



Contents

Webinar Recording	1
ADA Requirements & Best Practices for Libraries	1
Purpose & Context.....	1
Key Messages	2
Resources.....	4
Questions?.....	4
Accessibility Action Plan for Public Libraries	5

Webinar Recording

- Recorded on April 23, 2026
- [Watch the Video](#)
- [ASPeN Event](#)

If you'd like a shorter version, a version tailored for a board meeting, or a version focused on libraries specifically, just let me know.

ADA Requirements & Best Practices for Libraries

Based on webinar transcript, generated by Copilot.

Purpose & Context

The webinar, led by Emily Shuman (Director, Rocky Mountain ADA Center), provided guidance on how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—specifically Title II—applies to public libraries. The session aimed to help library staff understand legal responsibilities, practical implementation, and best practices for accessibility.

Key Messages

1. ADA Overview and Intent

- The ADA is a civil rights law ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- It prohibits discrimination in all public programs, services, and activities.
- Disability is defined broadly as any physical or mental impairment substantially limiting major life activities; the definition is intentionally inclusive.

2. Prevalence & Importance

- Nearly 1 in 3 adults in Montana has a disability.
- Many disabilities are non-apparent; disability status may be underreported.
- Accessibility benefits everyone, not only people with disabilities.

3. Title II Responsibilities for Libraries (Public Entities)

Libraries must:

- Provide equal access to all services, programs, and activities.
- Make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures.
- Ensure effective communication, including auxiliary aids and services.
- Maintain accessible facilities (including following 2010 ADA standards for new construction and alterations).
- Designate an ADA Coordinator, publish an ADA public notice, and maintain a grievance procedure (for entities with 50+ employees).

4. Reasonable Modifications

Libraries may need to adjust policies when necessary to allow equal access. Examples include:

- Allowing service animals despite “no pets” policies.
- Accepting alternative forms of identification.
- Permitting food/drink when needed for medical conditions.

Modifications must be reasonable and cannot cause an undue burden, fundamental alteration, or direct threat.

5. Service Animal Rules

- Only dogs and miniature horses trained to perform disability-related tasks qualify as service animals under the ADA.
- Staff may ask only two questions:
 1. Is this a service animal required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?
- No documentation, vests, or certification can be required.
- Emotional support animals are *not* service animals under the ADA.
- Service animals must be housebroken and under the handler's control; disruptive animals may be removed (but services must still be provided to the person).

6. Effective Communication Requirements

Libraries must communicate with patrons with disabilities as effectively as with others. This may include:

- Sign language interpreters
 - CART or captioning
 - Braille, large print, or accessible digital documents
 - Assistive listening systems
 - Screen-reader-compatible digital content
- Primary consideration must be given to the aid or service the individual requests.

7. Digital Accessibility (Websites & Apps)

- A new Title II rule requires public entities to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for websites and mobile apps.
- Compliance deadlines have recently been extended by one year.
- Section 504 also imposes similar requirements for entities receiving federal funding.

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



8. Best Practices for Libraries

To go beyond ADA minimums and create inclusive environments, libraries are encouraged to:

- Provide routine staff training (ADA basics, disability etiquette, service animal handling).
- Develop internal policies for accessibility and accommodation processes.
- Engage people with disabilities in planning, hiring, programming, and advisory groups.
- Build partnerships with disability organizations, independent living centers, and parent groups.
- Publicly demonstrate commitment to inclusion through website content, displays, programming, and outreach.
- Regularly solicit feedback via accessible surveys (digital and paper).
- Continuously review and improve accessibility efforts.

Resources

[Rocky Mountain ADA Center](#)

[Rocky Mountain ADA Center Channel](#)

[MSL Accessibility Statement](#)

[Montana Title 49. Human Rights § 49-4-214. Right to be accompanied by service animal-- identification for service animals in training](#)

[DPHHS Independent Living Center Webpage](#)

[Understanding WCAG: Making digital spaces welcoming for everyone - From WebJunction](#)

[Disability Etiquette - Respectful Interactions with People with Disabilities - Great Lakes ADA Center](#)

Questions?

[Marilyn Bennett](#), Outreach and Digital Resources Librarian, Montana State Library

Accessibility Action Plan for Public Libraries

Purpose

To ensure full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to strengthen equitable access for patrons and staff with disabilities in all programs, services, facilities, digital platforms, and community interactions.

1. Governance & Leadership

1.1 Appoint/Confirm ADA Coordinator

- Designate at least one staff member as ADA Coordinator (required for entities with 50+ employees).
- Publish name, phone, and email on the library website and on physical signage.

1.2 Maintain Required Public Notice

- Post an ADA public notice outlining rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations.
- Ensure it covers effective communication, reasonable modifications, grievance processes, and how to request auxiliary aids.

1.3 Maintain a Grievance Procedure

- Provide a clear method for patrons to report inaccessible services or discrimination.
- Review and respond promptly, documenting all actions.

2. Staff Training & Internal Capacity

2.1 Annual ADA & Disability Etiquette Training

Topics should include:

- Understanding ADA Title II responsibilities
- Disability etiquette and respectful interactions
- Service animal rules
- Effective communication requirements
- How to identify and implement reasonable modifications

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



2.2 Specialized Training for Key Roles

- Front-line staff: service animals, de-escalation, communication support
- IT staff: digital accessibility and WCAG
- Facilities staff: ADA building standards and barrier identification

3. Accessibility of Physical Spaces

3.1 Conduct a Facility Self-Evaluation

- Review all library spaces: entrances, bathrooms, shelves, furniture layout, signage, program rooms.
- Ensure accessibility and compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards for new construction and alterations.

3.2 Develop or Update Transition Plan

- Identify barriers and create a timeline for remediation.
- Prioritize low-cost, high-impact improvements (e.g., signage, door hardware, seating options).

3.3 Establish Service Animal Procedure

Ensure staff know:

- The two permissible questions
- No documentation can be required
- Behavioral criteria for removal
- Emotional support animals are not service animals

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



4. Policy Review & Reasonable Modifications

4.1 Review All Patron-Facing Policies Through an Accessibility Lens

Examples:

- “No food/drink” policies
- ID requirements for library cards
- Time limits on computer use
- Space reservations

Modify policies where necessary to ensure equal access.

4.2 Create Clear Procedures for Accommodation Requests

- Provide script or guidance for staff on how to respond.
- Train staff on handling one-off or informal modifications (flexibility is key).

5. Effective Communication & Auxiliary Aids

5.1 Establish a Clear Process for Requesting Communication Support

Make it easy for patrons to request:

- Sign language interpreters
- CART captioning
- Large print or Braille materials
- Alternative digital formats
- Assistive listening devices

5.2 Build a Vendor List

- Maintain a list of local sign language interpreters, CART providers, assistive tech vendors, and other resources.

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



5.3 Internal Stock of Basic Aids

Aim to maintain:

- Large-print handouts
- Pen & paper for communication
- Portable assistive listening devices
- Clear masks for lip-reading accessibility

6. Digital Accessibility

6.1 Adopt WCAG Standards for Websites and Apps

- Begin or continue implementing WCAG 2.1 AA for all digital content, as required by the new Title II rule.

6.2 Audit Library Website and Online Services

Check for:

- Keyboard navigation
- Alt text
- Captions and transcripts for videos
- Screen-reader compatibility
- Proper color contrast

6.3 Ensure All New Digital Purchases Are Accessible

- Require vendors to provide VPATs or accessibility statements.
- Prioritize products designed for inclusive use.

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



7. Programming & Community Engagement

7.1 Make All Programs Accessible

- Offer captioning, ASL, or alternative formats as needed.
- Ensure staff know how to handle accommodation requests in advance.

7.2 Form an Accessibility or Access Advisory Committee

- Include community members with disabilities.
- Review programs, services, and spaces regularly.

7.3 Partner With Disability Organizations

Examples include:

- Centers for Independent Living
- Parent support groups
- Local disability councils

8. Workforce Inclusion

8.1 Create an Inclusive Workplace for Staff with Disabilities

- Encourage flexible scheduling, remote work options when possible.
- Permit sensory tools, seating modifications, lighting adjustments.
- Promote disability etiquette and respectful communication.

8.2 Recruit, Hire, and Support Employees with Disabilities

- Develop inclusive hiring practices.
- Engage staff in disability-related decision-making.

Access and Usability Series

ADA and Libraries

April 23, 2026



9. Continuous Improvement and Feedback

9.1 Provide Accessible Feedback Channels

- Digital and print surveys
- Anonymous drop boxes
- Option for phone or in-person feedback

9.2 Annual Review of Accessibility Initiatives

- Review progress toward goals.
- Update the transition plan and training schedule.
- Integrate new technologies and best practices.