

Different Voices, Common Quest:

ALA OLOS Preconference

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**SERVING PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES**

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Library Services for People with Disabilities

Policy Passes

On January 16, 2001, ALA Council, the governing body of the American Library Association, unanimously approved the following policy. The policy was written by the Americans with Disabilities Act Assembly, a representational group administered by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), a division of the American Library Association.

Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy

The American Library Association recognizes that people with disabilities are a large and neglected minority in the community and are severely underrepresented in the library profession. Disabilities cause many personal challenges. In addition, many people with disabilities face economic inequity, illiteracy, cultural isolation, and discrimination in education, employment and the broad range of societal activities.

Libraries play a catalytic role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their full participation in society. Libraries should use strategies based upon the principles of universal design to ensure that library policy, resources and services meet the needs of all people.

ALA, through its divisions, offices and units and through collaborations with outside associations and agencies is dedicated to eradicating inequities and improving attitudes toward and services and opportunities for people with disabilities.

For the purposes of this policy, "must" means "mandated by law and/or within ALA's control" and "should" means "it is strongly recommended that libraries make every effort to..."

1. The Scope of Disability Law

Providing equitable access for persons with disabilities to library facilities and services is required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, applicable state and local statutes and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA is the Civil Rights law affecting more Americans than any other. It was created to eliminate discrimination in many areas, including access to private and public services, employment, transportation and communication. Most libraries are covered by the ADA's Title I (Employment), Title II (Government Programs and Services) and Title III (Public Accommodations). Most libraries are also obligated under Section 504 and some have responsibilities under Section 508 and other laws as well.

2. Library Services

Libraries must not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and shall ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to library resources. To ensure such access, libraries may provide individuals with disabilities with services such as extended loan periods, waived late fines, extended reserve periods, library cards for proxies, books by mail, reference services by fax or email, home delivery service, remote access to the OPAC, remote electronic access to library resources, volunteer readers in the library, volunteer technology assistants in the library, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter or realtime captioning at library programs, and radio reading services.

Libraries should include persons with disabilities as participants in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of library services, programs, and facilities.

3. Facilities

The ADA requires that both architectural barriers in existing facilities and communication barriers that are structural in nature be removed as long as such removal is "readily achievable." (i.e., easily accomplished and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.)

The ADA regulations specify the following examples of reasonable structural modifications: accessible parking, clear paths of travel to and throughout the facility, entrances with adequate, clear openings or automatic doors, handrails, ramps and elevators, accessible tables and public service desks, and accessible public conveniences such as restrooms, drinking fountains, public telephones and TTYs. Other reasonable modifications may include visible alarms in rest rooms and general usage areas and signs that have Braille and easily visible character size, font, contrast and finish.

One way to accommodate barriers to communication, as listed in the ADA regulations, is to make print materials available in alternative formats such as large type, audio recording, Braille, and electronic formats. Other reasonable modifications to communications may include providing an interpreter or realtime captioning services for public programs and reference services through TTY or other alternative methods. The ADA requires that modifications to communications must be provided as long as they are "reasonable," do not "fundamentally alter" the nature of the goods or services offered by the library, or result in an "undue burden" on the library.

4. Collections

Library materials must be accessible to all patrons including people with disabilities. Materials must be available to individuals with disabilities in a variety of formats and with accommodations, as long as the modified formats and accommodations are "reasonable," do not "fundamentally alter" the library's services, and do not place an "undue burden" on the library. Examples of accommodations include assistive technology, auxiliary devices and physical assistance.

Within the framework of the library's mission and collection policies, public, school, and academic library collections should include materials with accurate and up-to-date information on the spectrum of disabilities, disability issues, and services for people with disabilities, their families, and other concerned persons. Depending on the community being served, libraries may include related medical, health, and mental health information and information on legal rights, accommodations, and employment opportunities.

5. Assistive Technology

Well-planned technological solutions and access points, based on the concepts of universal design, are essential for effective use of information and other library services by all people. Libraries should work with people with disabilities, agencies, organizations and vendors to integrate assistive technology into their facilities and services to meet the needs of people with a broad range of disabilities, including learning, mobility, sensory and developmental disabilities. Library staff should be aware of how available technologies address disabilities and know how to assist all users with library technology.

6. Employment

ALA must work with employers in the public and private sectors to recruit people with disabilities into the library profession, first into library schools and then into employment at all levels within the profession.

Libraries must provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities unless the library can show that the accommodations would impose an "undue hardship" on its operations. Libraries must also ensure that their policies and procedures are consistent with the ADA and other laws.

7. Library Education, Training and Professional Development

All graduate programs in library and information studies should require students to learn about accessibility issues, assistive technology, the needs of people with disabilities both as users and employees, and laws applicable to the rights of people with disabilities as they impact library services.

Libraries should provide training opportunities for all library employees and volunteers in order to sensitize them to issues affecting people with disabilities and

to teach effective techniques for providing services for users with disabilities and for working with colleagues with disabilities.

8. ALA Conferences

ALA conferences held at facilities that are "public accommodations" (e.g. hotels and convention centers) must be accessible to participants with disabilities.

The association and its staff, members, exhibitors, and hospitality industry agents must consider the needs of conference participants with disabilities in the selection, planning, and layout of all conference facilities, especially meeting rooms and exhibit areas. ALA Conference Services Office and division offices offering conferences must make every effort to provide accessible accommodations as requested by individuals with special needs or alternative accessible arrangements must be made.

Conference programs and meetings focusing on the needs of, services to, or of particular interest to people with disabilities should have priority for central meeting locations in the convention/conference center or official conference hotels.

9. ALA Publications and Communications

All ALA publications, including books, journals, and correspondence, must be available in alternative formats including electronic text. The ALA Web site must conform to the currently accepted guidelines for accessibility, such as those issued by the World Wide Web Consortium.

http://www.ala.org/ascia/access_policy.html

A TEN POINT PROCESS

1. Gather Information

On the Library

On the Community

On Individual Users and Non-Users

2. Convene a Planning Committee

People with disabilities & their families and caregivers

Representatives of other agencies & organizations

Representatives of other libraries

Representatives of your library staff

3. Identify Key Issues

First look at information gathered in #1

Discuss the current strengths & weaknesses of your community

Discuss the future opportunities & strengths

Identify the significant issues raised in the prior discussion Prioritize the issues

Select the issues which the library can best address

4. Analyze the Library's Current Plan

To make each section inclusive of people with disabilities

To ensure that the identified issues are addressed

5. Draft Goals and Objectives

6. Determine Available Resources

7. Finalize Goals and Objectives

8. Draft Plan

9. Finalize Plan

10. Evaluate

*From **Planning for Library Services for People with Disabilities** by Rhea Joyce Rubin. Chicago: ASCLA, 2001.*

CHECK YOUR LIBRARY'S CURRENT PLAN

1. Assess your library's current plan -both the mission statement and the implementation plan --from the point of view of patrons with disabilities.

For each part of your library's mission statement or plan for service, ask the following questions:

- Are our facilities *architecturally accessible*?
- Do we have the appropriate alternative *formats* of materials for people with disabilities?
- Does our *collection* address the information needs of people with disabilities? .Do we have alternative *modes of access* to this program or service?
- Do we need an enhanced or extended *service* or a special *program* to ensure that people with disabilities are included?
- Do the library *policies* related to this goal provide for special needs?
- Is *staff* trained in providing this service or program for people with disabilities?
- If *technology* is involved, do we have accessible equipment and adaptations needed for people with disabilities?

If the answer to any question is "no," an additional objective or activity should be written for that goal in the plan. Have your planning committee help you design the new objective or activity.

2. Now compare the issues identified at the retreat with your current plan. Is there a goal, objective, or activity in the plan that addresses each of the prioritized issues? Be sure to use the questions above to be sure that implementation includes the needs of people with disabilities.

If any of the identified issues from the advisory committee's retreat is not

apparent in the current plan, an additional goal, objective, or activity must be added. Again, the committee has the expertise to advise you on the contents of the goal.

3. At this point you also need to return to the results of the community scan and the user/ non-user surveys. Your new goals and objectives should relate to those findings as well. If they do not, you need to consider writing yet another new goal or objective.

CONVENING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. An ideal committee is large enough to represent the community yet small enough to work together. A group of 12 to 18 is best. But there is no magic number; since community representation is the goal, let that determine the committee size.

2. Composition of the committee is key. You want to invite:

- People with each kind of disability found in your community .Caregivers (family and paid) of people with disabilities .Members of organizations of people with disabilities
- Staff of other agencies that serve people with disabilities .Special education directors and teachers
- Representatives of other area libraries offering more or different services for people with disabilities
- Library staff representatives
- Youth, adults, and older adults

3. In addition to having disabilities, you want your committee members to be stakeholders and true representatives. That is, they are:

- Knowledgeable .Connected
- Assertive people
- Concerned with the outcome of your work
- Willing & able to make real contributions to the planning process
- Will advocate for the resulting plan

SERVING PATRONS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

People who are deaf are unable to rely on audition alone to understand speech; they must also rely on visual and other cues. People who are hard of hearing have difficulty hearing speech without amplification. There are many techniques and accommodations which can help hearing people communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Communication modes with deaf and hard of hearing patrons will vary depending on residual hearing, age of onset of hearing loss, speechreading or sign language skills, and personal preferences.

Communication Methods

- American Sign Language (ASL). A visual based language with its own grammar and syntax, ASL is the primary language of the deaf community in the United States. (Most hard of hearing adults, however, rely on assistive listening devices such as hearing aids and telephone amplifiers.) ASL interpreters facilitate communication between deaf and hearing individuals by conveying spoken English in ASL and vice versa.
- Written English. Deaf and hard of hearing people may communicate with hearing people by reading and writing English. In one-to-one interactions in the library this may mean simply writing notes back and forth with paper and pen or on a nearby computer. Note that many deaf people, especially those who have never heard English, have difficulty mastering English which is a foreign language to them; reading levels may be low so keep written communication simple until you know the abilities of the individual person.
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). Another type of interpretation, CART provides visual text with nearly instantaneous translation of the spoken word. The CART provider types the speaker's words on a stenographic machine which is connected to a computer with software to translate the stenographic code into English. The translation can then be read on the computer screen; for larger group events the CART text can be displayed on a large video screen or projected onto the wall.
- Telecommunications. TTYs, which are sometimes called TDDs or text telephones, are small typewriter-like devices that transmit text over the telephone lines. TV programs and videos are now often captioned (closed captioned require decoding, open captions are visible at all times) for deaf people to read; recent FCC regulations require one hundred percent captioning in network and cable broadcasting. Another telecommunications method is the relay services mandated by Title IV of the ADA. TTY users can connect to the library via the relay service whose operators will read the text aloud to the hearing staff person who can then respond to the operator who will transmit the return message via TTY.
- Spoken English. People who are hard of hearing may be able to communicate orally if an amplification device is used. Deaf people also may communicate orally depending on their training and may be able to "speech read" (previously known as lip reading) if you enunciate clearly.

Tips for Serving Patrons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Approach the patron so you can be seen.
- Get the patron's attention before you start speaking.
- Ask the patron how s/he prefers to communicate and then accommodate the request. Do not assume a knowledge of sign language. Do not leave to find a person who can sign unless the patron requests it.

- Reduce background noise or move to a quieter location.
- Always face the patron as you speak and maintain eye contact.
- If you are using an interpreter, be sure to speak directly to the patron, not to the interpreter.
- Speak at a normal pace, enunciating carefully; do not exaggerate your lip movements or mumble as this makes speechreading difficult.
- Keep your mouth visible --do not obscure it with your hands or by chewing gum or food.
- Be aware of the lighting. For example, do not stand in front of a light source because that makes it difficult to speech read or to pick up visual cues.
- If a hard of hearing patron has hearing aids or other assistive listening devices, give her/him an opportunity to adjust the equipment.
- If the patron does not seem to understand you, write it down.

*From **Planning for Library Services for People with Disabilities** by Rhea Joyce Rubin. Chicago: ASCLA, 2001.*

SERVING PATRONS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

People who are blind do not see well enough to read (depending on the cause and severity of the blindness, they may, however, see shapes or patterns of light and dark). People who are visually impaired may see with correction (glasses, contact lenses, or surgery) or may have severe disabilities which make reading difficult. There are many techniques and accommodations which can assist people who are blind or visually impaired people in using library materials.

Communication Methods

- **Voice.** Many blind people have volunteer or paid readers who read written materials aloud to them at home, at work, or in the library. Reading machines scan printed materials and translate it into speech which is read aloud by a synthesized voice. This technology also allows computers to "talk" so that information on computer (e.g. your library's online catalog) or on CD-ROM can be read (that is, heard) by people who are blind or visually limited. Descriptive videos (DVS) allow people who are blind or visually impaired to hear a description of what others are seeing; a narrator describes key visual elements during pauses in the video's regular dialogue.
- **Braille.** This is a tactile reading and writing system, created in 1829, consisting of raised dots produced in a six-dot configuration which stand for the letters of the alphabet and certain letter combinations or word contractions. Note that some people who are blind and most people who are visually impaired, especially those who lost vision later in life, do not read Braille. For those who do read Braille, however, it is usually the preferred mode of reading because of its portability and its non-reliance on electronics. Braille can be produced manually, on special typewriters, and on computers with Braille translation software. Some Braille users carry pocket sized Braille computers with them for taking notes; the data can then be read aloud or printed in Braille. The reading machines mentioned above can also produce Braille copy if the proper accessories are attached.
- **Magnification.** Many people with limited vision can read large type books and printed materials. (This includes large print key caps on keyboards.) If the materials are in standard print or handwriting-- or if the large type is not large enough --magnification devices can be used. These include hand held magnifiers; closed circuit televisions (CCTVs) or electronic magnifiers; screen enlargers which passively magnify a computer's screen; and magnification software which enlarges the print on the computer screen.

Tips for Serving Patrons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Do not yell or speak loudly to people with vision loss; most are not deaf or hard of hearing.
- Identify yourself and others with you. If in a group setting remember to identify the person you are addressing.
- Have your voice show your welcome and helpfulness
- Speak directly to the patron, not through her/his sighted companion. .Do not touch or pet a guide dog on duty.
- When giving directions, use the clock face as your basis. For example, "The reference desk is at 3:00 from where you're facing."

- When guiding a patron, allow the person to take your elbow; do not grab the patron's arm or hand. Stand next to him/her and slightly ahead, then ask her/him to take your arm.
- Ask what you can do to help and which materials format/communication method is preferred.

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SERVING PATRONS WITH MOBILITY OR ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS

People with mobility impairments may use canes and/or crutches, walkers, motorized scooters, or wheelchairs to get around. Many of these people are capable of all tasks but walking. Depending on the cause of the disability, other (or additional) voluntary muscles may be affected. For example, a person with a disability may not be able to hold a book or turn pages. Spinal cord injuries, musculoskeletal disorders such as arthritis, and some developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy are common causes of motor impairments.

Besides personal auxiliary mobility aids such as wheelchairs and canes, other aids for people with motor impairments include wheeled carts for carrying library materials, rolling stools, step stools, reaching devices, book holders, and page turners. Your library may have these for people to use in your facility.

Tips for Serving Patrons With Motor Impairments

- Keep clear pathways for people using wheelchairs and canes.
- A wheelchair (or scooter or walker) is part of the personal body space of its user. Do not touch it (or push it) without permission.
- Do not carry a patron unless it is an emergency evacuation situation or the person requests it.
- Place yourself at the patron's eye level by sitting or crouching.
- Speak directly to the patron rather than through his/her attendant.
- Do not assume speech or other disabilities.
- Do not assume they need information on disabilities.
- A person using a wheelchair is not "wheelchair bound," "crippled," or "handicapped."
- Ask the person how you can help.

*From **Planning for Library Services for People with Disabilities** by Rhea Joyce Rubin. Chicago: ASCLA, 2001.*

SERVING PATRONS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities —also called learning differences —are neurological disorders which make it difficult for individuals to process and/or interpret sensory information. The disability may manifest itself in only one area (e.g. reading or math) or in many. People with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence and, with accommodations, can learn at age appropriate levels. Dyslexia and attention deficit disorder (ADD) are the most common examples of learning disabilities, but over 100 different specific learning disabilities have been identified.

Tips for Serving Patrons With Learning Disabilities

- Give clear directions, checking for comprehension, and paraphrasing or repeating if necessary.
- Be patient. A person with a learning disability may need extra time to understand you or to complete a task.
- Be literal. Some people with learning differences have difficulty with tonal subtleties and with metaphors.
- If a form (e.g. library card application) needs completion, offer assistance if writing is a problem.
- Offer information in a variety of reading and comprehension levels and in non-print formats.
- Treat the person with respect. Often people with learning differences are treated as stupid, lazy, or developmentally disabled.

*From **Planning for Library Services for People with Disabilities** by Rhea Joyce Rubin. Chicago: ASCLA, 2001.*

SERVING PATRONS WITH SPEECH DISORDERS

Speech, voice, and language disorders affect a person's ability to speak in an understandable fashion. There are many causes of speech disorders including cerebral palsy, head injuries, deafness, Parkinson's disease and stroke. People with speech difficulties are of average or above average intelligence, and usually process information without difficulty; the problem lies in communicating with others.

Tips for Serving Patrons with Speech Disorders

- If you are unsure what the person is saying, repeat it back, asking for confirmation that you have understood.
- If you definitely do not understand what the patron is saying, tell him/her and ask how the two of you can communicate more easily.
- Offer writing as an alternative means of communication. Note that some causes of speech difficulty also make writing arduous.
- Consider moving to a quiet, less public area. Stressful situations often exacerbate a person's speech difficulties.
- Be patient. A person with a speech difficulty may need extra time to communicate clearly.
- Do not finish the person's sentences for him/her. This is insulting.
- Treat the person with respect. Often a person with a speech difficulty is treated as drunk, developmentally disabled, or mentally ill.

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SERVING LIBRARY PATRONS WITH DISABILITIES:

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