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# The Open Rose Group

Disability awareness training for libraries: 2011 update

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on behalf of the Open Rose Group

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The Open Rose Group (ORG) was formed in January 2003 by staff who supported people with disabilities at eight university libraries in Yorkshire: Bradford, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and York.

The group membership ranged from library staff whose full-time role involved supporting people with disabilities to staff for whom this role was merely one of several responsibilities. Although membership has changed since its formation, and not all universities were able to contribute actively to this update, the Open Rose Group has remained faithful to its original commitment to exchange ideas and discuss policies and procedures in order to move from base-level provision to best practice in the provision of services to disabled library users.

In view of the importance of staff training on disability issues extending to all members of library staff, many of them part-time and weekend workers, the ORG submitted a group application for the SCONUL Award for Staff Development 2003. This successful application funded the collaborative development of a staff training DVD and supporting materials for use in training library staff on disability issues. This package has sold over 180 copies in the UK and Europe, and has recently reached South Africa!

The package covers four key areas of disability: dyslexia, hearing, mobility and vision. Each section of the film is clearly broken down into short sub-sections (typically 2-3 minutes), covering a wide range of issues:

#### **Dyslexia**

- induction and user education
- staff and services
- using OPACs
- finding material
- assistive technology
- coping with change

#### **Hearing**

- British Sign Language
- communication
- environment and safety
- visual aids
- library services
- perception and awareness

#### **Mobility**

- access
- library support
- induction
- library services
- awareness and assumptions

#### **Vision**

- assistive technology
- learning environment
- access to information
- library support
- transcription centre service

The supporting materials in the DVD package have been updated; the film remains unchanged, as the issues raised are just as relevant as they were in 2005 when the DVD was first issued. The supporting materials now consist of quizzes, group discussion points and practical exercises, with a new element: training tips, which briefly illustrate how the pack has been used and adapted by ORG members. One new activity has been included within each of the four main sections and all the resources, statistics and websites cited have been updated. The ORG believes that this resource can engage staff and provide ideas for service development, which can be tailored, to fit individual needs and situations. We have also found it a powerful tool with which to raise issues, and an effective springboard, which has led to adaptations to our services, increased awareness of the need for our services and more inclusive delivery.

The training package provides an audiovisual aid, which could be used in a variety of ways:

- The flexibility of the DVD format makes it suitable for group or self-directed learning.
- The complete film offers a useful overview of a range of disabilities for use in an induction session on disability issues.
- Selected clips can be used in workshops concentrating on individual disabilities in order to stimulate discussion about that disability.
- The film can be used as a springboard for discussion of local library policy and procedures and to benchmark against practices elsewhere.

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