



# A Library Without Obstacles

A Guide to Accessibility

## About this Guide

- This guide is written by and for the staff at Biblioteken i Malmö, BiM, (the libraries in Malmö, Sweden). Throughout the guide there will be information not applicable to other libraries in Sweden or elsewhere.
- Some of the terms, technical or otherwise, are either Swedish or only used in Sweden and there for cannot be translated.
- At the end there will be an explanation of concepts and terms.

# Content

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Necessary for some – good for everyone</b> _____   | <b>04</b> |
| <b>Social accessibility</b><br>General approach _____   | <b>06</b> |
| <b>Access to activities and resources</b><br>Planning viewing and events _____                  | <b>08</b> |
| <b>Technical aids</b><br>Access to mediums and technical aids _____                             | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Physical accessibility</b><br>An accessible library _____                                    | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Access to information and communication</b><br>To write clearly and design information _____ | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Concepts of accessibility</b><br>Explanations, context and background _____                  | <b>26</b> |

# Necessary for some – good for everyone

In this guide you can find information on what we currently offer our disabled visitors. This manual offers tips on how one can contribute to making the libraries more accessible. It is intended to show what we can offer our disabled visitors but also give advice on how to improve. You can use this guide as an instrument and also to get an idea of what the libraries offer in the area of accessibility. Our basic premise is that whatever is necessary for some is good for everyone. Use the guide as an inspiration.

## **A library for everyone**

In Sweden approximately 18% of the population have some kind of disability, whether it is physical, mental or intellectual. The Swedish Library Act states that this target group is given a special priority.

The libraries must be accessible to all and provide an equal opportunity to take part in literature, knowledge and freely form opinions.

# How did we do this?

Libraries without obstacles was a project run by a working group throughout 2019. The purpose was to strengthen accessibility. Together with experts and professionals we made an inventory of the different library functions, evaluated and purchased technical aids, improved our furnishings and lighting but also

proposed for other changes. We could ascertain that our libraries are good at accessibility, particularly mediating literature but we do have areas that must be developed in regard to physical accessibility. See this guide as an aid to developing the work on accessibility.



A close-up photograph of two women. The woman in the foreground has long dark hair and is looking towards the right. The woman in the background is partially visible on the right side, also looking towards the right. The background is blurred, showing large letters 'ART'.

Social

accessibility

# Having a good conversation every time

## We are all different and we must look at our visitors from their point of view.

Be helpful and attentive, treat everyone with respect. Everyone we meet have different needs, which we do not know of on beforehand. We must be clear on what rules apply and avoid exceptions. If the

same question is asked several times or to several people, the reply must be the same, no matter who they ask. It can be difficult to encounter and approach people who don't respond or behave as expected.

### Pointers:

- Be calm and generous in your approach. Moderate your own expressions. Your calm will rub off and create a mutual feeling of security.
- Try to position yourself in eyelevel with the person you are talking to. Avoid direct eye contact with people who appear to be angry, stressed or upset.
- Offer to accompany the visitor, instead of only referring them, to the shelf or location they are looking for. It can be difficult and frustrating to navigate among the shelves of the library.
- Let the visitor know what is allowed instead of what is not allowed.
- Always let the visitor finish talking. Avoid completing or ending their sentences.
- Back away and retreat if you realize you are agitating someone. Let a colleague take over.
- Change your strategies if you notice your recipient doesn't understand. Prioritize and divide information into smaller parts, focusing on what's most important. Use pen and paper to write down information and illustrate what you mean.



Access to  
activities and  
resources

MASTEN 2

BIBLIOTEK

MASTEN 2



# Welcome, everyone is invited!

**The libraries should be for everyone. But everyone doesn't know what the libraries have to offer.**

We need to invite people who might have difficulties getting to the library and therefore seldom visit us. Co-operate with, schools for children with special needs, activity centers for people with disabilities, associations for the disabled, and so on.

We need to adapt our viewings to people with disabilities. In order to do this, it's good to have some understanding of what disabilities they have, how old they are, on what level their understanding of spoken language is and what they are interested in.

If you are arranging a viewing for a special-needs class or school, it is a good idea to visit them in their comfort zone first for example in their classroom. Tell them about the viewing, what they will see and do when they visit the library. That way you get to know each other on beforehand which creates a sense of security which goes both ways. The same applies if you are meeting disabled adults.

### Pointers:

- For visiting, choose a time during the day when the library is usually calm and quiet.
- Gather the group. Approach them calmly.
- Show them where emergency exits, and restrooms are located.
- Begin with a rough schedule of the viewing and invite the group to ask questions and share their expectations.
- Speak loud and clear, use a simple language. If needed, use aids as sign language and symbols.
- After the viewing, make sure there's time for questions and for the visitors to share their impressions from the visit.
- Thank the group for the visit and be sure to welcome them back.

# Let everyone join in

**Every year our libraries arrange many events.**

**It is important to make them accessible for everyone.**

In order to reach that goal, a few requirements need to be met. Some are more important than others, and unfortunately, all demands can't be reached all the time. Therefore, we must be able to inform our visitors what we can and cannot offer at a certain time.

We plan with a perspective over time. Altogether, the activities and events must be adapted to as many as possible. For example, some events should be interpreted in sign language and/or have visual descriptions.

**Our minimum requirements are:**

- A microphone is used by lecturers and by the audience (for when they ask questions).
- There should be good general lighting or a spotlight on the lecturer to facilitate lipreading.
- Presentations and on-screen viewings are high in contrast.
- Make sure there is plenty of space for wheelchairs, walkers and others with limited mobility.

- It must be easy to find the way from the entrance to the venue. The way there should be spacious and free from narrow passages.
- All information on the event must be clear and easy to understand whether it's communicated through leaflets, on social media, on screens or posted in the library.

**Before activities and events, it's good to know if the following is available:**

- Access to various technical aids, such as hearing loops.
- Possibility for transport services to drop-off and pick-up clients close to the venue entrance.
- Parking possibilities close to the venue.
- Doors and entrances with a free passage of a minimum of 80 centimeters. It is especially important to know if there are passages not reaching the requirement. Would it be possible to arrange another entry way or maybe widen the passage?
- Accessible restrooms.

# Reading without obstacles



**We offer adapted media, for example talking books and books in braille for children with visual impairments.**

Easy-to-read books are suitable for readers with cognitive impairments. Easy-to-read books are a good choice also for readers having Swedish as a second language. Our libraries offer home delivery of books and talking books to people with difficulties getting to the library.

As librarians, or library employees, we need to know what media accessible medias we offer. The supply differs between our libraries, but anything can be reserved and delivered to your preferred library. Altogether, the libraries in Malmö have a large collection of media.

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## **The Apple Shelf is our collection of accessible books for children:**

- Tactile books. These books offer the reader to gather information or, read a story with their fingertips.
- Books with sign language or augmentative and alternative communication. These contain both text/letters and pictures of the most important signs of sign language.
- Apple-bags and language-bags. They contain a combination of books and objects that can be used for children in need of language/speech training/support. The bags are produced in co-operation with speech therapists.
- Books in sign language.
- Books for them who communicate with Bliss.
- Silent books. Picture books without text.
- Books in braille.
- Books about disabilities.

## For visitors of all ages:

- We have talking books on CDs that can be played on a Daisy device.
- Talking books are also available through the app Legimus on your smart phone or tablet. Legimus requires a user account. It's free and any librarian at any library in Malmö can register an account for you.
- Talking newspapers. Several newspapers and cultural magazines are available as talking newspapers. They can be read with a Daisy device or with an app for your smart phone or tablet. Contact the subscription department for the specific newspaper. MTM (the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media) converts the newspaper from paper to a talking newspaper.
- Talking book subscription. Subscribers of talking newspapers can also get talking books sent directly to their Daisy device.
- Easy-to-read books for all ages. The books are written in a simplified language and in short sentences.
- The easy-to-read newspaper "8 sidor" ("8 Pages"), published by MTM (the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media).





# Technical aids



# Don't forget about the tech

The libraries in Malmö might have a larger supply of technical aids than you think.

**All libraries have access to:**

- Daisy devices for loan. They are kept at the main library but can be reserved and sent to your preferred library.
- Speech synthesis. ViTal is installed on all our public computers and reads from the web processor or the word processor.
- All our information desks are equipped with hearing loops.
- Portable hearing loops are available at the main library and can be borrowed by staff at any library in Malmö. They can be used for events and activities held both at the libraries and in other venues.

**Also available at some libraries:**

- Reading camera or magnifiers for enlarging written texts in papers or books. They also make it possible to adjust the contrast and to change the text and/or background colors. These

devices are available at the libraries in Bellevue, Husie, Kirseberg, Limhamn, Rosengård and at the main library.

- A computer with braille display and braille printer is available at the main library.





Physical

accessability



# Everyone should be able to reach their next book

**It should be easy and possible for everyone to navigate and move within the library premises.**

It should be just as easy to find a place for peace and quiet. The physical space can't be a limitation. Roaming should be simple, and the premise environment must be safe and welcoming.

Most matters regarding the physical accessibility is regulated in the Swedish Planning and Building Act. You may not be able to affect some aspects brought up in this guide, but they are still good to know. These aspects are valid for public as well as staff premises.

- Information desks should be visible, or otherwise clearly signposted from entrances, staircases and elevators.
- Staircases, ramps and entrances must be clearly marked and have distinct signs. Contrast markings guide visitors with visual impairments or with orientation difficulties. Contrast markings are used for example marking doorways and glass walls, for showing where a ramp begins and ends, and for marking stairs.
- Keep the measurements below in mind when furnishing the premises. It is important that isles and passages are correctly adapted and that the library is not narrow and cramped. The measurements are adapted to wheelchair users:
  - 90 centimeters for shorter passages for example between a table and a shelf.
  - 120 centimeters for a longer passage or isle.
  - 200 centimeters for a turning circle.
- Avoid creating hidden spaces and without overview.
- Avoid overcrowding and cluttering with furniture
- When a premise is temporary remodeled, for example for an event, it might be difficult for some visitors to find their way and orientate themselves. Be sure to create distinct and obvious passages.

It must be perfectly clear for the visitor what is expected from them. Different rules for different rooms or different zones within a room is good, for example

study areas where conversations are allowed and rooms for silent reading and contemplation.

## Pointers

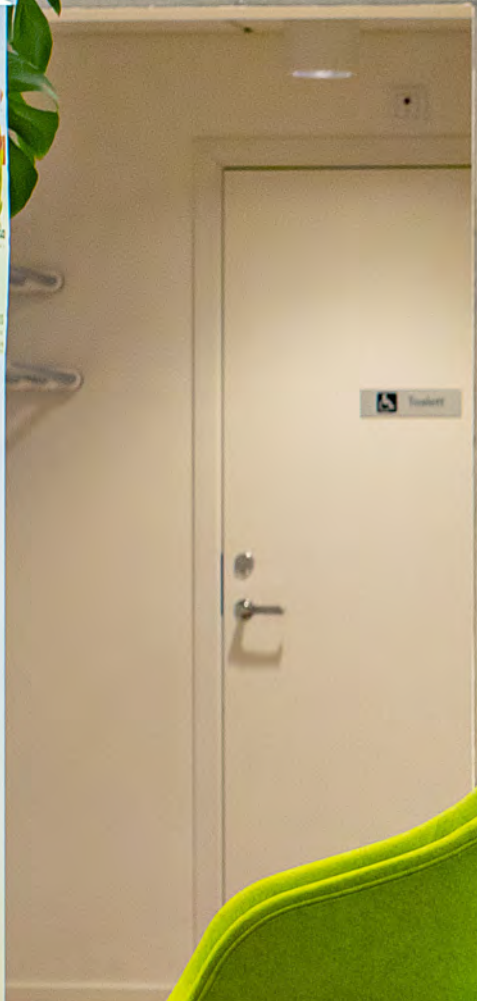
- Post signs with clear regulations. Make sure they are visible and complied.
- The visitor should be able to prepare their visit on beforehand with help from information on the website. The site should clearly state what the library offers and what is expected from the visitor.
- Create visible and accessible areas for technical aids.
- Try to reduce impressions as from, for example lighting and sound in order to minimize risk of cognitive overload.
- Signs should be spread across the premises rather than gathered in one place.
- Lights should be flicker free LED.
- Choosing furniture, carpeting and other furnishings that muffles sound. Single colored fabrics are preferable to patterns with multiple colors. Use drapes and curtains to shade windows.
- Decorate with green plants to create a calm interior. Round leaves make an especially soothing impact.
- Soap and detergents should be fragrance free.



# Lästips



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**Accessible**

**information and**

**communication**

# We write so everyone could understand

**According to the Language Act, the language in public functions should be clear, simple and comprehensible. In other words - a plain language.**

Plain language means using words that are easy to understand in a clear and simple structure.

You need to know what you want to achieve with your text. Decide what you would like the reader to know once they have read your text. Consider on what channel and/or media your text will be posted. Is it an e-mail, a sign, a leaflet or will it be posted on social media? You need to adapt your writing depending on how and where it is published.

This goes for both internal communication as well as partners and public information.

## **Pointers:**

- Begin with the most important information.
- Write short sentences.
- Address the reader directly ("you").
- Use everyday language.
- Avoid negations.
- Avoid figurative language.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Explain what needs to be explained. You might have to explain technical terms and internal concepts.
- Avoid long and complicated sentences.
- Write informative headlines.
- If you are writing a long text, summarize the most important information.

# We design so that everyone can understand

**All signs and informative materials produced by the libraries in Malmö should have a clear and an easy-to-read design.**

Keep in mind that this also applies to temporary signs, for example a sign informing that a printer is out of order.

It also applies to, for example, Power Point presentations. Do not forget to always use plain language.

## **Pointers:**

- Use images to illustrate your message.
- Do not use cursive text.
- Use straight and even fonts.
- Do not use only capital letters. Applies to headlines as well.
- Consider font size. No less than 24 pts for a sign in the A4 format. In a regular document don't use fonts smaller than 11 pts.
- Make sure to have a high contrast between text and background.
- Don't place text on pictures or motley backgrounds. Put the text in a solid colored box instead.

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# Our films have captions

All films that are produced by the libraries in Malmö have captions, which is required for films published on social media. Films shown on our website should, aside from having captions, also have visual descriptions. This is required by law.

The Malmö city website video player supports visual descriptions, sign language, and captions, and offers a transcription of the video as well. Our goal is that all films published on our website will be interpreted in sign language.

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# The New Communication Hub

On our internal Sharepoint page, the New Communication Hub, contains a lot of information on accessible communication in all our channels, whether it's in text or with video and audio. This is a good source of knowledge for anyone working with communication at the libraries in Malmö.

Templates and other aids for communication can also be found here.

The Hub is updated continually.

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# Concepts of accessibility

## **Bliss**

A system of symbols where words, concepts and grammatical rules are represented by images. These images are composed of black lines and can be used to form full sentences. Bliss is used mainly by people who lack the ability to speak. The user communicates by pointing to an image chart.

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## **Disability**

This means that someone has a decreased, or completely absent, ability to function physically, intellectually or mentally. The level of disability can vary but will have a great impact on life. A disability can be congenital or be a consequence of a disease or an accident. Disabilities can be temporary or lifelong.

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## **An obstacle of accessibility**

Something that limits someone with a disability in relation to their surroundings. A threshold can be an obstacle for someone with a walker, and a difficult text can pose a limit to someone with dyslexia. An obstacle of accessibility is not something a person has, but rather something that exists in their surroundings.

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## **The right to function**

The right to function in different situations, no matter the disability or the obstacle. It's a shift from obstacles and special solutions to the principle of everyone's human rights. Everyone has the right to a functioning life.

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## **Varied functions**

We all have different abilities, strengths and weaknesses. Varied function means there is an anomaly to the norm concerning physical, psychological or cognitive function. In Sweden it is best to not use this term, and instead use the word disability.

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## **Hearing loop**

A technical aid for the hearing impaired. Usually installed in lecture halls, information desks and the likes. Hearing aid technology can also be mobile. This technology aids the user by enhancing volume of what is being said.

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## **Neuropsychiatric disabilities, NPD**

This is based on how the brain works and processes information. NPD is a collective term for, for example, adhd (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), add (attention deficit disorder), autism, tourettes, and dyslexia. Sometimes the term ESSENCE (early symptomatic syndromes eliciting neurodevelopmental clinical examinations) is also used as a collective term. This concept is mainly used in healthcare, before a diagnosis is made.

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|---|---|
| <b>Visual description</b>               | Aids for the visually impaired that describes what is shown on stage or in a movie. Useful for events, arrangements and movies produced by the library.   |
| <b>Talking book</b>                     | A sound recording of a book designed for the visually impaired and played on a Daisy device, with a reading program on the computer or in the Legimus app for smart phones and tablets. A talking book consists of either sound or a combination of sound and text. Not to be confused with audio books.  |
| <b>Supporting sign language or TAKK</b> | TAKK is a Swedish abbreviation for "Tecken som Alternativ och Kompletterande Kommunikation", meaning "signs as an alternative and complementary communication", and is equivalent to unaided Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). TAKK is based on the Swedish sign language and can help stimulate speech development. When supportive signs language is used, only the most important words of the sentence are signed.  |
| <b>Sign language</b>                    | Sign language is not your mother tongue in signs but a language of its own. The Swedish sign language is an independent language and has by law a minority language status by law.  |
| <b>Accessibility</b>                    | A concept used to best describe how well a website, a room, a venue and so on is adapted to people with disabilities. This includes the physical layout of a premises, the possibility to partake in events offered and the access to information and the approach from staff.  |
| <b>Daisy-device</b>                     | An acronym for "Digital Audiobased Information System", a technical device that reads from CDs and mp3s, but depending on what model is offered, some also read from SD cards or USB memory sticks. The device can be borrowed from the library by people with visual impairments or other disabilities causing them difficulties to read ordinary books. The word "disability" is used in a broad and generous sense, including people with dyslexia as well as people with broken arms. |
| <b>Apple Shelf</b>                      | Mainly for children with disabilities and their parents (who may or may not have disabilities). The Apple Shelf exists as a part of the Human Rights Act, because all human beings have the same rights. Contrary to what the name might suggest, the Apple Shelf isn't necessarily just a shelf, but can even be an area with adapted media of different types.  |

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