

Six New Signing Glossary Apps Designed to Enhance Museum Access of Visitors Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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Signing Glossary Apps designed by TERC provide signed terms for on-the-fly use during museum visits

CAMBRIDGE, MA, USA, January 24, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- If you are a family with at least one member who is deaf and hard of hearing, these new signing glossary apps might be for you. Each glossary provides access to thousands of signed terms and definitions specifically for aquariums, botanical gardens, natural history museums, nature centers, science museums, and zoos. Developed by TERC with funding from the National Science Foundation (Award #1602284), the apps are free and can be used with iPhone and Android mobile devices.

There are numerous ways people can interact with the glossary apps to enrich their museum visits. People can select terms from lists or type them into a search box, see an Avatar character sign the term and its definition, listen to a human voice speaking the English text, open and close an illustration with a single click, and play and replay the term over and over.

"It was exciting to see visitors with varied hearing levels, signing and reading ability, and interests having fun using the glossaries in different ways," said Tara Robillard, TERC's lead researcher. "Some used the glossaries to learn new signs. Others used them to find out about what they were observing or doing and to talk about what they had noticed. This heightened interest and kept children focused."

Deaf and hard of hearing children typically have literacy levels that lag behind those of their hearing peers, making access to captions, labels, instructions, and information difficult. This, in combination with a lack of interpreters to sign material for them and parents who often do not have a robust signed technical vocabulary make visits to museums a low priority. The signing glossaries help bridge these gaps by enabling on-the-fly access to the signed vocabulary families are likely to encounter during their visits.

The words of a parent who has used the glossaries during visits is a testament to the value they add to the experience: "We are most impressed at the versatility of the glossaries. Our daughter loves visiting all of these places, but we often avoided them because we were unsure what value they'd have without the rich explanations we were able to give to our boys, who are both hearing. The glossaries enriched not only her experience but ours as well by helping us to feel more connected to her during visits. Sometimes as a hearing parent of a child who is deaf, you feel ill-equipped to provide your child the best educational support. This is particularly true when it comes to science and math. Our experiences have all been positive, regardless of the type of museum we are visiting."

Apps for the [Signing Zoo Glossary](#) (SZG), [Signing Nature Center Glossary](#) (SNCG), [Signing Science Museum Glossary](#) (SSMG), [Signing Natural History Museum Glossary](#) (SNHMG), [Signing Aquarium Glossary](#) (SAG), and [Signing Botanical Garden Glossary](#) (SBGG) are available free through Apple's App Store and from the Google Play Store.

About TERC and Its Mission

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