

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

# Assessing the Needs of Users with Disabilities in Pursuit of More Accessible, Inclusive Libraries

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## PRESENTATION PLAN

- Background
- Goals for this study
- Methods
- Findings
- Recommendations and next steps

# Background

# In-Depth User Studies

- User study of [1G undergraduates](#) (2017)
- Mixed methods study of [Black undergraduate and graduate students](#) (2019)
- COVID pause
- User study of international students (in progress)



## How this study came about

- Heard feedback about accessibility of library services and spaces from 2020 student survey
- Paused study of international students
- Conducted interviews by Zoom for convenience, safety, and increased access
- Learned about users' experiences with campus and the library during the height of the pandemic

# Goals for this study

## Research Questions

- To what extent are Libraries supportive of disabled users, caregivers, and allies?
- How might library staff make library spaces, web interfaces, collections, and services more supportive for these users?

## Goals

- Deepen our understanding of current services
- Assess effectiveness of services and spaces for users with disabilities, including allies and caregivers
- Recommend improvements or new services

# Methods

# Library Accessibility Services Environmental Scan

Chadwick Dunefsky and Carrie Wilson, AUX Practicum Students

This report summarizes key findings of the library accessibility environmental scan conducted during November 2021 (see full details in [this spreadsheet](#)). The foundations of this environmental scan were a preliminary evaluation of the [DUI Services for Patrons with Disabilities](#) webpage, an analysis of a survey of users with disabilities, and AUX graduate assistant Candice Wang's [literature review](#) on the same subject.

We surveyed seven academic libraries and two public libraries<sup>1</sup> for the design of library accessibility information webpages, the types of services and resources provided, and the staffing models for both addressing the needs of patrons with disabilities as well as internally assessing library accessibility improvements. We also interviewed User Experience Librarian Robin Davis (NC State Libraries) to gain further insights into her accessibility liaison position (see [Appendix A](#)). We also contacted Accessibility Coordinator Andy Andrews (University of Washington), but due to time constraints, we were not able to set up an interview.

## Key Findings and Takeaways

Our key findings from this environmental scan are divided into two sections: first, how different libraries make accessibility information available on their websites and, second, what different staffing models are possible for addressing library accessibility.

### Accessibility Services Information on Library Websites

In this section, we will cover how different libraries make information about book delivery, facilities, maps, and assistive technology available on their websites.

#### Book Delivery

In 2017, JJ Pionke interviewed patrons on how they “view the library’s accessibility at a large academic institution” (p. 48). These patrons shared that “there were a wide range of inconsistencies regarding physical access to spaces and materials from poor lighting to aisles not wide enough for wheelchairs” (p. 52). Library stacks are generally not designed to be accessible for patrons with physical disabilities. Academic libraries can provide resources to combat the inaccessibility of library stacks on their library website. These resources might include book delivery to various locations on campus or maps detailing the structure of the library.

## Learning from others

- Literature review
- Environmental scan
- Campus groups, including Student Disability Access Office, Duke Disability Alliance, and Disability and Access Initiative

## Informational Interviews and Previous Assessment

- Spoke with leaders of campus disability groups to gather info about community and previous assessment work at Duke
- Reviewed results from a 2018 Accessibility Survey distributed by Duke Disability Alliance
- Survey data was helpful to gain context for general accessibility issues at Duke, but Libraries were rarely mentioned by respondents

# Survey Design

- Demographics (status at Duke, disability status)
- Library usage (which libraries, how often)
- Barriers to visiting libraries
- Satisfaction with physical spaces
- Satisfaction with remote or online services
- Additional comments

## Feedback/Distribution

- Received input on survey draft from Dr. Marion Quirici and Duke Disability Alliance students
- Dr. Quirici and DDA helped distribute survey via mailing list and social media
- Also sent to library staff for redistribution, advertised on library social media
- Survey ran from Feb. 8th to March 1st
- Incentive: drawing for \$50 Amazon Gift Card

## Survey Analysis

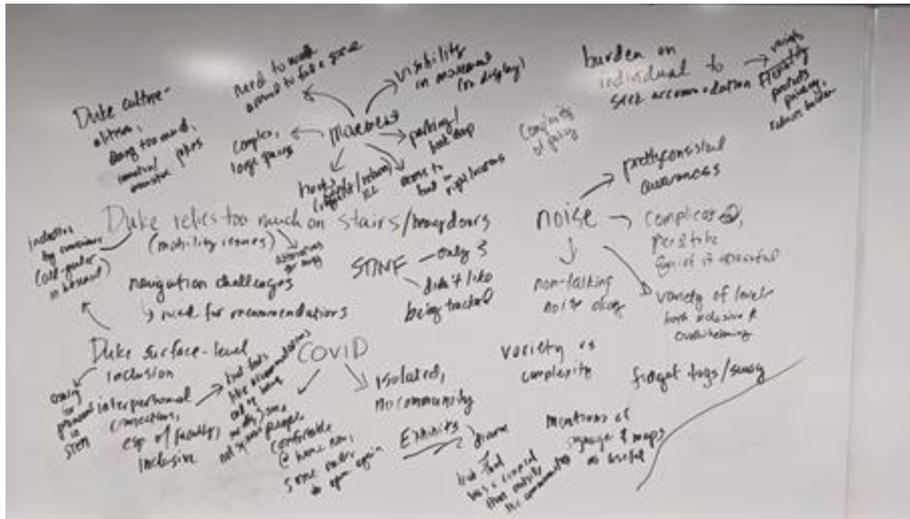
- Total responses: 90
- Descriptive statistics for quantitative data
- Manually coded free-text comments (~60 comments across 6 questions)
- Synthesized into themes/recommendations

# Semi-Structured Interviews

- Welcoming spaces
- Campus accessibility
- Library accessibility

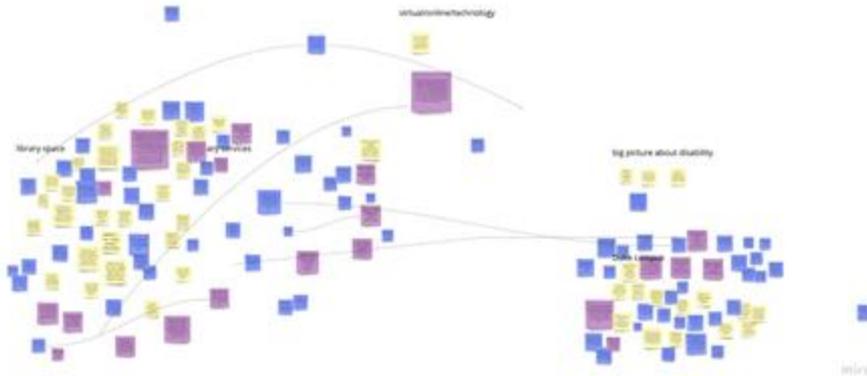
## Interview Participation and Analysis

- 37 Survey participants volunteered for follow-up interviews
- 20 completed screener survey
- Invited three groups:
  - Individuals with disabilities (2 interviews)
  - Caregivers/family members (1 interview)
  - Allies (1 interview)
- Length: 30-60 minutes
- Incentive: \$15 Amazon Gift Card per person



## Affinity mapping to analyze interview data

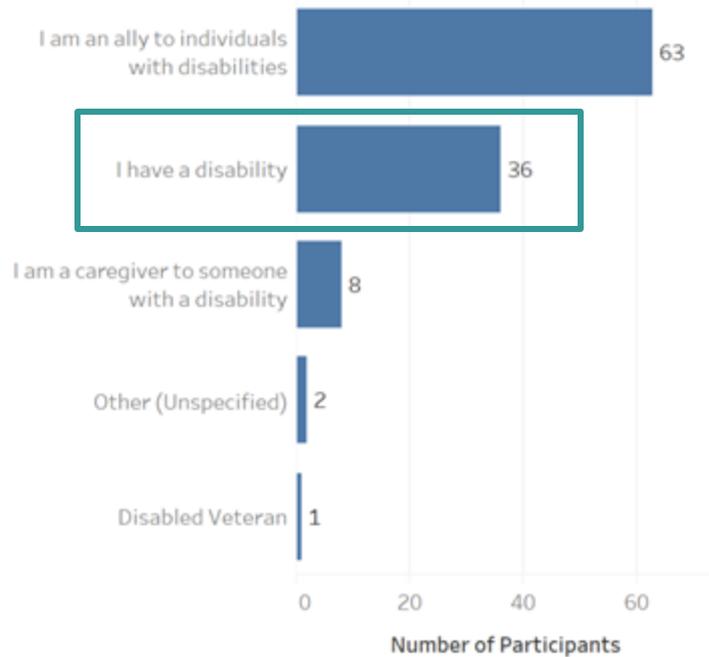
- Team gathered in person and online to review transcripts
- Identified key quotes and comments
- Developed high-level themes (e.g., spaces, technology/digital resources)
- Used Miro board to categorize comments by theme, color coded by user group



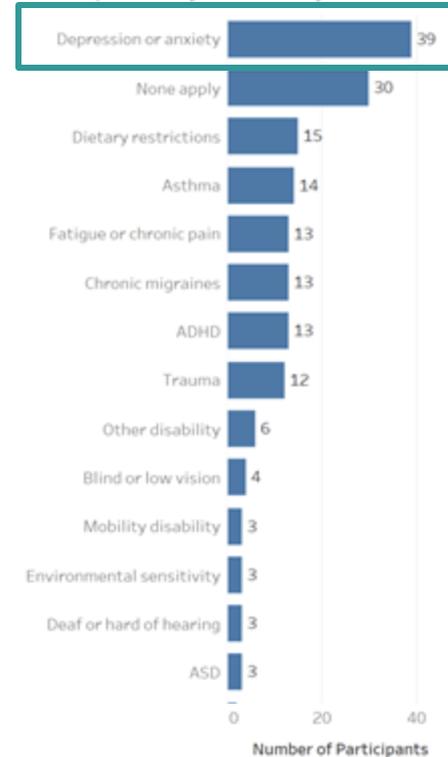
# Findings

# Survey Demographics: Is it a disability?

## Participants by Disability Identification



## Participants by Disability





## Campus Themes

- Duke's elite campus culture is generally not inclusive
- The built environment of campus is not accessible for people with physical disabilities
- University systems and policies are difficult to navigate for people with disabilities



“Another part of the culture [at Duke] is doing so much all the time...it’s really not feasible for a lot of neurodivergent people and then they’re kind of shamed for not being able to take on as much. Or alternatively, you just take on that much and then it breaks you down...it makes you feel like not wanting to share if you’re struggling with something.”

INTERVIEWEE WHO IDENTIFIES AS DISABLED

“The lack of knowledge of resources has made me feel unsupported, like if I don’t know what resources are available, or I’m not well versed in them, it can be hard for me to support other people.”

INTERVIEWEE WHO IDENTIFIES AS AN ALLY

# WELCOME to the LIBRARY

WE INVITE YOU TO

Learn *actively*  
Explore *freely*  
Think *critically*  
Celebrate *diversity*  
Respect *everybody*  
Build *community*

## Library Themes

- The Libraries are generally seen as more inclusive than broader campus
- Space needs vary widely from person-to-person, so having a broad variety of findable spaces is key
- Communicating available spaces, policies, and services is important but challenging
- Explicit efforts to be welcoming to people with diverse needs are appreciated

### Find Library Spaces

Reserve Group Study Rooms

Noise Level	Features	Library	Find spaces by name or description
<input type="checkbox"/> Conversational Study (45)	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-reservable (30)	<input type="checkbox"/> Perkins Library (36)	<input type="text" value="lights, armchairs, tables, etc."/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet Study (15)	<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Boston Library (12)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Absolute Quiet (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Reservable (14)	<input type="checkbox"/> UMass Library (8)	

Results (64)



Perkins Library, 2nd Floor

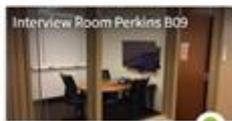
Group Study Room

8 reservable rooms for group research, small (2-4 people), medium (4-6 people), large (10-12)



Perkins Library, 2nd Floor

Reservable interview room with telephone (number: 524-660-3910)



Perkins Library, Lower Level 2 (L2)

Reservable interview room with telephone (number: 524-660-5425), whiteboard, table seating

“I don’t think [the library] is inherently inaccessible, but I do not think it is accessible. I think it’s kind of neutral. And that it’s there, and a lot of disabled people choose not to use it, because it’s not additionally accessible. I wish they had more materials to provide for people with disabilities...or at least a space where disabled people can study and feel like they are surrounded by people who will be respectful.”

INTERVIEWEE WHO IDENTIFIES AS DISABLED

“Many spaces in [the library] have noisy ventilation systems. For someone wearing hearing aids, this can be very disruptive.”

“Emphasis on quiet on every level makes it extremely hard for me to study while having tics without a study room, which is often already booked. I am afraid of being asked to be quiet or being stared at by other students.”

COMMENTS FROM TWO SURVEY RESPONDENTS



# Recommendations and next steps

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Duke University Libraries website. The header includes the Duke University Libraries logo, user account options, a search bar, and a main navigation menu with items like 'Search & Find', 'Using the Library', 'Research Support', 'Course Support', 'Libraries', and 'About'. Below the header, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Services > Services for Patrons with Disabilities'. The main content area features a large heading 'Services for Patrons with Disabilities' followed by a paragraph stating the library's commitment to equitable access. Two main sections are visible: 'Accessing Library Buildings' and 'Library Spaces and Technology', each with a list of bullet points. A 'More information' sidebar on the right contains a 'Questions? Contact libraryADA@duke.edu' link and a list of topics: 'getting to the library', 'retrieving materials from shelves', and 'low-distraction study spaces'.

**DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**

My Accounts Ask a Librarian Search articles, books

Search & Find Using the Library Research Support Course Support Libraries About

Home > Services > Services for Patrons with Disabilities

## Services for Patrons with Disabilities

Duke University Libraries are committed to providing equitable access to all library users. The libraries provide a range of services to those who may require assistance to access and use library spaces and materials.

### Accessing Library Buildings

- [Duke Disability Management System](#) is the central clearing house for disability-related information for Duke University, where you will find information about getting to the libraries and campus accessibility maps.
- [Library-specific accessible parking information](#) is also available.
- [Library Building Access](#) : all library buildings have at least one unassisted (automatic) entrance. Across the Perkins, Bostock, and Rubenstein Libraries on West Campus, all doors allow for unassisted entry except for the exterior door to the Von Der Heyden Pavilion.
- For additional questions about getting to any of our library buildings, please contact [libraryADA@duke.edu](mailto:libraryADA@duke.edu).

### Library Spaces and Technology

- [Find Library Spaces](#) : details about different spaces and technology available within the library; includes individual study seats available for reservation.
- [Transparent masks for staff](#): if you rely on lipreading, you may request that staff wear a clear mask when they assist you (available in Perkins & Bostock and Rubenstein Libraries).
- [ADA Study Room](#) (formerly known as the Assistive Technology Room): a private study room that can be reserved by students who have an ADA accommodation from the Student Disability Access Office (SDAO), who receive information directly about how to reserve the room. Staff and faculty should contact [libraryADA@duke.edu](mailto:libraryADA@duke.edu) for information.
  - Note: Duke Disability Management System also maintains a [list of assistive technology](#) equipment on campus.
- [Doctoral Research Space \(DRS\)](#) : a shared, low-distraction study space that students (including non-doctoral students) who have an ADA accommodation from the SDAO may request access to. Amenities include adjustable height desks, printer, and scanner.
- [Restrooms](#) : availability of different restroom features in library buildings
- [Use a Copier or Scanner](#)
- [Request for accommodation](#): Duke University encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of

#### More information

Questions? Contact [libraryADA@duke.edu](mailto:libraryADA@duke.edu) for more information on

- [getting to the library](#)
- [retrieving materials from shelves](#)
- [low-distraction study spaces](#)

## Update relevant info on library website

- More details about services for users with disabilities
- Access to buildings and collections
- Access to online resources and virtual assistance
- Point of contact for users

# Find Library Spaces

Reserve Group Study Rooms

Filters:

- Noise Level**
  - Conversational Study (40)
  - Considerate Study (11)
  - Absolute Quiet (7)
- Features**
  - Non-reservable (30)
  - Group Study (29)
  - Reservable (14)
- Library**
  - Perkins Library (8)
  - Bostock Library (11)
  - Lilly Library (6)
- Find spaces by name or description**

[clear selections](#)

Results (64)



**Edge Project Rooms**

Bostock Library, 1st Floor

**Group Study Allowed**

9 reservable rooms for group research, small (2-4 people), medium (6-8 people), large (10-12 people); flatscreen, writable walls.

[Make your reservation](#)



**Interview Room Perkins 130**

Perkins Library, 1st Floor

Reservable interview room with telephone (number: 919-660-5958).

[Make your reservation](#)



**Interview Room Perkins B09**

Perkins Library, Lower Level 2 (LL2)

Reservable interview room with telephone (number: 919-660-5810), whiteboard, table seating.

[Make your reservation](#)



**The Ahmadieh Family Commons**

Rubenstein Library, 2nd Floor

Table seating and armchairs.

[Make your reservation](#)



**Bostock Lower Level 1 Study Area**

Bostock Library, Lower Level 1 (LL1)

Non-reservable study area, table seating.

[Make your reservation](#)



**Bostock Study Room 425**

Bostock Library, 4th Floor

**Group Study Allowed**

[Make your reservation](#)

Improve access to study spaces for users' diverse needs

- Address complexity of library study “zones”
- Help users more easily connect with spaces that meet their needs



## Longer-Term Recommendations

- Create alternatives to “oppressive quiet” spaces for solo study
- Provide sensory-friendly spaces and resources (e.g., fidget spinners, stress balls, audiobooks, large print signage)
- Increase outreach to users who might benefit from services and spaces



## Next steps

- Charge team to consider findings and recommendations
- Review findings with disability community at Duke
- Communicate outcomes to library and campus stakeholders

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