Utah State University Libraries, in collaboration with the Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities (USU CPD), published the first issue of a new open access scholarly journal focused on disability issues in the United States.

The Developmental Disabilities Network Journal (DDNJ) publishes research and evaluation on the multiple systems that serve individuals with disabilities and their families. The journal specifically highlights programs, practices, and policies that encourage the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of public life. Because the new journal is open access, the latest research and information about disability programs is available at no cost to people with disabilities, their parents, siblings, and caregivers, direct-support professionals, and community members.

In addition to being open access, the DDNJ is unique in that it is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are involved at all levels—from the editorial board to the peer-review process. “This new publication fills an important niche in the field of disability research, and it is groundbreaking in its focus on including people with disabilities in the publishing process,” said Matthew Wappett, executive director of the USU CPD and editor in chief of the new journal.

Wappett explained that an individual with a disability reviews each article submitted to the journal. “We are committed to building a cadre of reviewers who can provide a real-world perspective on the articles submitted for publication,” he said.

In place of an abstract, the DDNJ has asked that authors provide a “plain language summary.” This summary is intended to help nonacademic readers understand the focus and content of each article. The DDNJ also encourages authors to provide video abstracts or summaries of their articles to assist individuals who are non-readers.

This new journal is part of a growing trend of open access scholarly journals.

“Through open access publishing, libraries can provide quality information to researchers and the public, removing barriers to access and actively supporting lifelong learning,” said Shannon Smith, USU Libraries’ scholarly communication librarian.

Projects such as the DDNJ are a tangible demonstration of the USU Libraries’ commitment to furthering the advancement and accessibility of USU’s research.

“We are proud to partner with the CPD to expand resources that will support individuals with disabilities and their families,” said Dean of Libraries Bradford Cole.

The DDNJ will be published twice a year. The Winter 2020 issue will focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with disabilities and the disability service system. The DDNJ is currently seeking research articles, personal perspectives and preliminary analyses focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. The DDNJ and more information can be found at digitalcommons.usu.edu/ddnj.

The CPD is housed in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at USU and is Utah’s federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

USU Libraries are the intellectual center of Utah State University. As both a physical and virtual destination, they create collaborative, engaging environments for learning and scholarship. The USU Libraries provide access to almost 2 million print books and journals, 7,600,000 e-books, 480,000 government publications and over 60,000 electronic journals.