The library and persons with hearing disabilities

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With the collaboration of Library and Information Science Faculty and the Vicerectorat d’Estudiants of the University of Barcelona
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1. User identification
Definition

“Hearing disabled are those persons who have been deprived of hearing or have suffered a considerable hearing loss”
Characteristics

- Deaf community is very heterogeneous
- The hearing disabilities are conditioned by: *Internal factors*
  - The degree of hearing loss
    - Hypoacoustic persons
    - Deaf persons
  - The moment in which the loss took place
    - 0–6 years (cognitive barriers)
    - After 6 years
Characteristics

External factors

- The surroundings: family, educational, social and work

- Deafness is an invisible handicap

- One of the fundamental problems is that of communication barriers
Deaf community

- There are now more than 132,000 persons in Catalonia with some auditory disability.
- In Catalonia the deaf community is represented by Fesoca and thirty affiliated associations.
Sign language

- Is not a universal code used in all countries
- Is not a pictorial or mimicked language
- Can express abstract concepts as well as specific concepts
- Needs a sign language interpreter
- Dactylologic alphabet
Dactylologic alphabet

Source: http://www.lambdaweb.org/grups/sords/llengua.htm

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Lip reading

- Is a visual method for recognising speech
- Success depends on the ability, interest and attitude of the speaker
2. Needs and limitations in using library services
Needs and limitations in using library services

- Communication and accessibility barriers present in library staff, activities and equipment
- Cognitive barriers
- Invisible handicap
3. Adapting library services
Applicable standards

- There is not a legal groundwork for adapting services
- Unesco and IFLA guarantee equal access to the library
- IFLA has specific directives for the deaf in: *IFLA Professional Reports, no 62*
Actions carried out by libraries

- Prior experiences
  - The Library of the Metropolitan Forum of Coruña has created an integral service for the deaf
  - “Adventures of reading” programme

- Preliminary study
  - Social setting and the hearing disabled that could become users
  - Establishes collaborative ties with entities representing this group

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### Actions carried out by libraries

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Actions carried out by libraries

- One of the keys to a service’s success is effective dissemination
  - To give guided visits
  - To distribute some informative fliers to centres and associations
4. The case of a public and a university library
The case of a public and a university library

- Catalan Library System
- Audit of the Ignasi Iglesias – Can Fabra public library
- Audit of the library of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra
5. Conclusions
Conclusions

- Situation of Catalan libraries quite insufficient
- Adventures of reading programme (Consortium of Libraries of Barcelona)
- Certain actions not requiring a significant investment of resources
Conclusions

In the short term

1. Use alternatives to acoustic signals
2. Use the fax, e-mail or sms
3. Initiate collaborative ties with associations for the deaf
4. Distribute among the staff communication guidelines

The library and persons with hearing disabilities
Conclusions

Mid or long term

1. Prepare a flier for promoting services and activities and audio-visual resources
2. To break the true communication barrier: understand sign language
It is well known that libraries have few economic resources but this argument should not be used to defend discrimination against a sector of population.
Thanks you for listening

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This presentation is based on a previous paper elaborated by Noemi Alcázar, María del Mar Chacón, Iraís Martí and Ignasi Sanz, for the Special Services course.