Bay Area Library and Information Systems (BALIS) Innovation Grant Report:

SFPL Library Accessibility Toolkit

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The San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) is grateful to BALIS for providing grant funds that made it possible to create and distribute a total of 35 SFPL Library Accessibility Toolkits to SFPL Branch libraries and Main Library subject reference desks. Though this project has progressed much more slowly than originally hoped for and projected, it has had a successful roll-out.

Project Summary
The San Francisco Public Library is nearing completion of an ambitious Branch Library Improvement Program that will make all SFPL buildings accessible for all visitors. An increasing number of new users with disabilities are visiting the renovated and new SFPL facilities. Many of them enter their neighborhood libraries with high expectations and needs for accommodations beyond ramps and accessible restrooms. However, they don’t necessarily need sophisticated or expensive accommodations like computers with assistive technology or sign language interpreter services. SFPL Library Accessibility Toolkits are storage boxes that contain simple assistive devices for use in Library facilities and a binder with supporting information for staff; they are intended to improve the user experience of people with disabilities. Toolkits have been placed at 27 SFPL neighborhood Branch libraries and at 7 subject reference desks in the Main Library.

Devices in the Toolkits were selected after soliciting suggestions from librarians and people with disabilities. Specifically, queries were sent to a number of discussion lists, members of ALA’s Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies Division, ALA’s Libraries Serving Specialized Populations Section, Bay Area Disability Services Librarians and the Disability Community. A visit to the Adaptations Store at San Francisco’s LightHouse for the Blind was very useful; staff members there prepared for the visit by asking customers what they would like to have available for them in the Library. Finally, a local hearing loss consultant helped select a simple and sturdy one-to-one assistive listening device.

Included along with the assistive devices is a binder that includes: information about an ADA Notice sign that was distributed and posted at each branch, detailing how staff members can refer users who need more assistance or more sophisticated accommodations to SFPL Access Services staff; instructions for an Accessible Facility Checklist that is completed at each Branch Library and on each Main Library floor before opening every morning; tip sheets and guidelines about how to assist people with a variety of disabilities; information about service and support animals; and, a checklist with information about each item in the toolkit and how it is used.

Roll Out
- Toolkits were introduced at SFPL Adult Services meetings and a meeting of Branch Managers.
- Presentations at Branch library and Main Floor meetings are planned for December 2011 – March 2012.
The project was reviewed at a meeting of Bay Area Disability Services Librarians (BADSL); representatives from Berkeley Public Library, Contra Costa County Library, San Jose Public Library, the CA Department of Education and the CA Department of Rehabilitation were in attendance.

All of the information in the Toolkit binder will be available to SFPL staff via our Intranet starting on 12/15/2011.

An article about the Toolkits appears in SFPL’s January 2012 At the Library newsletter.

Information about the Toolkits will be posted on the public Web site.

To make information available for interested people outside SFPL, documents from the Toolkit binder will be posted on the Bay Area Disability Services Librarians FaceBook page.

Suggestions for more ways to make information readily available to other BALIS / PLP libraries would be greatly appreciated.

Evaluation

The project will be evaluated based upon usage after a one-year period. Evaluation tools/metrics will include:

- Feedback from SFPL staff and other service providers via an online survey instrument, measuring usability, most commonly utilized tools and overall perception of the usefulness of the kits.
- Data on the number of uses in sample locations.
- Suggestions for improvements or added functionality.

Assistive devices in the Toolkits include the following:

**For People who are Blind or have Vision Disabilities**

“Ergotouch” 2X hand-held magnifier

This is an economically priced and effective magnifying glass.

Magnifying sheet - 8.5” X 11”

The size of this is magnifier makes it useful for viewing illustrations, maps, etc.
Signature guide

When placed on a sheet where people need to sign their name, this simple tool makes it easier for users to write in the correct location.

Page writing guide / reading guide

Standard line spacing makes this useful for people filling out print forms.

18-Inch Braille+Large Print Ruler

This simple desk tool has universally accessible design.

Sanford 20/20 pen

The unscented ink from these inexpensive bold pens doesn’t bleed through paper. Bold lines are easier for people with low vision to read. 2 per toolkit.

For People who have Dexterity Disabilities

Roberts Book Holder

Accommodates books and magazines of varied sizes and weights.
Pencil Grip
(for children or adults with smaller hands)

Pencil Grip Jumbo
(for adults with larger hands)

Ergo Pencil Grips provide greater comfort and control for both right and left handed users, especially those with rheumatoid arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome. Fit on most any pencil or pen. 2 each per toolkit.

For People who are Hard of Hearing

Pocketalker Ultra Amplifier with Neckloop
This small personal amplifier, for one-on-one communications, can be used at a service desk, when walking with a person to the stacks, or in a public computer class or program. The neckloop is used by people who have personal hearing aids.

Headphones
Used with the Pocketalker by people who don’t have hearing aids.

Headphone Disposable Covers
Made of sheer, medical grade poly, these should be replaced after each use. Initially: 100 covers per toolkit.

For People who have Learning Disabilities

18-Inch Braille+Large Print Ruler
This simple desk tool has universally accessible design. Rulers can help people write more legibly by providing a horizontal line to use as a reference. They can also be placed under the line of text currently being read, so that the reader is not distracted by the text that immediately follows.
“Ergotouch” 2X hand-held magnifier

This is an economically priced and effective magnifying glass.

Magnifying sheet - 8.5” X 11”

The size of this magnifier makes it useful for viewing illustrations, maps, etc. Increasing text size can be a useful accommodation for people with LD.

Pencil Grip
(for children or adults with smaller hands)

Pencil Grip Jumbo
(for adults with larger hands)

Ergo Pencil Grips make pens or pencils easier to hold, which may make writing easier for both right and left handed users. Fit on most any pencil or pen. 2 each per toolkit.