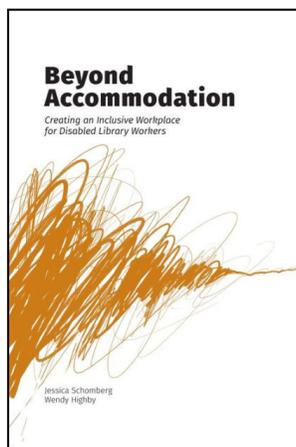


Book Reviews



Jessica Schomberg and Wendy Highby. *Beyond Accommodation: Creating an Inclusive Workplace for Disabled Workers*. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2020. 220p. Paper.

Jessica Schomberg and Wendy Highby begin with a very broad and thought-provoking discussion of the demographics of disability. Diagnosed “behavioral disorders and mental illness are on the rise while diagnosed physical impairments are decreasing” (15). Disablement is defined very broadly, as occurring where there is a mismatch between the environment and ability. Their review of the evolution of disability theory is effective.



As this book makes clear, being a disabled library employee can be truly challenging. For a library worker with an invisible disability who needs an accommodation, it becomes necessary to disclose to authorities in the workplace. There are substantial risks involved with disclosure, and the issue of when and how to disclose disability is woven throughout this book. Many disabled people live financially precarious lives, which makes the material risks of disclosure and requests for accommodation

very real. This is particularly true if the disclosure involves a stigmatized problem, such as mental illness. Accommodations are often seen in the workplace as disruptive to the status quo. One of the major barriers to accommodation is the problematic history of the ADA, which Schomberg and Highby discuss at length. The book also offers tools for fighting for accommodations, including self-advocacy, employer and community support for disabled workers, training of disabled people (to understand their rights), training of coworkers (to create a supportive community), and organizational flexibility.

The authors offer concrete characteristics of a library that is supportive of disabled employees. Schomberg and Highby advocate for “democratic participatory management” (61) that enables all people in an organization to have a say in how everyone’s needs can be accommodated, not just those of workers with disabilities. A supportive library should be open about evaluation processes, talk openly about accommodations, and provide significant training for the entire staff to create a welcoming environment. The authors stress the importance of unions and the real problems with at-will contracts. Unions are a powerful tool for negotiating working conditions, and Schomberg and Highby suggest that unions should get more involved with the needs of disabled workers. They advocate for “guaranteed rights to collective bargaining” (132).

It is radically necessary for a library worker who is disabled to learn self-care and self-advocacy. Even for those who are not in a supportive environment, learning to self-advocate is important. The authors state that the personal can become political, particularly if you can find common cause with colleagues and undertake collective action. They offer a breakdown of the different types of power that can be built in the workplace and clearly hope to empower disabled library workers to improve their circumstances. Schomberg and Highby clearly believe that individuals working together can change an organization. This is their call for action.

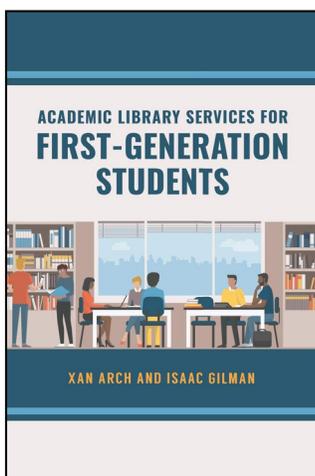
The fight to integrate the disabled into the workforce is clearly part of an even broader call for social and political change. For example, whether or not a disabled person is believed when they disclose may depend on their race. Disability must be understood through an intersectional lens. The authors touch briefly on the connection between disability and climate change. Disabled activism is also intensely connected with stereotype and implicit bias. Highby recognizes common ground with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Economic and social critique is a major theme of this book. The challenges of disabled people in our society illustrate fundamental problems with individualism and neoliberalism. Individualism means that disability is understood as an individual battle. We need to learn to work together and care for one another. Schomberg and Highby describe the need for political work on all levels, to secure the rights of the disabled, supporting calls for a “new social contract” (131).

This is a very thought-provoking and challenging book. The research is very thorough, and the authors are imaginative in terms of where to look for sources. Schomberg and Highby engage many different voices. One audience for this book is the disabled library worker who needs to learn about self-advocacy and the value of self-care. The authors are forthright about their desire to empower the disabled library worker. This book will also appeal to those who are interested in changing how libraries work. The vision here touches both structural political and social issues and how we can, as individuals, change the way we deal with each other.

This is also a deeply personal book. The authors’ voices are heard clearly through their individual narratives, stressing the point that the personal is political. Schomberg and Highby combine personal experience with a thorough understanding of the literature to present their points compellingly. *Beyond Accommodation* is clearly meant to be an emancipatory work, describing current circumstances while making a strong call for change. All library workers should heed it. —Robin E. Brown, Borough of Manhattan Community College

Xan Arch and Isaac Gilman. *Academic Library Services for First Generation Students*. New York, NY: Libraries Unlimited, 2020. 149p. Paper.



Xan Arch and Isaac Gilman create a necessary, at times difficult to discuss, piece of writing that should be used by academic libraries across the nation. *Academic Library Services for First Generation Students* brings forth the question of how to address best librarian practices for first-generation students. They argue that current practices cater to middle-class white students. The academic setting is shaped in such a way that first-generation students are viewed as needing “assistance” when the actual problem lies within the institution and its support systems. This book’s structure facilitates a rich understanding of the problems within these institutions while also offering concrete examples for academic libraries that want to do better. The book begins by describing the social context of first-generation students in higher education generally and then addresses academic libraries in particular. It finishes with examples of how to adapt institutions to better support these students.

The authors begin their book with the understanding that institutions are the ones that need to adapt for first-generation students and not the other way around. Rather, they want to shift from a “deficit” outlook to an “asset” outlook of these students. Arch and Gilman