

EXPERT INSIGHTS:

ACCESSIBILITY IN THE LIBRARY

ACTION ITEMS from the “Accessibility Partners: Building Inclusive Experiences in Libraries” Webinar

WEBINAR PANELISTS:

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In today’s digital landscape, it’s more important than ever for academic institutions to ensure their websites, applications, physical space, and digital resources are accessible to every individual. Establishing partnerships with accessibility experts gives organizations the knowledge and tools they need to create inclusive digital experiences for everyone.

In our recent webinar “Accessibility Partners: Building Inclusive Experiences in Libraries,” experts from across industries shared their experiences on how librarians can make their spaces more accessible. Based on our expert panelists, as well as recommendations from the hundreds of librarian attendees, here are actionable next steps academic and public libraries can take.

A DIGITAL MATERIALS

1. **Text-to-Speech Tools:** Implement tools like ReadSpeaker to assist users with reading difficulties. These tools can be integrated into digital platforms to provide audio versions of text.
2. **AI and Translation Tools:** Utilize AI tools and translation apps to assist non-English speakers. Handheld AI translators and apps like Google Translate can be particularly useful.
3. **Digital Accessibility:** Ensure that digital resources and platforms are accessible. This includes providing accessible MARC records and using tools like Seeing AI for visual impairments.
4. **Online Training:** Encourage staff to take online courses on accessibility, such as those offered by Perkins Access, Deque University, or others, to improve their understanding and skills.
5. **Review Vendor certifications:** Certifications from independent auditors such as ASPIRE can provide expert assessment on publisher and vendor accessibility statements. Documents like the VPAT, which stands for Voluntary Product Accessibility Template, explain how information and communication technology (ICT) conforms to the accessibility standards outlined by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

B PRINT MATERIALS

1. **Large Print Books:** Increase the availability of large print books to support the “whole student” and enrich the overall student experience as well as community engagement. Large print, including titles from Thorndike, benefits a wide range of readers, including those with visual impairments and reading difficulties. Address barriers such as cost and limited print runs by advocating for more diverse large print options.
2. **Adapted Books:** If your library also caters to the wider community including children of staff or students, consider creating and promoting adapted books that accommodate different levels of ability and offer simplified language, interactive elements like textures or buttons, and visual supports for images. These can include sensory elements and durable materials suitable for different age groups.

C PHYSICAL SPACE

1. **Flexible Seating:** Incorporate a variety of seating options to accommodate different physical needs and preferences. This can help students stay focused and comfortable.
2. **Shelf Accessibility:** Avoid placing books on the top and bottom shelves to make them more accessible. Consider using these spaces for displays instead.
3. **Simple Signage:** Use high-contrast colors (e.g., black-on-white) and clear, simple language for signs. Symbols and color coding can also help non-English speakers and those with intellectual disabilities navigate the library.
4. **Visual Aids:** Provide whiteboards and markers at service desks to facilitate communication with deaf or hard-of-hearing users.
5. **Community Engagement:** Engage with the community to understand their needs and preferences. This can help ensure that accessibility initiatives are user-centered and effective.

D ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. [ADA Fact Sheet on New Ruling April 8th, 2024](#)
2. [Office of Public Affairs - Press Release April 8th, 2024](#)
3. [Office of Public Affairs - Blog post, July 15th, 2024](#)
4. National Center on Accessible Educational Materials - [Learning on the Go: ADA Title II Updates & Requirements](#)
5. [ReadSpeaker for Education](#)
6. [ReadSpeaker YouTube videos](#)
7. [ReadSpeaker TextAid](#)
8. [Grants for your library](#)
9. [Project Tomorrow 2019 Large Print Efficacy Research](#) (2024 white paper coming soon)

Explore more at gale.com/accessibility

