

Libraries and Reading

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Libraries and Reading: Intellectual Disability and the Extent of Library Diversity

BY

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Matt's Dedication

To my parents for their endless support and example, and to my mom who planted the seed of special education long before I was aware of it.

Leah's Dedication

To my parents for their love, support, encouragement, and endless sacrifice.

To my book club buddies for their inspiration, wisdom, and great gusto for life. You have opened my eyes and changed me in ways you will never know. You are all extraordinary individuals. Never let anyone tell you that you can't, and never give up...never.



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Preface

A word is in order about the serendipitous origins of this project. Matt had recently published *The New University Library* (2014) with the American Library Association (ALA). This book grew out of his work for the Librarians Association of the University of California (LAUC), the professional association of librarians at the University of California, on which he had served in various capacities, culminating in the presidency. As with the rest of the profession, LAUC was concerned about the future of libraries. A system-wide conversation on this topic was extended into the book which surveyed historical trends and applied them to case studies both inside and outside of the University of California.

Following publication, Matt attended a conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, one of the book's case studies, at the invitation of some of the staff. With the book published, it remained to be seen if its predictions would come true, and he recalled a study that found that a high percentage of futurists were wrong. At this conference, he met Leah who was giving a poster on an outreach program by the library at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). One of the conclusions of *The New Library* is that outreach would be important for libraries as they redefine themselves and reach out to new audiences, and Leah had taken a particular interest in outreach at her library. One of her projects is the basis of this study: the use of a book club in an academic library to advance the educational goals and college experience of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It seemed to Matt that this was more than another clever idea for reaching its participants. It had implications for the entire profession in policy, goals, service mission, and self-definition. As the project unfolded, it became clear to both authors that the serendipity of their meeting ran even deeper than had appeared. Individuals with ID, as will be seen, have a complex history with libraries. (We will use the abbreviation ID as a shorthand for the longer abbreviation and because intellectual disabilities were a universal characteristic of the populations we studied while developmental disabilities were uncommon.) Associated with the literacy efforts of public and school libraries, students with ID have not had a presence in higher education until recently. This came about through a relatively new movement called, Post-Secondary Education (PSE) which defines adults with ID as part of continuing education which gives nontraditional students access to college classes. It is only because one such program exists at Leah's campus that she was able to develop the book club at all.

The authorial partnership is not only reflected in the book's original circumstances but in the methodology by which it went forward. In a time of organizational change, librarians have become familiar with the terms "top-down" and "bottom-up" as ways of structuring projects. The first refers to developing a plan at the administrative level and executing it. The second refers to the opposite process where the initiative comes from the lower levels of an organization, either through ideas from staff or practices that coalesce into policy. The choice of starting above or below depends on the circumstances, and it is not uncommon for both to be employed simultaneously. That is the case here by virtue of the authors' history. The policy issues and professional trends of Matt's book illuminated Leah's case study, and her innovations shed new light on trends. The two perspectives worked in synergy. While theory and practice are supposed to be interdependent, the scientific method formulates theory as preceding experiment. So, it is worth noting that this project has operated somewhat in reverse with the practice of the library book club at FAU in robust form before coming under examination by theory. The precedence of practice over theory recurs throughout our study.

Far from resolving all the issues presented, our study often only introduces them. But it is our hope that this book will reduce the chance and serendipity that brought it about and smooth the path of others toward understanding and contributing to library services for disability.

Acknowledgments

Our wide-ranging journey in this book would not have been possible without the aid of a long list of people who gave us a warm welcome when we arrived at their shores. Their generosity and dedication are deeply appreciated and give us high hopes for the future of libraries and disability services.

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We also thank Dr. Mary Louise Duffy for reaching out to the library staff years ago to suggest that the library host an intern from the program. If not for her wisdom, expertise, support, edits, and suggestions for the book, and for her time “lunching and learning” to teach us about exceptional education and what it means to work with adults with ID, this project would have been impossible. Her funny stories will be remembered and her friendship will be missed. We hope her retirement from FAU is going splendidly. Many thanks, as well, to Dr. Michael Brady, Dr. Gwen Carey, Professor Angelica Downey, Dr. Melody Wright, Ms. Heather Graeve, and everyone in the ACI program who gave of their time and energy toward this project. Without the support of the Academy for Community Inclusion (ACI) and its many wonderful professors, staff members, peer mentors, and students, none of this would have been possible. We are indebted to each and every one of you.

We thank Dr. Tom Fish, President and founder of NCBC, Lyna Smith, Susan Berg, Rachel Staley, Marilyn Darrow, and all of NCBC staff with whom we worked closely throughout this project. They answered questions, sent resources, provided stats, and trained us as NCBC affiliates. NCBC is a wonderful and unique organization, and we feel lucky that the FAU book club can contribute as one of its affiliates.

We thank Miss Mattie Rials, Laura Stokes, Darlene Morgan, Scooter Mouse, the staff of the McComb Public Library, and the Wednesday Special Friends who shared their warm Southern hospitality and welcomed us into their family. They hold a special place in our hearts and will never be forgotten.

We thank Dr. Meg Grigal and Debra Hart of Think College! for their inspirational and transformative research on Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Programs for college students with ID. We relied upon their expertise and vast knowledge of PSE throughout the writing of this book.

At the MacArthur Library at FAU, the site of the FAU book club, Leah particularly wishes to thank and acknowledge her co-facilitators and coders, Marilee Brown and Linda Lesperance for keeping her sane, and for their contributions, patience, time, energy, superb organizational skills, and most of all for their sense of humor to pull off something memorable. She hopes they enjoyed the ride as much as she did. Thanks also goes to Raven Mello, Ashlee Malkin, Hope Wiersma, Miranda Jones, and Sibel Bode, student staff at the MacArthur Library and peer mentors who took time out of their busy college lives to attend book club and to assist with the facilitation, reading and game playing. Everyone was integral to the smooth operation of the book club and their efforts do not go unnoticed. Leah particularly thanks Edith (Cookie) Davis, staff at the MacArthur Library, for her flexibility with her schedule and for constantly rearranging her desk duty so that Marilee, Linda, and Leah could run book club. Her keen searching skills and her assistance with fact finding and checking the library literature was a lifesaver. She is a true asset to the library team, and we are lucky to have her. And we thank Diane Arietta for the time she spent setting up our “movie theater” in the back staff area so that the book club could enjoy our end of the semester celebrations, and an even bigger thank you for her patience during the celebrations!

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