4.1d Obtaining Products and Services

One of the main reasons for using buildings is to obtain access to products and services. Any building with that function should be designed to facilitate such access for the entire population. Such buildings include commercial facilities, service centers, bill payment locations, libraries and offices handling applications and forms.

Entries and Circulation Spaces

These spaces will be the first contact people have with the interior of the facility. Providing a sense of openness improves knowledge of the facility’s spatial layout and social organization.

Guidelines:

- In retail establishments, provide a transition space at the entrance to help customers get oriented to the facility.
- Provide interior glazing or open access into all departments except those where privacy is desirable. Provide window treatments where privacy needs are variable.

Figure 4.1d.1. This interior glazing provides only visual access to the products and services in this museum bookstore.
Wherever controlled access is necessary, make the initial entry space an inviting area. A reception desk should be located immediately in or adjacent to this area, strategically located to prevent visitors from passing by without being cleared for entry.

**Product Distribution**

Displays expose visitors to the range of products available. Space and illumination are critical concerns for access and product selection. Accommodations for resting should be made wherever it is likely that someone may be in the area for more than a few minutes.

**Guidelines:**

- Examples of the best and most interesting products should be displayed in a reachable location providing hands-on access.
- Focus more intense and dramatic lighting on special product displays.
- Keep all products within the comfortable reach range of 24 - 48 inches.
- The width of all aisles should be planned to provide effective access to all products.
- All aisles should enable two people, either standing or using wheeled mobility devices (e.g., strollers, wheelchairs), to pass each other while traveling in opposite directions.
- Provide a supporting surface for trays and packages (e.g., tray slide) in service and cashier lines.

*Figure 4.1d.2.* The market provides a welcoming entry. Anyone can enter and the openness provides sounds and smells that attract the public.

*Figure 4.1d.3.* Hands-on access to products at comfortable levels allows everyone to examine items prior to purchasing. Wide aisles are needed where large crowds are expected.
**Staff Assistance**

Where assistance is necessary to provide access to all products, (e.g., books on a top shelf) this can be a universal service provided and available to everyone. This will eliminate the stigma associated with asking for help. It will also improve the public’s image of the organization because providing assistance where needed is a good business practice.

**Guidelines:**

- Assistance should be advertised for all who cannot manage on their own. This may include signs indicating the type of services available.

- Assistance services should not be identified with the International Symbol of Access. Such labeling immediately creates the impression that one must use a wheelchair to receive such services.

- Service desks should be low enough for seated use. If standing is more desirable, they should have low sections for seated use and for children. There should also be knee clearance for both sides when the counter must be used from a frontal position.

**Waiting Areas**

It is inevitable that people sometimes will have to wait where services are provided to the public. In some building types, like health service facilities, the waiting area can be conceived as part of the service area.

*Figure 4.1d.4. At this supermarket checkout, the service counters are lowered for two reasons. They are more usable by customers of all statures, whether standing or sitting, and also enable this checkout clerk to work from a seated position.*
Guidelines:

1. Provide enough space for the expected number of people waiting during the peak periods of the day. An overflow area also can be provided that is used for other purposes (e.g., lobby alcove) during most other times.

2. All waiting areas should have seating when it is expected that the wait will be longer than 15 minutes.

3. A system for taking turns should be provided in locations where the receptionist or clerk can easily lose track of who is next. This system should contain both auditory and visual components.

4. Waiting areas should be well lighted and have sound control to reduce background noise.

5. Where it is expected that people may wait for periods of up to an hour, access to restrooms, public telephones and drinking fountains should be provided in close proximity.

6. If smoking is allowed, there should be a separate smoking lounge that is well ventilated. An alternative is access to a weather protected outdoor area.

7. If small children are present, a play area is advisable.

Service Desks and Offices

The most critical point of contact between visitors to a building and staff is at service desks where a variety of activities take place that set the tone of the organization and establish its image to the public. It is particularly important to establish an equitable relationship between the visitor and the person providing service.

Guidelines:

1. Enough space for maintaining appropriate interpersonal distances should be provided.
The seating arrangement should facilitate conversation where appropriate. Corner to corner seating or round tables may promote more conversation than face-to-face seating.

Each person involved in a transaction or conversation should be at face-to-face level.

The service provider should be at the same floor level as the recipient.

Service counters should be low enough for use in a seated position or have a lower auxiliary or optional counter area. The lowered areas should have knee clearances and be wide enough for use by anyone.

Background noise in the service desk area should be controlled enough to ensure that quiet talking is understandable by all parties to the conversation.

At service desks where confidential information is communicated, provide sound absorbing surfaces, privacy partitions and other measures to control access to confidential discussions. Ideally, there should be a private office that can be used if the conversation may result in emotional distress.

Information Transaction Machines

An increasing amount of information services is being provided through computer-based equipment like ATMs, ticket machines and internet terminals. These machines are called information transaction machines (ITMs). All ITMs should be simple to use and easy to perceive.

Guidelines:

- Provide step-by-step menus that present manageable chunks of information in a logical order.
Group controls for similar functions and spatially organize the controls to reflect the sequence of steps. Graphics that guide the user through the steps also can be provided.

Include back-up and cancel modes to provide the option of correcting entry mistakes.

All transactions should provide feedback on the result. Critical actions should have confirmation steps before proceeding.

Reinforce correct choices with labels, symbols, color feedback messages and signals, etc.

Provide input/output modes that everyone can use (e.g., touch screen plus headset jack for verbal feedback).

Allow different methods of payment (e.g., credit cards, cash, debit card, etc.). Design the input slots for ease of insertion without the need for fine motor control.

Locate all operating controls within the comfort zone of 24 - 48 inches above grade.

Provide adequate lighting for all controls and directions.

Provide knee space when the device must be used from a frontal position.

Provide a display screen that can be adjusted to reduce glare, to optimize contrast and to accommodate the position of the user.

**Vending and Ticket Machines**

Vending machines, ticket machines, change machines, vend-a-card systems and related equipment should be usable by everyone. Since these machines are often owned and maintained by outside vendors, it is important that agreements with the vendors incorporate universal design provisions. These should include the types and design of machines and the location and arrangement of machines in the spaces provided.
Guidelines:

- Clearly identify accurate prices, types of payment methods and the process for canceling an order and getting refunds.
- Provide alternative means of payment including credit or vend-a-cards, change and bills.
- Bill readers should allow different orientations of bills and be tolerant of common flaws on bills.
- Automatic change features should be provided as part of the machine; if not provided, change machines or vend-a-card purchase machines should be located in the immediate area.
- Provide identification and instructions for operational controls in alternate formats (e.g., text, recorded or synthesized speech, and Braille).
- All controls should be operable using a closed fist or open hand.
- Provide enough space for both side and front reach approaches for any user whether standing or sitting.
- Locate all controls, money input devices and product dispensing areas within a comfort zone of reach for all people whether standing or seated.
- Product removal should be possible using one hand.

Figure 4.1d.9. This touch screen ticketing machine has instructions in four languages and a very simple and obvious method of operation. Several different methods of payment are possible and audible instructions and tactile labels are provided.