Introduction

In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act this survey is to assess progress and reflect the status of library services for people with disabilities since the Nelson study in 1996. This survey will address the major advances in technology as well as physical access in academic health science libraries for people with disabilities.

Methods

• A survey was compiled of original questions from Patricia Nelson’s work.*
• Additional questions were added to the survey regarding the accessibility of technological changes which have occurred in the past 15 years.
• A Google docs survey link was sent with a letter of explanation via 2 e-mails, in November 2010 and January 2011, to the listserv of the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL).

Results

• 24% response rate from the approximate 140 members of the AAHSL.
• AAHSL have progressed in eliminating physical barriers for persons with disabilities.
• Library staff are more aware of the needs of persons with disabilities.
• The accessibility of technology from the library has been addressed in ways that are cost effective and relatively easy, for example instruction documents on web pages are available in HTML format instead of only PDF.

Conclusions

Libraries seem to be reactive rather than proactive to making changes to services. This may be the case for several reasons including costs and number of patrons with a need. Planning for persons with disabilities is primarily handled by the campus office for students with disabilities but the budgeting for services is the responsibility of the library.

Improvements should be considered regarding:

❖ Speech software
❖ Captioning on library produced video instructions
❖ Web link spacing
❖ Screen reading software testing

Bibliography


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