

Fitting In and Standing Out: Experiences of Autistic Librarians in Ireland

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Agenda

Project Overview

Method

Findings

Discussion

Questions

Project Overview



Background

- Increasing rate of autism diagnosis in Ireland
- Superficial understanding of autism in general population (National Disability Authority, 2025)
- Autistic librarians as an invisible group within librarianship in Ireland: no demographic data available
- Building on research from UK and North America

Defining my research questions

1. How does being autistic impact autistic librarians' professional lives?
2. How do autistic librarians see themselves within the librarianship field in Ireland?
3. How do autistic librarians characterise their connectedness to other LIS professionals?

Method

- Theoretical framework
- Participants
- Data collection and analysis

Findings



Autistic People Belong in Librarianship

Autistic People Belong in Librarianship

Opportunities for Growth

Improving Inclusivity in
Libraries

Finding Community

“We occasionally have a laugh about like different situations in the library, which sometimes you wouldn't do with the neurotypical library staff. We would talk a lot about like the sensory difficulties we've had there, and like what might work to change, you know, some of those.”

“But yeah, it is actually very helpful to talk to them about things like that, and like sharing the oh, that noise! Oh, you know! Like having that little moment you're like, okay, there's other people, it's not just me, because I think it will be very isolating if you, if there was absolutely no one.”

Normative Expectations of Professionalism in Librarianship

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Entering and Progressing in
Librarianship

Hesitance to Disclose

Burnout

“That's something that I often worry about actually, is that, oh, am I being too direct. Then when it's because I, especially being a woman, can come across in a very negative light, which is frustrating.”

“The thing about masking, particularly in autism, in Ireland, in women, is that you do an awful lot to minimize the perceived disruption you cause, so ultimately I don't really want to be perceived or want to deal with that.”

“Just because I was always trying to match, I guess, neurotypical people, it meant that neurodivergent people were sort of passing me by when I could have been bonding with them in that way.”

Discussion



**How does being
autistic impact
autistic librarians'
professional lives?**

“Librarianship is a sacred calling; thus requiring absolute obedience to a set of rules and behaviours, regardless of any negative effect on the librarians’ own lives” (Ettarh, 2018).

**How do autistic
librarians see
themselves within
the librarianship
field in Ireland?**

**How do autistic
librarians
characterise their
connectedness to
other autistic LIS
professionals?**

Conclusion

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Thank you!

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