ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Who Are We?

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Seton Hall University Facts

- Catholic University founded in 1856
- 10,000 students (6,100 undergrad & 4,300 grad)
- 90 majors
- 80% of freshman live on campus
- One of the oldest diocesan universities in the U.S., under the Archdiocese of Newark
- Beat St. John's and Kentucky in men's basketball this season

What We'll Be Covering Today

- What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?
- ASD Demographics
- Impact on Libraries
- Legislation
- Outreach Initiatives
- Resources for Librarians
- Discussion

What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

- Spectrum disorder--symptoms manifest differently in every individual
- American Psychiatric Association/Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)
  - *Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts*
  - *Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities*

What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

- 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 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*
  - *50K ASD teens turn 18 each year*
  - *~17K (35%) attend college*
  - *<2% of the university population on spectrum*

ASD Demographics

- **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*

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

American Library Association (ALA)

- **ALA Code of Ethics Article 1** We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

- **ALA Services to People with Disabilities** The library can play a transformational role in helping facilitate more complete participation in society by providing fully accessible resources and services.

- Library staff should never presuppose a person's limits based on disability. Libraries are committed to providing equal access to collections, services, and facilities for all library users.

Legislation
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

- First disability civil rights law passed in the U.S.

- Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal funds.

- Most universities are affected by 504 because of research grants, student loans, and other programs that receive government funds.

Legislation
Education of All Handicapped Children Act

- Passed in 1975.

- Required all public schools to provide equal access to education and one free meal a day for children with physical and mental disabilities.

- EHA revised/renamed as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990.

Legislation
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- IDEA 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.

- Governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to infants and toddlers through age 21.

- Disability is a natural part of the human experience; improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

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Legislation
American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

■ Signed into law in 1990, by President George H.W. Bush.

■ Prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life.

■ To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability, which is defined by the ADA as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Outreach Initiatives

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

Outreach Initiatives

- ■ ASD-friendly environments
  - – Transparent signage, non-fluorescent lighting
  - – Safe spaces, quiet rooms/floors, tutoring spaces
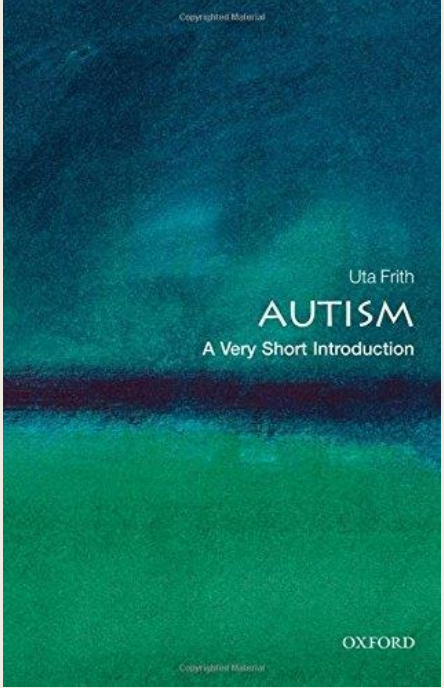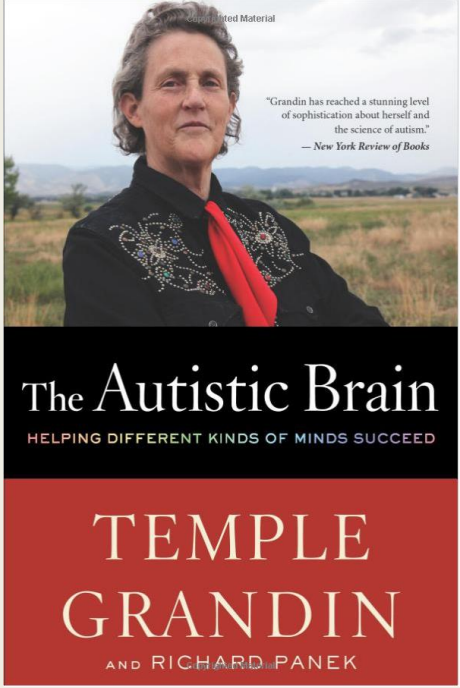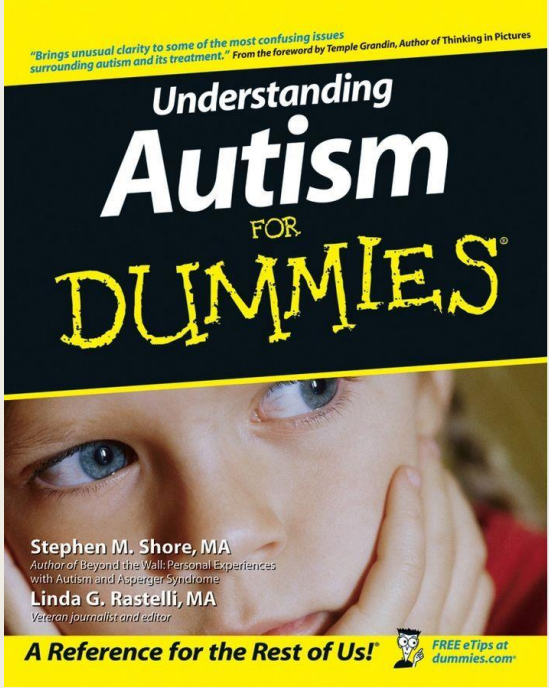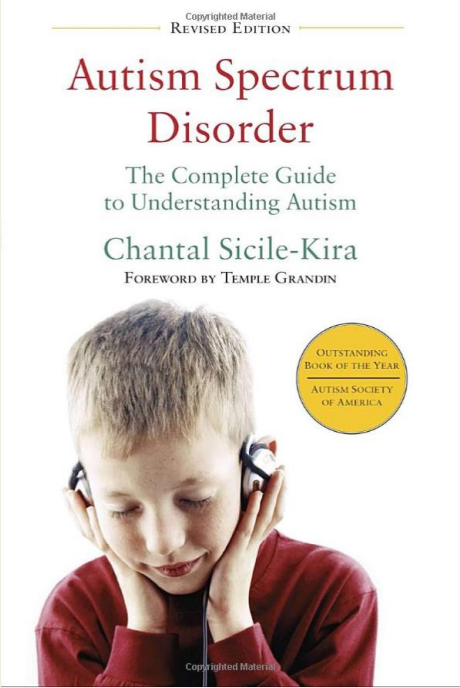- ■ Personal librarian program for ASD students
- ■ Chat reference

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Outreach Initiatives

- **Research Guides**
- **Library Display (Autism Awareness Month)**
- **Library instruction using**
  - webinars
  - goal-based exercises
- **Grants**

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ASD Characteristics

■ From 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)

Resources

Resources

- ASD (CDC) https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html
- Autism College http://autismcollege.com/
- Autism NJ https://www.autismnj.org/
- Autism Speaks https://www.autismspeaks.org/
- Autism Spectrum News http://www.mhnews-autism.org/index.html
- Libraries and Autism http://librariesandautism.org/
- NJ Dept. of Health https://nj.gov/health/fhs/autism/public/registry/

Discussion

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Thank You For Attending!