



IFLA Guidelines for Making Libraries Accessible for People with Disabilities

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With contributions and support from the Working Group on Accessibility of the IFLA Equitable and Accessible Library Services Section

September 2024

Endorsed by the IFLA Professional Council

English



IFLA Equitable and Accessible Library Services Section, 2024

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Suggested citation: Winkelstein, J. A., Bolt, N., Carlsson Asplund, H., Nomura, M., Rakočević Uvodić, M. (2024) IFLA Guidelines for Making Libraries Accessible for People with Disabilities, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Available at: <https://repository.ifla.org/handle/20.500.14598/3719>

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Chapter 1: Preface and Purpose

These guidelines are a revision of the “Access to Libraries for Persons with Disabilities Checklist,” published in 2005. The original guidelines continue to be useful in libraries, but the climate concerning people with disabilities worldwide has changed significantly since the original publication. There has been notable progress in the field of library services to persons with disabilities, particularly in the areas of assistive technology, electronic formats, and online communication tools, such as:

- The language related to the lives of persons with disabilities has evolved in this period; for example, people-first language versus identity-first language.
- User groups with cognitive disabilities were not included in the previous guidelines.
- There have been numerous innovations in supportive practices since 2005, and the new guidelines must reflect these changes.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of these updated guidelines is to:

- Provide basic ideas and strategies on how to make libraries accessible. For example, it includes universal design, assistive technology, and physical and information accessibility so everyone can use a library’s resources.
- Provide a rights-based approach for library services to all persons with disabilities, based on human rights-related laws, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While the authors suggest a “rights-based approach,” this is not always possible in every library situation. See the Caveat below.
- Specifically focus on leadership and management in libraries since the direction of library policies is likely under their guidance and control.
- Educate library staff on the wide range of users with specific needs so they can provide appropriate and welcoming services to meet these needs.
- Provide updates on helpful technologies to promote accessibility through numerous new library practices and innovations.
- Provide easy-to-understand guidelines so librarians without related training or experiences can begin serving all community members well.

- Contribute to the United Nations 2030 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), such as reduced inequalities, good health and well-being, quality education, decent work, and economic growth.

Hopefully, these Guidelines will allow libraries, disability groups, and support organizations to work together for effective library services to persons with disabilities. In addition, these partnerships will help promote accessible libraries in the community.

EALS has developed more specific Guidelines for some people with disabilities. See the EALS website for more detailed guidelines on serving disability groups.

Two important caveats:

Ability to implement these Guidelines

- While the Committee recommends a rights-based approach in these Guidelines, these Guidelines may be aspirational for many libraries due to limited funding and staffing. While urban library staff may have the time, expertise, and funds to address multiple aspects of accessibility, smaller and rural libraries may not. As with any of the suggestions in this document, libraries should do what they can and know that whatever that is, will make a difference. A welcoming and friendly environment and a sincere attempt to help are meaningful. Readers should review Chapters 1, 2, and 3 for an introduction and overview. Readers are encouraged to review sections of this report pertaining to their library's unique disability communities.

Use of terminology

- Appendix 1 includes a Glossary of Terms used in these Guidelines. Terms for and definitions of disabilities differ from country to country. The difference in the definition should not impact a library's commitment and determination to respond to people with disabilities in their community. Ask for help and understanding from partner organizations.

1.2 About "special needs"

In creating this updated version of the "Access to Libraries for Persons with Disabilities Checklist," the Authors want to acknowledge the universal truism that language constantly evolves. Even as we write these guidelines, we know that this language will be considered outdated and even offensive ten years from now or even sooner. We have done our best to use language that is respectful and informed. In doing so, we found ourselves taking another look at the term

“special needs.” While there are groups that continue to use this term, most persons with disabilities question the idea that their needs are “special.” Instead, they consider their needs normal and reject the idea that needing relevant information and resources in an accessible format and welcoming and supportive environment is “special.” Simply put, it is not “special services” to serve people with disabilities. We believe the library is responsible for removing all barriers preventing persons from using the library. It is critical to listen to the language people use about themselves. Because of this concern, we have avoided using the term “special needs” in this document.

1.3 Person-first vs identity-first

- Language related to disabilities is complicated. There has been a movement in the United States toward “people-first” language. An example of this language is “person with a disability” versus “disabled person.” The logic behind this language is that the emphasis should be on the person and not the disability. But, as Cara Leibowitz points out, “Disability is only negative because society makes it so” (*The Body is Not an Apology*, 2015). In other words, drawing attention away from the disability can be a way of negating who someone is and how they identify.
- Some groups prefer people-first language, and others prefer identity-first, stating that their disability is part of their identity. These discussions about language will continue, and opinions and preferences will change over time. The best way to find out what someone prefers is to ask them or pay attention to how they refer to themselves. If you use a term that is uncomfortable for them, apologize and promise to do better next time. And then do just that.
- In this document, we alternate between the two approaches.

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1.4 Target audience

- These guidelines are intended for all types of libraries: public, academic, school, children, youth, special, university and college libraries, and library

associations. They are also intended for disability groups and support organizations for persons with various disabilities. These Guidelines will allow libraries, disability groups, and support organizations to work together for effective library services to persons with disabilities and promote accessible libraries in the community.

- The Guidelines have been developed so library staff and community members can benefit from the work being done and expertise being shared. (See the LSN website (<https://www.ifla.org/g/eals/projects/>) for more detailed guidelines on serving specific disability groups).

Chapter 2: Philosophy and Overview

2.1 Human rights approach

Accessibility was recognized by the mainstream ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) community, beginning with the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), held in Geneva in 2003. Introduced by the disability community, the concept was incorporated into the Declaration of Principles adopted by the Summit, which in Paragraph 25 states: “The sharing and strengthening of global knowledge for development can be enhanced by removing barriers to equitable access to information for economic, social, political, health, cultural, educational, and scientific activities, and by facilitating access to public domain, information, including by universal design and the use of assistive technologies.” (WSIS, 2003).

Accessibility is central to independent living and social inclusion for everyone, especially those with disabilities. Removing existing barriers and preventing new ones from emerging are central goals of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, adopted by the United Nations in 2006.

The CRPD no longer regards disability as a personal condition or individual deficit but rather as the result of “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (Preamble). Reflecting this paradigm shift, accessibility is one of the central principles of the CRPD.

Accessibility is a fundamental precondition for persons with disabilities to enjoy their human rights. Without accessibility, persons with disabilities cannot live independently and participate fully and equally in society.

As access to information and knowledge is a crucial factor for social and political inclusion, libraries have a pivotal role to play in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities set out in the Convention, specifically:

- **The right to freedom of expression and opinion and access to information.** By offering information and literature in accessible formats, libraries enable persons with specific disabilities to develop well-informed opinions, share these in accessible public debates, and organize with like-minded people, in accordance with the right to freedom of expression and opinion set out in Article 21 CRPD.

- **The right to education.** In many countries, libraries are part of the educational infrastructure. As such, they can contribute to realizing the right to education enshrined in Article 24 of the Convention. By cooperating with schools and universities, libraries can, for example, provide educational materials in accessible formats needed to support students with disabilities.
- **The right to participate in cultural life.** Article 30 CRPD explicitly mentions library accessibility as a right to participate in cultural life. By removing access barriers to their buildings, resources, and services, libraries enable the active involvement of persons with disabilities in cultural life. This significantly improves the lives of persons with disabilities and increases social inclusion.

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2.2 Nothing about us without us: partnering with the disability community

A phrase used by the disability community is “nothing about us, without us.” It grew out of the too frequent development of services from businesses and

organizations that purported to serve people with disabilities but missed critical elements.

Library services to any disability group should begin by contacting the relevant disability community or government agency. All library planning should involve extensive input from these groups. Specifically, a library should:

- Include disability organizations in any needs assessment to determine the most appropriate services.
- Ask disability groups to help review library policies for intentional or unintentional biases.
- Ask disability groups representing different disabilities to examine and provide an honest evaluation of the library's physical organization and facilities, communications, and services.
- Include people from the disability community in any planning efforts.
- Include people with disabilities in any community user or advisory groups.

2.3 Universal design

Universal design is defined as: **The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.**

Universal design aims to support an inclusive society where everyone has equal opportunities to participate, regardless of disability status or age. The definition demands that products, environments, programmes, and services be designed so everyone can use them to the greatest extent possible, without needing adaptation or specialized design. In the design of new or renovated spaces, the principles of Universal Design should be used to ensure all needs are included. Universal Design focuses on the environment and not the person.

Universal design is not necessarily one solution to solving all problems and making the world inclusive and accessible for all. Still, it must be seen in combination with solutions for specific needs. For instance, in a library, people who are hard of hearing may need an induction loop, while persons with visual impairments may need tactile paths. While these may be specific solutions aimed at groups, at the same time, they make the library accessible for all and can be used by other people who prefer them. The main point of universal design is that it provides an environment in which barriers to access are removed or radically reduced without creating new obstacles. It is impossible to

claim universal design without being accessible for “all.” This is the critical point underlying universal design: universal access.

An excellent summary of the aspects of the Principles of Universal Design can be found on the Association of Government, Cooperative, and Library Associations (ASGCLA) “Universal Design” web page.

The seven principles include:

1. **Equitable use** by people with diverse disabilities
2. **Flexibility in use** for a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
3. **Simple and intuitive use** regardless of the user’s experience or skills
4. **Perceptible information** that communicates necessary information effectively to the user
5. **Tolerance of error** that minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended errors
6. **Low physical effort** required for efficiency and comfortability with a minimum of effort
7. **Size and space for approach and use** regardless of the user’s body size, posture, equipment, or mobility

In addition, they note the importance of considering the entirety of people’s lives, including such factors as economic status, gender, culture, and environmental concerns. As with other aspects of accessibility, it is essential to have a complete picture of what is needed and how those needs can be met.

The term was conceptualized in the middle of the 1980s by the American architect Ronald L. Mace, and this is Mace’s definition.

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2.4 Assistive technology

"Assistive Technology" was first officially used in the U.S. Assistive Technology Act in 1988. Assistive technology is "any item, piece of equipment, service or product system including software used to increase, maintain, substitute, or improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. These technologies have the important enabling role of the independence and full participation of persons with disabilities in society" (Article 3 of the European Accessibility Act). The European Accessibility Act recognizes the importance of assistive technologies and calls for compatibility with various devices and software like screen readers, magnifiers, and voice recognition tools.

Considering the above, assistive technology is an aspect of universal design. Universal design means the design of products, environments, programs, and services to be usable by all people, and it includes individual adaptations such as assistive technology.

Assistive technology helps people with difficulty speaking, typing, writing, remembering, pointing, seeing, hearing, learning, walking, and other actions. For example, someone who is blind or has restricted upper body mobility can use a computer screen reader to receive needed information. Others may find a trackball or joystick easier to operate than a mouse. Different disabilities require different assistive technology.

Library staff need to know how to offer assistive technologies to meet the needs of library users with disabilities. It is critical to note that assistive technology may not be helpful if the information on how to use it is unavailable to all users.

Examples of assistive technology that libraries can offer include:

- Computers and iPads/tablets
- Computer adaptations for access, keyboarding devices such as switches, and keyboard overlays to customize computer settings
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices; for example, communication boards that help people communicate
- Writing aids such as pencil grips and smart pens
- Environmental Control Units (ECUs), which include items like switches, joysticks, buttons, and voice commands to control lights, televisions, and telephones.
- Screen readers
- Braille and Braille embossers

- Large-print and tactile keyboards
- Amplified telephone equipment

More detailed information about assistive technology is found in Chapter 7.

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2.5 Marrakesh Treaty

The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled was adopted by the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on June 17, 2013. A complete list of countries that have ratified the treaty, including dates of ratification and enforcement, is available on the WIPO website. The Treaty presents an unprecedented opportunity for blind and other print-disabled persons to access printed works.

The Treaty's goal is **to increase access to books, magazines, and other printed materials for people with print disabilities**. It aims to achieve this by making it easier for accessible copies to be created and shared across international borders.

Each country that adopts the Marrakesh Treaty is required to create one or more limitations or exceptions to copyright law. These limitations and exceptions mean that various acts are permitted without infringing copyright.

The treaty covers any persons (or beneficiary, as defined in the law) with a print disability, such as:

- Blindness or low vision
- A developmental or learning disability such as dyslexia or autism
- A physical disability that makes it difficult to hold a book, such as Parkinson's disease or paralysis
- A non-permanent disability such as a broken arm or temporary blindness as long as the disability exists
- Deafblind (although other disabilities such as deafness that do not relate to the ability to read is not covered)

An accessible format (including digital) enables an eligible person to read or access the content as feasibly and comfortably as someone who is not print-disabled. As the IFLA document Navigating Copyright for Libraries says, “The treaty provides an opportunity for libraries of all types to boost services to people with print disabilities, helping libraries to better fulfil their public service mission of making knowledge and information available to everyone on an equal and inclusive basis.”

This treaty increases opportunities for libraries to provide accessible books to users beyond borders without copyright infringement. IFLA and EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) have created “Getting Started: Implementing the Marrakesh Treaty for Persons with Print Disabilities” to help local libraries implement the Marrakesh Treaty to benefit their users.

Getting Started is for staff in all types of libraries to take practical steps to deliver materials into the hands of print-disabled readers. It is a helpful guide for librarians to use the Marrakesh Treaty and fully use their new rights. It is for libraries of all types and sizes, from specialist libraries already providing services to people with disabilities to libraries eager to begin such services.

Check with a local copyright librarian or other specialist to verify how the Treaty is implemented in your country. If you are unsure or need further advice, contact your national intellectual property or copyright office: <http://www.wipo.int/directory/en/urls.jsp>.

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Chapter 3: Leadership and management responsibility in library accessibility

An essential ingredient in making a library accessible is the advocacy and positive role of the library's leadership and management. Effective leadership is critical to the quality of support received by people with disabilities and their families. Leaders and managers can set the tone, demonstrate commitment, and take the lead in establishing what is valued. Library leaders and senior management are advocates with the library's governing authority and funders, and they set an example for library staff. No one is more important in making a library accessible than a manager or leader.

With dedicated support from management and governing bodies, the commitment to accessibility becomes embedded in policies, training, and attitudes. While individual staff can certainly be adequate, if their contributions, such as partnerships and programmes, are not institutionalized with the active support of management, these contributions may disappear when these staff members are no longer at the library.

3.1 Developing library policies

The library's policies should:

- Communicate from a leadership position that **all** people have value, are respected, and openly welcomed, with a right to equal service.
- Ensure inclusivity is an intentional consideration at every stage, not merely assumed or added as an afterthought. Inclusion of all people should be a core consideration of policies, budgets, staffing, recruiting, and planning.
- Use universal design to plan and implement physical space and library resources and programs.
- Be explicit about the importance of fully including people with disabilities, not as added burdens or exceptions, but as the status quo.
- Engage target communities and support agencies to assist in identifying discriminatory policies and to develop policies of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and equality.

3.2 Assessing needs and partnerships

When creating needs assessments and partnerships, libraries should:

- Work with disability and human rights groups to assess the need for library services for people with various disabilities.
- Assume that people with disabilities exist in the library's community and determine the best way to meet those needs.
- Ensure that people with disabilities are included in all planning. Live by the motto: "Nothing about us without us."

3.3 Hiring and training library staff and volunteers

When working with and training library staff and volunteers, libraries should:

- Stress that organizations are at their best when they welcome, respect, and involve people of all backgrounds and life experiences, including people with disabilities.
- Create a plan to hire and retain employees with disabilities and use vendors that do the same.
- Be inclusive, always. Invite people with disabilities to volunteer at the library and ensure their training and inclusion.
- Emphasize that all library staff must treat their library users and fellow staff members with understanding and respect in accordance with the UN Convention of Human Rights.
- Ensure that staff know they will be evaluated on their customer service to all people, including those with disabilities.
- Plan training for people with disabilities that meets their unique needs.
- Provide disability sensitivity training to existing employees to help them best support colleagues with disabilities.
- Provide necessary accommodations to support staff and volunteers with disabilities.

3.4 Leadership of professional associations and national/regional libraries

- Accept the responsibility of helping local libraries within their area to become more accessible and inclusive.

- Work with national and regional disability groups to develop guidelines for local libraries to serve people with disabilities.
- Offer workshops and continuing education on guidelines and engage people with disabilities to help deliver the workshops.
- Seek funding for demonstration projects to guide local libraries.
- Hire disability specialists as consultants to local libraries.
- Make all association, national, and regional libraries and their publications accessible and inclusive as a model for local libraries.

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Chapter 4: Events

All people, including people with disabilities, can participate in all events arranged for library visitors. Events can be in person, requiring accessible physical space, or online, requiring accessible technology. Increasingly, library programming is a vital part of library services. The library must be fully accessible so all can benefit.

4.1 Planning a physical event

It is essential to carefully plan your event from beginning to end. Recommended steps for planning your event:

- Begin by evaluating how accessible your library is to hold events and what needs to be done to increase accessibility. What are the barriers to accessibility, and how can they be addressed? Consult with library staff and disability organizations to get their input.
- Reach out to potential partners in the community who can provide the library with relevant knowledge and ideas, as well as suggestions for appropriate programs. Collaborative programs have the potential to serve a broader range of community members.
- Create a plan that helps library staff identify the specific accommodation needs of library users.
- Decide whether the program will be exclusively for people with disabilities (for example, a story hour for children with autism) or everyone. A programme for everyone brings community members together, including the lives and needs of those with disabilities.
- Select the day and time, in cooperation with your partner (if you have one), to best meet the needs of your target audience. Will your event occur when the library is open or closed? If the target audience is seniors and people with disabilities, they may want to be home before dark. If the target audience is working adults, a program with appropriate accommodations may need to be held at night. Hold programs for youth in conjunction with a school schedule.
- Provide responsible staff members' phone numbers or email addresses if help is required.

4.2 Choosing locations for physical events

- Libraries may have special rooms for events. One approach for those without dedicated space is to have shelves on wheels to move them easily. Having an event in the central part of the library is rewarding, although it can involve considerable work before and after.
- Make sure there are no disturbing noises, such as other visitors speaking, ventilation, copying machines, or any other interruptions or distractions.
- If you know your event will occur in a room with any challenges, ensure you include this information in any related publicity.
- Provide a specific path or contrast marking leading to the event location.
- Provide hearing loops, use a microphone, and, if possible, install a program for speech-to-text transcription or captions.
- Make sure there is enough room for participants who use wheelchairs or walkers.
- Avoid tripping hazards, such as loose cables or personal belongings in the aisles.
- Be sure to note the location of the emergency exit.
- Place staff at the library entrance to guide participants to the event.

4.3 Planning online events

Online events can offer accessibility for community members with mobility challenges and those who are uncomfortable attending in-person events. If offering online events, keep in mind:

- Use online accessibility standards – see details in Chapter 7
- Remember there may be community members who do not have internet access or appropriate devices. If possible, provide laptops/tablets and hotspots so all community members can access your online events and other resources. If available, partners can provide information about the needs and resources needed.

4.4 Marketing accessible library events

- In the materials, communications, and information about the event, include easily discovered and accessed details about the venue's accessibility.

- Work with the disability community to market your event so it benefits as many community members as possible. Provide information to all organizations involved in the program.
 - For the broadest reach, advertising includes:
 - Newspapers and radio
 - Accessible text and video on the web page
 - Pamphlets and flyers inside and outside the library
 - Facebook, Instagram, and other popular social media platforms
 - If possible, an event mailing list or SMS (Short Message Service)
 - Be sure to communicate using straightforward, easily understood language
- Ensure ticket events are available through multiple channels, including in the library, by mail, phone, and online.
- Make sure all materials used at events are in an accessible format, such as digital formats with close captioning.

4.5 Assisting lecturer/presenters with accessible presentations

Multiple websites have instructions on preparing and making accessible PowerPoint presentations. For example, PowerPoint presentations should use high-contrast fonts and backgrounds, sans serif fonts, and avoid crowded slides with small font sizes. Presentation guidelines include speaking slowly and clearly, describing all images, reading all words on a slide, and, if possible, sending the slides to the organizer in advance.

4.6 Making library conferences accessible.

To make sure that all library conferences are fully accessible, whether in person or online, associations should:

- In materials, information, and communication about the event, including information about its accessibility.
- Choose facilities that are accessible, and if possible, in cities that are accessible.
- Ensure all conference materials are accessible in multiple formats and that those online are accessible.

- Ask people with disabilities to evaluate all electronic communication methods to ensure they work the way intended.
- Have an accessibility desk to manage any accessibility issues that arise.
- Send out guidelines to speakers on making presentations accessible and make accessibility one aspect of the speaker's evaluation. If there are no consequences (negative evaluation), there is little motivation for speakers to improve their presentations to make them more accessible.
- Invite speakers who have a disability to the program and ask people with disabilities to speak on topics unrelated to their disability. Offer programs for all members on various aspects of accessibility and inclusion.
- Be sure to include an accessibility evaluation in the conference evaluation covering the facility, the speakers, and the conference planning.

Chapter 5: Physical access

Physical access is an integral aspect of library services. Using universal design principles, it is essential to consider and recognize potential factors that may affect the level of physical access in libraries. This chapter summarizes the key points to consider when designing a new or refurbished library building.

Libraries are for all. Everyone should be able to use a community's library facilities and information resources. The library's surroundings, the entrance, restrooms, stairs, elevators, and every room should be accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons using wheelchairs should be able to manoeuvre easily in the library; persons with visual disabilities should be able to find their way without encountering any obstacles; persons with hearing disabilities should be able to communicate with library staff; persons with intellectual disabilities should be able to understand library procedures and easily utilize the library resources.

5.1 Outside and entering the library

Persons with disabilities should be able to access the library building easily, quickly, and safely. Suppose the main entrance cannot be made accessible. In that case, a secondary accessible entrance should be provided, equipped with an automatic door opener, a ramp, a telephone, and an accommodating staff willing and readily available to assist. Persons who use wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers should be able to enter through the door and pass through security checkpoints. Blind persons who use canes or guide dogs should be able to enter without encountering obstacles.

The following factors should be implemented as possible:

- Sufficient parking spaces near the entrance marked with the international symbol for persons with disabilities
- Clear and easy-to-read signage, using large sans-serif fonts and high-contrast colours
- Access paths to the entrance that are clear of obstruction and well-lighted
- Smooth and non-slip surface at the entrance
- A non-slip and gently sloped ramp with railings on both sides
- Entry phone accessible for Deaf users with limited mobility
- No steps leading to the door, as they are not accessible to all

- Glass doors prominently marked to warn persons with a visual disability
- Easy pass-through security checkpoints using a wheelchair/walker

5.2 Inside the library

All parts of the library should be accessible to users and staff. Libraries should consider the following points to enhance accessibility:

- Provide information about the accessibility of services, the library rooms, and the buildings. Include which services and facilities are accessible and those that are not.
- Provide multiple options for accessing all areas of the library.
- Train staff to assist patrons in an emergency and ensure they are readily available.
- Provide at least one comfort room with accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- Post a floor plan and service desks close to the entrance.
- Wheelchair users should be able to move around inside the whole library. Create sufficient spaces to allow a wheelchair user to manoeuvre their wheelchair, for example, turning around.
- If the library has more than one level or the entrance is above street level, provide a lift or ramp for wheelchair users and others with limited mobility.
- There should be no steps between rooms, and all doors should have automatic openers.
- Mark stairs and steps with a contrasting colour.
- Provide signage that is clear, consistent, and easily read. Use pictograms when appropriate, such as to the elevators and comfort rooms.
- Provide elevator buttons that are reachable by persons using wheelchairs or with limited mobility. Large buttons that can be activated with the wheelchair itself are excellent.
- Provide tables and computer workstations for persons using wheelchairs.
- Equipment, such as desks, tables, and chairs, should be adjustable.
- Computers should be easy to reach.
- Place desks and computers in a central location so help can be easily requested.

- Ensure the aisles between shelves and bookcases are free from obstruction.
- If possible, ensure shelves are reachable by persons using wheelchairs or with limited mobility.
- Provide comfortable chairs with sturdy armrests, various designs, colours, sizes, and adjustable lighting.
- Ensure the fire alarm is visible (e.g., flashing for the hearing impaired) and audible (for the visually impaired).

5.3 Comfort rooms

The library should have at least one comfort room for persons with disabilities, equipped with the following:

- Clear signs with pictograms indicating the location of the comfort room
- A door wide enough for a wheelchair user to enter and sufficient space for them to turn around
- A large enough space for a wheelchair user to be able to access the toilet seat
- Handles and flushing levers that are reachable for persons who use wheelchairs or have limited upper body mobility
- A reachable alarm button for persons who are using wheelchairs or who have limited upper-body mobility
- A washbasin and mirror at the appropriate height

5.4 Service desks

Staff service desks should include:

- An adjustable desk or one desk at an accessible height
- An induction loop system for persons with a hearing disability
- An organized “queue system” in the waiting area
- Adequate physical distancing

Self-service desks should include the following:

- Assistive technology applications and devices
- Chairs of varied sizes and designs and adjustable tables
- Staff assistance readily available
- Accessible self-service circulation stations

Resources

- Bibliotakeni I Malmö. "A Library Without Obstacles: A Guide to Accessibility." 2020.
<https://malmo.se/download/18.1063fd118de5108924902/1709204283971/A%20Library%20Without%20Obstacles%20v2.1.pdf>

Chapter 6: Ensuring access to information

Access to information is an essential part of all people's human rights. Information in accessible formats is vital for participating independently in community life and enriching one's life. For those who have difficulty reading and understanding due to disabilities, this chapter focuses on how to ensure that information is provided in a way that is accessible in libraries and used meaningfully.

6.1 Making information accessible

- Identify the specific alternative format and assistive technology designed to meet the information needs of users with various disabilities (refer to accessibility for specific groups).
 - Consult community members with disabilities and disability organizations to discover what information they need and what format would be best for them to access it.
 - Use clear, user-focused language you would use in face-to-face conversations. Avoid jargon and technical terms. Use language your community members use.
 - Create easy-to-read information (refer to 6.3) in print and digital format for people with cognitive disabilities.
 - Check the copyright law in your country when you modify or convert the original information into an accessible format.
 - Determine if your country has endorsed the Marrakesh Treaty.
 - Ensure all information about access, services, materials, and programs in libraries are available in alternative formats.
 - Provide training courses on using the technology for library staff and users.
- Provide computers equipped with the necessary software, such as screen readers for people with reading disabilities, who are blind or have low vision, and adaptive tools designed for people with physical disabilities. (See section 2.4 on assistive technology).

- Ensure that library staff know how to provide accessible information, including sign language if possible. If not possible, provide staff with the appropriate software to support community members who are Deaf.
- Create partnerships with specialized libraries to provide information in accessible formats, such as audio or Braille.

6.2 Ensuring library staff commitment

Library staff must be committed to accessibility for all community members. To support this, library management/administrators should:

- Actively facilitate staff acceptance of the necessity of access for people with disabilities. Establish the goals of providing accessibility for staff to make it easy to acquire accessibility-related resources.
- Recruit library staff, including those with disabilities, committed to accessibility. Use recruitment tools, such as accessible websites and online job application systems, which are accessible by all qualified people, including those with disabilities.
- Train library staff on using accessible technology and inclusive content, including technology usable without additional assistive technology and technology compatible with assistive technology.

6.3 Ensuring information is easy to read

“Easy to read” is one form of accessible information. It helps ensure that written and digital information is more straightforward to understand and more accessible to people with learning or cognitive disabilities or who are new to reading.

- Use language that is short, simple, concise, and concrete.
- Include illustrations on the same page as the accompanying text.
- Avoid complicated words while still using adult and age-appropriate language.
- Explain or describe complicated relationships concretely and logically.
- Use a logical chronological framework in describing events.
- Before publishing, evaluate the information and material with the target group.
- Follow the IFLA Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials (IFLA Report, Nomura).

6.4 Using electronic technology

In addition to making paper publications easier to understand, there are a wide range of methods for presenting accessible information electronically. Examples include:

- Systems that use scanners to scan documents for magnification, reading, and Braille translation
- Assistive/adaptive technology, such as magnification readers and screen readers
- Videos with captions
- Computer applications and software
- Broadcasting, such as radio broadcasts
- DAISY (Digital Access Information System) and EPUB format books

6.5 Using social networking services (SNS, social media)

Many libraries use social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly known as Twitter), to market their programs and services. Ensure information is accessible for people with print disabilities. Consider the writing style and use alternative text and accurate subtitles on videos.

References

Nomura, Misako, Skat Nielsen, Gyda, Tronbacke, Bror. "Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials." 2010. <https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/636>

6.6 Recommendations for outreach

It is essential to inform community members that the library provides online access to library resources from both inside and outside the library. Library staff can suggest websites and offer help if someone cannot access the information. Suggestions include:

- In the general communication on the main library website, provide information about accessibility to information about events, programmes, and the library building itself.
- Provides links for more detailed descriptions or contact information for an accessibility coordinator or event manager.

- Ensure websites and all other materials clearly communicate that disability inclusion is a part of the organization’s vision, mission, and values.
- Ensure your communications are accessible. Use captions on all audio and video files and ensure websites work with screen readers. This allows the millions of deaf, hard of hearing, and low-vision people to access materials and resources.
- Show people with disabilities in photographs, infographics, and other images on your website, social media, and other materials. If relevant to the event or activity, include people with invisible disabilities. Please note that you should only include people with disabilities in these graphics if your library is genuinely inclusive of and respectful toward them. This should not be a token representation.
- Use appropriate language and etiquette. Refer to people respectfully and using their preferred descriptors and language. Use the Disability Language Style Guide and related resources.

6.7 Online accessibility

Online accessibility is about designing websites or mobile applications for all, no matter who they are or how they access the Internet. It ensures acceptable ease of use for all levels of ability. It covers “websites and mobile applications owned or operated by a private entity, to establish web accessibility compliance standards for such websites and mobile applications, and for other purposes” (essential accessibility, 2020). The goal of online accessibility is to make web and mobile application content perceivable, operable, and understandable by the broadest possible range of users, including people with visual, physical, hearing, and cognitive impairment. In addition, online communication should be compatible with a wide range of assistive technologies.

6.7.1 Accessibility compliance

Websites or mobile applications should be in substantial compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A and Level AA standard established by the Accessibility Guidelines Working Group or any subsequent update, revision, or replacement to the WCAG 2.0 Level A and Level AA standard published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) or a successor organization.

Libraries should provide alternative means of access for websites or mobile applications that do not substantially comply with the standards set forth under

WCAG 2.0 Level A and Level AA standards. The alternative means of access for individuals with disabilities should be equivalent to the content available on websites or mobile applications for people without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities may rely on websites and mobile applications in their daily lives. Besides offering necessary access, building an accessible website, and providing mobile applications can save money by creating simpler websites to maintain and use with various browsers and devices. As with other accessibility efforts, these improve the general usability for all users.

6.7.2 Key components

While library staff may be unable to ensure all sites are accessible (such as subscription databases), it is essential to understand the possible barriers. It is also important to highlight the differences among libraries. While urban library staff may have the time, expertise, and funds to address multiple aspects of accessibility, smaller and rural libraries may not. As with any of the suggestions and guidelines in this document, libraries should do what they can and know that whatever that is, it will make a difference.

Below are three components to keep in mind for supporting online accessibility.

- Captioning. Note: Human-generated real-time captioning should be used whenever possible because it is much more accurate than computer-generated captioning. While there can be misleading or confusing captions with computer-generated captions, any captioning is better than none. Computer-generated captioning is constantly improved, and libraries should invest in the latest software.
- Audio description or media alternative (such as alternative text)
- Ensure information is consistently available through a range of assistive devices

References

LEVEL access. "The Online Accessibility Act: What it is and what it could mean." 14 October 2020. <https://www.essentialaccessibility.com/blog/the-online-accessibility-act>

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). "Making the Web Accessible for All." 2020. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). "W3C Accessibility Standards Overview." Updated, 29 June 2022. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/>

National Center on Disability and Journalism. "Disability Language Style Guide." August 2021. <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/> While a US-developed document, it has been translated into several languages. Always check with the local disability community for relevant local language.

Resources

- Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). "Introduction to Web Accessibility." 6 October 2021. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/>
- Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG.)" 6 December 2021. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- OGCIO. "Web Accessibility Handbook." December 2019. https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/web_mobileapp_accessibility/promulgating_resources/handbook/doc/Web_Accessibility_Handbook.pdf

Chapter 7: Accessibility for specific groups

This chapter includes ways for libraries to serve people with various disabilities. Read all the sections or, after you perform your community needs assessment, read the sections that relate most to the needs of people with disabilities in your community.

Some recommendations, though, apply to all disabilities. Consider incorporating these and look at specific chapters to meet the needs of your community.

7.1 General recommendations for providing services for all disabilities.

Welcoming atmosphere

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for all users. This is particularly important in welcoming people with disabilities in a non-judgmental, understanding, and patient manner. Library signage should allow people to navigate the library and its services as independently as they choose.

Staff Training

- Ensure all staff are educated about the needs in the community and the resources the library has to offer. Professional development staff should plan training that educates staff on the needs of the critical disability groups and what services the library offers or can develop to meet those needs.

Advisory Council

- Organize an advisory council of staff and disability community members for discussion, including shared experiences, information, and knowledge. They can also assist in planning relevant library events. It is essential to know the library-related opinions and needs of library users with disabilities.

Personal librarian

- A Personal Librarian is a service the library can provide, making it easier for people with disabilities to use the library. These are librarians with extra qualifications related to specific disabilities. With a Personal Librarian, library users do not need to explain themselves and who to contact directly at every visit. There may be questions about using the library or available materials

and resources. The availability of a Personal Librarian can impact a person's decision on whether to use the library.

Collection development

- Procure resources of particular interest to people with various disabilities in your community. These should include print and online fiction and non-fiction resources by and about people with disabilities.

Community resources

- Identify the agencies that are specific to people with disabilities. This can include government agencies, NGOs, health, employment, and training organizations.

Outreach

- Engage with and participate in the community and events outside the library. In all events, emphasize that the library is accessible to people with disabilities.

Communication

- Ensure all communications are accessible and meet the needs of viewers with any disability. Use accessible fonts and font sizes, and make sure all videos have captions.

Cooperation

- Reach out to organizations representing and serving people with disabilities in your community. Engage these organizations in evaluating your library's services and policies. Ask them to communicate information about the library's services to their members.

Advocacy

- Advocate for services for people with disabilities. Facilitate "community conversations" that allow persons to engage with each other on this topic.

7.2 Public library services to children with disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines the child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, a majority is attained earlier" (UNICEF, n.d.). This means that a library should include services and resources for a broad spectrum of stages of development, from babies and toddlers to children and young adults.

The library and its services should be open and inclusive to help every child access literature and information. There should be opportunities for educational

support, lifelong learning, and pleasure. The library should offer access to an extensive choice of appropriate media in different formats to meet these diverse needs.

7.2.1 Library staff

- The library staff should have expertise in a child's physical and psychological development so all children can rely on the library as a safe and welcoming place.
- Offer staff members tools to provide services that include all children.
- Staff should use person-centered language rather than focusing on any disability unless the individual requests a different language.

7.2.2 Library media and materials

Offer a variety of different media, including:

- Adapted age-appropriate media and materials in multiple formats, including easy-to-read graphics, pictographs, large print, and digital
- Media in the library that can be read with eyes, ears, and fingers
- Materials and resources that support concentration and calm for children
- Equipment and space planned using the principles of Universal Design

7.2.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Alternative keyboards and optical character recognition
- Audiobooks and publications – Includes DAISY (Digital Access Information System) talking books with full text and audio.
- Applications such as electronic math worksheets, word prediction, and spell-check software
- Graphic organizers and outliners
- Speech synthesizers/screen readers

7.2.4 Outreach

- Reach out to NGOs, governmental agencies, and parental groups that serve children with disabilities and seek advice and cooperative activities.

- Public libraries should contact schools' special education programs for children with disabilities and ask how they can support the school's programs in the public library.
- Offer programs for children outside the library (local parks, community festivals, local schools) emphasizing services the library offers for children with disabilities.

7.2.5 Programs, activities, and services

- Plan targeted events and inclusive programs for children with specific disabilities (i.e., autism). Both approaches have advantages. Specific programs for disabilities allow planners to focus on activities that may not interest a broader audience. Inclusive programs expose all children, with and without disabilities, to interact. Inclusive programs may require additional staff or parental involvement in planning and implementation.
- Provide relevant information in advance to interested groups, parents, and caregivers.
- Offer programs and workshops to parents and caregivers, allowing them to share experiences and simultaneously an opportunity for the library staff to know more about the target group.
- To make the child's visit to the library and use of its service a positive experience, be flexible, and adapt to the child.

References

UNICEF. "Convention on the rights of the child: text." 1989.
<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

Resources

- WETA Reading Rockets. "Assistive Technology for Kids with Learning Disabilities: An Overview." 2009.
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/assistive-technology-kids-learning-disabilities-overview>

7.3 School library services to students with disabilities

School-age students with disabilities refer to providing a free and appropriate public school education for eligible students ages 3-21 (IES NCES, 2021). The

students “may receive reasonable accommodation at school, such as elevator access, increased test-taking time, and the right to carry an asthma inhaler. Many children attend schools in self-contained classrooms with other children with disabilities. Some children attend separate classes; others are mainstreamed into general education settings. Some children may be home-schooled” (RUSA, 2021).

7.3.1 Library staff

- All library staff should know what the library can offer students with disabilities to meet their needs. Record the subjects of interest to each student with a disability.
- A well-informed and prepared staff is necessary to assist students with disabilities. In many schools, all library staff have training in helping students with disabilities. Because of the increasing discomfort with the term “special needs,” the authors recommend using the term “children with disabilities” when referring directly to children. rather than children with special education needs (SEN.)
- A School Library Advisory Committee composed of teachers, librarians, school aids, and administrators should provide training for all school library and teaching staff on resources available and how students with disabilities can use these resources. The goal is to support each student with a disability in their schoolwork reading interests and reading habits and in gathering information of interest.
- Under the leadership of a qualified teacher-librarian, the School Library Committee plans suitable collections, services, activities, and programs for students with disabilities across the curriculum, with the collaborative efforts of different school stakeholders. Besides annual planning, the school library committee can review library-related topics and report to various school stakeholders through diversified channels, such as newsletters, campus television and radio, bulletin boards, Facebook, Instagram, and other appropriate and relevant media outlets.
- School library facilities should be designed using Universal Design for Learning principles.
- Provide priority service to students with disabilities at all library service desks.

- Teacher-librarian and other school library staff should use plain language in all communication, including face-to-face, on the web, pamphlets, brochures, email, notes, and all other text.
- Make sure both the print and digital collections are accessible. For example, videos should have subtitling (captioning) and audio descriptions.
- Participate in Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings so that library staff know each child's disability and can provide needed support.
- Set up a schedule for students with disabilities to visit the school library regularly.

7.3.2 Library media and materials

- Easy to read, age-appropriate media and materials in multiple formats, including both physical and digital
- Alternate formats such as large print, graphics, pictographs, and tactile
- Media in the library that can be read with eyes, ears, and fingers
- Materials and resources that support concentration and calm for children in a variety of ways are an excellent complement to media

7.3.3 Assistive/adapted technology

- Talking and audiobooks
- DAISY (Digital Access Information System) talking books with full text and full audio
- eBooks with accessibility mode for screen readers and keyboard
- Reading pens and magnifying glasses
- Closed-circuit television magnifier
- Audio-visual equipment
- Computer programs and applications, such as a gamified reading e-quiz platform
- Speech synthesis and dictation applications

7.3.4 Outreach

- Teacher-librarians should create an advisory group with social workers, school education psychiatrists, occupational therapists, and other related professionals to assist with training and support, fundraising, advocacy

outreach, and advice on the planning and evaluating library programs and services.

- Partner with schools, associations, and organizations that work with children with disabilities.
- Advocate for and use funds from governmental and non-governmental organizations to support services for students with disabilities.
- Disseminate library services to students with disabilities in all contexts, in and out of schools, online and offline.

7.3.5 Programs, activities, and services

- Create a range of activities for students with disabilities. Provide opportunities for students to meet others with similar disabilities and share their skills and expertise with those outside their disability category.
- Offer peer-reading activities. In an integrated education format, upper-form students can help lower-form students with disabilities build their vocabulary and improve their reading skills.
- Provide parent educational and teaching staff training related to the various reading needs of students with disabilities.
- Provide seminars on library services to students with disabilities and school library visits in the community. Highlight these library services available for children with disabilities via social media.
- Invite celebrities with disabilities to provide school seminars for all stakeholders.
- Provide online or offline technology support. For example, a drop-in café for face-to-face interaction and a chat box for virtual learning commons.

References

Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) (2021). "Children with Disabilities." 1996. <https://www.ala.org/rusa/children-disabilities>

Resources

- IFLA Equitable and Accessible Library Services Section (EALS) "Using Universal Design for Learning to Enhance Information Literacy Programs: Online and in the library (Webinar II)." 2020. <https://www.ifla.org/node/93260>

- Institute of Educational Sciences: National Center for Educational Statistics (IES NCES) "Students with disabilities." 2022.
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>

7.4 College and university students with disabilities

College and university students can present the full range of disabilities. College and university libraries must be prepared to serve all students with disabilities or know where to refer for services.

7.4.1 Library staff

- Seek alternative accessible formats for assigned and required resources.
- Ensure study spaces are available and accessible for students with different disabilities.
- Work with the college or university disability office to identify students with disabilities and offer enhanced services.

7.4.2 Physical library using principles of universal design

- A selection of sound environments
- A room with accessible technology that can be booked in advance
- Height-adjustable desks
- Clear signage and information signs in Braille
- An accessible entrance and the ability to move around in the library unassisted

7.4.3 Library media and materials

- Talking books
- DAISY (Digital Access Information System) talking books with full text and complete analysis.)
- Braille
- E-books and digitized books
- Ask students what media and materials they need and provide it

7.4.4 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Speech synthesis, word prediction, and spell check software

- Braille reader and display
- Screen reader and magnifier, scanners, and OCR software
- Ask students what adaptive or assistive technology they need and provide it

7.4.5 Library Outreach

- Offer training and resources to college and university staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities, including accommodations related to library programs and resources.
- Provide information to new and prospective students on how to use library resources.
- Provide information to university staff on services available to their students with disabilities.
- Collaborate with the office of student disability services and student counsellors.
- Collaborate with national providers of adaptive media.

7.4.6 Programs, activities, and services

- Provide individual introductory meetings with the students to tailor the services offered, including demonstrating the available assistive technology.
- Offer follow-up meetings with the students to ensure the technology is working and to address any changes in their specific needs. For example, if they now need to draft essays and would like help.
- Offer workshops about accessible software.

Resources

- American Council on Education, Higher Education Today. "Higher Education's Challenge: Disability Inclusion on Campus." 19 October 2022. <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2020/10/19/higher-educations-challenge-disability-inclusion-campus/>

7.5 Persons with physical disabilities or mobility impairment

Mobility impairment is the inability of a person to use one or more of their extremities or a lack of strength to walk, grasp, or lift objects. A wheelchair,

crutches or a walker may be utilized to aid in mobility. Mobility impairment may be caused by disease, an accident, or a congenital disorder and may result from neuro-muscular and orthopedic impairments. (Acessibility.com)

7.5.1 Library Staff

- Each person with a physical disability is different and may need a different level of assistance. Meet with individual students to determine their specific needs and provide information on library services to help them.
- If a library user utilizes walking aides, such as walkers or crutches, be mindful of their walking speed and stamina.
- Use judgment in helping. Never touch an individual without asking if assistance is needed first. Help if appropriate (getting a book from a top shelf).
- Transportation to and from the library may be limited. The library should consider home delivery if possible or allow caregivers to pick up resources at the library.
- Design a communication system for people with disabilities to ask for assistance if they are in a distance section of the library.
- Library users with physical disabilities may have an attendant or caregiver present. It is still essential to address the person with the disability directly.

7.5.2 Library media and materials

- Ensure the library has appropriate furniture and equipment to accommodate people with physical disabilities.

7.5.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Speech recognition software
- Typing aides that do not require hand movement

7.5.4 Outreach

- Contact specific physical impairment organizations for advice on how to provide the most needed service.
- Develop library programs specifically to encourage the participation of people with physical disabilities.
- Ask for feedback from the individual first and the caregiver second.

- Provide training sessions on using technology designed for those with physical disabilities.
- Ask people with physical disabilities to tour your library and provide suggestions on improving accessibility.

References

- Accessibility.com. "Mobility and Physical Disabilities," no date. <https://www.accessibility.com/disabilities/mobility-physical>

7.6 Persons who are blind or with low vision

Visual impairment or low vision is a reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses, and it reduces a person's ability to perform specific or all tasks. It includes (1) the inability to see images clearly and distinctly; (2) a loss of visual field; (3) the inability to detect minor changes in brightness; (4) colour blindness; and (5) sensitivity to light. Totally blind refers to a complete loss of sight. (World Health Organization)

7.6.1 Library staff

- All staff members should know about visual disabilities, how library users or even fellow staff experience blindness or a visual impairment, and how to interact with and serve persons with visual disabilities.
- Remember to use clear and enlarged fonts, colour contrast, and plain language in all communications: on the web, in pamphlets, brochures, mail, notes, and all other text.
- Provide marked stairs and a tactile guidance system adapted for blind library users.
- Market events, activities, and services in accessible formats. Ensure that electronic materials are accessible and any video has audio descriptions.
- The information transmitted by the image must be repeated by voice. When graphics are presented, speakers should say, "The graph shows that reading had increased by 20%," instead of "Look at this graph."

7.6.2 Library media and materials

- Audiobooks, EPUB books and e-books

- Tactile books
- Braille books and BRF (Electronic Braille Format) books
- Large print books

7.6.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Screen-reading software
- DAISY (Digital Access Information System) talking books with full text and audio.
- Magnification software and portable magnifiers
- Video magnifiers or Closed-Circuit Televisions (CCTVs)
- Dictation software
- Braille printers and refreshable Braille displays
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems
- Smart audio book players on smartphones

7.6.4 Outreach

- Work with a blind consultant for advice when organizing services and events for community members who are blind.
- Collaborate and partner with blind and visual impairment associations, employment agencies, schools, health services, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Ask community members who are blind and visually impaired about their library needs.
- Invite interested organizations that serve people who are blind and visually impaired to tour the library and suggest ways to make it more accessible.
- Offer to speak about the library at associations and agencies that serve people with visual disabilities.
- If a regional or national talking book library is available, refer patrons to them.
- Make sure that electronic materials are accessible and that videos have accurate subtitles and audio descriptions.

7.6.5 Programs, activities, and services

- Ensure the meeting place's layout is consistent. Visually impaired people tend to be most comfortable with a known environment. An unpredictable environment may cause movement difficulty and sometimes anxiety.
- Organize a study circle group about accessibility of information for blind and visually impaired persons.
- Start a book club for community members who are blind or have visual impairments.
- Invite persons who are blind or with visual impairments to discuss their situations in school, work, and society.
- Invite famous blind people to the library to talk about their lives.
- Regularly share information for professionals on the library website and social networks and use the library blog to highlight what can be found in the library on the topics of blindness and visual impairment.
- Communicate with people who are blind or have visual impairments through the library website and social networks to reach the target audience who use computers and social networks. To reach blind people who do not have internet access or relevant skills, library staff should attend meetings or events of associations serving people with visual impairments.
- Organize training for visually impaired people on how to use digital technologies.
- Organize tours of the library for visually impaired visitors. During tours, give them the opportunity to touch all the corners and become familiar with the spaces. It will be easier for them to visit the library without a guide and will support their independence and self-confidence in the library.

7.7 Deaf, hard of hearing or Deafblind

Deafness or hearing loss, depending on when it occurred, is often called "an invisible disability." An observer cannot determine whether someone is Deaf, hard of hearing, or Deafblind at the first point of contact. A person who cannot hear, as well as someone with a hearing threshold of 20 dB or better in both ears, is said to have hearing loss. Hearing loss may be mild, moderate, severe, or profound. It can affect one or both ears, leading to difficulty in hearing conversational speech or loud sounds.

Hard of hearing refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. People who are hard of hearing usually communicate through spoken language

and can benefit from hearing aids, cochlear implants, captioning, and other assistive devices.

Deaf people have profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing. They frequently use sign language for communication.

Deafblind is a term used to describe people with a distinct condition that combines, in varying degrees, both hearing and visual impairment. Two sensory impairments multiply and intensify each other's impact, creating a severe disability unique from each separate disability. Alongside communication difficulties, there can also be challenges with movement without a guide.

It is of utmost importance to understand the difference between these disabilities and to use proper terminology. (World Health Organization, Senses Australia)

7.7.1 Library staff

- Staff should have general knowledge regarding deafness. For example, library staff should know about the importance of the time of onset, differences in communication regarding hearing loss, and the difference between Deaf, hard of hearing or Deafblind and Deaf culture.
- Library staff should consider the quality of services provided for all library users to ensure that the level of services offered is the same for all users, including Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind users.
- Library staff should consult with local associations and groups providing services to those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind to sensitize library staff to the needs of their library users.
- When selecting an employee to provide services to those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, they should be empathetic and approachable and ideally already have the necessary education, along with previous experience.
- When communicating with library users who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, library staff should know:
 - To speak at a natural speed
 - Not to overemphasize lip movements
 - To be aware of noise from a light source – high-pitched noises from lights can interfere with hearing devices, and dimly lit areas can make it more challenging to lip-read
 - To use pen and paper to ease communication

- How to use available electronic devices to communicate (mobile phones, computers, tablets)
- To insert pauses when changing the subject of a conversation and highlight topics of conversation so the deaf and hearing impaired can follow the conversation. They may be lip-reading, and these pauses will help them understand that the conversation is shifting.

7.7.2 Library media and materials

- DVDs, streaming videos, and other visual media in the library collection or shown in library programming must have closed or open captions and sign language, where available
- Easy-to-read materials available for persons who need them since persons with hearing loss may have reading difficulties, depending on the time of onset of their hearing challenge
- Children's books with DVDs, with content in sign language
- Webpages and content on social networks written in large fonts with contrasting backgrounds.
- Resources such as interpreters, assistive listening systems, and equipment to support Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) or similar options.
- Presentations written in large, easily read fonts, high contrast, small amounts of text on each slide, and transcripts.

7.7.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

Hearing Assistive Technology

- Hearing Loops, called Induction Loops or Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems (AFILS). Loops are the most user-friendly of assistive listening options. Hearing loops are simple, discreet, and effective. Users switch their devices to the telecoil program and automatically receive clear, customized sound directly to their ears
- Infrared Systems (IR) that work like TV remote control with a transmitter that sends speech or music from a public address or sound system to an IR receiver using invisible infrared light waves
- FM Systems, or Radio Frequency Assistive Listening Systems, transmit wireless, low-power FM frequency radio transmission from a sound system to FM receivers

- Augmentative and alternative communication devices such as picture boards, tablets, or any other device with touch screens
- Digitized Speech AAC Device/Smartphone with applications and communication boards that can produce digitized speech when the user either types a message or presses on images and words
- Speech-to-text/voice recognition software
- Smartphones/cameras to communicate in sign language
- Software/programs for closed captions
- Wireless connection to a projector or TV
- SMS, MMS, and other programs for text communication
- Text Magnifier/Reader for deafblind users

7.7.4 Outreach

- Collaborate with Deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind associations and representatives of the Deaf and Deafblind community.
- Invite representatives of the Deaf and Deafblind community to propose new programs and services at the library.
- Organize events related to getting to know your library and its programs and services for the deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.
- Mark essential dates for the Deaf and Deafblind community with relevant activities and advertise them.

7.7.5 Events, activities, and services

- Systematic staff education to provide better services for deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind
- Sign language courses for library staff and members of the community
- On-call sign language interpreter for activities, programs, and services
- Instant Messaging (IM), texting, or other virtual reference services
- Chat/video call zones on library webpages
- Usage of social networks and communication through them with sign language
- Presenting well-known deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind persons from the community or the world

- Exhibitions of deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind artists
- Events that sensitize the community to the specific communication needs of deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind
- Presenting and promoting literature of importance for the Deaf and Deafblind community
- Closed captions of all the video materials on the web page, YouTube, and social networks
- Employment of deaf, hard of hearing, or a deafblind person as a part of the library staff or as a volunteer
- Theatre plays in sign language
- Promotion of dual education for deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind children and young adults

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7.8 Persons with dyslexia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or other learning disabilities

"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." (The International Dyslexia Association, 2002)

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. (National Institute of Mental Health)

Learning disabilities is “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.” Such term does not include “a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disabilities, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA)

It is important to note that learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, or dyslexia are not related to intelligence level or caused by vision problems or deficiencies in teaching, social conditions, or motivation. Learning disabilities can have genetic causes or may have arisen from an injury or illness.

In this section, the term learning disabilities is used to refer to dyslexia and ADD/ADHD, and other similar disabilities.

7.8.1 Library staff

- All staff should understand learning disabilities, how people live with them, and how to meet and serve persons with learning disabilities.
- Remember to use plain language in all communication: on the web and in pamphlets, brochures, mail, notes, and all other text.
- Market the event, activities, and services in an accessible format that addresses the specific needs of people with learning disabilities. Avoid long paragraphs of information. Consider using bullets to convey critical information so that information can be clearly seen and more easily understood.
- Be patient. Learning disabilities are non-visible and may need additional patience to determine the specific need and service.

7.8.2 Library media and materials

- Easy-to-read and print materials, particularly for those with dyslexia
- Audiobooks, e-books, and graphic novels
- DAISY (Digital Access Information SYstem) talking books with full text and full audio
- Tactile books, toys, games, and movement space for those with ADD.

7.8.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Assistive pens/glasses
- Audio/video equipment
- Computer programs and applications, such as dictation (speech-to-text)
- Speech synthesis (using a speech synthesizer)

7.8.4 Outreach

- Partner with learning disabilities associations to identify the needs of your people with learning disabilities and market your events to this community. Reach out to employment agencies, schools, health services, other community agencies, accessibility offices, and organizations that might serve people with learning disabilities.
- Consistently ask people with learning disabilities about their library needs.
- Arrange a library tour for people with learning disabilities, emphasizing the collection and services designed to meet their needs.

7.8.5 Programs, activities, and services

- Provide a meeting place for people with learning disabilities to gather.
- Organize a study group about learning disabilities.
- Invite community members to library lectures about learning disabilities.
- Invite persons with learning disabilities to share their stories about their experiences in school, at work, and as individuals.
- Invite famous persons with learning disabilities to talk about their experiences.
- Offer a drop-in café with technology support.
- Ask people with dyslexia to tour the library and identify areas that may prove difficult for people with dyslexia.
- Start a book club for people with dyslexia using an easier-to-read book.
- Plan activities to engage people with ADD. Have items for children with ADD to play with during story hours. Keep stories short to engage children with ADD.

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https://repository.ifla.org/bitstream/123456789/498/1/guidelines-for-library-services-to-persons-with-dyslexia_2014.pdf

7.9 Persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia

Definition of Dementia: Dementia is a syndrome in which memory, thinking, behaviour, and the ability to perform everyday activities deteriorate. Although dementia primarily affects older people, it is not a normal part of aging.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and may contribute to 60–70% of cases. Dementia is one of the significant causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. Dementia has a physical, psychological, social, and economic impact, not only on people with dementia but also on their caregivers, families, and society at large. (WHO, 2021)

7.9.1 Library staff

To support library users with dementia, library staff should:

- Learn from and work with professionals in the field. Multi-professional cooperation is essential.
- Use patience and work in close cooperation with family members and caregivers.

- Smile and be welcoming, listen closely, speak slowly and clearly, and offer help if the person looks confused or distressed.

7.9.2 Library media and materials

Create memory boxes or reminiscence kits. The boxes can contain childhood toys, kitchen utensils, old magazines, or local memorabilia. Note that the library users in your area may have diverse cultural backgrounds and languages; therefore, be sure to reflect their lives in the kits. Other ideas include:

- Easy-to-read materials
- Picture and illustrated books
- Books designed for reading aloud
- Music and videos
- Talking books and audiobooks
- Books to help them feel comfortable in the local environment

7.9.3 Assistive/adaptive technology

- Assistive technology screens, like any computer display, are often easily visible to nearby people and can be used to protect the privacy of all users. Screen reading technology and magnifying technology require line-of-sight considerations in the design and layout of library facilities.
- Literacy software and hardware, which assists users with reading and writing tasks
- Speech recognition software, which enables users to navigate and document text through verbal input

7.9.4 Outreach

- Work with local Alzheimer's organizations and seek their advice on best serving people with dementia or Alzheimer's. Ask for suggestions for exciting programs or events.
- Offer to do programs in assisted living and memory care facilities.
- Offer deposit collections to assisted living facilities or help them organize their library with collections designed for people with dementia or Alzheimer's.

7.9.5 Programs, activities, and services

Events should be arranged explicitly for persons with dementia and not for the general public at the same time. Consider opening the library an hour early to accommodate people with dementia or Alzheimer's.

- Ideally, the group should have no more than eight persons. If possible, the participants should be at the same stage in their dementia.
- If possible, avoid bringing together people living in homes with people living in nursing homes.
- Plan the event to take place in the daytime.
- Limit the event or program to 30-40 minutes. Longer events can be more challenging for participants to keep their focus.
- Choose a room in the library that is quiet and calm. Sounds and disturbances can be complex for people with dementia.
- Allow enough time for each person to participate and be patient.
- Keep eye contact and be aware of body language.
- Simple services like providing coffee/hot drinks and refreshments can make the event feel special.
- Send the event invitation directly to the person if they live at home. If not, send it to a relative or staff member at the care home. Also, send one to the local dementia organization.
- Partner with dementia organizations, staff at an institution, and other specialists, such as music or art therapists, to arrange events.
- Use Memory boxes in different subjects to help start a conversation. Host a Memory Café at the Library or in a local care facility.
- Host a book club. Depending on the participants, this could include easy-to-read books. Provide newspapers and news discussions.
- Connect with or create your reading ambassadors.
- Conduct book talks by library staff can be an enjoyable activity and may lead to a joint discussion.

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7.10 Persons living with mental health issues

"A mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life. Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder." (National Alliance on Mental Illness, Iowa, 2024)

Some (but certainly not all) library users who show signs of mental illness can exhibit behaviour that is confusing and upsetting to the toughest and most seasoned among library practitioners. These behaviours can include wandering erratically, holding a loud and animated conversation with themselves, or the adult with obsessive-compulsive disorder who requests that library staff check out their books in a certain way.

Mental illness can affect a person's mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. It is important not to offer generalizations about persons with mental illnesses. Different illnesses will have various manifestations, and people manage their illnesses uniquely. Anxiety disorders and mood disorders, including depression, bipolar disorders, and schizophrenia, are the disorders library staff are most likely to be aware they are encountering.

7.10.1 Library staff

- Receive training on mental health and best practices for interacting with those with mental health challenges.
- Train staff to navigate unfamiliar conversations and make relevant and appropriate decisions.
- Treat people with mental health challenges with the same respect and consideration as other library users.

- Be polite. Use correct and respectful vocabulary in any conversation, informed by training and direct interactions with people with mental health challenges. Focus on the behaviour rather than the library user.
- Avoid making assumptions based on behaviour or appearance. For example, remember that library users are just as likely to be talking on the phone as talking to themselves.
- Develop library policies and procedures that aid library staff in their interactions with library users who have mental health challenges.
- Set and enforce standards of acceptable behaviour.
- Respect the privacy of each library user—have a private and safe place to converse if necessary.
- Allow enough time to meet the needs of library users with orientation difficulties.
- Be aware of the wide range of behaviours associated with mental health challenges. Help increase community awareness of mental health with displays, programs, books, and other materials.
- Select and recommend titles on mental health topics based on community needs and requests.
- Avoid sharing anecdotal stories to demonstrate your understanding; this may convey the wrong message.
- Make common behaviours seem less threatening by learning more about the range of mental health challenges and making information about mental health and symptoms available on your website.

7.10.2 Effective communication

- Be polite. As possible, stay calm and use appropriate phrases in conversation.
- Treat all patrons equally and respect personal privacy.
- Make a statement rather than asking a question.
- Use firm, assertive, but not aggressive language. Avoid a tone of voice or the use of phrases that might be considered judgmental, moralizing, or condescending. Try not to show anger, fear, disapproval, or disgust.
- As much as possible, avoid being hesitant or unsure of yourself.
- Remember to address the situation and the action rather than the person. Focus on the inappropriate behaviour, not the patron. Rather than saying,

“You are disturbing other library users,” say instead, “Using a loud voice and slamming books are inappropriate behaviours in the library.”

7.10.3 Library media and materials

- People with mental illness are interested in the same media and materials as other library users. The library can purchase a collection of resources specifically on mental health for the staff to refer people who may ask for help.

7.10.4 Outreach

- Form partnerships with agencies, professionals, and self-advocates to assess and meet the needs of people living with mental illness. Include group homes, state institutions, mental health clinics, and facilities.
- Identify resources available to community members with mental health challenges so you can refer people as appropriate.
- Ask local and national organizations for community resources for community members with mental health challenges.

7.10.5 Programs, activities, and services

- Invite speakers to the library who have expertise in mental health and can distinguish between facts and myths.
- Provide displays, programs, and materials related to mental health.
- Organize civic engagement conversations related to mental health.
- Offer meeting room space to mental health-focused groups.

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7.11 Persons with cognitive disabilities or autism spectrum disorder

Intellectual disability is a condition characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour that originates before age twenty-two and continues throughout life. Intellectual functioning—intelligence—refers to general mental capacities, such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. Some people with ASD have a known cause, such as a genetic condition. Other causes are not yet known. Scientists believe multiple causes of ASD act together to change the most common ways people develop.

People with ASD may behave, communicate, interact, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. Often, nothing about how they look sets them apart from other people. The abilities of people with ASD can vary significantly. For example, people with ASD may have advanced conversation skills, whereas others may be nonverbal. People with ASD may need help in their daily lives; others can work and live with little to no support. (Centres for Disease Control)

This section covers the needs of those with intellectual disability and persons with autism who have limited functional ability.

7.11.1 Library staff

- Be able to communicate effectively with individuals with cognitive disabilities, keeping their communication preferences in mind.
- Communicate directly with the library user, if possible, not with their caregivers.
- Provide individual support, such as library tours.
- Be open-minded and non-judgmental about behaviours that draw attention to what an individual is doing and if needed, provide a private calming space.
- If a library user has memory challenges, document or record what is discussed so they can use it later for their reference.
- Provide assistive technology as needed.

7.11.2 Library environment

- Provide a space in the library that is quiet and relaxing.
- Provide clear signage (e.g., toilet, quiet space, water fountain).
- Modify the library's physical environment to make it more comfortable
- Modify the library environment to meet the sensory needs of library users.

7.11.3 Library media and materials

- Easy-to-read media and materials, balancing easy-to-read with adult content
- Movies, videos, and music to engage
- Craft materials for a creative outlet

7.11.4 Technology

- Text-to-speech software
- Password manager
- Toggle to turn captions on/off
- DAISY (Digital Access Information SYstem) books

7.11.5 Outreach

- Contact organizations representing people with developmental disabilities and their caregivers and ask how to serve their clients best.

- Contact homes for people with developmental disabilities and invite them to the library programs.
- Publicize the services you offer to this group on your media.

7.11.6 Programs, activities, and services

- Story hours with easy-to-read books with adult content or craft events
- Opportunities for volunteer work at the library
- Tours of the library to help users be comfortable in the library

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7.12 Persons who cannot come to the library/home delivery

The library's mission is to provide good service to all community members. This includes persons with disabilities who are homebound and cannot visit the library alone.

Homebound is defined as being confined to the residence, either temporarily or permanently, due to illness, accident, disability, or other mobility challenges.

The library can have home delivery services designed for those homebound, including those living in care facilities. Personalized home visits by librarians or library volunteers can bring the range of choices and services the library offers into the home.

Home delivery can be offered to community members of all ages, from children to elderly seniors. It can help families with seriously ill children utilize the library's resources. For example, this service may be the only way to access fairy tales and stories. Home delivery will also help persons in isolation use the library.

7.12.1 Library staff

- Begin with a visit to the person's home to discover their interests, hobbies, and preferences in literature and authors. Allow time to get to know each person, including, as appropriate, meeting relatives or caregivers.
- Frequently, the same library staff who provide services to people with disabilities in the library building also offer home delivery services and are knowledgeable about and comfortable providing these services.
- All staff at the library should be familiar with this service and feel comfortable providing information about it.
- The homebound service needs to feel safe for library users and library staff. Library users may be apprehensive about letting a stranger into their home, and staff may be equally worried about visiting a stranger.

7.12.4 Outreach

- Connections to reach potential community members for home delivery:
- Relatives and caregivers.
- Home care staff, hospitals, health centres, meal delivery services
- Organisations for a range of health conditions

- Senior clubs, senior citizen organisations
- Newspapers, local radio
- The local municipality website, the library website, and other related websites
- Municipality staff who are connected to persons who are homebound

7.12.2 Delivery services

- Materials can be delivered by library staff or a volunteer who picks up the materials at the library.
- It may be appreciated if the delivery person has the time to discuss the books.
- If possible, loan periods should be longer than the usual library period.
- Arrange regular contact with the user to determine what resources are needed and when. Home delivery service must offer everything available at the library.

7.12.3 Activities, programs, and services

- If transportation is a challenge, the library may be able to arrange transportation to the library for programs.
- An online book club can also work well. This might require extra help with the computer and the Internet. Library staff, relatives, caregivers, or local organisations and associations may be able to assist.
- Reading Ambassadors read aloud to homebound persons at their homes. The library, along with volunteers, can make the arrangements.

7.12.7 Digital development and assistive technology

New solutions concerning digital development (using digital tools and applying digital technologies) and assistive technology should be developed and provided so library users and staff can communicate. Possibilities include Zoom, Teams, or cable television.

Resources

ASGCLA (ALA) (n.d.). "Ideas and models for offering programs," An excerpt from "101 Ideas for Serving the Impaired Elderly," an Association of Specialized,

Government, and Cooperative, Library Agencies (ASGCLA) publication that is out of print. <http://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/101ideasserving>

Appendix A: Glossary of Common Terms

This appendix provides definitions of frequently used terms related to accessibility. It is not exhaustive but intended as a quick reference tool. Adding other terms that may be relevant to your library and the community you serve.

Accessibility: A commitment to making information, resources, websites, the physical environment, transportation, communication, and other aspects of daily life accessible by removing barriers and offering a wide range of opportunities and connections.

Adaptive technology: “Adaptive technologies refer to special versions of existing technologies or tools, usually used by people with disabilities such as limitations to vision, hearing, and mobility.” Examples of adaptive technology include screen magnifiers and screen reader software. In other words, adaptive technology works as an “add-on” for an existing technology that helps disabled individuals access that technology (Assistive Tech, 2015). Consequently, **adaptive technology** is a subset of **assistive technology**. **Adaptive technology** often refers to access to electronic and information technology (Dakota Center for Independent Living, n.d.).

Alternative text (alt text): “Alt text, sometimes known as ‘alt attributes’ or ‘alt descriptions,’ is text (in HTML or other written, electronic copy) used to convey the image’s content or function to screen-reading software. Alt text is also used in place of an image in the event of broken image links or insufficient bandwidth to load images” (Towson University, n.d.).

Alzheimer’s: See Dementia.

Assistive technology: Assistive technology is an umbrella term often confused with adaptive technology. It is defined as “any item, piece of equipment, service or product system including software that is used to increase, maintain, substitute or improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities or for, alleviation and compensation of impairments, activity limitations or participation restrictions” (Dakota Center for Independent Living, n.d.).

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder: Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

(National Institute of Mental Health)

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD): A developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. Some people with ASD have a known cause, such as a genetic condition. Other causes are not yet known. Scientists believe multiple causes of ASD act together to change the most common ways people develop.

Braille: “Braille is a system of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or who have low vision...Braille is not a language. Rather, it is a code by which many languages—such as English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and dozens of others—may be written and read” (AFB, American Foundation for the Blind).s

Braille Display, Refreshable: “A refreshable braille display is a peripheral device that allows blind or visually impaired people to interact with a computer. A braille monitor uses the braille system that blind people use to read. Raised dots spell out text the user traces a finger over to read” (techopedia, n.d.).

Braille Ready Format (BRF): “BRF (Braille Ready Format) is an electronic text file that is transcribed into Braille. You will need specialized software or hardware to open and read BRF files” (Bookshare, n.d.).

Captioning: Also known as close captioning and live/real-time captioning. For people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, captioning is On-screen text that provides the exact words being spoken aloud as they are being spoken. Captioning can be computer-generated or human-generated. Due to common and frequent errors in computer-generated captioning, real-time captioning is recommended if possible and financially feasible, especially for programs specifically for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Cochlear implant (CI): A cochlear implant is an electronic device surgically implanted and worked by directly stimulating functioning auditory nerve fibers in the inner ear. Cochlear implants convert sound waves to electrical impulses and transmit them to the inner ear, providing people with severe to profound hearing loss, the ability to hear sounds, and potentially a better understanding of speech without reading lips. (Hearing Loss Association of America)

Cognitive disability/intellectual disability: Cognitive disabilities, or intellectual disabilities, are defined as difficulties or limitations regarding mental functioning or social skills.

Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART): “A professional service that can be delivered on location or remotely. CART services provide the instant translation of spoken words into text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer, and real-time software. The text produced by the CART service can be displayed on an individual’s computer monitor, projected onto a screen,

combined with a video presentation to appear as captions, or otherwise made available using other transmission and display systems” (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, n.d.).

DAISY: DAISY stands for Digital Accessible Information System. The DAISY/NISO Standard is the Digital Talking Book specification for creating accessible digital content for persons with reading difficulties such as dyslexia, blindness, low vision, and other print disabilities. It is a multimedia standard that supports the traditional presentation of images and text, audio, content navigation, and animation. It has been developed and maintained by the [DAISY Consortium](#), an international non-profit membership organization founded in 1996. Three kinds of DAISY books are widespread worldwide: Navigable audiobooks, text-only books, and full-text audiobooks.

Deaf: Deaf refers to people who usually have no useful residual hearing and use sign language as their primary mode of communication. This group of people is culturally Deaf and uses the uppercase “D” when writing the term. However, people who are audiological deaf (using a lowercase “d”) use their residual hearing with speechreading, amplification, hearing aids or cochlear implants, and other hearing assistive technology. The term deaf should always be used with a people descriptor; for example, people who are Deaf, people who are deaf, and deaf people. (Hearing Loss Association of America)

Deafblindness: “Deafblindness is a combined vision and hearing impairment of such severity that it is hard for the impaired senses to compensate for each other. Two sensory impairments multiply and intensify the impact of each other, creating a severe disability, which is unique from each separate disability” (World Federation of Deafblind)

Dementia: A syndrome in which there is deterioration in memory, thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform everyday activities. Although dementia affects older people, it is not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and may contribute to 60–70% of cases.

Dyslexia: “Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities” (The International Dyslexia Association, 2002).

Easy-to-read materials/texts: Easy-to-read materials are one form of accessible information. They help ensure written and digital information is simpler to understand and more accessible to people with learning disabilities. They are written with everyday simple words, larger print, and short sentences. There are lines of text on each page, and explanatory images often support the text. Easy-

to-read materials include straightforward and simple actions and simpler words that are still adult and age-appropriate.

Easy-to-read texts are adapted to target groups who have specific reading difficulties, for example, due to an intellectual or neuropsychiatric disability or due to dementia. Easy-to-read texts can also be for new readers or readers who are new to the language of the text.

EPUB: The EPUB specification is a distribution and interchange format standard for digital publications and documents. EPUB defines a means of representing, packaging, and encoding structured and semantically enhanced Web content — including HTML5, CSS, SVG, images, and other resources — for distribution in a single-file format. EPUB publications can be downloaded and read using smartphones, tablets, e-readers, and computers (.).

Graphic novels: Graphic novels are bounded narratives told in both art and text with a complete story arc (beginning, middle, and end) that encompasses multiple genres and is designed for a wide range of readers at a wide range of ages (KNILT, n.d.).

Hard of hearing: Hard of hearing is a descriptive term used when distinguishing between people with hearing loss, for example, people who are deaf and those hard of hearing. People often use the term hard of hearing to describe themselves, no matter the audiological level of hearing loss. Typically, people who use residual hearing, amplification, or hearing assistive technology and do not use sign language as a primary mode of communication consider themselves hard of hearing rather than deaf. (Hearing Loss Association of America)

Hearing loop: Hearing loops provide a magnetic wireless signal that a hearing aid can pick up.

Homebound: Being confined to the residence, either temporarily or permanently, due to illness, accident, disability, or other mobility challenges.

Identity-first language: Language in which the emphasis is on the disability— for example, disabled person, deaf person, blind person. Some groups prefer this approach. It is also best to ask and listen to determine the preferred language. (See person-first language.)

Inclusion (in classrooms): In inclusive classrooms, children with disabilities are included in the general classrooms and are only removed temporarily if necessary accommodation is unavailable. The children are provided with supportive technology and trained staff to ensure equity.

Learning disabilities: “A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.” Such term does not include “a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disabilities, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”

Mainstreaming (in schools): Mainstreaming means children with disabilities are primarily in separate learning environments (sometimes called “special education classes”) but are included in the general classrooms for specific subjects. If needed and possible, a support person accompanies them.

Marrakesh Treaty: “The WIPO-administered Marrakesh Treaty makes the production and international transfer of specially adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments easier. It does this by establishing a set of limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law” (WIPO, n.d.).

Mental health issues: “Mental health illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities” (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.).

Online accessibility: “Online Accessibility refers to the ability of users to access internet content regardless of physical impairments (such as visual or motor impairments) that might keep them from being able to access it otherwise” (Kennesaw State University, n.d.).

Optical Character Recognition (OCR): OCR is an image recognition technique in which computers recognize handwritten or machine-written characters (ScienceDirect, 2019).

Person-first language: Language in which the emphasis is on the person rather than the disability. For example, “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person.” Some groups prefer this approach. It is always best to ask and listen to know the preferred language. (See identify-first language.)

Personal Librarian: Your Personal Librarian is a specific service the library can provide, making it easier for community members to use the library. These are librarians with extra qualifications related to dyslexia or other disabilities (IFLA, 2015).

Print disability: “A print disability is a learning, physical or visual disability that prevents a person from reading conventional print” (Centre for Equitable Library Access, n.d.).

Screen magnifier: Enlarges the images/text on a screen.

Screen reader: Assistive technology that converts text and other elements on a screen into speech or Braille.

SEN (Special Educational Needs): “Special educational needs, often referred to as ‘SEN’ or ‘SEND’ (Special educational needs and disabilities), is a term used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child to learn compared to children of the same age. Some children may have SEND because of a medical condition or disability; other children may have SEND without a diagnosis or disability” (KIDS, n.d.). Because of the increasing discomfort with the term “special needs,” consider using the term “children with disabilities” when referring directly to children, rather than SEN or SEND.

Special needs: A term used to describe the information and resources needed by people with disabilities. This term is preferred by some and rejected by others, so listening to the community being served is recommended.

Speech synthesizer: “Speech synthesis, or text-to-speech, is a category of software or hardware that converts text to artificial speech” (University of Kansas, Department of Special Education, n.d.).

Total blindness: Total blindness is the complete lack of light perception and form perception, and is recorded as "NLP," an abbreviation for "no light perception" (American Foundation for the Blind, n.d.).

United Nations Sustainability Goals: “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership.” <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Universal design (UD): The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without needing adaptation or specialized design. An example of universal design is a ramp in the place of stairs.

Visual impairment/low vision: Visual impairment or low vision is a reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses, and it reduces a person's ability to perform specific or all tasks. It includes (1) the inability to see images clearly and distinctly; (2) a loss of visual field; (3) the inability to detect minor changes in brightness; (4) colour blindness; and (5) sensitivity to light.

WAVE (Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool): “WAVE® is a suite of evaluation tools that helps authors make their web content more accessible to individuals with disabilities” (WAVE, n.d.).

The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI): Develops web accessibility guidelines, technical specifications, and educational resources to help make the web accessible to people with disabilities.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2: is developed through the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) process in cooperation with individuals and organizations around the world to provide a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organizations, and governments internationally, <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>.

WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization): “WIPO is the global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information, and cooperation. We are a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 193 member states.” (WIPO, n.d.).

Appendix B: Acknowledgements

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, libraries, as public institutions, are obliged to implement accessibility and inclusion. This is a challenge but also an opportunity. Access to information, knowledge, and reading fiction, nonfiction, stories, and poetry enables and supports persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. It strengthens the role of libraries as crucial actors in promoting inclusion and human rights.

These guidelines are a revision of the 2005 “Access to Libraries for Persons with Disabilities Checklist.” They were developed by an international working group and experts under the responsibility of the Equitable and Accessible Library Services Section (EALS) in cooperation with the **Libraries Serving People with Print Disabilities**.

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