<u>Preferred Definition of Assistive Technology:</u> "Any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of people." (**Note**, this definition comes from the week 4 asynchronous lecture, and I have modified it slightly.)

**Evaluation of 5 assistive technologies in or available from the ESCU Library:**

1. <u>Elevators</u> – "One that raises or lifts something up: such as a cage or platform and its hoisting machinery for conveying people or things to different levels." Definition from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

    a. ESCU Library has a total of three elevators, one in the main lobby and two within the library proper. The elevator in the lobby gives a person access to the lobby first and second floors. While the elevators within the library proper give a person access to the four floors of the library.

    b. All three elevators will allow a person access to the second floor, which is the main floor with the circulation desk. This system of three elevators acts as a redundancy so if one is out of order then the other two will still get a person to the circulation desk where a librarian can assist them if needed.

    c. In case of power outages, the ESCU Library does have a back up system for emergency lighting and elevator power allowing people to safely exit the building if needed.

    d. Over all elevators in large public buildings with multiple floors that will be accessed by thousands of people a year are a much-needed AT. The elevators in the ESCU library are always kept in good condition and when work is done on

them it is one at a time, while slow this keeps two others open for people to use. The elevators are front and center literally speaking, they are hard to miss when walking in which provides quick and easy access.

    e. After my evaluation of this AT, I can say that the 3 elevator system works well within the library and gets a lot of use every day.

2. <u>Handicap door buttons</u> – A device that is used to open and close automatic doors, often placed near the door they open.

    a. Most of the doors within the ECSU library have a handicap door button next to them that allows users who are unable to open a door to still open them through the button.

    b. All the entrance and exit doors to the library are large and heavy so providing these buttons on those doors are a necessity, the doors in the stairwells do not have a handicapped door button but they are always locked open with magnetic locks. Also, all the bathroom doors have handicap door buttons.

    c. After my evaluation of the AT the handicap door buttons, they do work. I would also like to mention that if one is not working on the outside doors there is a call button that contacts the library staff inside and flags campus maintenance. This feature is only present on the 3 buttons on the outside of the building.

3. <u>Alt Text for photos and other resources Online</u> – "Alternative (Alt) Text is meant to convey the "why" of the image as it relates to the content of a document or webpage. It is read aloud to users by screen reader software, and it is indexed by search engines. It also displays on the page if the image fails to load, as in this example of a missing image." (This definition is from Harvard University's Digital Accessibility website).

a. With in the online library catalog the library employs Alt Text for photos that are displayed in the catalog. The library displays the Alt Test just below the images that have it.

b. When speaking with the Reference Librarian at ECSU they had mentioned that this Alt Text function of their website is relatively new and is constantly being added too. In showing off the AT they even found an item that had yet to have Alt Text added to it, and they made a note of it before moving on and finding one with Alt Text.

c. After my evaluation of this AT, I have determined that when present online, it does work and operates correctly.

4. <u>Wheelchair Accessible tables (ADA Compliant)</u> – "An accessible table has a surface height of no more than 34 inches and no less than 28 inches above the floor. At least 27 inches of knee clearance must be provided between the floor and the underside of the table. An accessible route provides access to each accessible table and a clear floor area 30 inches by 48 inches is provided at each accessible seating location. This clear floor area extends 19 inches under the table to provide leg and knee clearance." (From ADA Guide for small businesses)

a. All the tables on the second and third floors where the public seating is set up or ADA complaint according to the librarians I had asked.

b. The library has 3 types of tables all equal height but shaped differently, there is a smaller square table meant for two people with chairs placed opposite each other, then there are rectangular tables for 4 people with 2 chairs on each side placed opposite each other, finally there are the large circle tables, these seat 5-6 with the

chairs placed around the table. It should also be mentioned that some of the tables have purposefully one less seat, this is dedicated for wheelchair access, but from my time going to school these free spaces end up being moved around a lot as students move chairs.

    c. Going around and checking most of the seating available, all the tables are well spaced for those who need more space to move around.

    d. While not technically tables but cubbies, the public access computers in the library also fall within size parameters to allow wheelchair access.

    e. After evaluating this AT I have determined that it does work as intended, I should also say that no specific measurements were provided to me by the library staff, they only said that the seating was ADA compliant and I did not measure anything myself.

5. <u>Loanable Over Ear Headphones</u> – The ECSU Library offers at the circulation front desk the ability for patrons to loan out headphones for use within the library and to be used on the library computers.

    a. These were made available because of a policy where any audio coming from the library computers must be played with headphones. This policy is negated for people with a registered disability through the school's disability services but the headphones are still available to loan for those who aren't registered.

    b. All the headphones are the "over ear" type and are wired.

    c. I was told by the library staff that all the headphones do work well with the computers systems and applications.

     d.   After evaluating this AT system, I have determined that it does work well as intended, I personally did not see anyone using the headphones, but the library staff said that they are loaned out often.

**<u>Five high priority recommendations for improving the inclusivity at ESCU Library:</u>**

1. <u>Staff Training about their ATs</u> – For this recommendation it comes from what I had noticed, and that was that only the head librarian had the most knowledge on what ATs are available in the library, but it took some brainstorming with other staff to come up with some of the ATs they had. The Reference Librarian I had started out asking question too did not know what I meant by Assistive Technologies until I gave them a definition and some examples from class.

     a.   I am making this recommendation for AT training programs because the reference librarian and student staff mentioned interest in learning more about the subject. Before leaving they gave me a QR code to scan that leads to a space to lend feedback that goes directly to the librarians, and they expressed interest in me sharing my recommendations that I came up with for this project.

     b.   I am also making this recommendation a high priority because I believe that it is important for more than one person to know what AT technologies and services, they have available to their patrons. I went in as a person asking question for a project and not as a person interested in using the ATs the library has, if a person with a disability who needed these ATs had gone to ask these questions and the librarians had no answers they could come off as un-inclusive which the ESCU library is not, they are definitely an inclusive library.

2. <u>Loanable iPads or eBook readers</u> – This recommendation was brought to my attention by the reference librarian who had mentioned that at the other college library they work at, students are able to loan out iPads and other eBook reading devices that allows them to digitally read books within the library's collection. This is for students who have a hard time using the physical copies of books available in the stacks and find tablets easier to use, also tablets have access to screen readers and audiobooks for those who need those applications.

    a. I am making this recommendation to make the library more inclusive for those who go to the library in person, the library has eBooks and audiobooks available through their online catalog, but you would need access to a computer to use this kind of encourages people to access those form home and not come in person. While the library does have access to computers some people find conventional computers hard or impossible to use due to physical impairments. Not to mention the policy where people need headphones when using the computers.

    b. This recommendation would require the purchase of these technologies for the library, and possibly require a change to the libraries budget to allow for these tools.

3. <u>Add ATs in Group Study Rooms</u> – This is another recommendation that was brought to my attention by the head librarian. Currently group study rooms are not inclusive and have no ATs, the white boards in all the rooms are unable to be accessed by those in wheelchairs, the seating is different from the ADA compliant seating in the public seating areas, and the doors are kept closed and have no handicapped access buttons to open the doors.

    a. I am making this recommendation because the group study rooms are a very popular area of the library used by students and every student should have the

same access and ability to utilize all the tools the library has to offer that would lead to their academic success. The rooms are very good for group projects because the white boards double as projector screens where students can hook up their laptops and project their screens for a group project.

    b. I make this a high priority recommendation one because the head librarian had brought this up as something they want to change in the future, and two because of the nature of student group work. Often students are unable to pick their groups, and if the group plans on using the study room and one of the group members is in a wheelchair, they will have a hard time using the room and are then put in a place where they must explain themselves to the others which could lead to added stress.

    c. This recommended change would require a redesign of the group study rooms and maybe some renovations. First the whiteboards would need to be able to be raised or lowered for those in wheelchairs, then the doors will need to be made automatic with the addition of door switches, and lastly the tables and seating should be made ADA compliant.

4. <u>Redesign Third Floor Stacks to include ATs</u> – For this recommendation I noticed that the stacks in the library are not that wide and are very tall, tall enough that the library offers stepping stools within the stacks, anyone in a wheelchair would be unable to turn around and would need to commit to the aisle they are going down, and that is if the aisle is unobstructed. I had noticed in many of the aisles there are stepping stools left in the aisles that would make them impossible for people in wheelchairs. Also, the size of the stacks makes it impossible for these people to reach the top shelves for the books.

a.  Out of the five recommendations listed here this one will be the hardest to implement because it would require an entire redesign of the libraries stacks which would in turn displace thousands of books and materials for a time.

b.  My recommendation for this situation would be to at least add a small track system that allows the stacks to be moved slightly, or just make more room in the aisles, this is a hard one to make actual concrete changes too knowing the scope of the project but I believe that this recommendation should be taken into consideration for any future expansions with in the library to add more ATs to the stacks making them more accessible.

c.  Another recommendation for this situation that could be done immediately with no renovating is a tablet device at either end of the stack that displays what books are in there, this will allow a person to view the books without having to physically go down the stacks and still allow them to browse.

5.  <u>Desktop Magnifiers</u> – Much like loanable iPads and eBook tabled devices I recommend desktop magnifiers. I was shocked when I asked if the library had anything like this, but they said they had none that are open for public use. They do have 4 in the special collections on the fourth floor, but the fourth-floor collections are on a different time schedule than the main library and the materials are accessed differently.

a.  For this recommendation the library should buy desktop magnifiers, some in fixed locations within the stacks for quick viewing of the books before checking them out fully, and some that are loanable for portable in library use at the public desks. This is another way to make accessing physical copies of books more accessible for people and another Assistive Technology allowing people to use and access the library.

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