



Public Libraries and Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities: A Partnership in Progress to Improve Accessibility

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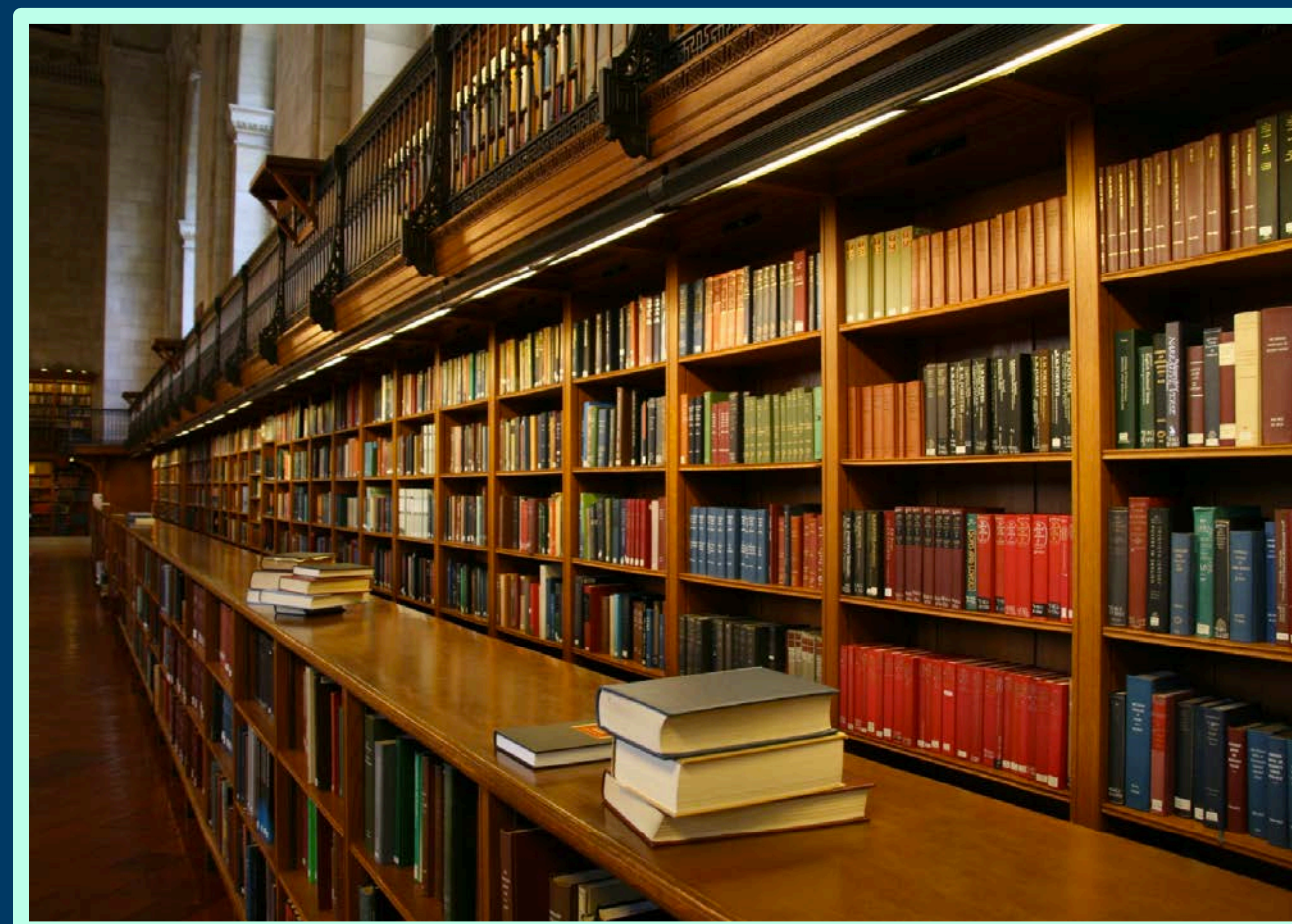
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Background

Public libraries can be a valuable resource for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities by providing support to:

- Develop interpersonal relationships within the community
- Build skills and knowledge to lead to a productive life
- Access information
- Improve digital literacy

A review of the literature revealed examples of successful library initiatives, as well as recommendations for improving accessibility. The literature suggests that connecting to and developing partnerships with local organizations will likely yield significant benefits.



Goals and Objectives

To examine the current work of public libraries in Westchester County to improve accessibility for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Four areas of accessibility were defined and examined:

- Programming
- Adaptive Technology
- Staff Training/Attitudes
- Physical Accessibility

Community Partners

- Partnerships were formed on a local level.
- Three libraries in the Westchester County region were visited and consulted.

Methods

- Conducted a literature review
- Performed an informal needs assessment
- Used/utilized convenience sampling
- Conducted semi-structured interviews
- No need for IRB approval at this time

Progress-to-Date

Programming:

- Librarians are implementing techniques to support the needs of all learners, such as multi-sensory activities and giving participants breaks when needed.
- They are seeking additional strategies for inclusion. Librarians are connecting to local community organizations for program development.

Adaptive Technology:

- Limited technologies were available; however, interest was expressed in acquiring more.

Staff Training/Attitudes:

- Librarians were open to further training in the area of disability.
- Often, personal background and community positively influenced their attitudes.

Physical Accessibility:

- Some accessible features included wide doorways and low book shelves.
- However, the need for improvement still exists, particularly with providing accessible restrooms and parking.

Next Steps

- Two surveys were designed in order to learn more about the needs of individuals with disabilities and librarians.
- The survey for librarians (shown below) was reviewed and approved by our community partners. The survey for individuals with disabilities will be developed further by next year's team.
- Next year, data collection and analysis will be conducted.
- Ultimately, the resources of WIHD will be aligned with the participating libraries.

Librarian Survey

**LIBRARY ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
(PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL AND/OR SENSORY)
WESTCHESTER LIBRARIAN SURVEY**

We are interested in learning from Westchester librarians about their experiences in providing programming and services for children and adults with disabilities and to hear their suggestions about how libraries could become even more accessible to children and adults with disabilities and their families. Your responses are anonymous. You may skip any question that you prefer not to answer. Thank you.

1. What is your role at the library?
 Library Director Other Library Staff

2. In what year did you complete your education in library sciences? _____

3. When did you begin to work professionally in a library or as a librarian? _____

4. Have you participated in any training on how to assist individuals with disabilities in using the library and its resources?
 Yes No

5. If you answered yes to Question 4, did you find the training helpful?
 Yes No

Why or why not? _____

6. If you answered no to Question 4, would you be interested in such training?
 Yes No

If yes, is there any specific area on which you would want that training to focus? _____

7. Please respond to the following statements:

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Not Applicable
a. My library meets the needs of individual with disabilities in the area of physical accessibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My library has an accessible restroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The books at my library can be easily reached by everyone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. My library has accessible parking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Assistive technology (e.g., screen readers, computer workstations) are available at my library.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Programs and events for individuals with disabilities are offered at my library.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Programs and events offered at my library are attended by individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If you'd like to elaborate or if you answered "uncertain" to any of questions 7a through 7g, please explain: _____

9. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
a. I feel comfortable offering computer and/or internet assistance to individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I feel comfortable offering assistance with other library resources to individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I feel comfortable facilitating programs and events for individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I would like to participate as an attendee in programs and events for individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I would like to participate as a moderator or facilitator in programs and events for individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. What are specific challenges/barriers in your work with individuals with disabilities? _____

11. What would be helpful to your library to address these challenges/barriers? _____

12. Please feel free to provide any additional comments addressing how to enhance library accessibility for individuals with disabilities: _____

Thank you for your participation!