

## **Museum access for people with special needs**

Rathnayake, Suvimali (Post graduate student)  
Hettige, Uda (Research Supervisor)  
Department of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya  
suvimalirathnayake123@gmail.com, udahettige@yahoo.com

Museums play a major role to showcase a country's identity and dignity to the world. It holds a distinctive place in tourism industry and become a major attraction. Museums are attracting people in numbers that were unheard of even a few years ago. According to the definition of International Council of Museums, museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. As specified by above definition museum is for all human beings. So when designing museums, authorities should pay attention to not only on normal people but also on differently-able people. Disabilities affect people in different ways. Many people associate the 'disabled' with someone who is in a wheelchair, or who is blind or deaf. The main objective of this research was to identify the ways of designing and facilitating museums for people with special requirements by Sri Lankan museums. Galle maritime archaeology museum was selected as the study area of the research. As a world heritage site, Galle Fort records highest number of visitor arrival. Also there are three main Govt. museums. According to visitor statistics maritime museum holds the first place among those. The research was based on field survey methodology where 50 domestic and foreign visitors were interviewed using structured questionnaires. The sample was randomly selected at the site and represented both the younger generation and senior citizens. Unstructured interviews and field surveys also used as primary sources of collecting data. Analysed final result shows that museum pays less attention on differently able visitors in basic fields such as accessibility, education and facilities and services. This study provides what are the ways that can use for facilitate differently able visitors in a museums. Not only maritime archaeology museum, but also all the museums in Sri Lanka must pay attention to above issue and providing facilities for people with special needs.

**Keywords:** museums, people with special requirements, visitors, facilities, services