ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

~ HELPING STUDENTS ~
WHO WE ARE

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WHAT WE’LL BE COVERING TODAY

■ What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?
  Characteristics • Demographics (NJ & National)
■ Literature Review What we found • What we didn’t find
■ Context ASD Legislation
■ Context Impact on Libraries
■ Recommendations Further Research • What libraries can do
■ Discussion
Poll question 1
WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?

■ Spectrum-symptoms manifest differently in every individual, from mild to severe

■ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, 2013):
  – Persistent deficits in social communication/interaction
  – Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior
ASD CHARACTERISTICS

■ Lack of or delay in spoken language
■ Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
■ Little or no eye contact
■ Lack of interest in peer relationships
■ Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
■ Persistent fixation on parts of objects
ASD CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat affect/non-responsive to verbose
- Nervous ticks, grunting
- Can feel rejection more acutely due to anxiety, insecurity and hyper-sensitivity
- Rigid, literal thinking, difficulty with abstract concepts, executive function (planning a term paper), theory of mind (understanding reasons for other people's actions)
DEMOGRAPHICS

■ New Jersey
  - ASD in children 1 in 34 (2018) or 3% of 8-year old children

■ National
  - ASD in children 1 in 59 (CDC, 2018), whereas 1 in 125 (2004)
  - Lifetime cost of caring for an ASD individual $2.4 million
  - 50,000 ASD teens turn 18 each year
  - ~17,000 (35%) attend college
  - <2% of the university population on spectrum
Why the increase?

- Expanded DSM definition
- More people knowing about autism and referring children to experts to document their concerns
- Greater awareness and public health education by the government and advocacy groups
- New Jerseyans also have more access to diagnostic services, so more children are getting evaluated earlier
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Limited research on ASD college students’ library experiences
- Tends to focus on the experiences of parents, faculty, administrators and not ASD students themselves
- Lack of research on effective supports for ASD students
LITERATURE REVIEW

■ ASD students have cognitive ability to succeed academically but lack academic/social skills

■ ASD students find library stacks intimidating and scary, but see the library as a safe place

■ Concept: student-ready approach vs college-ready

■ Concept: neurodiversity—no normal way for brain to function
### LEGISLATION—IDEA vs ADA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</th>
<th>Americans with Disabilities Act/ADAA Act</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K to Grade 12</td>
<td>College and Work Environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law of Entitlement</td>
<td>Civil Rights Law (eligibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures success</td>
<td>Ensures equal access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special accommodations</td>
<td>Reasonable accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District must identify student</td>
<td>Student must self-identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District pays for testing, specialized devices, etc.</td>
<td>Student pays for testing, specialized devices, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teachers have an understanding of the disability and IEP</td>
<td>Professors are given list of accommodations to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents involved</td>
<td>Parents not involved; student is over 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMPACT ON LIBRARIES

- ASD students heightened risk for academic failure
- Current services inadequate to help ASD college students
- ASD often does not manifest in observable/physical ways
- Many students choose not to disclose an ASD condition
- Lack of ASD understanding/awareness among librarians/staff
Poll question 2
RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Research on perceptions and experiences of people with disabilities regarding library services, in their own words

■ Research guided by Social Model of Disability (SMD) – what makes someone disabled is not their medical condition, but the attitudes and structures of society
RECOMMENDATIONS

- No single approach for supporting ASD students
- Library-sponsored events & workshops to further campus understanding of ASD
- Training opportunities for librarians/staff
- Collaboration & Campus Outreach
  - Campus Disability Services
  - Campus Counseling Services
  - Education faculty
RECOMMENDATIONS

■ ASD-friendly library environments
  – Transparent signage, non-fluorescent lighting
  – Safe spaces, quiet rooms/floors, tutoring spaces
  – Incorporate Universal Design (UD)
■ Personal librarian program for ASD students
■ Chat reference
RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Library Research Guides on ASD
■ Library Displays (April is Autism Awareness Month)
■ Library instruction incorporating
  webinars • goal-based, hands-on exercises • UDL udlguidelines.cast.org/
■ Grants
  – http://librariesandautism.org/grant/
  – Each year $5,000 is awarded
Autism Awareness

https://library.shu.edu/autism

What is autism spectrum disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that can cause social, communication, and behavioral deficits. The American Psychological Association defines ASD as "persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts" (2013).

The purpose of this guide is to help you with research about autism spectrum disorder. University Librarians are happy to assist you with your research. You can begin a chat during reference hours (just use the box below), submit an email reference question, stop by the reference desk, or request a research appointment. Also, please feel free to contact me directly if you need help. My contact information is on the left of the page.

Need Help? Ask us!

Chat with a librarian

Call the reference desk
673-791-9437
Submit your questions:
To Ask Us!
Stop by Reference:
Library, second floor
RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Communication Strategies
  - Be direct
  - Use concrete literal language
  - Give verbal instructions in a clear, logical order
  - Avoid non-verbal cues, slang, sarcasm
  - Be aware of sensory input from environment

■ Patience and encouragement goes a long way when helping students with ASD
Discussion question

1. What services, if any, does your library provide for students with ASD?
DISCUSSION

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Thank You For Attending!