Ontario Public Library Week - Celebrating Accessible Library Services

The Ontario Public Library Association (OPLA), a division of the Ontario Library Association, has launched the accessible library services video project. With the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario is a leader in implementing standards to enable organizations to provide accessible and inclusive services.

"Libraries are recognized as inclusive and welcoming places," states Jill Nicholson, president, OPLA. "When the customer service standard under the AODA was introduced, the library community was eager to learn how to effectively provide an accessible library service for persons with disabilities. We decided to create a series of video scenarios showing a common sense approach to be used as a library staff training tool."

The project was a collaborative learning experience. OPLA members chose the specific service scenarios by responding to a survey. A core committee drafted the story for each scenario; recent film studies graduates donated their time and expertise in shooting and editing; and actual library staff and customers performed in each scenario.

The videos are captioned and show authentic moments in everyday library service transactions. Libraries can use the videos in combination with other training tools.

"The key to providing an accessible library service is to have a common sense approach and one which demonstrates respect for the person with a disability," says Dorothy Macnaughton, who is an accessibility consultant, and also requires an accessible library service experience. "If the customer with a disability has a positive experience in the library, with warm, welcoming staff who are willing to listen, ask appropriate questions and meet the customer’s needs, they will feel confident using their library."

The videos, including links to other useful resources, can be found at:

http://www.accessola.../accessibility/

The first three videos were launched October 22 during public library week. The fourth will be released shortly thereafter.

This project was produced with support from the Government of Ontario’s EnAbling Change Partnership Program. Under this program, the Ontario government provides funding for strategic partnership projects with organizations that have the vision, leadership and commitment to make a significant impact on improving accessibility for people with disabilities across an industry or sector by promoting compliance with the AODA and accessibility standards. The program is administered by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.
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