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### Authors

Aldrich, Alan

Edwards-Johnson, Adriana

Morales, Olivia

[et al.](#)

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# Emerging Leaders Ask: Is it Accessible?

Alan Aldrich, *Instructional Services Librarian, University of South Dakota*; Adriana Edwards-Johnson, *Virtual Library Manager, Pioneer Library System, Norman, Okla.*; Olivia Morales, *Local History Librarian, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library*; Annelise Sklar, *Librarian for Political Science, Law & Society, and State, Local, & International Documents, University of California, San Diego*. Michael Witt, *Interdisciplinary Research Librarian, Purdue University*

ASCLA sponsored the 2008 Emerging Leaders Team X to focus their innovative energy on a project examining technology-related accessibility issues. The group met at the 2008 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia as part of an all-day session for Emerging Leaders and worked together electronically over the next several months. The project evolved from the original charge of evaluating the accessibility of ALA's website (an undertaking found to be part of the ALA Web Group's in-progress ALA site redesign) to assisting ASCLA in promoting the release of an upcoming "Accessibility Toolkit" that will provide information on various accessibility issues relevant to libraries and librarians. The group presented a poster during the Emerging Leaders poster session at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Anaheim.

ALA adopted a Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy in 2001, and library accessibility is governed by three major federal laws: the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For librarians, accessibility means providing equal access to library resources such as physical facilities, services, and materials including collections, computers, websites, and OPACs. Libraries need to provide equivalent services and materials to all patrons regardless of ability or disability, and, when exact equivalents are not available, assistive technology devices should be provided.

ASCLA's accessibility toolkit will be useful to libraries of all different types and sizes that need help understanding and managing access issues for patrons who may have physical disabilities; learning and developmental disabilities; or cognitive, mental, or emotional illnesses; or who may need service animals or assistive technologies. The toolkit was designed by librarians who specialize in

serving patrons with disabilities. Each tip sheet addresses a specific issue and offers practical solutions for training and implementation. When finished, the toolkit will be available in electronic format free-of-charge on the ASCLA website.

The team developed a multipronged approach to marketing the toolkit. They took advantage of the Emerging Leaders poster session at ALA Annual Conference to create an educational poster about accessibility basics such as the number of Americans—all potential library users—with disabilities (32.5 million) and an example of how a website using mostly red colors appears to a user who is color blind. The team also set up two interactive demos: an activity where visitors had to try using a laptop with pencils in each hand to simulate a dexterity disorder and sunglasses with a flip-down visor to simulate blindness. The team also developed a slogan, "Accessible? Ask ASCLA" and distributed three hundred buttons with the slogan on them at Annual. To complement the buttons, which feature the word *accessible* written in Braille, the team pinned the buttons to their poster table in the same Braille formation. Once the toolkit is available, there will also be a mass e-mail notification campaign to various library-themed professional discussion lists, many of which represent ALA's divisions, round tables, chapters, and student chapters.

Team X consisted of Alan Aldrich, Adriana Edwards-Johnson, Olivia Morales, Annelise Sklar, and Michael Witt. The team mentor was Marilyn Irwin, past president of ASCLA, and the ALA staff advisor was Barbara Macikas. The ALA Emerging Leaders program, which began in 2007 as one of ALA Past President Leslie Burger's initiatives, is designed to give new and younger librarians a chance to participate in problem-solving workgroups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA's structure, and have an opportunity

to serve the profession in a leadership capacity. The program consists of day-long sessions on leadership and a group project to complete between Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. Emerging Leaders has approximately one hundred slots each year and is open to ALA members who are either under age thirty-five or have less than five years of post-MLS experience. Approximately half of the slots are sponsored by ALA divisions, round tables, ethnic affiliates, state chapters, or AASL Affiliates. The deadline for the class of 2009 was July 31, 2008.

Team X's working wiki page at [http://wikis.ala.org/emergingleaders/index.php/X\\_\(2008\):\\_ASCLA](http://wikis.ala.org/emergingleaders/index.php/X_(2008):_ASCLA) is still available.

What resources are available to you?

- Section 508 information at [www.section508.gov](http://www.section508.gov)
- ASCLA website for disability access issues at [www.ala.org/ala/ascla/asclaisues/issues.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/ascla/asclaisues/issues.cfm)
- W3C website on Web accessibility at [www.w3.org/WAI/eval/Overview.html](http://www.w3.org/WAI/eval/Overview.html)
- Northwestern University Web accessibility site at [www.northwestern.edu/univ-relations/web\\_comm/howto/accessibility](http://www.northwestern.edu/univ-relations/web_comm/howto/accessibility)
- OSU Web accessibility site at <http://oregonstate.edu/accessibility/web.php>

Tools for assessing usability of websites:

- Cynthia Says software at [www.cynthiasays.com](http://www.cynthiasays.com)
- Web Accessibility software (WAVE) at <http://wave.webaim.org>
- Vischeck for evaluating color issues at [www.vischeck.com](http://www.vischeck.com)
- ImageJ software at <http://rsb.info.nih.gov/ij>