Conducting Museum Evaluations
With Accessibility In Mind
November 17, 2020
10:45 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.

Aaron Rawley Volunteer Coordinator, Gore Place

Jan Crocker Independent Project Coach

Kamisha Heriveaux Self-Advocate Content Expert, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS)

Leigh Anne Lee Manager of Inclusive Design & Cultural Projects, Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD)

Introduction

Aerial view of Gore Mansion & grounds in autumn, viewed from a drone.

South Facade of the Gore Mansion in Fall

UP Program

Left: Guide standing on accessible ramp of the mansion

Top right: Guide with cane touching reproduction dress on multisensory tour
Bottom: Mass Cultural Council Logo

Jan Crocker

- Independent Project Coach
- Exhibit Designer
- Evaluator

Focus Group Evaluation: May 20, 2021

"My Farm At Waltham"

The early 19th century home of Christopher & Rebecca Gore

- 6 content panels installed outdoors around the grounds
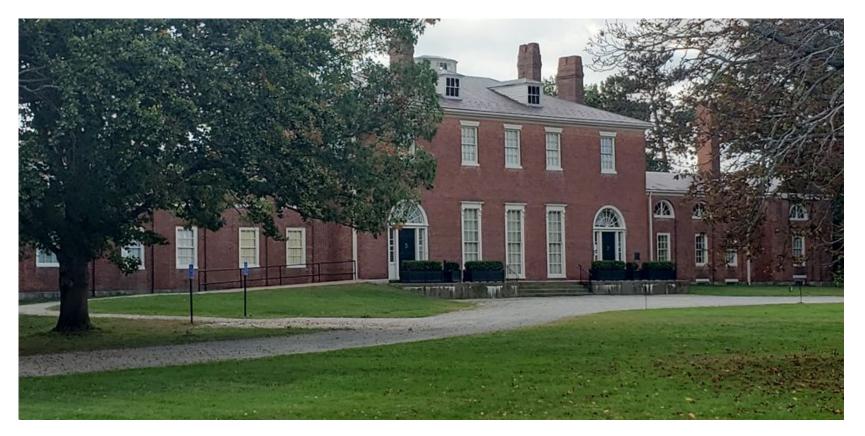
- 1 Welcome kiosk

Gore Place's Learning Goals

- Visitors will understand what this farm looked like in 1816.
- Visitors will understand that Gore Place is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving this open space for the enjoyment and education of our community.
- Visitors will understand that Gore Place takes special care to be accessible to all.
- Five families/individuals will join as members each month after visiting The Gore's Farm at Waltham.

Main Message:

The Gore Estate combined architecture, landscape design, and experimental architecture following European precedent in the early 1800s

1806 Gore Mansion's front entrance

Panel #4: The Barnyard

Panel #5: South to the River

Panel #3: The South Pasture

Four Acre Pasture 5

GORE PLACE

Gore Place c. 1911

AUDIO TOUR
for an accessible tour call
781-222-4861
press 5# to hear this stop

IMAGINE...

oxen grazing in this pasture. Gore's farmers used large animals to help with heavy work like hauling timber and plowing the fields. Mr. Gore's farm totaled 250 acres running south all the way to the Charles River.

Watch for our rare sheep, Leicester Longwool. They are an English breed developed for their wool.

It takes a whole acre of field grass to feed two sheep for a year. In the winter, the farmer must have hay and other food for the animals until the spring.

"We have need of everything that can be saved for winter food. There is now no grass & has been very little since the middle of August.."
–C. Gore to R. King, October 9, 1816.

Pastures are important grazing land as well as important open space for birds and wild animals.

Watch for red-tailed hawks soaring in the sky. They nest here.

"We have seen, felt and admired the fine sheep, cows and oxen of Bakewell's breed."
–C. Gore to R. King, August 10, 1799.

View across the lawn

View of the green lawn with two panels in the
background

My Approach to Focus Groups

- Walk participants around the exhibit

- Interview them

- Note problems

- Note opportunities for engagement

- Learn more about the participants needs

- Learn how to make the panels more accessible

Interview Questions

- What interests you most about this panel?

- If I wasn't with you, would you have been able to find this panel?

- What would make this panel better for you?

- Are there any questions you would like to have the staff answer about this panel?

Results:

- Navigational issues

- Language

- Images

- Interests

Navigation Issues

- No clear starting point

- Could not find panels on their own – no evident path
- No one said they could find any of the panels if I had not lead them to the panels
- Road hazards for both blind and mobility impaired
    - uneven turf
    - a variety of surfaces - grass, mulch, dirt
    - hanging branches in the middle of the path
    - Goose poop on the paths
- "I can't see the next panel."
- "Mulch gets caught in my wheelchair wheels."

Language

- Inclination to literal
- Use of terms like "imagine" the trees, the weathervane, birds, animals, and the Charles River meant they wanted to see   the trees, the weathervane, the birds, the animals and the Charles River.
- Concept of past and present could be a little fuzzy.
- Notion of "farm" is contemporary.

Quotes

- "I never heard of oxen. Why are there no oxen?"

- "Where is the weathervane."

- "Where does the farmer sleep at night?"

- "Can we sit by the river?"

- "Where are the fruit trees?"

- "Where are the thorn bushes today? Can we touch them?"

Interpretation of images

- Interpreted as more relevant and literal to the text than decorative

- More images were requested

- Opened possibilities for thinking about the people who lived at the farm, the farmers, and the animals

Interests

- Birds

- Animals

- Trees – ages of them, identification

- The Farm itself

- Something to do that is reminiscent of other "farms"

Suggestions

- Add flags to each panel so we can see where they are.
- Have softer pebbles on the ground.
- Need more benches for time out.
- Install a rope along the path so we have a way to guide ourselves.
- Need tactile maps and braille labels
- Mention of the audio tour needs to be audio
- Want more on the different birds and trees
- Want to know why the Carriage House was moved twice

Suggestions Cont.

Activities:

- Selfie station with cutouts
- A place to pet animals
- Hayrides
- More about the existing farmer and his life

Kamisha Heriveaux

- Introduction
- Mass. Advocates Standing Strong
- How I got involved with the Evaluation
    - one of my colleagues asked me if I wanted to participate in taking part in a tour with Gore Place to check out the accessibility
- Expectations before arriving
- What museums can learn from people with disabilities
- Recommendations to make visitors with disabilities more welcome at exhibit evaluations
- Gore Place evaluation: takeaways

As I walked through the tour with my wheelchair I realized a few things.

1. There needs to be a smoother pathway for wheelchairs.

2. The panels needs braille.

3. A place to take a break when someone needs to.

4. There needs to be an audio tour. (completed after evaluation in May)

5. Needs accessible buttons.

Recommendations for other museums:
1. Do a walkthrough as a staff before setting up tours to make sure everything is in order so that everyone can be more involved and engaged with the future tours moving forward.
2. Independence is key to accessibility
3. Accessibility is a continual process, not a checklist. Keep moving forward.

Leigh Anne Lee

- Why should your organization include visitors with disabilities in programming and exhibit planning from an institution's perspective?

- What types of user/experts should you have participate in your planning and evaluation process?

- IHCD's user/expert review of Gore Place as part of MCC's UP Initiative

Why should your organization include visitors with disabilities in programming and exhibit planning from an institution's perspective?

- Includes people with disabilities in the conversation rather than assuming to know how to design/plan for visitors' with physical, sensory, and brain-based disabilities.

- Allows your organization to learn from visitors' firsthand experience what works and does not work.
- Ensures that a program and/or exhibit will be inherently accessible to people rather than requiring "band-aids".

User Experts on a guided tour in the oval Withdrawing room

User/Expert

- **A primary user/expert** is a person who has developed expertise by means of their lived experience in dealing with the challenges of the environment due to a physical, sensory or brain-based functional limitation.

- **A secondary user/expert** is a friend, spouse, family member, service provider, therapist, teacher, or anyone who has extensive experience sharing life with primary user/experts and paying close attention to the interface with their environments.

What types of user/experts should you have participate in your planning and evaluation process?

Everyone!

3 Broad Categories of Functional Limitations

Physical	**Sensory**	**Brain-Based**
Mobility	Sight	Learning
Dexterity	Hearing	Developmental
Strength	Speech	Mental Health
Stamina	Touch	Cognitive
		Brain Injury

What can user/experts evaluate?

- Everything!
- Alt text
- Captioning
- Layout
- Digital Interactives
- Physical Interactives
- Specific Programs
- Braille
- Audio
- Etc.

User/Expert Review of Gore Place – 2019

Two User Experts at the base of the Great Stairs in the East Entry of the Gore Mansion

Include alt text/caption

User/Expert Review of Gore Place – 2019

Include alt text/caption

Four User Experts investigating maps in Christopher Gore's office

User/Expert Review of Gore Place – 2019

Include alt text/caption

Four User Experts head toward the Mansion's East Entrance ramp while facing into the sun

What Gore Place has learned

- Inclusion of community voices
- Development of multifunctional content
- Evaluation of accessibility items and tour procedure
- Audio tour for My Farm At Waltham is live
- Internal and external DEAI and Accessibility committees and task forces
- Follow up review once changes are made
- Continual prototyping of ideas and development

Q&A + Contacts (handouts in resources: nemanet.org)

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