
Revised Guidelines for Accessible Libraries and Services for Everyone: A Brief Overview of Tips for Ensuring Access to Information for Persons with Disabilities

Misako Nomura

Secretariat, Assistive Technology Development Organization (ATDO), Chofu, Japan

E-mail address: nomura@atdo.jp



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Abstract:

The Revised Guidelines for Accessible Libraries and Services for Everyone, prepared mainly by the IFLA/Library Services for People with Special Needs Section (LSN) members, is being reviewed by IFLA.

While the original is still helpful today, it has been revised in light of the changing global situation related to persons with disabilities and the remarkable progress in library services for the target population under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Guidelines result from the recent LSN activities, which could be very practical for many libraries and librarians.

This paper provides an overview of the revised guidelines, including the sections of the Preface and the Purpose, Philosophy and Overview, Leadership and Management Responsibilities in Library Accessibility, Events, Physical Access, Online Accessibility, and Accessibility for Specific Groups. The paper also briefly discusses tips for ensuring access to the information libraries and librarians provide. In addition, it describes the issues raised by the guidelines and their solutions and discusses what libraries and librarians can do to ensure inclusive library services that welcome all people.

Keywords: guidelines, accessible libraries and services, persons with disabilities. access to information

Introduction

IFLA Guidelines for Accessible Libraries and Services for everyone is a revision of the “Access to Libraries for Persons with Disabilities Checklist,” published in 2005. We revised them because the situation of the world related to persons with disabilities has been changed in terms of language and user groups. In addition, we found the remarkable progress in the field of library services for persons with disabilities particularly in the area of assistive technology, digital format and online communications tool and the necessity of updating the Guidelines.

The purpose of these Guidelines is the following.

- To provide basic ideas and strategies how to make libraries accessible such as universal design, assistive technology and physical and information accessibility.
- To provide a right-based approach for library services to all persons.

- To focus on leadership and management in libraries since the direction of library policies is likely under their guidance and control.
- To educate library staff on the wide range of users with specific needs to provide appropriate services to meet these needs.
- To provide updates on helpful technologies to promote accessibility through numerous new library practices and innovations.
- To inform library managers and staff on how libraries can welcome all people, including those with various disabilities.
- To provide easy-to-understand guidelines so librarians without related training or experiences can begin serving all community members well.
- To contribute to the United Nations 2030 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), such as reduced inequalities, good health and well-being, quality education, decent work, and economic growth.

Brief Overview of the Sections of the Guidelines

The Guidelines for persons with disabilities are divided into 8 Chapters. These include:

Chapter 1: Preface and Purpose

This Chapter describes the background and purpose of the new Guidelines development as mentioned the above. It also describes the issues raised in developing them such as what “special needs” means for persons with disabilities, and person-first vs identify-first.

It also refers to the target audience. These guidelines are intended for all types of libraries; public, academic, school, children, youth, special, and university and college libraries. They are also intended for disability groups and support organizations for persons with a range of disabilities.

Chapter 2: Philosophy and Overview

The following are focused as a strategy to promote inclusive library services.

- Human rights approach
- Nothing about us without us: partnering with the disability community
- Universal design
- Assistive Technology
- Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

Chapter 3: Leadership and Management Responsibility in Library Accessibility

The positive role of the library’s leadership and management is one of key points to make a library accessible because the commitment to accessibility is reflected in policies, trainings, and attitudes with the support from the management and governing bodies.

Chapter 4: Events

It describes how all people including people with disability can participate in and enjoy the library program at the physical space or online. Many useful tips can be found in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Physical Access

Physical access is an integral aspect to library services. This chapter summarizes the key points to take into consideration when designing a new or refurbished library building.

Chapter 6: Access to information

It refers to the latter part of this paper

Chapter 7: Designing Online Accessibility

In order to ensure online accessibility, it should be considered to make web and mobile application contents perceivable, operable and understandable for persons with disabilities. In addition, online communication should be compatible with a wide range of assistive technologies,

Chapter 8: Accessibility for Specific Groups

It offers general recommendations common for any disability group in terms of :

- Welcoming atmosphere for all users.
- Staff training
- Advisory Council of staff and disability community members for discussion
- A Personal Librarian service
- Collection development considering people with the various disabilities
- Community resources
- Outreach
- Communication in accessible way
- Advocacy

And this chapter also offers the detailed recommendations focusing on the following users. It may be useful for you to just read the services about the disability groups that you are involved with.

- public library services to children with disabilities
- school library services to students with disabilities
- college and university students with disabilities 50
- persons with physical disabilities or mobility impairment
- persons who are blind or with low vision
- deaf, hard of hearing, or Deafblind
- persons with dyslexia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or other learning disabilities
- persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia
- persons living with mental health issues
- persons with cognitive disabilities or on the autism spectrum disorder
- persons who cannot come to the library/home delivery

Appendix A: Glossary of Common Terms

It provides definitions of frequently used terms that relate to accessibility. It is hoped that this section will be used as a quick reference tool.

Appendix B: Acknowledgement

The names of the contributors are provided with many thanks by the working group of these Guidelines.

Tips for ensuring access to information.

Access to information is a basic human right under the right based conventions such as “UN Human Right Declaration,” “UN International Convention of the Right of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)” and so on.

In order to ensure access to information, accessibility is important for persons with disabilities. The general comment on the Article 9 of CRPD: accessibility, recognizes accessibility as a

precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate equally in the society.

Based on the above, we focus on ensuring that information is provided in libraries in an accessible and meaningful way. In these Guidelines the following are recommended for making information accessible:

- Identify the specific alternative format and assistive technology designed to meet the information needs of users with a range of disabilities.
- Consult community members with disabilities and disability organizations to find out what information they need and what kind of format would be best for them to access that information.
- Use clear, user-focused language you would use in face-to-face conversations. Avoid jargon and technical terms.
- Use language your community members use.
- Create easy-to-read information in both print and digital format for people with cognitive disabilities.
- Check the copyright law in your country when you modify or convert the original information into an accessible format.
- Determine if your country has endorsed the Marrakesh Treaty.
- Ensure all information about access, services, materials, and programs in libraries is available in alternative formats.
- Provide training courses for library staff and library users on how to use the technology
- Provide computers equipped with necessary software, such as screen readers for people with reading disabilities, who are blind or have low vision, and adaptive tools designed for people with physical disabilities.
- Ensure that library staff know how to provide accessible information, including sign language if possible. If not possible, provide staff with the appropriate software to support community members who are Deaf
- Create partnerships with specialized libraries to provide information in accessible formats, such as audio or Braille

It is important that library staff be committed to accessibility for all community members. To support this, library management/administrators should do the following.

- Facilitate staff acceptance of the necessity of access for people with disabilities.
- Establish the goals of providing accessibility for staff
- Make it easy to acquire accessibility-related resources.
- Recruit library staff, including those with disabilities, who are committed to accessibility.
- Use recruitment tools, such as accessible website and online job application systems, which are accessible by all qualified people, including those with disabilities.
- Educate library staff on the use of accessible technology and inclusive content, including both technology which is usable without additional assistive technology and technology that is compatible with assistive technology.

We understand the important role of library management/administrators in improving accessibility in libraries.

“Easy to read” is one form of accessible information. It helps ensure that written and digital information is simpler to understand and more accessible to people with learning or cognitive disabilities or who are new to reading. The following are suggested:

- Use language that is short, simple, concise, and concrete
- Include illustrations on the same page as the accompanying text
- Avoid complicated words, while still using language that is adult and age appropriate

- Explain or describe complicated relationships in a concrete and logical manner
- Use a logical chronological framework in describing events
- Before publishing, evaluate the information and material with the target group
- Follow the IFLA Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials published by LSN.

In addition to making paper publications easier to understand, there are a wide range of methods for presenting accessible information electronically. Examples include:

- Systems that use scanners to scan documents for magnification, reading, and Braille translation
- Assistive/adaptive technology, such as magnification readers and screen readers
- Videos with captions
- Computer applications and software
- Broadcasting, such as radio broadcasts
- DAISY¹ and EPUB² format for accessible e-books

Regarding the accessible e-books, DAISY Consortium (DC) internationally and Japan DAISY consortium (JDC) which as a member of DC are promoting DAISY/EPUB technology for producing born accessible eBooks. In Japan, in order to produce such books JDC has started promoting the EPUB Accessibility, a technical specification for informing users about the accessibility of e-books.

Many libraries use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to market their programs and services. To ensure information for people with print disabilities the writing style, use of alternative text and accurate subtitles on videos should be considered.

Issues arising in the development of these guidelines

The issue was that the terms and definitions of disability varied from country to country. After discussion through virtual meetings, one of the solutions was to add an addition after the definition.

The guidelines contain a lot of technical terms, which are difficult for librarians to understand without specialist knowledge, so Appendix A includes a glossary of terms used in these Guidelines.

Regarding the term 'special needs', some disabled people's groups complained that their needs are neither special nor unique, but we responded that it is not the term itself, but the barriers it indicates. We need to continue to consider this issue in the future by listening to the voice from people with disabilities. This point is addressed in these guidelines.

Conclusion

These guidelines contain many suggestions and recommendations for library services for people with disabilities, which some libraries may find difficult to put into practice because of limited budgets and staff. But first, consider what you can do to welcome those people. We hope these guidelines will help you make the first steps.

Note:

1. DAISY: DAISY stands for Digital Accessible Information System. The DAISY/NISO Standard is the Digital Talking Book specification for creating accessible digital content for persons with reading difficulties such as dyslexia, blindness, low vision, and other print disabilities. It is a multimedia standard that supports the traditional presentation of images and text, as well as audio, content navigation, and animation. It has been developed and maintained by the [DAISY Consortium](#), an international non-profit membership organization founded in 1996. Three kinds of DAISY books are popular across the world:

Navigable audio books, text-only books, and full-text full audio books. (from the Appendix A)

2. EPUB: The EPUB specification is a distribution and interchange format standard for digital publications and documents. EPUB defines a means of representing, packaging, and encoding structured and semantically enhanced Web content including HTML5, CSS, SVG, images, and other resources — for distribution in a single-file format. EPUB publications can be downloaded and then read using different kinds of devices like smartphones, tablets, e-readers, and computers (from the Appendix A)

References

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