



## **ADEQUATE ENVIRONMENT FOR VISUAL IMPAIRED PEOPLE**

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Current practice is for the interiors of buildings to be designed and realised for people who have normal vision, i.e. for a "standard observer". Many of the population however, have reduced vision and it is therefore timely to investigate present practice from the point of view of these visually impaired people.

The essential question is 'How much does impaired vision differ from that of the normal observer?' Additional requirement is to understand the requirements of visually impaired people that are consequences of these differences.

Although there are many kinds of reduced vision and measure of reduction could be very different, some typical characteristics can be found that could be useful in formulating the concept of an "impaired observer".

Analyses of impaired vision shows, that it implies not only a reduced visual ability, a larger sensitivity to any disturbing effect, but also a different strategy for gathering visual information. Moreover, while the movement of people in a building for people with normal vision is generally not a problem, this movement can be a considerable and an essential problem for the visually impaired.

If we want to provide an 'equal opportunity' environment for visually impaired people, the above differences make it necessary to rethink current practice used in the design of the visual environment. It is clear that it is not possible to provide visibility and comfort for all people at the same level. It seems to be a realizable ambition however, to extend the population able to obtain enough visual information to be able to move around safely.

A key requirement for the visually impaired is to be able to delineate areas that are meant for safe passage, i.e. gangways and spaces between objects, be it desks in the office environment, or showcases in a museum.

Thus, a basic question is 'What kind of gangways meet the requirements of visually impaired people? For the answer we have to turn back to the basis of forming the visual environment, we have to evaluate the role of the "original" room (the room without lighting) and the effect of the addition of lighting.

From this valuation, useful conclusions can be established concerning the qualities of the surfaces in the environment, the artificial lighting, and the supplementary artificial lighting.