Contents

Webinar Recording

- Recorded on January 27, 2026
- [Watch the Video](#)
- [ASPeN Event](#)

Purpose and Context

- Part of the *Access and Usability* series focused on **Universal Design (UD)** principles and **ADA requirements** for libraries.

- Goal: Raise awareness about barriers for people with disabilities, connect participants to resources, and encourage brainstorming solutions.

Key Takeaways

- **Universal Design benefits everyone**, not just those with diagnosed disabilities.

- ADA sets minimum requirements; UD goes beyond compliance.

- Language matters: use inclusive, person-first or identity-first terms.

- Accessibility is ongoing—requires planning, resources, and community input.

Why Accessibility Matters

- **25% of Americans have a disability**, and anyone can become disabled at any time.

- Easier to design for accessibility from the start than retrofit later.

- Accessibility aligns with **library standards**: safe, comfortable, and convenient access for all.

Universal Design (UD)

- **Definition**: Design usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without adaptation or specialized design.

- Originated by **Ron Mace** in the 1990s.

Seven Principles:

1. **Equitable Use** – Same means of use for all; avoid segregation.

2. **Flexibility in Use** – Accommodates diverse preferences (e.g., ambidextrous scissors).

3. **Simple and Intuitive** – Easy to understand regardless of experience or language (e.g., universal symbols).

4. **Perceptible Information** – Communicates effectively across sensory abilities (e.g., tactile paving, audible crosswalk signals).

5. **Tolerance for Error** – Minimizes hazards and unintended actions.

6. **Low Physical Effort** – Efficient and comfortable use (e.g., lever handles, automatic doors).

7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use** – Adequate space for all users, including wheelchair access.

ADA Overview

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)** – Key titles:

  o **Title I**: Employment.
  o **Title II**: State/local government services (most libraries fall here).
  o **Title III**: Public accommodations.
- **Title II Requirements**:

  o Equal opportunity to benefit from programs/services.
  o No segregation or exclusion.
  o Reasonable modifications (e.g., service animals).
  o Physical and digital accessibility.
- **Recent Update (2024)**: Web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA) apply to government websites and mobile apps starting April 2026.

Library Examples

- **Curbside service** and **home delivery** as accessibility features.

- **Talking Book Library** for visually impaired patrons.

- **Service animals** allowed as reasonable accommodation.

- Renovation case study: Thompson Hickman Library (Virginia City, MT)

  o Historic building challenges.
  o Accessibility study funded by AARP.
  o Phased plan: parking improvements, ramps, elevator.
  o Grants used for ADA-compliant door hardware, actuators, and signage.

Digital Accessibility

- Websites must meet **WCAG 2.1 AA** standards.

- Tools mentioned:

  o WAVE WebAIM.
  o PAC PDF Accessibility Checker.
  o Adobe Pro accessibility features.

Resources and Links

- [ADA Title II](#)
- [ADA Web Accessibility Fact Sheet](#)
- [ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#) (buildings)
- [Rocky Mountain ADA Center](#)
- [Universal Design Project](#)
- [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#)
- [Montana Public Library Standards](#)
- [ADA Web Accessibility Rule (2024)](#)
- [Access Board – ADA Parking Guide](#)
- [MSL Webinar Overview on Digital Accessibility](#)
- [PAC PDF Accessibility Checker](#)
- [OCR Web Accessibility Video Series](#)
- [Web Accessibility Basics Guide](#)
- [Thompson-Hickman Library, Virginia City, MT](#)

Questions?

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Library Actions

1. Assess Current Accessibility

- **Conduct an accessibility audit** of your building and digital services.

    o Use ADA standards for physical spaces (ramps, door widths, signage).
    o Use tools like **WAVE** or **PAC PDF Checker** for websites and PDFs.

- Gather **community feedback** through surveys and public meetings to identify barriers.

2. Improve Physical Access

- Ensure **accessible parking** is located on the shortest possible route to the entrance.

- Install or upgrade:

    o **Automatic doors** or lever handles for low physical effort.
    o **Ramps** and handrails where stairs exist.
    o **Clear signage** with universal symbols and Braille where appropriate.

- Provide **adequate space** at service desks and computer stations for wheelchair users.

3. Enhance Digital Accessibility

- Update websites to meet **WCAG 2.1 AA standards**:

    o Use alt text for images.
    o Ensure color contrast and readable fonts.
    o Organize content for screen readers (proper headings, logical order).

- Make PDFs accessible:

    o Tag structure for headings and lists.
    o Add alternative text for images.

- Test regularly with free tools like **WAVE** and Adobe accessibility checker.

4. Offer Alternative Services

- Maintain **curbside pickup** and **home delivery** options for patrons with mobility challenges.

- Provide **multiple formats** for materials (e.g., Talking Books, large print, audiobooks).

- Ensure **programming access**:

    o Offer virtual participation options for events.
    o Record sessions with captions.

5. Train Staff

- Educate staff on:

  o Person-first or identity-first language.
  o ADA requirements and reasonable accommodations (e.g., service animals).
  o How to assist patrons with disabilities respectfully.

6. Plan for Long-Term Improvements

- Develop a **phased accessibility plan**:

  o Prioritize low-cost, high-impact changes first (signage, door hardware).

  o Seek grants (e.g., ALA Accessible Small and Rural Communities Grant, AARP funding).

- Incorporate **Universal Design principles** in all new construction or renovations.

7. Communicate Accessibility

- Clearly state available accommodations on your website and in the building.

- Use signage to direct patrons to accessible entrances and services.