SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Library Director and faculty and staff of Watson Memorial Library at Northwestern State University affirm our commitment to providing the best possible library service to all of our patrons, including those who are physically or mentally challenged. We also affirm the value and purpose of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991. We recognize that the library building and facilities fall seriously short of full compliance with the stipulations of that Act.

Having recognized that situation, and until funds are made available for the necessary refurbishment, the library’s policy is to provide personal assistance for each library user who has a disability (as defined in the Act*) and who desires such assistance.

When a disabled person enters the library, a member of the faculty or staff or a student employee comes forward and offers assistance. The offer is made in a positive and matter-of-fact way, without condescension. If the disabled person declines the offer, he or she is reminded that library staff are available at any time should assistance become necessary. If the offer of assistance is accepted, assistance may take the form of removing drawers from the card catalog, opening and turning the pages of periodical indexes, removing boxes of microfilm from cabinets and placing the microfilm on readers, photocopying articles from bound journals, or retrieving books or journals from library shelves. These examples should be considered illustrative and not inclusive. Help is to be given when, and where, it is needed.

It is important to note, however, that staff members are to take every precaution not to intrude on the sense of intellectual inquiry that brought the disabled person into the library. The role of the staff is solely to facilitate access to library resources, and under no circumstances is the staff member to make decisions that might bear on the creative independence of the disabled library user.
Staff members assist disabled patrons in opening doors, using the lavatories and drinking fountains, and in other reasonable ways to ensure the comfort of the patron, if assistance is requested.

Further, it is the policy of Watson Memorial Library to address the shortcomings in the physical facilities in as timely a manner as possible. When funds are available, necessary changes rank high in the spending priorities. Until then, it is incumbent on the Director, the Faculty, and Staff of Watson Memorial Library to make appropriate changes, where possible, in creative and low-cost ways.

*1) A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, 2) a record of such impairment, or 3) being regarded as having such an impairment.