THE EXPECTATIONS, PRIORITIES, AND PREFERENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHEN SEEKING ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES
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The situation:
It’s common for academic libraries to have a webpage, or multiple webpages, devoted to describing the resources, services, and facilities of the library for users with disabilities. However, these pages vary considerably and there are no clear standards for these pages nor literature on the preferences of users with disabilities for this content.

The question:
What are the expectations, priorities, and preferences for students with disabilities when they try to locate and use these library pages on accessibility?

Challenges:
• Literature review: Hard to distinguish webpage accessibility vs. information about accessibility on webpages
• How prepared for different needs in the interview should I be?
• Locating a good option for remote interviewing

Recruitment:
• In person meetings with campus organizations to get their input and buy-in for the project resulted in them including a call for participants in their newsletters.
• Print flyers were posted around campus
• I included information on this study in my regular news email to students in my liaison college

Participants:
Twelve students, including undergraduates and graduate students, participated. They divulged a variety of disabilities, including dyslexia, ADHD, brain injury, autism, mobility issues, chronic pain, nerve damage, vision impairment, depression, anxiety, and chemical sensitivity.

Methods:
Semi-structured interviews. Consisted of a number of open and closed questions, also involved them ranking some categories and selecting five top priorities in terms of content to include on a webpage of information about accessibility.

Preliminary findings:
Students desired information on:
• Sensory information (sound levels, lighting…)
• Furniture
• Physical layout of building

Some stated preferences included:
• Contact information for named individuals
• Language that makes them feel like they aren’t imposing

Other issues that emerged:
• Common terms (disability, accommodation, accessible) have different connotations to different people
• Students with invisible disabilities can find locating information relevant to them difficult
• Clear organization is important, but assumptions about who would use what services can be incorrect or incomplete

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“I would definitely want to know what the physical space is going to be like and what I’m going to encounter when I get there…this is something that people often push back a lot--they’re like, that’s a lot of detail that you’re asking for, and I’m like, without that detail, I’m not coming.”

“I wasn’t diagnosed until I was transitioning into graduate school, so I’m very new to services that are provided. So I probably would expect that it would exist, but I have never searched out for it.”

“I would hope it would be easy to find and thorough to make it seem like it wasn’t just tacked on to the website as an afterthought”

“maybe because my disability [is] more invisible, so it’s not really something that I’d be like, oh, is this ‘accessible’ to you?”

“I mean inclusivity-- not forgetting about people with other types of disabilities besides physical disabilities or hearing or…sight difficulties.”