

**SERVING THOSE WITH
PRINT IMPAIRMENTS:
AN OUTREACH TOOLKIT FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES
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HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The purpose of this outreach toolkit is to provide helpful and simple guidance to those in public libraries on how to start outreach in your community to those with print impairments and to community partners who serve them. Use this simple, step-by-step guide to get started. We invite you to be an ambassador in your community for those who need a better way to read!



DEFINITIONS

What does “print-impairment” mean?

For this toolkit, we are using the definition of print impairment from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the U.S. Library of Congress. An individual of any age affected by print-impairment, eligible for the NLS service, has difficulty reading traditional/standard print or has trouble holding a book or turning the pages of a book because of:

- A physical impairment
- [A reading disability](#)
- A visual impairment
- Blindness

The impairment may be temporary or permanent.

What is the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)?

- The NLS is a free library service of the Library of Congress, established in 1931, that provides braille and talking books and magazines at no cost [to those eligible for its services](#) — both residents of the U.S. and its territories and U.S. citizens living abroad. Individuals of any age may be eligible for the program if they are blind, are visually impaired, have a physical disability or a reading disability that prevents them from reading regular print. Library materials are distributed to regional and sub-regional libraries, where they are circulated by postage-free mail to eligible patrons. Braille and talking books & audio magazines are also available for download through the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website and the BARD Mobile app.
- The NLS service is also extended to [institutions](#) that serve eligible individuals. There is no cost for the services.
- Children, teens and adults are served.
- Watch a NLS [introductory video](#)

What Services are Offered by the NLS to Registered Individuals & Institutions?

- A digital talking book player
- Audiobooks
- Audio Magazines
- Braille
- Downloadable audiobooks & audio magazines
- A mobile app for smartphones & tablets: BARD Mobile
- A music program (audio, braille, and large-print music scores, texts, and other instructional materials. Music in & of itself is not provided)

Services are delivered to the home and ship postage-free as “Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped.”

Who is eligible for the services provided from the NLS?

- Children, teens, and adults affected by print-impairment (see above definition) on a temporary or long-term basis.
- Institutions that serve eligible patrons may also have a no-cost account. This includes public libraries, long-term care facilities, nursing homes, etc.
- For more information, [see NLS eligibility web site](#).

How does a Person or Institution Apply for NLS Service?

- People or institutions interested in the NLS service are required to complete an application.
- To find applications, you can reach out to your regional NLS Library or you can [download an application from NLS](#).
- An application must be completed and certified before NLS services can start.

What makes the NLS Service unique?

1. Accessible reading service with assistive equipment
2. Tens of thousands of digital audio book titles available for all ages (including picture books, fiction, and non-fiction)
3. Many titles offered are available exclusively through the NLS service
4. Audio and Braille downloading
5. No-cost home delivery service

How can I Find my NLS regional library?

There is a directory online at <http://www.loc.gov/nls/find.html>

RATIONALE

Why is Outreach Necessary?

- Many with print impairments may be:
 - Isolated at home
 - Unaware of the library's services
- Potential clients could be currently underserved; find them, invite them in, enrich their lives!
- It is an opportunity to find new community partners & library advocates

People with print impairments reside in our communities, but may not be using our public libraries for a variety of reasons including:

- Lack of accessible services or unaware of what the library has to offer
- Transportation difficulties
- A person with a print impairment may be isolated at home

Statistics suggest that print impairments are likely to increase as the

population ages. Look at your Library's Mission Statement and/or Strategic Plan. Think about those who comprise your community and if they have access to the great services your library offers. By reaching out to those with print impairments, you are serving an underserved group in your community. These are people who may be unaware of the wealth of services & programs your library offers. You will enrich lives.

STATISTICS JUSTIFY THE OUTREACH

Statistics tell us that a significant percentage of our population has a disability. In addition, our population is aging and a portion of those 65 and older are isolated at home. As the population ages, print impairments may increase.

- 12.6% nationally have a disability
- Those with disabilities are the world's largest minority
- U.S. 65+ Population is expected to double by 2050
- 1 in 20 over 65 estimated to be isolated at home. Number may rise

One cause of print impairment is vision loss. Here are several compelling U.S. statistics:

- 27% increase in vision impairment between 2000 & 2010
- By 2030, a 71% increase is projected
- By 2050, a 210% increase is expected

Sources: (See Bibliography: 7,12,19,20,21)

CAUSES & IMPACTS OF PRINT IMPAIRMENTS

Some Causes of Print Impairment:

- Arthritis
- Blindness
- Brain Injury
- Cerebral Palsy
- Dyslexia
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Parkinson's Disease
- Stroke
- Vision Loss

Psychosocial impacts of print impairment may be:

- Depression
- Loss of Daily Living Activities
- Social isolation

Sources: (See bibliography: 1,5,8,9)

ETIQUETTE & COMMUNICATION

When working with people with print impairments, it is important to know how to communicate effectively and with compassion. If you are unsure of how to say something or how to act, just ask and follow the individual's preferences. Here are a few suggestions; see the bibliography for more information.

- Think abilities, rather than disabilities.
- In general, it is wise to use person-first language. For example, “a person with a vision impairment”, not “a vision-impaired person.” However, there are people that may not prefer person-first language. A good rule is to use the language the individual chooses.
- Do not assume a person needs assistance; ask first.
- Speak directly to the person, not to the companion or assistant.
- Avoid using “suffers with”, “a victim of”, or “afflicted with” when discussing impairment.

- Make sure you communicate with the individual at an age-appropriate level. Do not infantilize an individual because they have a print impairment.
- When interacting with a person with a vision impairment, always introduce yourself and others who may be with you. Be descriptive and specific.
- Be sensitive about physical contact. Do not touch a person or a person's wheelchair or assistive equipment without first asking.
- Do not pet a service animal without asking first. ADA guidelines at http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_ga.html.

Sources: (See Bibliography: 4,16,17,18,22)

GETTING STARTED WITH OUTREACH IN FIVE STEPS

1. Start Small
2. Take an Internal Assessment & Inventory
3. Get the Word Out on the Services You Offer
4. Train Staff
5. Incorporate Outreach as part of your Mission

Step 1: Start Small: Add the no-cost services of The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)

If you do not already provide this service, add the free National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), at the Library of Congress, to your library. It is just another no-cost service you can offer in your community and it is one of the most simple & far-reaching services you can add. It costs you nothing! To add the service, find your regional library in this NLS database & complete an application with that library: <http://www.loc.gov/nls/find.html>

Learn more about the NLS at <http://www.loc.gov/nls>

With the NLS service on board:

- Work with your regional NLS library to train all library staff on the NLS services, application process & eligibility.
- Educate your Board and train them on the service as well. It is unique and tends to impress them. Everyone seems to know someone who needs the service.
- Incorporate the reachable goal of serving patrons with print impairments in your mission statement and/or strategic plan.

Step 2: Take an Internal Assessment & Inventory

Take an inventory of all resources, services, and programs your library has to offer those with print impairments. This may include:

- Audiobooks
- Described DVDs
- E-books
- Electronic Databases with audio
- Large-print Books
- Programs: story time, etc.

- Computers & Electronic Devices with Assistive Technology Features (e.g. magnifiers, software, operating systems & electronic devices with built-in accessibility features, etc.). See tip below
- Accessibility of your building
- Get input from your coworkers; there may be other services as well.

Tip: Many computer operating systems and electronic devices have built-in accessibility which is not well known by the general public.

Learn More!

- Apple: <http://www.apple.com/accessibility>
- Google: <http://www.google.com/accessibility>
- Microsoft: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

More helpful resources: (see Bibliography: 10,23)

Step 3: Get The Word Out

- Create a page on your web site listing all of the accessible services you offer. Incorporate an audio welcome message that includes a phone number to call
- Create & post simple, uncluttered, large-print & large-sized flyers around your library to promote awareness of the services (see bibliography: 2, 3,11)
- Post social media updates weekly about your services

Tip: A person with a print impairment may not be in the library or online, but a family member, friend or neighbor may see the information. Have large-print brochures available.

Step 4: Train Staff

With your inventory of services in hand, Train your staff on:

- All of your available services
- Etiquette in communicating with patrons with a print impairment
- Encourage staff to mention these services at the Reference & Circulation desks

Step 5: Incorporate Outreach into your Library's Mission & Strategic Plan

Work with your Board to incorporate outreach to those with print impairments into your library's operations.

DEVELOP YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY

When you are comfortable with the NLS service, have completed your internal inventory, started to spread the word about your services, and trained your staff, you are ready to begin to develop your outreach strategy.

Important components are:

- A. List all of your accessible services
- B. Develop talking points on the services you offer
- C. Convene an Outreach Focus Group
- D. Train Outreach Staff/Volunteers
- E. Develop Outreach Targets
- F. Go on the Road!

A. List your Accessible Services – Free & Fee-Based

Make a list of all of the accessible services you offer, both free and fee-based. This should be easy; you just conducted an internal assessment/inventory! You will want to share this list with staff, your board, your outreach focus group, etc. and add it to your web page of accessible resources.

Free:

- Service of the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)
- Your collections of audiobooks, audio-described DVDs, large-print books, databases that offer audio, etc.
- Your in-house technology (e.g. Magnifier such as a CCTV, accessibility built into operating systems, accessible software, electronic devices for borrowing that have accessibility, etc.)
- E-books
- Programs
- Technology lending and training (e.g. tablets, ereaders)

Fee-Based:

If you subscribe to any of these fee-based services or other services, list them here (e.g. Audible, Bookshare, Learning Ally, etc.).

B. Develop Talking Points

Talking Points about the NLS Service:

“This is a free service we are offering from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in the Library of Congress for anyone who has difficulty reading standard print or holding a book due to:

- A Physical impairment
- A Reading disability
- A Vision impairment
- Blindness”

“The service offers no-cost home-delivery of:

- Audiobooks
- Audio Magazines
- Digital talking book players
- Braille
- No-wait, no-loan period. Tens of thousands of downloadable titles available via: Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) and BARD Mobile app for smartphones & tablets

The NLS service is another example of your tax dollars hard at work for you. Learn more at <http://www.loc.gov/nls> ”

Talking Points for Outreach Staff/Volunteers:

- “Our library currently offers the following services for patrons who cannot read standard print: [list everything here].
- The services are free.
- We have a free, home-delivered accessible reading program from the Library of Congress.
- We will work one-on-one with you to familiarize you with these services.”

Talking Points for Library Board:

- “The population is aging
- As the population ages, we will see more people with print impairments & isolated at home
- There could be an underserved group in our community

- There are free services available. We can easily add them to our services; requires staff training and outreach”

Talking Points for Community Partners:

- “There are free library services to serve those with print impairments who have difficulty reading standard print due to a physical impairment, a reading disability, a vision impairment, or blindness. Those who have difficulty holding a book or turning the pages also qualify
- By offering these free library services to your clients, you are providing great customer service and enriching lives
- We would like to partner with you to reach your clients who can benefit from these services
- It is also a PR opportunity for your organization”

Talking Points for Customers with Print Impairments:

- “We have services to meet your library needs. They are [list them].

- We will work with you one-on-one to familiarize you with these services”

C. Convene an Outreach Focus Group

Purpose of the group is:

- To share with them all of the accessible services you offer
 - To brainstorm about how to find those with print impairments in the community
 - To recruit your community partners to sign people up for the NLS service and library cards
 - To encourage partners to direct people to your library
- Members of an outreach focus group may include:
- Community members with print impairments
 - Library Board member(s)
 - Member(s) of your Friends group
 - Local healthcare providers (e.g. home health care agencies, office managers from ophthalmology, optometry & gerontology)

practices, adult/pediatric day care providers, senior living communities, etc.)

- Local Nonprofit Organizations (e.g. American Legion, Brain Injury, Catholic Charities, Disabled American Veterans, Easter Seals, National Federation of the Blind, VFW, Lions, MS Society, Parkinson's, etc.)
- Local religious leaders. Note: Many churches, mosques, synagogues, etc. are serving people who are isolated at home.
- Staff from local schools (e.g. librarians, special-ed teachers, social workers, etc.)
- Staff from local social service agencies, (e.g. senior center staff, offices on aging & disability services, etc.)

Identify a corps of volunteers from this group who can do outreach (if library staff is not able)



Figure 1: Chart of Outreach Focus Group members

D. Train Outreach Staff/Volunteers on:

- Your Library's accessible services & technology available
- Application process for library card & NLS application talking points
- Etiquette & Communication

E. Create Your Initial List of Outreach Targets:

With input from the Focus Group, develop a list of local organizations to target for outreach. These may include:

- Government agencies: local, county, and state agencies serving aging & people with disabilities.
- Medical agencies:
 - Day Care (adult & pediatric medical day care)
 - Doctors (e.g. local gerontologists, internists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, osteopaths, pediatricians, retina centers). Target the office managers for outreach
- Home Care Agencies
- Hospitals, including specific departments:
 - Community Health Education
 - Gerontology/Healthy Aging
 - Home Care services
 - Hospice
 - Social Service Department (they develop discharge plans)

- Support groups (e.g. arthritis, brain injury, caregivers, stroke, ALS, MS, Parkinson's, vision loss)
- Veterans Affairs Clinics & Hospitals
- Wellness programs
- Hospice Programs
- Nonprofits serving those with disabilities (e.g. Lions, Easter Seals, MS Society, National Federation of the Blind, etc.)
- Schools: Special Ed Teachers/IEP teams, School Librarians (you can provide an in-service for staff)
- Senior Centers & Senior Living Residences (e.g. Continuing Care, Assisted Living, Long Term Care, senior housing)
- Local veteran service organizations (e.g. American Legion, DAV, VFW, etc.)

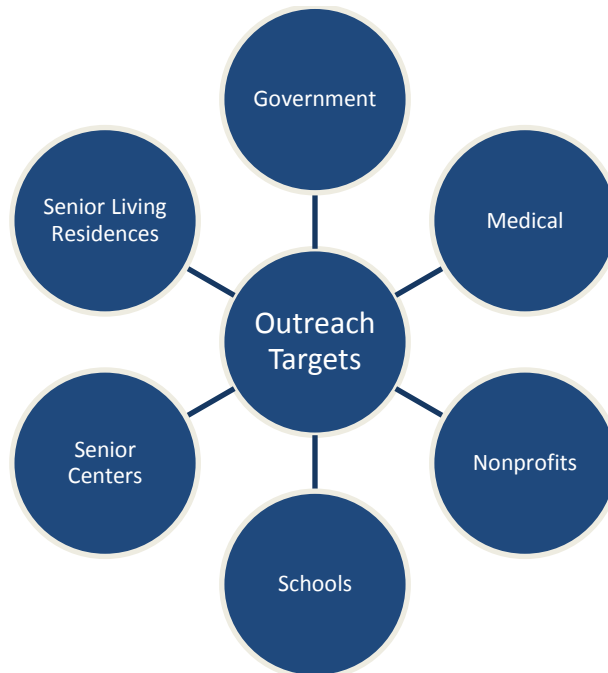


Figure 2: Outreach Targets

Questions:

- Does the facility offer support groups for people with various impairments? You can offer to make a presentation or provide a program.
- Do they have case managers who make home visits or who advise caregivers? You can offer an in-service to train staff on discussing your services.

F. Go on the Road and Promote!

You are now ready to send staff out into the community. See our PR package for several templates of PR materials you can use.

PROGRAMS

When you bring on the NLS service, you can offer one-on-one sessions for people learning how to use the digital talking book machine and the NLS services. You can offer similar sessions for all of the other services you identified that are available.

In addition, if you lend electronic devices or have tech-savvy staff, staff can begin to learn the accessibility features built into operating systems and electronic devices. You can offer programs and help get the word out on these often little-known & very helpful services:

- Apple: <http://www.apple.com/accessibility>
- Google: <http://www.google.com/accessibility>
- Microsoft: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

For tips to learn more about using accessibility features in the iOS operating system, take a look at the short tutorials from the Hadley School for the Blind. <http://www.hadley.edu/InstructionalVideos.asp>

Tip: if you have a library member who regularly uses accessible technology, invite them to assist with classes.

Book Clubs:

- Create an audiobook group
- Form a conference call-in or video conference call-in book club for those who cannot come to the library
- Establish a book club group that meets outside of the library (e.g. at a local senior center, assisted living residence, synagogue, or local business, etc.)

PUBLIC RELATIONS PACKAGE

A key component of outreach is marketing through:

- Media: Newspapers, local TV, PSAs, social media
- Networking & Presentations
- Print Flyers
- Web Site

Here are several PR templates that you can use to promote your services for those with print impairments.

Tip: These resources will help guide you to design media for those with print impairments (see bibliography 2,3,11)

Sample Twitter Posts for NLS Service:

- Need a better way to read? You may qualify for a free audiobook player & thousands of free audiobooks. #ThatAllMayRead
- Having trouble reading standard print? There is a free service from @librarycongress. Ask us about it! #ThatAllMayRead

Sample PSA language for NLS Service (courtesy of NLS)

“Enjoy the freedom to read your way! The braille and talking book program we offer is a free library service for people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from using regular print. Call [add number] for more info!”

Sample Text for an Outreach Email for NLS Service:

My name is [name here] and I am emailing from the [name of library]. I want to inform you about services we offer from the Library of Congress for those who have difficulty reading standard print because of a physical impairment, reading disability, or vision impairment. I know you will have clients who can benefit from this service. I would like to speak or meet with you to discuss how we might partner to spread the word.

The service includes no-cost home delivery of a talking book player, talking books & audio magazines, Braille, and a book and magazine downloading program. There is also an app for smartphones & tablets.

It is a wonderful service that enriches the lives of those who have difficulty reading. I look forward to hearing from you. I will follow up with a phone call.

Sample Text for an Outreach Email for all Library Services:

My name is [name here] and I am emailing from the [name of library]. I want to inform you about services we offer for those who have difficulty reading standard print because of a physical impairment, reading disability, or vision impairment. We are beginning a new outreach effort to reach community partners who may have clients who can benefit from our services. I would like to speak or meet with you to discuss how we might partner to spread the word.

I look forward to hearing from you. I will follow up with a phone call.

Sample Text for Press Release about adding NLS Service:

Draft Press Release for Libraries

[your library's name here] [address and website here]

Contact: [name, phone and e-mail address]

For Release: Immediately

[Name of Library] Provides a Better Way to Read for All

[City, NJ, date] – The [name of library] has partnered to bring [name of NLS Regional Library's] no-cost services to the [library]. These services, from the Library of Congress, are for children, teens, and adults in [name of State] who cannot read standard print due to a physical impairment, a reading disability, a vision impairment or blindness. Anyone who has difficulty reading standard print or holding a book or turning the pages of a book may be eligible. Once registered for the program, residents will be able to select from these no-cost services:

- Audiobook player
- Audiobooks & audio magazines
- Braille
- Downloadable audiobooks, audio magazines & Braille
- BARD Mobile app for smartphones and tablets

There is no cost for these services and the services are delivered to the home postage-free.

[statement from NLS regional library]

Library staff will be available to help explain the eligibility criteria for these services, provide applications and explain the application process. Staff will also be able to demonstrate the simple and easy-to-use audiobook player and audiobooks available to those registered with [name of regional library].

[Local library quote]

For more information, call [phone] or see your librarian.

Sample Text for Promotional Flyer for the Public:

Need a Better Way to Read?

[add a good graphic here]

You May Qualify for FREE Home-Delivered Library Services if Your Ability to Read is Affected by:

- A Physical Impairment
- A Reading Disability
- A Vision Impairment
- Blindness

FREE Services for All of Our Customers in Our Communities!

Call us [phone]

Visit our web site [Library's web site]

[Name of Library]

Do you have limited staff and/or budget? Do not let these concerns prevent you from providing outreach materials on services to those library patrons with a print-impairment.

Consider contacting your local regional library to request materials you can distribute. Often there is a section you can affix a label to with your library's name and contact information. To find your state's library: <http://www.loc.gov/nls/find.html> .

Sample Text for Hand-Out about NLS Services to Distribute to Community Partners & Outreach Targets

[Your library logo, contact information]

Do You Know People Who Have Difficulty Reading Standard Print or Holding a Book?

The [Name of Library] is reaching out in [name of town] to find children, teens, and adults who have difficulty reading standard print or holding a book due to:

- A Physical Impairment
- A Reading Disability
- A Vision Impairment
- Blindness

Our library offers no-cost accessible services designed to serve them.

These include:

[List your Services]

A home-delivered, no-cost, accessible reading service from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at The Library of Congress. An application is required; see attached.

Questions? Call [name] at the [Name of Library]

You can find more information on the Library of Congress program at

<http://www.loc.gov/nls> .

CONCLUSION

Serving people with print impairments in your community is:

- A needed service justified by statistics
- A way to enrich the lives of those who have difficulty reading standard print, particularly those who are isolated at home
- An opportunity for staff to learn new skills
- An opportunity to increase your library's circulation
- An opportunity to build more community partners & support for the library

Outreach to a population with print impairments can be done simply and with little to no cost to the library. Be an ambassador for those with print impairments in your community.

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