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Cornell University Library (CUL) Policy

**Providing Library Services to Persons with Disabilities (PWD)
July 1999**

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I. General Responsibilities of CUL, Both Endowed and Statutory Divisions

A. Defining responsibilities of CUL to accommodate disabilities and limitations to accommodation

1. In general, reasonable efforts must be made by CUL to provide access to library materials and services for persons with disabilities (PWD). In doing so, CUL must strive to provide the same utility to PWD as would be received by the non-disabled. What constitutes a "reasonable effort" may be determined by common practice within the library and university communities, advice promoted by associations concerned with specific disabilities, technological development and advancements, common sense, legal determinations or a combination of any of the above.
2. Financial feasibility may be a determining factor with regard to the level of accommodation provided, if any. It should be noted, however, that, "The larger and more financially endowed the library, the higher the expectation that a greater volume of information will be made available within a shorter amount of time." [Office of Civil Rights] (Section 504 Compliance Handbook, Supplement No. 235, June 1998, page 8).

We interpret "library" in this quotation to mean library system.

3. CUL, in determining whether a requested alternative format would be feasible, should note the following assertion of the Office of Civil Rights. "A categorical decision by a public library not to even consider a request by a patron for a particular alternative format is in most instances a violation of title II." (Section 504 Compliance Handbook, Supplement No. 235, June 1998, page 8).
4. In some rare instances, PWD may be asked to provide their own equipment and support services, or share the costs thereof. This rare circumstance most often arises when a person has uncommon disabilities requiring unique support services, and "reasonable efforts" by CUL have been exhausted.
5. In no way should these guidelines and recommendations be construed to indicate that CUL, in its effort to comply with laws regulating services for PWD, is attempting to exceed normal levels of compliance or legally bind itself to higher levels of service than required by legal regulation.

B. Providing legal and responsible notice to PWD about accommodation in the form of brochures, Web site information, and other appropriate means

1. The numerous library units and locations which constitute CUL vary greatly in physical geography, construction, staffing, equipment, functions and service. Some PWD may find that CUL and its individual units may be less appropriate or more difficult to use than similar facilities on other campuses. CUL should inform PWD about the levels of accommodation available relative to their individual interests and type of disability. Realistic portrayals of what can be anticipated should be conveyed and/or communicated to PWD.
2. A variety of communications tools should be used in providing this information. The production of brochures, Web sites, computer files, recordings and other forms of conveyance should be accessible to PWD as well as the non-disabled. An informed choice to use the CUL facilities and services needs to be made by PWD and those who may be supporting them in their efforts. Consultations with librarians should always be recommended to assure both a better understanding of the accommodations possible and the choices to be made.
3. All publications should be coordinated by the CUL Documentation Committee.

II. General Responsibilities of Faculty, Staff, Students, and Visitors Who Are PWD and in Need of Accommodation from CUL

A. Defining responsibilities of PWD who may need accommodation

1. All PWD who wish to be accommodated in accordance with the laws and regulations governing library services for PWD should preferably identify themselves as PWD and clearly indicate the nature of their needs. While some disabilities may be obvious, PWD

should not rely on the perceptions of service providers. Regard for personal privacy and general discretion should be entwined in the process of revealing personal needs based on disabilities.

2. In order to ensure personal privacy as well as discretion, the following means of self-identification are recommended:
 - a. Student PWD should register with Student Disability Services in Day Hall. All other PWD should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity. These offices will honor stated wishes within the limits of the law with regard to privacy and discretion, and will notify relevant service centers at Cornell, including CUL, about the variety of disabilities currently on campus and the service interests of PWD. The Office of Equal Opportunity will recommend discrete ways to notify campus service providers about particular disabilities and needs.
 - b. If it is possible, PWD should notify CUL about their needs in advance. CUL will prepare to make accommodations so that they are ready when needed.

B. How to provide legal and responsible notice to CUL about the need(s) for accommodation. What forms of communication can be used?

1. As stated above, faculty, staff, or students who are PWD are encouraged to self-identify either with the Student Disability Services Office, or with the Office of Equal Opportunity at Cornell. If this is not done, library services for PWD will be provided irrespective of the self-identification process. However, timely and/or appropriate accommodation is less likely to occur without advance notice and self-identification.
2. A current list of all CUL contact persons will appear on the Library's PWD Web page.
3. Contact by telephone, e-mail, regular mail, and fax will be accepted.

III. Common Policies for All Units of CUL

A. Designating responsible contact persons at all unit libraries and for CUL in general

1. CUL will designate a Primary Contact Person for Disability Services, who will serve as the Library's liaison to the University's Office of Equal Opportunity (see section IV below). One or more backup persons will also be appointed to serve in the absence of the primary contact person.
2. Each unit library will designate one person (and backups when appropriate) to be the responsible contact person for disability services and issues in that unit, and who will be a liaison to the CUL Primary Contact Person for Disability Services.

B. All units should maintain a list of equipment appropriate for use by PWD with specific disability(ies) available in the unit. A master list should be maintained by the CUL Primary Contact Person for Disability Services.

C. Training of all public service personnel for disability awareness and service will be the responsibility of the Unit Library Contact Person and coordinated by the CUL Primary Contact Person for Disability Services.

1. The unit library contact person should:
 - a. Know how to operate and provide for the maintenance of any adaptive technologies in the unit.
 - b. Facilitate the training of all public services staff in coordination with the CUL Primary Contact Person for Disability Services and with the assistance of Library Human Resources.
2. Staff at each service point should know:
 - a. Where all accessible exits and elevators are located.
 - b. Where adaptive technologies are located and whom to contact regarding their use.
 - c. Any arrangements which have been made with PWD.
 - d. Rudimentary use in adaptive technologies, i.e., "how to get someone started" in their use.

D. A materials access policy for PWD will be written and maintained by each unit based on the unit's ability to accommodate disabilities. This may describe provisions for delivery of library materials on request or other means of providing access. Buildings and the nature of the materials requested may dictate the policy developed. This policy should be sent to the CUL Primary Disability Contact Person. It may include, but need not limited to, the following:

1. A map of the unit which shows disability access points.
2. A process for assisted access to areas in the unit which are not disability accessible.
 - a. Paging books in the stacks which are not easily accessible.
 - b. Delivery to other libraries of unit's materials to accommodate PWD.
3. A policy for changes in short-term loan policy.
 - a. For example, a patron with dyslexia may need to use reserve materials for more than two hours at a time.
 - b. Current periodicals and/or reference materials may need to be taken out of the building to be used in an adaptive technology location.
4. A process for individual or group instruction on how to access materials online, at home, in the office, or in the library instead of using print materials.
5. A list of machines which the library has in the building to accommodate varying disabilities.
6. A list of people in the library responsible for seeing that disabilities are accommodated.

E. Creation and maintenance of a Library Services for PWD Web page is the responsibility of CUL with input from all units, and will be coordinated by the CUL Contact Person for Disability Services.

1. The site should be easily found from the Library Gateway.

2. The site should include descriptions of any adaptive technologies available and their locations (including the appropriate contact person).
3. Information should also be included about any library planning or other pending changes that might affect access by PWD to specific units.

F. Signage: all signage should comply with ADA requirements. Signs should include tactile Braille when appropriate.

G. Funding should be sought by all units for disability equipment and services whenever possible. CUL administration should be notified prior to any such applications.

IV. Responsibility of Primary Contact Person for Disability Services

The Primary Contact Person, who will be designated by the library administrator in charge of systemwide public services, will be responsible for:

- A. Serving as the main CUL contact with the Office of Equal Opportunity, and attending OEO meetings of College/Area Disability Representatives. Pertinent information from these meetings will be posted on CU-LIB.**
- B. Maintaining regular communication with unit contacts and facilitating periodic meetings and training sessions.**
- C. Maintaining the list of Unit Library Disability Contact Persons and equipment appropriate for use by PWD available in the units. These lists should be kept on the library Web site for easy access.**
- D. Working with the CUL Documentation Committee on the publication of information on services for PWD in all formats for CUL.**

V. Enforcement of Disability Policies

- A. All units should be prepared for periodic site visits to units by the Primary Contact Person for Disability Services.**
- B. All units should be prepared for occasional site visits to units by University officials in charge of Disability Policy and regulations.**
- C. All units should provide brief yearly written reports concerning PWD services. These reports should include:**

1. Summary of services provided within the last year to PWD.
2. Problems encountered when providing services, if any.
3. Inventory of equipment, services available at the unit for accommodations.
4. Requests for equipment, money or personnel for services for the next year.
5. Inventory of pamphlets, Web sites, etc. available at the unit to assist PWD.

This policy supersedes any previous CUL policies on this subject.

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