

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting  
Montgomery County Public Libraries  
Meeting Notes  
March 3, 2021  
Teleconference via Zoom  
3:00-5:00 pm

Attendees:

Jill Lewis (retired Director Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, former MCPL Library Board Chair); Francie Gilman (retired Montgomery County librarian, Board Independence Now); Betty Thompson (AAC consultant); Elizabeth Lang (MCPL Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager); Debbie Brown (President Sligo Creek Chapter National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled staff member); Cindy Buddington (Board Independence Now, Equipment for Children); Jonina Duker (member former Special Needs Library Advisory Committee and former Disability Resource Center Advisory Committee); Matt Barkley (Montgomery County ADA Compliance Manager); Barbara King (member former Special Needs Library Advisory Committee and former Disability Resource Center Advisory Committee); Jane Carona (Treasurer, American Council of the Blind of Maryland, member ACB of MD National Capitol Area Chapter and Braille Revival League); Larry Cohen, Facilitator Leisure World Lions Low Vision Group, Board Lions Low Vision Rehabilitation Network; Richard Bell-Irving, Treasurer, Learning Disability Association of Montgomery County, Learning Disability Associations of Maryland and Virginia; Tim Lighter, MCPL Library Board liaison.

Guests:

Yasmin Reyazuddin (member Sligo Creek Chapter National Federation of the Blind)  
Kate Tavakolian (MCPL Staff Development Coordinator)

Jane Carona hosted the Zoom meeting. Cindy Buddington chaired the meeting.

Library Report  
Elizabeth Lang

## Facilities:

Long Branch Library renovation is complete, and the branch now is providing the same services as other branch libraries, under Covid restrictions. Minor refresh work remains for the staff room with the installation of new carpet and paint. Germantown Library will close for a refresh project in the next few months. The original plan for a full refresh is not possible due to the budgetary constraints of Covid-related needs. The Germantown mini-refresh includes all ADA work. The design is complete, and the Department of General Services is awarding the contract and preparing the work schedule.

Maggie Nightingale Library, located in Poolesville, will follow Germantown Library for a refresh project with construction commencing in the coming summer or fall. This branch is the sole library in a leased facility, and the County is limited in the kind of work it can complete. However, the County is requesting that the landlord reach the same standards as any other library. The library has a storefront in a strip mall. Elizabeth said that the County will ensure that the main entrance and the meeting room entrance are accessible, and the landlord needs to bring other entrances into compliance and solve other problems with them as part of the landlord's responsibility for the building exterior.

Design for the Potomac library will start next month. The contract with an architect has been signed.

## Additional Library Updates:

The County standardized hours across library locations and eliminated fines for all materials, not only children's materials. People still are expected to pay for lost items. Jonina Duker asked how long it is before something is declared lost, and does that timeframe differ for materials clearly for people with disabilities like the braille collection. Elizabeth did not know the answer to this question and invited anyone to send her recommendations. Francie asked that people look at the website before making recommendations; it has a fair amount of information. Elizabeth advised clicking on policies at the bottom of the website home page. Tim volunteered to follow up and check the policies, and Jill asked all AAC members to take a look at the library policies. (Note that since the meeting, information about elimination of fines was removed from the MCPL homepage, so members should look at the Paying Fines page.)

## Staff Training Update

Kate Tavakolian, MCPL Staff Development Coordinator, joined the meeting for the staff training discussion. Kate reported that her primary role is working with subject matter experts to develop training for library staff. She met with the AAC in the past about how to roll out training for people with disabilities and worked with Elizabeth on the staff training tip sheets created by the AAC members. There will be no in-person training until at least Fall 2021. Yet the library has hired many new staff who have no prior training about serving people with disabilities. Kate and Elizabeth have an approach that will address new staff members in need of training and also create re-usable introductory or refresher training for all staff over time. They hope to create a pilot Zoom panel of people with disabilities who will draw on the tip sheets for short presentations and interactions with staff on Zoom. Matt Barkley will present an introductory session to be followed by four detailed panels. On the panel would be Matt, because of his role as ADA Compliance Coordinator in the County, and four other people of the AAC's choice (the panelists could be on the AAC or not). The AAC also can decide on the panel discussion topics, and the library would record the panel discussion via Zoom along with the addition of an introduction, an overview of services, and a link for the tip sheets. The finished panel will last 90 minutes, which is about the maximum time for staff to step away from their work. Kate suggested that, since it is not possible to do useful introductory training by focusing on many different disabilities, grouping topics is preferable. As an example, Kate said a panelist might talk about who she/he is, what community the panelist represents, and the issues the panelist's community cares about and why. An umbrella introduction covering working with customers with similar disabilities would be included. Each panel would be followed by a quiz for feedback about what participants understood. The County always does an evaluation after training, e.g., what did participants learn, how will they use it, and anything else they would like to know about that topic.

Kate said this amount of preparation is time consuming, but the tip sheets are the legwork and are ready to use. Kate has put a placeholder on April 28 for the training Zoom room. All the times are wide open, 10 AM until 6 PM; the AAC can choose.

Matt noted that his group is revising its own training curriculum, and mutual learning between his group and MCPL about how to successfully conduct this kind of training is very useful.

Kate noted that she already requires all newly-hired staff to go through the ADA Title II training; this will be additional training.

AAC members were very pleased with the proposed training module. Jill asked, and Elizabeth confirmed, that the tip sheets the AAC sent are now in final usable form without need for additional major reviews, although the tip sheets can be modified at any point and can evolve.

Elizabeth will work with Kate and especially draw on the scenarios to let Jill know what is needed from AAC members. They will identify the timeframe for the process, and what scenarios they would like to address. Kate again emphasized the plan to keep this introductory session focused on universal information that everyone needs to hear rather than the details of the tip sheets. Jill noted that the resources in the tip sheets keep changing. Kate said the documents can be updated any time we see the need.

Francie asked if training will be available for substitutes at the circulation and information desks. Kate said that there are no plans on the horizon to bring back substitutes at all, and what will happen after the libraries fully reopen is unknown. Kate noted that there are still staff on 100 percent telework, and those people need to be reached, too.

Jonina requested that AAC members jointly come up with a timetable for regular AAC review of the tip sheets to keep training current. Elizabeth asked the AAC to determine a desired timeframe with the resources the AAC would like to review – tip sheets, online resources. Elizabeth asked that the AAC coordinate recommendations and provide them to her through Jill or at the next AAC meeting.

#### Braille Marketing Subcommittee Report

Debbie reported that the subcommittee members are Debbie, Francie, Jane, Barbara, and two other members of the Sligo Creek Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, Yasmin Reyazuddin, Renee Donalvo-Carlsen

The subcommittee initially determined if the process for putting a braille book on hold is accessible, including the step of getting a library card. They found the process works although there are some issues with the website.

Debbie asked Matt if he has staff fully devoted to the County Internet and web accessibility. Matt replied that he does not. His department works with the County IT staff for IT concerns. Debbie said that the subcommittee strongly recommends that he have his own staff; the absence is evident in questionable aspects of the County websites.

Subcommittee members mentioned specific website problems they found. Debbie said that a reader is able to obtain a library card, but some website faults led her to call the library in the process. The website never confirmed that she succeeded, but she did receive an email immediately saying that she had her library card. The website does not encourage looking around for that kind of confirmation because it times you out and you don't know the timing. However, subcommittee members found that library staff are very nice and helpful and do call back. Even when the website is inaccessible you can get help by phone.

Debbie also found that Holds 2 Go let her know that her book was waiting for her, but it was hard to schedule the hold pickup. Again, she called the library and staff helped. Yasmin Reyazuddin put in her library card number but could not find out whether her card was active or expired. She reached the list of books but did not go farther.

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Yasmin noted that NFB will be doing online public training about accessibility testing on April 14 from 1 to 5 and asked if anyone would like to participate. [It is titled "A Deep Dive into Accessibility Training" and can help anyone who wants to learn more, to do testing, or to improve their organization's web accessibility.] Register at the NFB website under Trainings. It is free.

Jane said that part of the problem is a training issue because the website is not intuitively easy to use. Elizabeth said that the library's Digital Strategies team is responsible for the layout of the web pages and is updating them now to make

navigation more obvious. Elizabeth asked for problems in finding things to be included on the list of problems to be solved. Jane and Jonina both had examples. Jonina noted that these are not unique difficulties for people with vision disabilities.

Staff need to know about the braille collection. The subcommittee members also wonder if Tim Lighter could bring the braille collection to the Library Board's attention, and Angelisa Hawes to the Commission with Disabilities, and all AAC members put a word about the braille collection into their communication systems or newsletters.

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Elizabeth noted that there is no marketing budget.

Someone wondered if the AAC could issue its own press release. Jonina noted that we are not an LAC, a topic that was tabled for discussion at this time. Elizabeth and the braille team will put together a summary and points that can be used in multiple media.

Cindy noted that the resulting information could go to many organizations and groups to increase the number of people who know there is a small braille collection available and circulating now. Debbie will use NFB communication media, and Jane will do the same for ACB. Everyone can tell teachers and even informal small groups. Jill will reach out to Monica about contacts with the school system. Debbie noted that we can do more after the library system opens up.

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Larry asked if there are outreach programs now. He recalled the value of Francie's

visits to his Leisure World low-vision group.

Elizabeth said that four people are on the outreach team. She supervised them until December 1; a branch manager now has that role temporarily. Presently the team members are primarily working in branches to fill branch needs. Elizabeth expects no staff availability for outreach for the foreseeable future.

Elizabeth described past practices, before the pandemic. Members have gone to schools, and many kinds of groups and public events like Earth Day at Brookside. They have made presentations, staffed information tables, and did some online outreach. They talked about everything, including the physical collection and online collections.

As agreed at the last meeting, Elizabeth reviewed outreach materials and found nothing specific about what the library has and does for customers with disabilities. Elizabeth will ask the library graphic designer to create an information sheet. Most brochures are focused on one need or type of resource. For example, brochure topics include high-school research, trying to get into college, where to find e-books and e-magazines, and how to find streaming movies or digital educational resources.

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Jane also urged specific outreach to disability communities. She noted that people with visual disabilities have their own library system and pay no attention to County options. People don't know about the library calendar and all the services the library offers.

Debbie suggested that the coming Zoom training include that information, too. Jill said that the AAC can do publicity, too, by regularly communicating about libraries to people in our organizations.

Elizabeth asked what social media platforms and messages would be useful. At the bottom of the MCPL webpage is a topic called iConnect to Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter where the library has a presence and the team is open to ideas.

Francie recommended that the group as a whole send ideas about outreach to Jill

within the next two weeks. Francie will send a starter list to the group.

#### Library Board Report

Tim expressed appreciation for the good meeting. Francie told Tim that everyone appreciates his emails sharing much valuable information. Tim encouraged AAC members to advocate for the library with the Council members during this time of budget stress and competition for available funds. He sent an email a few days ago about how to advocate. Some talking points include the upgraded wifi at many branches that lets people use the branches as workplaces, and the absence of fines that improves inclusion for people who can't afford fines.

Tim reported that Councilman Will Jawando plans a Virtual Library Tour. These Zoom sessions tend to focus on Covid and vaccines, but it is an opportunity for Council members to hear about libraries and also about the needs of people with disabilities.

He said that in the State Legislature a bill was put forward by the Montgomery County representative to address the fact that Amazon is limiting e-book licenses for libraries.

He noted that Friends of the Library has a new president, Pam Saussy.

Jill thanked Tim for sending information to the AAC in accessible formats. Jane has confirmed that all his materials are accessible. At Jill's request, Tim agreed to ask the Board and Friends of the Library to send information in accessible format, particularly Friends of the Library. Jane and Debbie mentioned that PDFs are not accessible.

#### County ADA Compliance Report

Matt Barkley spoke about himself and the Montgomery County ADA compliance team as background for how he can benefit the AAC in the position that Nancy Greene held before she retired. He made a similar presentation to the Commission on People with Disabilities. He said he admires the AAC's passion and work. Matt said that, like most people, he gave little thought to disability matters until he became a wheelchair user. His background includes working in a Center for Independent Living similar to Independence Now and as a member of state-wide and national councils for independent living; then a role in Fairfax County similar to the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities. He strongly believes that disability rights are civil rights and noted that having disabilities is a natural part of the human condition. He is not disabled by his need to use a



wheelchair but is disabled by stairs and narrow doorways or things similar to the inaccessible websites discussed earlier.

Matt's work at Fairfax County included library initiatives like accessibility materials for that county's Access Services Board and ensuring that every library branch had accessible kiosks, a big change. He passionately believes that libraries are essential and must be accessible.

His office is located in the Montgomery County Department of General Services. Most departmental work focuses on design and construction of buildings. His staff works with others on physical accessibility and also takes on its own projects. His office was created by a Settlement Agreement with the US Department of Justice over ADA compliance; it is also the right thing to do. He considers the ADA standards as the minimum, not the maximum. He looks at the accessibility of sidewalks, bus stops, county facilities, the website, transportation and Ride-On busses. He noted current discussions about floating bus stops, which are very popular with cyclists and not with the disability community.

Priorities come from the DOJ Settlement Agreement, resident complaints, etc., focusing on the places that are most used. The 20-some current initiatives include the refreshes and updates of libraries; he complimented Elizabeth's work. His office has a \$4.5 million annual budget, which is not enough but they make it go as far as they can. He noted that the county's ADA compliance work includes more than his department.

He said all County employees need training on working with people with disabilities people in building permits, police, parking, etc. He encouraged everyone to contact his office directly to get quicker solutions if people see accessibility problems. Call 240-777-6197 or use the website [ADAAcompliance@montgomerycounty.gov](mailto:ADAAcompliance@montgomerycounty.gov) His email is: [matthewbarkley@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:matthewbarkley@montgomerycountymd.gov).

There are six people in his department, including himself, an architect and an engineer, as well as staff who do outreach and training, technical assistance, and contractor relations.

Future meetings

Jonina suggested inviting Will Jawondo, the head of the Council's library group, to a future meeting.

## Summary of Action Items

Tim will try to find out how long before an unreturned item is declared lost, and if that differs for materials clearly intended for people with disabilities, like braille books.

All AAC members are asked to review library policies by clicking on "policies" at the bottom of the home page. Send recommendations to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, working with Kate, will send to Jill what is needed from the AAC for recording a 90-minute introductory staff training that draws on the tip sheets and includes Matt Barkley as host with about 4 more panelists who represent disability communities. The recording facilities are reserved for April 28. Include in this Zoom training the information that people with visual disabilities have their own library system and may not know about county services and resources, or things on the website like calendar and all it offers.

AAC members are invited to coordinate and create recommendations for regular reviews to keep tip sheets updated and provide those recommendations through Jill or at the next AAC meeting. AAC recommendations might usefully include a desired frequency of these reviews, and whether anything will be covered beyond tip sheets.

The Braille team will test and put together recommendations to deal with website problems of accessibility for people with visual disabilities. Debbie will coordinate this information and send it to Elizabeth and Jill. Jill will send it to the whole AAC.

All AAC members are invited to register for a free "Deep Dive into Accessibility Training" on April 14 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. This online NFB program can help anyone who wants to learn more about accessibility testing, or to improve their organization's web accessibility. Register at Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

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Jane Carona hosted the Zoom meeting. Cindy Buddington chaired the meeting.

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He said that in the State Legislature a bill was put forward by the Montgomery County representative to address the fact that Amazon is limiting e-book licenses for libraries.

He noted that Friends of the Library has a new president, Pam Saussy.

Jill thanked Tim for sending information to the AAC in accessible formats. Jane has confirmed that all his materials are accessible. At Jill's request, Tim agreed to ask the Board and Friends of the Library to send information in accessible format, particularly Friends of the Library. Jane and Debbie mentioned that PDFs are not accessible.

## County ADA Compliance Report

Matt Barkley spoke about himself and the Montgomery County ADA compliance team as background for how he can benefit the AAC in the position that Nancy Greene held before she retired. He made a similar presentation to the Commission on People with Disabilities. He said he admires the AAC's passion and work. Matt said that, like most people, he gave little thought to disability matters until he became a wheelchair user. His background includes working in a Center for Independent Living similar to Independence Now and as a member of state-wide and national councils for independent living; then a role in Fairfax County similar to the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities. He strongly believes that disability rights are civil rights and noted that having disabilities is a natural part of the human condition. He is not disabled by his need to use a wheelchair but is disabled by stairs and narrow doorways or things similar to the inaccessible websites discussed earlier.

Matt's work at Fairfax County included library initiatives like accessibility

materials for that county's Access Services Board and ensuring that every library branch had accessible kiosks, a big change. He passionately believes that libraries are essential and must be accessible.

His office is located in the Montgomery County Department of General Services. Most departmental work focuses on design and construction of buildings. His staff works with others on physical accessibility and also takes on its own projects. His office was created by a Settlement Agreement with the US Department of Justice over ADA compliance; it is also the right thing to do. He considers the ADA standards as the minimum, not the maximum. He looks at the accessibility of sidewalks, bus stops, county facilities, the website, transportation and Ride-On busses. He noted current discussions about floating bus stops, which are very popular with cyclists and not with the disability community.

Priorities come from the DOJ Settlement Agreement, resident complaints, etc., focusing on the places that are most used. The 20-some current initiatives include the refreshes and updates of libraries; he complimented Elizabeth's work. His office has a \$4.5 million annual budget, which is not enough but they make it go as far as they can. He noted that the county's ADA compliance work includes more than his department.

He said all County employees need training on working with people with disabilities ñ people in building permits, police, parking, etc.

He encouraged everyone to contact his office directly to get quicker solutions if people see accessibility problems. Call 240-777-6197 or use the website [ADAAcompliance@montgomerycounty.gov](mailto:ADAAcompliance@montgomerycounty.gov) His email is: [matthewbarkley@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:matthewbarkley@montgomerycountymd.gov).

There are six people in his department, including himself, an architect and an engineer, as well as staff who do outreach and training, technical assistance, and contractor relations.

Future meetings

Jonina suggested inviting Will Jawondo, the head of the Council's library group, to a future meeting.

Summary of Action Items

Tim will try to find out how long before an unreturned item is declared lost, and if that differs for materials clearly intended for people with disabilities, like braille books.

All AAC members are asked to review library policies by clicking on "policies" at the bottom of the home page. Send recommendations to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, working with Kate, will send to Jill what is needed from the AAC for recording a 90-minute introductory staff training that draws on the tip sheets and includes Matt Barkley as host with about 4 more panelists who represent disability communities. The recording facilities are reserved for April 28. Include in this

Zoom training the information that people with visual disabilities have their own library system and may not know about county services and resources, or things on the website like calendar and all it offers.

AAC members are invited to coordinate and create recommendations for regular reviews to keep tip sheets updated and provide those recommendations through Jill or at the next AAC meeting. AAC recommendations might usefully include a desired frequency of these reviews, and whether anything will be covered beyond tip sheets.

The Braille team will test and put together recommendations to deal with website problems of accessibility for people with visual disabilities. Debbie will coordinate this information and send it to Elizabeth and Jill. Jill will send it to the whole AAC.

All AAC members are invited to register for a free "Deep Dive into Accessibility Training" on April 14 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. This online NFB program can help anyone who wants to learn more about accessibility testing, or to improve their organization's web accessibility. Register at <https://nfb.org/programs-services/center-excellence-nonvisual-access/trainings/accessibility-boutiques?q=programs-services%2Fcenter-excellence-nonvisual-access%2Ftrainings%2Faccessibility-boutiques>

Elizabeth and the Braille team will put together points about the braille collection that can be used by MCPL and many people and organizations in multiple media. (See Jill's March 8 email, subject: Talking points for braille collection.)

Francie recommended that the group as a whole send ideas about outreach to Jill within the next two weeks. Francie will send a starter list to the group.

AAC members are encouraged to advocate for the library with the council members and to attend the Council's virtual tour sessions. Some pro-library talking points include the upgraded wifi at many branches that lets people use them as workplaces, and the absence of fines that improves inclusion for people who can't afford fines. AAC members can also speak up for their disability communities.

Tim will ask the Library Board and Friends of the Library to send materials in accessible format, particularly Friends of the Library. PDFs are not accessible.

The next AAC virtual meeting is on June 2 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

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