

Research Services for People with Disabilities

JJ Pionke

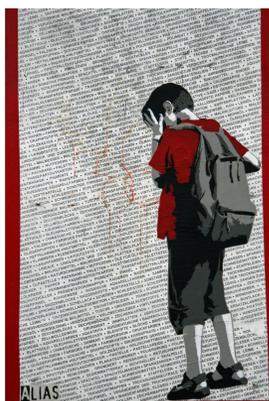
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Problem

Students with disabilities may not be using library services because:

- Shyness, intimidated, overwhelmed
- Disability is a barrier to communication
- Disempowered
- Unaware of services
- Poor past experiences
- Time constraints

Most library services aimed at people with disabilities have been steered towards particular visible disabilities like blindness or wheelchair users. Very little research or services has been done for hidden disabilities.



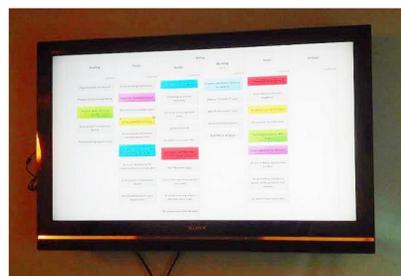
"Atlas - Boy in the Corner" Andriberlinblag on Flickr, licensed on CC for attribution, non commercial and no derivatives.

Objective

Provide research services to people with disabilities in the ways that reach them and determine the feasibility of specialized program. This could include:

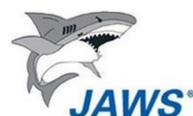
- Using alternative forms of communication
- Utilizing assistive technologies like large monitors
- Recommending and teaching assistive software like Kurzweil 3000
- Shelf reading and specialized wayfinding
- Other services to be determined on an as needed basis

What We've Done to Assist Patrons



"Kanban Cast - large Kanban board in our office" Kanban Tool on Flickr licensed by CC attribution, sharealike.

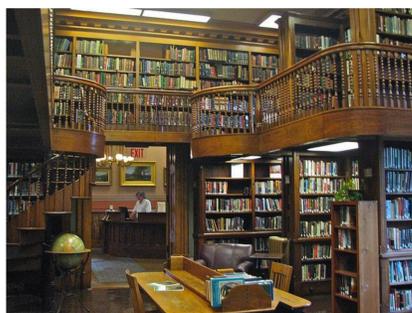
Large screen monitors for easier viewing of materials.



JAWS is a commonly used screen reading software.



Through use of the HathiTrust Proxy, libraries are allowed to download materials, even within copyright and not held by the library, for people with reading disabilities.



"St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (1871) - Interior: library stacks detail" Don Shall on Flickr, licensed under CC for attribution, noncommercial, no derivatives.

Sighted shelf reading for people with reading disabilities.

a b c d e f
g h i j k l m
n o p q r s t
u v w x y z

Typface: Dyslexie Regular

The Dyslexie Font is a specialized font for people with dyslexia to help them read more easily.



The library has Kurzweil 3000 loaded on all public computers. Kurzweil 3000 will read text and webpages aloud, allow for highlighting and notation, translate pages in select languages, and contains a dictionary, among other things.

Results so far

- Enthusiastically welcomed by groups that support students
- Outreach via gradlinks, eweek, targeted emails, physical posters
- Low usage by patrons
- Patrons who have used the service have appreciated it and used it more than once
- Low usage could be due to a variety of things including:
 - Lack of interest
 - Feeling intimidated by a specialized service
 - Overwhelmed by asking for assistance

Next Steps

- Finish the project to gather as much data as possible
- Interview the users if possible about their experience
- Develop a training program around disabilities and reference services
- Blend the training program into the regularly scheduled training for people who provide reference
- Include training in empathy and compassion in order to empower patrons with disabilities to reach out more often
- Making training program available to all libraries as this kind of training is currently very limited and will have a major impact on libraries that use it.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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