

Teaching Accessibility in a Library and Information Science MLS program

Amanda Harrison^a, Rene Burress^a, Kelly Pryde^a, Cari Cusick^a, and Lauren Hays^a

^aUniversity of Central Missouri, USA

aharrison@ucmo.edu, burress@ucmo.edu, kpryde@ucmo.edu, ccusick@ucmo.edu,
lauhays@ucmo.edu

ABSTRACT

Students in library and information science programs need to develop the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary to create inclusive and accessible libraries for all users (American Library Association, 2018; Jaeger et al., 2013). While there is an awareness that LIS schools need to cover these topics, surveys of LIS schools have shown only minimal increases in the number of ALA-accredited programs covering these topics in core or required courses (Gibson, 1977; Walling, 2000). LIS students are interested in practical coursework designed to support patrons and librarians with disabilities in their library spaces and services (Pionke, 2019; Pionke, 2020). There is also an increasing awareness that DEI should be expanded to DEIA to better serve patrons with accessibility needs (Burress et al., 2024). A more comprehensive look at the skills, knowledge, and strategies LIS students learn while completing their degree would help identify gaps for future course and program development.

This exploratory study examines syllabi and assignments for courses taught in the 2024-2025 academic year. Researchers interviewed faculty and adjuncts to help provide context for how accessibility was approached and examined what pedagogical tools, techniques, and mindsets were utilized. These results will inform the development of a scope and sequence to assess the LIS curriculum itself in hopes that an overarching set of structures can guide how well LIS students are prepared to meet accessibility and inclusion challenges in their professional careers.

Research questions

How are future librarians trained to achieve a mindset of inclusivity in the library and information sciences?

What types of pedagogical tools and techniques are used to teach accessibility and inclusion?

What skills and techniques are students being taught to help them measure the current accessibility in their future libraries and plan for more inclusive spaces?

Methodology

Participants will be asked to share the most recent copies of their class syllabi (2024-2025 academic year) as well as assignments or discussion board prompts that relate to the topic of accessibility in libraries. Once this data has been collected from participants, they will be asked to schedule a zoom-based interview.

The ALISE presentation of this work will provide preliminary data on this work-in-progress study and the beginnings of the identified scope and sequence.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Education of information professionals; Curriculum.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Accessibility; Inclusion; Teaching; Scope and sequence.

Copyright 2025 by the authors. Published under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2025.2012>

REFERENCES

- American Library Association (2018, June 26). *Services to people with disabilities: An interpretation of the library bill of rights*.
<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/servicespeopledisabilities>
- Burress, R., Li, X., & Hebert, H. S. (2024). Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in library and information science curriculum: Looking back and to the future. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006241279471>
- IFLA Standing Committee of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons. (2005). *Access to libraries for persons with disabilities - Checklist*. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. <https://repository.ifla.org/items/b629967c-c0b3-4fb8-92d7-099783b72ba5>
- Gibson, M. C. (1977). Preparing librarians to serve handicapped individuals. *Journal of Education for Librarianship*, 18(2), 121-130. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40322534>
- Jaeger, P. T., Bertot, J. C., & Subramaniam, M. (2013). Preparing future librarians to serve their communities effectively. *The Library Quarterly*, 83(3), 243–248.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/670699>
- Jaeger, P. T. (2018). Designing for diversity and designing for disability: New opportunities for libraries to expand their support and advocacy for people with disabilities. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 2(1/2), 52-66.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v2i1/2.32211>
- Pionke, J. (2020). Disability- and accessibility-related library graduate-school education from the student perspective. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 61(2), 253–269. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jelis.2019-0036>
- Pionke, J. (2019). The impact of disbelief: On being a library employee with a disability. *Library Trends*, 67(3), 423–435. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2019.0004>