

From Access to Advocacy

The Disability Community in the Library

#PWDinLibs

Bryce Kozla

Twitter: @PLSanders

brycekozlablog.blogspot.com

What to expect

What I will cover	What I won't cover
individual and societal barriers	detailing accessibility tools
strategies to help make the library more welcoming	Exactly how to be ADA compliant

**Type questions anytime!
I'll get to them when I can.**

POLL

How comfortable are you interacting with disabled people?

Scope results

- **67%** feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people
- **36%** admit to thinking of disabled people as not as productive as everyone else
- **85 %** believe that disabled people face prejudice.
- **24%** of disabled people reported having experienced attitudes or behaviours where other people expected less of them because of their disability.
- **21%** of 18 – 34 years old admit that they have actually avoided talking to a disabled person because they weren't sure how to communicate with them

<https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/research-policy/disability-perception-gap>

People with disabilities are human beings.

People with disabilities want and deserve access to visiting and working in libraries.

If you're not seeing disabled people in your library, it is not because they don't want to be there.

Abled vs. Disabled

Abled/Nondisabled: have no disability legally or otherwise

Disability/Disabled/PWD: physical disabilities, invisible disabilities, developmental delays, mental illness, chronic or terminal illness (legally disabled or otherwise identify)

20% of the population is disabled!

Identity-First Language vs Person-First Language

It's best to ask!

Identity-First: “disabled librarian”

Person-First: “librarian with a disability”

For signage/marketing/etc:

“people with disabilities” or “the disability community”

What About “Special Needs”?

- Useful for connecting nondisabled caregivers of young disabled children to resources they need
- It’s important to acknowledge its implications among staff to decide when to use it

In the library, can all needs just be “needs”?

THE ABLED NARRATIVE

The Abled Narrative

- Messages we've internalized about PWD
- PWD are “the Other”
- White Supremacist ideals: position groups of people as less able in order to colonize and oppress
- Helps those in power keep it

The Abled Narrative

- Absorbed through media depictions and religious text
- Perpetuated by our own sense of self-preservation
- Libraries are for Everyone... aren't they?

The Abled Narrative

Disabled people exist as functions of, or tools/props for, abled people and do not have their own stories.

Disabled is the worst possible thing to be.

Disabled people are burdens.

These are all lies.

LIE #1:

Disabled people exist as functions of, or tools/props for, abled people and do not have their own stories.



https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much

LIE #1: PWD Do Not Have Their Own Stories

- Disabled people exist to teach abled people about **gratitude**
- Disabled people exist to teach abled people about **kindness**
- Abled people who speak to/care for/care about/date disabled people **are inherently inspiring**

LIE #1 at Your Library

- promoting books and other media that portray this angle of disability only.
- talking to a person with a disability differently than you would to other patrons.
- praising disabled people for completing simple tasks.

Counter: be mindful of representation

- FB page: “Representing Disability in an Ableist World”
- Research authors to find out their relationship to disability
- Champion #ownvoices
- Tropes are not always automatic “NO”s, especially kids
 - Focus on harm

[Representing Disability in an Ableist World Facebook Page](#)

Evaluating media

Does the book focus on the experiences of an abled sibling/friend rather than the disabled person?

Is the disabled character as fleshed out as other characters?

Does the disabled character “make up” for their disability?

Are a character’s good traits qualified in relation to their disability?

Can the character be happy living with their disability?

Evaluating media continued

Does the character need to “overcome” their disability to achieve success?

Are analogies made about abled characters “overcoming” negative traits and disabled characters “overcoming” disability?

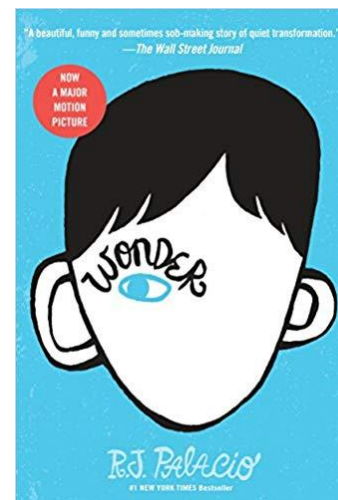
Does the disabled character spend a lot of time wishing they were abled?

Are there any anti-disability slurs in the book?

As a reader, how do you feel about the disabled character in general?

One important note

it is NOT up to a library staff member to insult or explain away an individual disabled patron's favorite media just because it reinforces the abled narrative.



Counter: think about your interactions

- Speak clearly and evenly, not obstructing your mouth
- Pull up a chair or kneel to get on level
- Refrain from touching mobility aids
- Direct questions to the disabled person, not their caregiver
- Read a person before praising them
- Resist the urge to help right away

LIE #2:

**Disabled is the worst possible thing to
be.**

LIE #2: Disabled is the worst possible thing to be

- Abled people would never, ever want to be disabled, and would rather die
- A disabled child is the worst possible of all outcomes in regards to pregnancy
- People with disabilities all wish they could be cured or want to be abled

TRUTH: Quality of life is not linear!



The message only works assuming that abled people could not imagine being happy as disabled people.

Lie #2 at work in the world

- “Cure” research vs. quality of life research
- Isolated and ill-informed caregivers



DISABILITY DAY OF MOURNING

Remembering people with disabilities murdered by their families

March 1, 2019

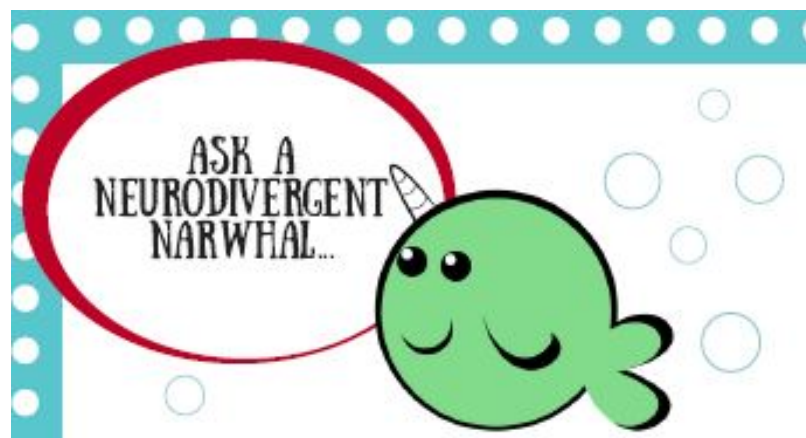
<https://disability-memorial.org/>

LIE #2 at Your Library

- staff having thoughts about and possibly even talking about how they would rather die than be disabled.
- aligning with organizations that have histories in stoking fears in parents.
 - Autism Speaks is one of these organizations.
- offering condolences when helping a caregiver.

Counter: providing a supportive atmosphere

- invite a local self-advocate to speak to staff about living with disability.
- promote organizations that are by and for people with disabilities.
- encourage staff to be warm, positive, and informative when helping to find resources.



LIE #3:

Disabled people are burdens.

LIE #3: Disabled people are burdens

- Disabled people should not ask for more than the bare minimum they need
- An increased quality of life is pointless
- Productivity is a measure by which we can gauge a person's life worth
- Accessibility is an issue about lawsuits and not one about people needing to live their lives

ADA and the Capitol Crawl



Courtesy of Tom Olin

Counter: Employee recruitment and retention

- Emphasize work/life balance (and MEAN it)
 - Policies that focus on quality of life however that looks
 - Supportive benefits
- Keep work loads manageable and equitable
 - Make sure everyone has what they need
 - Check in regularly

If out of your power: Please advocate!

Counter: Space, Services and Programming

- Connect with a local self-advocacy group; partner and listen.
- Universal Design: the most accessible, period.
 - Body fit; comfort; awareness; understanding; wellness; social integration; personalization; cultural appropriateness
- Advocate for inclusivity-based change that benefits the whole population

POLL

Which of these things have you used recently?

Universal Design

Body Fit

Comfort

Awareness

Understanding

Wellness

Social Integration

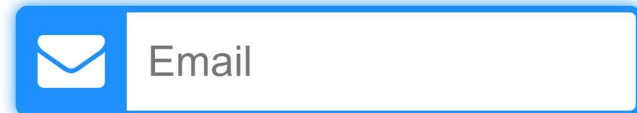
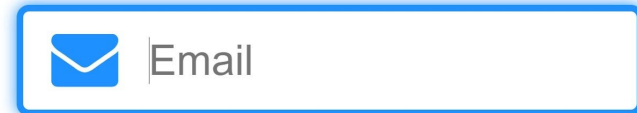
Cultural Appropriateness

<http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>

Universal Design



“Accidentally” Accessible



Advocating for change: considerations

- First reaction may be defensiveness
- It's no one's individual fault but it still needs to change
- Advocacy as a disabled person: empowering but can be dangerous

Lead by example

- Contact your local self-advocacy group
- Advocate for accessibility using the Universal Design model
- Use disability-inclusive language
- If you see a person struggling, ask if they'd like help
- Follow the disability community online and amplify their stories
- Look out for non-problematic media about disability for your collection
- Continue to educate yourself

You can do it!

Thank you!

S Bryce Kozla

 brycekozla@gmail.com

 brycekozlablog.blogspot.com

 bit.ly/PWDLIBS

