Ableism and access in the academic library

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Overview

- Person-first language
- Overview of research
- Methods
- Themes

Pictured above: *Accessible icon*
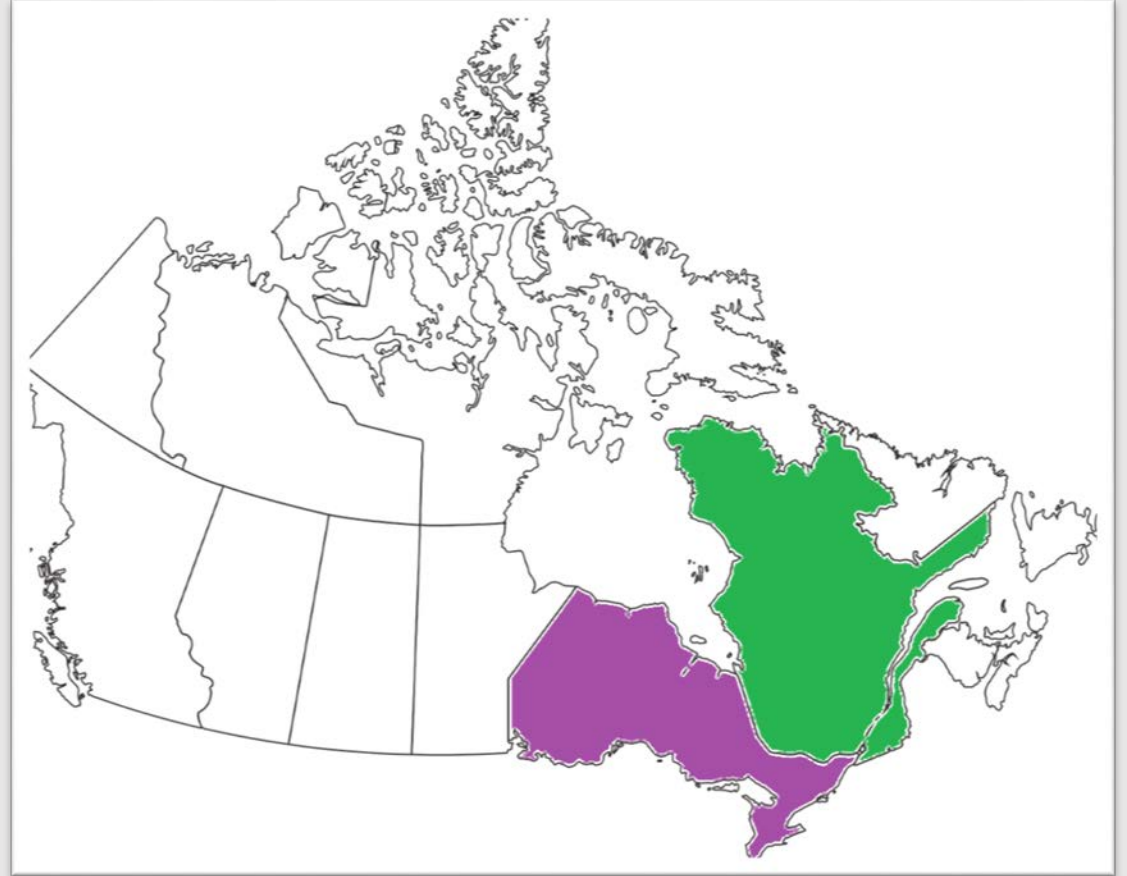Source: Accessible Icon project (Public Domain)

PhD research

Comparative case study of 2 academic library systems in kanada

onitariio/Ontario

- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
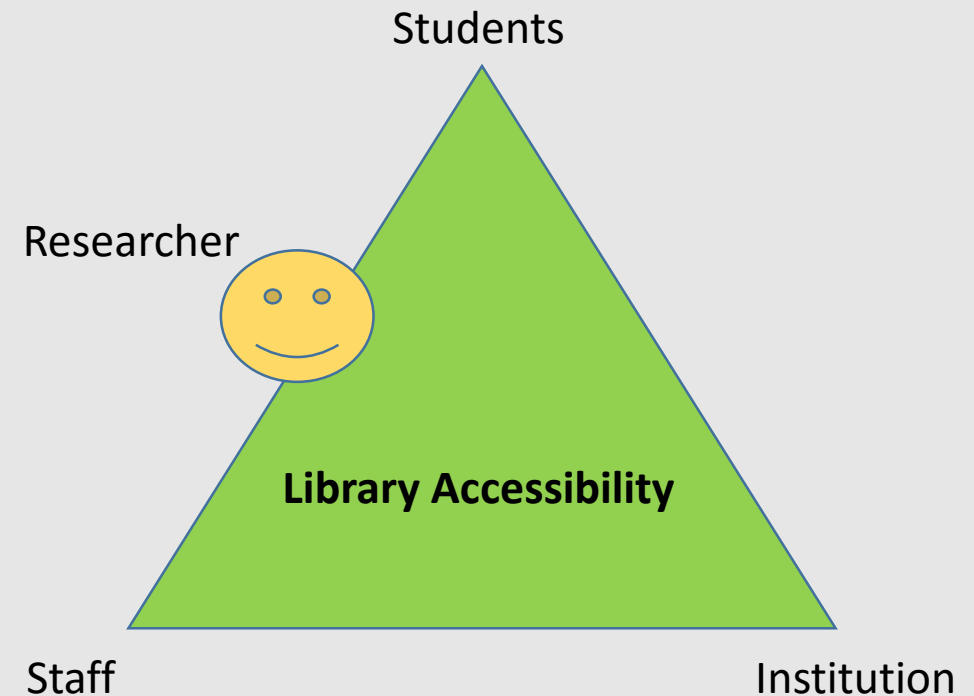
kepék/Quebec

- Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur
- No accessibility legislation

Pictured above: Map of kanada with onitariio/Ontario and kepék/Quebec highlighted

Methods

- Data sources:
  - Physical and information audit
  - Policies
  - Interviews with staff
  - Survey and interviews with students
- NVivo
- Grounded theory
- Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Students

Researcher

Library Accessibility

Staff

Institution

A few themes…

Librarians

- Resources
- "Helper profession"
- Accommodate at point of need
- Uncertainty and training
- Expertise and advocacy

Students

- Resources
- Bathrooms and doorways and chairs, oh my!
- Accommodations, begging and workarounds

Student: And that's the hard thing. Cause when you always hear, well I always hear 'well it's a budgetary thing when it comes to either treatment that I don't need, well not that I don't need. It's treatment that *I need*, or accessible devices that I need, or getting the proper amount of care through a PSW.

It's always a budgetary thing. Yet, if it's a commitment to accessibility and inclusion, then I feel like there needs to be more of a push than to just say there's no money, versus looking for it or figuring out how it can be done.

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Librarian: As I said [student], he's very outspoken. And I think we need more of that. I can advocate for the students but until students advocate for themselves… I feel like they might think it's obvious that they shouldn't have to, that it's obvious that they need better service… I think it would help if they advocated strongly… Because they need to get their voices out there. But how can we help that too? Like how can we help them get their voices out there?

Claire: Do you think that there are reasons that students are not advocating strongly?

Librarian: I don't know. I think that's probably a personal… They already feel like they need help and they don't want to point it out I guess? I think that's a personal thing… I think it would help the university listen. More effectively.

Librarian: There are probably things we could be doing that we don't know about, and things that students haven't asked for, because, it doesn't occur to them that we might be able to help them.

Claire: Yes. Do you have any sense of maybe why students don't want to go to [Disability Support Services]? And you know, take advantage of some of the services that are available?

Librarian: Probably just pride… Don't want to ask for help.

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Student: So to have to go and essentially ask, sometimes it feels like begging for that support. It's really hard to do... If you know [what's available] then it's just oh yeah I need that. And I already know that you're going to do it and you won't bat an eye if I ask you for it.

One final theme

Frustration, exhaustion, gratitude

A new story?

I would just say as a general rule, if we're not actively trying to work towards accommodation, accessibility, then we're probably working against it to some extent. (Librarian)

"Indeed, accessibility can help promote values of diversity and social responsibility, and can serve us in the work of making our workplaces and profession more equitable and just" (Rosen, 2017)

References

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Rosen, S. (2017). Accessibility for justice: Accessibility as a tool for promoting justice in librarianship. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. Retrieved from http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2017/accessibility-for-justice/

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