



General Library Access Issues

The information in this portion of the presentation is covered in your handout titled *Making Library Resources Accessible to People with Disabilities*.

As more information is delivered using computer and network technologies, libraries play an increasingly important role in ensuring access for all people to Internet and electronic information resources. In making libraries and electronic resources accessible, principles of universal design should be employed.

Put up overhead transparency.

Typically, organizations design their services and facilities for the average user.

Universal design means that you design them for people with a broad range of abilities and disabilities. Keep in mind that patrons may have learning disabilities and visual, speech, hearing, and mobility impairments. To begin, let's focus on general library accessibility.



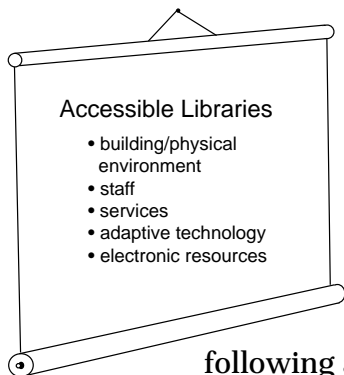
out, *Making Library Resources Accessible to People with Disabilities*. You can use this handout as a starting point for surveying the library for accessibility.

You may find this list intimidating as you begin to think about the planning and funding processes involved in implementing all of the suggestions. Or you may think that you have to start from scratch and build a new building or computer lab to achieve an accessible library.

Remember, you have already taken the step of attending this program and educating yourself about these issues. This list can help you evaluate your library for accessibility. Some of the items on the list have probably already been addressed in the library. With this information, you can develop strategies to begin implementing some of the ideas not already in place in the library. For those who cannot take on an expensive project at this time, there are many low-cost things you can do to begin making the library more accessible.

Let's start by looking at the physical environment of the library facility.

Highlight things that the library is already doing or has arranged in the facility as you go through this section. Or, have the audience describe things already in place or planned.



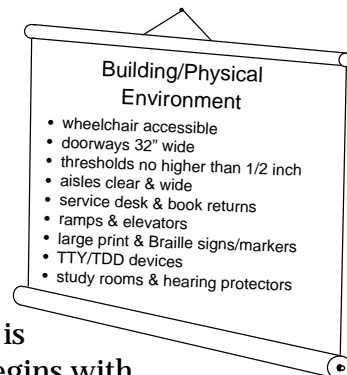
Put up overhead transparency.

To plan an accessible library, it is helpful to think in terms of the following access issues: facility, staff, services, adaptive technology and electronic resources. We will cover all of these throughout the presentation. The questions I will be addressing are included in your hand-

Building & Physical Environment

Put up overhead transparency.

Designing a library that is universally accessible begins with the parking lot and the physical environment





of the facility. Ask yourselves these questions in determining how to make your facility more accessible.

Are parking areas, pathways, and entrances to the building wheelchair-accessible?

Are doorway openings at least 32 inches wide and doorway thresholds no higher than 1/2 inch?

Are aisles kept wide and clear for wheelchair users? Have protruding objects been removed or minimized for the safety of users who are visually impaired?

Are all levels of the library connected via an accessible route of travel? If some materials are in inaccessible locations, are there procedures for retrieving materials for patrons with mobility impairments?

Are ramps and/or elevators provided as alternatives to stairs? Do elevators have both auditory and visual signals for floors? Are elevator controls marked in large print and Braille or raised notation? Can people seated in wheelchairs easily reach all elevator controls?

Are wheelchair-accessible restrooms with well marked signs available in or near the library?

Are service desks and facilities such as book returns wheelchair accessible?

Are there ample high-contrast, large print directional signs throughout the library? Are shelf and stack identifiers provided in large print and Braille formats? Are call numbers on book spines printed in large type? Is equipment marked with large print and Braille labels?

Are telecommunication devices for the deaf (TTY/TDD) available?

Are library study rooms available for patrons

with disabilities who need to use personal equipment, or who need the assistance of a reader?

Are hearing protectors, private study rooms, or study carrels available for users who are distracted by noise and movement around them?

Put up overhead transparency.

In making computer workstations in the library more accessible, consider these additional access questions.

Is at least one table for each type of electronic resource adjustable so that a person who uses a wheelchair can type comfortably? Can the adjustment controls be reached by wheelchair users?

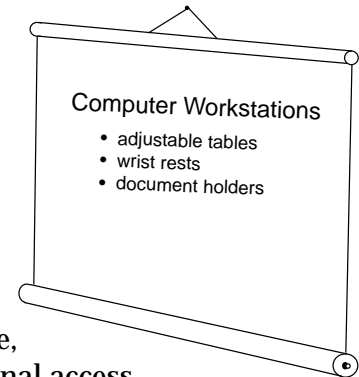
Are wrist rests available for those who require extra wrist support while typing?

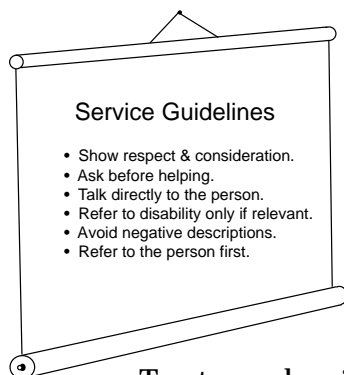
Are document holders available to help position documentation so that it can be easily read?

Staff

People who greet and interact with patrons have a great impact on their success in using library resources. Consider the following questions to ensure that library staff are able to equitably serve patrons with disabilities.

Are public services staff aware of disability-related communication issues? There are no strict rules when it comes to relating to people with disabilities. However, here are some helpful hints. These are listed in your handout.



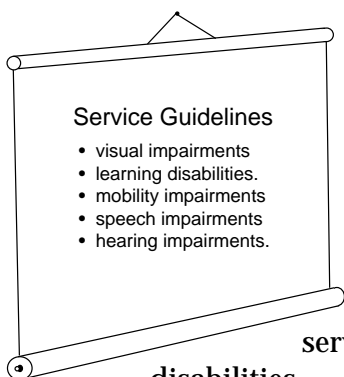


Put up overhead transparency.

Here are some general guidelines for working with patrons with disabilities.

Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration that you do with others. Ask a person with a disability if he/she needs help before helping. Talk directly to the person with a disability, not through the person's assistant or companion. Refer to a person's disability only if it is relevant to the conversation.

Avoid negative descriptions of a person's disability. For example, "a person who uses a wheelchair" is more appropriate than "a person confined to a wheelchair." Refer to the person first and then the disability. "A man who is blind" is better than "a blind man" because it emphasizes the person first.



Put up overhead transparency.

Here are some guidelines to think about when serving patrons with specific disabilities.

When interacting with people with visual impairments, it is important to be descriptive. For example, instead of saying, "The computer is over there," say, "The computer is about three feet to your left." When guiding people with visual impairments, offer them your arm rather than grabbing or pushing them. And always ask permission before you interact with a person's guide or service dog.

If asked, read instructions to patrons with specific learning disabilities. Try sitting or crouching to the approximate height of people in wheelchairs when you interact. Listen carefully and ask people with speech impairments to repeat what they have said if you don't understand.

Face people with hearing impairments and speak clearly when you talk to them so they can see your lips. Don't over-enunciate as this can make it more difficult for the individual to read your lips.

Here are additional things to consider in ensuring that staff are prepared to serve patrons with disabilities.

Put up overhead transparency.

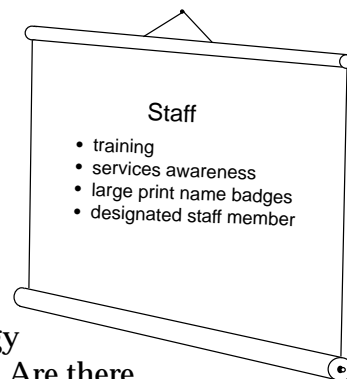
Are public services staff trained in the use of TTY/TTD's and adaptive computer technology provided in the library? Are there regular refresher courses to help staff keep their skills up-to-date?

Are staff trained in policies and procedures for providing accommodations to patrons with disabilities? Are staff aware of services provided for people with disabilities?

Are public services staff knowledgeable of other organizations, such as federally-funded talking book and Braille libraries, that provide information services to patrons with disabilities?

Do public services staff wear large print name badges? All patrons benefit when they can easily identify those who can assist them.

If any staff members are trained in sign lan-





guage, are they identified to other staff members so that, when available, they can assist patrons who are deaf?

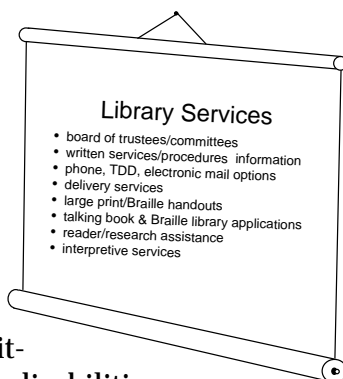
Does the library have a designated staff member and/or committee who coordinates services for patrons with disabilities, monitors adaptive technology developments, and responds to requests for accommodation?

Services

With well-trained, aware staff, the library can be a welcoming place for people with disabilities. But it is equally important to review the library's services for accessibility.

Put up overhead transparency.

Are people with disabilities included in the library's board of trustees and committees? Are people with disabilities included in the library's access planning process?



Does the library have a written description of accommodations for patrons with disabilities, including procedures and information on how to request special accommodations? These policies and procedures should be advertised in the library and library publications.

Are reference and circulation services available by phone, TTY/TDD, and electronic mail?

Are resource delivery services available for patrons confined to their homes, retirement facilities, or hospitals?

Are large print and Braille versions of library handouts and guides available?

Are applications for the nationwide network of Talking Book and Braille Libraries available for patrons who are blind or who have low vision or mobility impairments?

Are reader and research assistants available to patrons with vision impairments?

Are sign-language interpretation services available by request for library sponsored events?

Designing the library's services according to universal design principles may seem a daunting task, but in reality much can be done with a little flexibility, a dash of creativity, and a strong commitment to providing equal service to all the people in your community. Surveying our library with the questions we have covered in this section of the presentation is a great way to get started.

End this portion of the program with the following exercise, or develop an interactive activity tailored to your audience and library.

Before the program, set up in different parts of the room three stations consisting of tables covered with butcher paper. Place boxes of markers, copies of the lists of questions, and the items described below at each station. Have the participants form groups of two to five people. Working with their handouts and notes, have the participants spend 20 to 30 minutes working at stations that relate most to their interests. Encourage them to brainstorm and write ideas and comments generated from the questions at each station on the butcher paper.

To help you apply some of the ideas from this portion of the program to our library, I'm going to have you form small groups for the next activity. You can see around the room three stations which cover three of the areas discussed under this section on general library accessibility: building and physical environ-



ment, staff, and services. I would like each group to choose an area to focus on during the activity. At the station for your area, you will find a list of activities and questions. Work through the activities and questions with your group. As you brainstorm and talk, write down your comments and ideas on the butcher paper. When we are done with the activity, we will mount the paper on the wall and have each group report briefly on their work.

Station 1: Building and Physical Environment.

On this table provide library floor plans, measuring tapes, if possible a wheelchair, and for fun a hard hat. Make copies of the following questions. Post one copy at the station and leave the rest on the table for the participants.

If you are meeting in the library facility:

- Tour a section of the library and measure entrances and aisles. Push the wheelchair through the library. Record findings about accessibility for people using wheelchairs. Propose solutions to problems encountered.
- Tour the library specifically looking at the accessibility of signage for people with visual impairments. Report findings and propose solutions to problems encountered.

If the program is not being held in the library facility

- Using the check list provided in your handout, write down potential physical barriers to access for a person using a wheelchair in our library. Brainstorm solutions to these barriers.
- Reflect on the signage at our library. Record potential problems for people with visual impairments and propose solutions.

Station 2: Staff

Make copies of the following questions. Post one copy at the station and leave the rest on the table for the participants.

- Talk with your partner(s) about experiences that you have had in your role in the library assisting people with disabilities. Were you able to assist the person with his/her library need? What training would have helped you better serve this individual? Is there special equipment or software available in the library on which staff should be trained?
- List key things the staff in the library need to know regarding serving patrons with disabilities. How can this information best be delivered e.g., staff meetings, documentation, memos, trainings?

Station 3: Services

On this table provide multiple copies of policies or handouts related to services for patrons, and specifically related to accommodating people with disabilities. Make copies of the following questions. Post one copy at the station and leave the rest on the table for the participants.

- Working with the list from your handout, what services does the library have in place? What services could be added?
- Review the policies and handouts. Write comments and edits on them and tape them to the butcher paper. What new handouts would be helpful? In what formats should they be available? Write ideas for new handouts on the butcher paper.

After the allotted time have the participants mount the butcher paper on the wall and share their comments. Encourage them to write more comments on the butcher paper as they have ideas during the rest of the program.



After the program, type up the comments and distribute them to the participants within several weeks. Enclose a letter thanking them for attending the program and asking if they have pursued any of the ideas generated.

The problems you've targeted and the solutions you've brainstormed in this activity will give you a good start in making the library more accessible to people with disabilities.

You may want to insert a break at this point.

Adaptive Technology

Problem	Solution
access to computers	→ adaptive technology
access to electronic resources	→ universal design principles

Put up overhead transparency.

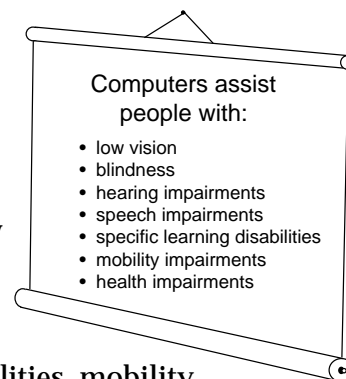
Using computing resources can increase the independence, capabilities and productivity of people with disabilities.

Access to computing resources for people with disabilities in your library involves two issues: access to the computers themselves and access to the electronic resources. Electronic resources include operational programs such as word processors and spreadsheets and information resources such as encyclopedias and databases available through local and networked computer systems.

In this section of our program we are going to look at the solutions that adaptive technology provides in enabling access to computers for people with disabilities. We will explore how the application of universal design principles can reduce or eliminate barriers to electronic resources in the next segment of our presentation.

Put up overhead transparency.

Access to computers assists people with low vision, blindness, hearing impairments, speech impairments, specific learning disabilities, mobility impairments, and health impairments.



We'll now watch a videotape presentation that gives an overview of computer access problems and solutions. It also highlights some of the special advantages access to computers, adaptive technology, software and the Internet provides to people with specific disabilities.

Your handout titled *Working Together: People with Disabilities and Computer Technology* summarizes the content of the video presentation and this portion of the program. Another handout you have titled *Meet the Speakers: Working Together: People with Disabilities and Computer Technology* provides information about the people featured in the videotape.

Show the videotape presentation titled *Working Together: Computers and People with Disabilities*.

As the individuals in the videotape demonstrate, computers help lower many barriers that people with disabilities face. They demonstrate various technologies that make it possible for people who have disabilities to use computing and networked resources. Now we will review this information and consider examples of accommodations that allow people with disabilities to effectively utilize electronic resources found in libraries.

I emphasize that these are only examples, since abilities, disabilities, and learning styles are unique to individuals. Please contribute