Accessible Library Teaching

ACCESSIBLE LIBRARY TEACHING

JEANNIE AN; LAURA BANFIELD; LOUISE CARAVAGGIO; MATTHEW FESNAK; ANNA FLAK; SUSANNA GALBRAITH; KATIE HARDING; CARLY MCLEOD; KATIE MERRIMAN; JO-ANNE PETROPOULOS; SUBHANYA SIVAJOTHY; ARIEL STABLES-KENNEDY; AND NANCY WAITE

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INTRODUCTION

Anna Flak and Katie Harding participated in McMaster University's inaugural Accessible Education Fellows program in 2023-2024. We were interested in exploring accessibility in library settings and found that there was not much information about the library-specific ways that we teach and engage with students. In a desire to address this gap, we proposed a library strategic initiative for accessible library teaching for 2024-2025.

The result of that strategic initiative is this Pressbook. This strategic initiative was meant as an opportunity for library team members with all levels of experience to engage with and learn about topics related to accessible library teaching. We wanted this resource to be used within our library to help make our teaching practices more accessible but also hoped that it could benefit library workers seeking to engage in accessible library teaching outside of our institution. The authors chose to explore accessibility in library teaching topics that were of interest to them and their work. As a result, this book does not provide a comprehensive discussion of accessibility in all possible modes of library teaching.

Although we aimed to maintain a similar organizational style through all of our chapters we did allow for flexibility in the structuring. Our intent behind this resource was also to be more practical than scholarly and this is reflected in our approach and writing style.

If you have any questions or comments about this book, please contact Anna Flak (flaka1@mcmaster.ca) and Katie Harding (kharding@mcmaster.ca).

1.

INSTRUCTIONAL WORKSHOPS

Subhanya Sivajothy

Overview

This chapter will look at library instructional workshops. These workshops can cover a range of topics, from basic library orientation and database searching to advanced research techniques and citation management. Tailored to meet the needs of diverse audiences, including students, faculty, and researchers, these sessions aim to support active learning and research proficiency. Using principles of Universal Design for Learning and Critical Disability Theory, this chapter will make recommendations for facilitating different types of workshops.

Description of Workshops

There are different types of library workshops that can cater to different audience needs, preferences, and schedules. Academic libraries often provide workshops in different delivery modes which each have different advantages and barriers. This section will describe some of the barriers and the next section will provide some recommendations.

In-Person Workshops

In-person workshops can foster hands-on learning and community building but may exclude individuals who cannot physically attend due to mobility issues, transportation/location barriers, or health concerns. There may be physical barriers such as tables, counters, or bad lighting, for example. Furthermore, some in-person ice breakers and activities such as the [four corners exercise](#) are not especially physically accessible.

Online Workshops

These types of workshops have increased significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic and can be a great accessible option. These can be synchronous or asynchronous and can offer convenience but can exacerbate

unequal access to technologies, internet connections, and more. Participants without reliable internet access, appropriate devices, motivation issues, or digital literacy skills may struggle to engage fully (Peacock, 2025). Furthermore, online platforms may not always be fully accessible to users with disabilities, such as those requiring screen readers or captioning.

Synchronous Workshops

These are workshops that are held in real-time either in-person or online. These workshops allow for direct interaction and immediate feedback. However, they may exclude individuals with scheduling conflicts, time zone differences, or limited access to reliable technology. If it's a tool or demonstration workshop, there may be barriers in participants following along with the steps in real-time. There is reduced flexibility in being able to match every participant's learning times in a synchronous session. Participants who have cognitive processing issues, are hearing or vision impaired, or have other accessibility issues may need accommodations or asynchronous alternatives to the workshops.

Asynchronous Workshops

These are workshops that offer self-paced learning through pre-recorded materials and can provide flexibility for those who have different schedule needs or need a slower pace to work through the materials. It provides more time and a slower pace to reflect on complex problems and issues. Some barriers might present themselves for learners who require structured guidance or struggle with motivation as self-paced learning requires increased levels of self-direction. Participants may feel isolated or unsupported, particularly if they encounter difficulties with the content.

Guiding principles

The recommendations will be informed by principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as well as Critical Disability Theory (CDT). UDL is "is a framework that avoids a 'one-size fits all approach' to learning materials. It encourages using multiple ways of engagement, representation, and action and expression to meet the needs of a larger number of learners (Government of Canada, 2024). CDT is not focused on bodily or mental impairments itself but "social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations" (Hall, 2019). It understands disability as produced through a system, rather than "discovered" in a body.

Recommendations for accessibility

Here are some recommendations for building accessible workshops that can cater to a wide range of learners with different needs and preferences.

1. Starting with Introductions, Icebreakers, and/or Trivia

This will start your workshop in an engaging manner. For individuals with social anxiety, other disabilities, or those who are marginalized, these activities can reduce barriers to participation by fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging engagement from the start (Frankel and Smith, 2022). Additionally, icebreakers and introductions can be a method for instructors to gauge the diverse needs, backgrounds, and expectations of participants, enabling them to tailor the workshop to be more inclusive and responsive to the group's unique dynamics (Khanna, 2021). Try not to discount concerns or hesitations that a participant might have about the activity. It is important to provide space or an option to sit out if a participant doesn't want to participate vocally and would rather listen in.

2. Including Flexibility in the Workshop Format

For example, if you are offering a synchronous workshop, try to integrate some asynchronous elements in the workshop to improve access. This can look like: recording synchronous sessions and making them available, providing written summaries, or linking a research guide with the workshop. If you are offering asynchronous workshops, you might offer opportunities where the student can meet with you to work through the steps of the workshop. For online learning, studies show that there is an increased need for activities with practical application that engage deep thinking about course content (Buelow, Barry, and Rich, 2018)

3. Emphasizing Collaboration and DIT (do-it-together) Ethics

Collaborating with both other instructors as well as students can lead to more diverse and successful learning opportunities. During the workshop, if possible, allow the students to share their experiences and interests. Try to incorporate group activities in the workshop if possible and create room to allow students to share their own work or reflect (without forcing them to do so) (Shanley and Chance, 2016).

4. Ensure Workshop Materials Are Accessible and Provide in Advance

This includes slides, links to research guides, cheat sheets, and workshop working materials. Use accessible design principles for online content, such as providing alt text for images, captions for videos, and readable fonts. Provide these materials if possible before the start of the workshop. This supports UDL's emphasis on multiple means of representation and ensures that users with disabilities can fully engage with digital resources at their own pace.

5. Provide Clear Instructions and Navigation

Structure workshop materials with clear headings, step-by-step instructions, and intuitive navigation. This reduces cognitive load and supports learners who may struggle with self-directed or complex tasks. Providing a clear timeline breakdown of your workshop with clear learning objectives may help students who have difficulty with attention or motivation. Providing live captions whenever possible (and closed captioning whenever you include audio visual materials) can also help reduce barriers to learning.

6. Include Examples and Case Studies

Including real-world context is important because it helps abstract concepts become tangible and relatable (Ni Chochlain, 2021). Providing them as problem solving questions can encourage critical thinking, application of knowledge, and participation and discussion with other participants. Use cases that match student interests as well as experience levels. Try to integrate sample topics that address issues of race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, and other intersecting axes of oppression (Shanley & Chance, 2016).

7. Offer Breaks and Opportunities for Real-Time Support

If you are running longer workshops (more than an hour) breaks are essential for maintaining focus and energy. This is especially important for participants with different access needs such as attention-related challenges, chronic fatigue, or sensory sensitivities. Breaks are also a good time to follow up with any questions or provide some real-time support and one-on-one assistance to ensure that everyone is following along.

8. Avoid Jargon and Use Inclusive Language

Jargon can alienate participants who are unfamiliar with specific terminology. To mitigate this, you can

introduce necessary terms and definitions early in the workshop. You can also provide a glossary that participants can refer to throughout the workshop and after. Other examples of inclusive language would be using gender-neutral language and not using harmful or ableist terms.

9. Encourage Active Participation and Co-Creation

Active participation and co-creation include instructional activities beyond just passive learning through listening, reading and memorizing (Baepler, 2016). This could involve activities, debates, discussions, or even using polls. It is useful for the instructor as it provides ongoing feedback on what the students are learning, and studies have also shown that students are more likely to be successful in classes that employ active learning.

10. Include Flexible Assessment Methods

In workshop settings, instructors may not be able to use traditional assessment methods that one may use in other class settings. However, it is still important for both instructor and student to leave with some sort of assessment of their learning. Flexible methods can include quick collaborative presentations, quizzes, polls, or short applications of their knowledge (Elkhoury, 2021). Look for opportunities that involve students in assessments as well; it is valuable to teach students how to evaluate their own progress as they are learning a new skill, topic, or technology (Shanley & Chance, 2016).

11. Feedback, Evaluation and Learning from Teaching

Feedback and evaluation are crucial for understanding the effectiveness of your workshop and identifying areas for improvement. Valuing and increasing the opportunities for participant voices and experiences increases opportunities to pay attention to our own assumptions, expectations, and beliefs (Graf, 2016). This practice ensures that future workshops are better tailored to meet the needs of all learners, creating a cycle of continuous improvement and equity.

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Further reading and resources

- Active Learning Tip Sheet
- Alternative Assessments
- Critical Disability Studies Collective Terminology

- [Inclusive Ice Breakers](#)
- [Tips on Using Case Studies](#)

2.

DESIGNING ONLINE AND IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

Laura Banfield; Louise Caravaggio; and Jo-Anne Petropoulos

Overview

This chapter delves into the design of accessible library learning sessions, both online and in-person. We will illustrate how instructors can effectively address the diverse needs of learners by incorporating principles from design frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

We will focus on the aspects of instruction that can be controlled by the instructor. For example, facing the audience while speaking, selection of classroom, or sharing materials ahead of the session. Focusing on these considerations may help to maximize accessibility and minimize barriers to learning.

Description of Library Teaching Practice

Library teaching practices encompass online, in-person, or hybrid environments, as well as synchronous and asynchronous situations. The instructor may take didactic or interactive approaches or a hybrid of the two, to ensure a balance of content and application is covered. Some instruction sessions are driven by course or program needs, while others are meant to provide a general overview and orientation to the library and information seeking skills. Library instruction is influenced by the context (online vs in-person vs hybrid), mode of delivery (synchronous vs asynchronous), and purpose (assignment driven vs orientation).

It is essential to examine potential barriers to accessibility to understand why and how to approach creating accessible instruction. Barriers can be varied and complex. According to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), a barrier

"means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; ("obstacle")" (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005).

It is recommended that instructors consult the appropriate legislation to understand how a barrier is

defined and how legislation specifies their application (e.g., educational institutions, health authorities, or public sectors). Locally, institutional and organizational departments and units can offer further guidance to understanding and working with barriers to accessibility.

In addition, it is paramount to recognize the varied challenges that learners experience because of visible and invisible disabilities. This recognition can help instructors in their preparation of teaching materials, assessments, and practice.

Guiding Principles

Library instructors can consult various frameworks to create a barrier-free online and in-person learning environment. For example, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) addresses barriers within the learning and instructional environments (Burgstahler, 2021), whereas Universal Design in Education (UDE) addresses both physical space (e.g., ramps) and instructional environment (Burgstahler, 2021).

Recommendations for Accessibility

Below are some practices instructors can employ to create an accessible learning environment informed by the principles of UDL, UDE, and UDI, and AODA standards. Instructors should recognize the aspects of their instruction that they can control. These include the learning environment, teaching practices, and behaviour. They should also strive to make the best possible adjustments within their limitations and the constraints of the environment.

Recommendations

- Check-ins: solicit engagement and participation through feedback and questions; where possible, provide multiple means of participation
- Body positioning: face the audience; have your camera on; allow for captioning
- Pre- and post-instruction: share slides and handouts; modify as appropriate
- Building & classroom location: consider a barrier-free access building and classroom location; be aware of the physical space, lighting, visual field, ambient noise, and room layout
- Learning platforms: think about how and where content will be displayed within the platform; put the learner first in decision making
- Learning materials: employ readability and accessibility checkers; include descriptive text for images and figures; manage amount of content shared

- Learning styles: incorporate various learning styles
- Use of Voice: enunciate and be mindful of speech pace and patterns; use sound equipment if available

Conclusion

It is essential to remain adaptable and ready to modify strategies if they prove ineffective. Having alternative approaches prepared can facilitate quick adjustments if the need arises. If you are uncertain about how to best support learners, do not hesitate to ask them. Most learners are willing to share ideas to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and training. As your knowledge and experience grow, accessibility will become a natural part of planning for library instruction. Be willing to let go of your plan for a perfect session to ensure learners' needs are accommodated.

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3.

INTEGRATING ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY INTO TEACHING

Nancy Waite

Overview

While all technology can be considered assistive in some way, technology specifically designed to support students with disabilities in increasing, maintaining, or improving their functional capabilities is classified as accessible technology (US. Department of Education, n.d.).

Assistive technology in education generally falls into two categories. The first category includes student-specific tools, such as screen readers, Assistive Listening Systems, mobility devices, and specialized software. The second category consists of technologies that enhance the learning environment for all students, such as closed captions, live captions, described video, and accessible learning resources.

When introducing technology into the classroom, it is important to assess whether it meets the needs of your students. One way to evaluate a product's accessibility is by reviewing its Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) or Accessibility Compliance Report (ACR). This document outlines key accessibility features, such as whether the product includes captions, has been tested with screen readers, or is keyboard navigable. However, while a VPAT or ACR provides valuable insights, it does not guarantee that a tool will fully meet every student's needs, and those produced by a third party should be considered more reliable than those produced in house. Regardless, additional accommodations may still be necessary to support the student (ITIC, 2025).

By carefully selecting and evaluating technology and integrating it within the classroom, educators can create an inclusive classroom where all students, regardless of ability, can fully engage with learning materials and participate in meaningful ways.

Accessible Tech – Individual

Students have valuable insight into their own assistive technology needs, and should be considered the experts at what works for them. Even when two students have the same disability, the tools and strategies that work for one may not be the best fit for another. To provide meaningful support, it's essential to consult with the

student to understand how they interact with their technology and what classroom adjustments enhance their learning experience.

By working collaboratively with students, educators can create an environment where assistive technology is used effectively and seamlessly integrated into classroom activities. Open communication and flexibility allow students to maximize the benefits of their technology, ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed.

Screen Readers

Screen readers are essential tools that convert on-screen text into speech or output it to a refreshable braille display, enabling students with visual impairments or learning disabilities to access digital content. Common screen reader programs include [Job Access With Speech (JAWS)](#), [NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA)](#), and [Orca,](#) along with built-in tools like [VoiceOver for macOS](#) and [Narrator for Windows](#).

To effectively support screen reader users, course materials must be provided in accessible formats. Microsoft Word is the preferred format due to its consistency and high compatibility with screen readers. While screen readers can interpret PDFs, many PDFs are inaccessible, often made up of scanned images or flawed Optical Character Recognition (OCR), resulting in missing or unreadable content.

While PDFs can be remediated, this process is intricate, requiring manual adjustments to tags, elements, and artifacts, and frequently involves costly tools. Automated methods alone are often inadequate. If not executed properly, remediated PDFs can still be ineffective for screen reader users.

One of the key benefits of accessible Word documents is that what appears on screen is generally what a screen reader will convey. Although not perfect, Word files tend to be more reliable and accessible than PDFs, helping to ensure all students receive equitable access to course content.

When creating accessible documents, use structured headings to support navigation, allowing users to jump directly to sections instead of listening to the entire document. Add alt-text to images so visual content is conveyed clearly. Ensure tables are created in an accessible manner by repeating the header row and adding alt-text listing the number of rows and columns. Create features such as a bulleted list using the styles panel. Lastly, always run the Accessibility Checker to confirm your document meets accessibility standards. Following these practices helps ensure all students have equal access to educational materials.

(CNIB, 2025)

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS)

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS) can be found in large lecture halls, community spaces, and theatres where background noise can interfere with speech clarity. They will typically have a symbol of an ear with a line diagonally through it from the lower left corner to the upper right corner. ALS technology includes an assistive

listening device (ALD) used by the student and installed audio equipment that amplifies speech. The audio equipment transmits speech directly to a student's receiver, such as a cochlear implant or digital hearing aid.

To maximize the effectiveness of an ALS in the classroom, instructors should follow these key guidelines:

- Use the provided microphone and audio equipment. Ensure the system is set to the correct channel so the transmission reaches students' devices without interference.
- Position the microphone appropriately. It should be placed close enough to capture speech clearly but not so close that it picks up extraneous noises, such as rustling from clothing, scarves, or facial hair.
- Perform a microphone check at the start of each class. Verifying sound levels and clarity helps prevent issues that may disrupt student access.
- Encourage students to ask questions by using a microphone. This ensures all students, including those using the ALS, can hear discussions and engage fully in the class.

By consistently implementing these best practices, educators can help create an inclusive learning environment where students with hearing loss have equitable access to spoken content.

(National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, 2019)

Mobility Devices

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching students who use mobility devices, as each student has unique needs and preferences. However, there are key principles educators can follow to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment:

- Consult students about seating preferences. Ask students where they prefer to sit and ensure a space is reserved for them if needed. This helps them navigate the classroom comfortably and participate fully.
- Respect mobility devices as personal space. A wheelchair, walker, or any mobility aid is an extension of a student's personal space. As you wouldn't touch someone's belongings without permission, avoid touching, moving, or handling a mobility device unless the student gives explicit consent.
- Never push a wheelchair without being asked. Even if it seems helpful, always wait for the student to request assistance rather than assuming they need help.
- Notify students if you become aware of any barriers to getting to the classroom, and encourage the student to sign up for the campus facility alerts, so they are aware as well.
- Post directions to the nearest accessible washrooms, cafeteria or vending machines, and water fountains.
- Ensure materials are accessible. Providing digital versions of class materials in advance allows students to use the technology that best supports their learning and mobility needs.

(Council of Ontario Universities, 2017)

Speech to Text

Speech-to-text, also known as speech recognition, allows students to use their voice instead of typing to input text. Popular programs include [Dragon NaturallySpeaking](#), [Dictate in Microsoft 365](#), and [Apple's Voice Control](#) feature. These tools can be invaluable for students who have difficulty with traditional keyboarding due to physical, cognitive, or learning differences.

While students using speech-to-text software typically do not require direct assistance, it's important to recognize that their written output may not always have perfect spelling, grammar, or punctuation, especially when they are still training the software to identify their voice patterns. Encouraging students to review and edit their work helps refine their accuracy over time.

(Goldstone et al., 2021).

Accessible Tech – Classroom

The following technologies enhance learning for all students; however, it is still best to consult the student requiring accommodations before proceeding, as the best resource for supporting the student is the student themselves. The student may have a specific need relating to these accommodations.

Closed Captions

Closed Captions provide a text-based alternative to the audio in videos, making audiovisual content more accessible and inclusive. In Ontario and many other regions worldwide, captions are required for all classroom videos, ensuring that all learners can engage with the material.

While captions are essential for D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students, they also benefit a wide range of learners, including English language learners, individuals with auditory processing disorders, those studying in quiet environments, and students encountering new or complex terminology. Students are accustomed to watching video content with captions. 70% of Gen Z respondents report they watch most of their online video content with captions or subtitles (VITAC, 2024).

A third-party captioning service is the most efficient practice for anything beyond a very short video. Caption providers offer software solutions that can be embedded, or you can download the caption file and upload it to your Learning Management System (LMS).

Live Captions (CART – Communication Access Realtime

Translation)

Live captions provide real-time, word-for-word speech transcription as it occurs, offering an alternative to ASL interpretation. These captions are typically generated by a remote captioner connecting to the classroom via platforms like Zoom or MS Teams. Initially, the audio is automatically captioned, and a human captioner then monitors and corrects any errors or omissions in real-time, ensuring captions remain accurate and up-to-date (Ad Astra, 2023).

To ensure the best possible captioning experience for both live and recorded captions, follow these guidelines:

- Use the provided microphone and audio equipment to ensure clear and accurate sound capture.
- Position the microphone appropriately: It should be placed close enough to capture speech clearly but not so close that it picks up background noise, such as rustling from clothing or facial hair.
- Encourage students to use the microphone when asking questions, and remind them to speak individually to ensure clarity.
- Ensure strong internet access to maintain a stable connection for live captioning.
- Minimize background noise as much as possible to enhance caption accuracy.

(3PlayMedia, 2024)

Described Video/Audio Description

Described Video (DV) /Audio Description (AD) provides detailed descriptions of key visual elements in films, TV shows, and other audiovisual content, ensuring that essential visual information is accessible.

Since producing Described Video is both time-intensive and costly, typically ranging from $12 to $25 per minute based on complexity, careful consideration is given to whether visual details are already conveyed elsewhere in the content, or if there are visual details that need to be described for the understanding of the film.

The DV process involves meticulously crafting descriptions, identifying natural pauses in dialogue or action, and hiring professional voice actors to record the narration. These descriptions are then seamlessly integrated into the production, enhancing accessibility without disrupting the flow of the original work.

For content requiring more in-depth descriptions, Extended Described Video offers a solution. This method temporarily pauses the video to insert additional narration, ensuring a richer and more comprehensive experience, though it does extend the overall runtime.

Described Video makes visual media more inclusive, ensuring that the content within the video reaches everyone.

(AI-Media, 2018)

Learning Management System

Many course resources are organized through Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, Moodle, or Desire2Learn. While these platforms offer significant benefits, they can also present barriers to students if the content is not designed with accessibility in mind. To ensure that your content is accessible to all users, consider the following tips:

- Use built-in accessibility tools: Most LMS platforms offer accessibility checkers and features—take advantage of these tools to help you create accessible content.
- Add content directly, rather than as attachments: Instead of attaching PDFs, use LMS pages or webpages for content. Ensure that any embedded linked documents are also accessible.
- Use proper styles and formatting: Use designated styles to format headings, titles, and emphasis (e.g., bold or italic text) rather than manually adjusting font size or formatting.
- Ensure accessible media: Provide closed captions for videos, add alt-text to images, and avoid using auto-play features.
- Create accessible tables: Use tables only when necessary to present data, not for layout or design purposes. Ensure the tables are structured adequately for screen readers.

(Collett, 2025; SETC Special Education Technology Center, 2023)

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Further reading and resources

- SNOW Website – Assistive & Accessible Technology
- Assistive Technology – Ontario Teachers Federation
- What is AT? – Assistive Technology Industry Association

- [Making Technology-Based Lessons Accessible – ED Technology Specialists](#)

4.

RESEARCH CONSULTATIONS

Katie Merriman

Overview

This chapter examines research consultations and offers strategies for collaborating with students who require accessibility support. It provides recommendations for information professionals through the lens of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), addressing each phase of the research consultation process: scheduling, physical and virtual space considerations, and the consultation itself.

Description of library teaching practice

Most academic libraries offer some version of research consultations. Typically seen as a practice where student(s) and librarian meet, either individually or in a small group setting to discuss research or library related topics. Research consultations are usually booked either through direct email with the librarian or a booking form, typically lasting between 15-60 minutes. Historically, these consultations were in-person either at a service desk, in a librarian's office, or in a consultation space. While in-person consultations are still an offering for many, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, many librarians switched to online modes of consultations, usually through platforms like Zoom or Teams. This practice of online consultations has persisted as a favoured method for many students and librarians. The content usually covered in research consultations can include:

- Using library resources
- Databases
- Library website
- Other library tools
- Searching/research techniques
- Knowledge synthesis
- Research methodologies
- Publishing
- Research data management

Listed below are many areas where a student might face accessibility barriers:

- Screens: For those individuals who are blind or with low vision, there can be difficulty interacting with screens. This can pose challenges to sharing information with the learner as the primary access point to most information sources is online.
- Inaccessible tools: There are many tools required when doing research: databases, citation managers, etc. Many tools, especially databases, are not considered user-friendly, nor do they have accessible interfaces, making traditional research practices challenging to those with accessibility needs.
- Consultation locations: Both in-person and virtual consultation settings can present accessibility challenges. Some students may benefit from the structure and reduced distractions of in-person meetings, while others may prefer virtual consultations for the comfort of using their own tools and avoiding travel.
- Audio/volume: Individuals who are D/deaf or hard of hearing benefit from having live captioning or the ability to adjust volume.

Guiding principles

When working with individual learners, it is impossible to anticipate every specific accessibility need. Therefore, the recommendations in this chapter are grounded in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework—a flexible and inclusive approach that serves as a practical starting point for supporting diverse learners. UDL is particularly well-suited to research consultations, which are inherently adaptive and personalized to each student's needs. By applying UDL principles, information professionals can create more accessible and equitable consultation experiences. For readers interested in exploring UDL further, a list of recommended resources is provided in the "Further Reading" section.

Recommendations for accessibility

Before Consultation

Begin by considering the booking platform/system. Are the means of booking with a librarian clear and accessible? Consider:

- How are students made aware of this service?
- How do students find the form/system to book with a librarian?
- Does the form/system meet WCAG standards of accessibility? You can use tools, like WAVE or

accessibility checker, to evaluate your webpages.

- Is the service clear on what students can speak to a librarian about? Is it free of library jargon and does it use clear language?
- Are you providing students with options of in-person and/or virtual consultations?

Lastly, add an optional question in your booking form or a line in your email correspondence offering accessibility support to those who may require it. The wording could be, "If you have any accommodation requests, please share them". Including this in your form or email correspondence shows users that you are interested and willing to support their needs, and removes some of the burden of correspondence from users, and allows the librarian to prepare appropriately for the consultation.

Consultation Location

Consider if/how you can offer both in-person and virtual meeting spaces.

In person spaces

Consider:

- Wheelchair/mobility aid accessibility (stairs, floor gaps, steep ramps, large enough space, etc)
- Locked doors
- Unclear signage
- Quiet, distraction free
- Strong Wifi connection, outlets, computer access
- Provide information on the library website so learners know how to access your spaces.

Virtual spaces

Consider:

- Is the platform used by your organization accessible? Zoom is often considered to be the most accessible platform.
- Ensure permissions for sharing are enabled.
- Recording meetings[1]
- Sharing transcripts
- Live captioning

During Consultation

This stage of the consultation is where the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can have the greatest impact on how support is delivered. The following recommendations are intended not as a definitive checklist, but as a starting point—guiding information professionals toward cultivating an accessible and inclusive mindset in their practice.

Audio supports

For individuals with hearing impairment or auditory processing disorders, supports may include:

- Live captions
- Slower speech
- Jargon-free language

These practices allow those who are Deaf/deaf or hard of hearing to read generated text, lip read or process speech/sound easier.

Visual

For individuals with visual impairments, supports may include:

- Zooming in on text and screen visuals
- Using descriptive language
- Changing the visual display of your computer, which might include one of the following:
    - Dark mode: A pre-defined visual configuration
    - High contrast mode: A mode that changes the colour of what appears on screen
    - Inverted colours mode: A mode that changes the colour of what appears on screen
    - Reduced motion mode: A pre-defined visual configuration

These practices enhance visual contrast and/or visibility of a screen to allow for easier visual consumption.

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1. The author acknowledges that some librarians may feel uncomfortable providing recordings or transcripts, in which case consider what accessibility supports you are comfortable with, and how you might mitigate these discomforts to support students? For example, is there a Libguide or resource that can be shared to support the content shared in the consultation?

Content/communication

For individuals experiencing language barriers or auditory processing disorders, supports may include:

- Leading with kindness and patience, providing space for invisible disabilities, and remembering that you never know someone else's experiences[2]
- Recording consultations
- Employing some of the strategies listed above, such as transcripts, live captioning, and screen contrasts, to aid learners who may struggle with content/communications concerns

These practices create a comfortable and safe learning environment where learners can be comfortable to ask for what they need to thrive.

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5.

LIBGUIDES

Susanna Galbraith

Overview

Springshare's LibGuides are a popular tool for libraries to create and publish web content that showcase and curate subject, course, and topic specific resources. These websites have evolved from what was originally called a pathfinder. Pathfinders are intended to be a launch point for research on a particular topic, via the collection of select materials available in a particular institution on that topic. These websites can include accessibility barriers that are common to all web content.

Description of library teaching practice

LibGuides are often used alongside library and information teaching sessions to guide learners in selecting resources and serve as a supplementary learning tool for learners to reference beyond the synchronous session. Non-accessible websites can create barriers for persons with auditory, cognitive, learning, physical, speech, and visual disabilities. Common web accessibility barriers (World Wide Web Consortium, 2025) that are most relevant to LibGuides for these persons include:

- [cognitive and learning disabilities](): complex language and inconsistent layout
- [physical](): poor keyboard navigation, complex navigation
- [visual](): lack of alt-text for images, page structure issues, complex navigation, keyboard navigation, poor colour contrast

These barriers can be prevented by those who administer, create, and maintain content in LibGuides. For administrators, Springshare's LibGuides software is highly customizable, and the functionality is either accessible out-of-the-box or can be customized to improve accessibility. Content creators and maintainers also play a significant role in ensuring each guide and the content within them is accessible. In 2018, Stitz & Blundell created a rubric for LibGuides and found most failed web accessibility standards.

Guiding principles

Since LibGuides are websites, the accessibility standards that guide their design are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 or WCAG 2.2. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 are a set of international standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. In Ontario, these standards are enacted through the Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act or AODA. The guidelines within WCAG each have 3 levels, A, AA, and AAA. Level A is the bare minimum, and AAA is a very high standard. The current requirement in Ontario at the time of this writing is Level AA. As such you'll often see that web accessibility must meet the WCAG 2.2 Level AA criteria. The process for ensuring compliance includes conducting tests using website automated testing tools (see further resources and readings below) combined with manual testing, such as keyboard and screen reader navigation. Note: while Level AA is the legal requirement some of the recommendations below are Level AAA.

Recommendations for accessibility

Below you'll find recommendations based on the [WCAG 2.2 criteria](#) that are most relevant to the common barriers that apply to LibGuides (Chee & Weaver, 2021, Stitz & Blundell, 2018, Hopper, 2021, Skaggs 2016), with links to resources on how to meet them. The WCAG 2.2 criteria do not specify any requirements around font type, so that is not included in the recommendations. There are WCAG requirements for video, but that is outside the scope of this chapter and will not be covered. It's important to note that many institutions and legal standards still reference WCAG 2.0 and WCAG 2.1. Each version of the guidelines builds on the previous one, meaning that WCAG 2.2 includes and expands upon the criteria established in earlier versions.

Recommendation	Description	WCAG Criterion	Audience	Roles Responsible
Images have alt text	Images need to be described for screen readers.	Level A: Non-text content	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators and maintainers
Ensure heading tags are in the proper order	Headings need to follow H1, H2, etc. for screen readers to follow the sequence of information on the page. This means that boxes (which include heading tags) should be placed in a single column rather than across the page horizontally. Headings within boxes would also need to be in the proper order.	Level A: Info and Relationships	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Administrators and content creators
Ensure tables have headings	Tables need to have headings within the columns for screen readers to follow the information in sequence.	Level A: Info and Relationships	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators
Ensure tables aren't used for layout	Tables should be used for tabular data, not layout	Level A: Info and Relationships	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators
Ensure content that should be read as a list uses list formatting	List content should use the list formatting.	Level A: Info and Relationships	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators
Use heading formatting for headings	Bold formatting shouldn't be used in place of the Heading formatting, if it's a heading.	Level A: Info and Relationships	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators
Use Side-Nav Layout with one column	Given the option in LibGuides of using Side-Nav or Tab Layout, use Side-Nav.	Level A: Meaningful Sequence	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content/ Guide creators

[Avoid uninformative link phrases, and only use underline for links.](#)	Links provide more information than just "click here". Also, non-links should not be underlined.	Level A: [Link Purpose](#)	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Content creators
[Ensure sufficient colour contrast](#)	Where colour is used anywhere on the page, ensure the contrast is tested and verified.	Level AA: [Contrast](#)	Persons with visual disabilities (colour blindness)	Administrators and content creators
[Avoid images of text](#)	If an image has text, include it in the alt-text, but keep this to a minimum. Try to keep text within the HTML separate from images.	Level AA: [Images of Text](#)	Persons with visual disabilities	Content creators
[Ensure a clearly visible focus for keyboard navigation](#)	LibGuides out-of-the-box does not have overly visible focus indicators for keyboard navigation. They can be improved with CSS customizations.	Level AA: [Focus Visible](#)	Persons with visual and physical disabilities	Administrators
[Ensure navigation layouts are consistent across guides](#)	At a policy or guidelines level try to ensure all content creators are using the Side-Nav Layout. Also, administrators can create templates that allow for consistent content within navigation across guides (eg Home, Find Resources, Get Help).	Level AA: [Consistent Navigation](#)	Persons with cognitive and physical disabilities	Administrators
[Use consistent language and formatting for similar actions.](#)	Administrators can create re-usable boxes to ensure content creators keep elements of guides consistent. Also re-using links, databases and books can help to ensure consistency.	Level AA: [Consistent Identification](#)	Persons with cognitive disabilities	Administrators and content creators
[Keep content simple and relevant with a reading level that's appropriate for the audience.](#)	Content creators can be careful to ensure guides aren't too full of extraneous information and try to refrain from using library jargon.	Level AAA: [Reading Level](#)	Persons with cognitive disabilities	Content creators

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6.

ONLINE LEARNING OBJECTS

Jeannie An and Carly McLeod

Overview

Online learning objects, such as instructional videos, multimedia tutorials (e.g., H5P), and library guides (e.g., LibGuides) are essential tools in academic libraries. They provide flexible, on-demand learning opportunities for students and faculty. This chapter explores the creation and implementation of online learning objects, emphasizing accessibility to ensure all users can benefit from these resources. Guiding principles such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) inform the recommendations provided.

Description of library teaching practice

Online learning objects deliver instructional content in various formats, including videos, interactive tutorials, and digital guides. These resources support independent learning and access at any time, making them ideal for distance education and asynchronous learning environments. However, standard approaches to creating these objects may present barriers, such as a lack of alt text for images, poor navigation, and inaccessible multimedia content.

Guiding principles

The following guiding principles and frameworks inform the accessibility recommendations:

- [Universal Design for Learning (UDL)](): A framework that aims to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](): Guidelines developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)](): Standards that mandate how organizations must remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

Accessible best practices adapted by Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers, chapter 16: [Online Learning Objects: Videos, Tutorials, and Library Guides](#)

Best practices for creating accessible instructional videos

- Implement High-Quality Closed Captions
  - Captions should accurately reflect spoken content and align with on-screen actions.
  - Ensure captions do not obscure important visual elements.
  - When a script is available, use the script to generate captions.
  - While automatic captioning tools (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) can expedite the process, manual review and correction are essential to ensure clarity, accuracy, and professionalism.
- Provide Transcripts
  - Transcripts enhance accessibility by allowing users to read or search for the video content.
  - Transcripts improve search engine optimization, increasing the visibility of learning materials.
  - For users with visual challenges, consider including descriptive audio that narrates visual elements.
- Design Visually Accessible Content
  - Use large, high-contrast text and images to ensure readability.
  - Display visual elements long enough for users to process the information.
  - Avoid flashing content, which can be distracting or difficult to interpret.
  - Provide a text equivalent for any essential visual elements.
- Ensure Platform Accessibility
  - Confirm that the video hosting platform or webpage meets accessibility standards.
  - Verify that video controls are operable via keyboard navigation to support users with physical disabilities and those using screen readers.

Best practices/guidelines for creating accessible multimedia tutorials

- Plan for Accessibility from the Start
  - Address accessibility considerations early in the design process due to the complexity and length of multimedia tutorials.
- Apply Video Accessibility Standards
  - Include closed captions and transcripts for all narrated content.
  - Provide described video/audio description or an alternative instructional format for users with

visual disabilities.

- Design Visually Accessible Content
    - Use large, high-contrast text and images.
    - Ensure content remains on screen long enough so readers can read the content.
    - Avoid flashing visuals and using color alone to convey meaning.
- Use Effective Alternative Text (Alt Text)
    - All images must include alt text that is descriptive and contextually relevant.
    - Alt text should reflect the purpose of the image within the instructional material.
- Ensure Accessibility of Interactive Elements
    - All tutorial components (activities, interactions, feedback) must be compatible with screen readers and keyboard navigation.
    - Buttons and interactive hotspots should be clearly visible, labelled with their purpose (e.g. not "click here"), and easy to activate.
    - Avoid timed activities and tasks requiring precise mouse movements, which may be difficult for users with physical disabilities or those using a screen reader.

Best practices for creating accessible library guides

- General Design Principles
    - Use large, easy-to-read fonts and high-contrast color schemes for both print and digital formats.
    - Apply structured headings to organize content clearly and provide navigation for screen reader users.
    - Provide alternative text (alt text) for all images, tables, and graphs to ensure screen reader compatibility.
    - Avoid using vague hyperlink text such as "click here;" instead, link from meaningful words or phrases.
- Best Practices for LibGuides
    - Leverage LibGuides' built-in accessibility features but ensure proper implementation during content creation.
    - Add alt text for all images manually.
    - Use the default sans-serif font for readability; apply bold text sparingly for emphasis (and never as a title).
    - Organize content using boxes, and within boxes, use clear headings and bullet lists to support skimming.
    - Maintain consistent formatting by developing and following a style guide.
    - Use Headings 1 and 2 for page and box titles.

- Use Heading 3 within content boxes.
- Disable autorotation in Gallery boxes to avoid distractions.
- Include captions and transcripts for any embedded videos.

General Considerations for Creating Accessible Learning Objects:

- **Use Descriptive Link Text**: Avoid generic phrases like "click here" and use descriptive text that indicates the link's destination.
- **Ensure Videos Have Captions and Transcripts**: Provide captions for videos and transcripts for audio content to support users with hearing limitations.
- **Maintain Consistent Navigation**: Use a consistent layout and navigation structure across all learning objects to help users easily find and access content. Use built in headings to support screen reader navigation.
- **Check Reading Order**: Ensure the reading order of content is logical and intuitive, especially for users relying on screen readers.
- **Use Plain Language**: Be clear and concise when communicating information and avoid jargon.
- **Evaluate and Reflect**: ensure the online object created meets the information needs of your audience.
- **Create a Learning Object Maintenance Routine**: Check periodically for any functional issues that may occur in your learning object, such as broken links or embedded codes.

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Further reading and resources

- [Creating Interactive Content Using H5P](): MacPherson Institute, McMaster University. This website is an excellent resource for creating interactive content using H5P.
- [H5P – Accessible Content Types:]() This link helps select the content type/widget that meets accessibility guidelines within the H5P platform.
- [ALA RUSA Guidelines – Learning Differences](): This link helps, as an instructor, understand the types of learners and assistive technology you may find in your online learning environment.
- [ALA RUSA Guidelines – Virtual Accessibility:]() This link provides general tips and tips for boarder communication in an accessible format (meetings, webinars, group discussions and documents).
- [Applying Digital Experience Design to Teaching and Learning Environments (eCampus Ontario)](): This open-access resource provides more ideas about how to incorporate online learning objects into your teaching. Chapter 12 includes examples of things to consider when creating accessible learning objects.

7.

ACCESS SERVICES

Matthew Fesnak

Overview

Library access services provide a bridge to the materials, events, and spaces of the library. They are key for directing users to physical and digital materials, guiding research, and providing opportunities for engagement. Through various offerings, libraries have many opportunities to empower users, including those with disabilities. However, ensuring that access services are accessible requires thoughtful preparation and active effort. Providing helpful services to users with disabilities can be realized through the built environment, staff training, policies, procedures, the workplace culture, and whether diverse communities are consulted and valued.

Description of library teaching practice

Reference services have been integral to libraries for over one hundred years:

Contemporary library services offered to students, faculty, staff and members of the public include online and in-person circulation or reference assistance, access to digital and physical resources, and workshops, classes, multipurpose spaces and events.

Many university library services are geared towards undergraduate students (ALA, 2014), providing materials for courses, research help for assignments, and study spaces. However, libraries also extend services to community members, and for purposes other than academic success.

By providing services that focus on lifelong learning, libraries can create inclusive spaces for those who do not thrive in traditional classroom settings. Classrooms can be sources of trauma for people with disabilities as many students have been made to feel like failures compared to their neurotypical and non-disabled peers (Hoffman, 2015), are neglected or experience gaslighting from educators (Runswick-Cole et al., 2024). The challenges faced by disabled people can be exacerbated by other identities, such as the effects of colonialism for racialized people with disabilities (Ward, 2024). The challenges faced by disabled people can also intersect with other identities (ObeySumner, 2018; Boren, 2022; Davy 2021) and it is worth learning about these intersections when trying to improve your library services to all.

What kind of a concern is C. Carpy and Company? Where are they located? What do they manufacture? Please give me a list of dealers in paint in Santos, Brazil. I'm a tired business man please give me a good mystery story.

I told my husband that there were books at the public library which would give me more information in an hour than I could get from friends and neighbours in a week.

Guiding principles

Providing customer service to users with disabilities may be regulated by legislation, as in Ontario, in which case you will likely work through a training exercise at the start of your employment. However, as these can be very generic, it is easy to forget about them. Reviewing these standards as well as guidelines more specific to library services is essential:

- The Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act provides a legal framework for providing accessible customer service, and following this act can provide a starting point for library service points.
- The Government of Canada provides the guide Accessibility in the Public Service.
- The Canadian Federation of Library Associations published Guidelines on Library and Information Services for People with Disabilities .
- The American Library Association has published Services to People with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights and a manual with a section on Library Services for People with Disabilities (section B.9.3.2)
- ALA also has a Reference and User Services Association that has published various guidelines and resources.

There is also legislation to regulate built environments for accessibility. The built environment is important to consider as it has a significant impact on how users access library services and accessibility should be prioritized when undergoing major renovations, reviewing floorplans and furnishings, and so on. See the following standards and guides:

- Here is a guide from the Government of Canada's Accessibility Standards on built environments.
- In Ontario, there is a guide for Accessibility in Ontario's Building Code.
- ACRL offers an Academic Library Building Design guide with useful tips and references

Recommendations for accessibility

There are many different things libraries can do to improve the accessibility of their services. Since the services offered by libraries are so broad, making them accessible is not straightforward. As such, this is not an exhaustive or exacting list. Assistive devices and technology can also go a long way to make your library services more accessible. See the chapter on accessible technology for more information.
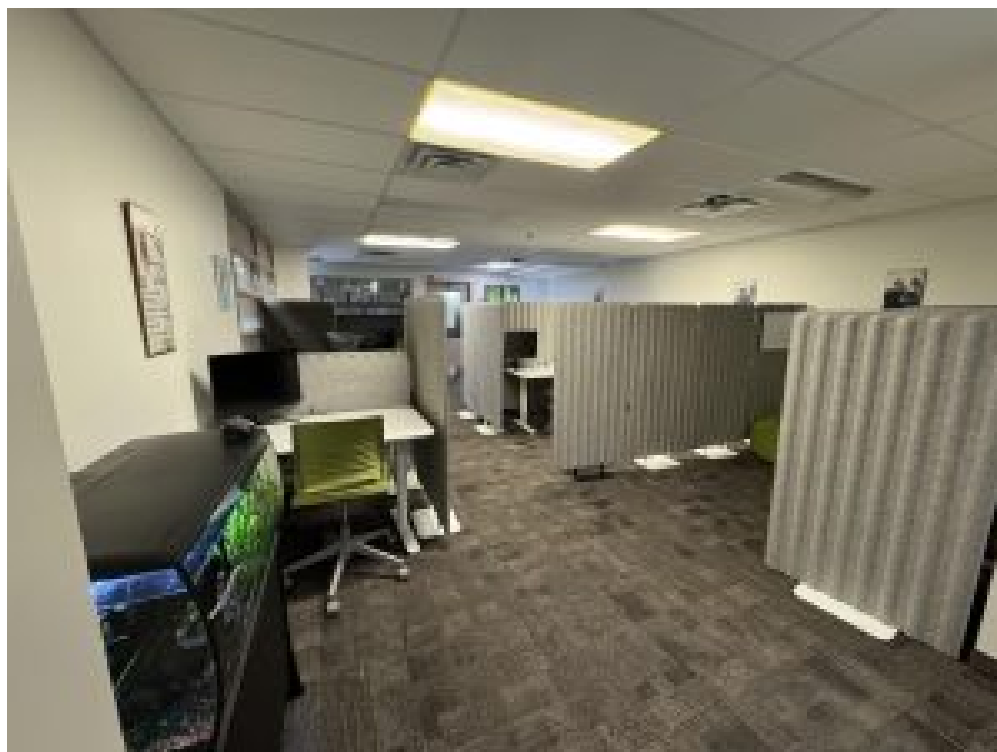
Attitude towards users

- Understanding the social model of disability (Disability Rights Commission, 2005; Human Resources and Social Development, 2004) or the pathology paradigm (Boren, 2022) can help you to create accessible policies, practices, and places.
- Library services have been shaped by the profession's long-established white, upper-class bias (Galvan, 2015), and this bias has been reflected in services aimed to better the working-class masses (Waterloo Public Library, 2024; "Andrew Carnegie: A Tribute: Colonel James Anderson"). Reflecting on historic policies and procedures that may be influenced by such attitudes can help your library serve users from different backgrounds.
- Consider alternative conflict resolution and community safety approaches that centre on inclusivity. People with disabilities – and especially those with intersecting marginalized identities – will suffer the most when libraries increase the presence and authority of police and/or security (Selman and Curnow, 2019; Salerno-Ferraro and Schuller, 2020). Closed stacks and security gates will make your library feel like a "fort" (Vendeville, 2023) and put off or distress marginalized library users.
- Clearly communicate to your visitors how to get to your library, how to use your services, and if there are any barriers, such as needing an ID card, or if certain entrances are not accessible.
- Advocate for more accessible and equitable policies, such as eliminating or reducing strict fines that may disproportionately affect those with disabilities.
- Offer to collect items if the stacks are inaccessible.

Built environment

- The library and its built environment can create barriers to services the same way that technology and digital environments can. The accessibility of your spaces needs to be prioritized and routinely reviewed.
- Building libraries can be legacy projects for architects and donors, who prioritize showy features for someone or some organization to stamp their names on. An example of this problem is Robarts Library's new "commons" project, which was established as a work and study space, but was built with large sections of seating that are totally inaccessible (Bozikovic, 2022; AODA Alliance, 2022).
- Wayfinding is something that is neglected in a lot of university libraries, and the Library of Congress Classification, CODOC, and Dewey Decimal systems do not make it easy for users to find materials. Paying attention to signage, providing multiple formats for wayfinding, and maintaining your stacks can help make them more accessible.
- The construction of reference, circulation, and research desks can be anxiety inducing and turn people away from library services (Katopol, 2014).
- Libraries have a long history of being sensory friendly environments, exemplified by the Nancy Pearl shushing librarian figure (McPhee, n.d.).

- In many university libraries, there are quiet floors or areas where excessive noise and/or scents are not permitted. It can be helpful to create additional spaces specifically for people with disabilities that are sensory friendly, provide accessible technology, and address other needs that your general study areas cannot. For an example, McMaster's Library has the Campus Accessible Tech Space (CATS), which has been specifically curated and provides lots of accessible technology.

Library Culture

- Many universities and libraries target their accessibility efforts at students exclusively. Excluding the hundreds or thousands of faculty and staff employed at your organization from your accessibility initiatives is not an effective way to make your university and library accessible.
- As many differences have been pathologized by those in power, common understandings of disabilities do not reflect the lived experience of users. Relying on stereotypes regarding disabilities or specific user groups is not appropriate. Creating a culture that gives voice and power to those users will help make your organization more accessible and inclusive.
- Review new technologies being integrated into library services for their accessibility, as tech firms often do not prioritize accessibility needs when introducing new products.
- For many people with communication differences, it is important to provide information in a variety of formats and allow for feedback and interaction.
- Providing links, notes, and/or transcripts from in person reference interactions, online chat sessions, and video calls can be very helpful and make your services more accessible.
- Replacing human reference services with chat bots will likely lead to poor interactions for your users (Maksimovic, 2023), particularly if the platform is inaccessible to those using screen readers.
- Many disabled people benefitted from the efforts taken to mitigate airborne illnesses and accessibility efforts generally during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Making efforts to reduce the spread of disease can help make your library more accessible, as does giving your workers paid sick days, wearing masks in crowded spaces, improving air filtration, providing simultaneous online and in-person access to events, ensuring quality audio and transcription, and so on.
- Workplaces that are eager to "get back to normal" do so at the expense of disabled people. Framing working from home as an excuse to be lazy turns away many disabled people. Laziness has been unfairly used as a trope against disabled people for a long period of time, at least in colonial, Western society (Ward, 2024).

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8.

OUTREACH EVENTS

Anna Flak; Katie Harding; and Ariel Stables-Kennedy

Overview

This chapter will focus on strategies for improving the accessibility of in-person library outreach events such as library open houses, tabling, speaker events, or pop-up events offered outside of the library building(s). We will use the principles of Universal Design and the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines to provide recommendations to make these outreach events accessible to a wide variety of learners. We will consider event spaces as well as how information is communicated between library workers and learners.

Description of library teaching practice

Here we consider library outreach events as in-person library events held outside of the classroom, either in a library building, or in another building or campus space. These events are often geared to a broad audience, comprising an audience of learners with a variety of experiences, familiarity and comfort with libraries, learning needs, and preferences. Further, these sessions are often open or drop-in attendance, making it difficult to plan for individual accessibility needs in advance. Some examples of library outreach events could include tabling (inside the library or at another location), library open houses, or events hosted in other spaces across campus. The purpose of library outreach events can vary but often involve a component of building relationships with new library users or increasing knowledge of the library or a library service within the community.

Some of the barriers that these events may present include:

- Event spaces may be inaccessible or present barriers to engaging fully with the event
- Outreach events can be loud, making conversation challenging
- The event environment can be overwhelming, causing participants to feel overstimulated
- Outreach materials may be difficult to perceive (e.g. print materials with small fonts, glare from sunlight on screens)
- Individuals may feel unwelcome or unsupported to attend

Guiding principles

The recommendations below are built on the principles of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning.

<u>Universal Design</u>: Designing spaces and environments to be accessible to a wide range of people with different needs

<u>Universal Design for Learning</u>: Builds on the concept of Universal Design by introducing the framework of multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression.

- <u>Multiple means of engagement</u> refer to how the learner is engaged by the learning environment, i.e. how we are ensuring that all our students are motivated to learn and considering different approaches that might work for different students. Some students might like to participate in an activity, while others might prefer to listen to information or participate in a discussion.
- <u>Multiple means of representation</u> refer to how the learner picks up the information ie. are we accounting for different learning styles by presenting our information and content in different ways? This could be text, graphs, pictures, videos, etc.
- <u>Multiple means of action and expression</u> refers to how the learners may choose to act on and express their knowledge i.e. are we providing different opportunities for our students to participate in the learning process. This could be providing options for students to share what they've learned in a variety of ways such as verbally, in writing, or by creating something like an image or a video.

Recommendations for accessibility

General

- Marketing for events should be plain language and accessible (e.g. webpages, emails, registration forms). Describe accessible features of the event and provide contact information for the event organizer so learners with disabilities can reach out with any questions related to accessibility of the event. Ask attendees to indicate if they have any accessibility needs.
- If you provide catering, ensure that ingredients are well labelled. Provide tables for attendees to put their food or drinks on. Include options that are easy to eat and ensure straws are available. If guests pre-register for the event, ask if they have any dietary restrictions to ensure everyone can enjoy the catering.
- Offer water bowls and access to outdoor relief areas for service animals.
- Provide options for attendees to offer feedback on their experience of the event, including anything that was inaccessible or challenging for them. Use this feedback to adjust and improve for future events.

Event venues

- Choose spaces that are accessible for people with physical disabilities. Visit the space(s) ahead of the event and consider the accessibility of the building entrance, meeting rooms, washrooms, hallways, paths, aisles, elevators, and parking. Consider things such as ramps, automatic doors, and width of doors and walkways.
- Consider the season and the weather conditions, and if these will create barriers to getting to and/or participating in the event.
- Choose a venue that does not include a lot of noise from external sources and reduce noise where possible to ensure participants can hear information that is shared verbally, aren't overwhelmed, and aren't distracted.
- Event spaces should be well lit but avoid too much natural light where glare can make it difficult to see, especially for those with low vision.
- Ensure that booths, tables, and chairs are adjustable and can be moved around, so they are accessible to accommodate a variety of accessibility needs.
- Offer quiet spaces for those with sensory issues.
- At events that involve standing, provide seating options for attendees who can't stand for long periods of time.
- Develop a barrier-free route to the event, highlight locations of elevators, and accessible washrooms and workstations.
- Ensure your event venue is near accessible public transit stops and is scheduled during times when public transit is available. Provide accessible public transportation information to your event.
- Ensure accessible parking is located nearby and provide information to attendees about where this is available.
- Consider offering audio, textual, and visual alternatives to pedestrian tours.
- The event moderator should inform participants of the nearest emergency exits, accessible restrooms, and any other important accessibility features of the space.

Communicating and presenting information

- Signage should use large, accessible fonts and ensure adequate contrast between the text and background colours.
- Provide information in multiple formats (e.g. text provided digitally, in print, or verbally; providing verbal or textual descriptions of visuals). Provide materials in an alternative format to attendees who require it before the event. Post a QR code directing attendees to the accessible online version.
- Provide presenters with guidelines for creating accessible presentations and require them to submit materials in advance to allow time for your team to create alternative formats and share with attendees

who require it before the event.

- Use inclusive as well as plain language and visuals that are accessible to all.
- Provide interpreter(s) as needed to help any attendees who require them.
- Use microphones and captioning in events with a speaker. Videos should also be captioned.
- Speakers should identify themselves when they speak.
- Speakers should position themselves to maintain a clear line of sight between themselves and the audience.
- Speakers should speak slowly, clearly, and use simple language.
- Provide multiple modes for participants to interact with speakers (e.g. asking questions verbally or by submitting a question over email or text)
- Provide microphones for attendees to ask questions, or have the speaker repeat questions into their microphone.
- Reserve seats at the front of the room for attendees who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have low vision.
- Offer short (5-10 minute) breaks between topics or activities to give the audience time to process.
- Follow best practices for accessible documents to ensure any handouts are accessible.

Accommodations

- Promote accommodations request services clearly in all promotional materials for the event.
- If participants are required to register for an event, provide a space for them to indicate any accessibility needs or accommodation requests. Ensure the registration deadline is early enough that your team has time to fulfill those requests.
- Designate a member of your team who can manage any accommodation or access requests before, during, and after the event.
- Communicate in advance of the event with any attendees who request accommodations to ensure that acceptable accommodations are available.
- If any participant's accommodations requests cannot be accommodated, the team member managing accommodations should work with that participant to find an appropriate alternative.
- Budget for disability related accommodation services such as real-time captioning, interpretation, sensory tools, and additional space for decompression.
- Book interpreters and other service providers several weeks in advance.

Planning outreach events comes with many challenges, often constrained by tight budgets, short timelines, and limited human resources. The cognitive load involved can be overwhelming, especially given planning is not central library worker training. Additionally, the unpredictable nature of drop-in events makes it difficult to anticipate and address the needs of our diverse student populations.

Continuous learning and collaboration can help bridge the gap. Seeking professional development opportunities, sharing best practices with colleagues, and documenting experiences can create a stronger foundation for future events. By embedding these principles into everyday workflows, accessible outreach event planning can become a more intentional and manageable process, leading to more engaging and inclusive programs.

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