

# LIBRARY ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MEETING NOTES

June 2, 2021

### Attendees:

Jill Lewis (retired Director of the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, former MCPL Library Board Chair); Francie Gilman (retired Montgomery County librarian, Board Independence Now); Betty Thompson (AAC consultant); Elizabeth Lang (MCPL Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager); Debbie Brown (President of the Sligo Creek Chapter National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, staff member at the National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, chair of AAC braille marketing subcommittee); Cindy Buddington (Board of Independence Now, Equipment for Children); Matt Barkley (Montgomery County ADA Compliance Manager); Barbara King (member of former Special Needs Library Advisory Committee and former Disability Resource Center Advisory Committee); Jane Carona (Treasurer of American Council of the Blind of Maryland, member of ACB of MD National Capitol Area Chapter and Braille Revival League); Larry Cohen (Facilitator of Leisure World Lions Low Vision Group, Board of Lions Low Vision Rehabilitation Network); Richard Bell-Irving (Treasurer of Learning Disability Association of Montgomery County, Learning Disability Associations of Maryland and Virginia); Tim Lighter (MCPL Library Board liaison), Monica Martinez (formerly director of Partnership for Extraordinary Minds and now special education advocate, involved with parents of people with autism), Yasmin Reyazuddin (member of NFB and of AAC braille marketing subcommittee), and guest Alice O'Reilly (chief of collections division at Maryland Library for Blind and Print Disabled)

### Library Report

Elizabeth Lang

There is a Contemporary Conversations event coming up on June 5, with Haben Girma, the first deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School. There is difficulty registering for blind people because of a pop-up window. Elizabeth will report it and help us get registered.

Renewals: All rules about returning books were suspended when ~~everything~~ Montgomery County Public Libraries shut down last March. The waiver for returning books is still in effect. Fines have been eliminated. Elizabeth will check to find out when an item is declared lost. The Library has implemented automatic renewals, so that items will automatically renew 2 or 3 times. [Since this meeting the MCPL website has been updated: see the Borrowing Library Materials for guidelines. <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/services/borrowing.html> ]

Library reopening is underway. Six branches opened yesterday. Other branches will be opening on June 14. All of the branches will be open by July 6. Library openings aren't happening faster

because of staff shortages. Administrative staff are working at libraries. They have suspended the page program (these are staff who shelve books).

As libraries open, the only restriction is that masks are required. [Since the meeting, this has changed — no masks are now required.] There has been positive feedback about the re-openings. The Library has no plans yet to change from virtual to in-person programs and events. Will future events be both in-person and virtual? The technical requirements are very difficult for this. It is almost like running two events, with someone managing the virtual event and someone managing the live event.

Renovations: Germantown is closed because they are under construction. Their estimated time of completion is September. They are replacing service desks, carpet, and some furniture and doing some ADA work. This should be done by the end of summer.

Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) and Potomac are in the design phase. Damascus needs to go through a building assessment. They have to look at plumbing, wiring, and the building envelope. We have never visited Damascus. It would be easier to go as individuals because it is hard to get to as a group. **MOVED UP:** Elizabeth will send an email with the timeline, and we will arrange visits individually. We can talk about it at the next meeting. We can also ~~arrange visits and~~ discuss our conclusions by email.

### Staff Training Update

The initial staff training will feature a panel of community members with disabilities, who have already been identified. This will be a virtual panel with six members. Elizabeth is working with Kate Tavakolian to develop a script. It is a step-by-step description of who will speak and when, and what cues are needed. The script is to keep the event organized. They will find a producer for the event. The presenters will each have a 10- to 15-minute presentation. Each will speak about a visit to the library for someone with a specific disability. There will be three scenarios: approaching the information desk; picking up a hold; and wanting to use a computer. The training will be done at the adult services forum. It will be recorded by the adult services library staff so that other staff can take the training at any time. The only way to reach all staff at once would be on the single annual Staff Day, which is not feasible because there are many pressing issues. Elizabeth observed a training on autism that worked well. Kate will direct the program; Elizabeth is working on a draft of the script. She will have Matt go first because he has County-wide ADA responsibility. The panelists will hear from Elizabeth in July. The final project will be done in August. Elizabeth will check everyone's vacation plans so that people can schedule their part. Elizabeth will talk to each panelist. Elizabeth said that the adult services forum date has been set but did not say what it will be.

Will there be time for questions and answers at the adult services forum, since all the panelists will be there? Yes, that's the whole point. This panel will not involve actual footage of people in the library. This panel is to present an overview. Elizabeth asked AAC members to start thinking

about the second sessions, which not occur before December. In addition to Matt, there are 5 panelists

## Braille Marketing Subcommittee

Debbie Brown

We are thinking of ways to get the word out about the Children's Braille Collection. We're thinking of targeting parents, teachers' groups, specialists at the Maryland School for the Blind. We will encourage people to get a library card. We will market the braille collection at events like the Louis Braille birthday party in January, and want to make sure this event appears on the library calendar. We are interested in how the Library can help us publicize the collection, including featuring the braille collection like other library services at all general events. Jill said that by January we should be able to do this. Debbie will draft a short article suitable for AAC members to post on our organizations's social media and a longer version for an article for newsletters, websites, etc.

Alice O'Reilly, chief of Collections Division at the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, (NLS) was invited by Debbie. Alice noted that NLS is trying to create a MARC standard for braille books (this computer code would make it easier to search for braille as a format). She said perhaps it would be good for MCPL cataloging staff to have a conversation with the NLS cataloguers. NLS will also encourage braille magazines to be put in places where they will be taken, including libraries and schools. Debbie said that it's important to get materials like magazines into children's hands, and that if children don't go to the School for the Blind they are not exposed to braille. Alice suggested that MCPL could acquire de-accessioned high quality braille materials to expand the collection. About magazines, Elizabeth said that the library no longer offers print magazines. About searches in the catalog, Elizabeth said that In the MCPL catalogue when you search for "braille," you will get braille books but also print books with "braille" in the title. She explained that the databases that hold the collection are legacy, and that this is a big problem for many types of materials. Not a lot of library staff are doing cataloging now, so making changes will not happen easily. She appreciates our suggestions, and will see what can be communicated with staff. The Library no longer has print magazines, due to caution about COVID, and she doesn't know future plans. There has been a budget cut that makes it difficult to increase the workload. It doesn't mean we can't have braille magazines, but realistically, staff capacity has been reduced.

## General Outreach and Programming

This was a brainstorming session to gather ideas for future specific plans.

Cindy began the discussion by suggesting that a good braille reader or someone with a disability who is a story teller could participate in a children's story time, because this would let children know that people who read differently or use a wheelchair or walker also are readers. Jill and Debbie agreed that reading to children would be good, perhaps doing "Frog and Toad" with a sighted reader and a braille reader, with each reader taking one of the characters. Jane mentioned the MCPL program "Read to a Dog," and said there were a lot of hoops to go through to be approved. Alice suggested using a print-braille book. Jill suggested putting a list together of people who are willing and able to do a braille story time.

Monica asked if MCPL is doing a podcast? Elizabeth said MCPL is not doing that, because most staff are in branches. Monica talked about doing a panel on autism in April, which is Acceptance Month. She also suggested a panel of people with disabilities saying what they wish they had known early in their disability experiences.

Richard said that people with special needs are just Googling or relying on school systems rather than looking for organizations to help them. So his organization has shifted its focus from parents of people with disabilities to new initiatives like quarterly Zoom meeting where professionals start sharing stories and have a group think, which has been very successful. Virtual events like this can engage experts anywhere. Experts benefit from the events by sharing ideas and by making their services known. Also, would there be value in sponsoring support groups for parents? Could MCPL provide Zoom hosting for meetings of parents?

Jill talked about the Zoom party that LBPD did in October 2020, "Hats Off to LBPH," which was successful and fun. Children read braille, and people wore creative hats.

AAC members do not want to give up Zoom events.

AAC members could work with the LACs, who already do outreach. Angelisa Hawes is the representative on the Commission on People with Disabilities; she should talk about eh braille collection and any special braille programs. Angelisa is the assistant director for facilities and ADA.

### Library Board Report

Tim has sent out the board reports. He is interested in having someone from the AAC come to a Board meeting. He noted that there have been complaints about the font size of the Friends of the Library newsletter; he will work on it. He asked about having Council Member Jawando at a future AAC meeting. Jill will do that, working with Regina on the schedule.

### ADA Compliance

Matt is the county ADA Compliance Manager. He appreciates the work of the AAC and the AAC tip sheets and training initiatives as he works on new county-wide training on ADA. He

mentioned interest in floating bus stops being installed in conjunction with protected bike lanes and said there is no guidance for Title II of the ADA. The Department of Transportation got a grant from COG to find best practices. A \$1 million portion of the ADA Compliance budget was postponed but will come back in 2024 and 2025. There are some compliance issues with a swimming pool in Olney and with correctional facilities. He encouraged people to contact him with problems or ideas and gave his contact information: 240-777-6197 or [adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov).

## Future Meetings

The next meeting will be September 1. Members would like to continue having Zoom meetings hosted by American Council of the Blind of Maryland, and thanked Jane for making the arrangements. When asked about future priorities for the AAC, these were mentioned: Going to Damascus to look at accessibility needs; update on staff training and watching and providing feedback on an early version of the initial staff training panel; outreach for braille and for library services in general; getting an AAC member from the Commission on People with Disabilities. Francie said she would draft a letter for Jill to send to Anita about getting a representative. Also, Amy Fier represents a group that is not coming into the library; seek her input at the next meeting about outreach and marketing to them. And regarding staff training, before September meeting, AAC members could think about for the subject trainings for the group you represent, what would be the most effective and ideal things to do.

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Damascus library— Elizabeth will send a timeline. Anyone who is able will visit and provide reports. As possible, members will use email to share reports before September meeting.
2. Ongoing work on staff training panel—Elizabeth, Kate, and panelists. First steps: Elizabeth will tell panelists the date of the training event at the adult services forum (date already set) and will coordinate with panelists on other timeframes. Elizabeth and Kate will create a script and Elizabeth will discuss with each panelist.
3. Create and distribute braille marketing materials—Braille Marketing Subcommittee with assistance from all of committee
4. Invite Will Jawando to future meeting—Jill
5. Plan specific future disability-related programs like those noted above.
6. Francie will draft a letter for Jill to send to Anita about getting an AAC representative from the Commission on People with Disabilities.
7. Everyone – tell Elizabeth when you encounter library's web accessibility issues. Be as specific as possible, but all input can be helpful. (See notes from March 2021 meeting.)