Beyond Accommodations and Access
Successfully Serving Disabled Community Members
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We would like to thank our community partners:

...and our participants
About Me

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A note on language

Person-First Language (standard in public services, healthcare, education):

- “People with disabilities”

Identity First Language (popular among many disability communities and self-advocates - particularly Deaf and Autistic communities):

- “Disabled people”

I use a combination throughout this presentation.
Ableist Language

More resources
https://www.spreadtheword.global/
"In the autism community, many self-advocates and their allies prefer terminology such as "Autistic," "Autistic person," or "Autistic individual" because we understand autism as an inherent part of an individual's identity...On the other hand, many parents of Autistic people and professionals who work with Autistic people prefer terminology such as "person with autism," "people with autism," or "individual with ASD" because they do not consider autism to be part of an individual's identity and do not want their children to be identified or referred to as "Autistic."

Lydia Brown
(self-advocate)
Why are we here? Why learn about serving people with disabilities?
Who is disabled?
It’s complicated.

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/north-carolina.html
Who is disabled?
It’s complicated.

North Carolina - 2017
Disability status and types among adults 18 years of age or older by age group
View by: Disability Status
Response: All

Disability Status
- Any Disability
- No Disability

Who is disabled?
It’s complicated.
Who is disabled? It’s complicated.

Most people who could be classified as having a disability *don’t think of themselves as disabled*.

Many people with disabilities *do not have an official diagnosis*.

Many people’s disabilities (especially learning/reading disabilities) are *tied to academic assessments* (and they aren’t in school anymore).
“Disability” isn’t just about children’s services.

How might it fit into your workspace?
How do we talk about disability?

Medical Model

Social Model

Social-Ecological Model
CRITICAL DISABILITY

How do we talk about disability? “Types” of Disabilities

Functional Disability Types

Mobility: Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs

Cognition: Serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.

Independent living: Difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping.

Hearing: Deafness or serious difficulty hearing.

Vision: Blind or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.

Self-care: Difficulty dressing or bathing.

Acquired Disabilities

Congenital Disabilities

Developmental Disabilities (including neurodevelopmental disabilities)

Categories overlap!
Nearly everyone experiences disability at some point in life.
American Library Association Declaration for the Right to Libraries

“Libraries serve people of every age, education level, income level, ethnicity and physical ability. For many people, libraries provide resources that they could not otherwise afford – resources they need to live, learn, work and govern.”
“When access is centralized at the beginning dream of every action or event, that is radical love... I know that if they do those things without changing their internal worlds that see disabled people as fat and stupid... they can have all the ASL and ramps in the world and won't come where we're not loved, needed, and understood as leaders, not just people they must begrudgingly provide services for (p.67)”

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
(disability justice self-advocate)
The law requires that buildings or facilities that were designed, built, or altered with federal dollars or leased by federal agencies after August 12, 1968 be accessible.
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Federal civil rights law for people with disabilities. Protects in services, programs, and activities provided by State and local government entities.

Title II extends federal prohibitions on discrimination to all activities of State and local governments regardless of whether these entities receive Federal financial assistance.

Deals with access, employment, and web/technical accessibility.
Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment and in the employment practices of federal contractors.

Education For All Handicapped Children Act of 1975/IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.
Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA)

Requires accessible polling places in federal elections for elderly individuals and people with disabilities. Where no accessible location is available to serve as a polling place, voters must be provided an alternate means of voting on Election Day.

Voting Rights Act

Prohibits conditioning the right to vote on a citizen being able to read or write, attaining a particular level of education, or passing an interpretation “test.”

https://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm
Basic Disability Etiquette
What did we learn?
Ask prior to assisting.
Ask questions if you aren’t clear what kind of accommodation someone needs.
Don’t touch service animals or equipment without asking.
Don’t take it personally when your help is rejected – sometimes your “help” is disruptive.
Treat the person as a person – not their disability.
Talk directly to the person, and not their support person.
Other suggestions

- Don’t talk down to people. Treat adults like adults.
- Speak directly to the individual, not to their interpreter, support person, or caretaker.
- Some people need time to organize their thoughts. Be patient, and wait for a response.
- If you don’t understand, ask the individual to repeat.
- Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish their sentences.
- Prepare to repeat what you say, verbally or in writing.
- Reflective Listening can help: When you think you understand, paraphrase and ask the speaker if you got it right.
- Be patient, flexible, and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.
Service Animals in North Carolina
What types of animals may be service animals?

What tasks can service animals perform?

What two questions must you ask a person with a service animal?
Many disabilities are invisible.
Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Affects individuals’ ability:

- to focus
- to control impulsive behavior
- to control frequency of physical movement

The CDC (2019) estimates that 6% of American children have been diagnosed with ADHD.

How might this affect community members who use the library? Library materials?
Autism Spectrum Disorder

Individuals with ASD tend to share a small number of traits (from a possible list of many common traits).

Some common traits include:

- Strong working memory.
- Atypical sensitivity to light, sound, smell, taste, and texture, while others exhibit under-sensitivity (Miller et al. 2009).
- Difficulty with communication: spoken language, handwriting (and other fine motor skills) and social communication with neurotypical children and adults.
- Approximately 31% of autistic children also have intellectual disabilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018).

How might this affect community members who use the library? Library materials?
Research

Two studies


2. Interviews: Autistic teens and young adults & their parents/Library staff n=44
Research Findings.

Local Information Literacy.

Disabled people and their families often experience stigma and social exclusion in their local communities.

“Local information literacy—knowledge about what local community, services, and information sources exist in and outside of the library, and knowledge of how to find that information in the local community” was important.

(Gibson & Hanson Baldauf, 2019)

https://muse.jhu.edu/article/723587
Research Findings.

Intersections.

“...parents’ information needs and the spaces in which they seek information may be uniquely influenced by intersecting variables, including race, income level, and education level.”

(Gibson & Hanson Baldauf, 2019)

https://muse.jhu.edu/article/723587
People with disabilities are extremely diverse, but not randomly diverse. They/we intersect in significant ways with other marginalized groups...some people can claim disability—along with disability rights and disability pride—but many more people experience disability and debilitating conditions. All of these emerging frameworks from trans, queer, critical race, and postcolonial studies suggest that a focus on disability alone is not enough to understand disability for what it is: always an intersectional identity.

-Dr. Stephanie Rosen (Associate Librarian and Accessibility Specialist at the University of Michigan Library)

http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2017/accessibility-for-justice/
Research Findings.
Language & Culture.

“as someone who grew up having to translate which I was happy to help my mom but there were times when I was like I’m a child, I want to go do this, or I want to go do that, but no I have to stay here because I’m trying to make this connection happen”

If people do not feel welcome, they will not come to the library. If parents do not feel supported (in terms of language) they won’t bring their children to the library - especially if those children might be perceived as “troublesome.”
Research Findings.

Security.

“I have a six year old with autism. And I have a 10 year old - ADHD. So, how you can work... But you have another kid, who cannot be allowed in the library? What I'm talking about? I've been asked to leave the library because my kid is too loud...So it is really a problem when they send you their security person, which at the library is like - what is they want? My kid has the same rights that other kids have. But that is not possible. Because it is a quiet environment.”
Research Findings.
Personal Data.

“How you going to get a library card for your kids if they are asking you, ‘I want a valid North Carolina driver’s license? Some of the people cannot get one. I need a bill with your address and your name…sometimes we are unable to share a bill.’”

Sharing personal information is more difficult for already vulnerable community members. Personal information is not “free.”
Learning/Reading Disabilities

- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)
- Language Processing Disorder
- Nonverbal Learning Disability
- Intellectual Disability

How might these disabilities affect community members who use the library? Library materials?
Autistic Meltdowns
Group Discussion

What is an autistic meltdown? Is it the same as a temper tantrum?

How might we support autistic community members in the library? Other community members with disabilities?

In terms of space/design? Behavior policies/rules?