

TAKE THE ACCESSIBILITY TEMPERATURE OF YOUR LIBRARY

Accessibility is about more than a ramp, it is fundamental to intellectual freedom. Nevertheless, how many things in your building say “No?” What physical, intellectual, and cultural barriers do we unknowingly put in the way of our public and how do these barriers impact access and Intellectual Freedom?

You need to know the pulse of your community. If you do not, you are encouraged to find out. These are guidelines and suggestions to help you determine what your library’s temperature and think about some solutions for wellness.

CONSIDERATIONS		Yes No	WELLNESS INFORMATION
<u>PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY</u> - Get the patrons in the door and in front of the materials they want quickly and easily			
1. Comfort Level			Provide a comforting and welcoming place to visit.
1.1. Is the atmosphere welcoming? 1.1.1. Are all people of the community comfortable coming to the library? 1.1.2. Do they feel welcome?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Post staff members or volunteers at the entrance to welcome people to the library and help direct them to the areas of interest.
1.2. Can you identify the staff? 1.2.1. Do the library staff wear ID badges; nametags; library t-shirts or aprons? 1.2.2. Are they easy to tell apart from the other patrons?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Staff should be easy to recognize. The patron should be able to find a staff member for assistance.

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<p>1.3. Does the Patron feel safe?</p> <p>1.3.1. Is the parking lot well lit?</p> <p>1.3.2. Are other patrons intimidating?</p> <p>1.3.3. Is security available and visible?</p> <p>1.3.4. Is there a safe place to lock up a bicycle?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Quite often, a person will not enter a building if they do not feel safe.</p> <p>Example: A crowd of teenagers or vagrants outside the entrance to the library may cause a person to feel intimidated.</p> <p>Be sure to provide a setting that feels safe and welcoming.</p>
<p>2. Accessibility</p>		<p>Everyone should be able to use the library without barriers to information.</p>
<p>2.1. Signage</p> <p>2.1.1. Exterior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Is it welcoming? ◇ Is the library building easy to identify? ◇ Are the signs informational? Informative? <p>2.1.2. Interior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Are there too many signs? ◇ Are the signs easy to read? ◇ Is library-specific jargon used too often? <p>2.1.3. Exhibits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Can the patron walk away with free literature and information about programs? 	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Review the signage at your library. Consider the size and font/typeface of the lettering, the height of the sign, and the sign's wording.</p>
<p>2.2. Lighting</p> <p>2.2.1. Are there dark corners with low visibility?</p> <p>2.2.2. Is it difficult to see the books/call-numbers/signs?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Take a tour of your library. Find those dark corners and find ways to light them up. It may be difficult for those with low visibility to read call numbers or book bindings in a darker area of the library. Make it easier on the patron to find what they need without having to ask for assistance.</p>

CONSIDERATIONS	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	WELLNESS INFORMATION
<p>2.3. Does the library provide universal or family restrooms with baby changing stations?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>A father should feel comfortable bringing his young daughter to the library. What if she needs to use the restrooms or he needs to change her diapers? How about a mother and a son? Consider how the family dynamic is changing—with many fathers staying home with the kids, and how the facilities in your library may hold them back from visiting.</p>
<p>3. Universal Right to Free Expression</p>		<p>ALA: Freedom of expression encompasses the freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association, and the corollary right to receive information.</p> <p>http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8662</p>
<p>3.1. Meeting Rooms – Policies</p> <p>3.1.1. Are meeting rooms open to use by religious or political groups?</p> <p>3.1.2. Are meeting rooms open for use by for-profit businesses?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>ALA: Many libraries provide meeting rooms for individuals and groups as part of a program of service. Article VI of the Library Bill of Rights states that such facilities should be made available to the public served by the given library “on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”</p> <p>If meeting rooms in libraries supported by public funds are made available to the general public for non-library sponsored events, the library may not exclude any group based on the subject matter to be discussed or based on the ideas that the group advocates.</p> <p>http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8581</p> <p>Review your policies to ensure that they are appropriate for your community’s needs.</p>

CONSIDERATIONS		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	WELLNESS INFORMATION
3.2. Free Literature / Petition Distribution 3.2.1. Is there an area of the library where literature can be distributed for free? Or information posted publicly? 3.2.2. Is petitioning permitted on library property?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Develop and review policies for posting and distributing free material or petitions. Designate a space for free materials near heavily traveled areas.
<u>INTELLECTUAL ACCESSIBILITY</u> - Give the patron ready access to information without prejudicial regard to language, ideas, content, or beliefs			
1. Censorship and Diversity in Collection Development			ALA: Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan. Access to all materials legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude materials even if they are offensive to the librarian or the user. http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8530
1.1. Does your library censor materials? 1.2. Is the collection well-rounded? 1.3. Is the collect comprehensively developed and well-balanced in a range or variety of ideas?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Some examples of censorship may include removing or not selecting materials because they are considered by some as racist or sexist; not purchasing conservative religious materials; not selecting materials about or by minorities because it is thought these groups or interests are not represented in a community; or not providing information on or materials from non-mainstream political entities. Check not only your policy, but also the collection development practices of the staff. Make sure a variety of perspectives are present in the collection.

CONSIDERATIONS	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	WELLNESS INFORMATION
<p>1.4. Controversial Materials:</p> <p>1.4.1. Are controversial materials purchased for the collection??</p> <p>1.4.2. Are controversial materials displayed for the public to recognize?</p> <p>1.4.3. Are controversial materials located with the regular collection or are such material placed in a special location?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Because materials placed in restricted collections often deal with controversial, unusual, or "sensitive" subjects, having to ask a librarian or circulation clerk for them may be embarrassing or inhibiting for patrons desiring the materials. Needing to ask for materials may pose a language barrier or a staff service barrier. Because restricted collections often are composed of materials which some library patrons consider "objectionable," the potential user may be predisposed to think of the materials as "objectionable" and, therefore, be reluctant to ask for them.</p> <p>Barriers between the materials and the patron which are psychological, or are affected by language skills, are nonetheless limitations on access to information.</p>
<p>2. Privacy</p>		<p>Provide a service free from unauthorized intrusions.</p>
<p>2.1. How are holds notifications communicated to the patron?</p> <p>2.1.1. If a call is made to the patron's house, is a message left with the title of the book?</p> <p>2.1.2. Does the library ensure that when a book arrives for the patron that there is complete privacy?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The Patron should be notified that a book is available without disclosing the nature of the material.</p> <p>Example: a person researching divorce may not want their spouse aware of their information search.</p>
<p>2.2. Are privacy screens used on the public computers?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Patrons should be able to search the Internet with the assurance of privacy. If they are accessing information on a medical condition or legal issue, the patron should not be concerned a passer-by or fellow computer user is "shoulder surfing"—or reading over their shoulder.</p>
<p>2.3. Are technical "ghosts" such as cookies, cache, or Internet history files saved on the computer?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The technical staff needs to ensure that all traces of computer activity are removed after the patron walks away from the computer. If this data is not removed passwords, username information, credit card numbers, and other personal data could be accessed and used maliciously by other users who know how to access that information.</p> <p>The history of the user's activity on the computer could also be used to track the Web sites a user accessed.</p>

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<p>2.4. Is the patron required to use an identifying resource to access public databases or library computer services?</p> <p>2.4.1. Does the technology track the usage of the computer databases?</p> <p>2.4.2. Are there records of which databases the user accessed and when?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Look at the library's logs and how often they are destroyed.</p> <p>Confidentiality of the patron's online activity should be maintained at all times. The logs should be destroyed frequently to protect the patron's rights and civil liberties.</p>
<p>3. Access to Information</p>		<p>Provide easy admittance to information</p>
<p>3.1. How accessible are the databases?</p> <p>3.1.1. Can the databases be accessed without a library card?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ If a library card is required, are guest cards available? ◇ Can a person without an address, such as a homeless person, get a library card? <p>3.1.2. Can the databases be accessed from home? Or must they be used only on library owned computers?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Ensure that your library allows access to information for all patrons regardless of economic status. Libraries are essential in providing people with access and participation in the electronic arena. Information is information regardless of format.</p> <p>Much of the access rules for databases are run by vendors. Be aware of the vendor's requirements and communicate those to the users.</p>
<p>3.2. Internet Access</p> <p>3.2.1. Does access for minors require parental permission?</p> <p>3.2.2. Are filters used on the Internet connection?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The opportunity to participate responsibly in the electronic arena is also vital for nurturing the information literacy skills demanded by the Information age... Minors also possess First Amendment rights. Only parents and legal guardians have the right and responsibility to restrict their children's – and only their own children's – access to any electronic resource.</p>

CONSIDERATIONS		Yes No	WELLNESS INFORMATION
CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY - Know your community and be aware of the information needs of the community. Do not let cultural differences become a barrier to information.			
1. Comfort Level			Provide a comforting and welcoming place to visit for all people in the community.
1.1. Atmosphere: is it welcoming?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Staff should be inviting and pleasant with eye-catching and appealing displays. The lighting should be soft but well-illuminated and the aisles should not feel crowded or overwhelming. Make the library a comfortable relaxing place for the community.
1.2. Cultural Expectations: How well do you meet the cultural expectations of your community? 1.2.1. Do the exhibits represent the community the library supports? Are they exhibits culturally relevant to the community? ◇ Do the photos and exhibits show people of many cultures and backgrounds? ◇ Do the marketing and PR photos represent those in your community? 1.2.2. Are the phones answered so that the caller knows he/she has reached the correct party? 1.2.3. Does the staff understand the cultural "dos and don'ts" for those of different cultures?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Article I of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states: "Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves." Article V of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." Know the cultural expectations of all members of your community such as the acceptability of eye-contact, hand-shakes, or physical contact of any kind.
1.3. Language Barriers 1.3.1. Does the community speak the same language as the library staff? ◇ Is too much library jargon used and not enough of the common vernacular? ◇ Are foreign language/ESL/TOEFL materials available?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Libraries serving multilingual or multicultural communities make efforts to accommodate the information needs of those for whom English is a second language. Library initiated programs across language and cultural barriers introduce otherwise un-served populations to the resources of the library and provide access to information.

CONSIDERATIONS	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	WELLNESS INFORMATION
<p>1.4. Are resources easily accessible to the visual or hearing impaired communities?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Install adaptive programs that read aloud what is in print on the libraries' computers. Provide Braille labeling and signs with the Audio books. Have staff members trained in ASL (American Sign Language) so they can communicate easily with the Deaf community and those in the community feel welcome to come into the library.</p> <p>For the learning disabled, some programs can highlight the words that are read aloud on the computer screen. This offers a bi-modal approach to learning, in which a person visually and aurally processes the information-which can be an invaluable tool for a person with a learning disability.</p>
<p>2. Fines/Fees/Financial Issues</p>		<p>Economic Barriers – Charging fees creates barriers to access. That is why ALA has urged librarians, in <i>Economic Barriers to Information Access</i>, to “resist the temptation to impose user fees to alleviate financial pressures, at long-term cost to institutional integrity and public confidence in libraries.”</p>
<p>2.1. Does your library charge for non-print material? (such as AV materials)</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The American Library Association opposes the charging of user fees for the provision of information by all libraries and information services that receive their major support from public funds. All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users.</p>
<p>2.2. Does your library charge for print-outs?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Whenever possible, all services should be without fees. In any case, fees should not create a barrier to access. Translated to the electronic environment, this means that some libraries will provide the text on the screen at no charge, but might charge for printouts.</p>

CONSIDERATIONS	Yes No	WELLNESS INFORMATION
3. Community		Know your community and understand their information needs.
3.1. Does your collection represent the current culture of your community? 3.1.1. How has your community changed in the past few years? Has it changed at all?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Consider surveying members of your community or holding focus groups. Find out what kind of cultural changes are occurring and how your library can better meet the needs of your growing/shrinking/changing community.
3.2. Does your library provide training for staff development and staff sensitivity?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Libraries that adhere to these principles systematically monitor their programs of service for potential barriers to access and strive to eliminate such barriers when they occur. Services and those who provide the services should be re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that the library's basic mission remains uncompromised.