

**A guide to creating a disability representation section in your library**



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# About Children and Young people with Disability Australia (CYDA)

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disability aged 0 to 25 years. Our vision is that children and young people with disability are valued and living empowered lives with equality of opportunity.

# About this guide

Creating a disability representation section in your library is a meaningful way to promote diversity, representation, and inclusion. By curating a collection that showcases the voices and experiences of authors and characters with disability, libraries can play a vital role in fostering empathy, understanding, and connection within their communities. We hope this CYDA Guide provides valuable insights and resources to support your efforts in creating a more inclusive library environment.

Thank you for your commitment to diversity and representation in literature!

# Introduction

This guide, brought to you by Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA), aims to assist local libraries in curating a collection that highlights books written by authors with disability and books that feature characters with disability. By promoting diverse voices and narratives, libraries can foster inclusivity and provide valuable resources to their communities.

# The case for change

Promoting role models and disability pride is not just a one-time effort; it's an ongoing commitment to inclusivity and representation. Why promoting role models and disability pride should be a permanent feature in libraries:

* Lasting impact: A permanent focus helps individuals with disability see themselves in literature, boosting self-esteem, identity, and aspirations. This consistent exposure fosters pride and belonging in the disability community.
* Continuous engagement: By regularly featuring role models and examples of disability pride, libraries encourage ongoing discussions about representation, diversity, and inclusion, leading to deeper learning and reflection over time.
* Educational benefits: Including books about disability rights, history, and experiences educates children, young people, and families. This promotes empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diversity and the ongoing need for advocacy.
* Community building: A permanent focus strengthens the disability community and promotes solidarity among individuals with disability, their families, and allies. Libraries become welcoming spaces for community building, networking, and support.
* Cultural change: Regularly featuring role models and examples of disability pride helps shift cultural attitudes towards greater acceptance and representation of individuals with disability. This challenges stereotypes, reduces stigma, and promotes social change.

Ensuring that role models and disability pride are a permanent part of library collections creates lasting impact, continuous engagement, educational value, community building, and cultural change.

By featuring more audiobooks, Braille, large print, Easy Read formats, graphic and image-based books, as well as books written by disabled people and featuring characters with disabilities, we can help create a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone's stories are valued and celebrated.

# Step 1: Planning and preparation

* Identify goals: Determine the objectives of creating a disability representation section in your library. Consider the importance of representation, education, and accessibility.
* Allocate resources: Allocate space, budget, and staff time for curating and maintaining the collection.
* Establish criteria: Develop criteria for selecting books, including authenticity, relevance, and diversity of experiences.

# Step 2: Book selection

* Research: Conduct research to identify books written by authors with disability and books featuring authentic portrayals of characters with disability.
* Consult: Seek recommendations from diverse sources, including disability advocacy groups, authors, readers, and educators.
* Consider intersectionality: Ensure diversity within the representation of disability, including race, gender, sexuality, and other intersecting identities.
* Evaluate accessibility: Prioritise books that are available in accessible formats, such as large print, Easy Read, audiobooks, and Braille.

# Step 3: Collection development

* Curate a diverse collection: Select a variety of genres, formats, and reading levels to cater to diverse interests and age groups.
* Include non-fiction and fiction: Incorporate both non-fiction books on disability rights, history, and experiences, as well as fiction that features writers with disability and authentic portrayals of characters with disability.
* Highlight own voices: Prioritise books written by authors with disability to ensure authentic representation and perspectives.
* Collaborate with publishers and distributors: Reach out to publishers and distributors to source relevant titles and advocate for increased representation in publishing.

# Step 4: Cataloguing and display

* Catalogue books: Ensure that books in the disability representation section are accurately catalogued and easily searchable in the library's catalogue.
* Create displays: Design accessible and visually appealing displays to showcase books from the disability representation section, highlighting themes, authors, or characters.
* Provide informational materials: Accompany displays with informational materials that educate patrons about the importance of disability representation in literature.

# Step 5: Promotion and outreach

* Promote awareness: Raise awareness about the disability representation section through library newsletters, social media, and community events.
* Host talks and panels: Invite authors with disability to discuss their work and experiences, fostering dialogue and engagement.
* Engage with people with disability: Collaborate with local disability advocacy groups and organisations to promote the collection and ensure its relevance to the community.

# Step 6: Evaluation and feedback

* Monitor usage: Track the usage and circulation of books from the disability representation section to assess its impact and relevance.
* Seek feedback: Encourage patrons to provide feedback on the collection and solicit suggestions for improvement.
* Regular review: Conduct regular reviews of the collection to ensure its currency, diversity, and alignment with community needs.

# Step 7: Promoting role models and disability pride

* Introduce role models: Include books that highlight real-life individuals with disability. These role models can inspire children, young people, and families by demonstrating the diverse talents and capabilities of individuals with disability.
* Connect with community resources: Collaborate with local disability organisations, advocacy groups, and role models with disability to offer mentorship, support, and networking opportunities for children, young people, and families. Facilitate connections with peers and role models who share similar experiences and aspirations, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment within the disability community.

# Step 8: Ensuring accessibility

**Library Accessibility**

* Physical: Ensure that the library space is accessible by providing ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Ensure that aisles are wide enough to accommodate mobility aids and that signage is clear and easy to read.
* Sensory: Consider sensory needs by providing quiet areas, noise-reducing headphones, and sensory-friendly spaces. Avoid using flashing lights or excessive visual stimuli in library displays and programming.
* Digital: Ensure that library websites, catalogues, and online resources include alternative formats, screen reader compatibility, and keyboard navigation options.

**Display Accessibility**

* Physical: Ensure that materials are displayed at a height that is reachable for patrons of all heights and abilities. Avoid placing displays in narrow or congested areas that may obstruct mobility or impede access.
* Visual: Use clear, legible font sizes and high-contrast colours in signage and display materials to enhance visibility. Provide Braille or tactile signage for individuals who are blind or have low vision.
* Interactive: Ensure that any interactive displays are accessible to all. Provide alternative options or accommodations as needed.
* Easy Read or Easy English Materials: Include easy read or easy English versions of signs and display materials. Use simple language, clear visuals, and concise explanations to convey information effectively.

**Material Accessibility**

* Format: Offer materials in a variety of formats, including large print books, audiobooks, e-books, and braille editions. Ensure that digital resources are compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers and magnification software.
* Content: Curate materials with consideration for content accessibility, selecting books and resources that feature authentic representation of characters with disability and address disability-related themes with sensitivity and accuracy. Avoid stereotypes, stigmatising language, or harmful portrayals of disability.

