LIBRARIES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

ACCESSIBLE, SMALL, AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

SERVING PATRONS WITH DISABILITIES

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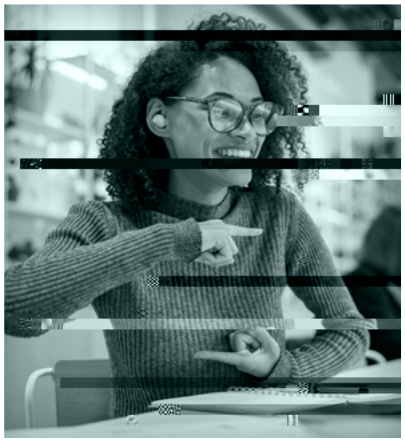

American Library Association

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It's important to understand the di erent ways disability is defined—and why—for both legal and social reasons.

Overarching Legal Definition

As defined by ***the Americans with Disabilities Act***

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Education Law Definition

As defined by ***the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*** *and* ***Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act***

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Employment Law Definition

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Disability Etiquette—Basic Rules of Thumb

If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if they need it, then listen to and honor what they say

Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to get things done or said

Treat adults accordingly; for example, don't speak to a disabled adult like a child

Avoid infantilizing or condescending the person with the disability. Call a person by their first name only when you extend this familiarity to everyone presmerypst.6 (s)9 (r)9.8 (a)122C D 446gs/C20 1 Tf0 Tc 0 Tw 10y81 5.1

- [illegible] adults and children with disabilities in institutions
- Failing to incorporate accessibility into building design plans
- Buildings without braille on signs, elevator buttons, etc
- Building inaccessible websites
- The assumption that people with disabilities want or need to be “fixed”
- Using disability as a punchline, or mocking people with disabilities
- Refusing to provide reasonable accommodations
- The [illegible] movement of the early 1900s
- The [illegible] of disabled people in Nazi Germany

Along with these examples, there are also many di□erent forms of less obvious, everyday ableism. These would include:

- Seeing someone who has a disability as extraordinary for doing typical things
- Choosing an inaccessible venue for a meeting or event, thereby excluding some participants
- Using someone else’s mobility device as a hand or foot rest
- Framing disability as either tragic or [illegible] in news stories, movies, and other popular forms of media
- C [illegible] - [illegible] to play a disabled character in a play, movie, TV show, or commercial
- Making a movie without an audio description or closed captioning
- Using an accessible bathroom stall when you are able to use another stall without pain or risk of injury
- Wearing scented products in a scent-free environment
- Talking to a person with a disability like they are a child, talking about them instead of directly to them, or [illegible]
- A [illegible] about the medical history or personal life of someone with a disability
- Assuming people have to have a visible disability to actually be disabled
- Questioning if someone is “actually” disabled, or “how much” they are disabled

- Never touch a person with a disability or their mobility equipment without consent
- Never touch a person's service animal; remember that they are working
- Keep invasive questions to yourself
- Don't speak on behalf of someone with a disability unless they explicitly ask you to
- Talk about disability with
- Incorporate accessibility into your
- Learn more about being a

Engage People with Disabilities

Following the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act is a bare minimum, not a gold standard of accessibility. For true accessibility, it is best to adhere to the motto "nothing about us without us," which is a guiding principle of the disability rights movement. F A 1990, and then in the United States, it remains the rallying cry of activists organizing against systemic oppression with the goal of people with disabilities taking control over decisions a□ecting their lives.

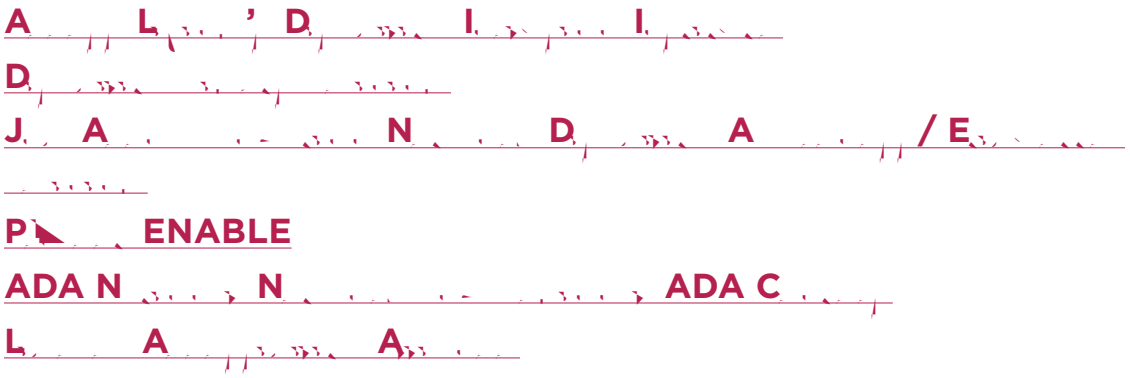
As this motto makes clear, the best way to create accessible libraries is to proactively include people with disabilities in discussions about the design of facilities, programs, and service o□erings. Disabled people should be engaged in both the planning and implementation stages of any e□orts you take on, as they have vital information about how to make accessibility really work. Drawing upon their lived experiences will make your facilities, processes, services, and programming more accessible to everyone. To

the conversation with your ADA C, or re32/O /Layout 1BDC BT/T11 1 Tf

Disability is a rich, complex, and personal experience. Disability can also be traumatic, and it can be greeted with varying levels of acceptance and discrimination even within the disability community. Working alongside disabled people can help you be more mindful and help you steer clear of biases and stereotypes.

Participate in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Training

Disability work is everyone's responsibility—not simply a Human Resources function. One important way to ensure that everyone contributes to these e□orts is through sta□-wide disability inclusion training, which should be conducted by and in collaboration with people with disabilities. Consider as well the perspective of disability community members that have high support needs who may not be able to contribute to the creation of training materials and how their needs and rights are represented in accessibility training. For recommendations on training, see the following:



Developing a Disability Inclusion Mindset UdSs D2 Tm 3 ETEMC /

to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient, and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. The article “Equal Access: Universal Design for Libraries” by Sheryl Burgstahler o□ers some great tips for getting started with UD.

See the next page to learn the 7 principles of universal design.

Notes

Use this space to take notes, write down reflections, and list new ideas.

Prompts:

1. Think about the community your library serves and other organizations that also serve the same area. What current or new partners could you leverage to support your accessibility goals?
2. What are some ways that your library could engage community members with disabilities to share feedback about your space,

Assistive Technology/Sensory Tools

A (AT) are products, equipment, and systems that enhance learning, working, and daily living for persons with disabilities.

Below are some AT and sensory tools you may want to consider adding to your library:

- N -
- A L D (e.g. fidget spinners, kinetic sand, etc.)
- L P A (for more examples of sensory tools, see the programming section of this guide, p. 32).

Closed Captioning

Closed Captions help those who are Deaf or hard of hearing access audio-visual content. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provides guidelines for closed captioning that could be applied to videos, tutorials, or other resources the library provides. It is a good idea to use closed captions on any videos your library creates, and during virtual programs. According to the FCC', closed captions are required to be:

Accurate: Captions must match the spoken words in the dialogue and convey background noises and other sounds to the fullest extent possible

Synchronous: Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers

Complete: Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program to the fullest extent possible

Plain Language or Plain English

According to the Plain Language Action and Information Network, plain language or plain English is “communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.” Some plain language guidelines include:

- Formatting documents so readers understand how they are organized
- Using “you” and other pronouns
- Using the active voice instead of the passive voice
- Writing short sentences and paragraphs
- Using common, everyday words
- Creating easy-to-follow Lf6.3 (o)-14.9 (-(en-US)/MCI ≠Lan/GS1 gs/T13 1 Tf0.374t≠E

B P D (NLS). This free service provides books and audiobooks free of charge to qualified individuals who are residents of the United States. Once an individual has signed up, they can access materials through an app or have materials mailed to their homes.

Resources for Patrons with Disabilities

Creating a LibGuide or a webpage that connects patrons with disabilities to community resources is a good idea. You may want to think about including links for the following:

Assistive Technology (AT) centers: All states have at least one AT center, which may make assistive technology and devices available for short-term loan to people with disabilities. Examples of these include O A, N ' A P, A K, and the A P. Googling the name of your state with the words "assistive technology" should yield a result. For more information about these programs, ' A.

O: This agency provides job training and placement for people with disabilities. They may help with obtaining a driver's license, paying for college or vo-tech training, or with jobs and other employment-related needs.

J A N: This is an invaluable source for ideas about getting rid of the barriers people with disabilities encounter at work and in the world in general.

C L: These centers provide resources and help for people with disabilities, including help with h8 (o)29.9 0 13 81 380iv(l)3.9 (e

Other Resources

Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) provide information and support for youth up to the age of 22 who have disabilities, their families, and other caring adults. Each state has at least one PTI which you can find

Electronic Documents

In general, when creating an electronic document or resource, like PDFs, Google Documents, Word Documents, etc. you should:

- Use a readable, sans serif 12 or 14 point font
- Use color sparingly
- Make sure the file format is accessible
- Use built-in accessibility checkers in Word or Google Docs
- Lst e□ects in PowerPoint and other slar programs
- Choose one font and stick with it
- Use plain language as muSkh as possible
- Define any acronyms
- Include alt text for all images (unless they are merely decorative)
- Make sure all videos include closed captioning

For more information on creating accessible documents, see

Notes

consider potential audience members' ages, interests, and abilities. Doing this allows you to meet their needs and gets them invested in attending.

Let's look at a program to see how UDL works, starting with multiple means of presentation. As an example of how this has been implemented, consider a hypothetical prorS Pen-US (n)1e4.7 (o)13.8 (t)15. .9 (m)+0.621 0 0 1 [(E)3C3 5 Ds0)6.7

Once you have incorporated these guidelines, there is very little else to do. The last details will depend on the type of program.

Performances

Make sure performers can get to the performance area comfortably and can reach any microphones or podiums. Raised daises can be problematic for performers with mobility issues and those who are short

Reserve seating in the front for people with low vision, those who are hard of hearing, and people with ADHD

Craft or Book Discussion Programs

Try circles or U-shaped set-ups instead of rows, to encourage social interactions

Place supplies where everyone can reach them. Have two sets of supplies for easy access if nee&e it.4 (ey) (e)-32ee99.9802 Tm[a.8 (og)-10.71.4 (

Creating Accessible In-Person Programs

By applying UDL principles and the above guidelines, many aspects of in-person programs will be accessible, welcoming, and non-stigmatizing to patrons with or without disabilities. What counts for accessibility, however, will vary from program to program. Here are some guidelines for making di□erent program types accessible.

Books Clubs

O□ering material in the format, complexity, and reading level of participants is key to creating a barrier free book-related program. Materials should be appropriate for the age level of the audience, and participants must be able to read the book. Hi/lo books, material written for new adult readers, audio books, and books written for English Language learners can work well for these programs, and can also fill other collection needs. By o□ering multiple formats or multiple means of presentation, you expand your potential audience.

Books should be chosen by the participants, but sta□ can o□er a short list for consideration. While it can be tempting to avoid controversial books

For example, there are multiple formats available to tell the story of Temple Grandin including the YA graphic format *B a en: Rebel Ladie ho Rocked he Wo ld*, the children's book *The Gi l ho Tho gh in Pic e* , and the adult autobiography *Thinking in Pic e* .

Shakespeare's plays, *P ide and P ej dice*, *The Pa able of he So e* , and the U.S. Constitution are examples of titles available in multiple formats. Connect your patrons to the **N L B P D** to get to the formats they need. Ma0 1v /P e s.8 (ghu.6 (r)12.8 (e e)29

When planning the setup for a performance, take steps to protect the performers and the audience. Keeping these two groups separated is particularly important, and there are a variety of ways to erect barriers between them (for example, a raised stage, a rope across the front of the stage, or strategically placed chairs). Another option is to have volunteers stand discreetly by the performance area, which Music for Autism does for its concerts at the Brooklyn Public Library. Volunteers prevent participants from grabbing instruments during performances, and also encourage participation like dancing and using rhythm instruments at designated times.

Performers should be given microphones and asked to use them, even in “small spaces.” Projecting and speaking loudly can distort phonemes, making it di□cult for people who are hard of hearing to understand. Using assistive listening devices such as microphones, an FM system, or small portable transmitter and receiver can also help people with ADHD or sensory issues to focus. FM systems have come down in price considerably

Lectures, films, or other video programs can be problematic for people who are blind or have low vision, people who are Deaf, the hard of hearing, and the neurodiverse community. To make these programs more accessible:

- Always enable captioning
- When choosing films or videos, give priority to those that are audio-described for people who are blind. These can be available on a secondary audio channel made available to patrons who need it via FM system
- Make sure that visuals used in lectures are adequately described to support people who are blind or have low vision and to help those who are neurodiverse make sense of the context

For more detail on accessible performances, refer to the excellent guide from K C .

Sometimes it can be di cult to juggle accessibility needs. The features that make movies accessible to some can be challenging for others. For example, captions allow people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to access dialogue. However, they can be distracting for people with ADHD or mental health issues. If you cannot resolve the contradiction, try o ering the program twice, one with and once without the accommodations. If that is not possible, alternate programs accessible to one group with programs accessible to others. Make it clear in promotional materials which accessibility features will be available at any given program.

Maker Programs

Making things like art, food, or a bird house requires the correct tools, materials, and techniques. Understandable instructions are important, too.

Tools are important, and adaptive tools can sometimes be expensive. But inexpensive versions of these can often be made by combining basic tools with common items like duct tape, paper tape, and polyester or cotton padding. Unfortunately, are one tool that is di cult to adapt. At

Budget permitting, also consider:

- Spring assist scissors
- Rolling scissors

- Avoid using computer-generated backgrounds or blurred backgrounds, as these can be difficult to process or distracting for some people with mental health difficulties and/or autism

If you are sharing a slide presentation, remember:

- Use a serif-free font
- Separate text and graphics
- Describe any visuals such as pictures and graphs

Recorded Programs

- Once a presentation has been uploaded, edit the captions so they are more accurate
- Choose a platform that allows for pausing

Check out RUSA's [redacted] for more ideas and details.

Creating Accessible Passive Programs

The accessibility of passive programs depends on the availability of options. A general rule of thumb here is to provide multiple ways of completing activities, at different levels of difficulty. For example, for a puzzle program, offer puzzles of different sizes and with a varied complexity of pieces. Give patrons the option to choose between a 1,000-piece puzzle of a race at the Talladega SuperSpeedway, a 60-piece Ravensbuger race puzzle, a 5-piece wooden car cut out puzzle, and a car puzzle on a puzzle app. Alternatively, you can design your own puzzle by gluing a relevant picture to cardboard and cutting it into pieces. Having a QR code with a link to a YouTube video of Talladega Nights adds another layer of presentation to this passive proict0.7 (m)60.7 Span≤ActualTex

For gardening itself, it is important to provide program attendees with a variety of di□erent tools (and tool types), and to demonstrate that there are always at least two ways of doing anything

Notes

Use this space to take notes, write down reflections, and list new ideas.

Prompts:

1. Refer to the image on Page 34 regarding physical considerations as well as the bullets on Page 35 regarding sensory considerations when creating accessible event spaces. What guidelines shared to improve physical space could be applied to an upcoming library program? What are the barriers to making physical or sensory consideration changes in your library?
2. Think about the materials you need for an in-person art program--from instructions to supplies to tables and seating. How would you adapt this program to be accessible for someone who is blind or low vision? For someone with limited hand mobility?
3. What can you include in your program registration process to create a pathway for patrons to request accessibility services?

VI. Facilities

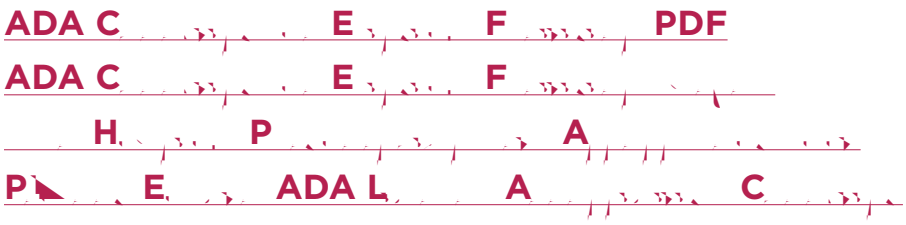
The intentional planning of your library's built environment is key to ensuring that all users are able to move in and through spaces as independently as possible. By auditing your facility to identify barriers, working with outside experts and forging local partnerships, and using the resources in this next section to help guide action items, library sta can make immediate impacts that create spaces that are navigable, thoughtful, and accessible to all visitors regardless of budget size.

Assessing the Accessibility of Library Facilities

It is important to note that not all facilities are the same, nor does every library system have access to the same level of resources. When assessing your library space, it is critical to first perform a physical audit of your space to identify the priority barriers that may need to be addressed. With this initial audit, consider asking a community member with a disability to help. Use the [redacted] as a starting point when reviewing all spaces in your facility. It is also recommended to work with a local architect or accessibility consultant familiar with building codes when assessing your venue's physical accessibility. Your

Increasing Facility Accessibility

Since ADA accessibility of facilities is very case-specific, experts recommend following ADA checklists like the examples provided below.



Other useful resources include regional ADA centers and .

Increasing Facility Accessibility on a Budget

- Plan budgeting with accessibility in mind at the foundation and identify what can be done now, in a year, in five years, etc.
- Research funding opportunities at the state, private, grass-roots, and national levels
- Identify the “low hanging fruit” (actions that can be made with no cost or very limited cost, and that will have immediate impact)
- Partner on a local level to allow for resource-sharing opportunities

The Library Building

Below are a few broad areas of focus that can be used when auditing your library’s parking, approach, entrance, and interior spaces. These items are pulled directly from the checklists found in the former section as examples, and are not to be taken as the only things to assess in your unique library space. As noted earlier, each facility layout and resources are di□erent, and it is important to identify both the barriers of space and pathways to improvements.

Signage

Create clear signage indicating where the ramp and front entrance is,

Notes

Use this space to take notes, write down reflections, and list new ideas.

Prompts:

1. Take some time to travel through your library space with a colleague, using one of the checklists referenced on Page 51. What could be a barrier for someone to navigate the space independently? Are the barriers you discovered the same as the barriers your colleague discovered? Identify what you both think are priority issues that may keep folks from visiting your space.
2. Examine the various furniture, desk heights, and table placements in your space. What adjustments could be made with little or no cost? What equipment should be prioritized for future budgeting?
3. Think about your emergency evacuation plan and sta training. Do these policies and practices include a plan for people with disabilities in case of emergency? How could your partnerships in the community help with inclusive emergency planning?

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VIII. Acknowledgements

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ABOUT the American Library Association

The American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization

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