Nothing About Us Without Us: the Benefits of Hiring Staff with a Disability in Libraries.

Elaine Chapman  
Technological University Dublin, elaine.chapman@tudublin.ie

Sarah-Anne Kennedy  
Technological University Dublin, sarahanne.kennedy@TUDublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/libcon

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation

This Conference Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the TU Dublin Professional Services (including Library Services) at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Conference Papers by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact yvonne.desmond@tudublin.ie, arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, brian.widdis@tudublin.ie.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License
Nothing About Us Without Us

The benefits of hiring staff with a Disability in Libraries

Elaine Chapman
Sarah-Anne Kennedy
TU Dublin Library Services - City Campus
About us

Elaine Chapman
- Autistic
- Library Assistant
- Petrified of public speaking

Sarah-Anne Kennedy
- Working to better understand disabilities in order to be a better manager, co-worker, librarian, and ally.
- College Librarian
- Ok with public speaking (always room for improvement)
Visible Disability

Invisible Disability
Disability or Society? Which is more disabling?

Nothing about us without us

Medical and social models of disability

Universal design

Accessible space this way
Building on Accessibility

Where do we fit?

Disability visibility

Attracting disabled staff

How we can improve your accessibility

Image Source: http://www.edf-feph.org/european-accessibility-body
#bemediasmart

#BeMediaSmart

#Be_Media_Smart
Making our community inclusive

Disabled students and higher education:

Retention rates

Employment rates

But what do these numbers mean?
Disabled staff and higher education

Employment rates, or lack thereof

Representation

Knowledge

Community

Image Sources:
Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)

- Ireland’s first Technological University
- Ireland’s newest university - established 1st January 2019
- Ireland’s largest university - student population 28,500 and 3000+ staff
- Teaching and research covering Science, the Arts, Business, Engineering and Technology
- Pathways to Graduation from Apprenticeship to PhD
TU Dublin

Merger of ITB, ITT, and DIT to become:

TU Dublin Blanchardstown
TU Dublin Tallaght
TU Dublin City Campus

Library Services located in all 3 campuses.
TU Dublin Values

Inclusion
Equitable, Collegiate, Supportive

Excellence
Creative, Driven, Ground-breaking

Impact
Innovative, Entrepreneurial, Responsive

Integrity
Ethical, Accountable, Honest
Library Staff with a disability

No statistics on number of employees with a disability - visible or invisible disability

Disability Service receives no funding to support staff

Focus of majority of LIS literature focuses on library users with a disability

Literature or guides available tend to focus on library staff with visible disabilities

Virtually no literature on library staff with invisible disabilities
New University
New Library Service

Developing new policies & practices - e.g. recruitment policy “Recruiting Difference, Reflecting Diversity”, Unconscious Bias Training, Managing Mental Health...

Opportunity to develop new services with input from staff with a disability, Disability Services, students with a disability, and external networks

Director for Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion - Dr. Yvonne Galligan

Ability Network

Image Source: https://motley.ca/the-cost-of-a-clean-slate/
Benefits

Employment

Inclusion and Representation

Safe space - opportunity for staff to feel they can disclose their disability

Tapping valuable skills, knowledge, and lived experience

Learning opportunity

Image source: https://www.proxlearn.com/inclusion-of-special-education-students-with-general-education-curriculum
What have I learned?

Formal training & support needed - language and culture

Don’t be afraid to Ask - each employee is individual

Need to address specific workplace processes, structures, and assumptions - constantly revise

Trust - toxic individualism

Be open to ideas and be flexible

Be proactive - create learning opportunities and sensitivity in the workplace

Image source: https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2018/03/27/psychology-language-learning/
“Disabilities may not be immediately apparent, but they also can’t be ignored just because they are inconvenient.

We all need to call out unreasonable work expectations and draw attention to the combination of interpersonal and institutional issues that cause us to be suspicious that our colleagues aren’t pulling their weight. We talk about library work as if productivity, efficiency, and countable things are the most important methods of evaluation.

Creating a truly inclusive workplace includes normalising body and performance differences, in our workplace policies and practices, as well as in the language we use to describe disability.”


Libraries have the opportunity to be leaders in making a real difference to employees with a disability.
Go raibh maith agat
Thank you

Elaine Chapman elaine.chapman@dit.ie
Sarah-Anne Kennedy sarahanne.kennedy@dit.ie
TU Dublin Library Services - City Campus