

Closing the 95 percent gap: Library resource sharing for people with print disabilities.

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Closing the 95 Percent Gap: Library Resource Sharing for People with Print Disabilities

Mary Anne Epp

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Abstract

Experts estimate that only 5 percent of the world's publishing output is made accessible in alternate formats for people who cannot use print. While some popular commercial digital audio and textual products are available to people with print disabilities, many people do not have equal access to reading materials and other resources. People who cannot use print due to a visual, physical, neurological, or perceptual disability need libraries to provide the equitable access. Libraries need strategic partnerships, improved public policy, and international agreements to fulfill the promise. Equity laws, union catalogs, new technology, standards for production and resource sharing, postal subsidies, and commercial production of alternate formats have all helped. This article focuses on key elements that affect library resource sharing for people with disabilities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Challenges include

attitudes, organizational isolation, diversity of alternate formats, nonadherence to standards, inaccessible online services, an uncooperative publishing industry, inconsistent access to equipment, and inadequate training. Recommendations are made to improve the legal framework, develop sharing library communities, and apply universal design principles.



Closing the 95 Percent Gap: Library Resource Sharing for People with Print Disabilities

MARY ANNE EPP

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INTRODUCTION

"Libraries have historically served as our nation's great equalizers of knowledge. In today's increasingly diverse and complex information environment, their services are needed more than ever" (ALA, n.d., p. 3).



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