Inclusive Service Skills for Library Staff

30 August – 3 September 2027
Addis Ababa

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Ref: 103600415_225231 **Date:** 30 August – 3 September 2027 **Location:** Addis Ababa **Fees:** 4500 Euro

Course Overview

The Advancing Accessibility: Building Library Systems to Serve All Users Equitably course is designed to equip library professionals with the essential skills and strategies needed to create inclusive, welcoming, and equitable services for all patrons, including people with disabilities. This program emphasizes practical training in communication, accessible design, assistive technology, and inclusive programming, ensuring that libraries can meet the diverse needs of their communities.

Through a combination of global best practices, universal design principles, and real-world case studies, participants will learn how to deliver exceptional customer service, conduct accessibility audits, and adapt both physical and digital services. The course offers comprehensive insights into visual impairment support, hearing impairment services, autism-friendly practices, and accommodations for cognitive disabilities.

Participants will leave with a clear action plan, practical tools, and the confidence to implement disability inclusion training for librarians, making accessibility a central part of their library's mission. By embedding accessibility into every aspect of library operations, libraries can strengthen their role as leaders in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion for all.

Target Audience

- Library directors, managers, and supervisors
- Public services and reference librarians
- Circulation and customer service staff
- Children's and youth services librarians
- Outreach and community engagement coordinators
- IT and digital services staff in libraries
- Facilities managers in library environments

Targeted Organizational Departments

- Public services departments providing front-line support
- IT and digital services units ensuring web and online catalog accessibility
- Facilities and operations overseeing accessible library space design
- Outreach and community engagement, designing inclusive programs
- HR and staff development are implementing disability inclusion training for librarians
- Collection development and technical services teams ensuring accessible formats are available

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Targeted Industries

- Public libraries
- Academic and school libraries
- Special libraries healthcare, corporate, law, government
- Museum and cultural heritage libraries
- Archives and community information centers

Course Offerings

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Apply inclusive library services training strategies to interact effectively with patrons with disabilities.
- Conduct accessibility audits of library spaces, services, and digital platforms.
- Implement universal design for libraries to ensure equitable use of facilities.
- Deliver respectful and effective communication with patrons who have visual, hearing, cognitive, or autism spectrum needs.
- Adapt programs, events, and services to align with inclusive library environment best practices.
- Integrate assistive technologies and accessible formats into collections and services.
- Create sustainable action plans for advancing accessibility in their library systems.

Training Methodology

The course uses a highly interactive approach that combines theory with practice. Training methods include:

- **Case Studies:** Real-world examples of inclusive libraries from around the world.
- **Role-Play Exercises:** Practicing customer service skills for patrons with different disabilities.
- **Workshops:** Redesigning spaces, programs, and digital services with accessibility in mind.
- **Group Discussions:** Sharing experiences and solving common challenges collaboratively.
- **Accessibility Audits:** Hands-on analysis of library environments, websites, and services.
- **Reflection Sessions:** Daily reviews to reinforce learning and apply it to participants' libraries.

This library accessibility training program ensures that learning is practical, engaging, and directly applicable to the daily work of library professionals.

Course Toolbox

- IFLA Guidelines for Making Libraries Accessible
- Equal Access: Universal Design for Libraries checklist
- Accessible Communication Toolkit
- Disability-inclusive customer service guidelines
- Accessibility audit templates for physical and digital services
- Program adaptation checklists for autism-friendly library training
- Examples of inclusive signage and accessible wayfinding systems
  Note: Tools are not physically provided; participants receive downloadable resources, templates, and best practice guides.

Course Agenda

Day 1: Foundations of Accessibility in Libraries

- **Topic 1:** Understanding disability diversity and its impact on library services
- **Topic 2:** Global accessibility standards and library-specific obligations
- **Topic 3:** The role of libraries in advancing inclusion and equity
- **Topic 4:** Identifying barriers in physical, digital, and service environments
- **Topic 5:** Principles of universal design for libraries
- **Topic 6:** Building staff disability awareness as a foundation for inclusive service
- **Reflection & Review:** Identifying current gaps and opportunities in participants' libraries

Day 2: Communication and Interaction with Patrons with Disabilities

- **Topic 1:** Core principles of accessible communication in libraries
- **Topic 2:** Supporting patrons with visual impairments: tools and strategies
- **Topic 3:** Communicating with patrons who have hearing impairments
- **Topic 4:** Serving patrons with cognitive disabilities and learning differences
- **Topic 5:** Autism-friendly practices and sensory-sensitive service design
- **Topic 6:** Respectful language, cultural sensitivity, and avoiding stereotypes
- **Reflection & Review:** Role-play exercises on disability-inclusive customer service

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Day 3: Accessible Library Spaces and Technologies

- **Topic 1:** Conducting accessibility audits for library spaces
- **Topic 2:** Inclusive design for entrances, reading areas, and service points
- **Topic 3:** Signage, wayfinding, and information in accessible formats
- **Topic 4:** Assistive technologies for patrons with visual, hearing, or mobility needs
- **Topic 5:** Adapting collections: Braille, large print, audio, and digital content
- **Topic 6:** Creating quiet zones and sensory-friendly areas in libraries
- **Reflection & Review:** Hands-on activity designing an inclusive space improvement plan

Day 4: Inclusive Programming and Digital Services

- **Topic 1:** Designing programs and events for diverse audiences
- **Topic 2:** Inclusive storytime and educational programming adaptations
- **Topic 3:** Partnering with community disability organizations for outreach
- **Topic 4:** Web accessibility compliance for library websites and online catalogs
- **Topic 5:** Delivering virtual library programs inclusively
- **Topic 6:** Digital accessibility: captioning, transcripts, and alternative formats
- **Reflection & Review:** Group work to adapt an existing program into an accessible model

Day 5: Sustaining Accessibility and Building Inclusive Leadership

- **Topic 1:** Developing accessibility policies and procedures for libraries
- **Topic 2:** Training staff and volunteers for long-term inclusion practices
- **Topic 3:** Monitoring and evaluating accessibility initiatives
- **Topic 4:** Securing funding and resources for accessibility projects
- **Topic 5:** Advocacy and leadership: libraries as champions of inclusion
- **Topic 6:** Creating an accessibility action plan tailored to your library
- **Reflection & Review:** Presentation of participants' action plans and peer feedback

FAQ

What specific qualifications or prerequisites are needed for participants before enrolling in the course?

No prerequisites are required. The course is designed for library professionals at all levels who want to improve accessibility in their institutions.

How long is each day's session, and is there a total number of hours required for the entire course?

Each day runs for approximately 4–5 hours, totaling 20–25 hours across the 1 week, including interactive activities and group sessions.

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How does this course prepare library staff to serve patrons with disabilities in practice?

The course combines theory with role-play, case studies, and practical audits, ensuring that staff gain hands-on experience and leave with actionable skills to implement immediately.

How This Course is Different from Other Inclusive Library Training Programs

This program goes beyond compliance training by equipping library professionals with practical, service-oriented skills to interact effectively with patrons with disabilities. It integrates universal design for libraries, accessible communication practices, and real-world program adaptation, all based on globally recognized guidelines such as the IFLA accessibility standards and Equal Access frameworks.
Unlike general accessibility workshops, this course is tailored specifically for library contexts, providing participants with actionable tools such as accessibility audit templates, communication guides, and inclusive program checklists. By the end of the program, library staff will not only understand the principles of accessibility but also know how to apply them in their daily interactions, making accessibility an integral part of their library's culture and mission.