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LACUNY Disability Services Roundtable Meeting Minutes, November 2006

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LACUNY Disability Roundtable Meeting
Thursday, November 16, 2006
Baruch College

Attendance: Mounir Khalil (City); Geri Hebert (Bronx); Jessica Hernandez (Lehman); Scott Sheidlower (York); Sara Marcus (Queens); Brian Ross (Baruch); Karen Mason (Medgar); and Tess Tobin (City Tech)

Meeting started with introduction of members.

Election of officers: By acclamation, Scott Sheidlower was elected Chair and Karen Mason as Co-Chair. By a vote of 8/3, Geri Hebert was elected secretary.

General Discussion

Mounir, Scott, and Sara will be presenting at CUNY IT Conference – 2006, “*Technology: More Efficient – Or Is It?*” – where they will talk about how technology does not work for all people in the same way.

LACUNY Institute theme is “High Tech, High Touch.”

Mounir suggest that we survey what CUNY has in regards to technology for the disabled. Kingsborough is relocating their disability office. As pointed out by Sara, this is not a good idea especially in the middle of the semester. The disabled student, especially the visually impaired may become confused and disoriented and must learn a new path.

Tess mentioned that students are charged a tech fee and some of it is allocated for the purchase of software, hardware and furniture for the disabled. In addition, as stated by Mounir, each campus has a disability budget.

The following colleges can help with disability issues: LaGuardia, NYCT, College of Staten Island, Rochester School for the Deaf, Landmark College for the learning disabled, and Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

Venessa stated that emotionally disabled refers to people with mental disorders; panic disorders, bipolar, dyslexia and other learning disorders and we must be sensitive to these people. As mentioned by Sara, the learning disabled often do not tell you they have a learning problem.

Scott introduced our speaker for the meeting: Dr. Sara Marcus, Adjunct Associate Professor, Graduate School for Library and Information Sciences, Queens College.

Dr. Marcus’ presentation concerned “listening to the hearing impaired patron.” For the hearing impaired, a BI instruction or event is challenging even with a hearing aid. Library services are a problem for the deaf, according to Phyllis Dalton (Library Services for Disabled Individuals), because “many deaf or hearing impaired people are unable to participate in community activities or to use common services because of their inability to communicate via traditional modes.”

As librarians, we need to determine how the library can help this group; and, to identify the responsibilities of the librarian as well as those of the patron.

There were six questions that Prof. Marcus explored:

1. Who is the population in question? We identify them using both visual cues and non-visual cues.
2. What method of communication can we use with them? : Speaking, signing, and writing down.
3. Why does this population require full access to the services in the library?
4. What are the steps that we can take to communicate with them? : Among the ways we can work with them are either one-on-one or group based settings.
5. What can you do to help the patron?
6. What can be expected of the patron who is deaf or hard of hearing?

How to spot? You might or might not see a hearing aid (the assistance of a hearing aid: does not mean the person can hear well with it, it might only be there to help the person hear loud sounds); sign language – not signing does not mean a person is not deaf or hearing impaired but they may have an oral disability; you might not see a hearing impaired patron lip reading/speech reading, nor might you see an inner ear hearing aid or cochlear implants. You cannot tell that they're disabled by looking at them.

The library should also be ADA compliant for the deaf impaired. According to Teri Switzer “unlike ADA services for the blind or physically handicapped, there is no specific legislation for deaf or hard-of-hearing.”

Prof. Marcus also stated that the ADA, according to the Department of Justice ADA homepage, “. . . prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and services provided by private companies, and in commercial facilities. The ADA also covers effective communication with people with disabilities, and requires reasonable modifications of policies and practices that may be discriminatory.”

Therefore the entity should:

- provide reasonable accommodations for the hard-of-hearing
- be able to adapt to the needs of the patron
- have the equipment to do a TTY hook up

The TTY hookup should be at the reference desk. This is a relay operation (a large deaf population uses this) that goes through an operator.

- make sure people know how to use it
- it's a one way communication device
- requires wire typing

Email or IM setup for students.

Encourage use of the library – pleasant experience – promote library open to hard of hearing as well be promoting services:

- Website
- TTY
- IM; email – specific to students who do not have telephone or use of a phone – special setup for these type of students
- CRAT (computer real-time caption system): Get it, use it, and advertise it.

Refer to the League for Hard of Hearing (LHH) to get more information about CRAT. They will/maybe do a demo for your library. Scott and Sara will look into scheduling a field trip.

Need to cut down on the noise level – move the reference desk to a quiet spot in the library. Being out of the path of traffic will make it easier for hard of hearing individuals to focus.

Other methods of communication:

Assistive listening devices (ALDs) or systems designed to reduce the effects of noise, distance, and reverberation on hearing and thus improve the user's ability to communicate.

- ❖ Hardwire (you and someone else connected to microphone and wire – limited mobility – plug into something. Good at reference desk.
- ❖ Infrared and FM. Microphone – use person's own receiver (people use and hook to second microphone – headset or neck loop with receiver built in. Walkie talkie with many people talking on them. Infrared direct line of site (you don't hear other people). FM no line of site; however, other people can pick up (cheaper).
- ❖ Induction Loop – good with people who have T-coil in hearing aid.

Oral (also known as lip reading) – For some, this is enough to get by; but, this does not mean total comprehension. Lisa Hamlin, Coordinator for the Hard of Hearing, notes “approximately 30% of spoken English is visible on the lips” – the other 74% or so, according to Judith Monroe, is invisible to the deaf for lip reading purposes. Hard of hearing need more than hearing aids. Hamlin goes on to state that “when a person practices speech reading, they use more than the lip shapes to understand speech – expression, body language, context, is understood even if you are profoundly deaf.” Speech reading enables one to comprehend enough to understand the general idea of the communication, but not exactly which can lead to much misunderstanding. What should be done?

- ❖ When student(s) want to sit in front of the class, don't ask why. Form your words but do not over-form them. Speak clearly. Students focus on your face, offer to write information down. Assign a note taker. Computer created speech is hard to understand.
- ❖ Cue Speech. Sign and speech language together. This is done with hand gestures with their speech.
- ❖ Sign language: American Sign Language (ASL) – Basic sign language or at least finger spelling is a nice gesture for some or all library staff to have, and might even be useful for simple directional queries and/or brief reference interviews. However, as a replacement for trained/certified interpreter it is not sufficient. Signing Exact English is another sign language.
- ❖ Textual

CAN (Computer Assisted Note Taking)
CART (Computer-Assisted Real-Time captioning)
Close Caption (visual audience) – need transcript w/audio
Open Caption (visual audience) – need transcript w/audio

- ❖ Reference Desk
 - Pad and pencil at all times
 - Type on computer word document to type message back and forth
 - If available, TTY – dedicated line to answer reference questions
 - Write up info for hearing impaired on how to use databases: instructions as to how to use databases.
- ❖ Convert into Braille – raised print (Baruch Center for the Blind, 6th floor, NYPL, and the Lighthouse for the Blind have equipment for the blind – Field trip will be planned to see their setup and equipment.
- ❖ Brochure
 - All about the library, name, location, contact person
 - Information on accessibility and accessible for deaf, what services are available and who to request them from
 - Need interpreter, let person know, plan in advance
 - Disability specialist
- ❖ Visual Alerts
 - Visual alerts for patrons who cannot hear
 - Closing alarm, flash lights
 - Make audio announcement
 - Security alarm – flashing lights
- ❖ Noise Level Alert
 - Headphones
 - Visual aid to tell them they are too loud

Accessibility: Steps to take when providing service

Per Dr. Marcus, according to Julie Ann McDonald, “noise and light are two factors often overlooked in examining the accessibility of libraries but for the hearing impaired, they are important considerations. Because hearing aids make all sounds louder, noisy reference or circulation areas can cause problems for hard of hearing patrons who might be distracted by background noise. Carpeting and furniture that will absorb noise can be used to alleviate this problem. Individual study carrels can be provided to limit the visual distractions of deaf or hard of hearing patrons who typically rely heavily on sight.” Note: study carrels works best for the hearing impaired.

Location of areas for interaction is also a factor. If areas are located at the entrance to the library there will be traffic occurring, making it harder to focus on the conversation at hand. Even moving the reference desk back a few feet or changing the direction the desk faces can be helpful.

During one-on-one interactions, a librarian having problems understanding the speech of the deaf/hard of hearing patron should attempt to understand as well as possible:

- Speaking in an attempt to be understood

- Be aware how you speak – clearly, do not overemphasize
- Get their attention first
- Put blame on self when cannot understand
- Light on your face
- Speak-up – do not shout
- Personal listening/amplifying device
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Do no over-emphasize
- Do not distraught your words
- Do not hide your mouth
- Rephrase rather than repeat
- Write down important information – you write it down
- Put contact information on notices

What are some of things libraries can do today? Encourage the library to take the following inexpensive actions:

- Installation of a TTY at the reference, circulation, and information desks, or at least at one desk where calls can be answered at all times (reference):
 - o Train staff in the use of TTY
 - o Advertise the TTY number and service
- Clear directional signs posted throughout the library that are not obstructed
- Education of the staff in communication with deaf/hard of hearing
- Ensuring good lighting conditions, particularly in areas of communication
- Have pen and paper readily available at all access points throughout the library
- Patience when dealing with a deaf/hard of hearing patron

What can we expect of the patron who is deaf or hard of hearing? First, they must inform the librarian that they have a hearing problem. It is the patron's responsibility to give advance notice of special needs. Patron should recognize that the library will meet their needs to the best of the library's ability. Not necessarily the exact requested accommodation but an equivalent system that serves the same purpose might be provided.

Dr. Marcus is available to do assessment of your library. She can be contacted at smmb66@gmail.com.

Other Business

Thursday morning is OK for meetings.

Trips will be planned by Scott and Sara to visit the Lighthouse and the Andrew Heiskell Library. The tours will be opened to everybody. Get money from LACUNY to cover the cost, if any. There should be a representative from each college.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.