Topic: Universal Design & People with Dual Sensory Impairments.

Thesis: The application of Universal Design is to create architectural settings that can support the specific physical, mental and emotional needs of persons with dual-sensory impairments.

Abstract:

The Role of Universal Design in Residential Facilities for People with Dual-Sensory Impairments

After the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, many people with disabilities found their lives could be much more enjoyable and independent (ADA, 1993 p. 1). Though this was definitely a step in the right direction, there were still many issues to be addressed. People with disabilities still feel embarrassed, judged and segregated when they cannot perform everyday tasks without some type of assistance. This is where Universal Design plays a significant role. This paper will investigate how a building can be both functionally and aesthetically pleasing for all people while specifically uncovering the problems and providing support for people with dual-sensory impairments. Architect Ronald Mace first used the term, and after doing so, the phrase became widely known in many product advertisements, as well as in literature for the Americans with Disabilities Act (Null, 1996 p. 25). However, what many people neglect to realize is that Universal Design is beneficial for everyone. No one is to be discriminated (Christophersen, 2002 p.165). If executed properly, universally designed buildings will provide an environment where people from all walks of life can have the chance to live life as independently, confidently and happily as possible. With this in mind, particularly in residential facilities, aesthetics and how it influences the quality of space in an environment is very important. There is no longer a need for large, institutional dormitories where people feel like a number in a hallway. People deserve smaller, habitable residences that blend-in with the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood where they can feel comfortable and ‘at home.’ The social distance between people with disabilities and able-bodied people must be minimized (Christophersen, 2002 p.173). Therefore, when designing for people with dual-sensory impairments, it is crucial to create space that specifically supports their needs without neglecting or segregating the needs of all people.
Annotated Bibliography


