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From the Editor...

According to data from the 2000 census, 28.9% of households in the United States include at least one person with a disability. This does not include individuals living in group homes or “households made up of unrelated individuals.” The census also shows that disability rates are even higher in the South and in rural areas. Add to these numbers the fact that the median income for households with a disabled family member is only \$39,155, while the median income for households with only able-bodied individuals is \$54,515.

These numbers give you a small inkling of why we’re talking about people with disabilities and libraries. Because people with disabilities—just like people without disabilities--*need* libraries, and because the number of people with disabilities in your community may be much larger than you think.

The other reason that we’re talking about disabilities in libraries is the fact that nearly every one of us is only temporarily able-bodied. As I write this, one of our librarians just called in to tell us that she broke a bone near her knee and can’t come to work, possibly for months. For those of us who have had an injury or major surgery, we know what it feels like to be unable to fully function physically and/or mentally, and the challenges it takes to live our everyday lives with a functional challenge. Imagine what it is like to know that the challenge won’t just be for this week, or this year, but for the rest of your life.

The articles in this issue are aimed at helping library patrons with disabilities gain access to the information and library resources that they

need. Two articles, one by [Anne and J. Michael Pemberton](#) and another by [William Black, Amy Burks, and Mayo Taylor](#), cover broad issues of accessibility in libraries. Each takes a slightly different perspective on the topic, with the Pemberton piece specifically addressing inexpensive changes that we can make in our libraries. Black, Burks, and Taylor, on the other hand, focus on “universal usability.” Meanwhile, [Sandy Cohen](#) discusses very specific things that we can do to facilitate communication with patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

[Celia Szarejko](#) takes on the pressing issue of the accessibility of virtual libraries. Not only do we have to look at our own library web pages to make them accessible, but we need to take into consideration accessibility features when we select electronic information resources for our patrons.

[Kathy Campbell](#) addresses collection development of children’s books that touch on topics of disability. She makes the excellent point that children’s books can help normalize the perception children have of people with disabilities, and she offers a number of suggestions for selecting good books in this arena. Collection development resources for adult collections are addressed in this Weblibliography.

Another group of articles provides information on services to which we can refer individuals. Sandy Cohen writes on the [Library Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#); Ruth Hemphill and Ed Byrne cover the [Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped](#); and Fran Ziglar gives a history of the [Nashville Talking Library](#).

We close out this issue with personal reflections. Our [interview column](#) features patrons with disabilities telling about their experiences of libraries. From the other side of the desk, [Fran Ziglar’s biographical essay](#) on her experience working in libraries reminds us that, when hiring anyone, we should (to use the slogan of [ability.org](#)), “see the ability, not the disability.”

-[Marie F. Jones](#), TL editor

Work Cited

Wang, Qi. 2005. *Disability and American Families 2000*. (Retrieved April 1, 2006 from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/censr-23.pdf>.)