

Access for library users with disabilities:

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SCONUL Access Steering Group



Access for library users with disabilities

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Foreword

Prior to the preparation of this paper, a number of key decisions were made:

- 1 To take a fresh and more extensive approach, rather than merely reviewing the existing paper for accuracy and current practice.
2. To provide recommendations for both good practice and future work that could be viewed as a continuum, enabling each institution to identify its current position, recognising that higher education institutions are at different stages of development in respect of inclusive provision.
3. To encourage all institutions in ways of development, recognising that there may be physical, practical and financial limitations, as well as potential for enhancement of provision.
4. To omit issues of procurement, since:
 - The market place is constantly changing.
 - Provision, especially through the Disabled Student's Allowance, may be regional in some aspects.
 - Inclusion in the paper could be perceived as recommendation.
 - Exclusion could be misinterpreted.
 - Commercial websites are particularly susceptible to change, rendering information given possibly obsolete and therefore unhelpful.
 - Technological advance means that new and potentially very useful products are constantly emerging, would not be represented and could be overlooked.
5. To make the paper itself a model of good practice in accessibility, particularly observing the following points:
 - Type-face: Arial.
 - Type size: 12 point for main text.
 - Text justification: left.
 - Line spacing: 1.5 in main text.

- Text boxes: formatted for screen reading.
- Headings: generated by use of styles.
- Referencing system: Harvard.
- Emphasis: bold text, rather than italic or underline.
- Punctuation: to facilitate screen readers where possible
e.g. use of full stops to terminate bullet points.

When printing the document, cream or another pastel-coloured paper is recommended.

Future developments

Whilst the Working Group has endeavoured to produce a document which will be appropriate to both present and future needs, it is hoped that the more widespread acceptance of the social model of disability and a positive anticipatory approach, in line with developing legislation, may in due time, inspire a fresh outlook on accessibility for all users in all aspects of library facilities.

Access for library users with disabilities

Since the publication of the original version of 'Access for users with disabilities', many changes have taken place. The introduction of the Disability Equality Duty in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 has been a major driver for change, as has the ongoing increase in the numbers of students in higher education disclosing a disability.

The Working Group acknowledges the strengths of the original document, on which it has endeavoured to build. It is now necessary to take a much broader anticipatory approach, with the emphasis on providing all library services in an inclusive way. The review reflects current best practice and provides direction for the future both in respect of individual disabilities and differences and in providing an inclusive learning environment.

Delivering services in an accessible way is seen as a moral issue of human rights as well as a legal obligation. The intention is to reflect the spirit of the legislation and go beyond mere compliance. Examining existing procedures and practices and engaging in genuine consultation with disabled people is seen as the essential way to secure truly accessible services.

The group has endeavoured to use language that is inclusive, but is aware that individual preferences vary and that terminology in the field of disability changes rapidly. Any offence is unintentional.

1 Introduction

1.1 Social and political issues

SCONUL promotes the social model of disability, which regards people as being disabled by social barriers. If no barrier exists, then a person with an impairment is not prevented from using services. These barriers may be physical, or attitudinal or behavioural. Sometimes inappropriate or inadequate responses create barriers for disabled people. For example, students may feel embarrassed about asking for a large-print library guide in front of other people. If guides to services are available on web pages, they are accessible to people with a visual impairment, since software can be used to magnify the text or read it aloud. They will also be available for all students to see off campus. Taking a proactive approach to identifying and removing barriers is likely to result in improved services for everyone.

The social model of disability contrasts with the medical model, which sees the individual with the impairment as a 'problem'. There is a deficit: this individual is unable to complete the standard application form; cannot read adequately; cannot work independently because of their disability; has poor short term memory because of their disability. The model is a reactive one, which deals with a single individual, and fails to result in any improvement to general service provision. The social model of disability underpins UK disability discrimination legislation and the QAA Code of Practice for disabled students (QAA1999). The model is one developed by The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), who located equality of opportunity for disabled people within the context of human rights (UPIAS 1976).

It is recognised that every higher education institution is unique, with its own location, student profile and institutional priorities. The intention of this paper is to be indicative rather than prescriptive. Many institutions are taking a joined-up approach to promoting equal opportunities for disabled people in the context of an institutional equality and diversity strategy.

Beyond individual higher education institutions, a range of sources of support have been developed, often through cross-sector partnerships. The emphasis is on supporting service providers and employers in taking proactive measures to support the rights of disabled people to obtain access to learning opportunities and employment, and to engage in active citizenship.

Examples of these include:

- **Action on Access** The former National Disability Team has now been subsumed into Action on Access. The new body promotes widening participation in higher education, including participation by disabled students.
- **Equality 2025** The Office for Disability Issues is recruiting disabled people to form a disability advisory network to communicate disabled people's views to the government. The ODI has set out a twenty year action strategy to create equality of opportunity and full social inclusion for disabled people.
- **Equality Challenge Unit** The ECU advises higher education institutions on equality issues, including writing Disability Equality Schemes. Its original focus was on employment issues, but that has now been broadened.
- **Disability Equality Partnership** From January 2006, Action on Access, the Equality Challenge Unit and the Higher Education Academy have formed a partnership to support higher education institutions in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled students.
- **Higher Education Academy** Through its Subject Network the HEA is developing resources to promote inclusive practice and contextualising disability good practice and pedagogy to the needs of academic disciplines.
- **Higher Education Funding Council for England** HEFCE is developing its own Single Equality Scheme, to explain how it will meet its statutory duties to promote disability, race and gender equality. HEFCE's 'Improving provision for disabled students initiative' funded some valuable projects, such as the **Consortium of Arts and Design Institutions in Southern England** (CADISE) Being Inclusive in the Creative and Performing Arts Project.
- **Human Rights Convention for Disabled People** Following lobbying that began in 2002, the United Nations in 2006 agreed a new Convention on

Human Rights for Disabled People, to be adopted formally by the General Assembly in its next session. The UK has already signalled its intention to ratify the convention.

- **REVEAL** This is a national database of accessible formats, developed by the Museums, Archives and Resources Council, Share the Vision, the National Library for the Blind, the Royal National Institute of the Blind and the British Library.
- **RNIB and NLB merger.** The Royal National Institute for the Blind and the National Library of the Blind are merging their services to provide a single library service and lobbying body.

1.2 Legislation

The government has used a range of legislation to drive forward social change. The key acts affecting higher education libraries are:

1.2.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) aimed to end discrimination against disabled people in employment and access to goods, facilities and services. For the purposes of the act a disabled person is defined as anyone 'with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Key concept:

Normal activities must be taken to include the majority of library use activities, such as access to book shelves, seating, counter services, user education, using electronic materials, photocopying etc.

Those covered by the definition include:

- People with a sensory impairment.
- People with learning disabilities.
- People with a fluctuating medical condition e.g. rheumatoid arthritis.
- People who have previously had a disability even if they no longer have the disability.

- People with progressive conditions, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, from the moment the condition leads to an impairment with some effect (even though not substantial) on day-to-day activities.
- People with a clinically-recognised mental illness.

1.2.2 Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001

The Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) extended the DDA to cover post-16 education, ensuring that the needs of students and potential students with disabilities were covered. Higher education institutions were required to anticipate the more obvious needs of disabled students, and make reasonable adjustments in advance. They were required to make reasonable additional adjustments for individual disabled students. They were required not to discriminate against a disabled person by treating them less favourably than others for a reason relating to their disability without justification, or by failing to make reasonable adjustments.

Discrimination is treating someone **less favourably** for a reason related to his or her disability, without **justification**, where the responsible body could reasonably have known of the disability. Justification must be based on reasons both material to the circumstances and substantial, and is relevant only to disability-related discrimination.

Justifications include:

- Maintaining academic standards.
- Making unrealistically expensive provision in an individual case.
- Providing services which could be covered by grants/loans available to students.
- Equivalence through the availability of other aids or services.
- Practicality.
- Health and safety.
- The interests of other students.

It might then be argued that some proposed adjustments could be unreasonable.

A very useful summary of the potential scope for justification and reasonable adjustment is included in the Code of Practice issued by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC 2003) and revised in 2006 (DRC 2006).

Such justifications asserted by institutions and libraries may be tested by the courts, with the Disability Rights Commission acting as a conciliation service. Arguments

based on expense, for example, would be reviewed in light of the entire library or institutional budget.

Key concept:

Care, including seeking legal advice, will be required by library managers wishing to argue justifications for not providing equity of service.

The legislation requires 'anticipatory' changes; it is not acceptable to leave the necessary adjustments until a particular disabled person requires them.

Libraries should promote best practice, not minimum standards.

Some potential difficulties surround the concept of disclosure within the Act. Students have a right not to disclose their disability, and have protection under the Data Protection Act, but an institution may be held responsible for discrimination if they did know, or could have known, that a particular student had a disability. The onus is on the student to make their disability known, if it is not apparent. When a disability is made apparent to any member of staff, either through non-confidential disclosure or observation, then the institution must react and make the appropriate adjustments. It is important that institutions take reasonable steps to find out if students have a disability, and to encourage students to disclose.

Confidentiality agreements, including authorisation by a student before prior support arrangements are put in place, safeguard individual rights. Institutions will, however, be expected to anticipate needs and ensure that robust procedures are in place to pass authorised information to those who will provide support.

If an institution carries out general anticipatory adjustments, such as installing push pad doors or hearing loops, this may benefit those students who chose not to disclose a disability.

Key concept:

Students will be encouraged to disclose if they can see they are in a non-discriminatory environment, which is seen to anticipate their potential needs.

Prior knowledge of individual student needs is desirable but not a right.

1.2.3 Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 extended the definition of disability in the DDA 1995 to cover people with cancer, HIV/AIDS and multiple sclerosis from the point of diagnosis. There is no longer a requirement for a mental illness to be clinically well-recognised, but it must last or be expected to last for longer than a year.

The DDA 2005 introduced a general Disability Equality Duty, which requires institutions, when carrying out their functions, to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people.
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Eliminate disability related harassment.
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- Take steps to meet disabled peoples' needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

The DDA 2005 also introduced a duty for specified public bodies, including universities, to produce and implement a Disability Equality Scheme and associated three-year action plan to show how they were going to tackle disability issues. In doing this they should:

- Engage disabled people in designing the scheme.
- Collect and monitor data to inform future planning.
- Conduct impact assessments to investigate the impact of policies and procedures on disabled people.
- Report on progress.
- Collaborate with other public bodies.

In many institutions the development of a Disability Equality Scheme has prompted closer working across the whole institution.

Some of the likely implications for higher education libraries are:

- A changed institutional ethos, with proactive planned developments anticipating barriers to disabled people, rather than reaction to complaints and negative feedback.
- Active involvement of disabled people in decision-making processes as well as user focus groups.
- Increased monitoring of all library users and their opinions, preferably with regular questions on disability issues.
- Publication of any feedback with an explanation of planned responses to the issues raised.
- Review of all literature and publicity materials to ensure that they include positive images of disabled people, and that these images are not limited to sections dealing with services for disabled people.

1.2.4 Human Rights Act 1998

This act incorporated into UK law the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, and came into force in 2000. Discrimination in this legislation is very widely defined and certainly guarantees rights to disabled people.

1.2.5 Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002

This act gave the right to make a copy for a visually-impaired person in an alternative format of a literary, artistic, dramatic or musical work, or published edition under certain conditions. The required format must not already be available commercially, and the visually-impaired person must have lawful access to a copy (e.g. in a library or archive). The definition of a visually-impaired person given in the act is 'one who is blind or partially-sighted or has uncorrectable sight loss or who has a physical disability which makes it impossible for them to hold a book or move their eyes'. This makes it possible to provide a book in an alternative format, which may include the creation of an audio file.

1.2.6 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

These regulations make it unlawful to discriminate against employees on the grounds of age. They also apply to higher education, making it illegal to discriminate against

students on the grounds of age. Employees will have the right to request to continue to work beyond the normal retirement age. Since many disabilities are age-related, this may increase the numbers of library users and members of library staff with disabilities.

1.2.7 Equality Act 2006

The purpose of the Equality Act is to bring the separate equality commissions together as the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The new Commission will take on the work of the Disability Rights Commission, and promote disability issues within the broader equality framework.

1.3 Guidelines from Funding Councils and Quality Assurance Agency

1.3.1 The statutory guidelines

The main relevant regulations are two codes of practice published in 1999.

- The Quality Assurance Agency issued a code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards for all UK higher education institutions (QAA 1999). Section 3 deals with students with disabilities. Revision of individual sections began in 2004. The key principle of these regulations is that students with disabilities should have access to a learning experience comparable with their peers, and 24 precept areas are defined for the delivery of this equity of treatment.
- The Higher Education Funding Councils for England (HEFCE) and Wales (HEFCW) also published their guidance on base-level provision for disabled students in higher education (HEFCE 1999) which included recommendations on specialist staffing levels.

1.3.2 Financing provision for disabled students

It is important to be aware of the different types of funding available for provision for disabled students, and to have some knowledge of how these may be accessed within an individual higher education institution.

HEFCE provides (HEFCE 2006):

- Project funding for special projects e.g. in the period 2003-2005 it provided funding to 54 higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) for projects on developing resources relating to the learning and teaching of disabled students.
- Project capital funding to allow higher education institutions to develop their physical infrastructure and make anticipatory adjustments for disabled students (in response to the introduction of SENDA) e.g. the installation of a lift to provide an accessible alternative to stairs.
- Disability Premium funding as part of the block grant to an institution. The disability allocation reflects the number of students at each institution who are reported as receiving the Disabled Students' Allowance. However, not all disabled students are eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance, as HEFCE itself recognises (HEFCE 2006), so there are questions about the fairness of this allocation method.

'The profile of students in HE is changing, with nearly 55 per cent of undergraduate students now aged over 21, and 45 per cent studying part time. We know there are correlations between increasing age and disability and that different modes of delivery for HE are likely to impact some disabled students, who are more likely to require greater flexibility or different modes of learning (e.g. distance, work based or e-learning) to succeed in HE.'

(HEFCE 2006)

- Finance for national organisations to provide advice to higher education institutions. From 2000 to 2005 HEFCE funded the National Disability Team, which was set up to monitor and manage the special disability initiative projects. Following the end of its contract in 2005, HEFCE has redirected the resources to a Disability Equality Partnership of three organisations who will provide advice to institutions on improving provision for disabled students:
 - ◇ Action on Access, the national widening participation co-ordinating body.
 - ◇ Higher Education Academy to support learning and teaching.

- ◇ Equality Challenge Unit, to ensure the embedding of disability in the broader equalities agenda.

1.3.3 Disabled Students Allowance

Individual disabled students with a recent disability assessment may apply to their Local Education Authority or other funding body for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which may include elements for equipment (e.g. a computer with assistive software, a digital recorder), training in using special equipment, support workers to help with study, consumables, extra photocopying costs and books. Getting a DSA can be a lengthy and complex process. Some students, including some part-time students and some who are funded by NHS bursaries, are not eligible. Full details can be found in 'Bridging the gap' (Student Finance Direct 2006). International students receive no individual funding, but may have extensive support needs.

Key concept:

It is important to support disabled students at the beginning of their time as students, to prevent their falling behind. There may be significant delays in assessment for DSA, in getting the allowance, and in ordering equipment. This is a particular problem for people first diagnosed as disabled at university, including many students with dyslexia, and also for those with a changing or deteriorating condition. Libraries cannot assume that all disabled students will have access to their own computers and assistive software.

It may be reasonable for a library to pass certain additional costs on to individual students, on the grounds that they will be chargeable against the DSA e.g. some institutions provide photocopying accounts and issue termly invoices.

1.3.4 The institution

The Disability Discrimination Act requires institutions to make anticipatory provision for disabled students and reasonable adjustments for individual students. The total institutional resources are taken into account when considering what is reasonable, rather than purely those of one department. Thus some support for disabled students would be absorbed within the mainstream budget. Where significant costs may be

incurred, as in the supply of material in alternative formats, an institutional strategy must be devised, and library managers may need to negotiate on this.

1.4 Institutional policy and governance

The higher education institution's governing body is responsible for compliance across the institution, and it is to the governing body that library managers are accountable. Individual employees are responsible for their own actions and the institution is responsible for the actions of its agents, such as collaborating institutions or contractors.

Key concept:

Supporting users with disabilities is an institutional issue. Student services covered include access to resources, information and communications technology, teaching and skills training, and distance and e-learning. Libraries have to be integrated into a whole institution approach.

In practice, organisational implementation of arrangements to ensure compliance will be overseen by the senior managers of the institution.

It is crucial that institutional managers signal clear policy commitment to ensuring compliance, or better. Changes to library policies must reflect institutional policies. All policies will be subject to disability equality impact assessment under the DDA (2005). Implicit policy must be made explicit and all employees must be informed of the institution's responsibilities and of their responsibilities as individuals in delivering the institutional policy. This management and policy approach must cascade through all levels of the institutional organisation, being replicated by library management within library and learning resources services.

2 Needs and expectations

A user may be any member of the institution, or anyone entitled to reading access. Hence they may be staff, undergraduates, taught or research postgraduates, or those attending certificate, diploma or other short courses. They may be distance learners, mature or international students, in any combination and in any teaching category, or on placement in another institution, at home or abroad. They may be visitors from other institutions, or external readers. They may also have multiple disabilities or differences.

Any student or member of staff may also be accompanied by support workers, whose own access needs must be met.

All disabled library users have the right to expect equality of access, with all other users, to all learning and teaching opportunities, and resources originating in any format. The institutional policy should be reflected in that for library provision, and if necessary, affected by it. Promotion of an effective feedback system is helpful in developing support that is directly relevant to the actual needs of the current members of the institution.

The needs and expectations of undergraduates are applicable to all student groups: postgraduates and some groups of undergraduates may have additional requirements.

2.1 Staff

Members of staff have a dual need:

- To obtain access to all resources necessary for both research and teaching.
 - ◇ There is a right to expect the same degree of accessibility and support as that provided for students.
- To make provision for their students with disabilities in the context of both learning and assessment. Staff awareness of disabilities and differences and response to these is patchy, and requires active institution-wide strategies to provide fully inclusive programmes.

Key concept:

An awareness of the full range of disabilities and differences, which may potentially be represented in the student body singly or in combination, is essential for all staff, irrespective of whether they themselves have such disabilities or differences.

There is an expectation that the library should be able to resource teaching needs for any given course, and to provide such information in an alternative format if required. If facilities for production are not available in house, sufficient notice should be given to outsource this.

2.2 Undergraduates

Students with a disability or difference have a right to expect access to learning resources, services and learning and assessment opportunities on the same basis as all other students. There is evidence of wide variation within and across institutions, in terms of information at induction, provision of learning resources, and selection of assessment methods. In particular, attention should be given to the provision of teaching materials in a medium that is directly accessible, or capable of easy conversion to an accessible format.

It is legitimate for students with disabilities or differences to expect equality of pre-course planning with all students, in terms of the physical environment and service and resource provision. Where specialist equipment and software is provided, staff should be familiar with, and able to collaborate with the student in, its use. The best provision is made where libraries in particular have dedicated staff such as library disability officers, and assistive technology specialists. Since the aim is to integrate and not segregate, software and training resources should be made available to all students, whilst providing some specialist facilities. This has the added advantage of resourcing students who are reluctant to declare a difference or are as yet unaware that such a difference might exist.

2.3 International students

The principle of inclusivity is paramount here, as students should be disadvantaged neither by their lack of facility with English nor by any disability or difference. It may be particularly difficult to identify a dyslexic learning difference, and so assistive software should ideally have institution-wide provision and support. The support available for dyslexic learners may also enhance the learning experience of non-dyslexic students. International students may also be disadvantaged by a lack of funding, as most will not be eligible for individual support, and so the institution has an obligation to provide adequate facilities for equality of access to learning.

2.4 Postgraduates

Generally, postgraduate students will expect to require access to a broader range of learning materials, many of which may be less accessible in their original form. This particularly applies to research, as opposed to taught, postgraduates. Consideration needs to be given to accessibility at the point of need, which may range from archive material, through print stock, to a range of e-resources, as well as centralised accessibility. Provision for all students must meet the need to 'browse'.

2.5 Part-time students

Part-time students may well attend at times when specialist library staff are not available. Particularly useful for this cohort is the provision of on-line and paper-based training support in assistive software, to suit different learning styles. There is an entitlement to the same degree of access, to buildings, and to e-resources as well as to professional staff. Not all part-time courses are eligible for DSA support, and students without this provision will be much more dependent on institutional resources. Some may be seconded from employment and value facilities at or close to their place of work. Provision for part-time students should be equivalent to that for full-time students, although it may be differently sourced.

Case study:

A multi-campus university provides assistive resources at each campus, where possible having some centralised specialist facilities, with at least some provision in each library. Provision is also made in hospitals that are linked to the university for nursing and medical training.

2.6 Distance learners

Distance learners may be full- or part-time students, participating in courses at any academic level. There may be some requirements for physical access to buildings. Distance learners should be able to access learning facilities on an equivalent basis to those on campus. Most information supply and communication should take place electronically, but some use may have to be made of postal services. In terms of specific provision for disabilities and differences, it cannot be assumed that distance learners are automatically eligible for DSA funding, and so there is a duty to make any assistive provision that would also be available to students on campus. This raises particular issues with software licensing, and specialist equipment, and individual situations would have to be negotiated.

2.7 Mature students

Mature students may have additional requirements, particularly if they have had no previous experience of study at higher education level. They may have previously undiagnosed learning differences, and may be less familiar with technology and its potential. Learning needs are likely to be more individual than for other groups of students.

2.8 Support workers

A number of students with disabilities or differences have support workers to assist with physical and/or learning needs. Since they are enabling the student's learning, they should have the same access to buildings, learning resources and specialist equipment, together with any relevant training and staff support, whether or not they have an entitlement to this in their own right. This may require some resolution of membership, or software licensing rights, if the support worker is not employed by, or a member of the institution concerned.

3 Disabilities and differences

Any disability or difference does not define the person. People may experience a combination of disabilities and differences and each person will have needs which are unique to them. Any student population reflects the diverse nature of the general population and this is increasingly so due to initiatives such as widening participation.

This section considers the following disabilities and differences:

- The dyslexic spectrum
- The autistic spectrum
- Mental health
- Medical conditions
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Physical impairment

The section aims to identify common areas of difficulty, with brief details of particular disabilities or differences for context. More information can be found in the Resources section if required. Aspects of good practice and priorities for development will be found in section 4.

3.1 The dyslexic spectrum

Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). This term is used to indicate that a person does not find learning in general difficult, but it is difficult to learn, perform or demonstrate knowledge and understanding **under certain conditions for certain types of tasks** (Cottrell, 2003).

People with dyslexia experience a range of strengths and difficulties to varying degrees. Each person will have a unique viewpoint of what their dyslexia means to them and the experiences that they have in everyday life. People with dyslexia are able to be successful students and the provision of an inclusive service and effective study support reduces many of the barriers they face.

People with specific learning difficulties will not generally have all the difficulties mentioned below, and they will experience difficulties at different levels, and may have no problems at all with some of them.

Dyscalculia: the word means 'difficulty with number and calculating' - not necessarily difficulty with higher mathematical concepts.

Dysgraphia: severe difficulty with handwriting.

Dyslexia: difficulty with words, referring to a whole kind of mind-set that thinks differently to the kind of mind that thinks primarily in words. It affects many faculties in varying degrees. The dyslexic mind often has above average visual-spatial cognitive ability.

Dysphasia: difficulty in coordinating speech, often resulting in difficulties in word order and pronunciation.

Dyspraxia: delay or disorder of the planning and/or execution of complex movements. Associated with this may be problems of language, perception and thought.

(Pollak, 2006)

This section concentrates on dyslexia within this spectrum, as this student group usually makes up the largest percentage of people registered as disabled in higher education.

3.1.1 Defining dyslexia

Is it more than just difficulties with reading, writing and spelling?

There are many different answers to this question: ongoing research means that definitions are changing as more is known about the subject. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) definition is practical and educationally oriented but contains no reference to neurological findings or cognitive science.

The following definition comes from the BDA website:

'A specific difficulty in learning, in one or more of reading, spelling and written language which may be accompanied by difficulty in number work, short-term memory, sequencing and auditory and/or visual perception, and motor skills. It is particularly related to mastering and using the written language – alphabetic, numeric and musical notation. In addition oral language is often affected to some degree.'

Reading difficulties can be caused by visual instability in people with dyslexia. This means that text is not stable, resulting for example in word endings being affected, and words being confused.

Reading for long periods of time can be difficult and it can take a person with dyslexia 3 – 4 times longer to read a given text.

Also related to reading difficulties are the issues of complex text, the introduction of new words, the colour contrast of text on paper, and sequencing or word order. Using a dictionary can often be difficult; providing a spelling dictionary helps.

Difficulties with written expression may result in spelling being phonetically based e.g. fone = phone. Letters may be reversed (e.g. b and d), mis-sequenced, added, or omitted, especially when the person has not had access to a spellchecker.

Some letters are exactly the same shape in type-faces like Arial, just rotated: **p q d b**

3.1.2 Screening for dyslexia

Students may not know that they have dyslexia when they enter higher education. It is important that there is a screening service for people who are struggling for reasons which may be dyslexia related. This service is generally undertaken by disability support / student services but some academic libraries are becoming involved in the initial stages of the screening process.

Students with dyslexia indicators are then referred to an educational psychologist (or other specialist SpLD teacher) who will test for and diagnose dyslexia. They will provide a report outlining support mechanisms which the institution and the student's LEA must facilitate. Students who already have an official diagnosis will still need to

provide recent evidence of their dyslexia, in the form of an assessment carried out after the age of sixteen.

There are difficulties when screening international students, as it may be hard to identify whether the barriers relate to studying in a non-native language or if they are linked to dyslexia. Software used for screening is currently only available in English.

3.1.3 Dyslexia and the library

Libraries can present considerable barriers to students with dyslexia. Dyslexic students have difficulties with a number of areas required for successful use of the library and these can be exacerbated by environmental design that does not consider their needs. Students may avoid the library because of problems with literacy and may have a general anxiety about books.

Case study:

"I'm having trouble with these assignments now and this is what is worrying me about not being able to get these books. If I get them too late I'm not going to get the full benefit of what's in them. I'll be trying to extract information at such a rate that I'm bound to miss something. Plus you are at a level now where you have got to think about it. But if you can't read it properly, how can you analyse it properly - it's just a vicious circle."

Ruth, 1st year, Diploma in Social Work (DEMOS 2003)

There may be barriers to accessing the library for people who experience difficulties having the following characteristics:

- **Speed of processing:** interpreting and understanding information given e.g. responding to questions asked by staff at service points in relation to a query.
- **Short-term memory:** remembering instructions e.g. how to log on to PCs.
- **Sequencing, (or word / letter order):** transferring information accurately e.g. passwords, shelf marks.
- **Spoken language and motor skills:** communicating needs at service desks effectively.
- **Auditory or visual perception:** assimilating information e.g. library orientation.

- **Attention span / concentration / distractibility:** overload of information e.g. in induction sessions.
- **Concept of time / time management:** arriving late for appointments.
- **Organisational skills:** obtaining the required resources within a timeframe to complete a task effectively.

The following emotions are experienced at some point in most students' academic experience, but these symptoms often occur to a greater degree and frequency to dyslexic people:

- **Stress and anxiety** – Libraries are often large, busy, intimidating places. Some students even have difficulty entering the building. Having to ask for help repeatedly, using equipment while others watch and wait can cause embarrassment.
- **Confusion, frustration and anger** – Locating information can be problematic in a large building particularly when resources are moved around e.g. relocation of book stock and moving study spaces. Students often only know their way in, where their books are, and their way out.
- **Low self esteem** – the student may feel that everyone else seems to be coping but they are not. Fear of appearing foolish may prevent the student from asking for help, especially if they have to ask in front of others. People may not feel they can come back several times to ask the same question.

3.1.4 Positive aspects

There are also many positive aspects of dyslexia.

A dyslexic student may have the following qualities:

- See the whole picture or the 'big picture'.
- Think visually and in three dimensions.
- Make unexpected connections, being a divergent thinker.
- Be resourceful and resilient, determined and motivated.

- Be vocal and confident.
- Be articulate and creative.

The above strengths can be utilised in providing a supportive learning environment.

3.2 The autistic spectrum

Numbers of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), although still small, are growing rapidly. Asperger's Syndrome, a type of autism, is described by Wing (1981) as a 'triad of social impairment':

1. Impairment of two-way social interaction. People with ASDs commonly misinterpret the social and cultural rules most of us take for granted. It is often difficult for them to form social relationships.
2. Impairment of comprehension, language and non-verbal communication. Subtleties such as the use of metaphors, body language, humour and abstract concepts may create difficulties. People with ASDs may take what is said very literally, find it hard to make small talk, misread when to pause in a conversation, or interrupt inappropriately.
3. Impairment of imagination, with the substitution of repetitive, stereotyped routines. These can serve to reduce anxiety, but unexpected changes can cause emotional distress. Difficulty grasping the abstract can lead to problems with empathy and seeing things from another's point of view.

People with ASDs have the same intellectual range as the rest of the population, although a greater proportion will have learning difficulties and other impairments e.g. depression. Some of the characteristics of the condition may be strengths too, for instance a deep and sometimes obsessive, interest in a particular topic, possibly an obscure one.

3.3 Mental health issues

Mental health difficulties may be chronic or acute. They can include anxiety, bereavement, paranoia, phobias, depression, autistic spectrum disorders,

schizophrenia, and seasonal affective disorder. For further information see the Resources section.

Difficulties may be present on entry to higher education, or may develop as a consequence of the student's endeavour to engage either with the university context as a whole, or with specific aspects, such as a complex and busy library environment. People with a mental illness or distress can experience difficulties with thinking, emotions or behaviour, which may affect any aspect of the learning process. The disabilities are often 'unseen' and may not be specifically disclosed.

3.3.1 Challenges within the learning process

Possible difficulties with the learning process include:

- Reluctance to access the building.
- Confusion with complexity of resources.
- Reluctance to use public workstation areas.
- Poor personal organisation.
- Pressures of time constraints (borrowing/submission of work).
- Poor concentration.
- Difficulty reading from workstation monitor.
- Communication difficulties.
- Relationship difficulties - including gender issues.
- Inflexible or limited learning styles.

3.4 Other unseen disabilities (medical conditions)

The term 'medical condition' is used throughout this section to describe conditions that may be **treated** with medical or other interventions. This terminology is intended to be clear and precise without giving offence (Ashcroft *et al.* 1996; cited in Holloway, 2001). The approach that informs this work is the social model of disability. This model focuses on the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others as having some form of impairment (The British Council of Disabled People, 2002).

Some people using library facilities may have **permanent** (e.g. diabetes) and / or **progressive / fluctuating** (e.g. ME) medical conditions. People with conditions that

have a 'substantial and long-term adverse affect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' are defined as having a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). A person is covered by the Act even if they are receiving medical or other treatment which alleviates or removes the effects of having a medical condition (Disability Rights Commission, 2006). People who have previously had a disability are also covered under the DDA even if they no longer have a disability (SKILL, 2006).

The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (Skill, 2006) points out that people who have temporary conditions e.g. broken limb, will not be covered by the DDA. However, it is important to support anyone who experiences barriers to accessing the library regardless of whether they are covered by the DDA. This is good practice to ensure that all students have equal access to services and facilities.

People with medical conditions may face a number of barriers when using a library and accessing library resources. It may be that people feel anxious about using the library particularly if they are feeling unwell. They may also be concerned about asking for help if they have an unseen disability (Action for ME, 2006). This section aims to give an overview of some medical conditions and describe the barriers that people may face.

3.4.1 Overview of medical conditions

Many medical conditions are unseen and include epilepsy, myalgic encephalopathy (ME), multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, haemophilia, asthma and arthritis. A brief description of some medical conditions is given below.

Epilepsy: the National Society for Epilepsy defines epilepsy as a neurological condition that starts in the brain. It is a symptom that the way that a person's brain works is sometimes disrupted (The National Society for Epilepsy, 2004). Many people will have a single seizure at some time in their lives; however, epilepsy is the tendency to have repeated seizures (The National Society for Epilepsy, 2004; Epilepsy Action, 2006).

Diabetes: a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body cannot use it properly (Diabetes UK, 2006). Some people experience hypoglaecemia. This occurs when the amount of glucose in the blood falls too low. This can usually be treated by having a fast acting carbohydrate e.g. sugary drink, followed by a slow acting carbohydrate e.g. cereal bar, biscuits, sandwich, fruit or milk (Diabetes UK, 2006).

Case Study:

A student who experiences hypoglaecemia approached a member of library staff to enquire if she could eat and drink in the building when necessary. This request was authorised and the student was issued with a letter outlining the arrangement. The letter could be produced if staff or students questioned her.

Debating point:

Most libraries have a stringent policy on eating and drinking and may only allow bottled water. How should exceptions to this rule be facilitated for people who experience hypoglaecemia or for other health reasons?

Multiple Sclerosis: results from damage to the central nervous system, resulting in interference with messages between the brain and other parts of the body (Multiple Sclerosis Society, 2006).

Some people with MS experience periods of relapse and remission, whereas other people have a progressive pattern. People may experience pain, problems with memory and thinking, difficulties with vision, fatigue, tremor of the muscles and muscle spasms (Multiple Sclerosis Society, 2006).

Myalgic Encephalopathy (ME): is also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Many parts of the body can be affected, such as the immune and nervous systems. Common symptoms are severe fatigue or exhaustion after minimal activity, problems with memory and concentration and muscle pain (Action for ME, 2003). Other symptoms are poor temperature control and sleep disorders (Support ME, 1999; 2000).

One of the most difficult aspects of ME is the tendency of symptoms to fluctuate markedly. There can be periods of remission and relapse resulting in feelings of confusion and frustration (SAMEC Trust Research Centre, 2000).

3.4.2 Barriers to access to the library environment for people with medical conditions

- **Concentration and maintaining attention** e.g. when learning to use electronic resources.
- **Tasks in the library are physically demanding** e.g. accessing different areas of a large building to obtain resources, reaching for and carrying books.
- **User education sessions can be long and complex** e.g. attending a lecture style session at the end of the day may be too demanding.
- **Busy and noisy library environments** e.g. group study space, print rooms.
- **Poorly signed facilities** e.g. lack of information about location of toilets can cause discomfort.
- **Keeping formal appointments** e.g. people have good days and bad days and may not be physically capable of keeping a pre-arranged appointment.

3.5 Visual impairment

Only a small proportion of visually impaired people are totally blind. There is a range of effects, including cloudy or patchy vision, inability to distinguish light from dark, blurred vision, difficulty judging distance or speed, peripheral vision and tunnel vision. Some people cannot see close objects; others have poor distance eyesight. Visual ability may be affected by the environment, for example whether known or unknown, bright sunshine or a darkened room. Visual impairment can be congenital, or develop later in life. Some conditions are stable, whereas others will deteriorate or fluctuate. It is not always obvious that someone has a sight disability.

What this means is that every person with a visual impairment is likely to require individual adjustments. Students will also have to work harder than their non-disabled counterparts.

Use of screen-reading software, Braille, tactile or audio recordings necessitates reliance on auditory rather than visual processing. These media, as well as enlarged print (both printed and screen-magnified), reduce the ability to scan information, require extra concentration, and can be more tiring.

3.6 Hearing impairment

It may not be evident that a person is deaf or hard of hearing; this is often a hidden disability. It is a common misconception that people who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot hear any sounds at all. The person is likely to be able to hear some frequencies and may be lip reading. It is therefore important always to consider whether you are communicating clearly.

3.6.1 Difference between deaf and hard of hearing

A simple definition of deafness or hard of hearing is an 'inability to hear sounds or parts of sounds'. The RNID (2006b) points out that it is important to realise that being deaf or hard of hearing can mean very different things to different people.

It uses the following terms:

Deaf people:	Used in a general way when talking about people with all degrees of deafness.
Hard of hearing people:	Describes people with a mild to severe hearing loss. Often describes people who have lost their hearing gradually.
Deafened people:	Describes people who were born hearing and became severely or profoundly deaf after learning to speak.
Deafblind people:	Many deafblind people have some hearing and vision whilst others will be totally deaf and totally blind.

**The Deaf
Community
Deaf culture**

Many Deaf people whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language consider themselves part of a specific community, the Deaf Community, and not disabled. They may describe themselves as 'Deaf', with a capital D, to emphasise their Deaf identity.

There are many reasons why some people are born deaf or hard of hearing or lose their hearing later in life. Sometimes people may lose their hearing temporarily and it returns when they receive medical treatment. For others, deafness and hearing loss are permanent.

**profound hearing
loss and
profoundly deaf**

Relate to people who have no hearing at all.

Depending on the degree of deafness, a deaf person may be able to hear some sounds at certain pitches, but hear little else. Other hard of hearing people use hearing aids. These work best in quiet environments across a distance of no more than 1.5 metres and in one-to-one conversations. If there is noise or several people are talking, or even on a windy day, the hearing aid user might need the help of assistive devices such as induction loops to eliminate background sounds (RNID, 2006c). Deaf and hard of hearing people may be able to understand what is being said some of the time, but not always.

Debating point:

Is every service point in the library equipped with a hearing loop?

Are staff aware of the existence of hearing loops?

How would you give a tour of the library to a student who is hard of hearing?

Are portable loops available?

Who tests and maintains this equipment?

3.6.2 Barriers to access in the library environment for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

Traditionally, libraries are not seen as welcoming, deaf-friendly places. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may experience a number of environmental and attitudinal barriers in the library including:

- **Attitudes and awareness of library staff and students.**

- **Security arrangements** e.g. fire alarms.
- **Set up of teaching rooms and study areas** e.g. lighting level, induction loops, background noise and acoustics, seating arrangement.
- **Use of language** e.g. plain English in leaflets and posters.
- **Accessing services** e.g. telephone renewals.
- **Information overload** English may effectively be a second language for deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language. Working with an interpreter is challenging.

Case study:

A member of library staff delivered an induction tour to a large group of students with disabilities. A deaf student and her BSL interpreter were in attendance. The member of staff tailored her delivery to make the session inclusive for this student by speaking clearly with plenty of pauses.

Debating point:

The member of staff focused on the needs of one particular student. How could this have advantaged or disadvantaged other members of the group? What are the implications for delivering user education to large groups of students?

The following emotions are experienced at some point in most students' academic experience, but these symptoms often occur to a greater degree and frequency in people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- **Confused, embarrassed, frustrated** Library staff may not be aware of the communication barriers that people are facing. If the student is not being understood they can feel frustrated and may find it difficult to get their point across.
- **Fearful and unsafe** Students may have concerns for their security if they cannot see what is happening in a room as they cannot fully rely on audio cues e.g. in study areas where seating faces the walls. This is a particular concern during non-core hours such as 24 hour opening.

- **Tiredness** e.g. from the extra effort required to read by some deaf and hard of hearing people, particularly users of British Sign Language which has a different grammatical structure. Deaf and hard of hearing people work extra hard to receive what is being said and this makes communication more stressful.
- **Lonely and isolated** According to the RNID, 68% of deaf people feel isolated because of their deafness. This may be exacerbated by barriers to communication and a lack of awareness of Deaf culture.
- **Lack of confidence** due to possible difficulties with reading and understanding etc.

3.7 Physical impairments

3.7.1 Definition of a physical impairment

Physical impairment is a term which refers to a broad range of impairments which may be either congenital i.e. present at birth, or a result of injury or disease. Some conditions may result in marked fluctuations of behaviour and performance, whilst in others these remain stable.

Many impairments which cause mobility difficulties are visible because people may have to rely upon assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, and walking sticks. Some impairments may be invisible but should be taken equally seriously e.g. ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis).

3.7.2 The range of physical impairment

Examples of physical impairments are amputations, arthritis, back problems, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, ME, muscular dystrophy, post viral fatigue syndrome and spinal cord injuries. The following is an overview of some physical impairments:

Cerebral Palsy (CP): This is a general term used to describe a number of muscular dysfunctions which are traumatic but non progressive. Some of the characteristics may include stiff and involuntary motion of legs and arms, difficulty in speaking and general difficulty in controlling and co-ordinating voluntary muscle movements. People are affected to different degrees with one or more parts of the body involved (Portland Community College, 2005).

Muscular Dystrophy (MD): There are a variety of types of muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions. These conditions are characterised by the loss of muscle strength, as progressive muscle wasting or nerve deterioration occurs (the muscular dystrophy campaign, 2004).

Spinal cord injuries: The brain can no longer communicate fully with the rest of the body, which will result in at least some loss of movement and/or sensation (SpinalNet, 2006).

Temporary mobility impairment: e.g. broken limb, arm or shoulder.

Some temporary mobility difficulties are unseen e.g. temporary back injury, whereas others are more visible e.g. a person may use crutches due to a sprained ankle.

3.7.3 Assumptions and myths

It is important to be aware that people with mobility difficulties have a broad spectrum of physical capabilities. Some people are able to transfer from a wheelchair into alternative seating or may be able to walk a short distance. People with mobility impairment do not necessarily use a wheelchair.

In 2002-2003, 4.97% of all students had a known disability. Wheelchair users or students with mobility difficulties accounted for 0.24% (HESA 2004).

3.7.4 Barriers to access in the library environment for people with physical disabilities:

- **Access to facilities** e.g. buildings, toilets, book stock etc.
- **Use of transport to get to the library** e.g. taxi drop off points and blue badge parking spaces.
- **Communication** e.g. for people who need communication support.
- **Staff awareness** e.g. regarding unseen physical disabilities.
- **Fire evacuation** e.g. provision and location of safe havens.

Debating point:

What guidelines are in place within the institution for fire evacuation?
Are there different procedures for fire drills and a real emergency?

What are the implications of this?

What provision is made for people with Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans?

Most students will need to access support at some point in their education, including at college and university. Different support is provided to reflect the wide range of diversity in the student population. The library is a central service and needs to accommodate the needs of all user groups in its provision and approach.

4 Service delivery

4.1 The holistic learning experience/inclusivity

The role of the library or learning resources centre is to support the learning and teaching of the institution. The nature of the student experience has changed, with the increasing use of blended or e-learning. Increasingly students are using remote resources, rather than those physically housed within the library. They are required to work in small groups to develop presentations, sometimes using sophisticated technology. They may want more flexible learning spaces, in place of the traditional library. They may want to use the library at any hour of day or night.

There is no single model for service delivery, since much depends on how a library relates to the institution as a whole. What is important, however, is a commitment to improving service delivery, to developing an understanding of user needs and to responding to feedback.

Service delivery is concerned with meeting the complex and competing needs of all library users within the context of finite resources. Flexibility is the key to achieving this. This may mean:

- Providing material in electronic format as well as in print.
- Offering online renewals and an automated telephone renewal line.
- Having longer opening hours with reduced staffing levels.
- Having a staffed lending services desk in addition to self-issue machines.

Using the social model of disability, library staff should be proactive in examining their policies and practices to identify and remove any barriers that might prevent disabled people from using library services. This is sometimes about using a different means to achieve the same aim. This could mean, for example, making all forms available in an accessible format on the library's web pages, to enable visually-impaired students to enlarge them or use screen-reader software.

The rationale behind any additional provision for disabled students should be to reduce environmental or attitudinal barriers that they may experience in the library environment. Longer loan periods, for example, may be needed to compensate for the

slower reading speed of students with a visual impairment or dyslexia, or for issues related to physical access to the library.

Many of the improvements to library services, removing barriers to access, will result in an improved service to all library users e.g. improved signage, clear layout, choice of renewal methods, clear instructional guides.

Audits of all aspects of service delivery will identify any areas that may be presenting barriers to disabled people or other service users. Standards of service delivery should be explicit, and should be monitored and reported on. Disability equality impact assessments on all policies and practices are required under the DDA 2005 Disability Equality Duty.

All procurement and service design should be inclusive, taking account of the potential access requirements of all service users. Questions about accessibility should be raised with external suppliers, and should be explicit in product specifications.

The sections on good practice and priorities for development are intended to promote general inclusivity: however some aspects may be particularly related to specific disabilities or differences, which are coded as follows:

- A - Autistic spectrum
- D - Dyslexic spectrum
- HI - Hearing impairment
- M - Medical
- MH - Mental health
- P - Physical
- VI - Visual impairment

4.2 Service principles

4.2.1 Organisational attitude

A positive organisational attitude towards providing services that are accessible to people with disabilities is key to the success of doing so. It is vital that access to services for all is seen as a right and as an integral part of service planning and delivery, rather than an added extra, favour or exception.

The attitude of senior staff is likely to be reflected in the actions of front-line staff, and thus affect users' perceptions of institutional attitude to people with disabilities.

It is important for all levels of staff to express positively issues related to accessibility and that senior staff demonstrate an expectation that these issues will be treated seriously.

4.2.2 Access to services

Library services should be equally available to all users with disabilities, and, as most academic libraries admit external users, this includes members of the public. There are different models for achieving this aim.

Where possible, mainstream services should be accessible. Alternatives for disabled people should be provided where accessibility cannot be mainstreamed, or where alternatives provide a much quicker or easier solution for disabled people.

Some libraries employ formalised mechanisms of service delivery for such users, for example identification cards, standard extended loans. It is important for a one-to-one discussion to take place between individual users and either library or institutional disability staff, and to negotiate appropriate and feasible services.

Discussion point:

Special cards - are these helpful or divisive? Students with disabilities may appreciate not having to explain each time a particular service is required or it may be more helpful for any particular information to be held on the library record and be apparent only to service staff.

How would discreet but appropriate service be offered, prior to a user record being accessed?

Should services provided for disabled users be inclusive of (i.e. available to) all users?

Some libraries rely on mainstreamed service provision, such as telephone renewals, email and web links to overcome barriers to equal access. Others again offer individualised services by negotiation between the student and (dedicated) library staff.

4.2.3 Disclosure and privacy

Users should be required to disclose their disability to as few staff as possible in order to obtain services. Records kept of eligibility for services for people with disabilities, should record the fact of eligibility only, without any detail of reasons.

All users are entitled to privacy in front of other library users. They are entitled to know how any information will be used and disclosed, and be confident of a safe environment for disclosure.

Any records kept of information of a personal nature such as information about a disability should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This includes non-personal information such as the person's name where inclusion of the name in a particular context implies some personal information. For example a list of students who have signed up for a library induction specifically for students with dyslexia should be treated as confidential.

One way to avoid unnecessary need for disclosure within the library is to have eligibility decided by central institutional disability staff such as a disability coordinator. Students are likely to be discussing wider issues of support with this person or an equivalent, so library services can be discussed at the same time. The disability coordinator can then contact the library with the student's name and the services for which they are eligible.

Staff need guidance to know how to respond to disclosure in a way that fulfils the need to ensure that the response is one that is acceptable to the student, respects their right to privacy, and allows the institution to fulfil its legal responsibility once a member of staff is aware of the user's disability. This might involve asking the student for permission to pass on information where appropriate, and ensuring the student is aware of broader disability services within the institution.

4.2.4 'More favourable' treatment

People with disabilities will often have to work harder than non-disabled people to carry out tasks related to study or academic work. This means that in order to provide equality, people will need to be treated 'more favourably'. Perhaps a student with a visual impairment could fetch a book from the shelves with aid of a magnifier, but the time this might take might be prohibitive, so offering book fetching would be appropriate.

4.2.5 Choice

Wherever possible, people with disabilities should have the same choices in their use of library services as their peers. This means having a choice of places to study or use a computer, of sources of information and of times to get support. Some people may choose to use a less accessible mainstream service rather than a service exclusively for people with disabilities.

4.2.6 Staffing

Some institutions have library staff with specific responsibility for users with disabilities or differences. These may be library disability officers, assistive technology specialists, or staff, particularly in satellite libraries, who are the first point of contact for users with disabilities. These may be dedicated staff, or those who have additional library responsibilities.

4.2.7 Siting of services

Appropriate siting of specific services for users with disabilities must take into account the needs of all users. This applies particularly to technological provision. Specialist workstations and facilities alongside public provision promote inclusivity, and workstations within the library allow ready access to reference material. Remote or individual workstations provide a quiet environment and enclosed space, but may not be near other workers, or have easy telephone access for assistance, and there may be associated risks of lone working. If outside the library, then special arrangements may have to be made for printed reference material to be borrowed.

Debating point:

Should facilities and services for people with disabilities be provided just at key sites or at all sites? The answer to this will depend on size of sites, distance from each other and numbers of users and staff at each site (a disabled person might need to use any library site).

Case study:

A university with a main library and several site libraries has chosen to provide some services at all sites, for example book fetching and extended library loan times. A range of assistive software is available in computer clusters across campus. However some equipment and facilities are only available in the main library and off-campus sites. Users can ask for books to be transferred between sites when access is not possible at the home site.

4.2.8 Elements of accessibility

When planning accessible services, all aspects of service provision should be considered, such as:

- **Physical access** for people with mobility problems, including but not exclusively, wheelchair users. Examples include reach-height for switches, handles, leaflets etc (P).
- **Signage** and direction information for people with a range of disabilities.
- **Acoustics** for people with hearing impairments (HI).
- Accessibility of **printed or electronic information** for example for people with upper limb, visual, or learning disabilities.
- Accessibility of **equipment**, computers, vending machines, photocopiers, for example for people who are wheelchair-users, or people with visual impairments (P, VI).

This will be covered in more detail in sections 4.6 to 4.10.

4.2.9 Examples of good practice:

- Staff with **dedicated time**, available through a range of opening hours.
- Staffed **photocopying facilities** (including enlarged copies/colour).
- **Book retrieval** on request.

- Extra **individual skills training/support**, for example from dedicated staff, or subject librarians.
- **Dedicated staff** to filter and direct help to library and wider institutional services, thus optimising student time.
- **Inter Library Loans (ILL)/inter-site loans** for accessible copies.

Case study:

A student with visual impairment needed access to an alternative format of two US theses available from the British Library on microfiche. While a hard copy version would have cost more than £30 each to purchase from the BL, applying via the inter-library loans service to the awarding universities, with an explanation of the problem meant they could be supplied at the standard ILL loan cost of £5, via Research Libraries Information Network. It pays to persevere when looking for alternative strategies.

4.2.10 Opportunities for development

- Promote awareness of a library approach to positive disability provision through academic schools, to raise awareness of the range of disabilities and the strategies and solutions available to enable learning on the same basis for all students.

4.3 Customer service

It is essential that the library is clear in defining the services which it either does or does not offer, and that all library staff are fully familiar with these policies. Users with disabilities should be made aware of the level of service they can expect. This should be widely available in the form of a library policy statement, which should comply with the institutional policy.

Debating point:

Staff with dedicated time – what do they do? Ideally, all staff should be equally well versed in disability issues. One model of service delivery, particularly appropriate for the smaller library where staff are fewer and readers personally known, may aim to achieve exactly this, with all staff trained in introducing users with disabilities to the services provided and ensuring a continuous standard of service delivery.

For many libraries, it may be preferable to focus service provision on one or more staff with dedicated time. Their role would be to act as the referral point and continuous contact for individual users; to be the library's representative on institutional service and policy groups; to act as current information gatherer for the library, and to co-ordinate user education and staff training. It is vital that provision of dedicated staff does not encourage other staff to see supporting people with disabilities as being the job of only those members of staff and not the responsibility of all staff.

4.3.1 Examples of good practice

- Make staff aware of possible **accessibility issues** with printed or digital materials (D, VI).
- Produce **accessibility guidelines** for all printed information (D, VI).
- Site **enquiry points** and workstations in well lit areas, away from any significant background noise. Provide adequate seating and a swivel facility for the monitor, so that on-screen information can be shared.
- Design **posters or printed materials** or templates for these, in a style that will be as accessible for as many people as possible. Where an institutional corporate image is being followed, libraries may need to lobby for good practice within their institution. Good practice includes adopting minimum type sizes for posters and leaflets, choosing appropriate colour combinations, and creating a clear understandable layout (RNIB 2006, British Dyslexia Association 2006) (D, VI).

- Make **general written information** aimed at all library users, including library guides and bibliographies, available in alternative formats, for example large print, different font/colour options, web page, audio, Braille. Each publication should clearly offer alternative formats and state how to request these (D, VI).
- Make **all information** available electronically.
- Run **individual or specialised induction sessions** for students with disabilities.
- Raise **awareness of hidden disabilities** through staff training, leaflets and information boards (M).
- **Publicise contact details** of relevant library staff. Named contacts and other useful services should be advertised as widely as possible, with telephone/text/fax numbers, email, voicemail and dedicated consultation hours if possible. Consideration should be given to the development of such web-based services as email discussion groups and 'ask the librarian' features.
- When **instructions** are not understood, allow time before re-phrasing as information processing is more lengthy for some students (A, D).
- **Address and make eye contact with** the person rather than any support worker, if necessary attracting their attention first and introducing oneself by name (HI, P, VI).
- Advertise and maintain a **mechanism for complaints and suggestions**, with clarity of feedback and guarantee of prompt response.
- Front-line staff should have an awareness of **issues surrounding communication** with people with disabilities, for example not covering the mouth or looking away when talking to someone who may be lip-reading, and using acceptable language (HI).
- Provide **Deaf awareness** training for all staff, together with access to a basic sign language course (HI).
- **Lipreading** is 70% guesswork and requires intense concentration. Where possible, use a well-lit area, facing the light and avoid confusing

- backgrounds. Sit or stand at the same level as the person, away from obstructions, especially at service points. Look directly at the person and use natural speech and facial expressions (HI).
- When **working with an interpreter**, allow time after speaking. Speak directly to the person, not the interpreter, and allow regular breaks for people using interpreters in longer discussions (HI).
 - Be aware that English may not be a deaf person's first language, that there are different **sign languages**, and that different grammatical structures apply (HI).
 - Use short words where possible, e.g. 'buy' not 'purchase' (HI) Speak clearly, at a medium pace, using **plain English**, and avoiding library jargon. Use pauses to allow time to process information or ask questions (A, D, HI).
 - Only a minority of visually impaired people are proficient in **Braille**, and most employ a combination of methods. Readers, note takers or amanuenses may be used, and forms of communication should be appropriate to the individual student's needs (VI).
 - Enable and advertise **user contact** through a variety of media - text message, text phone, fax, email, according to user's needs.
 - Provide **extended loan periods** for print-disabled students (D, VI), and a **book fetching service** (M, MH, P).
 - Send **overdue and renewal information** via SMS or email to help students keep track of their library account.
 - Operate **relaxation of fines** where applicable - there may be physical difficulties, memory issues, or the user may have difficulty accessing and understanding the library and its systems.
 - Provide **pale-coloured paper** for photocopying or printing. This can make reading easier for many print-impaired people (D, VI).
 - Enable **transfer of books** between sites, for reasons of access to buildings or use of assistive technology.

- Provide **assistive technology hardware and software** to give access to printed or digital materials.
- Provide **training and support with specialist software**, for text reading, spellchecking, graphical and textual assignment planning, revision support and bibliographic reference management.
- Provide **support for mentors/assistants/support workers** (library access, loans, IT access) accompanying students in situations which they find particularly challenging (MH, P,VI).
- **Make allowances** for late arrivals, or missed appointments.
- **Assess design of web-based information**

Web-based information is legally required to be accessible to users with disabilities. It is recommended that there is a mechanism for ensuring accessibility for any web pages created by library staff. People creating web templates will need an appropriate level of awareness of good practice for creating accessible web content. Products bought in from outside providers, for example OPACS, must also be accessible. Libraries should lobby these providers to ensure the full accessibility of their products. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (1999), provide a world standard for web accessibility. RNIB also offer guidance on good practice (RNIB 2006).

- **Examples of good practice in web design** are:
 - ◇ To provide textual alternatives to graphical images on web pages so that screen reading software can give a representation of the image.
 - ◇ To ensure the page is useable by people using a keyboard and no mouse.
 - ◇ To ensure the text remains visible and readable when users alter the text-size or colour by not creating areas that are a fixed size.

Many **standard library practices** will be especially useful to people with disabilities, and should be advertised to them, such as quiet areas with less distraction or online

renewals. The provision of electronic journals may provide disabled people with access to articles in a form that can be more readily retrieved and read.

4.3.2 Opportunities for development

- Increase awareness of the range of disabilities and differences, and the corresponding issues raised.
- Provide library-wide training at the relevant level in communication skills.
- Devise communications strategies that provide a positive experience for all users.

4.4 Distance learners

Distance learners with no recognised disability or difference would reasonably expect to have access to all necessary learning materials. These could either be supplied electronically, or via a postal arrangement. Some libraries operate a postal loans scheme for items with one-week or longer loan periods: costs of despatch may be borne by the issuing library, but the borrower is normally responsible for the cost of return. These arrangements would also benefit users with a physical impairment. Remote access to e-material is provided through the ATHENS scheme, and apart from access to a university computer account and associated files, provision of specific software would not normally be expected.

Although it is likely that students working at home because of a disability or difference are likely to be in receipt of a DSA, this cannot necessarily be assumed. In particular, if the student is following a part-time course, this may not be eligible for the allowance. There is an obligation to provide the same specialist support and training available to on-campus users: these may be achieved in part by providing on line tutorials and guides via access to the intranet, although these would not be available to the general population.

Visits to a university or college campus are likely to be infrequent, but students with physical impairments in particular, should be able to access all areas related to their studies, and have evacuation plans in place where required.

4.4.1 Examples of good practice

- Provide a **home delivery** service, for a small charge.
- Allow people to **renew** items by email or online.
- Consider **extended loan** periods.
- Check that there are adequate **accessible parking spaces** and an area for taxis to set down near the library entrance; consider a booking system if these parking spaces are very limited (M, P).
- Provide information on **accessible public transport** links (P, VI).
- Establish an **electronic enquiry service** through externally facing library web pages.

4.4.2 Opportunities for development

- Maximise electronic availability of study materials.
- Extend hours of availability of dedicated staff with expertise in disability issues.

4.5 Non-registered library users

Many libraries in higher education institutions are open on a consultation basis to the general public.

Participating members the UK Libraries Plus scheme or the SCONUL Research Extra scheme can normally obtain reciprocal borrowing arrangements.

Generally none of these users would have access to e-resources, other than the collection catalogues, unless temporary log-in facilities are provided.

As well as providing a generally accessible building, the main practical requirement is to support the needs of visually impaired users. Without computer access, these are likely to be limited to CCTV viewers, simple manual magnifiers, and coloured overlays.

4.5.1 Examples of good practice

- Provide a range of **overlays/magnifiers** at public service points which are staffed over the widest range of hours (VI).
- Ensure all **staff at public service points** are aware of the range and purpose of resources available for use.

- Provide **CCTV** viewers in a range of locations, especially where management of printed material is difficult e.g. journals, special collections (VI).

4.5.2 Opportunities for development

- Provide workstation facilities which allow non-registered users access to screen reading software (D, VI).
- Offer email contact facility for enquiries and information.

4.6 Buildings / physical access

Physical access encompasses access to and egress from the building, parking, and routes from parking or public transport, and the person's use of services within the building. When considering physical access, the needs of all people with disabilities should be considered, not only wheelchair users.

It is valuable for staff responsible for managing physical changes to the library to be aware of Building Regulations Part M (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2004) to help ensure that work meets the regulations and prevents unnecessary barriers to access. As well as giving information about widths of doorways and corridors, these regulations give guidance on height of switches, handles etc., design of reception desks, colour schemes and visibility.

The regulations can also provide a point of reference when assessing the current building accessibility or for minor issues such as the height at which to mount a leaflet holder.

4.6.1 Physical access audits

Conducting a physical access audit on both the main library and branches has two main benefits, to identify inaccessible areas and to highlight good practice where it exists (Jones 2002).

Key concept:

Without the benefit of a physical access audit there will be no clear picture of how the library may meet the requirements to anticipate needs under DDA.

There are four possible approaches:

- Funding Council sponsored audits. These would include audits under institution-wide HEFCE 'estates strategy' (HEFCE 1999, 2006a, 2006b) or further audits using funding from the HEFCE disability premium or disability provision development fund. This method has the added advantage of easier access to sources of funding.
- Independent audit carried out by specialist access consultants. This may involve considerable cost.
- Independent survey organised in-house with support from estates department.
- Self-audit using a resource access toolkit.

In making the audit, particular attention should be paid to the following areas of good practice.

4.6.2 Examples of good practice

- **Designated parking space(s) and convenient dropping off point(s)**, including dropped kerbs. When planning the allocation of limited resources, it may be useful for the library to be involved in the identification of common routes to the library from other key buildings, to ensure that these routes are totally accessible and clearly marked on campus maps (P). Provide tactile maps of key routes/buildings (VI).
- **Accessible entry** – e.g. ramps, automatic doors, handrails, guaranteed assistance, low level thresholds and appropriate door widths for wheelchairs (P).
- Provide **lift and alternative access** to all floors (M, MH, P).
- **Lighting levels** – external and internal; a useful source of information is The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers. (CIBSE 2006) Also ensure that, where required, light switches are at a suitable level for wheelchair users (P).
- **Flooring** – should be non-slip and suitable for all users with mobility problems (P).

- **Appropriate furniture** – e.g. low level desks, staff contact points and photocopiers for wheelchair users, ergonomic chairs, height adjustable computer and study tables, seating next to areas where people need to queue, lightweight trolleys to aid book collection, for readers' use (P).
- **Hearing systems** – in training rooms and at staff contact points to allow people with hearing impairments to hear voices more clearly without background noise. Make portable hearing loops available to allow maximum flexibility of building use (HI).
- **Doorways and corridors** should allow sufficient clearance for wheelchair users. Provide automatic opening or magnetic pin-back doors to main areas and thoroughfares.
- **Accessibility to library stock** – there should be at least one metre clearance between rows of shelving, and ideally the top shelves should be accessible to wheelchair users. Aisles should be kept free of obstacles. Where it is not feasible to make adjustments to shelf heights or row widths or where for any other reasons a user with disabilities cannot access the stock independently, assistance by staff has to be guaranteed at all times when the library is open (P).
- **Toilets** – accessible toilets should include an effective emergency alert to library staff. Procedures will be needed to ensure this alert is responded to appropriately (P).
- **Signage and orientation** – signs should be large enough to contrast with their surroundings and be well lit. Lettering used should be large enough, legible and contrast with the background. The words should be as short and simple as possible. Signs at eye level are more likely to be seen. Tactile information at waist height may help people with visual impairment. Information boards should be at a suitable height for all users, including wheelchair users. Directional signs should be logical and use standardised wording (Barker and Fraser 2000). Provide directional information in a variety of formats, avoiding terms such as 'left' and 'right'. Use floor plans in addition to verbal information (A, D, VI).

- Provide plans with **key routes and locations** e.g. fire routes, refuge points, lifts, accessible toilets, offices where disability and other specialist staff are located.
- Provide **orientation tours** of the building at induction time and repeat each term. 1:1 tours should also be available (D, VI).
- Consider **extended opening hours** at peak times, including exam periods.
- **Eating and drinking** may not be generally permitted in the library, but provision must be made for students with medical needs, e.g. diabetes, perhaps through individual letters of authority, reducing the need for repeated explanation (M).
- Provide **study spaces** which do not face the wall, or install mirrors, so users are aware of what is happening behind them (HI).
- Some **study rooms** should be wheelchair accessible and have adjustable height furniture (P).
- **Colour and layout** - the most effective way to enhance residual vision is to increase the size, brightness and contrast of features in the environment, for example contrasting colour surrounding door frames and handles (Bright 2006). However as well as enhancing usability of space for visually impaired people, environmental colour has also long been known as having an effect on mood, so careful thought should also be given to selection of colour schemes for particular areas (Wexner 1954). Consideration of layout is also important, e.g. partitions may be used to create quiet/private sub-areas (D, MH, VI).

Case study:

In developing Assistive Technology Service areas throughout a multicampus university, colour schemes are chosen to create a calm environment, but with the use of appropriate contrast. Walls are pale green or pale blue, with darker shades for carpet and doors. Door frames and doors are contrasting colours. Cloth covered partitions, large enough to provide privacy without feeling oppressive, are erected between workstations. Vacant table space is also

provided. Chairs upholstered in red provide warmth and visual contrast.
Daylight desk and overhead lighting is provided.

4.6.3 Evacuation and emergency procedures

Fire regulations differ across the country, and it is important to liaise with the university health and safety department to ensure that local requirements are known. Some policies, for example the use of evacuation chairs, may be subject to change. Issues to be considered include the clearance of buildings at normal closure time; clearance should be both efficient, so that no-one is left behind (for example ensured by alarms in more remote areas of the buildings, careful security checks), and considerate, so that users have time to prepare for departure (for example ensured by clear advertising of closing times and procedures, early warning announcements). As for emergency evacuation, clear procedures need to be implemented and widely advertised.

Good practice:

- **Lifts** – must be built in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations. (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2004). This defines dimensions of car, and requirements such as audible and visible notification of floors reached and doors opening. Useful features are tactile and low-level control buttons. Fire-safe lifts are the best way to provide evacuation for disabled users, and to enable safe access to all facilities (HI, P, VI).
- **Fire refuges** – new and existing buildings should have a strategy for fire evacuation which will include refuges where no fire safe lift is available. Local fire regulations may limit the possible use of such refuges (P).
- Install **visual indicators** for activated fire alarms, and/or supply vibrating pagers. Provide visual indicators at closing time (HI).
- Negotiate **personal emergency evacuation plans** for any student who may experience difficulty with emergency egress (HI, M, P, VI).
- Make **all staff** aware of fire evacuation procedures for users with disabilities.

Debating point:

Emergency evacuation for people with a mobility problem is a difficult issue; there is usually no way to ensure that staff are aware of who is in the building. Disabled users are not obliged to disclose their presence. The ideal solution is a fire-safe lift, but this is very expensive and may not be a reasonable option, especially for the smaller library. Other solutions include specialised evacuation chairs, harnesses, fire-safe refuges, or locating all public facilities on ground floors.

One problem with the first two is the need to have the guaranteed presence of trained and willing staff at all times; there are potential risks of physical hazard and legal liability. Signing in systems can be useful, but users may legitimately feel that they should not have to identify themselves, and there is no guarantee that such a system is fail-safe in the case of fire evacuation.

4.6.4 Opportunities for development

- Establish safe egress procedure from all areas of the library to allow full access to all facilities at all times.
- Embed accessibility issues at design stage of any building project, to ensure full budgetary provision.

4.7 Equipment and software

Assistive technology in the form of specialist software and/or equipment allows people with disabilities to bypass, overcome, or compensate for barriers to learning. Assistive technology may give access to mainstream computing equipment, or for example access to printed text.

A wide selection of products is available.

4.7.1 Examples of good practice

Libraries should provide the following as a minimum to allow access to library services for people with disabilities:

- **Large monitors** at selected workstations and enquiry points: the maximum useful size is 19", as larger screens than this require excessive head movement (D, VI).
- **Screen magnification software:** this allows enlargement of all screen elements, typically up to sixteen times original. The most basic software will provide a magnifying strip across the screen, increasing the vertical dimension only. More sophisticated programs will allow the use of strips, lenses or screen section magnification, with 'smoothing' of text to avoid pixellation, and inclusion of screen reading. This software should be made available on larger monitors (VI).
- **Screen reading software:** this enables the user to listen to any standard document, scanned image or web page. Systems range from simple reading of text, to full screen reading of all elements, completely controlled by keyboard strokes, for users with no useful sight (D, VI).
- **Video magnifiers ('CCTV') for magnifying printed text:** these come in two basic forms, one a moveable flat bed beneath a monitor, the other a handheld camera attached to a monitor, which allows greater flexibility of use. Both types offer a range of magnification and of typeface /background colours to suit users' needs (VI).
- **Standard magnifiers – on a stand or hand-held:** overlay magnifier sheets or convex plastic magnifier strips provide a simple solution that can be employed by all library users (VI).
- **Coloured overlays:** users may find that the use of a coloured overlay can clarify printed text. The required colour is very specific for each user and is also subject to variation. Software is available to provide this effect on a monitor, with a large colour palette. Acetate overlays are also available: however the colour range is restricted, but it is useful to have a set available for use if required (D).
- **Portable hearing system:** whilst fixed hearing loops should be installed in key areas such as loans desks and enquiry points, a portable facility gives the user full access to the spoken word in any part of the building (HI).

- **Ergonomic input devices, such as mouse and keyboard:** many users find standard input devices difficult to use. A range of keyboards (e.g. ergonomic, large print, yellow text on black) and a range of pointing devices (roller/trackerballs, touch pads, vertical, extended) should be provided. As a wide range is commercially available, a small number should be provided, with the flexibility to meet individual user's needs as required (P, VI).
- Establish a **loan system for laptops and peripherals:** this can be managed within the conventional loans system, with borrowers accepting responsibility for replacement of the item if lost or stolen. This provision supports students awaiting new or replacement equipment, and gives the opportunity to trial for suitability.
- **Photocopiers/A3 printers:** print enlargement to A3 size, and the use of cream or pastel paper can make print more accessible (D, VI).
- Establish a **receipt system** for printing and photocopying, to enable users to redeem costs via the Disabled Student's Allowance.
- Use internal or external **digitisation services** to provide copies of material not available electronically (VI).

The following are essential if the library is responsible for institutional provision, for example in a combined library and IT service where there is responsibility for accessibility of computing facilities:

- **Braille embosser and Braille translation software:** Braille translation software enables direct conversion from word processing and spreadsheet data. The more sophisticated systems can also produce graphs, and interline visible text and data. The simpler Braille embossers produce Braille only: more sophisticated printers can also reproduce diagrams with varying dot heights relating to print density and can provide associated colour. It is not always necessary to use specialist Braille paper (VI).
- **Tactile diagram makers:** these work with images laser-printed or photocopied onto chemically coated paper which when put through a fuser unit, then swells where printed. These prints or standard diagrams can be

used in conjunction with a touchpad to provide audio tags to annotate areas of the diagram (VI).

- **Voice recognition software:** enables input of text or data to standard programs and emails by voice alone. The software is trained to both the user's voice, and the type of language typically used in existing documents, and 'learns' through use. The same software can be used to listen to created text. Use of this software generally requires a separate environment, as users can feel self-conscious in a larger space, and may also disturb other users (P, VI).
- **Literacy software:** this provides a more sophisticated spellchecking facility than is normally available. Typical software will read text aloud, suggest alternative spellings with associated meanings so that the correct word can be selected, and check for homophones. Text highlighting and study skills tools are also available (D).
- **Mind mapping software:** this provides an organisational tool for assignment planning or revision purposes. Ideas can be recorded and linked graphically, in a range of ways, with as many notes and graphics added as required. The software converts to a text structure and the diagram and/or text can be exported to standard applications for further processing (D).
- **Bibliographic management software:** this can be particularly helpful to students with organisational difficulties and print impairment (D).

Debating point:

To what extent should these services be provided by and within the library? Is Student Services a more appropriate location? This will generally be a matter for local decision, and depend on local structures. The decision may also depend on whether assistive technology is being provided simply to make the library accessible, or as a broader student service.

Arguments for siting such services in the library buildings may be long opening hours and ready access to print and reference materials.

The TechDis service provides an essential guide to software and services. The delivery of assistive technology will vary between institutions. Increasingly packages are being integrated into mainstream network delivery, yet dedicated Assistive Technology centres where established remain popular with users.

Debating point:

There are arguments for and against a discrete environment for disabled users. In favour of separate provision is the fact that a dedicated workstation area can foster a sense of community and peer-support. It can also provide a quiet, calm atmosphere in which to work, and an efficient focus for staff support. Students may be able to control lighting conditions, or have a private space within which voice recognition can be used without disturbing others or having others listening in.

Against separate provision it could be argued that it 'ghettoises' students with disabilities, and that it excludes the general student body from access to such assistive technology as mind-mapping and text-to-speech software. Students may need to use assistive software in classes involving computer use. A compromise solution would be to extend the licensing for such software to general networking, or to purchase a floating licence system.

There are strong arguments for a combination of integrated and separate services.

Software that is identified as primarily assistive, e.g. mind mapping software, is a useful tool to all in higher education: equally, general software, such as bibliographic management or voice activated software, meets specific needs of students with disabilities and differences.

Key concept:

Inclusive aspects of software should be exploited whenever possible: Making assistive software and support available to a wider audience may also meet the needs of students who do not wish to declare a disability, or for whom a disability has not yet been identified.

Using assistive software on a broader basis is inclusive of the disabled student in the general student population, as is the recognition that general software meets particular needs.

It must be borne in mind that this equipment and software cannot be used effectively without adequate support from staff with dedicated time and wherever possible appropriate qualifications and grading (Singleton 1996). Postgraduate, teaching and technical qualifications are all relevant. Two types of support are required: technical-based (for maintenance and upgrading of hardware and software) and user-based (for initial and ongoing training and assistance). These considerations carry a heavy commitment to both capital and ongoing funding, which will influence the institution's decision as to which model to choose and at what level.

4.7.2 Opportunities for development

- Provide facilities for **full electronic access** to all types of library resource (D, VI).
- Consider the possibility of **fully inclusive resources**, making all facilities available cross-campus, to all users, to meet the needs of undeclared or undiagnosed differences amongst the user population.
- Provide **access to all software solutions** supplied to disabled students through the DSA, and develop staff expertise for training.
- Extend **software and study skills training** to any student who identifies a personal need.

4.8 Accessibility of learning resources

All computer-based resources provided by the library should be assessed for accessibility. If these are internet based W3C WCAG should be used. For software, see the Irish National Disability Authority IT Accessibility Guidelines (2006). Staff involved in developing software should consult relevant guidelines for developers. The types of resources that should be assessed are: corporate web site, virtual learning environments and portals, library catalogue, e-Journal and e-Library sites and databases. Where accessibility can be improved in-house, users should be involved in

testing improvements. Where resources are bought in and interfaces cannot be configured in house, developers should be lobbied for improvements to accessibility. Web accessibility skills are still relatively rare in software and with web developers, so key staff may need training in this area. It is important that accessibility problems can be clearly articulated to suppliers.

4.8.1 Examples of good practice

- Many electronic resources require **password** access: students may have to remember multiple usernames. Ensure information is available in various formats, and that procedures are in place to supply forgotten passwords or provide changes, with minimal delay (D).
- **Library classification systems** rely on sequences of numbers and letters which have no clear link to the location or content of the item. Supply clear library plans and subject guides in a range of formats (A, D).
- Extend **on-line and self-service** information and loans/enquiry services (A).
- Provide clear **accessibility guidelines** for the local environment in a range of formats, using operating system elements and commercially available software, so that individuals can manage their own learning environment (D, VI).
- Simplify **access procedures** to intranet/internet, so that visually impaired users have minimal dependence on sighted colleagues for start-up procedures (VI).

4.8.2 Opportunities for development

- Develop strategies for training in systematic methods e.g. database searching in ways that are accessible to all students with a range of disabilities, differences and learning styles.

4.9 Procuring learning resources

Statements by suppliers or developers about accessibility of digital resources should not be taken at face value. Whenever possible, whilst resources are being considered, the short-listed resources should be tested for accessibility. If this is not possible, suppliers should be asked detailed questions about accessibility. Broad

questions such as 'is it accessible?' and 'is it DDA compliant?' are not adequate in most cases.

It can be very informative to discuss with other institutions their experiences of the accessibility of resources they have bought, as experience with suppliers varies widely.

Where no suitable system is fully accessible, advocate long term change, obtain written commitment to future accessibility and request interim solutions from suppliers. Alternative suppliers should be sought if accessibility issues are not taken seriously.

4.9.1 Examples of good practice

- Users may experience problems **locating books** as they may be unable to remember classification systems, or may transpose elements of shelf marks. If possible, connect all catalogue enquiry points to a printer, to provide accurate item information (D).
- Provide a **book collection service** which also assists users who would prefer to locate actual items themselves. A designated contact in each library is useful.
- Provide print and online **request/reservation facilities** to enable users to request items more flexibly.
- Make provision for others to **take out books** on a student's behalf (M, MH, P).
- Purchase stock in **alternative formats** where available, to meet general or specific student's needs. Core texts may not always be available in an appropriate accessible format, and some e-copies made available by publishers may not be compatible with screen reading software (D, VI).
- Commercial **transcription services** require significant notice and may be very costly. Consider provision in a single institution or group, as well as national resources for alternative formats (VI).
- Purchase DVD and video material with **subtitles** where possible (HI).

4.9.2 Opportunities for development

- Consider how existing networks and/or institutional facilities can be employed creatively to provide resource solutions for individuals and specific groups of users.

4.10 Library user information and education

The design and delivery of all user information must be inclusive. It should be carefully designed to ensure a close match between the needs of the service user and the information content. A clear overall structure will help all service users in retrieving appropriate information, and will reduce the need to ask library staff for help. Offering a choice of delivery methods, e.g. pod casts, self-guided audio tours, virtual library tours, is inclusive of students with different learning preferences.

Written information should be clearly designed and concise. Dense print may be difficult for students with dyslexia or a visual impairment. Written guides should follow the RNIB's recommendations (RNIB 2006). Considering the needs of dyslexic users might result in such changes as reducing the amount of solid text, choosing a 12pt minimum type size, choosing a sans serif type-face such as Arial, using bullet points, using colour and pictures. Guides should be made available electronically, as well as in print form, to enable screen readers to be used.

A clear strategy should be devised for the delivery of user information, with early induction sessions followed by more detailed sessions. It is important to have clear procedures in place for the induction of disabled students, to ensure that they have the information they need to get started.

Since general induction sessions for all students can be overcrowded, it is worth considering individual sessions for disabled students. This will be an opportunity for the member of library staff to find out about the student's particular access needs, and for the student to ask questions. The physical layout of the building and emergency evacuation procedures can also be covered.

Any group attending a user education session is likely to include disabled people, people with differing educational backgrounds, and differing English language skills. The person giving the session is unlikely to be aware of the differing needs of the students.

4.10.1 Examples of good practice

- Check **access needs** in advance for known disabled students in the group, and provide a suitable accessible copy of any documentation in advance.
- **Information leaflets** should use pictorial information where possible (D). Diagrams may need to be replicated in text or tactile format (VI). Arial font at least 12 point on pastel coloured paper is preferred (D). Colours can also be used to link ideas/subject areas (D).
- Consider an appropriate **room layout** e.g. space for wheelchair-users (P).
- Provide **adequate lighting** for the tasks. Additional lighting and simple backgrounds may be required for signing/lip-reading (HI, P).
- The **presenter** should be visible to the whole group (HI).
- An **outline** of the session should be provided at the start (A, D).
- Support the use of **voice recorders** in training sessions. If necessary ask the user to sign a disclaimer that they will not reproduce the information without consent. Some institutions have standard forms based on Disability Rights/SKILL/NATFHE guidelines (Skill 2007) (D, VI).
- Provide **handouts** at the start of the session, with appropriate space for annotation.
- Introduce **unfamiliar vocabulary** in both spoken and written form (D).
- Keep **sentences** short. As a rough guide, any sentence of more than 30 words should be shortened or split.
- Summarise **key points** at the end of each section and the overall session.
- **Leave gaps** between sections to allow students time to collect their thoughts and organise notes (D, P).
- Introduce **variety of pace and content** and use a multi-sensory approach to enable students to remain engaged in the session. No section of any session should last more than 20 minutes.
- Limit the **duration** and content of the session if it involves giving directions or instruction in using a library system, to avoid overload.
- Use a **range of teaching techniques** to address a variety of learning styles. Employ a combination of text and diagrams (D).
- Use a **flexible teaching style** that can respond to revealed learning styles.
- Offer the option of an **individual** teaching session if necessary (A, MH).

- Choose varied examples and **positive images** of disabled people.
- Invite **questions** and check understanding. Repeat questions aloud if you think that they may not have been heard by all.
- **Rephrase answers** to questions if there appears to be a lack of understanding.
- Supply **personal contact details**, so that students can ask questions independently for clarification. Some disabled students who have not generally disclosed their disability may do so more readily if they realise that independent support is available.
- Make **teaching materials** available electronically, in a screen-readable format (D, VI).
- Provide **complete written training documentation** for users who prefer not to attend interactive group sessions (A).
- Keep **changes to routines** to a minimum and notify students well in advance of alterations to venues, appointment times (A, VI).
- Teaching/training sessions, especially on an individual basis, should be enabling and enhance **student independence** in all aspects of the learning process.

4.10.2 Opportunities for development

- A session which provides high quality input for users with disabilities and differences will be extremely effective for all participants. Develop a common framework for training delivery according to these principles that can be used in a wide range of learning situations and environments.

4.11 Evaluation, feedback / impact assessment

In order to deliver the services its users want, a library needs to find out what they do want. While there may be data from institution-wide research, such as a student satisfaction survey, the library is likely to need to undertake its own research.

- Use a **variety of methods** e.g. surveys, evaluation forms after training sessions, focus groups, complaint forms.
- Ask about **disability, ethnicity, gender and age** in any survey, in order to analyse responses by these categories and identify any differences. This

- may also encourage responses from people who have not disclosed their disability to the university.
- Consider how to **facilitate the engagement of disabled people** e.g. making the survey available in alternative formats, arranging focus groups in accessible locations, providing support workers.
 - It is important to **explain why** the information is required and what will be done with it.
 - Give assurances of **confidentiality** and respect them. Never report on data in a way that may allow an individual to be identified.
 - Inform library users of the **conclusions**, and how the library is going to respond. Use innovative methods such as web-logs and email feedback.
 - Seek **feedback on all aspects** of library services, not just services designated for disabled people, to ensure that all services are delivered in an inclusive way.

Best practice is for disabled people to be actively involved in decision-making about policies and procedures. This might mean including a Student Union Disability Officer or a disabled member of staff on a library working group.

Higher education institutions are required by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 to conduct disability impact assessments on policies and procedures. This involves looking at the evidence that exists about how each policy or procedure operates, and at whether there is an adverse impact on disabled people (HEFCE 2004). Sometimes it may be necessary to supplement existing data by additional data collection e.g. to hold a focus group for disabled students to explore issues identified in the library survey. If an adverse impact is identified, the organisation is required to take steps to mitigate that impact, and then evaluate their effectiveness. Reports on disability impact assessments are required to be published.

Equality impact assessment is a powerful tool to examine what an institution says it is doing, and the reality of how that is experienced by disabled people. The emphasis is not on conducting a perfect impact assessment, but on identifying areas where the institution could do better and initiating changes. The library's management team should be aware of how disability impact assessment is being introduced in their institution.

5 Training and staff development

5.1 Introduction and strategy

In order to comply with the law and to provide a high standard of customer service, library staff must have the appropriate level of disability awareness. This enables staff to break down barriers to accessing library facilities and to ensure that disabled people are not discriminated against. There may be existing or potential staff who are unaware of their own responsibilities in this regard. It is, therefore, recommended that every higher education institution library should have a clear policy on training and staff development relating to disability. Similarly, a training and development plan should be produced and reviewed regularly to take account of changing needs. It is important that a training schedule covers new legislation and updates to facilities e.g. assistive software.

Key concept:

Policies and plans are necessary to translate strategy into practice. Disability related training should be integrated into standard planning procedures.

5.1.1. Responsibility

Responsibility for training and staff development relating to disability may be assigned to a single person or it may be shared. Irrespective of the model adopted, overall responsibility should rest with a senior manager, or the disability contact, who may delegate tasks to other staff. All members of the service should be made aware of which member of staff is responsible for which aspect.

5.1.2 Disability services group

It is good practice to have a disability services group involving members of staff who work in different areas and have different skills. The group's remit would be to discuss operational strategies and training needs arising from changes to service provision. Planning and delivery of disability training could be shared amongst members of this group rather than being the sole responsibility of the named disability contact. This will convey the message that all staff are equally responsible for disability support.

5.1.3 Training

an institution can provide different types of disability related training for its staff. For example there is 'disability awareness training' and 'disability equality training', with the latter having a much greater focus on breaking down attitudinal barriers and looking at human rights issues. The disability movement would recommend that disability equality training should be delivered by a disabled person and that this in itself may help to challenge entrenched attitudes (Disability Rights Commission, 2006). More details on how to contact disabled people who carry out training are available from the Disability Rights Commission.

Other ways of involving disabled people in staff training include inviting students or the Students' Union Disability Representative to give a talk to staff or using training materials such as the Open Rose Group DVD that provides case studies and feedback from disabled library users (Open Rose Group 2005).

Key concept:

Library staff must have a clear understanding of the barriers that students with disabilities may face. A library can be well resourced and have a variety of equipment and software but students can still face attitudinal barriers. One example is that staff may not feel that a student needs help if they have a 'hidden disability' or have chosen not to disclose.

5.2 Identifying institution and individual needs

Training needs should be identified at institutional, service or individual level through recognised good practice including staff appraisal, user surveys, course evaluation and complaints procedures. It may be that some training themes are identified at an institutional level or are being addressed by the university staff development group. Training needs may also become apparent if new assistive software or equipment has been purchased or there have been major changes to buildings.

5.2.1 Management responsibility

Having identified needs, it is the role of managers and library disability support contacts to ensure that:

- all staff are kept informed about any development activities being provided.
- every effort is made to find time to enable all library and information service staff to participate; this is particularly relevant for part time, evening and weekend staff.
- student and staff feedback on training needs is acted upon.
- any training needs identified at service level are fed back to the institution.
- training from external organisations is 'bought in' if staff at the institution do not have the resources to do the training.

Debating point:

Is the same level of training provided for all library staff such as:

Evening and weekend staff

Security staff, including those who work throughout the night

Casual / temporary staff

Staff who do not work at front line service points e.g. cataloguing, acquisitions staff, online teams, managers

Student mentors / advisers?

What are the implications for providing consistent customer service?

5.3 Collaboration through regional / national initiatives

An effective and efficient way of providing staff training is through collaboration with regional and national groups. There are a number of regional consortia of library staff including CLAUD, ALIS Wales, the Open Rose Group, NOWAL, MLA North East and SCURL. Regional groups can share the costs of appointing external trainers or share production and purchase of training materials. They can also share innovative good practice ideas on training and staff development.

5.3.1 Regional groups

CLAUD is a regional group of librarians in higher education networking to improve library access for disabled users in the south and south-west of England. The group runs an annual conference, with talks from experienced practitioners, that is open to both members and non-members. **ALIS Wales** is the Welsh equivalent, previously known as CLAUD Cymru.

The **Open Rose Group** comprises eight Yorkshire universities. The group won the SCONUL Award for Staff Development in 2003 and has produced a film plus supporting materials for use in libraries to assist staff training on disability issues.

NOWAL is a consortium of university and college higher education libraries in Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. It not only runs general training events but includes a unit on 'Supporting disability in the workplace' in its Certificate in Library and Information Practice.

The **M25 Consortium** has established the M25 Working Group on Disabled and Special Needs Support 'to assist M25 libraries in their services and support to users with disabilities and other special needs. The consortium also provides resources on 'the accessibility of library information for disabled users' on their website.

SCURL is a consortium of university and research libraries in Scotland. The Special Needs Group aims to work collaboratively, to provide and improve services and facilities for users with special needs in SCURL member libraries.

5.3.2 National resources

It may also be useful for staff involved in delivering disability equality training to use resources provided by national initiatives. National organisations produce a wide range of help-sheets and may provide training sessions, typically DART, TECHDIS, Action on Access, RNIB, RNID, Hear First UK. For more information see the General Resources section.

Case study:

The Open Rose Group obtained funding from SCONUL to produce a disability awareness training DVD and supporting materials. Members of the group have used the DVD widely in their staff training and have shared their training methods.

Leeds Metropolitan University Library showed a section of the film on dyslexia to staff. The members of staff were then asked to go to collect a book from the shelves using a specific class number that could be interpreted in different ways e.g. 690 or 069.

"We decided to put a different slant on a very practical activity to make the familiar environment and a routine task as problematic as it could be for a dyslexic student" (Peacock, 2006)

5.4 Resources

5.4.1 Training for all staff

One of the most difficult resourcing issues is finding sufficient time to allow *all* staff to participate in staff development activities. Nevertheless, training must be available to all staff, regardless of pattern of work or level of responsibility. This could mean having to budget for paying the cost of child-care to enable part-time staff to participate. It will almost certainly require flexibility in terms of time-tabling and providing cover. Using a variety of techniques, including information boards in staff rooms, web logs, written material such as information leaflets or flyers, online learning, staff briefings, in-house training sessions and external courses, will help to make training available to all. Sufficient work-time must still be allowed for self-paced activities and the fact that people work at different speeds should be considered.

Case study:

A library's Disability Working Party wanted an induction training package suitable for all staff, but flexible enough to satisfy the training needs of part-time, casual and satellite staff in dealing with a range of situations appropriately. An online program was constructed: short (no more than 30 minutes), interactive (quizzes) and informal in tone. The aim was not to inculcate detailed knowledge but to introduce key awareness themes. A secondary aim was for the programme to act as a reference guide to key contacts and further information.

A prototype was developed and revised on the basis of feedback. All current staff were then asked to road test the package during the library's regular training hour, providing both training and further vital feedback. This was very successful, and a revised version later adopted as part of the university-wide induction programme.

5.4.2 Training support workers

One issue that may be relevant to some libraries is providing training for support workers. It is vital that support workers have a sound knowledge of library services and are able to use IT equipment such as scanners or assistive software. As support workers are paid through DSA funding only to support students, libraries and disability officers need to consider how to fund training sessions for these members of staff. One option may be to train support workers as a group and for the university to pay support workers for attending this training.

5.5 Planning and delivery**5.5.1 Publicity**

Careful planning of any training sessions is vital and staff must be told well in advance that training is taking place. Training needs to be well publicised in staff rooms, on the intranet and on the library web log where one exists. Any equipment that is going to be used in the training, such as DVD players, assistive software or hearing loops, should be tested beforehand.

5.5.2 Induction

Library and information service staff with responsibility for planning training and development should ensure that basic issues relating to disability are covered during the induction period for all new staff. Some institutions will require new staff to complete disability awareness training on a compulsory basis and staff may need to do this in order to complete a probation period. Beyond induction, the regular training plan should include both ongoing training activities and 'one-off' events to meet any training needs that have been identified.

5.5.3 Targeted training

Whilst it is essential that all staff have access to disability related training it must be carefully targeted. Not all staff will necessarily recognise their own training needs so managers need to be clear about which activities are mandatory and which can be left to individual choice. Some institutions make disability awareness training compulsory, whereas others leave it to the discretion of staff and line managers involved. The staff development good practice guide published by the Disability Rights Commission recommends that different staff groups should cover different aspects of the DDA as follows:

- Senior managers and heads of departments need to have a thorough understanding of their **legal responsibilities**; other staff may need only a brief outline of the law.
- Staff with management responsibility need to know how to make **anticipatory adjustments** in their departments.
- All staff who come into **direct contact** with disabled students and applicants need to know how to respond to a student who discloses a disability.
- All staff who come into direct contact with disabled students need to know how they can make **appropriate adjustments** for disabled people.
- All staff need to know who within the institution can offer **further advice** and information. It may be helpful if one staff member in each department can receive more comprehensive training so that they can act as an initial point of contact.
- All staff need to know that they have a **personal responsibility** towards disabled students.

- **Specific staff** may need training 'top-up' sessions in, for example, how to support a student having an epileptic seizure, or how to communicate with a hard of hearing person.

Key concept:

Training should be carefully targeted to ensure that individuals learn what they need to know without suffering from information 'overload'. Managers must be clear about which training is mandatory and for whom. It is important that staff have the time to reflect on any training and revisit their notes.

5.5.4 Code of Practice

The QAA Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities, precept 15, (1999) suggests that induction and development programmes for *all* staff might cover:

- **basic disability awareness/equality.**
- the **implications** of disability for the learning and teaching process for all staff involved in admissions, learning/teaching and assessment, curriculum development and learning resource provision.
- the **range and types of support** available to disabled people relevant to the education context for staff involved in admissions, learning and teaching and curriculum development.
- **accessible and alternative teaching strategies** for teaching staff and those involved in curriculum development.
- the needs of disabled students for those designing or managing the **physical environment.**

5.5.5 Different strategies

Hunter–Carsch and Herrington (2001) suggest that ‘when planning an approach to staff development it is useful to consider the appropriateness of different strategies; these depend on who the target groups are, the level of current awareness, management support and the timing in relation to college planning’.

5.6 Communication

5.6.1 Effective communication

Effective communication ensures that staff at all levels are kept informed about new developments, changes in procedure and training opportunities. In addition to existing channels of communication within the service, ongoing dialogue with Disability Officers and relevant departments within the higher education institution should be established and maintained to:

- ensure that information about disabled students is made available.
- keep staff informed about institutional staff development activities.
- share information about resources.

Possible methods to disseminate any non-confidential information are newsletters, web logs, the staff portal, leaflets, drop-in-sessions and notice boards in staff rooms.

5.6.2 Local organisations

One effective way of sharing information with library staff is to provide a booklet of institutional disability provision, local organisations and support groups who work alongside people with disabilities. Examples of local organisations may be a transcription service in a public library or a group that supports people with mental health issues. Lists of resources may help staff if they need to refer people to another organisation or feel that an issue cannot be addressed by the library. This information must be kept up to date to ensure that people are being provided with the correct details. The library should also have clear procedures on how enquiries that are outside the scope of the library will be dealt with and how and when to refer people.

5.6.3 Confidentiality and disclosure

Staff must also be aware that there are issues relating to confidentiality and disclosure. Students need to know that information about their disability will be kept confidential and will not be made publicly available without their consent. Channels of disclosure should be made obvious and be easy for the disabled student to use. It should also be clear to students why they are being asked to disclose and the efforts should be made to make people feel comfortable about disclosing a disability.

5.6.4 Consortia

Various consortia have established websites and discussion groups to facilitate communication. The M25 consortium has a training section, cpd25, on their website with a 'latest news section'.

The consortia mentioned in section 5.3.1 provide a wealth of information and useful links to other sites that will prove invaluable to anyone seeking to improve their understanding of the issues relating to training and staff development relating to all aspects of disability.

5.7 Evaluation

Evaluation of training is important for a number of reasons:

- to ensure that value for money is being achieved.
- to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training.
- to identify improvements that might be necessary.
- to identify further training needs.

5.7.1 Institutional systems

Most institutions will have their own evaluation systems that can be adopted for assessing the success of disability training. These should link closely to the plans and objectives identified at an earlier stage. Staff who are planning training events might find it helpful to consult *Organising a staff development event* (SCONUL 2001), which includes a sample evaluation form.

5.7.2 Further reading

For those who would like further reading on the topic, a number of publications offer guidance on the evaluation of training, some particularly for library staff (Phillips 1993). Useful books on the general evaluation of training have been written by Kirkpatrick (1998) and Bramley (1996).

6. Appendices

6.1 Group membership

Linda Robertson (Convenor)	Assistive Technology Officer, University of Southampton
Sally Exon	Assistive Technology Officer, University of Birmingham
Caroline Moughton	Equal Opportunity and Diversity Co-ordinator, Oxford Brookes University, representing CLAUD
Alyson Peacock	Learning Support Officer - Disability and Dyslexia Leeds Metropolitan University, representing Open Rose
Karen State	Library Disability Support Officer, University of Huddersfield, representing Open Rose

6.2 Remit

The SCONUL paper 'Access for Users with Disabilities' was published in 2002.

The Terms of reference and remit of this document were as follows:

To advise SCONUL on

- The development of policy and good practice relating to higher education library provision for users with disabilities.
- Guidelines for good practice in the design and management of buildings
- options for accessing and sharing information on supporting users with disabilities.
- Potential ways of supporting co-operative and cross-sector schemes in support of specialist needs.
- Options for contributing to the development of national guidelines for higher education libraries in collaboration with library regional consortia such as CLAUD and groups from other sectors.

Remit

- To summarise the key issues for libraries posed by relevant legislation such as the Disability Discrimination, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Acts.
- To review the regulatory framework provided by the Funding Councils and QAA.
- To provide guidelines on good practice for higher education libraries.
- To identify potentially significant gaps in provision and advise HE libraries on possible priorities.
- To define good practice for integrating provision, including means of securing user input, which can enhance and expand services.
- To offer guidance on issues to be addressed in responding to training and development needs of library staff.
- To identify examples of service standards which can meet the expectations of users with disabilities.
- To advise on the potential for supporting specialist and cross-sectoral bodies which can work collaboratively to support HE institutions in establishing 'best-practice'.

The development in computer technology, the increased availability of e-resources, fresh legislation, an increasing focus on the principle of inclusivity, and increasing numbers of students disclosing or identifying a disability or a difference required a substantial review, whilst retaining the breadth of the original paper. The group intend the review document to be a manual of current good practice, as well as being anticipatory of future developments, and that the paper itself should reflect good practice in accessibility.

6.3 Statistics

The following statistics are reported disabilities, it is probable that there will be more students who have not disclosed their disability to their institution. These are examples of institutions, and are not chosen for any other reason.

Institution and Background (listed in order of size, largest student population first)	Disability code	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total number of registered students
	Nature of disability	Dyslexia	Visual Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Mobility Impairment	Autistic Spectrum / Aspergers Syndrome	Mental Health	Unseen	2 or more	Not listed above	
	Number of students registered										
University of Southampton Student population: 31,000 Data collected: 2005/2006		1058	37	91	20	13	95	304	52	220	1,890
Leeds Metropolitan University Student population 30,060 (plus 19,280 FE) Data collected: 2005		737	25	62	60	1	61	208	49	118	1,321
Birmingham University Student population: 28,000 Data collected: 2005/2006		641	50	83	44	27	45	222	32	164	1,336
Sheffield University Student population: 26,068 Data collected: 2006		861	35	75	49	6	66	325	50	156	1,627
Sheffield Hallam University Student population: 26,000 Data collected: 2006		514	29	82	48	8	59	494	No data	168	1,445

Institution and Background	Disability code	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total number of registered students
	Nature of disability	Dyslexia	Visual Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Mobility Impairment	Autistic Spectrum / Aspergers Syndrome	Mental Health	Unseen	2 or more	Not listed above	
	Number of students registered										
University of Glamorgan Student population: 21,000 Data collected: 2006		284	12	8	39	No data	30	42	19	39	473
University of Portsmouth Student population: 19,880 Data collected: 2005/2006		829	227			No data	112	390	No data		1,558
Cardiff University Student population: 17,844 Data collected: 2006		675	21	42	36	4	22	230	26	87	1,143
University of Wales, Aberystwyth Student population: 12,132 Data collected: 2006		533	32	61	91	4	20	97	41	165	1,044
Southampton Solent University Student population: 11,500 Data collected: 2005/2006		505	7	12	21	No data	9	18	10	113	701
University of Gloucestershire Student population: 8,298 Data collected: 2005/2006		344	20	32	20	No data	22	102	18	76	218
Arts Institute, Bournemouth Student population 3,557 (1,812 HE students, remainder are FE) Data collected:2005/2006		389	5	18	17	2	22	158	23	25	659

6.4 List of useful resources

General

Action on Access - the National Co-ordination Team for Widening Participation (incorporates the former National Disability Team)

<http://www.actiononaccess.org/>

(accessed 26 October 2006)

BRAIN.HE Information for staff and students in higher education on specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia. Also includes Asperger's syndrome, autism, DHD, ADD and Tourette's syndrome

<http://www.brainhe.com>

(accessed 8 November 2006)

Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers

<http://www.cibse.org>

(accessed 8 November 2006)

CLAUD (Consortium of librarians in higher education networking to improve library access in the South and South West of England)

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/claud/welcome.html>

(accessed 24 October 2006)

DART - Disability Awareness Resource Team

<http://www.dart.org.uk/>

(accessed 15 November 2006)

DIS-FORUM - JISC discussion list for disabled students and their support staff

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk>

(accessed 15 December 2006)

Disability Equality Partnership - supporting higher education institutions in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled students

<http://www.drc->

[qb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education/disability_equality_partnershi.aspx](http://www.drc-qb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education/disability_equality_partnershi.aspx)

(accessed 26 October 2006)

Hear First - UK based deaf and disability awareness trainers and consultancy

<http://www.hearfirst.org.uk>

(accessed 15 November 2006)

Higher Education Statistics Agency

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/>

(accessed 5 October 2006)

Higher Education Academy

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/disability.htm>

(accessed 1 December 2006)

Images of Disability A cross-government initiative aimed at communications professionals to promote inclusive depictions of disabled people.

<http://www.imagesofdisability.gov.uk>

(accessed 3 December 2006)

National Register of Access Consultants - for independent access audits by specialist agencies

<http://www.nrac.org.uk>

(accessed 24 October 2006)

Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL)

<http://scurl.ac.uk/wg/sng/documents.htm>

(accessed 2 May 2007)

Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL)

<http://www.sconul.ac.uk>

(accessed 24 October 2006)

Skill: the national bureau for students with disabilities

<http://www.skill.org.uk>

(accessed 24 October 2006)

Teachability - Audit materials for use with academic departments

<http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk>

(accessed 3 December 2006)

Assistive technology

Emptech provides information resources on assistive technologies. The database includes product descriptions, commercial links, advice and training guides.

<http://www.emptech.info/index.php>

(accessed 4 January 2007)

The TechDis service, part of the JISC Technologies Centre, supporting the further and higher education community in all aspects of technology and disabilities and differences. Database lists items of technology for users with disabilities, with a register of experts and a searchable bank of information about technology and disability, with links to partner organisations

<http://www.techdis.ac.uk>

(accessed 24 October 2006)

AbilityNet

A range of skill sheets relating to Windows and MS Word and fact sheets on diverse accessibility issues

<http://www.abilitynet.org.uk>

(accessed 18 December 2006)

Operating systems

Information and guides on inbuilt accessibility features available from

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

(accessed 18 December 2006)

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility/>

(accessed 18 December 2006)

One of several commercial sites which has articles, information and further resources related to assistive technology

<http://dyslexic.com>

(accessed 18 December 2006)

Autistic spectrum

Asperger's Syndrome Association

<http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk>

(accessed 8 November 2006)

Autism West Midlands

<http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk>

(accessed 8 November 2006)

University students with ASD

<http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~cns>

(accessed 8 November 2006)

Dyslexic spectrum

Dyslexic adult link - news stories from adult dyslexics about their experiences

<http://www.dyslexia-adults.com/index.htm>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

Checklist for adult dyslexia

<http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/files/extranet/docs/SWA/dys%20checklist.pdf>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

British Dyslexia Organisation

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

- create accessible information, see their 'style guide' at:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/extra352.html>

(accessed 31 October 2006) and frequently asked questions:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/faq.html#q1>

(accessed 7 November 2006)

British Dyslexics - information for young people

<http://www.dyslexia.uk.com>

(accessed 7 December 2006)

Demos - Online materials for staff disability awareness
<http://jarmin.com/demos/course/dyslexia/091.html>
(accessed 7 December 2006)

Dyslexia Action - providers of support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties
<http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk>
(accessed 27 October 2006)

Dyslexia Health Education Association
<http://www.dhea.org.uk>
(accessed 7 December 2006)

Dyslexia UK - Dyslexia Teaching Today - resources for education
<http://www.dyslexia-teacher.co.uk>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

International Dyslexia Association
<http://www.interdys.org>
(accessed 7 December 2006)

National Centre for Learning Disabilities - Dyscalculia pages
<http://www.nclld.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=464>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

Specific learning difficulties
British Institute of Learning Disabilities
<http://www.bild.org.uk/>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

UK Dyspraxia Foundation
<http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/index.php>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

Hearing impairment

British Deaf Association signed website
<http://www.signcommunity.org.uk>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

Deafness research UK - the medical charity for deaf and hard of hearing people
<http://www.deafnessresearch.org.uk>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

Hearing Concern
<http://www.hearingconcern.org.uk>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

RNID - Royal National Institute for the Deaf
<http://www.rnid.org.uk/>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

Mental health issues

Ask Mencap - the information service on learning disability issues, organisations and services

<http://www.askmencap.info/>

(accessed 26 October 2006)

Mental Health Foundation - a UK charity for everyone's mental health

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/welcome/>

(accessed 26 October 2006)

MIND - the mental health charity

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information/Booklets/Understanding/>

(accessed 14 November 2006)

Physical impairments and medical conditions

Amputations

<http://www.benefitsnow.co.uk/handbook/amputation.asp#intro>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

Arthritis

Arthritis Care

<http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

Arthritis Research Campaign

http://www.arc.org.uk/about_arth/default.htm

(accessed 1 November 2006)

Asthma

Asthma UK

<http://www.asthma.org.uk>

(accessed 1 November 2006)

Back problems

<http://www.backcare.org.uk>

(accessed 31 October 2006)

Cancer

Cancer Backup

<http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk>

(accessed 1 November 2006)

Cancer Research

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org>

(accessed 1 November 2006)

Cerebral palsy

<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/disability/information/mobility/>

(accessed 1 November 2006)

Scope - information for people with cerebral palsy
<http://www.scope.org.uk/>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

Diabetes

Diabetes UK
http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/What_is_diabetes/What_is_diabetes/
(accessed 1 November 2006)

Diabetes Insight
<http://www.diabetic.org.uk/>
(accessed 1 November 2006)

Epilepsy

Epilepsy Action: Living with Epilepsy
<http://www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/whatisepilepsy.html>
(accessed 24 October 2006)

The National Society for Epilepsy
<http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk>
(accessed 1 November 2006)

Haemophilia

UK Haemophilia Society
<http://www.haemophilia.org.uk/>
(accessed 1 November 2006)

HIV/AIDS

The Terrence Higgins Trust
<http://www.tht.org.uk/informationresources/hivandaids/>
(accessed 1 November 2006)

The British HIV Association
<http://www.bhiva.org>
(accessed 14 November 2006)

Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME)

ME Association home page
<http://www.meassociation.org.uk>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

Action for ME
<http://www.afme.org.uk/>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

Multiple sclerosis (MS)

The Multiple Sclerosis Society
<http://www.mssociety.org.uk>
(accessed 31 October 2006)

The MS Trust - Key Facts about MS
<http://www.mstrust.org.uk/information/aboutms/keyfacts.jsp>
(accessed 1 November 2006)

Muscular dystrophy
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/md/md.htm#What_is
(accessed 1 November 2006)

Spinal cord injuries
<http://www.spinalnet.co.uk>
(accessed 15 December 2006)

Visual impairment

VISUGATE - resource on matters of visual impairment
<http://visugate.org>
(accessed 24 October 2006)

Connexions - advice, guidance and access to learning opportunities for 13 - 19 year olds
<http://www.connexions.gov.uk>
(accessed 24 October 2006)

REVEAL - the national database of resources and information in accessible formats
<http://www.revealweb.co.uk>
(accessed 24 October 2006)

NoVA - Non-Visual Access to the Digital Library: the use of Digital Library Interfaces by Blind and Visually-Impaired People - A project funded by Resource: the Council for Museums Archives and Libraries - explores the use of digital library interfaces by blind and visually impaired users
<http://www.cerlim.ac.uk/projects/nova.html>
(accessed 24 October 2006)

National Library for the Blind
<http://www.nlb-online.org/>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

Royal National Institute of the Blind
<http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/code/InternetHome.hcsp>
(accessed 26 October 2006)

Staff training and development

Disability Rights Commission - Staff development
Available from http://www.drc-gb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education/staff_development.aspx
(accessed 3 December 2006)

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