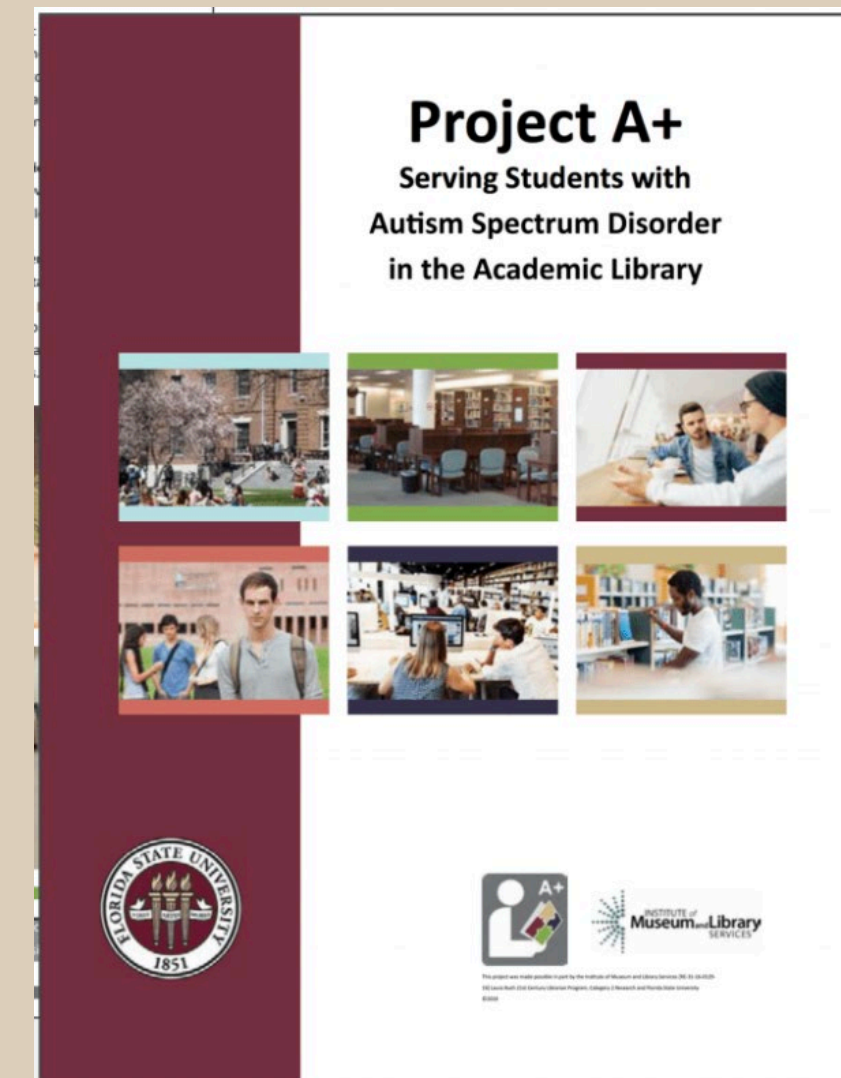


Autism spectrum disorder: Training and assessing academic librarians' knowledge

Blake Robinson¹ and Amelia Anderson²
Rollins College¹; Old Dominion University²

Introduction

Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often need additional support at colleges and universities compared with their neurotypical peers. This poster will discuss the training and follow-up survey the authors administered to librarians at Rollins College, introducing the respondents to ASD and academic libraries.



Characteristics of ASD in a Higher Education Setting

Issues with

- time management,
- social skills,
- self-advocacy, and
- other areas crucial for independent living in a college environment (Hillier et al., 2020; VanBergeijk et al., 2008; White et al., 2011, 2016).

Challenges to Address in an Academic Library

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires colleges and universities to make accommodations available to college students with disabilities but many students with ASD have trouble asking for accommodations in the first place (Elias & White, 2018; Kim, 2021). ASD is prevalent in the United States (Maenner et al., 2020), and this is reflected on college campuses as well (White et al., 2011). Librarians, as service providers, must be educated and knowledgeable about how to serve members of this student population.

Methods

- Purposive sampling was used to identify potential respondents at Rollins College.
- A Qualtrics mixed-methods, web-based survey was developed, which consisted of four multiple-choice questions and 11 free-response questions.
- Participants were asked to read the first two chapters of the *Project A+* training manual (Everhart et al., 2018), designed to help academic library employees better serve students with ASD.
- After reading the chapters, participants were invited to complete the survey.
- The first part of the survey assessed respondents' comfort with the content of the chapters using Likert scales.
- The second part of the survey solicited open-ended feedback, inviting respondents to share their takeaways and opinions about serving students with ASD

1 Training Concept 1

Librarians find value in learning about ASD.

Librarians in this study had a positive view of the Project A+ training manual and its content. Their knowledge of ASD increased after reading the manual. Other librarians may find similar value in such education.

Training opportunities include those specific to libraries:

- Project A+ Training Manual
- Project ENABLE

And those just about ASD:

- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
- Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network (AWN)

2 Training Concept 2

Librarians who receive education about ASD want to learn more.

Training opportunities should be made available for librarians about ASD, as such knowledge may lead to awareness of the need for improving services for members of this study population. If even a few staff members are inspired to learn more and tailor services, the library experiences of students with ASD may be improved.

3 Training Concept 3

Asking librarians about specific plans for action might inspire such actions to take place.

Library administrators interested in implementing improved services and supports for students with ASD can take results from this study to generate similar results. After allowing librarians to learn about ASD, through whatever training materials or mechanisms available, follow up by asking about specific plans based on knowledge learned.

References

- Autistic Self Advocacy Network. (n.d.). *Resource library*. <https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/>
- Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network. (n.d.). *Resource library*. <https://awnnetwork.org/resource-library/>
- Hillier, A., Ryan, J., Buckingham, A., & Schena, D. (2020). Prospective college students with autism spectrum disorder: Parent perspectives. *Psychological Reports, 124*(1), 88–107.
- VanBergeijk, E., Klin, A., & Volkmar, F. (2008). Supporting more able students on the autism spectrum: College and beyond. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders, 38*(7), 1359–1370.
- White, S. W., Elias, R., Salinas, C. E., Capriola, N., Conner, C. M., Asselin, S. B., Miyazaki, Y., Mazefsky, C. A., Howlin, P., & Getzel, E. E. (2016). Students with autism spectrum disorder in college: Results from a preliminary mixed methods needs analysis. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 56*, 29–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2016.05.010>
- White, S. W., Ollendick, T. H., & Bray, B. C. (2011). College students on the autism spectrum: Prevalence and associated problems. *Autism, 15*(6), 683–701.
- Elias, R., & White, S. W. (2018). Autism goes to college: Understanding the needs of a student population on the rise. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 48*(3), 732–746.
- Everhart, N., Woods, J., & Anderson, A. (2018). *Project A+: Serving students with autism spectrum disorder in the academic library*. Florida State University. <http://fsu.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fsu%3A550850/>
- Maenner, M. J., Shaw, K. A., Baio, J., Washington, A., Patrick, M., DiRienzo, M., Christensen, D. L., Wiggins, L. D., Pettygrove, S., Andrews, J. G., Lopez, M., Hudson, A., Baroud, T., Schwenk, Y., & White, T. (2020). Prevalence of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 8 years—Autism and developmental disabilities monitoring network, 11 sites, United States, 2016. *MMWR Surveillance Summaries, 69*(3), 1–12.