The American Foundation for the Blind reports that in 2011 about ten percent or about 21 million of all adult Americans reported they have trouble seeing either with or without glasses or eye contacts (Statistical Snaphots, 2013). This minority population faces great challenges in society where seeing is so fundamental to everyday living. Modern media's inherent visual nature can potentially make it hard for the visually impaired to access unless careful consideration is made to develop tools and materials for their use. As places of information exchange and access libraries stand in a unique position to help assist the visually impaired find access to materials in formats that they can use and understand (Sunrich & Green, 2006, p. 30).

The majority of library patrons can easily take seeing for granted. So much of the library is visual in nature including books, magazines, newspapers, physical signage, and computer equipment. Visual impairment is a significant obstacle to accessing library materials and services. Reduced budgets and poor management are additional obstacles that can stand in the way of helping to serve the visually impaired (Sunrich & Green, 2006, p. 39). Sunrich and Green (2006) conclude that these obstacles can lead to a "self-perpetuating" problem where library patrons choose not to use a library with inadequate services for the visually impaired and library services for the visually impaired aren't made available because of lack of patronage by the visually impaired (p. 39).

Despite the challenges facing visually impaired library patrons, there exist many opportunities for libraries to better serve this typically underserved population. Library staff can take major steps to better serve the visually impaired by ensuring that they are "trained in the use of the assistive equipment so that they can assist patrons with blindness when the need arises" (Sunrich & Green, 2006, p. 30). Although the technological improvements of modern society create additional materials that are harder to use by the visually impaired these same technological improvements are being used to develop tools that blind patrons can use to be full participants in a library like other library patrons. Various hardware and software tools make it possible for the visually impaired to read book in braille, dictate and listen to various computer documents, and browse the world wide web (Sunrich & Green, 2006, p 31-33). The internet also provides many useful resources that libraries can use to better serve the blind including websites that provide free audio books and materials for the visually impaired. The more tools and resources that libraries and library staff know the better suited they will be to help enable visually impaired patrons. It truly can be said that "technology has become an equalizer for the blind" (Valenza, 2000, p. 34). While standing at the intersection of technology and the liberal arts libraries must take on the responsibility to receive training and provide services that are designed to meet the needs of the visually impaired.

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