IJIDI: Book Review

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P ublic and school libraries serve a variety of clients including those that are neurodiverse. The book *Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens* by Amelia Anderson, with a foreword by Barbara Klipper, is the second edition and updated version of the book *Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder* by Barbara Klipper and published by the American Library Association in 2014. The purpose of this second edition is to provide public and school librarians and library staff with guidance, best practices, and examples of successful library services for autistic children and youth. The target audience of this book is professional librarians, library administrators, and paraprofessional library staff in public and school libraries. Chapters in this book include "Best Practices," "Storytime Programs for Young Children," and specific chapters dedicated to programming for "School-Age Children," "Teens," "Families," as well as for "School Libraries."

The book begins with the standard definition of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the clinical definition of ASD from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5), and the history of autism in the U.S. The neurodiversity movement is explained and why autism is considered a disability in the U.S. is also addressed. The first chapter concludes with the role of libraries in the autism conversation.

There are many decisions to make when planning programs and services for autistic children and teenagers in public libraries. These decisions include creating a culture of inclusion, universal design, staff training, program goals, inclusive or autism-specific programming, identifying ages for your program, outreach and marketing, budget and funding, scheduling, collaboration, and program evaluation. Best practices in providing public library programs to autistic children and adolescences is discussed throughout the book. These best practices include limiting enrollment, having assistants, using visual supports, and managing transitions. Other suggested practices include supplying fidgets and other sensory tools, designating quiet or sensory rooms, and incorporating repetition and routine to provide structure while being flexible and understanding.

Most of *Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens* focuses on best practices in delivering public library programming to families of children and adolescents with ASD. Storytime for young children is a core service in any public library. This book gives detailed description of the four sensory story time programs for young children that are part of regular

library services at four public libraries in the U.S. School-age programing ideas for autistic children in public libraries is presented in addition to best practices for making book discussion and summer reading programs more inclusive across different age groups. How public libraries can work with schools to offer programming related to school curriculum is also included.

The chapter on programming for teens discusses ideas of inclusive programming for this specific age group and describes some key library employment and leadership roles in public libraries for teens with autism. Programming for families of autistic children and teens may include programs and services for parents and caregivers, siblings, grandparents, and programs for all family members. The chapter on programming for families concludes with a discussion on representing autistic people and their needs in collections. This section on collection development in relation to ASD highlights the need to have books in public libraries from autistic authors because it emphasizes the importance of representing autistic voices and their lived experience in the collection.

The final chapter of the book, unlike previous chapters about library programming for autistic children and teens in public libraries, discusses library programming for autistic children and youth in school libraries. This chapter begins with some best practices for autism-specific programming in school libraries. It is important for teachers and school librarians to remember that school library programs and services for autistic children and youth span different age groups and, therefore, the programming should be age appropriate. The book encourages inclusive practices to be used in all library classes in school libraries.

According to the foreword of Library *Programming for Autistic Children and Teens*, the first edition (*Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder*) came out of a grant funded project to start a sensory friendly story time in Stamford, Connecticut, and present about that sensory friendly story time program at an ALA conference. One of the key features of this second edition is that it includes autistic voices and a range of resource driven appendices. Throughout the book, there are featured sections in which autistic librarians describe their opinions and experiences with library programs for autistic children and teens. This book also extensively describes best practices for how to make public library services for children and youth more inclusive, not just for users with ASD, but for all neurodiverse people and individuals with developmental disabilities.

The sections written by autistic authors could be better integrated into the text of the book by having these authors experiences, examples, and thoughts included within the general textual content of the book instead of being separated into featured sections. It should be noted, however, that a deliberate and purposeful choice was made to represent autistic self-advocates who prefer "identity first language" instead of "person first language" in the title and throughout the text.

Another potential oversight of this book is that it is North American-centric. Some of the suggestions may not be applicable internationally. The book also focuses primarily on public libraries with only one chapter devoted to school libraries. More information regarding school libraries providing services to children and teens with ASD should have been included. A book on a similar topic entitled, *Library Services for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders* by Lesley S. J. Farmer (2013), addresses library services for autistics in an educational setting more comprehensively than Anderson's *Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens*.

Additionally, whereas the focus of this book is on inclusion and diversity, unfortunately it does not consider the range of severity of the autism spectrum disorder. For example, library programming and best practices for non-verbal or minimally verbal autistic children and teens were not addressed. Generally, library services for a range of severity of ASD is never well addressed in the information science literature. However, there are books and articles written on library services for children and youth with developmental disabilities.

Library Programming for Autistic Children and Teens unequivocally achieves its purpose of providing guidance, best practices, and examples of successful library services for autistic children and youth to public and school librarians and library staff. I would highly recommend any public librarians and staff read this book before starting to offer library services and programs for children and youth with autism.

References

Farmer, L. S. J. (2013). *Library Services for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. ALA Editions.

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