



Supporting people to live well with dementia: a guide for library services.

It is quite interesting to note at the beginning of this review that one's interest in a problem, topic or activity starts affecting everything that one is doing even without consciously focusing on the matter. Recently, I have been working in the projects exploring information and communication support to people with disabilities. First, some clearly defined and rather severe dual sensory deprivation was in focus, then it expanded to people with other problems and services that they need. It seems, that since my involvement in this research, information about these topics started arriving on my desk and desktop, getting on the street ads and to the theatre performances, TV screens and news portals.

So, I was not surprised that this new book on library services for people with dementia and their carers caught my attention among the whole production of Facet Publishing. The book is written by a thoughtful researcher and library professional who knows the life of people with dementia first-hand having cared for her farther (she admits this herself in the book). As is usual she explains the social relevance of the book by necessity to investigate and understand the needs of people with dementia as their numbers are growing, but also by negative attitudes towards this condition that permeate society, culture and arts and present barriers to addressing the issue properly.

The author applies the social model of disability to explain the condition, but also provides some medical information about the kinds of dementia and their stages. The main attention is of course on the library customers with dementia and how libraries are involved in supporting them, which resources are necessary for providing quality service and help to them and their carers, volunteers and even library staff with dementia. A whole chapter is devoted to partnerships of libraries and other institutions that can pool their resources and expertise in providing support to.

The author takes a holistic approach to library services explaining how the environment could help in orientation, how reading activities can be used and organized for people with dementia, but also the therapeutic art and social interactions are employed to enhance the quality of life. The evaluation of services by the direct users and the methods that can be employed for this purpose receives significant attention in the book.

It was interesting to note that the author is also considering the language use. Learning and developing an appropriate language and terminology is a routine work in the projects directed at persons with disability, but it is a somewhat neglected area in most other cases. As the author states: 'Words matter', not only inside the project or library, but also in communicating with external partners, promoting activities and marketing. It may seem trivial, but it is not as the traditions differ not only along the countries and communities, but also among persons with different disabilities, thus the advice to involve people with dementia in this matter is sound and practical.

The book is written in a readable style. I liked its structure and the real-life examples in text boxes, though would have wished for a larger font in them (another type of disability to be considered by publishers and librarians).

Knowing the issues of many other people with disabilities, I would suggest that this book may interest many librarians developing services not only for people with dementia, but for others as well. It seems that the same advice can benefit libraries in general. It seems that the main public addressed in the book belongs to English speaking countries and the UK in the first place, but it can be used in other countries where libraries are among those few public institutions providing care to all, including the persons with dementia.

Elena Maceviciute
Vilnius University
November, 2023