Project A+: Unleashing the Superpowers of Neurodiverse Academic Library Users

Dr. Amelia Anderson
School of Information
Florida State University
Overview

• About ASD as a neurodiversity in young adults
  – Characteristics
  – Prevalence
  – ASD in College

• Why does this matter for librarians?

• Strategies to provide support
  – Communication
  – Social
  – Environment
  – Instruction
ASD Characteristics

• Social communication

• Fixed interests and repetitive behavior

• ... but, if you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism!
ASD Prevalence

• 1 in 59 children

• Up to 1.9% of college students (White, Ollendick, & Bray, 2011).
Challenges in Higher Education

• Lack of support

• Need for self-advocacy

• Retention
Why the Library?

• We’re a comfortable spot!

• Students with ASD need a safe space on campus, and already report using libraries regularly.
Strategies to Help
Communication

• How do you conduct reference interviews?

• Think about using:
  – Literal language
  – Closed questions (yes, really!)
Communication

• Face-to-face communication can be tough.

• Provide options:
  – Text chat
  – Email consultations
Social Opportunities
Library Environment
Library Environment

• Provide boundary objects

• Just say no to open floor plans!
Library Environment

• Try to avoid or provide alternatives for what might be sensory distractions

• Lighting
  – Have spaces with lamps or natural light

• Noise
  – Offer headphones
Library Instruction

• Prepare in advance
• Share in advance
• Don’t stray!
Thank you!

• Contact me with questions:
  • amelia.anderson@fsu.edu
  • http://aplus.cci.fsu.edu/