



Accessibility TipSheet

Producing and Distributing Large Print and Braille Programs

FROM THE ACCESS OFFICE

A theater researching the production of braille and large print program books asked me the following questions:

- Who produces the large print and Braille?
- Who pays for the copies?
- Are they four-color or black and white?
- When does the patron request this accommodation? At the time of performance or at the time of ticket purchase?

Below are responses from several theaters describing how they provide large print and braille programs. Check out the TipSheet on formatting large print program booklets for more information.



Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility, The Kennedy Center

The Kennedy Center’s Accessibility Office produces large print and braille Playbills in-house. Six volunteers each work around four hours a week to produce alternative format programs for approximately 3,000 events and productions a year at the Center.



The Playbills are designed in New York and the editors send us an electronic copy. To create the large print, the volunteers format the text in Microsoft Word using our style sheet. (Enlarging a printed program on a copy machine doesn’t improve legibility for low vision patrons because they need consistency in text font, size, line weight, etc.) Text is black and copies are made in-house on white, non-glossy 8½” by 11” paper. The formatted Playbill is translated into braille using a desktop computer, braille embosser (printer), and braille translation software (Duxbury). The number of large print and braille copies made varies depending on how long a production will run. There is money budgeted in the Accessibility Program to cover the costs of producing the programs.



We are committed to producing large print programs for all productions and performances and braille programs for all productions and performances with the exception of dance. Large print and braille copies are always available at the front of the theater and don’t require any advance request. Ushers are trained to offer large print and braille if they notice the patron has a white cane or guide dog, and many of our patrons request them from the ushers.





Judy Berk, Cultural Access Consortium

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The large print programs are created by the marketing departments of the theaters in our area. Most theaters have large print programs placed in the lobby or distributed by House Manager when requested. They are printed in black & white. Some theaters take the program and just make copies with larger print. Others edit the text for the most important parts and print it from there.



A consumer in the area who is blind has been printing the braille programs for us. The text is written by the marketing department of the theater, bios are included, and disk is mailed to her. The theater pays for the programs.



Large print programs are made available prior to performances. Patrons can request them when they come into the theatre. Again, in some theatres, they are out for the taking. Braille programs are printed prior to the performance depending on ticket sales and then we add to that number just in case.



Meri McGuinness, Publications Coordinator, Kravis Center

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Having researched Large Print programs several years ago, we provide for patrons who are visually impaired:



- Large print programs for all performances. Depending on size of performance (large theatre 2,200 seats are 100 copies, small theatre 350 seats we provide 25 copies). We have established an information table with a sign indicating they are available to anyone who would like them. Our ushers also know this for inquiries and we run a 1/4 page FYI on the large print to inform our patrons.
- Once the program is approved I save the copy in text-only format and then provide to a freelancer to produce the larger multiple page programs and I format the one to four pagers.
- The 25 copies are done at our center and the 100 copies are done at a small printer.
- We have gotten underwriting for the printing from a patron and they are given credit in writing on the program on a yearly basis.
- We use: plain white paper, 8 1/2 x 11, 18 pt type, double spaced, no graphics or color. We copy two sided and staple upper-left corner.
- On the really large performances, I do cut the copy down due to the size of type etc., to just include the program and/or cast or other important information. I try to keep pages to no more than 20. The majority of shows run about 4 to 8 pages max.

This will be our 3rd season doing and it has been very well received and we generally use most of the large prints. We have not yet provided Braille, and have not had any requests for such.



Michael T. Mooney, Manager of Access & Outreach, Paper Mill Playhouse,
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At Paper Mill Playhouse, we have the same typesetter who does our program also set-up a Large Print version. Mostly cast and production information and some announcements are included, but no ads (this varies by theatre, however). Braille is done by a large “brailleing” company near us but you can also use the Red Cross in some areas. For an audience of about 40,000 people we order 100 Large Print and 25 Braille and have never run out. As for who pays for these — We do! It’s part of our commitment to Accessibility. Large Print is relatively inexpensive but Braille can run you a bit. You can probably find funding for this easily, however. Large Print at Paper Mill is always black text on white paper stock.



Programs in all formats are available at all times, without prior request. Patrons wishing LP or Braille can obtain them from our snack bar, where the infrared and Audio-Description equipment is also doled out. Patrons at Audio-Described sensory seminars (pre-show) will be offered them as part of the seminar.



ABOUT TIPSHEETS

TipSheets are produced collaboratively with members of the Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) network. TipSheets are intended solely as guidance and are not a determination of an organization’s legal rights and responsibilities. You are welcome to copy and distribute this TipSheet.

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