

uOttawa Library Accessibility Plan

2019-2024



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I. Review of the Library's previous action plan/report

a. Adaptive services and resources

The Library has continued to maintain its Accessibility webpage <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/services/accessibility> This is updated anytime new technology or software is purchased.

Our on demand services are also being maintained, including:

- Online reservations of study rooms and adaptive technologies. Upon request, we also make reservations for users by email, phone or in person.
- Extended loans for material on reserve and in the general collection
- Assistance with retrieving material from the stacks
- Assistance with scanners and copiers
- Borrowing material from another campus library
- Providing access and mediating requests from qualified users, to the Accessible Content E-Portal, a service maintained by Scholars Portal

b. Partnerships: increased communication amongst accessibility stakeholders

From 2016 to the present, the Library has made more concerted efforts to meet and communicate regularly with SASS - Academic Accommodations, in an effort to share best practices, exchange knowledge and information, and to gain a better understanding of each other's services. This has led to a greater sense of trust and confidence in referring students back to SASS for follow-up, or to the Library for assistance in booking spaces, and using our technology and services. Together we have worked on improving the flow of communication between the student, the Learning Specialist and the Library by more clearly indicating the responsibilities of each party in requesting, outlining and providing accessible services.

The Library has also had representation at the Design Day events organized by the Faculty of Engineering, where first and second year students showcase their prototypes for designs that put the needs of individuals with disabilities at the forefront. Various teams over the years have designed projects specifically for the Library including an alarm that would alert hearing impaired users of an emergency situation.

The Library has also increased its presence at accessibility-related forums for example: the online Ontario College and University Libraries Accessibility Community, the Accessibility Conference held annually at the University of Guelph, and at locally hosted presentations and workshops on accessibility related topics including academic accommodations and inclusive teaching practices. It is clear that awareness amongst staff members is more widespread, due in part to mandatory training on Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and not just held within certain units within the Library.

As a member of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), uOttawa Library continues to have access to a range of accessible collections including Scholars Portal e-books, e-journals and specifically, the Accessible Content E-Portal (ACE) which provides an ever growing repository of accessible format texts available to users with print disabilities at participating OCUL institutions.

c. Inclusive spaces

In an effort to make the two adaptive technology rooms in Morisset Library more suitable, comfortable and appealing, minor renovations were undertaken in spring 2018. Walls were freshly painted, new dimmable lighting was installed, and furniture and fixtures were replaced and reorganized. In response to feedback received, new, more flexible ergonomic chairs were purchased

Since 2017, the Library has offered its 24/7 space in Morisset Hall to SASS - Academic Accommodations for the fall and winter exam periods. The carrels in this space allow students to focus and feel less distracted while writing exams and staff members can more easily manage and supervise the students.

In the new Learning Crossroads (CRX) building, the Library occupies spaces on the 2nd and 5th floors. The second floor houses a wide range of technology, such as:

- a video wall, featuring a giant 8K screen, for data visualization;
- virtual reality equipment and Surface Studio computers;
- multimedia studios (opening soon);
- A 48-seat Tinkering Lab to try new tools, such as Oculus Rift and Nintendo Switch game consoles;
- A 48-seat Learning Lab equipped with flexible seating, blackboard and whiteboard surfaces;
- A 150-seat reading room.

We are continuing to build a collection of equipment/hardware that is accessible to users with disabilities. As an example, we recently purchased the Xbox adaptive controller “built from the ground up through strong partnerships with The AbleGamers Charity, The Cerebral Palsy Foundation, SpecialEffect, Warfighter Engaged, and many community members” (Microsoft).

d. New organizational model: championing inclusion

In 2016, the Library embarked on a large [organizational renewal project](#) whose aim was “to identify and implement an organizational structure that will allow us to strengthen our capabilities, to maximize our capacity to meet our strategic goals, to improve the effectiveness of our day to day operations, and to be agile and able to respond to change.” The newly created Learning and User Services division includes the Design and Outreach unit, responsible for the Library’s online presence, inclusion and accessibility, marketing and promotion, social media, and event management. While the Library has always had a strong commitment to supporting

users with a wide variety of needs, we sought to deepen this through the creation of this unit that will focus on actively engaging with members of the campus and broader community to create services and spaces that support diversity, inclusion, and barrier-free access.

II. Current and anticipated strategies for the next 5 years

a. Procurement of accessible digital content

The Library is closely monitoring the development of the Library eResources Accessibility Project (LEAP), an initiative of Ontario's college libraries aims to "establish accessibility best practices, and develop a tool to evaluate the accessibility of library eresources [with a goal] to recommend workflows for implementing the evaluation tool at the local level, and to allow Ontario college libraries to collaborate on evaluations and share their results" ([p. 4, OCLS, Spring/Summer 2017](#)). In the meantime, uOttawa and the other members of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) are examining the issues related to procurement of accessible collections, and are seeking to collaborate on these efforts with the college libraries. We will also endeavour to begin an environmental scan of transcription, scanning and conversion practices on campus, in an effort to understand where gaps in skills and service exist.

The Library will also highlight its commitment to Policy 119 via the Library website, which outlines our obligation to provide material, upon request, in a conversion ready or alternate format.

AODA Standard/Regulation Section: [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11, s. 18 \(3\)](#)

AODA Compliance Date: In respect of digital or multimedia resources or materials, January 1, 2020

Responsibility: Library (Content & Access)

Timeline: ongoing

b. Accessible theses and associated documents in uO Research

- Work with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Faculties to empower students to consistently create accessible versions of theses and related documents for submission to the institutional repository ([uO Research](#)).
- Investigate options for retroactive compliance of theses already uploaded to the institutional repository.

Responsibility: Library (Scholarly Communication, Design and Outreach), Office of the Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Deans

Timeline: 2019-2021

- Introduce mechanisms/tools to enable accessibility verification of thesis documents submitted to uO Research
- Apply best practices and lessons learned from the creation of accessible documents for the institutional repository to other online publishing services supported by the Library.

Responsibility: Library (Scholarly Communication, Design and Outreach)

Timeline: 2021-2024

c. Increase accessibility expertise and capacity

Hire an Inclusion Librarian responsible for engaging with campus and community partners to ensure that the Library is as inclusive and accessible as possible for all current and potential users. This person will build strong networks with stakeholders on campus whose work centres on accessibility and inclusion, such as SASS Academic Accommodations, and the Human Rights Office. The Inclusion Librarian will seek to increase awareness of the range of accessible resources available at the Library.

Responsibility: Library (Learning and User Services)

Timeline: 2021-2024

d. Continued staff development related to accessibility

- Provide refresher training to employees on customer service standards related to accessibility, especially during spring/summer staff training.
- Provide training related to creating accessible documents, in particular for staff in the Design and Outreach unit.
- Increase awareness of universal design principles among library employees.
- Develop guidelines for inclusive library instruction.

AODA Standard/Regulation Section References: [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11, s.80.49 Training for staff, etc.](#)

Responsibility: Library (Design and Outreach)

Timeline: ongoing

e. Library systems

In new Library management systems, explore options to minimize the steps required for library users to request and be provided with accessible material, with the goal of making these processes as seamless as possible.

Responsibility: Library (IT, User Engagement)

Timeline: ongoing

f. Increase collaboration and knowledge sharing on accessibility issues across campus

Establish ties with student groups who support students with disabilities (note that the [Centre for Studies with Disabilities](#) closed as of March 29, 2019 pending student referendum vote)

Responsibility: Library (Design and Outreach)

Timeline: ongoing

Increase collaboration with the Learning and Technology Mentoring Centre and the staff and student mentors who teach students assistive technologies and learning strategies

Responsibility: Library (Design and Outreach, Learning and Student Success)

Timeline: ongoing

Increase communication with stakeholders on campus who deal with accessibility issues (e.g. made up of Learning Specialists, educational technologists). Advocate for the creation of an informal group to share knowledge and best practices.

Responsibility: Library (Design and Outreach)

Timeline: begin in 2019-2020

III. Consultation and feedback from uOttawa community members with disabilities

Library staff members refer to the Library accessibility webpage <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/services/accessibility> when users have questions about adaptive technology, spaces and resources. The Library has established a dedicated mailbox for accessibility inquiries - libadapt@uottawa.ca - helping to ensure prompt response from staff members with expertise in the Library's accessibility services. Note that while our core user groups are undergraduate and graduate students, we are also equipped to respond to staff and faculty requests.

We will liaise closely and regularly with the Human Rights Office, to develop mechanisms that allow us to contact students with disabilities directly. The feedback mechanisms may include: surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, etc. The goal of such engagement would be to assess students' awareness of Library services and to determine what barriers they experience when using them.

Within the next five years, these efforts will be supported by a User Experience Librarian who will assist in gathering timely and relevant feedback from all users in general.

AODA Standard/Regulation Section References: [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80.50 Feedback process required](#)

Responsibility: Library (Learning and User Services)

Timeline: 2019-