

UNC Chapel Hill CEDI Lecture Series: Dr. Amelia Anderson & Charlie Remy

Library Services for People with Disabilities: Researcher Panel

March 21, 2019

>> Okay, so today we have three speakers scheduled. I see two here. So we're going to start with Dr. Amelia Anderson, who is currently an Assistant Professor of Library Science in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies at Old Dominion University. Her dissertation research focused on how college students on the autism spectrum describe their experiences using academic libraries. Her current projects continue to explore the intersection of neurodiversity and library experiences, particularly for young adults and adults. She has previously worked as a public librarian. And Charlie Remy is the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian and Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He has a Master's degree in Library Information Science from Simmons and a Bachelor's in Spanish and Gender Studies from Elon University. So, right nearby. His research interests include autism in libraries as well as various aspects of the electronic resources lifecycle. Okay, we're going to have Dr. Anderson speak first. And then Charlie will follow up with a, with a question and answer session and discussion. Right? I'm going to... Amelia, I'm gonna hand over hosting to you so that you can share your screen.

>> Perfect. And if you would you, too, tell me the best way so I can, you know, I'll play with it, and you tell me what looks good as far as sharing the PowerPoint so that you don't also see all of my notes to the side.

>> I think when you share the screen, you get to choose which, which...

>> Okay. Good. I played with it a little bit earlier and want to make sure that I'm hitting all the right notes this time, too. So. Okay, so am I ready to go?

>> I see you, but I don't see your screen.

>> Okay. So let me share. And what I'm going to try to do is go ahead and put the PowerPoint on presenter view first, and then see if that just does it. Okay. Let's see. I'm also working with one of those, like, multi monitor situations. So forgive me for just one second here while I get all my screens in a row here. Okay, let's try presenter view, share screen, and there.

>> There we go.

>> Does that work? And do you get just the slide itself?

>> We have the slide and your your video is on the side.

>> Perfect. Okay, wonderful. That's very exciting. First try. Okay, so I, as Dr. Gibson said, I'm also an Amelia. I'm Amelia Anderson. And my title is a real mouthful.

>> So I'm Assistant Professor of Library Science at the STEM Education and Professional Studies Department at the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies at Old Dominion University. So I'm a professor of library science. And so I wanted to talk to you a little bit today just about kind of my research journey. And so I'm keeping it about 20 minutes. There's a lot more there. And so if, you know, I'm going to go kind of briefly about everything, kind of broad overview. And if there's anything in particular that you think is more or less important, just jot it down, and I'm open for questions at the end of this presentation. And also, I'll give, you my email address. So if you want to follow up later, I'm always happy to chat. So my presentation for you guys today is a little bit about kind of how I got to where I am and what I'm doing next. And so I wanted to tell you a little bit about how I got started where I am. So that's the background, and then if we have time for it, then we'll go a little bit into the current work as well. So how I got here first is that, so I got my MLIS and I worked in public libraries for a few years and decided that I wanted to continue my education. And so I applied to the doctoral program at Florida State. And at that point, I was kind of on the fence as to whether the timing was right. And I wanted to start my career as a researcher. And it wasn't until I heard from one of the professors at Florida State that they had just received a grant. And they thought that I would be a really good fit for being a research assistant on this grant. And so that was Project PALS. So I'm going to start by telling you a little bit about Project PALS. So Project PALS was really my first step into autism research. It was really my first step into research, period. But it also happened to be my first step into autism research. And for Project PALS, when I was applying for this assistantship, they asked me if I had any experience working with library patrons on the autism spectrum. And, and I said no, I didn't. You know, at that point, I had worked for about three years in a really busy public library in downtown Orlando, doing everything you can imagine from circulation to book clubs to children's programming. And it was only you know, after I actually started learning about autism, that I realized that oh, my gosh, I should have said, yes, I really have had a lot of experience. I just didn't realize it at the time. It wasn't until I started learning about autism, that I realized that, yeah, I've had these interactions, you know, regularly, I just didn't, I didn't know it. So Project PALS itself, is an IMLS funded grant. And this was a practitioner grant, not a research grant. So we were developing training for librarians and library staff to learn about autism and about how to best serve their patrons on the spectrum. So the course itself, it's free, it's accessible. Now I have the link for you there. I don't think you can click through from there, but it's a pretty short one. So hopefully, somebody can type it into the chat later, or I'll provide that for you as well. But it is available to you on Web Junction, if you are interested. And there's four modules, it's pretty basic. There's one that's just about autism. There's one that's about communication, one about technology, and then one about the physical library environment. So like I said, this was not a research grant, this was a practitioner grant. And that just means that it's just for, you know, people practicing in the field, we weren't actually going out and conducting major research here. But that being said, this is what fueled my research. In particular, it fueled my research about young adults and college students on the spectrum. And so that's really where my research lies now, is college students and young adults, and actually adults now too who are autistic. And the reason why that came from Project PALS is because the project itself was designed to be for all librarians. So we tried to make it broad and reach, you know, school librarians, academic librarians, public librarians, special librarians on and on, and to serve all user groups. But what we realized was that we were getting feedback that the training just wasn't applicable for, you know, older patrons, older library patrons on the

spectrum. And especially not for academic librarians who are taking these trainings, and they felt that it was more relevant for, for kids. And, of course, I mean, you probably know this already by this point this semester, but that's not because those library patrons aren't there, of course, you know, kids with spectrum grow up to be young adults with spectrum and adults with spectrum, on the spectrum, and, you know, it doesn't go away. So I also realized as a result of Project PALS, that when I told people what I did, whenever I said, oh, yeah, I'm doing this great project about autism and libraries. And I'll tell you too, that still continues to this day, this is still the reaction that I get. The conversation always shifts to children. And I always hear things about, oh, there's a great sensory storytime at my library. And, you know, those kinds of conversations. And that's wonderful. And that's necessary. And I'm so happy that those things are happening, and people are aware of that, but for me, it really opened my eyes to the fact that there's this whole segment of the population that is everything that's not kids, you know, teenagers and beyond who are also on the spectrum, and are also using libraries. And they're just kind of being left out of this conversation. So all that to say, that's kind of what brought me to where I am and what I do now, that really has fueled my own research. So a little bit of kind of the underpinning of how I do what I do. So the factors of my current work is I'm really invested in the idea of research to practice. And what that means to me is that the work that I do really influences kind of the day to day work of librarians. So for me, coming from being a practicing librarian, I really see the value in the importance of research, supporting that work. I also offer operate under the social model of disability services. And I think, you know, I was looking back at some of the things you guys have already learned this semester. And I think that you guys have already covered that topic. But if you haven't, I'm happy to go into that a little bit more as well. But essentially, for me, for my work it, it means that I'm not making the assumption that autistics need to change their behavior to, you know, more properly fit in, but instead that, you know, more basing my work in a position of education, and awareness, so that other members of society can, can adjust their expectations and adjust their behaviors to make it more conducive and supportive for autistic people. And so then, finally, a note on language. And I hate that this even has to be a conversation, Charlie and I have talked about this at length, but you'll see for me, I kind of go back and forth between person on the spectrum or autistic person. You know, it's that balance between identity first and person first. And again, I think you guys have learned about this as well. So for me, when I first started my work here, that was in 2013, when I began researching autism in libraries, and at that point, I was told that we absolutely do person-first language, so that would be person with autism. And that's 100% what we do, no questions asked, that's respectful. But since then, of course, things have changed. And, you know, a lot of people on the spectrum have taken back that label of autistic and they're proud of it, and rightfully so. And they don't want to be separated from you know, their autism, because you can't. How do you separate the person from their autism? It's part of who you are. And so you'll hear me kind of go back and forth, some of my older work does still have that person-first language. But for me moving forward, what I try to do is just use the language that the person I'm working with wants to be reflected by, I think that's, that's the right approach at this point. Um, so a few other parts that kind of guide my work now. And I think this is really important as well. And so that's why I'm spending time on this more than on the actual studies that I've done. So for me, you know, after going through the Project PALS, and realizing that I really wanted to work with college students on the spectrum, I did a couple collaborations that eventually informed my current work. So I worked with a professor in higher education and he was conducting interviews with college students who identified as autistic. And not only was it hard to get them to disclose to us

and actually be recruited as participants, but once we had them, and you know, they were happy to share with us, we found that there were a lot of barriers in the interview process itself. We had one student who actually told us, and so I have this picture as a representation. This was not us. This was not our participants. But just to kind of give you a feel for how, almost like an interrogation that might feel like. We had one student say that he didn't feel he, that he could give us good answers to our questions, even though he had, he had those answers to give. He said that he couldn't give them to us because he was too focused on the camera and modeling his behavior for the camera. So he was less aware of answering the questions. And so we've had to really shift the way that we plan to do these interviews with students. And so I just realized, there were all these kind of inherent barriers set up that, you know, you're not going to get the best information, because you're not, you're not using a communication style that feels natural for the autistic student. But for me, I'm really interested in getting those stories. I'm a qualitative researcher. So I, I like the rich, the detailed, the stories, not the numbers as much. And I wanted it in their own words. And so I started looking at alternate avenues for data collection. There is research that suggests that the online environment is, is a really excellent place for people on the spectrum to communicate and to find community outside of their own kind of little local world. And it also can eliminate some of those barriers that face-to-face communication can present. And so I thought that maybe there was something there to look at the online communication aspect and how that might facilitate more natural communication for people on the spectrum. So a lot of text, sorry, it's kind of a boring slide. But I'll talk through it. So we'll get through this one quickly, I promise. So all of that leads to my first kind of big independent study. This is lovingly called the Wrong Planet, Right Library. So Wrong Planet, if you're familiar with the Wrong Planet, it's a publicly accessible online discussion forum. It was developed by a guy named Alex Plank, who identifies as having Asperger's. And it's just by people with autism for people with autism. And so it's essentially just a discussion forum. And it covers all topics, I'll show you a screenshot in a minute here. But what I decided to do is I really wanted to know how college students who identified as autistic, how they use their College Libraries, their academic libraries. And so all of that background with me understanding that maybe interviewing is not the right approach here. I thought, well, how can I find this information otherwise, what can I do? And so I took a look at Wrong Planet to see if they were talking about their college libraries. And lo and behold they were, which was really exciting for me. So I thought, okay, well, there's something here I'm going to explore on this discussion forum, what they're saying about the academic library, and how they're saying it. And so that way we can understand their experiences and hopefully make things better. So again, what I think, to this, for me, what's particularly interesting and unique about the study is not as much the findings and conclusions, but actually the process itself. So the data collection, I think, is really kind of a big, interesting piece of this study. So I'm going to talk about that a little bit now. So like I said, I went to the wrongplanet.net. And again, if you have your laptop up, or you want to follow along, you know, I highly suggest checking it out. It's really a fascinating site. And so I went to wrongplanet.net, and I did a couple keyword searches for academic libraries. And, and I collected 98 discussion threads. So there are 98 threads in which autistic college students were talking about their libraries. And then I analyzed those using qualitative methods. So for me, this was really, I think, an innovative, innovative approach, because the data I collected, I'm calling it unobtrusive, which essentially, I collected this data about, you know, their views on the library without me interjecting anything as a researcher. I didn't steer the conversation in any way, these were just natural, unmediated conversations among their peers. And to me, this potentially allows for more

uncensored information to emerge. So the other thing I think that's really important about this approach is, so I said, firsthand, unedited accounts. You know often in autism studies, and even disability studies as a whole, it's really common to find others speaking for members of that population. So you know, instead of asking the, you know, autistic student, hey, how do you feel about this? You might, instead find somebody going to the parent or the teacher or the caregiver and asking how they think that person feels. You know, of course, one reason for that might be that there are some barriers in communication, but in my opinion, that just means we need to find other ways to communicate. So, so this was my attempt at getting those firsthand accounts unedited by a neurotypical person such as myself. And then finally sort of ethical considerations I do want to note. So Wrong Planet does have a private section where you can make a membership account, log in, and have private communication. But the, the discussions that I used for my study only came from the public site. So I also, of course, got IRB clearance and permission from the website owner, so. So this, I just wanted to show you kind of a snippet of what the site actually looks like. And this to me, I think, is important to include, because it shows you that the data is fresh, like if you look where it says last post here, and this is a screenshot from some months ago, forgive me, it might look different now. But the last post, you know, it's robust. People are posting often, you know, it's like 27 minutes ago, one minute ago, 17 minutes ago, this is not stagnant, you know, stale data. And then looking at just the total number of threads, I mean, you've got thousands of participants in these discussion forums. So there's really a lot of interesting information going on there. And I used in particularly the school and college life subforum there, but there are subforums for just about any, any topic that you can imagine. So I think really worth look, taking a look at if you're interested. So, like I said, to me, the most important thing about the study was the methods I used, but so just so you have a little bit of an understanding of what we found, was, you know, students, of course, they did talk about the library resources and books and, you know, social experiences and that kind of thing. But the real key findings that emerged from the study were discussion of the environment, so both the physical environment and also the sensory environment. So they talked a lot about using the library as an escape, and particularly from sensory overload. So this is one example of a student telling another student, hey, if you need to just get away, go to your library. But then the other, on the flip side, they also talked about the library as a contributor to sensory overload. So I'm sure many of you have been in your campus library. And I don't know what yours looks like. But I know for us, when we walk in the door, it's kind of a flurry of excitement. That's where the tutoring happens. And the you know, public computers, and it's not the most quiet space in the library when you first walk in the door. And so here's a student saying, you know, she's really being driven crazy by hearing humming from another student, you know, across the library, and what do you do? I'm so irritated. And then another example of somebody saying that people just want to go there and hang out. So anyways, the biggest takeaway for me from these findings is that it's not enough just to have quiet rooms, a quiet spaces, but you have to let students know that they're there. And you have to provide signage, and have handouts, and prepare them in advance and so that they know if they walk through the door, and the first thing they see is this overwhelming space, they know that there's a place they can go, that will be quiet, that'll be an escape, it'll be, you know, maybe more what their expectation is of the library. So I see, I'm almost at 20 minutes here, I'm going to run through a couple more slides quickly, and then just be available for questions at the end. So that project showed us that there was, there was something to explore there for college students, autistic college students and their campus libraries. So that influenced the next project I worked on. And this is called Project A+, there's

the the URL there at the bottom. So Project A+ was also an IMLS funded grant. This was a research grant, it is just being wrapped up now. But from this grant, we developed, we worked with librarians, we worked with college students, and we worked with an advisory board. And actually, Charlie Remy was on our advisory board. And for Project A+, we have ultimately put together a huge, I think almost 200 page training manual for college and university for academic librarians, to raise their awareness about the autistic students that they are already serving, whether they realize it or not. So like I said, that is available, the URL is down at the bottom. So some of the things that we found from Project A+ is that there are definitely a need for flexible customizable options. So what you see here, in this picture, this is a girl in a little study pod. And these pods can be used, you know, for multiple people during the day to kind of study. But also for those students who like, like you saw in a previous study, if they need an escape, if they need a sensory, you know, an escape from sensory distractions, these two pods can close together and make a little, you know, private kind of cove. So that's really important. And that's necessary in, in academic libraries. And then along with that is, it's really important that student know that those things are available. So it's not enough just to have them, but students need to know that they're available. So some of our librarians are saying, you know, we've got this stuff but maybe we need to promote it. And it's free to promote, but we just haven't done that yet. So of course, there's barriers to enacting change in, in academic libraries. No big surprise there. A lot of it is levels of administration, and then also funding. And then finally, with this study, we had a lot of challenges in participant recruitment. We thought that we would be able to get input from local autistic students about how they use the library. And that was a lot harder than we expected. And, you know, it should be no surprise, because we later heard from one of our advisory board members that you know, as an artistic student, you want to fit in, you know, why would you want to come forward and participate in a study that, that others you? So again, that kind of was more confirmation that moving forward, participant recruitment for me, I think is trending more towards online and social media. So Amelia, I don't know, we're at a little over 20 minutes. Do you want me to go ahead and close there and then have time for questions at the end?

>> I have a question right now.

>> We have questions right now.

>> So let me tell you, I do have a few more slides. And I just want to be, you know, cognizant of my time, as well as the other presenters. So tell me what you think would be the best approach?

>> Well I don't see Paul, so I think we have a little extra time.

>> Okay.

>> I think you can finish up and then we have a question. Go ahead and ask her question now.

>> It's what are the ethical considerations for this type of study?

>> The question that we have, and you can decide when to answer it, is what are the ethical considerations for this type of study?

>> For which one, for the the online discussion forum ones?

>> Yes, because I know that they are publicly available.

>> Yeah. Okay. So that one, right.

>> So you, so our, our IRB board, I did submit to them, even though I was not using, you know, human subjects, per se. So I did submit all my materials to them and have that approved by our board. What they asked me to do that I did not initially plan to do, what they asked me to do was to contact the website owner, and make sure that he was okay with me doing this. And honestly, I was shocked that he responded, because it is a huge website. And this guy now, Alex Plank, he's kind of, he's almost a celebrity now, like, he's a consultant for a show, I think on HBO or Netflix, to make sure they're getting like the artistic perspective, right? He's kind of a big deal. And so I thought, oh, my gosh, I'm never going to have the study completed, he's never going to respond. But he did. And he gave it his blessing. And he said, just as long as you credit, Wrong Planet whenever you talk about the study. So, so that was the IRB board's only stipulation. If you look at the literature for other studies like this, you know, essentially, if you are using usernames, you change them. For this study, it's interesting, because the people who, their usernames are already so far from what a given name would be, you know, if you look at them, they pick, you know, pick these crazy names. I didn't even use those. But yeah, essentially, as long as you're using publicly available data, this is something you don't have to log in to access, it's just out there. So I think it'd be a lot different if it was sensitive data that you had to log in to access, if it was something that they thought was private, that would be a lot different, but they don't, this is this is public.

>> Thank you.

>> You're welcome.

>> Okay, so I'm going to run through the rest of these kind of quickly. And then if there's anything in this that kind of strikes your fancy along the way, just jot it down and let me know at the end, and I can go into more detail during Q & A if you'd like. So the current things that I'm doing now, I have a couple of studies in the works. And I'm going to go through those quickly. So there's one that I'm looking at autism programs at colleges, looking at the idea of digital citizenship and cyber bullying. I'm also looking at employment and libraries. And for all of these, the population is autistic population. So when I was working with Project A+, the librarians that I worked with said, well, what are the other librarians at other universities doing to collaborate, you know, for students on the spectrum? And the answer to that is, honestly not very much. So I started this study, and I call them targeted programs. And the idea is I looked at, did an online search and I found 45 programs at the time of the study, that have like an autism cohort or targeted autism program. So essentially, students who are already entering the university, but are disclosing that they are autistic. And they want to, you know, be in this cohort for additional support. So I found 45 programs that were doing that. I contacted all of them, I got 22 responses. And from those responses, most of them said, we do not involve the library at all. Four of them said, hey, we do involve the library, we have a library component of some sort. So I conducted interviews with six employees from those four that said that they did have some sort of library

involvement. And I'm going to kind of skim through the findings, because I want to share with you what I think is the most important thing from this study is that the programs are interested in involving librarians and the librarians are interested in being involved in programs, but there was no connection. And so, I mean, honestly, the biggest takeaway for me here is that I got the responses from the programs that they said there is no library component at all, it was kind of a two-fold response. Like first, they would say, no, we don't have any, you know, library component. But then second, they would, they would say, but we're really interested, like, what does that mean? What would that look like? How could we involve the library? And they wanted to know the results of the study, and they wanted to know what other libraries have done. And so to me, that was the biggest thing was just the awareness that, that librarians are there, and they do want to participate and just kind of bringing that to their attention. So the next study that I'm working on is the idea of digital citizenship and cyberbullying for teens on the spectrum and the potential role of the public librarian. So you might know a lot of schools are integrating digital citizenship training and classes. And we wondered what would happen if that came from a public librarian, if that might be something that autistic teens would be interested in? So that study's ongoing, this is another, we're using Autism Forums, it's another really great website. If you're not familiar with it, highly recommend checking it out. And we have nine participants in this study. And we've gotten some really great information from them. Our teens are autistic teens that have participated in this study. A lot of them say, yeah, they do feel like they have been cyberbullied. And one adamantly says, yes, I have also been a cyberbully. So I'm going to go through these a little quickly. But essentially, what we have learned from this is that they do want to learn more, they do want to, you know, understand better digital practices, but not necessarily from librarians. They want to learn it from their peers. And that is, I think, is even better. Because, you know, in my opinion, if we're providing programming for autistic teens, that should be programming for everybody. So that just, you know, allows for a more inclusive setting anyway. And then finally, the last thing I'm looking at is employment in libraries. And this has really come about because as I presented at library conferences, inevitably, at the end of my presentations, I'll have librarians come up to me and not only thank me, but tell me, hey, I'm on the spectrum, so I really appreciate what you're doing. And that was kind of a surprise to me at the beginning, I didn't, you know, I didn't realize it that, that would happen. And now it's become, you know, one of the most important drivers of my research. So next up for me is exploring how librarians on the spectrum experienced the hiring process, and also just daily work, workforce experiences. And so before I close, I wanted to share with you some of the works that are already out there. And these are some of the autistic librarians who have already shared their stories. Philip Zupon at the bottom, he's written a lot of really interesting blogs. Paul Wyss, he's great. He's been on my advisory board. Zachary Tumlin. He's a music librarian. So this guy, J. Spectrum, he chose to not share his name. And so this is a pseudonym. Emily Lawrence. And then finally at the top, so that's actually Charlie Remy. But it was written by Alice Eng. And I don't know if he has shared that with you guys yet or not. But that's a really excellent interview with Charlie. So anyways, that's it for me. To end, I just wanted to say, essentially, for me, this has been a real learning process. And kind of my big takeaway from all of this is that when you know better, you do better. You know, it's, it's been a journey for me with language. You know, it's kind of a continual education. I'll provided this link here. This is an article, it's an editorial from the journal Autism, I see now that it's an incomplete citation, I'm a terrible librarian. It is, it's a really great editorial. And they explain how they used to use the puzzle piece to represent their journal. And now they realized that that's inappropriate, because

autism is not a puzzle, it's not something we're trying to figure out. It just is what it is. And so not only do they say that in this editorial, but they also say, oh, yeah, and by the way, we decided that we're going to not use first, person-first language in this editorial either, because that's what autistic people prefer. And it was just done so I think eloquently and kind of almost casually, like they just kind of put it in there. But I think that it is kind of just a continual process of learning and growth. And, you know, I know I mentioned Zachary, Zachary Tumlin in the last slide. And, you know, I actually met him because he called me after taking the Project PALS training. And he said, hey, I've got some issues with some of the things you said here. And some, you mentioned, the Autism Speaks, I don't, you know, I don't feel good about that. And as a result, you know, I've learned from him and grown and changed my approach. So and then finally, re-presentation. So that's kind of a new idea of, instead of representing members of population, you're re-presenting their words, so I'm not trying to speak for them, but instead give, give a platform and a voice and present their own words. So all that to say, that is kind of who I am and what I've done and still working on and there's my contact information. And of course, I'm here for Q & A at the end.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> All right. Next, we have Charlie Remy.

>> Hi, everybody. I have a little bit of a PowerPoint. Can everybody hear me okay?

>> We can hear you.

>> Okay. If I'm not loud enough, just let me know. I can, I can be very loud. So let's see. I guess I need to share my screen. And I'm going to share, I made a little, a brief PowerPoint. For just the questions. Can you see the entire?

>> We can see it, but it's not in presentation mode.

>> Yeah. See, if I put it in presentation mode, I think I'm having the same problem Amelia was having then it's going to crowd out my notes.

>> Okay. That's fine.

>> So I might just leave it like this. Maybe I'll, yeah. Okay. Is that, that better?

>> That's great, thank you.

>> Sorry, it's not ideal, but I have some notes. First of all, wonderful presentation, Amelia. You're research agenda's really exciting. I mean, it's so, it's so innovative and novel, and just listening to the current projects that you're working on is, is really, really cool. So I wanted to start off by just thanking you all for inviting me. And also, just appreciating the time that you all took to listen to the webinar that I gave, I wanted to do kind of a more of an interactive session,

because there were a lot of really good questions during that webinar that I gave in the fall. And so, and I, I got some, I got like five or six of your questions. And feel free to ask more. So I appreciate you taking the time and putting thought into the content and asking some really good questions. So just to start, the first question I got from you all was employment skills or training workshops, what, what do you think would be the most helpful if they were offered in libraries? I think they're, there are a couple things. The first would be for staff. So I'm thinking about making the interview process a little less overwhelming. In academic libraries, professional librarian interviews can be at least a day if not a day and a half. And that's a huge amount of time, a lot of which is expected, you're being expected to partake in a lot of socializing. So whether that's meet, meet and greets, or tours of the campus, or dinners, breakfasts, lunches with the search committee or various people at different levels, and then being asked the same questions over and over again. So just kind of being a little mindful of the amount of time and what is, you know, truly necessary. And again, it really depends on the context, the type of library, the policies, that type of thing, but just starting to think about the interview process. A lot of positions require presentations, and I'm not sure that in all library positions this is a relevant way for individuals who are candidates to share their knowledge. I think it could be very valuable for public services folks who are doing instruction to maybe do like a sample instruction session, but having a tech services or a coding person or archivist or, you know, give a presentation on a random topic that's, of course, relevant to the position, but is that really the best fit for the given position that you're hiring for? I think also sending questions to candidates ahead of time. One of the things that we like to do, typically, those of us who are on the spectrum is, you know, really prepare ahead of time, that can be kind of positive and a little bit negative in a way, because sometimes it can come off as very scripted. But that's something that can help reduce the anxiety. So, you know, send, send questions ahead of time to give... And the other thing that, you know, a lot of folks on the spectrum sometimes have challenges with processing information, sensory overload, and then also succinctly and quickly communicating answers. So when you've got the sensory overload, and you've got the time deadline, and you've got the anxiety, I'm thinking particularly during like maybe a phone interview, for example, if they had questions ahead of time, they could prepare answers. And like I said, it could have the tendency to be scripted. So maybe asking a few non-scripted questions to kind of, you know, get a, get, get them off the script a little bit. I think would be good. But providing answers to question. I mean, providing the questions ahead of time, I think would really be helpful in, in getting the best quality answers as well as reducing anxiety. I think another really important thing is to find ways that candidates can showcase their skills through sample activities. Temple Grandin talks about kind of like portfolios, and really focusing on one's knowledge and experience and less on their social skills and charm during an interview. So if you can give them a practice exercise, it's directly relevant to the job and how would they do it, you know, and, and maybe giving them the opportunities to submit it in writing instead of, you know, doing a presentation on it, for example, that that might be something to consider. And then for patrons, you know, the library, particularly a public library, partnering with the local autism organization, as well as the general career services center in the area to provide resume/cover letter review, mock interviews, career fairs, that type of thing. I think are good things to consider for helping patrons on the spectrum find employment. And then another thing, now someone else kind of asked a similar question, but they, they got me thinking about retention, and retention is so important. I mean, it's one, and and i think higher education in general is, has a big focus on retention right now. So it's not just getting the student in the door and admitted and attending but having them actually stay and

complete their academic program. Well, you can say the same thing about autistic employees in a library. It's not just enough to hire them and say, okay, you're on your own good luck. Really, making an effort to help them with their success, I think is really important. And, you know, small misunderstandings, and other day to day challenges, particularly I'm thinking about, like interpersonal skills here, need to be addressed in the moment, with direct and candid feedback. I would say most of us on the spectrum would much prefer very direct and, and, and candid feedback instead of evasive silence, because I can't learn and change what I'm doing, if I'm not aware of how that might be impacting other people. And it might, it's not because I don't have empathy. But it's, it's really because I might not be seeing, I might be so focused on my own little world, that I'm not seeing the big picture. And I'm also not necessarily seeing how other peoples are perceiving it. So really helping along the way, with, with candid feedback and giving the individual an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and improve. The next question is kind of a two parter. Do you think it would help if LIS schools offered courses in programming for neurodiverse populations? Definitely. I would suggest that programming be only one aspect of it. I think you could cover neurodiversity in general, look at programming, collection development, employment outreach, that type of thing. So yeah, I could definitely see at some point a semester-long course, just on neurodiversity in libraries. I would love if, if the WISE Consortium offered a course like this. So WISE, and I did see that UNC is a part of this, I remember taking a highly specialized course on Latin American librarianship when I was in library school through WISE, and it was great, because there were people from all sorts of different library schools that were taking it online. And so WISE might be a nice venue to kind of offer that initially. And then, you know, as, as Amelia showed you, and hopefully, you all got the link. The Project A+ created a really nice training manual. I remember reading the draft and, you know, giving feedback, I was on the advisory board. And I just remember like nodding like, oh, this is just so, they get it, you know, they really understand, and it's so holistic and comprehensive and takes in so many different aspects of our experiences in libraries. And so I would definitely recommend taking a look at that. And then you, you also mentioned that the very beginning of your question challenges with organization and executive function. And one thing that I would suggest that school and public libraries consider offering would be workshops using like cloud-based apps, which are often free, for improving organization. So calendars, to do lists, teaching file management techniques, and, and maybe beginning this in middle and high school when students are beginning to be assigned large long term projects in their classes. And these kinds of workshops could also benefit neurotypical students as well. Alright, the next question from you all was, do you think it would be helpful to offer trainings for library and campus staff on the neurodiverse community and other disability-related communities? Yes, I do. I think it would be really helpful for that. I think that autistics need to be actively involved in developing as well as providing the training sessions whenever possible. And Amelia kind of alluded to this earlier when she said that it's important that our voices are included in the conversation at an equal level. So we're at, we're peers, we're not, we're not looked down upon. And we're not looked up to either. I mean, at just kind of like an equal level to neurotypical. So I think, as long as autistics are actively involved in that development and delivery of the training, I think that's really important. The question about safe spaces. Yes, I think safe spaces are really important. You know, for there are areas where we can destress, not have to worry as much about judgment or explaining ourselves or, and also areas where we can receive some validation and support. But I think it's also important to balance that with integration into the larger campus community. And I think that neurotypicals can learn a lot from autistics, and autistics can learn a lot from

neurotypicals. And so providing the safe spaces, and areas that are comfortable and, you know, little extra supportive, at the same time, empowering the autistic individuals to learn how to effectively navigate, you know, a predominantly neurotypical world. Because the reality is, that is what they're likely going to face in a, in a work environment in life in general. And so I think that if you shelter autistics in this comfortable bubble, where they're not learning, they're not pushing beyond their comfort zone. And I'm saying this from my own personal experience. It, yeah, it's going to be challenging. And they'll be all sorts of different emotions that come up when you're trying to deal with the nuances of a neurotypical world, but that's where the growth occurs. So I always like to say balancing support with empowerment can really allow a lot of growth and development to take place. The next question is, since autism is protected by the ADA, do you personally feel the term disabled as medicalized or socio-political? I think it can be both, depending on the context. I think the term disability though is particularly relevant when someone needs certain accommodations like in a school or work environment. I think also people kind of like what you're mentioning on Twitter, self-identifying as disabled, so kind of reclaiming that as well that, that's awesome happening. But I really think it, it does depend on the specific context. And you had asked if self-identifying with certain language impacts how neurotypicals interact with members of the autistic and disabled community. Yes, I think that language can impact neurotypicals' views of autistics, but personally from my perspective, neurotypicals' actions toward autistics that are indicative of an attitude of respect, equity, and empowerment are really the most important. I'm more concerned that in the, in the, in the end about is an individual's action toward me respectful, and empowering. I think that that's what really, that personally, that's what matters to me. See, do you have advice for librarians whose collections include materials that are disempowering? I think you need to take a critical look at the tone and message of a, of a, of a book and kind of think, okay, what are its main goals? What's the agenda? When was it published? That's a big thing. I think more recent publications tend to be more empowering as researchers and society's perspective kind of evolves toward, you know, neurodiversity and autism. I, I can't give specific examples of, of materials. I don't I think that would be somewhat arbitrary. I don't, I don't know of any off the top of my head. But I would just, I would say, just look at, look at things carefully, critically, and in a context. And, you know, I'm, I think, if you can contextualize something, and maybe, maybe it serves as, maybe it's not the best resource for, I don't know, parents right now in the moment, but it might be relevant for researchers that are studying the evolution of how autism has been framed in the media, or that type of thing. I think it also depends on your library, and your, and your space realities, right? So what's your, what's your collection level? Is that really comprehensive, are you a research library or are you a more popular library that tends to just have a focus on more current materials? And some of the stuff can be really foundational, some, like Tony Attwood's book on Asperger's Syndrome is, is really, that's from like, 10 years ago. That's still, you know, he's a, he's a really important researcher from Australia that, that's done a lot of, of books and articles. So just because it's older, doesn't mean it's necessarily wrong. And that was, that was what you all sent me. I am welcoming other questions or comments. I also have other discussion questions for you all, if you want. So it's really, and I don't know how much time I have left. So it's really up to you. You know, what, if you have any more questions, or you want to get into discussion, or move on to the next thing?

>> Do you all have more questions?

>> I have a question. I think in your webinar, you mentioned mentoring students. Have you had any experience mentoring students? Or do you know anybody who has? Can you speak more to that?

>> Well, I have not. I have talked with... So, so we have a program here, called Mosaic. And it's one of those programs that supports students on the spectrum, they're regular degree-seeking students. We have about 50 of them. You know, they could be, you know, years 1, 2, 3, and then we have some 5 and 4, and then 5 and 6, staying a little longer. That's a structured program with a, with a curriculum, that is in addition to their regular majors. So these are regular matriculated students that are participating in Mosaic as an extra form of support. And I have spoken to some individuals in that program who are interested in librarianship, and just talking about the career options and what I do on a daily basis and that type of thing. I've also served on the advisory board for that committee, for that program. But I have not. I have not personally mentored any, any individuals on the spectrum, other than just kind of one-off conversations, professional conversations.

>> I have a question, Charlie. Are you, did you start the Autistics at the Library Facebook group?

>> Yes, I did.

>> So can you talk about that a little bit?

>> Yeah. Yeah. I was actually, I mentioned that. I have that on my last. Yeah, I have that on my last page. And any of you are welcome to join that. Yeah, I did, I did a couple years ago. And I have to admit that it doesn't have as much activity on it as I'd like. I was kind of mad, imagining it being like a think tank on Facebook, that's extremely active, but that's not a realistic expectation. There are about, there are about 180 members. And anytime I do kind of a talk like this, I always mention it and get a flurry of people who want to join, which is great. But yeah, I mean, it's, I think it's kind of a way to keep the conversation going, share things. You know, it's a lot of, several individuals have kind of talked about their challenges with finding employment, or maybe wanting to go to library school, and figuring out you know, what to do, or, you know, wanting just... There, I think there's some, I think they're mostly librarians in there, but they're definitely individuals who are on the spectrum that either have library degrees, or are interested, or maybe are like, you know, para-professionals in libraries. So I think, yeah, it's a nice mix. I try to share relevant things when I come across them. It's, like I said, I wish it were more active. But yeah, it's, I kind of envisioned it to be maybe kind of like an email listserv, but on, but on social media, you know, that type of thing. So yeah, just a way to, and you know, interesting. I have never been, I was aware of Wrong Planet. But I have never actually been on that website. And so I was amazed with, with the information that Amelia was able to find on libraries and in Wrong Planet, that's fascinating.

>> So I have another question.

>> Yeah.

>> You suggested some very helpful things in terms of the interview process for hiring managers, but what might you suggest that managers who are not just hiring managers need to know about being good managers or coworkers for autistic librarians?

>> Yeah, okay. Well, that's a really good, good question. I wish my boss were here. Cuz, cuz I know, she would have something to say about it. Yeah, I think, I think, looking at what the individual has to offer. And focusing on that. And really, I think, from my perspective, I have had been very fortunate to have supervisors who have really embraced my quirks, and worked with them and have seen my, and value my contributions. So they don't just see me as extra work. Because, and I think, I mean, I'm not gonna lie, I mean, I, I think I'm probably not the easiest to supervise. I think I'm probably pretty high maintenance. Okay, if I look at it from a neurotypical perspective, I think I am high maintenance, because I'm very, I don't hide my emotions really well. So when I get overwhelmed or anxious, I communicate it very, very directly. And not a lot of people, some, some people don't like that. But it's not a personal thing. It's just how I process the feeling of being overwhelmed. So I think, as I said earlier, kind of applies to supervisors providing a little extra support when necessary, listening and providing validation and reassurance. I think that's one thing that's really helpful for me as I have, I tend to doubt myself a lot. And so having the reassurance and feeling empowered to make decisions and to do things on my own, and become more autonomous without depending as much on asking every little thing. And also, you know, realizing that I have a tendency to get very much lost in the details, so I might miss, miss the big picture. I think my boss is really good also at helping me see other perspectives that I might not realize. So she might bring the perspective of, a differing perspective, to see, for me to see another side of, of something. And that's really helpful. So providing that support, but also challenging me and helping me grow and, you know, asking me to take on certain initiatives and kind of that we're working together on but kind of, like, asking me to take kind of a more active role. It's getting me out of my comfort zone. And I think that's where the growth can, can really occur. So, yeah, I think that. And, and just patience, really. I mean, just being patient and I guess just tolerating my quirks. I mean, I just am very quirky and I know that and, and, and, and I guess just using humor to like, I think is really, can kind of when I'm really stressed out and just kind of using humor to defuse the anxiety and, and that type of thing, can be helpful as well.

>> Do we have any other questions? No. Okay. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to stop the recording, and then we can continue our discussion online, but that won't be recorded so that the class can feel a little bit more free about talking.

>> Oh, sure. Yeah.

>> So whoever is viewing this recording online, I'm going unmute my camera and say, to those of you viewing the recording online post-class, thank you for joining us. Goodbye.