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Constructing Genre: A Threefold Typology

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Much genre research focuses on genre as typified, recurring discursive actions used by members of discourse communities. This article discusses the role of genre in a project that includes participants from different discourse communities. The participants created a single text to assist multiple audiences to ensure that buildings and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. The author proposes a functional framework for considering the role of genre knowledge on the cross-disciplinary project.

I think it just takes time to really shape the space—to understand it, shape the words and the texts and the images together.

Larry, Landscape Architect

The displayed epigraph is quoted from an interview with a participant involved in a writing project at Midwestern University, pseudonym for the large research university where my research took place. The project included people from different disciplines and professions including architecture, landscape architecture, professional communication, graphic design, and family services. The participants worked together to develop *Access for Everyone: A Guide to Accessibility with References to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)*, a 500-plus-page, illustrated, print guide to help professionals in a variety of fields, including design, construction, and facilities management, ensure that public buildings and sites are accessible to people with disabilities.

The project team dealt with social, physical, and discursive spaces and the challenges of giving shape to them in text. The team was concerned with built environments, spaces shaped—articulated, designed, and constructed—in ways that have often excluded people with disabilities. The team also was concerned with texts, spaces shaped by writers’ interpretations of ideas and embodied in choices about content, organization, illustration, document design, and language. Numerous considerations, including concern for the audiences and activities that the team’s text is meant to serve, ultimately determined the shape of the text—its genre.

The term *genre* has been used to describe “stabilized-for-now” (Schryer, “Records”) amalgamations of rhetorical strategies, content, and form that mediate ongoing activities, social relationships, and systems of activities (see, for instance, Berkenkotter and Huckin; Dias et al.; Journet; Schryer, “Walking”). Theorists argue persuasively that, as typifications of discursive actions, genres allow people to recognize and act on the social purposes of texts within particular contexts (e.g., Miller). Consequently, much genre research and theory over the past twenty years has concentrated on texts that are routine, recurring forms of discourse enacted within communities, or among communities that interact in larger “networks” (Bazerman, “Systems”).

Although explorations of the ways in which discourse communities (e.g., organizations, disciplines, professions) enact typical and/or recurring discursive activities have yielded rich perspectives about the nature of genre use, my research departs from this focus. I describe the role of genre in a situation that is nonroutine and nonrecurring and demonstrate ways in which participants applied genre knowledge in an attempt to make a single text intelligible to multiple audiences. The participants on the project that I describe in this article came from several different disciplines, each bringing to the work different expertise and technical skills and different approaches to interpreting and constructing texts. They did not use the same professional texts and genres in their respective disciplines, and they valued different genres and generic conventions. I seek to illustrate that the team members nonetheless relied on knowledge about fundamental functions of workplace genres to adapt conventions of existing genres and improvise generic solutions in several ways:

- instrumentally to meet the informational needs of the broader community involved in accessibility efforts,
- metacommunicatively to provide scaffolding that enabled readers from a variety of communities to access the information, and
- sociopolitically to represent the larger context of disability and accessibility issues from a particular perspective.

David Russell has suggested that “participants’ shared recognition of the typified actions that a genre operationalizes is the key to distinguishing one genre from another” (518). Studying discursive activities that are not typical, that take place at

the boundaries of communities and activities (e.g., Wenger), may provide further insight into how people from different discourse communities—those who do not routinely use the same genres—apply what they understand about distinguishing among genres to develop a “shared recognition” of activities in which they engage together—particularly when those activities are reading and writing.

In what follows, I briefly review relevant literature about genre knowledge and the uses of genre and describe the instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions of genre as a framework for considering the role of genre in nonroutine, cross-disciplinary activities, such as the *Access for Everyone* project. I explain the context of the *Access for Everyone* project, the local-level project activity, and the methods I used to research the project. I then provide analyses of the development of excerpts from the *Access for Everyone* text that demonstrate the ways in which the three functions of genre may help explain how people create and interpret texts in unfamiliar situations.

THEORIZING GENRE USE IN CROSS-COMMUNITY PRACTICE

Theorists discuss genre in two ways simultaneously: (1) plurally, as actual types of discourse in use, and (2) singularly, as a concept for categorizing, and strategically-applied knowledge about interpreting, managing, constructing, and negotiating discourse. This double sense of the term genre allows scholars to use a term such as report, for instance, to label existing documents as a type based on formal features, while at the same time calling into question the stability of those features by looking at how the genre is used differently by various communities to achieve a range of outcomes.

The recent history of genre theory and research focuses on ways in which genres are routine yet dynamic responses to communicative situations, driven by communal discursive practices and shaped by communities’ accepted conventions (e.g., Bazerman, *Constructing and Shaping*; Berkenkotter and Huckin; Miller; Schryer, “Records”). Theorists and researchers have argued that genres assist communities in constituting themselves, their members, and their relationships to other communities. Genres come into being to meet needs within communities (e.g., disciplines, professions, and organizations), and the uses of genres in specific domains become part of the tacit knowledge of community members that often is transparent to participants in situated activities and difficult for outsiders to understand (Bazerman, *Shaping and Constructing*; Berkenkotter and Huckin; Myers; Orlikowski and Yates; Smart).

Yet for people to use genres so they can become functioning members of communities, the tacit knowledge of genres somehow must be made explicitly available. In addition, although specialized genres facilitate the work of particular com-

munities, they may inhibit communication when different communities come into contact or when a community's work affects people who do not share its knowledge or ways of expressing knowledge. Such disjunctions can result in practical and ethical dilemmas. For example, the work of professional communication and rhetorical theorists who explored communications problems that preceded the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster illustrated practical and ethical problems related to genre, knowledge, communities, and conflict (Couture; Driskill; Herndl, Fennell, and Miller). Each of these discussions theorizes problems caused by the ways different communities interpret and value information.

To address the dynamics of genre use in situations that involve multiple communities and to address some of the fuzziness inherent in defining community (e.g., Ornatowski and Bekins), theorists have also considered genres as aspects of contexts, particularly with respect to determining exactly what constitutes context and accounting for the ways that dissimilarity in contexts affects the exchange of texts. The relationship of genre to context is complicated in various respects. In particular, research has suggested that uses of genres developed and understood in different contexts are not necessarily commensurable. Studies show, for example, that people have difficulty transferring genre knowledge from the context of school to the context of the workplace (Dias et al.; Freedman and Adam; Freedman, Adam, and Smart; Spinuzzi). But to participate in unfamiliar situations, people must learn new genres or bring genre knowledge to new contexts in novel ways.

In addition, contexts are multidimensional and genres function at various levels, including in local contexts and in complex systems of activity and networks of genre (Bazerman, "Systems"; D. Russell; Winsor, "Genre" and "Ordering"). Although these levels are interrelated, the functions of genre at local and broader levels are not necessarily complementary. In fact, they may be at odds, a disparity that can generate problems in accounting for the purposes and effects of genres. For example, the accessibility of built environments is determined not only by architects' plans and builders' interpretations of them but also by government directives. The U.S. Department of Justice's "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities" (ADAAG), as part of a government regulation—the ADA in this case—describes conditions that must exist for a building to be accessible. However, the conventions and language used to construct the genres of legislation and regulation have been established primarily by and for the legislative and judicial communities (R. Sullivan). These genres do not work well for building professionals who use other types of genres—plans and specification—to manage their primary activities.

Genres can also function in complex contexts to suppress and advance interests or reproduce social attitudes in ways that are not readily apparent or fully explicable at local levels (Blyler and Thralls; Chouliaraki and Fairclough; Paré; Winsor, "Ordering"). For instance, the social legitimacy of the discourse of various institutions and fields—for example, medicine and education—that describes and defines disability normalizes perspectives that are, in turn, widely adopted into soci-

ety and culture. This process of normalization is accomplished in part through uses of specific genres such as medical diagnoses and evaluations of learning-disabled students. Thus the identities of people with disabilities and their access to social institutions and spaces have in the past largely been articulated by and to others—employers, courts, and medical professionals, architects—not by those who have disabilities (Barton; Parr and Butler; M. Russell).

The complex relationships among genre and form, community, and context are particularly relevant when groups that interact use different strategies and conventions for constructing genres, when different communities have unequal power in discourse, and when contexts or the rhetorical stances that people bring to them are not shared. In these types of situations, the structure afforded by the genres people routinely use within their home communities—disciplines, professions, organizations—and in contexts with which they are familiar, only partially assist them in making sense of discourse.

In studying various aspects of genres in situations across a broad spectrum, researchers and theorists analyze the relationship between the forms of genres and the ways that people learn and use genres, suggesting the roles that genres play to shape the knowledge that people create and exchange about the world. They also recognize that boundaries of communities, contexts, activities, and genres are far from stable, a reality that creates considerable intertextuality in discourse and hybridity in genres (cf. Bakhtin; Bazerman, *Constructing* and “Systems”; Fairclough, *Discourse and Language*; Schryer, “Walking”). Thus the concept of genre continues to receive attention not because the forms of genres are stable but rather because genres in the plural, various, mutable reality of everyday use are complex and evolving sets of choices about discourse that participants in activities must effectively manage.

Despite these complexities, Bazerman writes, “we use genre to read and write” (*Constructing* 129) in order to interpret, manage, construct, and negotiate various types of text. Though uses of genre are mediated by our affiliations with communities and our involvement in contexts, we also need to account for the ways genre knowledge functions in contexts that involve discursive activity among people from different communities with different interests. Therefore, I next outline three functions of genre that derive from genre theory and my exploration of the *Access for Everyone* project. These functions—instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political—help focus attention on local-level literate activity as acts of genre use that respond to broader social contexts as well as on differences in the ways that people from different communities negotiate genre.

Instrumental Functions of Genre

Much of the research pertaining to genre and community suggests that communities use particular genres both locally and in networks of activity to get their work done. In this respect, genres support the instrumental function of providing knowl-

edge that people need to participate in activities—knowledge about what people need to do and how they need to do it. Technicians and engineers use work orders to negotiate tasks to be performed at a manufacturing company (Winsor, “Ordering”). Psychiatrists write diagnoses in clinics, which insurance claims processors recontextualize into statements that are then routed through complex systems involving medicine, business, and individual patients (Berkenkotter). In the context I researched, the government writes guidelines that architects and builders must use to ensure that buildings are accessible.

In terms of the instrumental function, a goal of the *Access for Everyone* team was to provide information about accessibility through text and graphics to assist people in a variety of communities to create built environments that are accessible to all people. To function instrumentally, our text needed to describe accessible conditions and to explain actions that must be taken to ensure that accessibility is achieved. Another instrumental aspect addressed in the team’s text is government regulation. Many potential readers would need information on the specific requirements for which they are responsible under the ADA. Instrumental functions include the ways that genres assist the activities of others and the realization of objectives beyond comprehending a text. However, providing information alone is insufficient to ensure that a text is comprehensible.

Metacommunicative Functions of Genre

Metacommunicative functions include the ways that writers structure content so that audiences can read and interpret texts effectively and the ways that texts mediate the exchange of information about the text and context between reader and writer. Deborah Brandt, though not specifically discussing genre, suggests that “to use and understand language requires knowing how to accomplish language *and* its setting simultaneously, knowing how to use language not merely to share meaning with others but also to constitute the conditions necessary for meaning to be shared” (30, italics Brandt’s). To exchange knowledge in a meaningful way, writers and readers rely on properties of texts, such as “cohesion, labeling and lexical variety” to “sustain much of the metacommunicative undertalk by which writing and reading are managed” (9). Brandt uses the term “undertalk” to signify that metacommunicative exchanges between writers and readers “function as part of the involvement-focus of written discourse” (9) that exists not only within, but outside, the text in the context that includes both the writer and the reader.

In very basic terms, through metacommunication the writer conveys information about the nature of the text to the reader (e.g., “This is a set of instructions, not a novel. Here’s how they work; let me help you use them.”). In responding to the ways that the audiences for *Access for Everyone* might locate and use information, the team considered various metacommunicative approaches, ultimately distancing the text from some types of genres—for example, legislation and regulation—

and aligning it with others—for example, manuals and guides. For instance, the language in the government guidelines provision focuses on conditions, as in the following excerpt:

4.13.10. If a door has a closer, then the sweep period of the closer shall be adjusted so that from an open position of 70 degrees, the door will take at least 3 seconds to move to a point 3 in (75 mm) from the latch, measured to the leading edge of the door. (U.S. 528, 1994)

However, the language in the team's text focuses on the action to be taken to arrive at a condition, as in the following example:

DR T1 Adjust the sweep period of door closers so that doors will take at least 3 seconds to move from an open position of 70° to a point 3 in (75mm) from the latch (measured to the leading edge of the door). [Required 4.13.10] (Draft 8/1999)

In this simple example, the content of the two passages is very similar. In fact the team struggled constantly to ensure that changes in the metacommunicative aspects of the text did not change the instrumental meaning of government guidelines. The syntax, however, is different. Replacing the syntax associated with regulatory genres to a more familiar and manageable construction is meant to make the requirement easier for readers to manage cognitively. The choice of the imperative construction is also meant to reinforce—metacommunicatively—that the action must be taken and replaces the regulatory genre's reliance on lexical cues such as the word *shall*. I interpret metacommunication as including and going beyond attention to the structure of a text. It is scaffolding in the text that both gives coherence to information and connects the information, writers, readers, and contexts for which a text is created and used.

Social/Political Functions of Genre

Social/political functions include the ways that genres express social relationships, represent contexts, and advance (or repress) particular social and political perspectives. Writers make choices in deciding which perspectives to incorporate, which information to stress, and how to prioritize information based not only on the need of readers but also on the writer's intention to promote a point of view.

Some genres have a significant amount of social and political power because they can prescribe rights and responsibilities. The power of legal and regulatory genres to impose obligations and establish relationships is clear, whether or not they are effective instrumentally in providing information or metacommunicatively in facilitating exchanges of knowledge. Other genres are powerful in shaping social and political realities because they facilitate the work of significant

fields on which the public depends—for example, medicine, law, or architecture. Interpretations of reality contained in such genres become normalized and legitimated and, in turn, shape reality for millions of people. These genres might be viewed as arrangements of knowledge and interests through the application of conventions that “become institutionalized and difficult to challenge without a commitment to change” (Schriner and Scotch). For example, in the context of accessibility, a text about accessibility requirements may discuss the built environment without discussing the ways that built environments affect people, thus creating the perceptions that accessibility is a special accommodation for a particular group. Incorporating or excluding in a text the perspectives and needs of people who have disabilities conveys a social/political point of view, whether the writer intends to or not.

The *Access for Everyone* team took a particular stance toward attitudes about accessibility and disability by choosing to explain the importance of accessibility. For example, in the section on door closers, in addition to the technical information, *Access for Everyone* includes the following justification for the requirement:

Improperly adjusted door closers make passage through doorways difficult for many people. Doors closers that close too quickly can trap people and wheelchairs in doorways.

Throughout, the writers provide the reasons for accessibility requirements in an attempt to shape readers’ attitudes about both accessibility and disability.

Relationship of Genre Functions

Clearly, the three functions of genre I describe are interrelated, and writers and readers manage these functions through the content, form, and design of texts. Separating interrelated functions for discussion presents problems, and I do not suggest that we can easily compartmentalize aspects of texts or genres because all aspects function together in determining the full sense of what writers represent and what readers interpret. However, recognizing the functions of genre as categories of typified actions that operationalize text-making activities may provide one tool for investigating genre use in contexts that include members of different communities and multiple audiences.

In this sense, generic interpretations depend on expectations (D. Russell) and improvisations (Schryer, “Walking”) on the part of both writers and audiences. Simply put, writers and readers use genre as primers that both capitalize on and create shared expectations from which we can improvise new texts and meanings by building on existing ones. Generic forms—as types of categorical, sociolinguistic knowledge that comes partly from our experiences with language but varies tremendously from individual to individual, group to group, and text to text—are suggestive. As J. R. Martin has pointed out, literacy involves the ability

to take cues from generic forms. In the next section, I describe the *Access for Everyone* project, including the context and background of the project, the purposes for the project, and the research methods I employed to study the project.

THE ACCESS FOR EVERYONE PROJECT

In developing a guide to accessibility, the *Access for Everyone* project team specifically responded to ongoing discourse and activities focused on ensuring that built environments are accessible to all people. Therefore, I situate the project as part of the social context and discourse involving disability and accessibility issues. This context includes the physical, social, and economic barriers that people with disabilities face and the recent history of attempts to address those conditions through legislating accessibility, primarily through the ADA and the ADAAG.

The team's work responded in particular to the need for additional, clear information about the ADAAG requirements. In addition, awareness of the social issues shaped the team's work and the perspective the team took to the issues in its text. The background I provide in the next section lays the groundwork for examining the specific strategies that the team members adopted to interpret and respond to the broader context—and each other—through its textual practices.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Congress passed the ADA in 1990, and by 1992 organizations and businesses with responsibilities to provide access under the ADA were required to develop transition plans outlining methods for assessing current conditions and procedures for implementing changes to meet ADA requirements. Midwestern University began its transition plan in the early 1990s. Part of the plan was to assess the physical environment of the campus to identify accessibility issues and to determine how to make appropriate changes. The primary source of information that guided this assessment was the ADAAG, which was developed by the Access Board, a regulatory branch of the Department of Justice, and published in 1991. The board sets standards for ensuring that new buildings for public use are constructed to be accessible to people with disabilities and that existing buildings comply with requirements for the removal of barriers to access.

However, the ADA and ADAAG are presented in the genres of law and regulation, which are difficult to use for practical purposes such as inspecting buildings. One particular difficulty with the 1991 ADAAG was that the guidelines were heavily cross-referenced—many individual guidelines referred to others. To understand the requirements of one guideline, readers needed to look up several and then determine

the combined effect. To assist university personnel who would be assessing the accessibility of Midwestern University's campus, several people involved in directing the assessment created a text to be used as a tool for identifying and recording building and site deficiencies. Titled *ADA Survey Manual: Site and Facilities Assessment for ADA Compliance*, the unpublished internal document reorganized the ADAAG information to facilitate the on-site inspections of the campus buildings. Thus, the primary purpose of the university's text was to assist university staff involved in the transition-plan assessment and continuing construction to

- identify features of buildings and sites that had to be analyzed for accessibility,
- determine which provisions of ADAAG applied to features of buildings and sites, and
- decide what actions needed to be taken to ensure accessibility.

The university, like all entities covered under the ADA, has a continuing responsibility to ensure that existing buildings, alterations, and all new construction meet accessibility requirements. Because the Access Board periodically makes changes, clarifications, and additions to the ADAAG, the university's *ADA Survey Manual* subsequently underwent several revisions to ensure continuing compliance in the university's construction practices.

The most current version of the ADAAG undertaken by the Access Board constitutes a broad revision of the form and structure of the ADAAG that includes a number of substantive changes to content as well as an attempt to align the ADAAG in form and convention with guidelines for accessibility contained in other significant building codes, such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) guidelines and the International Building Code (IBC). The most recent version of the university's text, *Access for Everyone: A Guide to Accessibility with References to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, not only attempts to account for these changes to the ADAAG but also entails broader objectives, including promoting the concept of universal design and disseminating information to audiences outside the university.

Project Purposes

The *Access for Everyone* team retained the purposes of its previous university survey manual and expanded the new text with the goal of gaining a wider audience outside the university including students, architects, planners, designers, drafters, and human resource professionals in various workplace environments. The *Access for Everyone* team also recognized that members of its diverse potential audiences are, in general, less familiar with accessibility issues than with other areas related to their particular jobs. For example, architects, though versed in design and construction, often lack expertise in accessibility issues. Meeting the needs of different audiences required the team to make significant adjustments to the form of the

text. With a broad concept of audience in mind, the team planned to revise the text so that its users would also be able to

- access background information on the ADA and the ADAAG,
- develop a basic understanding of the ways that built environments may limit people’s involvement in the basic activities of daily life,
- understand the requirements of ADAAG and the reasons for them, and
- implement design and construction practices that enhance accessibility for all people.

The development team assumed that architects and others who are familiar with architectural concepts and terms would probably be most interested in quickly locating information about specific requirements to verify information on plans and sites. Other professionals and students, who are less familiar with construction and architecture, might read to learn about accessibility concepts and the ADAAG. The *Access for Everyone* team attempted to make accessibility information easier to find, read, and understand by

- reorganizing the information in ADAAG and grouping related information,
- recasting the language from descriptive to imperative to ease the reader’s task in determining the specific actions they need to take,
- including rationales for the guidelines to help readers understand the requirements in the context of the needs of people with various types of disabilities, and
- providing multiple ways for readers to find and retrieve information.

In addition to these explicit goals, the team sought to establish the importance of accessibility and to promote the idea that “designing-in” accessibility is not only compatible with other architectural design goals but that it is also an ethical responsibility. The team wanted readers to focus as much on promoting accessibility as on following regulation by calling attention to the nature of disability as constructed through the interaction of people and environments.

RESEARCH STUDY¹

My research follows the team of graduate students and professionals, including myself, who worked on the *Access for Everyone* project at Midwestern University.

¹I prepared and submitted the required human subjects paperwork to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) at the university where this work was completed. The IRB approved the study described in this article. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

My role as a writer on the project led me to consider the interplay among the team members' different disciplinary perspectives and various understandings of genre, which led to both conflict and creation over the course of the four years the team worked together. For this project, we—individuals fully loaded with disciplinary and professional equipment—came together to mutually engage in a unique activity. It was unique to us in that some of us had never worked on a writing project of this nature, and some of us had never worked on a writing project in the particular content area that our text addressed.

Project Participants

Ten people worked on the *Access for Everyone* team over the four years of the project, including two from rhetoric and professional communication, four from graphic design, three from architecture/landscape architecture, and one outside consultant. The length of time that each person worked on the project varied in part because of the length of project. Some people left the project as they left the university for other positions; others joined the team to replace them. As the initial writer on the team, I was one of four people who started the project.

The following team members were working on the project when my research began and agreed to participate in the interviews and taped meetings and provide notes and drafts of documents for my study. Dr. Arnold, a professor of architecture at Midwestern University, initiated the project and served as project manager. He also revised much of the text, wrote several sections, and worked with the graphic designers who developed the illustrations. Larry, a master's student with a dual major in landscape architecture and community and regional planning, holds a bachelor of arts in architecture and had sixteen years of experience in commercial construction and design. Larry initially served as a technical advisor on content and the ADAAG and later worked on a number of the illustrations that are included in the text. Eden, a PhD student in rhetoric and professional communication, had seven years of experience, both in research and teaching writing at Midwestern University. She also had workplace experience as a writer and editor. Eden joined the team in the second year of the project as editor, revised the design of the document, and became the team's software expert. Pat, a master's student in Architectural Studies, an interdisciplinary program at Midwestern, holds a bachelor of arts in family services and has work experience in children's services and assisted living facilities. Pat served as a project assistant, managing files and other resources, assisting with copyediting and source verification. Pat joined the team in the third year of the project.

Research Methods

To investigate the ways in which genre knowledge factored into the team's planning, writing, and revision, I took a qualitative, multimethod, case-study approach

to collecting and analyzing data (Denzin and Lincoln; Hymes; Miles and Huberman; Rossman and Rallis; Silverman). Because my research focused on the team's use of genres, collecting and analyzing documents created and used by the team was an essential research method for my study.

I began by documenting what Wanda Orlikowski and Joanne Yates refer to as a genre repertoire of "different, interacting genres" (542) that people "enact [...] by drawing on their knowledge, tacit or explicit, of a set of genre rules" (545). The documents I collected from the beginning of the project included texts the team generated or used to do its work (e.g., e-mails, notes, memos, style guides, tracking documents, and document test plans and materials) and drafts of the text that was the object of the team's work—the text and illustrations for what became *Access for Everyone*. The sequence of drafts that the team created constitutes a record of the changes that the team made to the text over time, as well as substantive and editorial comments that the team members made to each other via the drafts. These changes and comments provide a record of the team's evolving views of both the generic considerations that shaped the text as well as the practical and social issues informing it. My purpose for reviewing and cataloging the various comments and revisions was to understand what considerations went into the final draft of the text and to identify the team's attempts to align the text with existing concepts of genre that team members brought to the work and to improvise on those concepts.

To gather information about what the project participants thought about the work, I interviewed the key project participants introduced above to collect information about the participants' professional and academic backgrounds and their perspectives on the work the group was doing. The participants I interviewed had different disciplinary backgrounds and varying levels of experience on the project, which allowed me to consider several different perspectives of it. I also collected additional information about the participants' understanding and use of genre by reviewing conversations that occurred during the team's meetings as we worked on the text. I made audiotape recordings of twelve meetings over five months, from January to May 2001, as the team prepared its penultimate draft to establish an accurate record to which I could refer in analyzing the collected data.

My purposes for collecting these types of data were to connect the team's talk with changes in the developing text and to understand whether and how the team's discussions would illuminate the use of genre on the project. Because my research interest is in discovering how people work with genre, I looked to this data to understand how the team fused content, conventions, and the rhetorical situation (Miller). In analyzing the data derived from interviews, transcripts, and documents related to the team's work, I followed principles of discourse analysis, studying language use in context. According to Catherine Smith, the focus of discourse analysis as a method "is to understand how our subjects' interactions relate to their settings and situations" (205).

The diversity of the team members' disciplinary and professional backgrounds in some ways reflects the diversity of the communities that contributed to the larger context that informed the team's work. The team members were each familiar with various genres and generic conventions from previous experiences and disciplinary and professional affiliations. These experiences and affiliations informed the practices that each team member brought to the project as well as the understandings each team member had about the functions of genre. In the next section, I examine samples from several texts that the *Access for Everyone* team used or created to demonstrate the ways in which the team understood and managed genre and to illustrate the ways in which the team members enacted the functions of genre in creating text.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENRE ON THE *ACCESS FOR EVERYONE* PROJECT

When the team began its work in January 1998, the plan was to spend several months revising the university's existing *ADA Survey Manual*. The team began by reviewing the latest version of the ADAAG to locate recent changes that needed to be incorporated into the new text, evaluating the previous version of the university's text to determine what aspects of the format we might retain, and assessing other sources for additional information on accessibility that we might include in the new text. The specific materials the team reviewed as it began its revision included

- the January 13, 1998, *Federal Register* that included the ADAAG,
- a reference source created by the Access Board to accompany the ADAAG, titled *ADAAG Manual: A Guide to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, and
- assorted "tech sheets" and books published by the federal government and others on different aspects of accessibility and the ADAAG.

The ADAAG was our primary source of information. But, as Larry, the technical advisor on the team, describes the ADA and the ADAAG:

[P]art of the [problem with the] ADA, too, is that it was written as a civil liberties document, and it's not really intended to be something that anybody but lawyers can understand [...] it's not written for the people who need to use it. (Personal interview)

Larry's comment reflects the concerns that other design/build professionals have raised about the genre—that it does not effectively serve the purposes of people who need to understand and apply the ADAAG in the context of design and construction activities.

Organization and Generic Functions

At the start of the project, the 1994 version of the ADAAG was available from the *Federal Register*. (It was also available online with updates to 1998 and this version was easier to use because of hyperlinking.) The sample table of contents from the 1994 ADAAG illustrates metacommunicative strategies in the genre that may create difficulty for readers (see Figure 1). The table of contents lists the topics covered in the ADAAG including the purpose of the ADAAG (section 1); the provisions (section 2), which elaborate the coverage and authority of the ADAAG; and the terms and conventions used in the document (section 3). The content (sections 4–10) is divided into three main categories of information—scoping, basic technical requirements that affect elements in all types of buildings, and special types of buildings for which some of the requirements are different. *Scoping* is a term that refers to information about the number, type, and location of elements of buildings and facilities that are required to be accessible.

The numbering system used in the ADAAG table of contents and throughout the document to structure and itemize the information includes up to six levels (not all shown in the table of contents), making individual guidelines sometimes difficult to find. The scoping requirements for elements of buildings are also separated from the technical requirements for those elements. This arrangement requires readers to check at least two different sections of the document for information.

Content and Generic Functions

Another difficulty is that the organization of information requires readers to scour many sections and pages to locate applicable requirements. Pat describes the difficulty of reading the ADAAG:

Just reading through ADAAG, and [I think] what are these numbers? What does it mean, go here? What's preamble? What, what is this? That's what my stress has mostly come from, trying to ferret everything out. And I feel like I'm doing this backwards, I'm walking backwards and jumping around from here to there and getting all this information and I'm just trying to make sense of it [...]. I guess it's the codes that I need to just figure out, the hierarchy and how this works, because that is what totally is confusing me. (Personal interview)

In mentioning the hierarchy, Pat is referring to the alphanumeric system used to organize the content of the ADAAG and to identify parts and subparts of the document and individual guidelines. Ruth Sullivan discusses several problems with the scaffolding of legislative genres including cues for accessing the appropriate information. People often find it difficult to, in Pat's words, "locate the parts of the legislation that are relevant" within the various documents, and then read and "appreciate the import of what they have read in terms of their personal circumstances and interests." In terms of the ADAAG, users may be frustrated when they try to

APPENDIX A TO PART 36—STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

**ADA ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES
FOR BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES
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4.9 Stairs	30
4.10 Elevators	30

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FIGURE 1 Table of contents, ADAAG. Reproduced from the *Federal Register*, Washington, DC, 1994.

determine exactly what applies to them—for instance, what they need to do to address a particular design or construction problem.

The next example, Figure 2, is a content page from the ADAAG that includes information about accessible doors. As the figure illustrates, the cross-referencing used throughout the ADAAG requires readers to locate and consider the information in several guidelines before making a judgment about an accessible condition. Many requirements refer readers to additional information in other requirements. For example, the section headed “4.13.5 Clear Width” refers readers to Figures 24 (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e)—illustrations that contain important information not provided in the text—and to guidelines in 4.2.1 and 4.3.3, which are in other sections of the guidelines. To prevent confusion, the *Access for Everyone* team concluded that any information pertaining to a requirement should also be included in the text as well as in illustrations. The Access Board drew the same conclusion and in subsequent revisions—the first published almost two years after the *Access for Everyone* project began—all information contained in illustrations is also included in the text of the guidelines.

Figure 2 also illustrates the language of regulation used in the ADAAG. The guidelines convey content information about accessible conditions but the metacommunication foregrounds conditions rather than actions. Lexical items, for instance use of the word *shall*, as well as the grammatical constructions of the individual guidelines represent the built environment using a *legal model*. Vijay Bhatia points out that

legal writing is highly impersonal and decontextualized, in the sense that its illocutionary force holds independently of whomever is the “speaker” (originator) or the “hearer” (reader) [...] [that the] general function of this writing is directive, to impose obligations and to confer rights, [...] [and that it attempts] clarity, precision and unambiguity on one hand, and all-inclusiveness on the other. (102–03)

Although the ADAAG, as a set of guidelines, is less difficult to read than other types of legislative writing (the ADA for instance), the language characteristics that Bhatia mentions are present in the ADAAG, making some guidelines difficult to interpret.

Functions and Constructions

The regulatory genre embodied by the ADAAG is difficult for people to use in various settings related to the design, construction, and maintenance of built environments. Instrumentally, the ADAAG provides information on the minimum conditions for accessibility required by the government. However, in terms of metacommunication, the organization of the information, the scaffolding provided for finding information, and the language used to connect readers with their re-

4.11 Platform Lifts (Wheelchair Lifts)

A17.1-1990. The highest operable part of a two-way communication system shall be a maximum of 48 in (1220 mm) from the floor of the car. It shall be identified by a raised symbol and lettering complying with 4.30 and located adjacent to the device. If the system uses a handset then the length of the cord from the panel to the handset shall be at least 29 in (735 mm). *If the system is located in a closed compartment the compartment door hardware shall conform to 4.27, Controls and Operating Mechanisms. The emergency inter-communication system shall not require voice communication.*

4.11 Platform Lifts (Wheelchair Lifts).

4.11.1 Location. Platform lifts (wheelchair lifts) permitted by 4.1 shall comply with the requirements of 4.11.

4.11.2* Other Requirements. If platform lifts (wheelchair lifts) are used, they shall comply with 4.2.4, 4.5, 4.27, and ASME A17.1 Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators, Section XX, 1990.

4.11.3 Entrance. *If platform lifts are used then they shall facilitate unassisted entry, operation, and exit from the lift in compliance with 4.11.2.*

4.12 Windows.

4.12.1* General. (Reserved).

4.12.2* Window Hardware. (Reserved).

4.13 Doors.

4.13.1 General. Doors required to be accessible by 4.1 shall comply with the requirements of 4.13.

4.13.2 Revolving Doors and Turnstiles. Revolving doors or turnstiles shall not be the only means of passage at an accessible entrance or along an accessible route. *An accessible gate or door shall be provided adjacent to the turnstile or revolving door and shall be so designed as to facilitate the same use pattern.*

4.13.3 Gates. Gates, including ticket gates, shall meet all applicable specifications of 4.13.

4.13.4 Double-Leaf Doorways. If doorways have two *independently operated* door leaves, then at least one leaf shall meet the specifications in 4.13.5 and 4.13.6. That leaf shall be an active leaf.

4.13.5 Clear Width. Doorways shall have a minimum clear opening of 32 in (815 mm) with the door open 90 degrees, measured between the face of the door and the *opposite* stop (see Fig. 24(a), (b), (c), and (d)). Openings more than 24 in (610 mm) in depth shall comply with 4.2.1 and 4.3.3 (see Fig. 24(e)).

EXCEPTION: Doors not requiring full user passage, such as shallow closets, may have the clear opening reduced to 20 in (510 mm) minimum.

4.13.6 Maneuvering Clearances at Doors. Minimum maneuvering clearances at doors that are not automatic or power-assisted shall be as shown in Fig. 25. The floor or ground area within the required clearances shall be level and clear.

EXCEPTION: Entry doors to acute care hospital bedrooms for in-patients shall be exempted from the requirement for space at the latch side of the door (see dimension "x" in Fig. 25) if the door is at least 44 in (1120 mm) wide.

4.13.7 Two Doors in Series. The minimum space between two hinged or pivoted doors in series shall be 48 in (1220 mm) plus the width of any door swinging into the space. Doors in series shall swing either in the same direction or away from the space between the doors (see Fig. 26).

4.13.8* Thresholds at Doorways. Thresholds at doorways shall not exceed 3/4 in (19 mm) in height for exterior sliding doors or 1/2 in (13 mm) for other types of doors. Raised thresholds and floor level changes at accessible doorways shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1:2 (see 4.5.2).

4.13.9* Door Hardware. Handles, pulls, latches, locks, and other operating devices on accessible doors shall have a shape that is easy

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FIGURE 2 Sample contents page showing requirements for doors. Reproduced from the Federal Register, Washington, DC, 1994.

sponsibilities in the context of building accessibility may hamper their efforts to find and understand the guidelines they need. Socially and politically, the power of the document—and of the genre—rests with the legal authority of the government. The government can force people to improve accessibility and, in that respect, the genre serves to mediate a number of relationships and competing interests both inside and outside the legal system. However, the document and the genre do little to explain the discrimination, exclusion, and isolation behind the regulations.

In the next section, I turn to an evaluation of the precursor to the *Access for Everyone* text, Midwestern University's *ADA Survey Manual* that it was the team's initial task to revise.

THE ADA SURVEY MANUAL AND THE GENRE OF MANUAL

The purpose of Midwestern University's *ADA Survey Manual* was to make finding and reading ADAAG information easier during inspections of the university. The information provided in the manual is, for the most part, taken directly from the text of the ADAAG.

Organization and Generic Functions

Because the purpose of the text was primarily to restructure ADAAG information, the focus of the development of this text was on metacommunication. The table of contents presented in Figure 3 illustrates several of the metacommunicative strate-

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGES	CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGES
AA	Assembly Areas	1 - 6	MC	Medical Care Facilities	87 - 91
AE	Accessible Route-Exterior	7 - 12	PL	Platform Lifts	92 - 95
AI	Accessible Route-Interior	13 - 25	PT	Public Telephones	96 - 102
AL	Alarms	26 - 28	RC	Restaurants and Cafeterias	103 - 108
AM	Automatic Teller Machines	29 - 31	RP	Ramps	109 - 114
AP	Accessible Parking	32 - 37	SE	Tub/Shower Seats	115 - 116
BU	Business and Mercantile	38 - 41	SG	Storage	117 - 119
BT	Bathtubs	42 - 45	SK	Sinks	120 - 122
CR	Curb Ramps	46 - 49	SN	Signage	123 - 127
DF	Drinking Fountains	50 - 52	SS	Shower Stalls	128 - 133
DR	Doors	53 - 61	ST	Stairs	134 - 138
DS	Dressing and Fitting Rooms	62 - 64	TA	Tables and Seating	139 - 140
EL	Elevators	65 - 75	TB	Toilet Rooms and Bathrooms	141 - 145
EN	Entrances	76 - 79	TL	Transient Lodging	146 - 155
GB	Grab Bars	80 - 81	TS	Toilet Stalls	156 - 159
LB	Libraries	82 - 83	UR	Urinals	160 - 161
LM	Lavatories and Mirrors	84 - 86	WC	Water Closets	162 - 164

FIGURE 3 Table of contents. Reproduced with permission from *ADA Survey Manual*, Midwestern University (pseudonym).

gies that the authors of the survey manual used to simplify the ADAAG. For example, the list of topics in the table of contents reflects the content of the ADAAG, but the information has been relabeled and reorganized alphabetically. The letter codes loosely correspond to the topics. The letter codes for each section, together with alphanumeric labels for subsections, are used throughout the manual to identify topics and specific requirements. A brief description of the labeling at the beginning of the text explains how the letters and numbers may be used as a coding system for recording building and site deficiencies during inspections.

Content and Generic Functions

The sample content page shown in Figure 4 demonstrates instrumental as well as metacommunicative functions of genre. The technical requirements included here, at the beginning of the doors section, are scoping requirements. In the ADAAG, scoping requirements are separated from the technical requirements, so people must move back and forth in the text between the scoping and technical information. Note that the language of the requirements here is the same as that of the ADAAG.

Alphabetical codes are provided throughout the content pages to indicate chapters and individual requirements. When requirements have subcomponents, numbers also are provided. The illustrations in this text, as in the ADAAG, include information necessary for meeting the ADAAG requirements.

Functions and Constructions

In sum the features of the university’s *ADA Survey Manual* reorganized and reformatted the information in the ADAAG so that people inspecting buildings, sites,

DR DOORS			
CODE	ITEM	TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS	GRAPHICS
A	Scope ADAAG 4.1.3 (7)(a)	At each accessible entrance to a building or facility, at least one door shall comply with this section.	
B	Scope ADAAG 4.1.3 (7)(b)	Within a building or facility, at least one door shall comply with this section.	
C	Scope ADAAG 4.1.3 (7)(c)	Each door that is an element of an accessible route shall comply with this section.	
D	Scope ADAAG 4.1.3 (7)(d) 4.1.6 (1)(g)	Each door serving as part of an accessible means of egress or connecting to an area of rescue assistance, shall comply with this section.	

FIGURE 4 Sample content page, requirements for doors. Reproduced with permission from *ADA Survey Manual*, Midwestern University.

and plans could easily locate information as they needed it. The scoping requirements and the technical requirements were brought together so that all information pertaining to a specific type of element or area was in the same location in the text. The guidelines, which in the ADAAG are compound constructions that may contain several requirements for one element of a building, are subdivided into discrete items in the *ADA Survey Manual*. The purpose for further chunking each guideline was that during inspections and plan reviews, inspectors could use the alphanumeric identification of an item as a code, jotting it down on a plan or list for future reference. For example, if a door that was required to be accessible met every guideline except one subpart of one guideline, the inspector could easily identify the one aspect of the door that required further attention.

The *ADA Survey Manual* required revision because by 1998 some sections were out of date or incomplete, some information also needed further explanation, most of the sections were not illustrated, and the information was straight out of the government regulations. In addition, because the *ADA Survey Manual* did not provide any information on accessibility other than that contained in the ADAAG, the text implies that meeting the guidelines is an adequate method for ensuring accessibility. The *Access for Everyone* team, on the other hand, was concerned with developing a text that covered the ADAAG, that presented necessary information in a form usable for multiple audiences, and that also adopted a more proactive stance in promoting a concept of accessibility that is broader than simply meeting the ADAAG requirements. In the next section, I focus on the decisions that the team made in planning the new text.

PLANNING THE REVISION

The primary purpose of the text was to guide people through the process of assessing buildings, facilities, and plans so that deficiencies in existing buildings could be corrected and so that new construction would be designed to be accessible. Moreover, because the ADAAG in many instances requires minimal standards for accessibility, we wanted our text to assist people in making more informed decisions about building accessibility. Thus, while the team's text would provide extensive coverage of the ADAAG, it would also include accessibility recommendations that would go beyond the basic government requirements.

Functions of Genre and Revision Strategies

To address these issues, the team decided on the following strategies for drafting the new text. In Table 1, I have grouped the strategies according to the three functions of genre that I described earlier, though I realize that the strategies are certainly interrelated and several might fit into more than one category.

TABLE 1
Revision Strategies for the New Text by Generic Function

<i>Function</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
Instrumental	<p>Find and provide current, accurate information on accessibility requirements.</p> <p>Find and provide information on accessibility solutions that reflect universal design principles.</p> <p>Explain ADAAG requirements as necessary.</p> <p>Find or create and include rationales, examples, and graphics to illustrate requirements.</p>
Metacommunicative	<p>Provide multiple ways for readers to find and retrieve information (including page layout, tabs, table of contents, and index).</p> <p>Recast the language from descriptive to imperative to ease the readers' task in determining the specific actions they need to take (clarifying content through word choices, syntax).</p> <p>Reorganize the information and group related information (reducing information load through scaffolding).</p>
Social/Political	<p>Promote the concepts of accessibility and universal design.</p> <p>Establish the need for action.</p> <p>Identify with or advocate for particular communities.</p> <p>Account for the needs of multiple audiences.</p>

The list of strategies says little about the actual *genre* of the text. Many of the features that became part of the new text developed from the project team's previous experiences with genres as well as from the genres we were becoming familiar with through the project.

CHANGING APPROACHES TO TEXT AND GENRE

In this section, I focus on three milestone iterations of the team's text. Each of these iterations—or transformations as I came to perceive them—reflects changes in the team's approach to the text and to its genre.

Transformation 1: *The Field Guide* and the Practical Orientation

Though we were somewhat bound to the content of the ADAAG, we decided to differentiate our text from the regulatory genre by adapting the instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions of other genres. As we grappled with the form and content of the text, we considered various genres with which readers would already be familiar and that provided information and assistance to readers effectively. For example, the *ADA Survey Manual*—the existing

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Preface	1	AL Alarms	211
Acknowledgements	2	AR Areas of Refuge	221
Accessible Routes and Spaces	21	EG Egress	229
RR Reach Ranges	25	SN Signs	235
PA Parking	35	Restrooms and Bathrooms	255
CR Curb Ramps	51	Restrooms and Bathrooms	256
RT Routes	61	TB Toilet Rooms and Bathrooms	257
RP Ramps	97	TS Toilet Stalls and Fixtures	273
EN Entrances	111	UR Urinals	293
DR Doors	117	FX Fixtures	297
EL Elevators	155	SS Shower Stalls	311
PL Platform Lifts	183	SE Bathtub/Shower Stall Seats	323
ST Stairs	193	BT Bathtubs	329
		GB Grab Bars	339

FIGURE 5 Table of contents. Reproduced from a draft of *A Field Guide to the ADAAG*.

text we were to revise—was labeled *manual*, as were several of the other sources texts we had at hand. These texts already contained some generic characteristics that the team associated with manuals and seemed to suggest, or invoke, particular choices. We associated manuals, for instance, with actions; thus we decided to replace legal language with imperative language. However, the generic label *manual*—which we had been using to refer to the text—was replaced with the label *guide*, which seemed to invoke guidance, the idea of being assisted through the information and through the physical environment. The team retained the reference to ADAAG in the title because our intended audiences would want to ensure that they were, in fact, meeting legal requirements.

Functions of genre and revision strategies. The team reorganized information about building accessibility by grouping related topics into five major divisions. As the table of contents in Figure 5 illustrates, we rearranged topics within main divisions in the order one might encounter the corresponding elements of a building during an inspection.

The decisions about the organization of the content reflect both instrumental and metacommunicative functions enacted in the new text. The organization of the text, temporarily titled *A Field Guide to the ADAAG*, was intended not only to assist readers in finding necessary information but also to suggest aspects of building accessibility that readers should consider during an inspection of a facility or a construction plan. We described the organization to readers in a section of the *Field Guide* that explained how to use the book:

The information [in the *Field Guide*] is presented from the ‘outside in.’ It will be easiest to follow if you begin your site inspection or plan review with the grounds, parking lots, and exterior routes; proceed to entrance areas and doors; then consider interior routes including corridors, elevators, stairs, doors, and adjoining areas. (n. pag.)

In an interview with the author, Larry explained this orientation to the content and metacommunicative functions:

One thing we discussed and decided early on was that [the text] should be something that could be read by people who are used to designing the environment, and that showed we understood the way that they think [...]. We’re combining areas into the way you think about designing a facility, approaching it from the site, or approaching the site, entering the building, and then moving through the building and that’s kind of how a building gets designed by designers. (Personal interview)

The instrumental and metacommunicative aspects of the text reflected in the revised organization were continued throughout the text with changes to the page formatting and to the language of the text.

The team created a three-column page format (see Figure 6) very similar to the university’s previous text: a column on the left that identifies topic areas covered in the page, a column on the right for illustrations, and a column in the center for the text about topics identified in the left column.

The headings at the top of each page identify areas of the page that contain information about the topics addressed on each page, the requirements and recom-

DR Doors		3
Topic	Requirements & Recommendations	Illustrations & Tables
Accessible Doors Number and Location	Provide accessible doors that comply with the requirements of this section as follows: A1 at least one door at each accessible entrance to a building or facility. 4.1.3 (7) (a)*** A2 at least one door within a building or facility. 4.1.3 (7) (b)*** A3 each door that is an element of an accessible route. 4.1.3 (7) (c)*** A4 each door serving as part of an accessible means of egress or connecting to an area of rescue assistance 4.1.3 (7) (d); 4.1.6 (1) (g)***	
Revolving Doors and Turnstiles	B1 Provide alternatives to revolving doors and turnstiles at accessible entrances and along accessible routes.***	

FIGURE 6 Sample content page, requirements for doors. Reproduced from a draft of *A Field Guide to the ADAAG*.

mentations related to the topics, and the illustrations and tables associated with the page content. We retained the two-letter codes used in the university's previous text to identify accessibility topics because the university architects and facilities managers, who were two of our primary audiences as well as our funding source, had already been using the abbreviations system for noting deficiencies on building plans and inspection sheets. Content about each topic—the requirements and recommendations—is identified with an alphanumeric code and includes references to specific sections of the ADAAG. In this version, more space was also provided for illustrations and tables than was provided in the previous text. However, the sample page shown here contains scoping requirements primarily that do not require illustration, which means that a significant amount of the page space is simply left blank.

The number and scale of extra-textual features (such as numbering, dividing lines, fonts, and other visual organizers) were reduced so that the font size of the text could be increased. Ironically, the small font size of the previous text posed an accessibility problem for some readers; thus our decision to increase the font size was both practical and rhetorical. We rewrote the text in imperative language to facilitate reading and interpretation. In addition, we added brief introductory statements to explain the requirements and recommendations for each topic. These statements specify the scoping or application of requirements.

During development of the first iteration of the text, many instrumental aspects of the project took precedence. Ensuring that the information and illustrations we provided were accurate took much more time than we had planned. We began the project thinking that rewriting the text would be a relatively straightforward matter. However, as we engaged the regulatory genre of the ADAAG and began translating the regulatory language, we found that some of the requirements were not only hard to interpret but also contradictory. We also found that we had to create new illustrations to achieve a scale that accurately represented reality.

To address the social/political aspect of our project, we expanded the introduction to include accessibility issues, added introductory material to each main division of the text, and adjusted the tone and style of the language. However, if readers skipped our introductory material, our text did little else to provide rationales for following minimum accessibility requirements let alone exceeding them.

In the next section, I discuss the ways in which the team worked toward addressing these gaps in a second transformation of the text.

Transformation 2: *The Quick Guide* and the Metacommunicative Orientation

During the second transformation, the team substantially revised the *Field Guide*. In considering the audiences for the text—both at the university and beyond—we wanted to convey to readers that the text would help them quickly identify accessibility issues and locate pertinent information. Our first (and easiest) act was to reti-

tle the document yet again from *Field Guide* to *Quick Guide Accessibility with References to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*. In this draft, the team focused on metacommunicative functions of the text. Our intended purposes for the text remained the same, but the ways that we sought to convey those purposes underwent a process of refinement.

Functions of genre and revision strategies. The content of the *Quick Guide* was basically the same as the content of the *Field Guide*; however, we added new elements including a foreword, a preface, acknowledgements, resources, and a section on reach ranges, which is an important accessibility consideration that applies to many other accessibility requirements. The most significant changes to the text address metacommunicative functions. The page formatting was substantially revised to improve the placement of text and graphics. Not all content required illustrations, and some content, such as the section on doors, required a considerable number of illustrations. The change from a three-column to a two-column format allowed us to more effectively incorporate illustrations with the text and manage page space. The alphanumeric codes for each topic were retained, but bold headings were added to differentiate each topic. Specific ADAAG references are included for each requirement related to an accessibility topic, and ADAAG required actions are differentiated from our recommended actions. Indentation was also added to differentiate items related to topics. A number of illustrations were added throughout the text, captioned, and referenced in the text. Additional information that some readers might require was added to the text. For instance, instructions for measuring spaces, slopes, and clear width at doorways are included and described in plain language.

Though most of the changes associated with this revision address metacommunicative functions, the team also attended to our social/political perspective. As the example text in Figure 7 illustrates, in addition to the introductions for each of the five major divisions of the text, we added brief introductions to each section within each division that provide important accessibility information. The introductions focused not only on building accessibility but also on the needs of people, as illustrated by the emphasized text in the following excerpt from the section about doors:

Proper design and installation of doors is essential *for independent access* to buildings and spaces within buildings. For doors to be usable, *people need to be able* to position themselves to open the door and to pass through the doorway. (emphasis added; n. pag.)

Taken together, the aforementioned changes described focus on assisting readers in managing information about accessibility issues. The changes to the formatting, which are substantial in the *Quick Guide*, highlight the team's concern in this

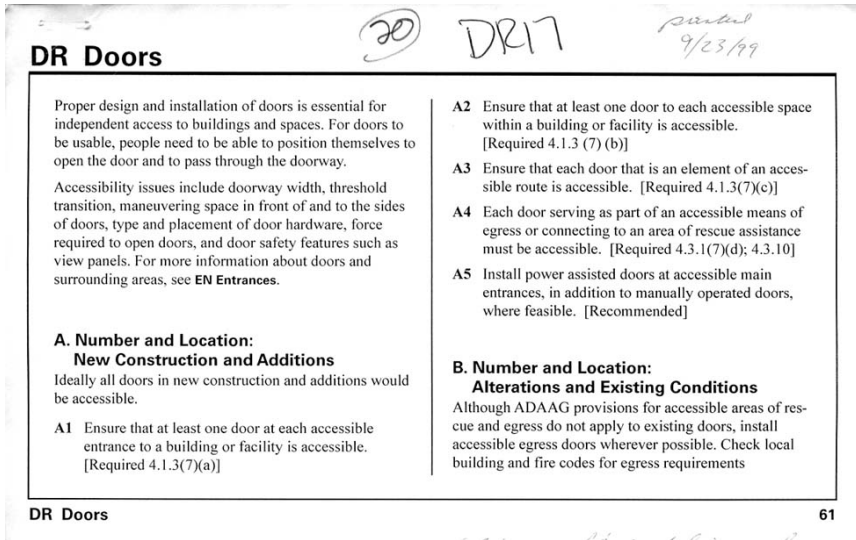


FIGURE 7 Transformation 2, sample content page, requirements for doors. Reproduced from the *Quick Guide to the ADAAG*.

draft for the metacommunicative functions of the text. The metacommunicative functions enhance the instrumental functions by providing navigation in the text and by establishing the writers' concern for the readers' participation not only in the text but also the context.

As team members added more coverage of accessibility issues and numerous illustrations to the text, and as we developed a better understanding of accessibility issues, we came to believe that part of assisting people to understand accessibility—as opposed to finding and minimally following the ADAAG requirements—meant incorporating explanations of accessible solutions and reasons for implementing them throughout the text. This decision led to a text that was more than 400 pages in length. For the text to remain quick and easy to use, we improved the design features to facilitate information retrieval (Rubens and Rubens; Rude, “Format”; Schriver).

However, the *Quick Guide* never saw the light of day because as we neared completion of our draft, the Access Board released a new version of the ADAAG for public comment. The format of the new ADAAG was significantly altered, the content was substantially changed, and the organization and numbering system were completely revised. The changes to the ADAAG reflected the Access Board's continuing interactions with both people in the design/build community and those with disabilities and advocacy groups. Many of the changes that the Access Board proposed were meant to align their accessibility requirements with the American

National Standards Institute accessibility standards, to which many design/build professionals refer.

The revisions to the ADAAG meant that our text was already obsolete, in part because we had been very conscientious about including references to specific ADAAG requirements with each accessibility topic and subtopic. Consequently, we decided to review the changes in the proposed ADAAG and determine how best to proceed with the project. One option was to scrap all the references to the ADAAG. Ultimately, however, we decided to provide information in our text on the changes to the new ADAAG.

Transformation 3: *Access for Everyone* and the Rhetorical Orientation

In the final transformation of the text, retitled this time as *Access for Everyone: A Guide to Accessibility with References to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)*, the team revised the text in response to the release of the proposed new ADAAG. The changes to the numbering system, organization, and content of the ADAAG created considerable work for the team. We re-evaluated every accessibility topic and subtopic in our text against both the new and old versions of the ADAAG to identify differences in the information and to decide what changes we would make to our text. We also decided to retain references to the old ADAAG in our text and to add references to the proposed new ADAAG.

As the work progressed and as we negotiated versions of the information among the various texts, we also began to question some aspects of our text that we had previously taken for granted. For example, in the doors section, the ADAAG refers to various sides of doors, using terms such as *push-side*, *pull-side*, and *latch-side*, which can become quite confusing. Therefore, in the new iteration of our text, in addition to incorporating changes to the ADAAG and new references, we provided more explanations about terms and about the conditions that they are used to describe. Throughout this review process, the team developed a more refined sense of the accessibility issues and the complexities of understanding the ADAAG requirements.

The overall structure and organization of this revision did not change from the previous iteration of the text. But, because the content of many sections of the text had become longer and more complex, we looked for ways to assist readers in understanding the structure of the document and navigating the text. As before, the text included a table of contents for the book, and for each of the five main divisions. However, in this iteration, we also added a table of contents to each division, as illustrated in Figure 8. We also added boldface, black tabs to the leading edges of the pages, which included the names of the sections and the two-letter codes

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DR Doors		
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F	Doors in a Series	122
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P	Door Opening Force	148
Q	Door Closers	148
R	Door Surfaces and Kickplates	149
S	Vision Lites and Side Lites	151
T	Automatic and Power-Assisted Doors and Gates	152

FIGURE 8 Sample section table of contents, requirements for doors. Reproduced from *Access for Everyone*.

identifying the accessibility topics. These codes—which people could use to quickly locate information—had been retained throughout all versions of the text.

The page formatting, structure, and organization were also substantially retained from the previous iteration. But throughout the text we added statements that addressed the relationship of people to the built environment. In addition, we addressed the relationship of the reader to the text, demonstrating concern for metacommunicative as well as rhetorical functions. The sample pages from the chapter about doors presented in Figures 9 and 10 exemplify the decisions we made about the content throughout the book. The changes are listed here:

- The introductions to the sections are expanded to address important accessibility issues, particularly in sections that contained complex requirements, such as those for doors.
- Terms used to describe elements of the built environments are more fully explained and illustrated as necessary.
- Discussions of the benefits of accessibility for a variety of users are included and rationales for accessible solutions are expanded. For example, in the previous iteration of the doors section, the discussion of clear opening width at doors began with the discussion of measuring the door. In the new version, we introduce the topic with a discussion of the importance of wider doorways, tying the rationale for providing wider doors to both users' needs and to other code requirements.

Proper design and installation of doors is essential for independent access to buildings and within buildings. A *doorway* includes the doorframe, hardware, doorstop, and closer. A *door* is the movable leaf that closes an opening in a wall. In some cases, a doorway will not include a door leaf. A doorway with no door leaf is referred to here as a *passageway*. For simplicity, in this chapter, *door* may refer to either a door leaf or a doorway.

The distinction between door and doorway is important because the clear opening width required in a doorway is not necessarily the same as the door size. This section includes information on accurately measuring the clear opening width.

For a door to be usable, people need to be able to position themselves to open the door and to pass through the doorway. Accessibility issues include clear width; threshold profile; maneuvering space in front of and to the sides of doors; type and placement of door hardware;

force required to open doors; and door safety features such as the height and position of view panels.

This chapter uses the following terms (adapted from ADAAG) to describe the orientation of a person to a door, including the direction from which a person approaches the door (*handle side* or *hinge side*), and a person's position relative to the direction of the door swing on approach to the door (*pull face* or *push face*).

The various combinations of the hinge or handle side approach, the direction of the door swing, and the presence of latches and closers influence the minimum required maneuvering space at a doorway.

Handle side. The handle side refers to the side of the door where the moving edge of the door leaf meets the doorway. This is the side where the handle (or knob) is located. Latches may also be installed on the handle side. However, not all doors have handles, knobs, or latches.

FIGURE 9 Sample content page, requirements for doors. Reproduced from *Access for Everyone*.

A closer regulates the speed of the closing door. Some closers are adjustable and must be set to meet fire, life-safety, and accessibility requirements.

Figure DR.1 shows an example of a door and doorway that is labeled according to the terms used in this chapter.

A Number and Location: New Construction and Additions

Doors and doorways that are part of an accessible route must meet accessibility guidelines.

Exception: Manual and automatic doors and gates that are operated only by security personnel do not have to meet accessibility requirements if security personnel have sole control of these doors at all times. ADAAG: 1999 404

The diagram shows a side view of a door and its frame. The door is shown in an open position, swinging towards the right. Labels include: 'closer' at the top of the door frame; 'door stop' at the top of the frame on the right; 'hinge side' on the left side of the door and frame; 'handle side' on the right side of the door and frame; 'push face' and 'pull face' indicating the direction of door swing; 'hinge' pointing to the door's pivot point; and 'door leaf' pointing to the door itself.

DR.1 A door and doorway labeled according to the terms used in this chapter

FIGURE 10 Sample content page, requirements for doors, continued. Reproduced from *Access for Everyone*.

- Requirements are supplemented by preferred solutions that include rationales for the suggestions.
- Detailed, illustrated suggestions for implementing accessible solutions are provided where possible.

Our generic improvisations led us not only to a very different text than the one with which we began but also to a different perspective about using generic features to address accessibility issues, represent people who benefit from accessible solutions, and recognize our readers. In addressing instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions, we had been working to create a text that went beyond assisting people to comply with the government's accessibility guidelines. We also hoped to provide a text that would assist people in understanding the issues. Of course, we had to understand them first.

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of the project, each of the team members needed to learn new information. The process of learning about building accessibility meant that we focused on the instrumental functions of the texts we were using and creating. As we became more conversant with the information and understood more clearly how the information fit together, we could more knowledgeably turn our attention to metacommunicative and social/political functions. In describing the transformations that the team enacted—transforming sources into a first draft and then transforming subsequent drafts into a final product—I argue that the process illustrates ways in which the team strategically engaged the instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions of various genres.

The team enacted instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions of genre to develop its text, and in doing so it adopted, adapted, and rejected features of various genres in strategically choosing the features that shaped its text.

- We enacted instrumental functions of genre by choosing and providing information to assist readers in activities related to ensuring that built environments are accessible to all people.
- We enacted metacommunicative functions by scaffolding information and by using forms and conventions to assist readers in understanding the purposes of the text and in finding and interpreting information in the text.
- We enacted social/political functions by representing the social context to which the team responded through its text.

The team's decisions about the forms and conventions appropriate for enacting the functions of genre were mediated by the team members' individual and collective experiences, our expectations about various genres, and our interpretations of the contexts and the needs of various communities and audiences for our text.

Although some of the strategies that the team members used in dealing with genre were shared, regardless of the disciplinary background of the participants, we did encounter situations over the course of the project in which the differences between people's disciplinary experiences and understandings of genre created difficulties and, sometimes, great insight. As we discovered, in working with people from other communities, practices related to creating and using genres must be adjusted to accommodate various perspectives.

Additionally, the team's consideration of the social/political functions of genres brought together aspects of various genres of regulation, advocacy, and architecture to articulate within the text some of the issues related to the position of people with disabilities. This sense of agency—the ability for genre to shape reality—may be most clearly demonstrated by powerful genres, such as laws and regulations that dictate the social, economic, and political structures and peoples' relationships to them. On the other hand, writers always create versions of reality through the instrumental, metacommunicative, and social/political functions. The team, in making its choices about these functions, attempted to construct with our readers a particular version of accessibility.

Although research has tended to focus on the specialized genres and genre knowledge that fields and disciplines create and use, we may be missing important opportunities to study strategic ways in which people use and manage genres in unfamiliar, nonroutine situations. In public policy contexts, such as accessibility, many communities must come together to share expertise, knowledge, and texts. We need to ask how genres function at the boundaries of communities and contexts. What, for example, becomes of genre when people from different disciplines, professions, or organizations discourse together in situations that are not typical for a particular group of professionals? Who controls the genre? Who controls the power to shape knowledge? What is at stake and for whom? These are some of the complex questions that have important implications for how people communicate on issues that require input and consensus from various groups with different sets of practices and areas of expertise.

As professional and technical communication researchers, we should investigate more of these types of contexts—unwieldy as they may be—for what they tell us about the ways in which people communicate in and with other communities. Understanding the dynamics of genre, for example, in such situations may allow us to assist directly in facilitating the communication practices of ad hoc communities that write texts that affect many of us.

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