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# Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines

**Disability Services Standard**  
April 2009

## 10.3 Disability Services Standard

Revised April 2009

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### 10.3.1 Objective and framework

The objective of this document is to provide standards and guidelines for developing library services and resources which offer barrier-free access and encourage inclusiveness and participation for people with disabilities.

In its statement on *Library and information services for people with a disability*, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) adopts in principle the right of people with disabilities to equitable access to information through all library and information services, and promotes the observation of current Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation. See [www.alia.org.au/policies/disabilities.html](http://www.alia.org.au/policies/disabilities.html). Relevant legislation for Queensland libraries is listed in 10.3.5.

Within this framework, governments and communities develop programs and policies to further inclusiveness and eliminate discrimination for people with disabilities. Libraries play a vital role in achieving these outcomes.

This standard recognises that there are many forms of disability including physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities and that they result in vastly different needs. It also acknowledges that library users may have varying levels of impairment, presenting a challenge in ensuring equity of access to services and resources for all.

### 10.3.2 Standard for disability services

#### 10.3.2.1 Standard for staff levels

In libraries serving populations over 35,000, one of the qualified librarians should be a specialist position to suit the demographic needs of the community. This may be a Community Services position which includes responsibility for planning and managing services to people with disabilities.

#### 10.3.2.2 Standard for staff management

Services to people with disabilities should be coordinated by staff with suitable specialist knowledge, skills and experience. Staff should undergo regular training and professional development to refresh skills and keep abreast of new advances in the field.

All library staff and volunteers should have an awareness of the range of disabilities, an understanding of the philosophy of inclusion and respect and a willingness to assist. Induction sessions for new staff should include training in accessibility, communication issues for various types of disabilities, and awareness of adaptive technologies and devices. Staff should also be sensitive to the role of carers who accompany people with disabilities to the library.

For more details, refer to the Public Library Staffing Standard, Section 2.3.5. ([http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/98785/SLQ - Staffing Standard - May 2008.pdf](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/98785/SLQ_-_Staffing_Standard_-_May_2008.pdf)).

### **10.3.2.3 Standard for community profiling**

Regular analysis of statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other relevant data should be undertaken to ensure current knowledge of prevalence and types of disabilities experienced in the Local Government area. This information should guide the planning and budgeting of library services for people with disabilities.

### **10.3.2.4 Standard for library facilities**

Library buildings should observe universal design principles and comply with all relevant legislation, building codes and Australian Standards (see 10.3.5.2). Wherever possible, there should be unimpeded physical access to and within the library for people with disabilities. Signage should use universal symbols, appropriate formats and colours.

Features such as automatic doors, ramps, pathways, safe floor surfaces, audible lift signals and appropriate lighting should be used wherever possible. Adequate allowances should be made for disabled parking spaces and wheelchair accessible toilets.

There should be sufficient aisle widths between rows of shelving and adequate turning spaces for wheelchairs wherever possible. For more information on library buildings and shelving, refer to the Library Buildings Standard, Section 4.4.2.7 and 10.3.5.2. (<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines/four>).

People with disabilities should be specifically allowed for in safety and emergency procedures of the building. Companion animals should also be catered for within library policies and guidelines.

## **10.3.3 Guidelines**

### **10.3.3.1 Guidelines for collections and resources**

Collections and resources should be developed in a wide variety of formats to serve the varying needs of people with a range of disabilities. All resources should be of high quality and cover the same range of interests and genres as the general collection. Resources of differing levels of difficulty should be available. Information resources about disabilities and their management should also be included.

Collections should be easily found within the library with attractive reading and viewing areas available. Adaptive furniture should be used where possible to enhance client comfort and usage e.g. there should be sufficient chairs available with arms and wheelchair accessible workstations (See also 10.3.3.2).

A growing range of multimedia materials and print resources offer a great variety for selection to cover all types of disabilities. Examples of these include:

- Large print books, newspapers and magazines;
- Audio books and CDs, in varying speeds;
- Captioned DVDs and other formats;
- Music and film DVDs and CDs;
- Tactile books and resources such as games and puzzles;
- Downloadable books, newspapers and magazines;
- E-books;
- Literacy and reading development resources (for students and tutors);
- Highly illustrated material;
- Spelling and instructional software;
- Reminiscence kits (for people with dementia);
- High interest/ low vocabulary resources;
- Medical reference and community information resources.

### **10.3.3.2 Guidelines for adaptive technologies**

A large range of adaptive technologies and assistive devices are available which greatly enhance usability of library facilities and resources for people with disabilities. Libraries should include an appropriate selection of these for their clients and continue to monitor developments in this growing field. Examples of assistive products include:

- Adjustable tables, workstations and computer screens;
- Keyboards with larger or smaller keys, overlays or ABC keyboards;
- Screen text magnification capacity;
- Special pointing devices;
- Portable MP3 or MP4 devices for downloadable resources;
- CDs and/or Daisy and other audio players for audio books;
- Text to speech software;
- Magnifying lenses and mounted magnifiers;
- Audio loops;
- Voice activated interfaces.

As more library services and catalogues become available over the Internet via library web sites, it is essential that these virtual services are easily accessible to people with disabilities. If provision is made for good accessibility, web based technologies can greatly enhance the range of services and resources available to these clients. General principles to follow in the design of web pages include using logical layouts, accompanying audio and graphics with text and use of larger fonts. Detailed web content accessibility guidelines can be found at [www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20).

### **10.3.3.3 Guidelines for community engagement and consultation**

Effective community engagement and consultation on the needs of people with disabilities can provide valuable input into the planning of services and programs. Partnerships should be developed with agencies that represent and serve people with disabilities to exchange information, discuss specific strategies and projects and to obtain feedback on current services. People with disabilities may be invited to speak at staff meetings or other forums to raise awareness. To streamline communication, many libraries prefer to designate a suitably trained staff member as the main contact for these clients.

### **10.3.3.4 Guidelines for programs and services**

A wide range of programs and services should be offered by all libraries, regardless of size, to encourage and enhance library usage by people with disabilities. As far as possible, they should be designed to promote participation in local community life through maximising physical and social integration. Library services for people with disabilities should be integrated with those for the general community wherever possible.

People with disabilities should be identified at the point of joining the library, and be made aware of the full range of services, resources and assistance available to them. Usage of online services such as circulation transactions, web and database searching, and downloading of material to portable devices should be clearly explained and encouraged, given their special benefit for these clients.

Services should be age appropriate and reflect a wide range of interests and abilities. Examples of services and programs include:

- Library orientation including introduction to the range of resources available;
- Storytelling, children's activities and rhyme time sessions using deaf sign language;
- Music programs;
- Computer and Internet training sessions, highlighting assistive devices;
- Home delivery services for housebound clients;

- Bulk loans to care facilities;
- Flexibility in applying loan limits and loan periods for people with disabilities;
- Celebrations of key events such as International Days for Deaf People and People with Disabilities, Disability Action Week, Learning Disability Week;
- Library displays and artworks by people with disabilities;
- Reading and interpretive services or referral to these. Larger libraries may consider having a staff member trained in Auslan.

#### **10.3.3.5 Guidelines for promotion and marketing**

Promotion of library services for people with disabilities should be appropriately targeted, inclusive, regular and consistent. To raise awareness and encourage usage of library services, various promotional techniques can be used, including:

- Production of library brochures and newsletters in large print, audio, web based and/or DVD formats as appropriate, utilising easy to read text and language;
- Distribution of promotional material in a wide range of community locations including those visited regularly by people with disabilities and their carers;
- Guided library tours and open days for targeted groups;
- Awareness sessions for relevant medical and support staff in local care facilities, referral agencies and health care centres.

#### **10.3.3.6 Guidelines for planning and policy**

Each library service should have clearly articulated plans and policies to support library services to people with disabilities. Planning should reflect relevant local, state and federal policies and legislation, including any council Disability Action Plans and relevant building codes. Strategies should be informed by active community consultation and should feature clear goals and objectives. Accessibility to both the physical library building and virtual services such as the library's web site should be an essential consideration in any plans.

#### **10.3.4 Performance Indicators**

- Effective physical and virtual accessibility to the library and its services by people with disabilities
- Regular analysis of statistical and demographic data to inform planning and budgeting of services
- Suitably trained staff assigned responsibility for coordinating services
- Number of targeted programs and participation in them

#### **10.3.5 Definitions and references**

##### **10.3.5.1 Definitions**

**ABC keyboards:** Computer keyboards with keys arranged in alphabetical order, useful for people with dyslexia or learning difficulties.

**Adaptive technology:** any product or software developed or modified to help make particular tasks able to be performed by people with a disability.

**Assistive device:** a device or tool which helps to compensate for the functional effects of a disability in the performance of tasks.

**Auslan:** the sign language of the Australian deaf community.

**Community engagement:** Communication between library staff and communities on a range of policy, program and service issues. Interactions may be formal or informal and range from information sharing to consultation, and sometimes active participation in decision-making.

**Daisy Player:** a digital playback device for reading audio books prepared in the DAISY format, allowing readers options such as book-marking not available in traditional audio books.

**Disability:** measurable functional loss resulting from impairment.

**Disability Action Plan:** A strategic plan, usually developed at council level, which highlights actions and strategies for helping to improve equity and inclusiveness in the local community for people with disabilities.

**Impairment:** Anatomical loss or loss of bodily function, usually caused by either injury or a medical condition.

**MP3:** a compressed music and audio format popular for digitising music

**MP4:** a compressed multimedia container which holds a mix of formats such as video, images and animation.

**Pointing device:** a device such as a mouse, joystick, or touchpad for moving or manipulating a cursor or pointer on a computer screen. Pointing devices for people with disabilities can include large trackballs, voice-activated pointers, or those manipulated by mouths, feet etc.

### 10.3.5.2 References

#### Legislation

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (amended 2002)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act (Queensland) 1991*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*
- *Disability Services Act (Queensland) 2006*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (ratified by the Australian Government July 2008)

#### Australian Standards

- *AS 1428 – Design for access and mobility.* 2001.
- *AS 3696.5 – Wheelchairs: determination of overall dimensions, mass and turning space.* 1989.

#### References

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<http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk/resources/toolkit/access.php>

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