Recently, the movie theater chain Alamo Drafthouse opened one of its cinemas locally, and I was impressed when I saw that included in its regular offerings is a program called Alamo for All. Alamo for All is a sensory-friendly movie program for guests with special needs and new parents. By creating a different environment, the Alamo helps that guests who might normally stay away from theaters feel welcome.

This special program at a theater made me wonder how libraries are doing when it comes to offering a "Library for All." Part of most libraries’ mission statements is making sure all members of our community feel that the library is a safe and welcome space for them. This includes senior citizens, the visually impaired, those in wheelchairs, people who speak various languages, the deaf, and so on.

While budget and staff resources may limit the types of services or programs you can sponsor, here are ten things to consider when making sure your library is modeling "library for all."

1. **Start with your staff:** Provide training to your staff and model a "customer first" mentality, regardless of guests' race, age, or abilities. While your library may not have the budget to purchase every adaptive technology, a little compassion goes a long way in making your community feel welcome. Research and share what is the best way to help a person with a disability when needed. You may want to designate a staff member to coordinate all of the services you can provide.
2. **Accessibility matters:** Go beyond the legal requirements of handicap accessibility and evaluate how easy it is to maneuver around your library with a wheelchair. Changes you make will also help caregivers of young children explore your library with a stroller. Guests should be able to enter most external rooms. Provide step stools for reaching books on tall shelves. Lastly, make sure some computer desks and study desks are handicap accessible, as well.
3. **Programming for all:** Think about ways you can make your programs open to all. Depending on your community, you may offer programs that are tailor-made for a type of guest, such as a sensory friendly storytime or a bilingual storytime. Or you can offer resources to help guests join in a general storytime, such as a deaf interpreter or a screen with captions. Pay attention to who enters your building and think about ways to make it more welcoming for them. Even small steps can go a long way.
4. **Let them volunteer:** Many people enjoy volunteering at the library and giving back in this way. How easy is it for guests with different abilities to volunteer? Are there jobs that can be done sitting down, as well as standing up? Do you allow patrons with aids to work together on certain projects? As much as possible, find ways that make it possible for anyone to volunteer.
5. **Information is Power:** Information such as hours of operation, the library catalog, a schedule of events, or lists of services should be available in multiple formats, such as different languages, in braille or large print, or even through a voice or video recording accessible via the phone or on the library website.
6. **Schedule of events:** Hosting events at different times of the day will allow different members of your community to attend. Do you have storytimes on the weekends and in the evening to allow people without traditional work schedules to attend? Do you need sensory friendly or adaptive storytimes for guests that don't enjoy the traditional storytime environment? Choosing a fitting time is important when hosting such events to allow the intended audience to attend.
7. **Every noise level a place:** Many libraries have designated noise-free zones, such as quiet study areas for patrons who need silence. Other guests may have wiggly, noisy toddlers who don't want to be frowned at while their child squeals with delight all of those delightful books. One solution can be to set designated hours or areas where noise should be expected. This may attract a wide variety of guests, not just toddlers. Market the hours clearly so all guests know what to expect. Choose a clever title for the noisy time/space.
8. **Collections and formats:** Curate collections at your library for all kinds of guests. Traditional print, large print, e-books, and audiobooks are standard in most libraries now. Try to purchase popular fiction in all formats. People who are blind or visually impaired may need to read in Braille. If you don't have a collection, touch base with local, state, and federal agencies that provide these resources at special or even free rates. [Start with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at the Library of Congress to find the options](https://www.loc.gov/nls/).
9. **Let there be (less) light:** The fluorescent or harsh lighting in most libraries can be overwhelming for some guests or give migraine headaches. Consider different types of light bulbs to soften the lighting and make the library cozier.
10. **Signage:**Signs in your library should be easy to read and at an eye level that is clearly visible. Consider if your community needs signage to be in multiple languages or to include Braille. This includes shelf readers, as well as directional signs.

Any changes you make can make a huge difference in making your community feel welcome. And, if you are wondering if it's worth it to make these changes, rest assured, [the principle of universal design says that changes you make for particular guests will inevitably make things better for everyone](https://www.washington.edu/doit/universal-access-making-library-resources-accessible-people-disabilities).

Creating a warm and welcoming environment will inevitably lead to more people having more access to books and other library services. And reading is the perfect way for customers of all ages to learn about all kinds of lives and develop appreciation and empathy for those differences.