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## Introduction

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WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all businesses, including libraries, must be prepared to meet the needs of all disabled people. Compliance with ADA mandates the removal of architectural barriers, resulting in physically accessible and safe buildings. It may also mandate the removal of communication barriers, resulting in routine use of TTs, state relay services, and awareness of, and sensitivity to, varying communication modes and cultural differences of disabled people. Disabled individuals may challenge libraries if accessibility fails to comply with ADA. "In all likelihood many questions will ultimately be decided by the courts" (Gunde, 1991, p. 809). This issue of *Library Trends* discusses topics related to one group of disabled patrons: deaf individuals. Librarians have an exceptional opportunity to take a proactive, instead of a reactive, role in serving the special needs of people who are deaf and of those who work with deaf people.

There are over 23 million people in the United States with a hearing loss. Deafness crosses all social, economic, political, and cultural boundaries. Deaf individuals, like hearing individuals, are not a homogeneous group. Each has his or her own preferred communication mode. American Sign Language, while the third most frequently used non-English language in the United States (Dalton, 1985, p. 26), is not used by all deaf persons. Oralists and supporters of manual communication have been locking horns for hundreds

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of years. Oralists feel that sign language will hinder English skills, while supporters of manual communication believe that communication is the ultimate objective. Alice Hagemeyer's article discusses the different communication groups within the deaf community, past and present library services to these groups, recent laws as they impact service to deaf individuals, and the roles that librarians can play in providing library services to members of the deaf community.

An awareness of the variety of communication modes used by deaf people will help hearing librarians better interact with deaf patrons. Warren Goldmann and James Mallory's article concentrates on communication methods that can be used to foster a more comfortable interaction with someone with a hearing loss. By applying basic communication skills and techniques, librarians can effectively learn to communicate with deaf and hearing-impaired library patrons.

In the not too distant past there were limited informational resources available in the area of deafness. However, public awareness and interest in people who are deaf has been heightened by legislation encouraging the integration and mainstreaming of deaf people in education and American society; by the establishment of telephone relay systems; by the growth of sign language classes offered at colleges and universities around the United States; and by movies, plays, and television shows which feature deaf actors. As a result of these events, a plethora of information related to deafness and hearing loss has been published. Articles by Carolyn Jones and Jonathan Miller will help librarians select appropriate print and nonprint materials for libraries to better educate and serve patrons who are deaf, or who are interested in the area of deafness.

Through literature, deaf children can overcome isolation and frustration. Susan Meck and Carolyn Schuler's article shares ideas on expanding students' knowledge through literature and book discussions and presents ways to select print materials which are particularly appropriate for deaf youth, from very young children to teenagers. The authors stress the importance of visual communication for sharing literature with this group.

Because of reliance on a visual style of learning, captioned films and videos are a significant means of access to the mainstream of American society for deaf people. Adapted media materials are becoming increasingly available. Jeanina Odien considers the need to update guidelines for library media centers in schools for the deaf. Gail Kovalik discusses the Captioned Films/Videos for the Deaf program.

The educational needs of deaf and hearing-impaired individuals continue into higher education. Librarians in institutes of higher education will find more deaf and hearing-impaired students on campus due to recent legislation. With an increase in the number of deaf students, librarians will need to be prepared to meet the communication challenge of bibliographic instruction to students who rely on nonaural means of learning. Melanie Norton's article discusses some of the methods used in teaching students at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf to use the library effectively and suggests ways that librarians in mainstreamed institutions of higher education can apply these techniques.

The New York State Library in Albany, New York, has a rich history in serving people who are deaf. On the occasion of Thomas H. Gallaudet's 200th birthday, the New York State Library prepared an exhibit and published a bibliography related to deafness. Audrey Smith and Paul Mercer share their program and bibliography with other librarians who may want to use the program as a model to create exhibits and promote deaf awareness in their own communities.

In 1987, the Roundtable for Libraries Serving Special Populations, a subcommittee of the New York Library Association (NYLA), published *Guidelines for Libraries Serving Persons with a Hearing Impairment or Visual Impairment*. Permission was given to the editors of this issue to reprint these guidelines. Librarians can use the guidelines and the questionnaire to assess their library service to the hearing-impaired population.

"Our responsibility as librarians is to make our library resources, whatever they are, as available to persons with disabilities as they are to those without disabilities" (Jones, 1991, p. 479). Recent legislation will require libraries to conform to laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination and that mandate the availability of a library's services to the disabled. "Very few American libraries are likely to be in compliance with the requirements of the ADA when it becomes effective" (Gunde, 1991, p. 809). The editors hope this issue of *Library Trends* will help librarians make use of existing resources and perhaps learn new ways to adapt or augment existing services to the needs of people who are deaf or hearing impaired.

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