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**Guidelines for Library  
Services to Persons with  
Dyslexia**

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Under the auspices of the Section of Libraries Serving  
Disadvantaged Persons.

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## Foreword

Within the last ten years there has in many countries been an increasing interest in dyslexia – or specific learning difficulties – not only among scientists and other professionals, but also in the general society. Although some people with reading and writing difficulties still hesitate to reveal their disability, many now openly discuss the problems they encounter in a world full of letters. This openness has created a deeper understanding of dyslexia and the problems related to this invisible disability that affects about 8% of the world's population.

At the 1997 IFLA Conference in Copenhagen a workshop "Access to Information: Serving Persons with Dyslexia" was arranged by the IFLA Section of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons (LSDP), the Danish Professional Group of Outreach Library Service, and the European Dyslexia Association (EDA). The workshop was complemented by a poster session on dyslexia.

At the 1999 IFLA Conference in Bangkok, LSDP and EDA likewise presented a poster session on dyslexia: "Dyslexia is everywhere. What does your library do?"

The great interest shown and the many questions asked during these conferences clearly demonstrates an increasing interest in dyslexia among librarians from all over the world, as well as a desire to learn what librarians can do to serve this large group of disabled persons.

The Section of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons wants to continue and expand on the 1997 and 1999 initiatives with these "Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dyslexia." The information contained in this document could also, to a certain degree, be helpful for libraries serving other groups with reading difficulties.

The LSDP Section hopes that these Guidelines will inspire libraries to help dyslexic people in accessing information and culture on equal terms with the rest of society.

*Birgitta Irvall & Gyda Skat Nielsen*

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# WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

"Dyslexia is a complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and function, and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected."

*(British Dyslexia Association)*

"Dyslexia is a medical term; specific learning disability is an educational one. They are both used to describe a condition that is congenital and, thought by many researchers, to be a genetically-transmitted organic difference in the language centre of the brain. It is not caused by mental handicap, sensory defect, emotional disturbance or cultural deprivation.

It is believed there may be a variety of causes but recent research has identified a "gene" as one possible cause. The problem can often be traced back to an organic difference in the brain that is hereditary.

At present, there is no cure for dyslexia so a dyslexic person is dyslexic for life and needs to develop strategies to overcome his or her specific difficulties.

Dyslexia occurs worldwide regardless of culture or language and affects about 8% of the population who experience a syndrome that can inhibit learning; 2-4% of the population can be seriously affected by it.

Dyslexic people experience difficulty in processing language both written and oral. Besides having problems in mastering reading, writing and spelling, many confuse directions, sequences, verbal labels and letters, words and numbers that look or sound similar. Despite intelligence and motivation, without identification and support, dyslexic children do not learn as their peers do but, when diagnosed, dyslexic people can be helped to learn with specialist teaching that is success-orientated, structured and systematic. They also require a great deal of support and encouragement.

Dyslexia does not mean lack of intelligence and many dyslexic people, after receiving the appropriate help at school or by private tutor, go on to obtain university degrees."

*(European Dyslexia Association)*

# THE DEMOCRATIC ASPECT

The democratic right of access to culture, literature and information extends to all, including those with different degrees of reading difficulties. It is of vital importance that all citizens be able to obtain information about what is going on in society. In order to exercise one's democratic rights and control one's own life, every citizen must be well informed.

Quality of life is also an important factor. Being able to read gives people a tremendous amount of self-confidence. It enables them to expand their view of the world and take control of their own lives. Through reading, people are able to share ideas, thoughts and experiences, and grow as human beings.

Reading promotion is strongly supported by the Standard Rules of the United Nation concerning persons with disabilities, the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto and the Charter for the Reader.

## The Standard Rules of the United Nation

In 1993, the United Nations adopted a document called *The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* (see appendix 1). The Standard Rules are not compulsory, but will become customary rules when implemented by a large number of states. Rule 5 declares that governments should develop strategies to make information services and documentation accessible for all persons with disabilities and should encourage the media, especially TV, radio and newspapers, to make their services accessible. Rule 10 says that people with disabilities should be able to participate in cultural activities on an equal basis and that countries should develop and implement methods to make literature, films and theater accessible to persons with disabilities.

## UNESCO Public Library Manifesto

In November 1994, UNESCO published *the Public Library Manifesto* (see appendix 2). This key document proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

"The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific service and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reasons, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities,

people with disabilities and people in hospital or prison.”

## **The Charter for the Reader**

The International Publishers Association and the International Book Committee jointly adopted *The Charter for the Reader* in 1992 (see appendix 3). The Charter declares that reading is the key to our cultural and scientific heritage and promotes international understanding. Democracy depends on well informed people. The printed word is an essential element in an individual’s personal development and his or her focus on the outside world and on other people.

There is a need for information on reading. The only way to make reading available to everyone is for publishers, libraries and other information providers to work in partnership with cultural, educational and social organizations to engage in the promotion of reading. Such an alliance of public and private interests offers the best hope of fulfilling universal reading needs.

# **THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE OF DYSLEXIA AMONG THE LIBRARY STAFF**

Many people with specific learning difficulties feel that libraries have nothing to offer them. "I don't visit the library, because I don't want any more failures", a dyslexic young man once said. (See Appendix 4).

For librarians it may be quite difficult to understand that venturing inside a library presents a real barrier to some people. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the entire library staff to make sure that weak readers receive attentive service when they do visit the library.

Dyslexic people frequently have low self-esteem. During their school years they often experienced a sense of failure which makes them very vulnerable. We have to make an extra effort to make this large group of people who are unaccustomed to the library feel welcome when they visit. This may mean changing the attitude of library staff and teaching them the appropriate way to interact with and assist dyslexic library patrons.

Some librarians may think that patrons with reading difficulties are more "troublesome" and less "interesting" than other patrons. This attitude may stem from inadequate training in library school and lack of knowledge about various disabilities.

## **Library schools**

It is important that library schools and other institutions educating librarians include information about dyslexia in their curricula. Preferably the students should acquire a broad knowledge of various reading difficulties and the needs of people affected by these. It may be useful to invite a dyslexic person to talk to library school students about what he/she would like to see the library provide in terms of materials and services. Such face-to face contact is often the best way to gain a deeper understanding of a specific condition or problem.

## **Continuing education**

A more comprehensive understanding of dyslexia may be obtained through workshops, conferences, and other continuing education that focus on library services to persons with reading difficulties. Such activities may be arranged by library schools, the national library agency, or professional organizations – preferably in cooperation with existing dyslexia associations. All levels of school and public

library staff should participate in these continuing education and training activities.

Having a dyslexic person(s) participate in one or more staff meeting(s) to inform about the problems and needs of people with dyslexia may be very useful for the daily work in the library and for the understanding of this disability.

# **LIBRARY SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA**

Children's librarians should have a solid knowledge of reading problems and reading materials suitable for all reading levels. Children's rhymes, Easy-to-Read-books, books with many illustrations, and talking books should be a part of the children's collections.

A special kind of talking books with text read in 2-3 different speeds are also useful for those who need to read the accompanying text slowly. All children with reading problems should have the opportunity to experience the joy of reading by listening to talking books. A child who has felt the joy of reading will work harder to improve his/her reading skills.

The library should cooperate with nursery schools in offering books with children's rhymes, which provide a pre-school reading training that is very useful, especially for dyslexic children. The library may also provide schools and parents with materials for reading instruction, e.g. books combined with talking books, Easy-to-Read-books, carefully chosen texts at the appropriate reading level, as well as educational computer programs. Close cooperation between schools, libraries and parents is essential for children with reading difficulties. It should, however, be mentioned that many parents of dyslexic children are dyslexic themselves and therefore not able to read aloud to their children or help them with their studies. Even so, with the right training in school most children can learn to read and write.



# MAKING PERSONS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES FEEL WELCOME IN THE LIBRARY

Staff with the proper training and an attitude sensitive to persons with special needs will know that a dyslexic person who visits the library for the first time will not be able to find what he/she is looking for without special assistance. It is self-evident that no "disability certification" is required in order to receive courteous and appropriate service.

## "My own librarian"

A dyslexic person would find it helpful to have his/her "own librarian", a professional with specialist knowledge of both reading difficulties and appropriate materials for this group of readers. This librarian should also be able to answer practical questions related to the handicap, e.g. "Where can I get help to improve my reading?" or "Is there a Dyslexia Association in the area where I live?"

The "**Dyslexia Librarian**" should be an integral part of a wide support network, which includes schools, local government agencies, and handicap organizations. A useful product of this cooperation could be a brochure with information about dyslexia and regular office hours for teachers and parents on library materials and services to reading disabled persons.

The library's orientation service to parents of dyslexic children and adults with dyslexia should include the opportunity to meet with representatives of both the local dyslexia association and the local school authority. A separate space in the library should be provided for such meetings. For parents of children with dyslexia and adults with dyslexia the library represents a "neutral place". Experience has shown that those who take advantage of these "office hours" come away with useful information and enjoy meeting other persons with similar problems.

## **Pleasant surroundings**

It is essential that the materials for people with reading disabilities be available in a central location in order to catch the eye of a person entering the library. People who are not used to visiting the library should be able to find "their" materials without having to ask and thereby "reveal" their disability.

As everywhere else in the library, signposting should be clear. **Pictograms** (text defined through pictures) on the signs is highly recommended (they are also helpful for the general public). **A colored line on the floor** leading to the relevant materials is helpful to persons with reading difficulties, as well as visually impaired patrons.

The section for weak readers should be **attractively designed** and include a seating area. A **tape recorder or a cd-player** should be available for selecting talking books. Computers and other technical aids should also be located in this area (see page 15).

This design model can be used in both large and small libraries. It does not require much money to create an "oasis" in the library for the weak readers. **The most important factor is having the right attitude.**

# **MATERIALS FOR PERSONS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES**

## **Easy-to-Read Materials**

Easy-to-Read books are described in the IFLA publication "Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials" (1997). There are two types of Easy-to-Read books:

1. Adaptations of existing books
2. Books written especially for persons with reading difficulties

Some Easy-to-read-books are produced together with a taped version. The reader listens to the tape and follows the text in the printed book. This is a very good way to improve reading comprehension.

Dyslexic persons are among those who can benefit from Easy-to-Read-books.

## **Talking books**

Listening to a well recorded book is very helpful for persons with dyslexia. "Reading by listening" gives them access to the same literature as those who "read by seeing".

Talking books on tapes, cassettes, or new digital media are produced either by commercial publishing houses or libraries for the blind. Copyright laws concerning the production of talking books differ widely from country to country. It is very important that these laws give dyslexic persons access to talking books produced mainly for the visually handicapped. Public libraries should work with libraries for the blind in each country to assure access to talking books for all who need them.

The new digital talking books which are slowly replacing the old ones on cassettes have much better search systems, making it possible to find a chapter or a page instantly and to place bookmarks. This technology will make it easier to study with the help of talking books.

A special kind of talking book has 2-3 different speed levels; it is particularly useful for improving reading skills/comprehension. The reader listens at a comfortable speed level and follows the text in the printed book. These talking books are produced both for children and adults.

Talking books are used today in many schools for reading instruction. In Scandinavia,

schools and libraries work together in programs using talking books combined with printed books. Children may also borrow talking books for pleasure reading. These services are very popular.

## **Newspapers**

In a democratic society, newspapers are vital sources of information. In some countries, national and local newspapers are produced on tape, mainly for the visually impaired. In Sweden there is also an electronic version of some daily newspapers that can be read on a computer with the help of enlarged print or synthetic speech.

Copyright laws present a problem when they limit the use of these formats to the visually impaired. It is important that libraries advocate for the rights of all reading impaired persons to have access to newspapers on tape or in digital form.

Some countries also have Easy-to-Read versions of Newspapers which are useful to a broad range of readers.

## **Periodicals**

People with reading difficulties need access to information in other formats besides books, e.g. recorded periodicals. These magazines contain current information on world events, science, medicine, art, and various consumer areas. Recorded periodicals may be available through libraries for the blind. Library staff should inform persons with dyslexia about these resources and how to obtain them.

## **Pamphlets and brochures**

Pamphlets and brochures – e.g. from the government or other public agencies - should also be accessible on tape. Through the audio format, persons with reading difficulties are given equal access to information that could make an important difference in their lives.

## **Reading Service**

To a person with reading difficulties, reading personal letters and other written communication can be a major problem. The library may be able to offer a reading service to their dyslexic patrons who could bring or mail their material to the library and have it recorded. It may also be possible for the library to scan a text into a computer where the patron can read it with the help of synthetic speech.

## **Videos with easy-to-read subtitles**

Videos are very useful for persons with reading difficulties. However, in countries where movies are not synchronized but have subtitles, persons with reading difficulties often have problems following the story because of the complexity of the spoken language. In Denmark, several feature films have been produced in versions with easy-to-read subtitles – not necessarily making the movie less interesting to the viewer.

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Using multimedia computers with pictures, sound and text is a new and challenging way to learn for people with reading problems. At the same time, when correct spelling is required in order to find the desired information, these computers present great problems.

Today there are many spelling and grammar software programs available especially aimed at persons with dyslexia. The library could buy some of these programs and demonstrate their usefulness to parents, students, and teachers. The computer should be in a secluded area of the library to allow for privacy. Library staff should be able to assist upon request.

In order to provide equal access to the Internet and electronic databases, it is important that the library equip some computers with synthetic speech and/or text magnification. If word processing capability is provided to all library patrons, voice recognition versions should be available to persons with reading and spelling difficulties. The library's homepage should be easy to read with a simple and clear layout that is accessible to all patron groups.

Close cooperation with schools and adult education centers is important when the library equips computers with programs for users with reading and spelling difficulties. The rapid development in assistive technology and software for targeted audiences makes it likely that many more tools will soon become available to persons with reading difficulties.

# PUBLICIZING LIBRARY SERVICES

When library staff have become well informed about dyslexia and a collection established for patrons with reading difficulties, the next question is: How do we inform our target group about our services?

A person with reading difficulties probably does not read the local newspapers, but family and friends do and can relate information about the services offered by the library.

Articles and announcements in the local newspapers should be complemented with a brochure about the library's service to people with reading difficulties. It is important that this brochure - like all other printed information from the library - be written in an easy-to-read language. The brochure should be available not only in the library, but also in other public places, e.g. the town hall, schools, doctors' offices, and local shops (see appendix 5).

Close contact with the local press is invaluable, likewise a good relationship with local radio and TV stations.

**A dyslexia campaign** could be organized in the library in cooperation with the national or local dyslexia association and other organizations dealing with dyslexia. Educators from all levels, labor unions, job centers, etc. should be involved in planning the campaign.

Lectures on dyslexia, a "market place" with information materials, demonstrations of computer programs for persons with reading problems are just examples of activities during such a campaign.

A dyslexia campaign will also have the benefit of making politicians aware of the many problems associated with having dyslexia. And the library itself will gain support and goodwill through its effort to improve the understanding of dyslexia in society.

There is no doubt that a major effort is required to provide equal access to information and culture for people with dyslexia all over the world. It is equally obvious that more progress can be achieved through the combined efforts of professional service providers and the reading disabled people themselves. Making the reading disabled confident in using the library, however, does not happen overnight. It requires hard work – but it is worth it!

# STANDARD RULES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: 48/96. Standard Rules of the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

## II. Target Areas for Equal Participation

### Rule 5. Accessibility

”States should recognize the overall importance of accessibility in the process of the equalization of opportunities in all spheres of society. For persons with disabilities of any kind, States should (a) introduce programmes of action to make the physical environment accessible; and (b) undertake measures to provide access to information and communication.”

(--)

#### (b) Access to information and communication

(--)

6.” States should develop strategies to make information services and documentation accessible for different groups of persons with disabilities. Braille, tape services, large print and other appropriate technologies should be used to provide access to written information and documentation for persons with visual impairments. Similarly, appropriate technologies should be used to provide access to spoken information for persons with auditory impairments or comprehension difficulties.”

(---)

8. ”Consideration should also be given to the needs of people with other communication disabilities.

9. States should encourage the media, especially television, radio and newspapers, to make their services accessible.



10. States should ensure that new computerized information and service systems offered to the general public are either made initially accessible or are adapted to be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

11. Organizations of persons with disabilities should be consulted when measures to make information services accessible are being developed.”

# **IFLA/UNESCO PUBLIC LIBRARY MANIFESTO**

”FREEDOM, PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

This Manifest proclaims IFLA’s and UNESCO’s belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

IFLA and UNESCO therefore encourage national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavor and imagination.

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressures.

A CLEAR POLICY MUST BE FORMULATED, defining objectives, priorities and

services in relation to the local community needs. The public library has to be organized effectively and professional standards of operation must be maintained.

Cooperation with relevant partners – for example, user groups and other professionals and local, regional, national as well as international level – has to be ensured.

Services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies outreach services for those unable to visit the library.

The library services must be adapted to the different needs of communities in rural and urban areas.

The librarian is an active intermedian between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.-

Outreach and user education programmes have to be provided to help users benefit from all the resources.”

# CHARTER FOR THE READER

”At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the International Publishers Association held in New Delhi, India, in January, 1992, the International Committee approved the following text which was later endorsed by UNESCO

- Article 1: The Right to Read
- Article 2: Opportunities for Reading
- Article 3: Support and Encouragement for Reading
- Article 4: Information and Cooperation on Reading
- Article 5: Conclusion

### **Article 1: The Right to Read**

It is our conviction that books are outstandingly effective in transmitting knowledge and communicating ideas, that reading encourages the fullest development of thought and the participation of the citizen in society

And

Noting the widespread concern about educational standards all over the world and the failure to eradicate global illiteracy, giving rise to social deprivation,

**WE REASSERT THAT READING IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT**

Reading influences our lives in many aspects:

#### **1.1 CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC**

Reading, not only of books but of all printed texts, is the key to our cultural and scientific heritage and promotes international understanding and interest in other cultures.

#### **1.2 SOCIAL**

Effective reading is a prerequisite for full participation in modern society.

#### **1.3 ECONOMIC**

Reading skills make a key contribution to economic success. Industrial corporations invest large sums in training staff to improve their communication skills, especially reading. New technologies demand a wider range of literacy-related competencies,

the lack of which seriously impedes progress.

## **1.4 DEMOCRATIC**

In a democratic society, with a free exchange of information the printed word is an essential element in an individual's critical capacity. It is the most effective medium for ensuring that pluralist views are prevalent in that society. Democracy depends on well-informed people.

## **1.5 INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY**

Reading is crucial for an individual's personal development and his or her focus on the outside world and on other people. Reading is also a good leisure activity (it keeps the mind and imagination active) and, if necessary, provides the opportunity to escape from daily cares, to develop and refine one's inner life and keep on extending one's horizons. The development of imagination through books, from early childhood on, cannot be overestimated.

## **4.2 CO-OPERATION ON READING**

The only way to make books and reading available to everyone, whatever their situation is for libraries, publishers, and booksellers to work in partnership, joining where necessary with various cultural, educational, and social organizations who engage in the promotion of reading. This alliance of public and private interests offers the best hope of fulfilling universal reading needs.

A reading environment should be created in all types and at all levels of society, beginning at pre-school age and extending through formal, non-formal and life-long education and embracing all types of reader including new literates minority-language groups, immigrants, slow readers and those with poor eyesight.

## **Article 5: Conclusion**

Books are the spiritual powerhouse of humanity – the resource that can enable humanity to face the future with confidence. Books need – books deserve universal interest and support.”

# DYSLEXIC PEOPLE AND THE LIBRARY

From the book by Staffan Ekegren, "Det var ju inte dum jag var. 13 dyslektiker begär ordet." (I wasn't stupid after all. Thirteen dyslexics demand to be heard), published 1996 by the county libraries of Eskilstuna, Falun, Gävle and Örebro, Sweden.

During the 1996-97 National Dyslexia Campaign in Sweden, four county libraries developed a book about how libraries meet the needs of persons with dyslexia. People with reading and writing difficulties rarely visit the library. Those few who dare come in, don't often ask for help. The word "stupid" seems to be branded on their forehead from an early age. The library appears to be one of those places where it is very difficult for dyslexic persons to hide their handicap.

Excerpt from the book cover:

"Here are thirteen persons who feel stupid, but they are not. They have dyslexia, the invisible handicap that makes hundreds of thousands of people feel deeply ashamed. But it is the library that should be ashamed. In a secret experiment, thirteen dyslexic persons visit the library. These visits make them confront not only their own fears, but also a society that is hostile to them."

**"Angelica, 21, student (p.97-99):**

I couldn't see what line I was supposed to be on, I couldn't do the reading.

Without saying anything, the librarian turned the computer screen towards me. Did he expect me to look at it? And why? Was it about the books I had asked for? Please read this and write down the books you want, said the librarian.

Books? Like when I was a child and didn't know the clock and had to ask what time it was. And they then took out the clock and I had to figure it out for myself.

But this time I saw only letters, a screen full of letters. How would I manage to read them? When I am alone with such a screen, I usually look for the first letter of the surname, and then use that to narrow down book titles and first names and publishers and publication dates and such things. If I have to read it all, it will take ages.

But now with this screen, I couldn't see what line I was supposed to be on, and I couldn't do the reading. Didn't even want to try, since I would only get upset.

Anyway, I felt stupid already. While he kept the computer facing me, he started to talk, to talk and point at the books by Boris Lindkvist; the latest one was from 88, he said. I indicated that I understood by looking and nodding in the direction he was pointing. This way you can fake it when you don't understand a thing.

Now show me the book you want to borrow, he said appearing calm. It is nice when someone can keep things calm. Someone who does not build a tense and stressful situation or create a disaster. Yes, I said. He remained calm and friendly, then he read out five titles that I could choose from, but there seemed to be more. The first and the last I remembered, so which one should I choose? Perhaps the list was in chronological order and it was of course the newest book by Lindkvist I wanted to get. I asked him to write down the title on a piece of paper. I looked at it and asked where I could find this book. He took the paper back and wrote "shelf B". I am still wondering what it looks like."

**"Roger, 42, on disability pension (p. 12-15):**

Should I forget it or should I go in?

Soon I was there, outside the library, and kept on sitting in the car. I debated with myself, should I forget it or should I actually go in. Libraries are old with narrow rooms; they are dark places with books from floor to ceiling. Like in the school library where the teacher was sitting. After that, I had never again gone to such a place, never in my life.

I will just begin to stutter, I thought, and I won't be able to get a word out. A book about bowling. Maybe people will stop and stare at me. I couldn't think of what to say to the librarian, but that was not as important as just taking the step inside.

Then I gathered up all my courage. Carried it with me.

The building actually felt spacious. Not so many books, the shelves were not so heavy, and were smaller than I remembered from my childhood. They didn't close in on you. And the windows were big, letting in a lot of light.

One time I was at a meeting where everyone had to present themselves to the group, you had to sit down in front of everybody and talk about yourself. I thought I couldn't do it. That I'd screw up. But then I stepped forward. This won't work, I thought, I won't be able to say a word.

Then that feeling went away and it was actually easy. But to walk up to the librarian and say: I am a very bad reader, can you help me find something about bowling. No way!

Must first walk around the library, size it up, absorb the atmosphere, really feel the place.

The people there were mostly young. I didn't think they were looking at me when I went over to the talking books, in the middle of the room. So easy to be able to stand just in the middle of the library and look at the talking books. So easy it was to find them, they were not hidden away into a dark corner. Because in a dark corner, I would draw attention to myself; why does he stand back there in the corner looking at talking books, he seems normal, so why does he stand looking at such books?

But here I was in the middle of the room, after all like anybody else. I didn't stand out in the crowd. A blind person has his white cane, a deaf person has his hearing aid, but my problem doesn't show until I write, until I try to read. It becomes such an emotional thing, so charged. They think it is clear from the first grade, or even before, so that they can brag about their intelligent children.

But now I have been in the library for a while and have gotten used to it, I have stepped inside. It feels spacious and nice and the talking books are in the center. The next thing to do is to walk over and talk to the librarian."



# Translation of Danish leaflet "Har du svært ved at læse?" into English

## Front page:

Is it difficult for you to read?  
Welcome to the library  
Søllerød Public Libraries, Denmark

## Page 2

### Check out an easy-to-read book...

We have many good books for dyslexic persons and others with reading problems  
- both children and adults.  
We also have some of these books recorded on tape...

Listen to an audiobook  
You will enjoy listening to a good audiobook  
In our library you can check out books on many topics – and also novels  
Please come in and get a list of books  
It is free

## Page 3

### Listen to a "talking" magazine...

We will probably have something you like  
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***Page 4***

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***Page 5***

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We have office hours  
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... see back page!

***Page 6***

Come in and meet us at  
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Holte Midtpunkt 23, 2d floor

Tuesdays 14-16  
- or by appointment  
- you can also call us

45 56 66 99

We look forward to your visit

Gyda Skat Nielsen  
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The **Dyslexia Handbook.** Edited by Ian Smythe. British Dyslexia Association. Yearly.

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Dyslexia or Specific Learning Disability is a serious disability in a world of letters. Since dyslexia is an invisible disability, many people have difficulty understanding the problems of persons with dyslexia. It is easier to recognize and empathize with a blind or physically handicapped person. A person with *dyslexia is not as readily identifiable and it may therefore be difficult to understand that he/she needs special library services. The libraries have an obligation to assist this large group of citizens to access to information on equal terms with their fellow citizens.*

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