

*Library Policies and Procedures Workshop Handout # 15***Frequently Asked Questions Regarding The Americans with Disabilities Act and Libraries****AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OVERVIEW**

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law on July 26, 1990. It is a comprehensive civil rights act for people with disabilities that provides legal protections that ensure equal opportunity and access to the mainstream of American life. "Enactment of the ADA reflects deeply held American ideals which treasure the contributions which individuals can make when free from arbitrary, unjust, or outmoded societal attitudes and practices that prevent the realization of their potential." (From the preamble, ADA Handbook, published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice, October 1991.)

**FAQs regarding the ADA and Libraries****Are libraries specifically mentioned in the Americans with Disabilities Act?**

Yes, in addition to complying with the law, Section 8 of the ADDAG (Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines) specifically addresses libraries.

**8.1 General** – The design of all public areas of a library shall comply with 8, including reading and study areas, stacks, reference rooms, reserve areas, and special facilities or collections.

**8.2 Reading and Study Areas** – At least 5 percent or a minimum of one of each element of fixed seating, tables, or study carrels shall be accessible to those using a wheelchair.

**8.3 Check-Out Areas** - At least one lane at each check-out area shall be accessible to those using a wheelchair.

**8.4 Card Catalogs and Magazine Displays** – Minimum clear aisle space of 36 inches is required. A shelf height of 48 inches for magazine display is preferred irrespective of approach allowed. The law was written before most libraries abandoned their card catalogs for computers. A counter height of 29 inches will work for most, provided that clear floor space is provided for a wheelchair user to access the computer.

**8.5 Stacks** – Minimum clear aisle width of 36 inches between stacks with a minimum clear aisle width of 42 inches preferred where possible and a 60 inch turning space at the end of an aisle. Shelf height in stack areas is unrestricted.

## **What kind of documentation does the library need for compliance?**

### **The ADA FILE**

Public libraries should maintain an ADA file. Items to include in this file are:

1. The Americans with Disabilities Act Handbook.  
The handbook was distributed to all public libraries by the Department of Justice in 1991. Public Library Systems also have copies of the handbook in their professional collections.
2. A self-evaluation of current services, policies, and practices that is reviewed periodically.  
Most Public Libraries conducted a self-evaluation to determine compliance with the ADA when the Act was originally signed into law. A self-evaluation is a careful examination of physical facilities and program operations to determine the extent to which people with disabilities are precluded from or limited in participating in programs. The self-evaluation usually consists of a “walk-through” of the library and an analysis of how the library operates including its rules and policies. New library directors should review the original self-evaluation, or perform their own self-evaluation if one has not been conducted.  
**A self-evaluation form is included in this curriculum.**
3. A list of local groups serving people with disabilities.  
Included on the list might be the local Independent Living Center. 37 IDC’s may be found in New York State. These centers provide advocacy and technical assistance to ensure that persons with disabilities have opportunities to make decisions that affect their lives just as their nondisabled counterparts do. A Directory of New York State Independent Living Centers may be found at <http://www.nysilc.org/directory.htm>  
The United Spinal Association, <http://www.unitedspinal.org>, can also provide accessibility training and technical assistance to public libraries.

## **What is “reasonable accommodation?”**

Reasonable accommodation is a modification or an adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to perform essential job functions.

## **What does the term “readily achievable” mean?**

It means easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.

## **How much will it cost to make my library accessible to people with disabilities?**

Many modifications cost little or nothing. Rearranging stacks so that there is a 36 inch width aisle for wheelchairs will cost just the time it takes to move the shelving. Sensitivity training for staff can often be obtained for free from local organizations that provide services to people with disabilities. Modifications to bathrooms might include the installation of grab bars at the back and sides of the toilet area or wrapping the pipes under sinks with insulation to prevent burns.

Many libraries in New York State have used State Aid for Public Library Construction funding to make modifications to their buildings so that libraries become more accessible. NYS Public Library Systems can provide libraries with guidelines for this funding stream. The NYS Division of Library Development’s web site contains additional information at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/construc/index.html>

## **What kind of alternative methods can be used to comply with the ADA?**

ADA compliance may be achieved through alternative methods including, but not limited to, assignment of staff to assist people with disabilities, home visits, delivery of services at alternate accessible sites and any other method that results in making materials, services, and programs accessible. Review with staff the alternative methods the library is utilizing to comply with ADA, as well as any modifications to programs, policies, and practices.

## **What areas should I look at, both inside and outside my library, to see if the building is accessible?**

Areas to review include: curb ramps, ramps, parking areas, meeting rooms, bathrooms, doors, work areas, elevators, stack width, check-out areas, and seating. The United Spinal Association, formerly the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, and the ADA Handbook provide clear descriptions and illustrations of these areas. The publication, *Accessible Building Design*, is out of print and permission was obtained to reprint parts of the booklet for this curriculum (*Teaching Aid: The*

*Americans with Disabilities Act #3*.) The purpose of the publication is “to take the reader, specifically a wheelchair user, through a typical building that is accessible.”

Refer to the **Americans With Disabilities Act Self-Evaluation Form For Library Buildings**, based on the United State's Department of Justice's Title II Technical Assistance Manual for ADA and its self-evaluation checklist for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. (ABLE Module 3, The Physical Plant, ***Teaching Aid: The Americans with Disabilities Act #2***.)

**Teaching Aid – The Americans with Disabilities Act #2**

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT  
SELF-EVALUATION FORM  
FOR LIBRARY BUILDINGS**

This form is based on the United States Department of Justice's Title II Technical Assistance Manual for ADA and its self-evaluation checklist for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Name of Library \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requires self-evaluation for all public library facilities, including main buildings and branches. A "No" answer to any of the questions does not necessarily mean noncompliance, since alternative methods may be pursued to provide accessibility to a library's programs and services.

**PART I: Interested Persons Consulted**

List the names of person(s) with disabilities and group(s) that work with people with disabilities who were consulted in the self-evaluation process.

**PART 2: Areas Examined and Problems Identified**

**ACCESS INTO THE LIBRARY**

Is there the required number of accessible parking spaces?	Yes	No	N/A
• 1 – 20 spaces = 1 accessible space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 21 - 50 spaces = 2 accessible spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 51 – 75 spaces = 3 accessible spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 76 – 100 spaces = 4 accessible spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are accessible spaces at least 16 feet wide with an 8 foot access aisle?	Yes	No	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ACCESS INTO THE LIBRARY (continued)**

Is the accessible parking sign located so that it cannot be obscured by a vehicle parked in the space? Yes No N/A

Do the reserved parking signs have the International Symbol of Accessibility? Yes No N/A

Are the accessible parking spaces closest to the accessible entrance? Yes No N/A

Do the curbs at walkways have curb ramps, including at drives, parking, and drop-offs? Yes No N/A

Does the walkway into the library have a clear width of at least 36 inches and is it in good repair? Yes No N/A

Do ramps have a clear width of at least 36 inches and a slope not exceeding a 1 foot rise in a 12 foot span? Yes No N/A

If the main entrance is not accessible, is a sign posted indicating the location of the accessible entrance? Yes No N/A

Do accessible entrances bear the International Symbol of Accessibility? Yes No N/A

Do entrance doors have at least a 32 inch clear opening? Yes No N/A

Do the doors open easily with one hand? Yes No N/A

Comments on areas examined and problems identified:

## ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Do book security gates have a minimum clear opening of 36 inches? Yes No N/A

Does at least 5%, or a minimum of one element each of fixed seating, provide knee space at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide, and 19 inches deep, and tabletops and work surfaces 28 to 34 inches from the floor? Yes No N/A

Where service counters exceed 36 inches in height, is an auxiliary counter provided with a height 28 to 34 inches from the floor? Yes No N/A

Are all aisles at least 36 inches wide? Yes No N/A

Are floor and carpeted surfaces stable, firm, and non-slip? Yes No N/A

Are directional signs in raised lettering and Braille and well-lit? Yes No N/A

If there is more than one level, does an elevator or ramps connect the levels? Yes No N/A

Do the controls outside and inside the elevator have raised and Braille lettering and are they mounted 35 to 54 inches above the floor? Yes No N/A

Do stairs and ramps have continuous rails on both sides that are mounted at 30 to 34 inches above the surface? Yes No N/A

Does at least one drinking fountain have a spout no higher than 36 inches? Yes No N/A

Is the highest operable part of a wall-mounted telephone more than 48 inches from the floor? Yes No N/A

Do doorways in public spaces have at least a 32 inch clear opening? Yes No N/A

**ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (continued)**



## ACCESS TO THE RESTROOM

Is there a restroom on an accessible route?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there signs at an inaccessible restroom giving directions to an accessible restroom?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there raised letter and Braille signs identifying restrooms?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Do doorways into the restroom have at least a 32 inch clear opening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is there at least a 5 foot circle or other open space for turning a wheelchair completely?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the stall door have at least a 32 inch clear opening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are there grab bars behind and on the side wall nearest to the toilet?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the toilet seat 17 to 19 inches from the floor?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the space in front of one sink 30 inches wide by 48 inches deep and is the rim of the sink no higher than 34 inches?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are pipes under the sink insulated to prevent burns?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Can faucets be operated with one hand comfortably?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments on areas examined and problems identified.

## EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Does the library ensure that all employment decisions are non-discriminatory in nature?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the library ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for employees with disabilities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the library reviewed and revised job descriptions to ensure that they are non-discriminatory and describe essential work functions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is a disability awareness and training program provided for library staff?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the library have a telecommunication device for the deaf and if so, what is the number?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the library staff aware of and know how to use the New York State Telephone Relay Service?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TTY users: If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-impaired, you can type your message on a Telecommunications Device for the deaf by calling toll-free, 24 hours 1-800-662-1220 or dial 711.</li> <li>• Hearing Persons: To communicate with a deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-impaired person who uses a TTY call, toll-free 24 hours 1-800-421-1200 or dial 711.</li> </ul>			
Are auxiliary aids or formats provided for individuals with speech, vision, and hearing impairments, such as qualified interpreters, taped text, large print, Braille, closed-captioned, or described videos?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the Library Board reviewed its policies and procedures to ensure that people with disabilities are provided access to its public meetings, programs, and activities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the library give notice to the public with the need of reasonable accommodation of at least 48 hours in advance to ensure qualified interpreters or auxiliary aids are available for public meetings, programs, and activities sponsored by the library?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

**EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS (continued)**

**Does the library inform groups using its facilities that they must comply with ADA and are responsible for providing qualified interpreters or auxiliary aids available upon request?**

**Yes    No    N/A**  
       

**Comments on areas examined and problems identified:**

**PART 3: Description of Modifications Made**

ADA compliance may be achieved through alternative methods, including, but not limited to, assignment of staff to assist people with disabilities, home visits, delivery of services at alternate accessible sites, and any other method that results in making materials, services, and programs accessible. Please list alternative methods the library is utilizing to comply with ADA, as well as any modifications to programs, policies, and practices. Attach additional pages and documentation if necessary.