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A thematic analysis of library association policies on services to persons with disabilities

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A thematic analysis of library association policies on services to persons with disabilities

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3 A thematic analysis of library association policies on services to persons with disabilities
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6 **Introduction**

7 Worldwide, persons with disabilities make up around 15% of the population (World
8 Health Organization, 2018). In Canada, the United States (US), and Australia the
9 numbers are higher at 22%, 26%, and 18%, respectively (Government of Canada,
10 2018; Center for Disease Control, 2018; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare,
11 2019). Persons with disabilities are a growing population everywhere as people are
12 living longer, as chronic health conditions are increasing, and as identifying as
13 having a disability becomes less stigmatized (World Health Organization, 2018).
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15

16 The importance of providing accessible services to persons with disabilities in
17 libraries has long been a topic of interest. Some professional library associations
18 have developed guidelines and recommended policies on how to best serve this user
19 group. These policies reflect consensus values of the profession and can set the tone
20 for the values of their individual members in their professional practice. In these
21 ways these policies have a role in shaping professional ideology around a topic.
22
23

24 Of particular interest here are policies from the American Library Association (ALA),
25 the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), and the Canadian
26 Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). While these organizations represent
27 three different nations, each with their own laws and policies around disability and
28 accessibility, they intersect in particular ways that make an analysis of policies
29 coming from them of high interest.
30
31

32 First, the ALIA and the ALA have reciprocal agreements between them such that
33 graduates from their respective library and information science (LIS) programs are
34 considered equivalents. Graduates from ALA accredited programs are recognized as
35 employable in positions requiring a degree from the ALIA and graduates from ALIA
36 programs are recognized as employable in positions requiring a degree from the
37 ALA. It should be noted that the ALIA is not the only organization with this type of
38 agreement with the ALA, but none of the other organizations have specific policies
39 on providing accessible service to persons with disabilities.
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43 Second, the ALA accredits graduate LIS education programs in Canada. Here we
44 have a unique instance where a national level association has significant influence
45 on the education of LIS professionals in another country. At the same time, the CFLA
46 makes specific recommendations within the Canadian context.
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48

49 An analysis of these documents will shed some light on the following question:
50 Given the interrelated nature of these organizations, what shared understanding of
51 accessibility and disability exists within these guidelines?
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54 **Defining Disability**

55 The United Nations defines disability as a broad umbrella term. Disabilities are a “long-
56 term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with
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3 various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders full and effective participation in
4 society” (2009). Disability is becoming less associated with a medical sense and is more
5 commonly noted as an interaction between the individual and the environment
6 (Devlieger, 1999; Field & Jette, 2008; Prince, 2009; Terzi, 2008). Prince (2009) defines
7 disability as neither a fixed nor uniform phenomenon but one that is “socially
8 constructed, administratively negotiated, and politically contested” (6). Garland-Thomson
9 (2002) notes that disability is unique in that it is “an identity category that anyone can
10 enter at any time, and we will all join it if we live long enough” (346).
11
12

13 **Literature**

14 *Analyzing and comparing policies, codes or guidelines*

15 There has been some literature around examining a variety of guidelines and codes from
16 various LIS professional organizations. The largest set of literature has focused on
17 analyzing ethical codes (Atkin, 2012; Byrd, Devine, Corcoran, 2014; Oppenheim &
18 Pollecutt, 2000; Dole & Hurych, 2001; Kendrick & Leaver, 2011; Koehler & Pemberton,
19 2011). The ALA’s Library Bill of Rights and the policies from the Canadian Libraries
20 Association have also been of interest (Campbell, 2014; Wilkinson & Nilson, 2010).
21 Research comparing policies from different information organizations has centered
22 generally on ethics policies including those on general professional ethics (Koehler,
23 Hurych, Dole, & Wall, 2000; Byrd, 2014), data ethics (Trepanier, Shiri, & Samek, 2019),
24 and ethics focused on health and medical librarianship (Hurych & Glenn, 1987; Koehler,
25 2006).
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29 Disability and accessibility policies have been of some interest, but this area is largely
30 unstudied. Schmetzke (2007) analyzed how the ALA provides information online. He
31 found that policies around digitization, electronic resources, and collections, among
32 others fall noticeably short of supporting an accessible environment. Peacock and
33 Vecchione (2020) found in their research on academic libraries that they often lacked a
34 comprehensive policy to facilitate the needs of persons with disabilities.
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38 *Disability and accessibility in LIS*

39 The majority of the research looking at disability and accessibility in LIS tends to focus
40 on the accessibility of the online environment (Liu, Bielefield, & McKay, 2017; Yi,
41 2015; Matta Smith, 2014; Hill, 2013; Oud, 2012; Conway, Brown, Hollier, & Nicholl,
42 2012; Conway, 2011; Brobst, 2009;). There is a small amount of literature focused on the
43 physical environment (Hughes, 2017; Hill, 2011; Copeland, 2011; Lazar and Briggs,
44 2015). Another small portion of the literature looks at how accessibility is discussed on
45 library websites and databases (Hill, 2020; Power & LeBeau, 2009; Graves & German,
46 2018; Gabel et al. 2016; Cassner, Maxey-Harris, & Anaya, 2011). A newer aspect of the
47 literature has been the examination of the library as a workplace for people with
48 disabilities (Oud, 2019; Pionke, 2019; Pionke 2020; Schomberg & Highby 2020).
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51 There is a gap in the literature in understanding library policy around accessibility for
52 persons with disabilities. This research intends to fill some of this gap by analyzing what
53 shared norms exist amongst intersecting national-level library association guidelines.
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Method

The policies were analyzed using a constructionist thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method by which one can look for patterns or themes within the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases were followed.

Phase one (familiarization): To develop familiarity and establish prolonged engagement with the data, each policy was read through multiple times. To provide additional context, supplementary information was sought out to provide context for the documents. This additional information came from a previous version of the current CFLA guideline and the original text and approval process of the ALA guideline. No previous version or supplemental information on the ALIA guideline could be found. Phase two (generating codes): The policies were then inductively coded in NVivo 12 for both semantic and latent themes, both separately and then together. First cycle (Saldaña, 2013) coding consisted of both in vivo and descriptive coding. The documents were analyzed using iterative loops (Sapa, 2020). Analysis was recursive moving back and forth between considering each individual document as a whole and considering the three documents as a set. Initial codes were developed from the first guideline analyzed and used on the subsequent guidelines. Additional codes were developed with the second and third text. This first cycle of coding resulted in an initial list of 45 codes. These subsequent codes were then examined in the initial text through a spiral process (Sapa, 2020). Peer debriefing was used to collapse some codes together and more adequately distinguish them. The final list (see Appendix) consisted of 40 codes. Phase three (searching for themes): With the codes visualized in a spreadsheet, connections were found between codes that were similar in content. This led to an initial list of potential themes. Phase four (reviewing themes) and phase five (defining and naming themes): Themes were then tested for referential adequacy by returning to the raw data as theme definitions and names were developed. This process led to the seven final themes – context, legislation, beyond legislation, staff, library processes, library services, and facilities. Phase six (writing up the report) is detailed below in the findings.

Multiple methods were used in order to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, the researcher had prolonged engagement with the data through multiple readings of the texts over an extended period of time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing and rich, thick description have also been employed for the purposes of validation (Nowell, L. S. et al. 2017).

The policies and the organizations

The policies of focus here share certain commonalities. All have similar titles: the *Guidelines on Library and Information Services for Persons with Disabilities* from the ALIA, the *Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy* from the ALA and the *Guidelines on Library and Information Services for People with Disabilities* from the CFLA. These documents represent similarly themed policies from three, national-level, professional library associations.

The ALIA was founded in 1937 and is the national professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. They provide accreditation of graduate

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3 LIS education programs in Australia along with other services like professional
4 development opportunities for library staff. The ALIA has had an accessibility policy in
5 place since 1979. The current iteration of the policy was updated in 2019.
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8 The ALA was founded in 1876 with the mission to “provide leadership for the
9 development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and
10 the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to
11 information for all” (American Library Association, nd). Amongst its many
12 responsibilities is the accreditation of graduate LIS education programs in the US
13 and in Canada. As well, it supports the continuing professional development of
14 library staff. The ALA published its guidelines in 2001.
15
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17 The CFLA was created in 2016 after the dissolution of the Canadian Library
18 Association (CLA). Its goals are to “influence public policy, advance library
19 excellence, and raise the visibility of libraries in Canada” (Canadian Federation of
20 Library Associations, nd). This organization is somewhat different than the other
21 two as it exists similarly to the International Federation of Library Associations
22 (IFLA), but for provinces in Canada in that it makes recommendations for policy and
23 guidance within the Canadian context but does not have the direct oversight of
24 graduate education. The CFLA guidelines were published in 2016 and were
25 developed from the earlier CLA guidelines.
26
27

28 29 **Findings**

30 31 **Context**

32 The context theme centers on how the documents are framed. This theme includes the
33 stated purpose of the documents and how the concept of disability is defined or
34 described.
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36

37 Each set of guidelines opens with a purpose or introductory statement that gives
38 insight into the intended audience. Each is meant to include a diversity of library
39 types. While the ALA is implicit about this in its broad use of the term ‘libraries’, the
40 ALIA and CFLA are more explicit. The ALIA notes that the guidelines are to “provide
41 all libraries, regardless of type, size or resourcing, with minimum standards for the
42 provision of accessible and inclusive services for people with disabilities” (ALIA).
43 Similarly, the CFLA states that “the purpose of these guidelines is to provide
44 libraries of varying types, sizes, and resources with the recommended practices for
45 the provision of accessible and inclusive services.”
46
47

48 The introductory information then goes on to describe or define disability. All three
49 documents incorporate a social model of disability in that their focus is on shaping the
50 library environment to be more accessible for persons with disabilities. Even with that
51 shared focus, the policies describe disability in different ways.
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54 The ALA provides a broad description of disability. The guidelines note that:
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3 people with disabilities are a large and neglected minority in the
4 community and are severely underrepresented in the library
5 profession. Disabilities cause many personal challenges. In addition,
6 many people with disabilities face economic inequity, illiteracy,
7 cultural isolation, and discrimination in education, employment and
8 the broad range of societal activities.
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12 The ALIA similarly describes disability quite broadly. The introduction notes that
13 disability is a:

14
15
16 complex and multidimensional experience and can occur at any
17 stage of a person's life. Disability may be temporary or permanent,
18 total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or invisible. There is no
19 single definition appropriate for all people with disabilities.
20 Definitions are only useful in that they indicate how different
21 disabilities might affect the use of facilities such as libraries. There
22 is no 'average' experience of disability.
23
24

25 The CFLA takes a different approach. Rather than define disability, the
26 guidelines note the prevalence of disability within Canada.
27

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29 In Canada, an estimated 14% of adults (3.8 million people) have a
30 disability. The prevalence of a disability increases steadily with age: 2.3
31 million working-age Canadians (15 to 64), or 10%, reported having a
32 disability in 2012, compared to 33% of Canadian seniors—those aged
33 65 or older. The most prevalent types of disability also vary by age. In
34 the youngest age group, 15 to 24, the most commonly reported types of
35 disability were mental/psychological disabilities, learning disabilities
36 and those related to pain, whereas for those aged 45 and up, physical
37 disabilities relating to pain, flexibility and mobility were higher. More
38 than 8 out of 10 persons with disabilities use aids or assistive devices.
39
40

41 Legislation

42 The overviews above are then framed within legislation specific to each country. The
43 main legislation referred to is national level disability legislation. The guidelines are
44 situated within the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Australian Disability
45 Discrimination Act of 1992, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The ALA
46 takes this idea a step farther by incorporating the language of its country's accessibility
47 legislation into its policy. Throughout the ALA policy there is a refrain that accessibility
48 needs should be met if such changes are "readily achievable" (easy to implement), are
49 "reasonable" and do not result in an "undue burden" on the library. These phrases and
50 words are language pulled directly from the ADA.
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54 Beyond initially situating themselves in relevant accessibility legislation, the guidelines
55 also refer to other legislation. Because of the way legislation works in their respective
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3 countries, the CFLA and ALIA guidelines also reference provincial/state level legislation.
4 Additional legislation referenced in at least one of the guidelines includes international
5 agreements, copyright, building codes, and affirmative action. The ALIA and CFLA
6 guidelines reference their respective building code legislation and their respective
7 copyright laws in reference to the creation and provision of materials in accessible
8 formats. The CFLA guidelines note that Canada is a signatory on the United Nations
9 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ALIA guidelines note
10 Australian affirmative action law in reference to the hiring process.
11
12

13 Beyond the Legislation

14 While each policy is contextualized within its respective country's legislation, each goes
15 beyond the standard of their legislation, implying the limitations of accessibility
16 legislation, and pushes towards the creation of a truly accessible environment. They
17 promote the value of universal design, note the importance of consulting persons with
18 disabilities in the development of services, and frame the provision of an accessible
19 environment as one of equity.
20
21

22
23 Libraries should use strategies based upon the principles of universal
24 design to ensure that library policy, resources and services meet the
25 needs of all people (ALA)
26

27 In addition to meeting legislative requirements, ALIA encourages the
28 observation of universal design principles...guidelines and standards
29 (ALIA)
30

31
32 Library staff should be familiar with the Principles of Universal
33 Design published by the Center for Universal Design, North Carolina
34 State University which will serve to make libraries more inclusive and
35 accessible for all users (CFLA)
36

37
38 Universal design is the "design of products and environments to be usable by all people,
39 to the greatest extent possible, without need for adaptation or specialized design" (Center
40 for Universal Design, nd). There are seven principles including a focus on equitable use,
41 flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error,
42 low physical effort, and size and space for appropriate use (Center for Universal Design,
43 nd).
44

45
46 As with universal design, consultation with community is beyond the scope of
47 accessibility legislation. There is a repeated emphasis in the guidelines on the importance
48 of consulting community members with disabilities in the development of services and
49 resources.
50

51 Libraries should include persons with disabilities as participants in the
52 planning, implementing, and evaluating of library services, programs,
53 and facilities (ALA)
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3 Libraries should routinely and actively seek the involvement of their
4 community in identifying needs and should be aware of any potential
5 limitations to information access or participation in programs (ALIA)
6

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8 Through a community-led approach to policy and planning, libraries
9 can provide environments and services that are universally designed
10 (CFLA)
11

12 The community-led approach to public libraries developed from the Working Together
13 project initiated in four Canadian cities. Public libraries in these four cities worked to
14 develop more inclusive library services by “establishing ongoing relationships with
15 socially excluded people” and by identifying and examining “systemic barriers to library
16 use for socially excluded people” (Vancouver Public Library
17 <https://www.vpl.ca/working-together-community-led-libraries-toolkit>).
18
19

20 Similarly, these guidelines go beyond the idea of equality and note the importance of
21 equity. Equality, “has to do with giving everyone the exact same resources, whereas
22 *equity* involves distributing resources based on the needs of the recipients” (Gutoskey,
23 2020).
24
25

26 ALA...is dedicated to eradicating inequities and improving attitudes
27 toward and services and opportunities for people with disabilities.
28 (ALA)
29

30
31 Libraries should provide equity of access and inclusion to all members
32 of their community (ALIA)
33

34 The library should conduct evaluations of its services to ensure that
35 they are equitable and inclusive to all members of the community
36 (CFLA)
37
38

39 Staff

40 Staff are considered in three different ways. First, is in the development and
41 implementation of graduate LIS education. Both the ALA and the CFLA advocate for
42 LIS education programs to “require students to learn about accessibility issues, assistive
43 technology, the needs of people with disabilities both as users and employees, and laws
44 applicable to the rights of people with disabilities as they impact library services” (ALA).
45
46

47 Second, there is a focus on a variety of training for library staff. The ALA notes that staff
48 should have training “to sensitize them to issues affecting people with disabilities.”
49 Library and staff, “should be familiar with national or provincial/territorial human rights
50 legislations, building codes, and other regulations relating to disabilities and
51 accessibility” (CFLA). Beyond being knowledgeable about disability and relevant
52 legislation, there comes a responsibility to be knowledgeable about assistive technology.
53 “Library staff should be familiar with and able to assist users in accessing and utilising
54 assistive technology and devices” (ALIA).
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4 Second, there is a focus on staff members with disabilities. Each notes the importance of
5 employing and providing accommodations to staff with disabilities. The ALIA notes that
6 “Libraries should continue to open career opportunities for people living with disability”
7 (ALIA). The ALA notes that libraries “must provide reasonable accommodations for
8 qualified individuals with disabilities” (ALA). The CFLA includes both employees and
9 volunteers in their statement. “The library should make every attempt to hire both paid
10 employees and volunteers with disabilities” (CFLA).
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14 15 Library Processes

16 Library processes includes the development and implementation of library policy related
17 to accessibility, communicating and marketing of library services in an accessible way
18 and, to a lesser extent, budgeting and advocacy.
19

20 The ALIA broadly advocates that “every library and information service should develop
21 organisation-wide disability access and inclusion plans.” The ALA keeps their focus on
22 providing equitable access of resources through “extended loan periods, waived late
23 fines, extended reserve periods, [and] library cards for proxies.” The CFLA policy is
24 much more granular outlining the importance of having policies on anti-discrimination,
25 service accommodation, accessible information, accessible customer service training, use
26 of guide dogs and service animals, assistive technology, and accessible communication.
27
28

29 Communication and marketing are often conflated within the documents such that these
30 topics need to be examined together. The CFLA notes that, “inclusive strategies for
31 communications, marketing and outreach will help to ensure the library is reaching the
32 broadest demographic of users.” Both the CFLA and the ALIA recommend the use of
33 ‘plain language’ and all three suggest using alternative formats like large type, audio
34 recording, and Braille in communication and marketing.
35
36

37 The website is noted as a tool for communication that needs to be accessible as well.
38 The ALIA recommends the use of universal design principles when contemplating the
39 design of catalogues, databases and guides to resources. The CFLA notes that the
40 library’s strategic plan should account for accessibility related to the library website and
41 that libraries should give priority to providing accessible websites, online catalogue, and
42 electronic resources.
43
44

45 The CFLA and ALIA guidelines also provide an emphasis on consciously budgeting for
46 accessible services and resources, and the importance and duty to advocate for a more
47 accessible world. Similar to the ALIA, the CFLA notes that:
48
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50 The library’s accessible services need to be part of the budget
51 planning and procurement process. Areas for consideration should
52 include the purchase of collections, library equipment, furniture,
53 library systems and contracts with vendors.
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3 Advocacy is emphasized as a responsibility of all library staff. The ALIA notes that “all
4 library staff have an advocacy role in promoting Australian library services. This includes
5 advocating for access and equity in library services for people with disabilities.” (ALIA).
6 The CFLA is slightly more explicit in that it notes that all library staff have a
7 “responsibility to advocate for equitable access to library services at regional, national
8 and international levels by making recommendations to government(s)” (CFLA).
9
10

11 Library Services

12 Library services includes a variety of services libraries can provide to be more equitable
13 in their services to persons with disabilities. These services include the provision of
14 materials in alternative format and assistive technology to help access the library’s
15 resources, personal assistance with using the library, providing accessibility within
16 library programs, and home delivery of library resources.
17
18

19
20 Collections will differ across libraries and types however a diverse
21 range of formats applies to all. A library’s collection development
22 policy should include procurement of alternative formats (ALIA)
23

24 The CFLA notes that “As more than 8 out of 10 Canadians with disabilities use aids and
25 assistive devices, a library environment that provides assistive technologies will enable
26 people to access library services with greater independence and privacy.” Assistive
27 technologies explicitly mentioned include screen readers, magnifiers, DAISY formatted
28 materials, and adaptive workstations that include various hardware and software of use
29 for those with disabilities.
30

31
32 The ALIA goes beyond the mere provision of adaptive formats and assistive technology
33 to focus on *how* these resources are provided.
34

35
36 Environments can magnify or even create disability by preventing
37 someone from doing what they want or need to do...Supportive
38 services, areas, and equipment which are separate can create feelings
39 of difference and exclusion often experienced by people with
40 disabilities and may deter the use of these services. Libraries should
41 provide accessible services in an integrated way (ALIA)
42

43
44 Personal assistance in using the library for persons with disabilities includes a focus on
45 reading assistance, technology assistance, and help with such things as e-mail, chat,
46 texting, telephone, fax, and video tutorials. As the ALIA notes, “Library staff should also
47 be able to provide accessible information to persons with disabilities about mobility aids,
48 devices and assistive technologies, including new technologies, as well as other forms of
49 assistance, support services and facilities.”
50

51 Assistance and general accessibility is also a part of programming. The ALIA states that,
52 “libraries should endeavour to ensure that their events are accessible to all attendees
53 regardless of disability need and consider how disability services are marketed or
54 communicated in relation to library-hosted events or activities.” The ALA clarifies by
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3 noting that “reasonable modifications to communications may include providing an
4 interpreter or realtime captioning services for public programs.”
5

6 Home delivery of service, sometimes called homebound services, involves the delivery of
7 books and program materials to persons who are unable to physically access the library.
8 While all three sets of guidelines list home delivery of library services as a need, the
9 ALIA goes further and relates provision of the service back to the idea of universal
10 access.
11

12 13 Facilities

14 Facilities are considered in a broad way across the guidelines. From the beginning there
15 is a focus on libraries consulting persons with disabilities in the “planning, implementing,
16 and evaluating of library...facilities” (ALA). The CLFA incorporates universal design
17 principles in its statement that “a barrier-free design helps to ensure that the library
18 facility is welcoming to all users.” Additionally, the ALIA notes that, “library access
19 starts prior to entering the building. Libraries should ensure that areas outside the library
20 facilitate safe access and exit from the library regardless of disability restriction.” Both
21 the ALA and the CFLA go further and note specific suggestions for developing an
22 accessible facility by making available things like accessible parking, accessible
23 washrooms, handrails, automatic doors, and wide aisles.
24
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27 Discussion

28 Examining the national-level guidelines on services to persons with disabilities from the
29 ALA, CFLA, and ALIA yielded several implications. While a focus on specific library
30 processes and services was expected, these guidelines go much further than this and do so
31 in a way that creates a wholistic understanding of accessibility.
32
33

34 While the guidelines are all situated within their country’s relevant legislation, there are
35 still significant commonalities. The guidelines provide a nuanced, shared understanding
36 of disability and accessibility that focuses on the social model of disability. A shared
37 focus and understanding of what makes for accessible collections, services, facilities, and
38 library processes mean that a library staff member using their respective country’s
39 guidelines would also be able to navigate a library in one of the other nations following
40 the other country’s guidelines. This finding shows that there is an understanding of
41 accessibility that transcends whatever national or provincial legislation that might be in
42 place.
43
44

45 All three sets of guidelines go beyond the legal mandates from their respective nations,
46 however, to advocate for a more equitable environment for persons with disabilities.
47 Accessibility legislation is focused on making a minimum necessary standard. In
48 addition, these minimum standards are also developed through a negotiated
49 understanding of what would make a particular environment accessible. An organization,
50 however, can be technically accessible within the law, but not be user friendly or
51 inclusive of those with disabilities (Hill, 2020; Byerley & Chambers, 2002; McCord,
52 Frederiksen, & Campbell, 2002; Byerley, Chambers, & Thohira, 2007; Blechner, 2015).
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3 The concept of universal design is not present in the language of any of the countries'
4 accessibility legislation. As a specific example the American ADA legislation allows for
5 segregated design (i.e. design options for people with disabilities that exist alongside
6 options for non-disabled rather than universal accessibility). To see universal design in
7 each of these policies is significant in that these policies call for a much broader level of
8 access than their respective legislation requires.
9

10
11 Consultation is a second important area that complements the concept of universal
12 design. Research around accessibility in libraries often does not actually include or
13 consult those with disabilities (Burke, 2009; Epp, 2006; Hill, 2013; Hill, 2011) and these
14 policies emphasize that consultation is an important aspect of creating and providing
15 adequate and equitable services. There is a saying in the disability community, "nothing
16 about us, without us" (Charlton, 1998). We can see the importance of consultation when
17 it is used, as in the incorporation of an accessibility advisory group in the development of
18 the new Calgary Public Library in Alberta, Canada. Accessibility issues arose even with
19 the committee, but the response to these issues was swift such that the library won the
20 Calgary Award for Accessibility in 2019 (City of Calgary, 2019). We can also see the
21 importance of these ideas when they are not used, as in the significant accessibility issues
22 in the new Queen's Public Library in New York, USA (Kim, 2019). The repeated
23 emphasis of the importance of consultation in these policies represents a contemporary
24 understanding of the social model of disability and a focus beyond what the legislation
25 says must be in place.
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29
30 It was expected that these policies would focus on the training of library staff members.
31 What is interesting is in how in addition, they focus on hiring and accommodating staff
32 with disabilities and two of them focused on the education of those within LIS programs.
33 A focus on hiring and accommodating disabled library staff is particularly interesting in
34 that here we have moved beyond direct services to library patrons and are considering
35 equitable employment practices in libraries. The importance of representation within the
36 profession cannot be understated. The focus on creating equitable employment spaces is a
37 laudable, yet unmet, goal as those with disabilities are underrepresented on library staffs
38 (Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians, 2019; American Library
39 Association, 2012).
40
41

42 **Limitations**

43 There are some limitations to this research. While these policies were created to set up
44 recommendations for providing services in libraries it's unclear how or if these policies
45 are actually used in the development of library-level policy. No research has yet been
46 done to assess how these national library association policies influence the development
47 of services and policy at the local level.
48
49

50 **Conclusion**

51 This research sought to analyze what shared understanding of accessibility and disability
52 exist within three sets of guidelines on library services to persons with disabilities. Given
53 the findings, there can be no doubt that there are notions of accessibility in LIS that
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3 transcend national level legislation. The concept of accessible services to persons with
4 disabilities in these policies is quite broad.
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7 A focus on staff training, library services, resources, and policies were expected. These
8 areas form the basis for library service in general, but these policies expand their focus to
9 the composition of library staff and in how they implicitly note the limitations of
10 accessibility legislation by including the concept of universal design and in their call for
11 consultation with persons with disabilities.
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13
14 The findings here create questions for further research in how these guidelines are
15 incorporated into professional practice, particularly around how the guidelines are used
16 and how they reflect actual practice.
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18
19 Additional research should focus particularly on if and how these national organizational
20 policies affect the creation of local library-level services and policies. This research
21 would start at the library level by investigating what policies and services are in place for
22 persons with disabilities and include interviews with staff about training and consultation.
23

24
25 Staff training is another area that could use more focused attention. These guidelines
26 highlight the training of staff to empathize with people with disabilities, to understand the
27 relevant local legislation, and to be skilled in using adaptive hardware and software.
28 Given these ideas, what kinds of training do library staff receive on these matters?
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30
31 Staff composition is also noted as important, yet it's something that we know little about
32 in regard to disability. Most broad studies on library staff diversity focuses on gender and
33 race. Only two studies were found to have broadly investigated disability in library staff
34 and those are either limited to a specific environment (Canadian academic librarians) or
35 dated at this point (Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians, 2019;
36 American Library Association, 2012). There has been some literature noting a resistance
37 to accommodation in the workplace (Pionke, 2019; Pionke, 2020; Schomberg & Highby,
38 2020; Brown & Sheidlower, 2019), but this area of study is one which would benefit
39 enormously from more attention.
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22 23 24 25 26 **Appendix**

27 Theme – codes

- 28 • Beyond the legislation – consultation, equity, normalization, universal design
- 29 • Context – definition, purpose
- 30 • Facilities – structure, entry
- 31 • Legislation – affirmative action, building codes, copyright, international
- 32 legislation, national legislation, provincial legislation
- 33 • Library processes – advocacy, budgeting, communications, policies, resource
- 34 sharing, website
- 35 • Library services – alternative formats, assistance, assistive tech, books by
- 36 mail, captioning, card proxies, collections, extended loans, extended reserve,
- 37 home delivery, programming, reference, remote access, sign-language, fines,
- 38 wifi
- 39 • Staff – employment, LIS education, training
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