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Accessibility Guidelines for Public Libraries in Finland

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Public library network in Finland

- Public i.e. municipal libraries
  - 743 libraries + 137 bookbuses in 2016
- Special libraries
  - Celia Library for the Print Disabled
  - Sign Language Library (online)
- Popular service
  - 66 % of the population visit libraries
  - 78 % are satisfied with the service
  - 2013-2017 libraries no 1 in the national customer service inquiry

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Library for All

- A project to develop a digital talking book service via public libraries for print disabled persons
- Co-operation with Celia Library for the Print Disabled and public libraries
- From a centralized special service from Celia to an inclusive service at public libraries
- Started in autumn 2013, ended in Dec 2015
- During this project we found out that there is little knowledge about accessibility in public libraries
- Accessibility Guidelines were a spin-off project, started in 2014

# Accessibility Guidelines for Public Libraries

- To raise awareness of accessibility in public libraries
- To give practical advice how accessibility can be ensured in all library operations and activities
- Meant for all library professionals from management to librarians working at the customer service

Yleisten kirjastojen saavutettavuussuositus

Composing the Guidelines

- Composed in co-operation with different authorities, library associations, libraries, user organizations and other experts

- Many disability and minority organizations and authorities were also asked to give comments on the drafts of the Guidelines

- Based on the Design for All idea – while good design solutions are necessary for disabled users, they can benefit everyone

- Permanent disabilities, temporary impairements, situational limitations
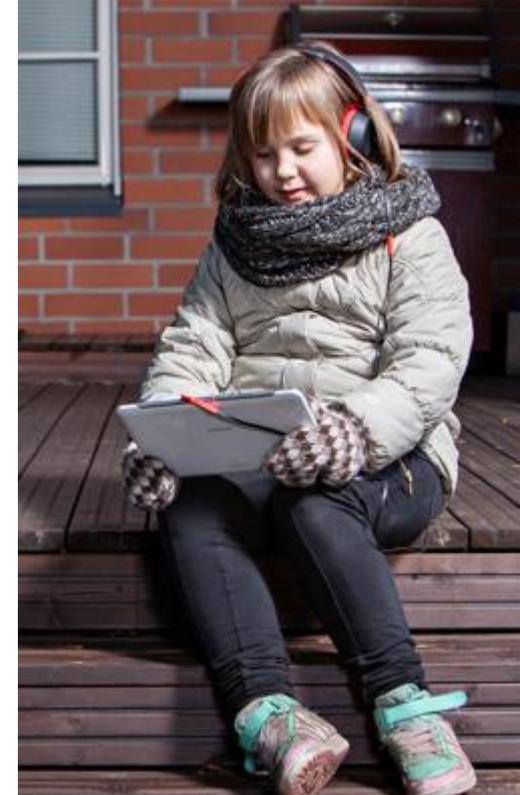
What is an accessible library?

- An accessible library is a library whose services all citizens can use **equally** despite their disabilities, special needs, or minority group status.
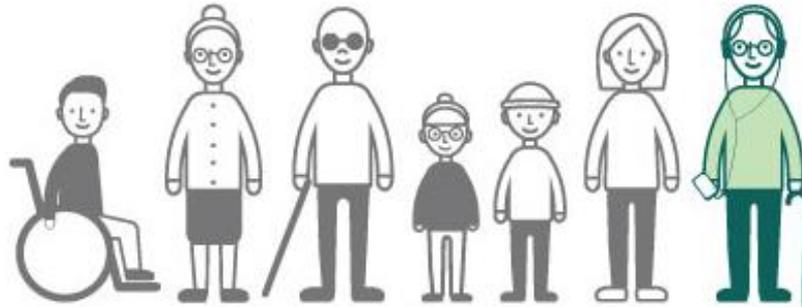
Many aspects of accessibility

- Accessibility is understood very broadly
- All minorities taken into consideration not just persons with disabilites
- Environmental and physical aspect
  - wheel chair access
- Informational aspect
  - accessibility of the content
  - accessible collections and materials
- Social aspect
  - all citizens feel welcome to a library

Contents of the Guidelines

- Introduction by Director of Helsinki City Library
- Concepts
- Strategic work and management
- Collections and materials
- Customer service
- Events
- Pedagogic operations
- Communication
- ICT procurements
- Premises
- Lists of special libraries and disability and other organisations

Some main points 1/5

- Leadership and strategy of libraries
  - Accessibility should be included in the strategy of the library and budget planning.
  - All citizens should be involved in developing library services.
  - Disability organisations, diverse learners, elderly people, HLBTI organisations, etc.
  - Accessibility should be taken into consideration when recruiting library professionals.

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Some main points 2/5

- Collections and materials
  - The diversity of society is reflected in collection. For example, children's collection have titles in which disabled children are characters.
  - Accessible book formats: audio / talking books, easy to read books, tactile books, videos with subtitles and audio description
  - Accessible books are easy to find. There is a shelf for them near main entrance or service desk.
  - A library has a book delivery service.
  - Co-operation with special libraries

Some main points 3/5

- Events
  - There are sign language interpreters or induction loops available if needed.

- Pedagogic operations
  - In booktalks also accessible books are mentioned.
  - Children are encouraged to read aloud (reading education assistance dogs / guinea pigs / grannies / grandpas)

READing Dog Sylvi

Some main points 4/5

- Communication
  - Use of many channels. Webpages, social media, e-mail, printed materials, announcements in the library, etc.
  - Use of many formats. Text, audio, video, infographics
  - Simple, understandable language
  - Making sure that web pages are accessible
  - Telling clients how accessible library is
- ICT procurements
  - WCAG 2.0
  - Usability testing with persons who use assistive technologies

Some main points 5/5

- Customer service
  - Library staff is easily recognized.
  - Language skills of staff (incl. sign language) is shown.
  - Staff knows how to communicate with clients who have a personal assistant or an interpreter.
- Premises
  - Detailed information about accessible entrance, lifts, toilets, furniture, etc.
  - Information about signs, lights and acoustics

Available in English

- The English translation is available https://www.celia.fi/eng/accessible-library/
- Published under the Creative Commons license Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International
- Can be translated and adapted into other languages

Accessibility Guidelines for Public Libraries

Kuntaliitto
Kommunförbundet
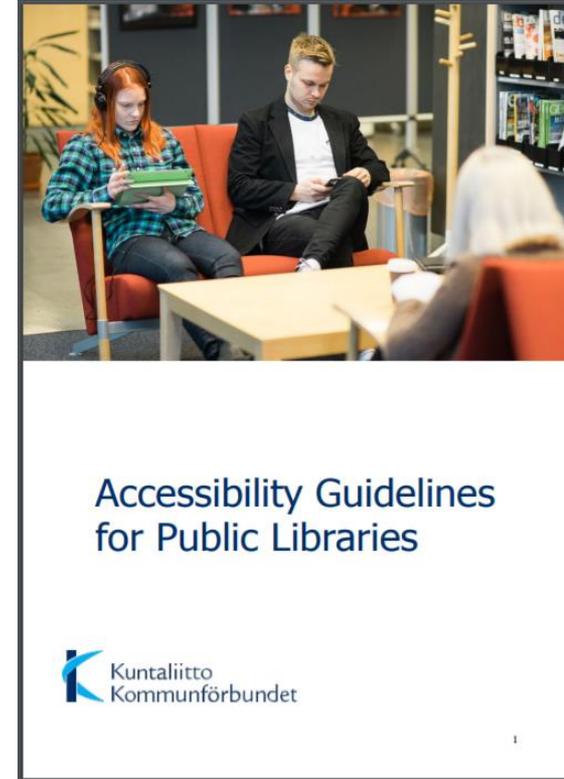
Process

- Writing group started working in Dec 2014
  - Many experts involved in writing
- First part was published in June 2015 for commenting
  - Comments asked from disability organisations
- Complete version of the Guidelines were published in June 2016
- In 2017, seven one-day symposiums/workshops around Finland
  - Presenting the Guidelines
  - Presenting local examples of accessible solutions
  - Discussion accessibility pros and cons in local libraries
- Updating the Guidelines
  - In August 2017
  - Next in the end of 2018: Marrakesh Treaty & Web Accessibility Directive

Thank you! Kiitos!

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