

Visit to the Museum of Possibilities

Hands-on-experience on Assistive Aids and Appliances available across the country ranging from newly launched solutions to already existing ones.

Duration: Half-day (3 hours)

Abstract

The Museum of Possibilities (MoP) is an evolving resource center for Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities. It is an initiative by the Department for Welfare of the Differently Abled, Government of Tamil Nadu. It aims to create a hub by bringing people together, to ensure that it evolves and supports the ecosystem connecting the innovators, creators and end users. The museum showcases various adaptations and technologies (No-tech to High-tech) that will look at overcoming barriers that we face, irrespective of the functional disabilities. Rather than a disability specific model, the Museum adopts Life Domain specific approach, 3 zones of the MoP- Live, Work and Play. MoP is a one-stop facility for everyone, irrespective of their background, to understand design of products and universal design. It, also, serves as an awareness building platform and addresses issues on Disability, Accessibility and Assistive Technology. The space can be used by professionals and product developers to- launch, trial, and display their products, gather problem statements, understand functional gaps of the products, long term relationship building for research and development, and conduct workshops/events to raise awareness through MoP.

Audience level

- **Beginners**
 - Get to know what Accessibility and Assistive Technology is and their applicability in the lives of People with Disabilities with hands-on-experience on some of the solutions.
- **Intermediate and Advance**
 - Identify problem statements to begin design and development of solutions.
 - Understand the gaps in existing solutions, and explore means to improvise.
 - Understand the need to make the solutions available in different scales of affordability.
 - Remodel existing solutions to make it flexible to cater to changing needs.
 - Medium to launch your product, support in outreach.
 - Support in networking with relevant experts.

Prerequisites: There is no prerequisite for the workshop as such. But, interested participants can do background research about the Museum and bring specific insights and discussion questions.

Introduction

Museum of Possibilities is an evolving resource centre of Assistive Technology that aims to support the ecosystem connecting the innovators, creators and end users. This is an initiative by the Department for Welfare of the Differently Abled, Government of Tamil Nadu. Based in the capital city of Chennai, this museum is envisioned to demonstrate and strengthen Assistive Technology across life domains for People with Disabilities. Breaking the conventional Disability specific model, adopting an innovative approach of domain-specific model- Live, Work and Play, the museum showcases various adaptations and technologies (No-tech to High-tech) that will look at overcoming barriers that we face, irrespective of the functional disabilities.

This one of a kind facility connects to the users directly as it is an open to all public facility with an in-house physiotherapist and a speech therapist to guide and consult on solutions that will cater to universal and individualistic needs.

This facility will enable awareness building on Accessibility, Assistive Devices and Universal Design of products and environments that caters for all users.

Under each domain, here are the components covered:

- **LIVE** - Model Accessible Home with models of accessible environments and assistive devices for each part of the house - Living room, Kitchen, Dining, Bedroom and Bathroom, that enhances participation in activities of daily living for independence. Most of them follow affordable, indigenous designs which can be easily adapted using any design professional.
- **WORK** - Solutions for communication, education, vocational and customized workplace solutions. There is a special focus on AAC- Augmentative and Alternative Communication.
- **PLAY** - Includes Accessible Gardening, sports, art and other leisure activities.

Why should participants visit the Museum? - Unique capabilities of the Museum

1. A one-stop facility for any individual with or without technical background on Disability to understand and experience recent developments in the field of Accessibility and Assistive Technology.
2. The initiative targets to address all the issues concerned with Disability, Accessibility and Assistive Technology.
3. The space is a must-visit facility for students and professionals from any background to understand design of products and environments from an universal design perspective.

4. Experience the mobile app developed exclusively for the museum, to ensure same experience for all visitors. It's unique features include:
 - a. Audio guided indoor navigation developed using beacon technology.
 - b. Inbuilt functionalities: adjustable font size, the possibility to change the layout's color, read aloud, bilingual options, picture descriptions, clear language, and screen reader compatible components.
 - c. Accessible information: Each exhibit inside the museum is provided with QR codes which are integrated with the mobile app. These codes, when scanned, provide details on the exhibit in various formats, ranging from text, image, audio description and sign language.
5. The ecosystem not just supports end users but also product developers.
 - a. Space to launch, display and trial new inventions before hitting the mainstream market:
 The Museum being hosted by the commissionerate for the welfare of the Differently Abled, maintains, connects with different Disability People Organisations (DPOs), individuals and networks. Hence, this platform stands ideal for any developer who has come up with a new solution and would like to connect to the community about it. This collaboration will pay the way for more effective outreach.
 - b. Gather problem statements:
 When the Assistive Aids or solutions do not match to the requirements of a visitor, the team will document the same on a regular basis, so that the Research groups and developers constantly get the first hand information. Research groups and developers are welcome to take these up as problem statements and evolve solutions.
 - c. Mentoring support during development:
 The Museum can support in connecting interested product developers to relevant technical experts for one-on-one guidance and support.
 - d. Understand the functional gaps in existing solutions, to derive modifications:
 The products procured in the museum come from various sources like the mainstream market, organisations working with specific disabilities, individual developers, start-ups: both recognised and emerging. Some of the products also are the ones replicated using locally available materials for low-cost alternatives. Visitors which include People with Disabilities are open to try out these and share their feedback after trial, which opens up the scope for improvements.
 - e. Opportunities to have long-term relationships for research and development.
 - f. 'Friends of Museum':
 A forum to bring People with Disabilities and their allies together, to take ownership of this facility and ensure that it grows in many ways. Interested

people can join, to support with ideas, suggestions and new Aids and Devices. There will be regular meetings (both virtual and offline) to get to know each other and work out the way forward.

- g. Support in marketing:
 The Museum though does not promote or market any product directly, it does share the vendor details to the visitors if they show interest to purchase.
6. The platform is also open to host community awareness workshops and events by individuals and organisations.
7. 'Disability Movement' and 'Impact Wall' installations showing the key moments in the history of India and across, where People with Disabilities were identified and acknowledged and the imminent change makers who were instrumental in the paradigm shift from the Charity Model to the Social Model of Disability.
8. Museum Cafe: A vocational training center showcasing a model accessible quick service restaurant managed by Adults with Disabilities.

Workshop flow

1. The Museum of Possibilities is stretched over 2100 sq.feet area and is manned by six staff which includes a manager, a physiotherapist, a speech therapist and three museum assistants.
2. The Museum can cater to 30-40 participants at a time to ensure each and every person gets a hands-on-experience on each exhibit.
3. The Workshop shall begin with a short briefing in the reception area for a duration of 15-20mins, followed by the tour guided by the staff which included brief insights on each product, their usage and demo.
4. During the tour around the museum, participants will also get a chance to meet and interact with self advocates from the Disability network, to hear and understand the need for such devices.
5. Closure: The group can then visit the cafe to see the 'Disability movement' wall, enjoy the ambience of the accessible cafe facing the Marina beach while having the refreshments made by Persons with Disabilities.

Takeaways/Outcome:

- Experience Accessible environment and various Assistive Technology at one stop.
- Understand the ecosystem in developing Universal and customized Assistive Technology.
- Facility to collect problem statements and collaborate with professionals in the disability sector.

Lead Facilitators:

1. **Poonam Natarajan**
Founding Director, Vidya Sagar, Chennai
Former Chairperson, National Trust, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2. **Hethal Solanki**
Manager, Museum of Possibilities.
Project Associate, TARA- Team for Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation

Resource Persons:

1. **Radha Ramesh**
Director, Vidya Sagar-Chennai
2. **Kalpana Rao**
Resource Center for AAC- Augmentative and Alternative Communication & Computer Access, Vidya Sagar, Chennai.
3. **Sudha Ramamoorthy**
Disability Rights Alliance
4. **Vedavalli. S**
Museum Curation team, Home Accessibility Consultant.
5. **Harishangar**
TARA- Team for Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation
Team working towards making homes and personal spaces accessible.
Vidya Sagar, Chennai.
6. **Bhavna Botta**
TARA- Team for Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation
Team working towards making homes and personal spaces accessible.
Vidya Sagar, Chennai.

Logistics

1. **Registration fee**
 - The Museum is a public facility which is open to all. There is no entry fee. But, in reference to the workshop, an optional registration fee for transportation and refreshments shall be charged.
 - Based on the number of registrations and preference, collected from the registration form, suitable arrangements will be made.
2. **Transport**
 - The transport charges to and fro, from the IIT Research Park shall be Rs.200. (Note: Accessible transport shall be arranged which accommodates both wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users. Hence, the same charge applies to all).

- If required, nominal charges will be worked out for people who cannot afford the transportation cost.

3. Refreshments

- Interested participants can pay and avail refreshments, made by Adults with Disabilities trained in the Museum Cafe. The charges applicable are Rs. 100.

References

1. Website: www.tnmop.in
2. Media Articles
 - <https://theprint.in/india/tn-gets-a-museum-of-possibilities-for-the-differently-abled/985869/>
 - <https://www.dtnext.in/city/2022/06/06/museum-of-possibilities-opened-for-differently-abled-in-chennai>
 - <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/here-lives-made-a-lot-easier-for-disabled/articleshow/92153380.cms>
3. Facebook: <https://bit.ly/The-Museum-of-Possibilities>
4. Harmonized Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier Free Environment for Persons with Disability and Elderly Persons
https://cpwd.gov.in/Publication/HG2021_MOHUAN.pdf