



Eye on *the Web*

LINKS TO THE RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

PORTALS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Statistics Canada's Profile of Disability in Canada estimates 3.6 million Canadians (12.4%) are living with a disability. Many of these individuals face barriers and obstacles in their daily lives, both physical and social. Some institutions (e.g., public libraries and libraries attached to colleges, universities and corporations) are obligated to provide accessible services to persons with special needs as outlined in the Ontarian's with Disabilities Act, 2001. And of course, the provision of equitable access to library services and resources for all library users is a tenet of librarianship. This column will introduce readers to Web portals designed for persons with disabilities and those who work with them. Appropriately, we have tried to include Web sites whose creators have made an effort to enhance accessibility through the use of alternate text-only access and sensitivity to screen readability.

Persons With Disabilities Online (Government of Canada) www.pwd-online.ca

Founded by the collaborative effort of five federal government departments, this Web portal provides extensive links to information about disability-related programs and services. The portal's main entry points include the following options: Travel and Transportation, Housing, Rights and Legislation, Employment, Assistive Technology. While most of the entries are federal initiatives, two important sections of this portal allow users to navigate information at the provincial and municipal level. These include the Benefits Finder and the Accessible Travel and Tourism links, both of which are found on the left side of the homepage under the heading, Helpful Tools.

The Benefits Finder provides the user with a list of programs and services relevant to their individual situation; this list is generated after the user enters her/his data into an anonymous online form. The Accessible Travel and Tourism section allows users to extract information by city or province.

Other notable links include the Mapping for the Visual Impaired and Disability Web Links initiatives, both of which can be found under the heading, Partners. The latter is summarized on the next page.

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Disability Weblinks (Social Development Canada) www.disabilityweblinks.ca

This joint federal/provincial/territorial initiative brings together information about more than 1,500 governmental programs, services and contacts for persons with disabilities. Resources are categorized by topic, including headings for Accessibility, Education, Employment, Rights and Transportation, as well as by jurisdiction. Users have two main options for locating information: View Programs by Jurisdiction and Topic or Search Disability WebLinks. View Programs by Jurisdiction and Topic allows users to find resources by selecting from a drop-down menu by jurisdiction (e.g. Ontario) and topic (e.g. education).

The Search Disability WebLinks option allows users to search the entire database by keyword. Search capabilities include truncation by using an asterisk (*) and phrase searching by using quotation marks (""). The Boolean "AND" operator is also available. Each entry provides a brief description of the resource and contact information including e-mail addresses and both direct and text telephone numbers.

For some jurisdictions, including Ontario, key resources for persons with disabilities are listed on the top of the search results page. Relevant non-governmental resources are linked from the bottom of the main page under the QuickLinks heading and include employment resources Workink and CAMO as well as EnableLink, profiled below.

EnableLink www.enablelink.org

Developed by the Canadian Abilities Foundation, this portal is jointly sponsored by the majority of provincial and territorial Workers' Compensation Boards in Canada.

The aim of EnableLink is to empower persons with disabilities by linking them to "a world of resources." Much of the homepage is dedicated to Top Stories of interest to persons with disabilities, including current reports and studies. The site itself is divided into more than 20 sections with headings as varied as Animals, Education, Family Life, and Youth. Subtopics include links to articles, organizations, and communication tools (e.g., chat and message boards).

Don't miss two important but low profile links in the body of the homepage: Directory of Organizations and Library. The directory allows users to search through over 5,000 disability organizations by keyword, province, and subject. It also links to an international directory with comparable search features. The Library link provides access to a searchable full text archive of articles from more than 10 years of Abilities Magazine, "Canada's foremost cross-disability lifestyle magazine." It also provides access to an online bookstore and, most impressive, a searchable bibliography of disability-related publications with a decidedly Canadian focus.

Use the link labeled Resource Library and Reading Room to access the keyword search interface and subject pull-down menu. While some subject headings do not actually link to any records, most of the monograph records we did find include ISBNs and sometimes even prices, along with the information that, "Any bookstore or library will be able to order the book for you with the ISBN number."

Living With Disabilities Accessible via the Canadian Health Network (CHN) www.canadian-health-network.ca/

The CHN is a national, non-profit health information service that brings together information produced by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, non-profit organizations, universities, hospitals, libraries and community organizations. While the scope of this site is broad, i.e., "to help Canadians find the information they're looking for on how to stay healthy and prevent disease", a relatively small but important section of the site is dedicated to persons with disabilities.

Use the Living With Disabilities link found under the Topics section on the left side of the homepage to access a concise list of FAQs and a sophisticated search interface. Users have the option of selecting from over 650 disability related resources via a hyperlinked index or guided search arranged by publisher (organization), date, and alphabetically by title.

A keyword search function is also available, as is an insightful selection of 10 Quick Searches: accessibility, advocacy, assistive devices, children, education, employment, independent living, seniors, violence, women.

Disability Resources Monthly (DRM) Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet: www.disabilityresources.org/

Disability Resources, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination of information that will help persons with disabilities to "live, learn, love, work and play independently."

Although based in the United States, this organization has collected an impressive list of Web resources that should prove useful to librarians and users north of the border. Don't let the busy homepage turn you off – the editor of DRM is a librarian and behind the glitz is an intelligently organized Web site. Use the navigation bar near the top of the page to access the DRM WebWatcher via the Subjects link.

Users will find a comprehensive list of subject headings that are also searchable through the site search engine found on the main page. The linked Web sites have been selected by librarians and their colleagues, with more substantial sites indicated by a red star.

Another important component of this Web site is linked on the navigation bar as Librarians. Here, librarians will find links to sites that intersect with librarianship and disability services, including Web links for listservs and e-zines, assistive technologies, and disability access policies drafted by libraries around the globe.

Like many non-profits, this site depends on the contributions of volunteers and, while many pages seem to be updated regularly, we have no doubt that you will stumble upon at least a few dead links.

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