



## Ergonomics in Design for All/ Newsletter

Dear Members and Friends of the International Ergonomics Association (IEA),  
Ergonomics in Design for All Technical Committee,  
**Welcome to our sixth year and twenty second newsletters:**

[it includes also a focus on the access audit handbook](#)

**Have a look at it, enjoy it!**

With very best wishes, I wish you good luck with your work,  
**Isabella T. Steffan**  
IEA Ergonomics in Design for All TC

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## BOOKS

### THE NEW CALL OF THE RIVISTA ITALIANA DI ERGONOMIA

By **Isabella T. Steffan**, SIE, Italy

New challenge for health and well-being: more than human health.



CALL FOR  
PAPERS  
YEAR 2023  
NUMBER 26

The Issue 26 of the Rivista Italiana di Ergonomia (Italian Journal of Ergonomics) intends to collect international contributions such as critical essays, scientific research, projects, and professional experiences to feed the debate on the effectiveness of ergonomic interventions in relation to the current meanings of health and wellbeing.

Authors are invited to submit an original scientific proposal related to the following topics, but not limited to:

- Health and well-being of humans and the planet from the one-health perspective
- Human variability and diversity in health and wellbeing issues
- Health, ergonomics, and gender inequality
- Digital health and well-being
- Ergonomics of the built environment for health and well-being
- Ergonomics in product and service design for healthy solutions
- Inclusive innovations for personal care
- New paradigms and new contexts for health and well-being in the workplace
- Ergonomic issues in health and well-being economics
- New educational and learning approaches to health and well-being

#### Deadline

Articles for issue 26 must be received by 15 June 2023  
Issue 26 is due to be published by 31 July 2023

#### General information

The articles must be sent in word-compatible format (.doc, .rtf) by e-mail to the following addresses:

[erminia.attaianese@unina.it](mailto:erminia.attaianese@unina.it) and [segreteria@societadiergonomia.it](mailto:segreteria@societadiergonomia.it)

General enquires can be sent to guest editors Prof. Alessia Brischetto ([alessia.brischetto@unifi.it](mailto:alessia.brischetto@unifi.it)) and to Prof. Mattia Pistolesi ([mattia.pistolesi@unifi.it](mailto:mattia.pistolesi@unifi.it))

## FOCUS

### THE ACCESS AUDIT HANDBOOK

by **Carol Thomas**, Director of Access Design Solutions UK Ltd and is a Senior Associate with the Centre for Accessible Environments, UK

In February this year the Royal Institute of British Architects published 'The Access Audit Handbook: An inclusive approach to auditing buildings', produced in collaboration with the UK Centre for Accessible Environments. The author of this Handbook, Carol Thomas, tells us how it incorporates current good practice and a broader approach for inclusion, embracing human diversity and difference to enable access for all.

Although now well established, access audits remain an evolving concept and may mean different things to different people. In this handbook an access audit is considered to be a measure of how well the environment and method of service delivery meet the needs of existing and potential users, whether they be staff, visitors, volunteers, pupils, patients, students or others. It is also a process through which potential barriers to access may be identified and recorded alongside suggested improvements in a way that enables people responsible for a site, building or service to move on to the next step of planning and implementing change.

The link between access audits and the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments is clearly established in the UK Equality Act 2010. The Code of Practice to Part 3 (Services and Public Functions) of the Equality Act 2010 identifies access audits as a means by which service providers are able to identify reasonable adjustments.

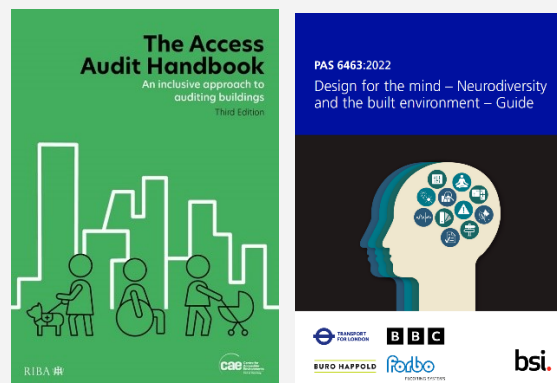
The duty to make reasonable adjustments relates only to disabled people – it does not relate to people on the basis of any of the other protected characteristics that come under the Equality Act (age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, and sexual orientation).

Nevertheless, when considering inclusion and inclusive design, the accessibility and usability of the environment for people from other protected groups may also form part of an audit. For instance, faith spaces, prayer facilities, features relating to women's safety and their well-being including pregnancy and menopause, baby feeding and changing, and non-gendered sanitary and changing facilities.

Providing a faith room is good practice to support inclusion and diversity, and these should be accessible to disabled people.

There is no specific guidance on this in the British Standard BS8300 or International Standard ISO 21542 but access auditors can apply good practice in terms of access to the room, the size and layout of the space, for instance enabling prayer mats to face in the direction of Mecca, and access to facilities such as storage of items for religious practices. A screen or curtain will be needed to separate prayer areas for Muslim men and women. Some religions require ablution (washing) before prayer, with clean and flowing water, this should also be accessible to disabled people.

In 2022, the British Standards Institute published PAS 6463 Design for the mind (PAS is a Publicly Available Specification, similar to a Standard but usually a quicker process).



*Figures 1-2. Access Audit Handbook cover on the left, PAS 6463 cover on the right.*

This provides guidance on neurodiversity and the built environment, and highlights design features which can make public places more inclusive, by reducing the potential for sensory overload, anxiety or distress. For instance, the availability of quiet rooms or areas providing a calming environment designed with muted colour schemes, natural textures, controllable lighting, free of odour and background noise. There should be a choice of seating including floor cushions and some seats which allow movement such as rocker-style chairs, and storage for items such as blankets and fidget items to assist with sensory stimulation to de-stress or reduce anxiety.

Guidance in PAS 6463 includes; where possible, designers should plan wayfinding to offer a choice of routes between significant locations; both direct, logical straight lines and also more flowing, curved lines that feel more natural and unobtrusive.

Curved walls provide improved sightlines, beneficial to remove some of the anxiety when entering an unfamiliar place by allowing more of a preview of the approaching area.

Inclusive environments that embrace neurodiversity can lead to benefits such as enhanced wellbeing through a reduction in fatigue, stress and anxiety; improved performance of many occupants through increased focus, creativity, productivity; enable people to socialize comfortably and safely, with positive communication; and create a more enjoyable environment where people can feel empowered and in control.

Facility managers may also consider options such as:

Do supermarkets provide quiet times for shoppers who need this?

Do theatres and cinemas offer relaxed performances?

Do museums, galleries and other visitor attractions offer tours at quiet times?

Do transport facilities offer familiarity visits for people not used to public transport?

An access audit is, by nature, a record of a building, or space, and its functions at one particular moment in time – it records the features and arrangements in place when the audit was undertaken. Following the audit, adjustments should be put in place which result in the removal of barriers and an improvement in the way services are delivered. Implementation of changes will clearly mark an improvement in accessibility but should not be regarded as a *fait accompli*. Service providers should regularly review the way in which services are provided, undertaking regular audits particularly if the building has been refurbished or if the nature of the service provider's business has changed. Undertaking subsequent audits may also provide the best opportunity to update recommendations in line with developing and evolving legislation, technology, and best practice design guidance.

It is preferable for a building to be audited when in use as this gives the best picture of how people actually access services and use the facilities. Auditing a building in use may also highlight where there is simply insufficient space for the number of people expected to use the facilities at any one time, a situation that could itself create a potential barrier to access. Auditing a building when it is empty or closed to the public may make the audit survey an easier task but does not provide a true picture of how the building is actually used. If the main audit survey has, for practical or operational reasons, to be undertaken when the building is closed, a subsequent visit during normal operation is clearly beneficial.

An auditor will need to consider the impact of evolving technology on the accessibility of a building, space, and / or elements within these. For instance, there are many wayfinding apps; there is increasing use of control systems such as access and security controls using fobs, touch or vicinity pads, smart cards, facial recognition, and voice recognition.

An auditor will not necessarily be familiar with all such systems but should be aware of good practice, how they can find specialist information and / or where to signpost the client for specialist advice. It may be in a workplace or setting where people are regular users, or a public setting where users may be unfamiliar with a building or space. An auditor will need to consider how user information is conveyed, including to people with a sensory or cognitive impairment, how intuitive is their use, and where the system is inaccessible for some people, for instance touch pads and blind people, what alternatives are available including summoning help.

Lift destination control systems are also increasing in use. Lift passengers register their floor destination at a central input and are then allocated to one of the lifts. This system aims to maximise the efficiency of lifts by allocating groups of people with the same floor destination to the same lift. This system requires the passenger to find, understand and use the central input control, take note of their allocated lift and find this lift among a bank of lifts. A passenger's allotted lift may not be the next one to arrive which can be confusing. If a person gets into the wrong lift, it may not stop at the required floor, and it may not be possible to request a floor stop from within the lift car. As some people will find destination control systems difficult to use, an auditor should assess how easy it is to obtain assistance if needed, and whether help is always offered to visitors.

Engagement with building users, and potential users, is essential providing invaluable insight into the accessibility of a site or building and the services provided from it. Once an access audit has been undertaken and a client is formulating an access plan or strategy, the continued participation of users is paramount.

The Access Audit Handbook includes six case studies. The first five case studies are extracts from completed access audit reports, each relating to a very different type of development – a theatre, the penguin enclosure at London Zoo, a parish church, an external environment and a university science laboratory located in an historic building.



*Figure 3-4. Hebden Bridge showing the old Town Hall and the new extension on the left. A recessed seating area in the walkway linking the old Hebden Bridge Town Hall and the new extension on the right.*

Case study six, the redevelopment of Hebden Bridge Town Hall, illustrates how a service provider has moved forwards from an initial access audit to plan and implement improvements to transform an inaccessible historic building into a thriving multi-use community development.

The Access Audit Handbook includes a set of 32 Checklists of the External environment, building internal spaces, management and communication. They provide useful aides memoires to assist in ensuring all aspects of an environment are considered.

The Access Audit Handbook can be obtained from the Centre for Accessible Environments

[NEW! Access Audit Handbook-Third Edition-CAE](#)

or from RIBA

[The Access Audit Handbook: An inclusive approach to auditing buildings | RIBA Books](#)

Promoting Ergonomics in Design for All is a core activity of our EinDfA TC.

*You can find information about objectives, domains of interest, members of the TC here:*

<https://iea.cc/member/ergonomics-in-design-for-all-eindfa/>

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