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Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: An International Approach

Edited by
Frank Kurt Cylke

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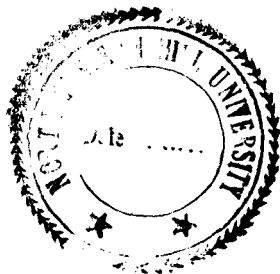
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Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: An International Approach

Key papers presented at the
IFLA Conference 1978
Štrbské Pleso, ČSSR

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PREFACE

Access to information is vital if an individual is to function effectively in our rapidly developing society. Blind and physically handicapped individuals require the same accessibility as their sighted and nonhandicapped associates to data and other processed material if they are to operate personally and professionally without disadvantage.

Librarians have a responsibility to provide information in a usable form to all people. Librarians serving blind and physically handicapped individuals share this responsibility, and thus have the duty to provide data and information in appropriate tactile, recorded, and other pertinent formats.

The question before librarians, therefore, is how the information transfer process can operate effectively at local, national, and international levels. How best can librarians serve their clients who have a need for information in special formats?

Background

For many years library service for blind and physically handicapped individuals has had nearly as many organizational locations as there are nations. Many countries consider the service an adjunct of its welfare services and some place it in the library orbit; some utilize private organizations as service points and some utilize the public sector.

Library service for the handicapped has the same philosophical base as that for the nonhandicapped. Many of the service and technical approaches are identical; those not identical are quite closely allied. Although providing appropriate library material for blind and handicapped people has necessitated the utilization of mechanical, electrical, and electronic engineering disciplines, the medium selected must be related to service and library philosophy.

IFLA

On Tuesday, September 6, 1977, librarians serving blind and physically handicapped individuals met, on special invitation, with members of the International Federation of Library Associations' (IFLA) Hospital Libraries Section. Those present discussed the need to organize within the IFLA structure to develop common technical and service guidelines.

FORMATS IN NON-PRINT MEDIA FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

A Paper Prepared by Paul E. Thiele

SUMMARY

Many diverse formats in the field of non-print media for the blind and visually handicapped have developed over the years. These formats in the production of embossed (braille), recorded, and enlarged print publication are not always compatible in that they require either special skills on the part of the user or specialized equipment for playback and listening. Quite unlike print materials, whose forms, with a few exceptions, are more or less universal, materials prepared in alternative forms for the blind and visually handicapped are represented in many formats and media. This diversification of formats presents a formidable barrier to successful international exchange of such materials.

The development of formats has deep historical roots, based on lack of communication and lack of overall direction among agencies serving the blind and handicapped. Today, widely diverging formats are closely linked to technological changes.

The IFLA Working Group on Libraries will have to address itself to the problems of formats and to the finding of solutions to promote the sharing of library materials for the blind and handicapped.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for dialogue among special book-lending and producing agencies of the world on the general topic of reduction of formats to a number

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COPYRIGHT AND LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

A Paper Prepared by Françoise Hébert

SUMMARY

Agencies which produce and distribute materials for the blind often encounter copyright problems which restrict their ability to serve blind readers. Yet they have never organized themselves to pressure for an amendment of copyright laws to remove these obstacles to service. The IFLA Working Group on Libraries for the Blind must define goals and objectives in the area of copyright, and begin to work to achieve these goals at the level of national copyright laws and international copyright conventions.

INTRODUCTION

Copyright is a subject which arouses the passion to give battle. It is a complex and controversial area of the law in which there are two opposing sides: the creators and the consumers.

Copyright creators are authors and others who have produced a work of intellect. Also on this side of the equation are assignees such as publishers and other intermediaries. Copyright consumers are those who use the creator's product, including those who seek to use these works in a form different from the original. The Working Group is comprised of a small and specialized number of copyright consumers who take a copyrighted work such as a book and produce it in another medium for persons unable to read print because of a visual or physical handicap. This new product is then loaned, sold, or given to blind readers, and sometimes it is made available by gift, exchange, or sale to persons or agencies outside the normal constituency of the producer.

THE AUTHOR

Françoise Hébert is Director of Library Services for The Canadian National Institute for the Blind located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

POSTAL REGULATIONS AND CUSTOM LAW

A Paper Prepared by Alfred D. Hagle

SUMMARY

This paper provides information on the distribution of library materials for the blind and physically handicapped through the international postal system. It includes information on acceptance of materials as postage-free matter in international mails under the most recent Acts of the Universal Postal Union at Lausanne in 1974 and recent developments under the Florence Agreement and its Protocol adopted at Nairobi on November 26, 1976; these accords enable the duty-free entry of library materials for the blind and physically handicapped into participating countries.

Recommendations are made for IFLA members to use international mail to achieve a more effective interchange of library materials for the blind and physically handicapped.

Collection of data for this paper was possible through the help and cooperation of Mr. Michael J. Regan, Office of International Postal Affairs, and Miss Kathleen A. Mullin, International Mail Classification Division, U.S. Postal Service; Dr. Stanley Kramer, Special Import Program Division, U.S. Department of Commerce; Mr. William O'Brien, U.S. State Department; and Mr. Arthur Isaacs, U.S. Bureau of Customs.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

A Paper Prepared by Anna Ubostad

INTRODUCTION

To develop an effective talking-book and braille book service, it is necessary to specialize. This is true when it comes to our relationship to the readers; our relationship to the public library service in general; and our relationship to skills demanded and groups of people necessary for the production and distribution of these books.

The bigger the library, the more expert we need to be in important, interesting, and even new fields, with the aim of creating the best possible literature and library service to the blind and partially sighted.

Expert knowledge is absolutely necessary, and specialization inevitable, if we have any chance of solving our share of this task. All the time we must be aware of pitfalls: the subject in itself may be so absorbing that we forget for whom we are working, what they need and want from us. We may lose our ability to listen to, discuss with, and respect the users of the library service we are engaged in building up and developing. Our own professional curiosity and our ambitions may become the prime motivation of our work. We actually may forget the simple fact that without the blind and partially sighted person we and our knowledge are superfluous.

Listed in this paper are organizations with which the IFLA Working Group on Libraries for the Blind should develop close cooperation.

THE AUTHOR

Anna Ubostad is Chief Librarian and Director of The Norwegian Association of the Blind in Oslo, Norway.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CATALOGING MATERIALS FOR THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED

A Paper Prepared by David Shumaker

INTRODUCTION

Significant international exchange of books for blind and physically handicapped readers depends on access to clearly presented, useful information about the reading materials available from other countries. Catalogs must contain the data needed to identify and select books, and must be arranged to facilitate searching. Standardization holds great promise for making catalogs and cataloging data from one country understandable in another. It will also reduce the cataloging costs incurred when one country acquires a copy of an item produced in another country. Standardization will allow the country to acquire the bibliographic record for the item, and save some of the original cataloging cost.

The functions of an alphabetical catalog have been defined as:

- a) to show whether the library contains a particular book, and
- b) to show which works by a particular author and which editions of a particular work are in the library.(1)

In addition, a subject or classified catalog shows which books on a particular topic are in the library. Many elements help to serve these functions, such as rules for filing, specified character sets, transliteration schemes (if records in various alphabets are filed together) and rules for the form and content of the individual bibliographic record. All of them are subject to international standardization, and all of the standards would help make a catalog from one country easily intelligible in another. The most basic of these elements, however, is

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