

# Understanding the Unseen: Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace

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## ABSTRACT

Approximately 61 million (or 1 in 4) adults in the United States have a disability. Despite this prevalence, many people cannot name a coworker who is disabled, possibly due to the number of people who have invisible disabilities. This lack of understanding of both causes and prevalence can cause both the disabled and their supervisors or managers to be unaware of how to address a disabled person's needs. In this article, the authors shed light on how to improve the professional environment for disabled archivists, staff, and patrons. People without disabilities or those with unrealized disabilities can all benefit when universal design is considered. The best way to achieve inclusivity is to encourage all employees to model the behavior you want to see in others and to normalize disabilities and accommodations. In an environment where accommodations for everyone are normalized, many of the micro- or macro-aggressions may be eliminated from the workplace, as it can help remove the stigma surrounding disability. Everyone wants to work in a supportive environment where they feel respected.

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## KEY WORDS

Disability, Accessibility, Accommodation, Mental illness, Temporary, Acquired, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Hard of hearing/Deaf, Low vision/Blindness, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Disclosure, Idiopathic hypersomnia (IHS), Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), Ally, Managers, Supervisors

Approximately 61 million (or 1 in 4)<sup>1</sup> adults in the United States have a disability. Despite this prevalence, many people cannot name a coworker who is disabled, possibly due to the number of people who have invisible disabilities. This lack of understanding of both causes and prevalence can cause both the disabled and their supervisors or managers to be unaware of how to address a disabled person's needs. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, signed by President George H. W. Bush, protects people from discrimination, but it does not provide guidance for how to ask for or implement accommodations for invisible disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Invisible disabilities include conditions such as autoimmune disorders and other chronic illnesses, neurodivergence, and visual and auditory disabilities. Mental illness accounts for a large portion of invisible disabilities. About 1 in 5 adults deals with mental illness each year, and 50% will deal with mental illness at some point in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> This can include disorders related to mood, anxiety, impulse control, eating, and/or substance abuse. Mental illness can be triggered by environment (feeling isolated, changing seasons), physiology (chemical imbalances), or experience (trauma, life changes). Recent events highlight these triggers. Reports have shown that nearly half of Americans reported that the COVID-19 pandemic was harming their mental health.<sup>4</sup>

All invisible disabilities come with their own hidden challenges and hidden energy expenditures. A certain amount of effort is invested in managing the fallout from disabilities. People develop tools to mitigate difficult situations, but they are inevitable. Work can take longer and be more frustrating to accomplish, which requires more managing and adds to the exhaustion. People with invisible disabilities commonly lie or stay silent about their disability because not every situation is an educational moment. Disclosing a disability often means revisiting trauma, long explanations of what the disability is, and uncomfortably invasive questions. Even worse is the possibility of others offering well-meaning but unqualified (and unasked for) commentary on diagnosis or treatment, or asking if a disability is even real. It becomes easier for an individual to get through the interaction and move on. Ultimately, these challenges can have a significant impact on the work environment for both staff and patrons in an archival setting.

Disabilities impact every aspect of a person's life and how they move through the world. It is critically important that disabled people feel like they have the agency to advocate for themselves or to seek out support as they choose. In the archival field, we are expected to advocate for our collections, patrons, and institutions; but less emphasis has been placed on advocating for ourselves and our colleagues, be it assistance in pulling boxes or providing adequate ventilation for moldy materials. Archivists should feel comfortable advocating for accessibility to collections as well as to our professional expertise. Given how many

people are disabled, or know someone with a disability, everyone can benefit from accommodations. In the spirit of self-advocacy, the authors created an all-disabled panel for the 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists. With over 400 archivists attending this session, the overwhelming and positive response to the panel proves archivists are interested in this topic.

## Temporary, Acquired, and Undiagnosed Disabilities

According to the Social Security Administration's Actuarial Note, Disability and Death Probability Tables for Insured Workers Born in 2000, it is projected that 65% of insured men and 70% of insured women will go from age twenty to normal retirement age without acquiring a disability.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important to note that an estimated 28 million people in the United States are currently uninsured.<sup>6</sup> It is also estimated that nearly 5.6% of working Americans experience a short-term disability (less than six months) every year. These temporary disabilities can include illness, injury, or complications due to pregnancy.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the CDC estimates that 6 in 10 adults living in the United States have at least one chronic disease, and nearly 4 in 10 adults have two or more.<sup>8</sup> However, receiving a diagnosis can be a long, and occasionally expensive, process. According to the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA), about 23.5 million Americans suffer from an autoimmune disease. It can take, on average, five doctors and four years to receive a diagnosis for an autoimmune disease; however, some may never receive one.<sup>9</sup>

While waiting for a diagnosis, people still need accommodations, but may not be sure what they need or how to ask for it. Depending on the length of disability, it may take longer to approve and implement the accommodation than the need exists. Some institutions might not have an office for employee disabilities, while others may only provide accommodations to those who can prove their disability is permanent or expected to last longer than six months. Others might require a note from a doctor if the "disability and/or need for accommodation are not obvious or already known."<sup>10</sup>

People with temporary, acquired, or undiagnosed disabilities may be less likely to ask for an accommodation or may be afraid to disclose their disability. They may be concerned that they will be turned down for an accommodation, feel their accommodation requirements or disability might not be taken seriously, fear they might be accused of faking, or worried coworkers may make assumptions that they are abusing the system.<sup>11</sup> Those individuals going through the process of receiving a diagnosis, or who face a temporary or acquired disability may also struggle internally. They may feel guilty that they need time off work for upcoming surgeries, may be stressed and depressed while waiting for a diagnosis, or may be worried about their finances. They may even experience

a sense of loss as they come to terms with their new “normal.” It is important to be empathetic to coworkers or employees who may be going through this difficult time. A person should never be made to feel guilty because of their disability.

If and when medical leave becomes necessary, most people are legally protected by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows employees at eligible institutions to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons. Essentially, the FMLA requires employers to provide their employee benefits and cannot fire employees for taking necessary leave.”<sup>12</sup> A common misconception regarding the use of the FMLA is that the employee will not get paid. While the FMLA only requires unpaid leave, depending on the employer, the employee may also use sick leave, vacation leave, or other accrued leave concurrently while on leave under the FMLA. Additionally, an employee cannot legally be fired for requesting or taking leave. (This does not mean a person cannot be fired while on leave for another reason unrelated to the leave.)<sup>13</sup> For more information regarding the FMLA, it is important to speak with the human resources office, especially if a person needs to take multiple days off for medical or personal reasons. Every institution is different, and the authors are not legal experts, so please talk to your HR office, if you have one, or the local office of the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division for specific information about how to apply for and use the FMLA.<sup>14</sup>

## Invisible Disability Examples

Invisible disabilities cannot be “fixed” but may not be readily apparent, for example, those who are hard of hearing/deaf, have low vision/blindness, or have limited range of motion. Rather than following only the required ADA guidelines, accommodations often need to be tailored to an individual. Many people with invisible disabilities may have been diagnosed later in life, had a sudden onset, or are only disabled temporarily. These individuals may have additional challenges navigating complicated accommodation request processes and dealing with the actual diagnosis. When an employer requires a lengthy, complex approval process or requires the requestor to create their own plan for accommodation, this places a heavy responsibility on someone who is already overwhelmed. The following two examples of invisible disabilities illustrate the impact that an invisible disability may have on an individual’s work.

Hard of hearing (HoH) people are on the deaf spectrum ranging from mildly hard of hearing to profoundly deaf. The profoundly deaf, much like wheelchair users, have visual cues to disclose their disability, such as the use of an interpreter or using ASL. The hard of hearing rarely have those cues; hearing aids can be easily overlooked if they are small or covered by a person’s hair, and people frequently will not believe that someone who speaks well is deaf. It is very

difficult for the HoH to join into casual office banter, especially if they must ask people to repeat themselves. This tends to throw the flow of conversation off, and it can be confusing for other people. Office social events like holiday parties can leave a person with a disability feeling drained. Standing for long periods and among lots of people, often with forced participation, can be debilitating, despite the best intentions of those planning an event. Being HoH and participating in office social events amounts to standing around smiling weakly; group dinners are even worse. In an office setting, it can be difficult for the HoH to speak up for themselves. An explanation such as “I’m sorry I’m loud, but I’m hard of hearing, so there isn’t much I can do about it” may be met with disdain; HoH individuals may need to take sick time or vacation time to hold conversations that could otherwise be held in the office without disruption.

People with disabilities involving energy, such as idiopathic hypersomnia (IHS)<sup>15</sup> and chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS),<sup>16</sup> also experience similar micro- and macro-aggressions, but often dismiss them because managing IHS or CFS is exhausting. These disabilities are not well understood, even by the medical community, so people with them constantly feel the need to “teach” others about them.<sup>17</sup> This means without medication or behavior modification, IHS and CFS sufferers are constantly, and frequently, debilitatingly fatigued. People respond with false empathy or worse, accusations that question the level of severity of their condition. An honest response to a random “How are you?” can feel like it will require a half hour lecture on the disability and illness, leading the person to want to reply “Fine, you?” to save time and more exhaustion.

Both examples illustrate the difficulty individuals with unseen disabilities can experience in navigating a workplace. Depending on how accommodating a workplace is, tasks that are generally considered basic/simple/quick may have to be done differently. Supervisors or colleagues may react to that need unfavorably, or may ask uncomfortable or invasive questions, which has an impact on both the individual and on the workplace. This can lead to people with invisible disabilities feeling very isolated. If a person does not want to disclose their disability, hiding it can be difficult. If a person does disclose their disability, they may need to do it repeatedly, which is demoralizing and dehumanizing.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

While the ADA was landmark legislation that set baselines for accessibility, it is not an impenetrable shield. The Act does not provide blanket protections or blanket accommodations in every case. For example, smaller institutions as well as historical buildings are often considered exempt. Requesting any sort of accommodation is a highly personal and difficult decision. Though society is erasing stigmas attached to many disabilities, individuals continue to face

challenges in disclosing their disabilities, and in continually justifying their accommodation needs. A study by Dalgin and Bellini on the consequences of disclosure during interviews found that disclosure of disabilities that carry negative stigma, particularly psychiatric disabilities, can substantially affect employers' opinions of job candidates.<sup>18</sup> Stigma can lead to individuals not disclosing symptoms or not seeking help for fear of repercussions. Attitudes toward disabled employees can inform how other colleagues interact with a person, what opportunities exist, and can prevent a person from succeeding. Even though 30% of employees meet the definition of having a disability, only 39% of those employees disclose to their managers. Even fewer disclose to their human resources departments or their colleagues.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes, disclosure may open an employee to cruel behavior from peers based on stigma or a false belief that accommodations are an attempt to receive unneeded special treatment.<sup>20</sup> Depending on the accommodations needed, there is a real fear of being fired or demoted due to being a "burden" on the staff or requiring accommodations that can be costly; this is especially true for the archival profession that increasingly relies on temporary or contract labor.<sup>21</sup> This can be compounded if the employee does not have an official diagnosis or the disability is undocumented. Since diagnoses and documentation require time away from work, the employee might feel guilty about missing work, even if they have sick leave. This is intensified by the fact that "attitudinal and physical barriers can be more disabling than the disability itself."<sup>22</sup> For example, while it is difficult to question a measurable disability (such as vision), mental disabilities can be particularly difficult to quantify, and employers and colleagues may question whether the disability is legitimate.

Approaching the idea of accommodations can be confusing for everyone involved. For many workplaces, the accommodation process is ill-defined or nonexistent. While accommodations may be approved, securing accommodations can require a negotiation between the disabled person and administrative personnel. If the process is automated or requires a non-person interface, it may not allow for the myriad of atypical, temporary, or undiagnosed disabilities. Accommodations need to be considered commonplace for every level of administration in large institutions, and codified in smaller ones.

For many people, the process of asking for accommodations can be so intimidating or overwhelming, they may avoid requesting them. One way for organizations to consider making the accommodations process easier would be to shift the expectations for individual positions, making basic accommodations a part of job descriptions. This means removing ableist language, such as requirements for an archivist to lift 40 pound boxes and climb ladders. Organizations may ask themselves: does the position actually require an individual to frequently lift boxes and climb ladders, or is there support available

for a disabled person? Are there colleagues or student workers who can help in these situations? People with disabilities may be less likely to apply to positions with a lifting requirement, even though there is an EEO statement, because they wonder how accommodating the employer will be. Instead, employers should create an environment where asking for a unique accommodation is no different than requesting office supplies. One way to do this is to have a list of accessibility offerings available to the employee when they are hired. This could include things such as text-to-speech software like Dragon, customizable workspaces, ergonomic split keyboards, footrests, or filters to put over fluorescent lights for those prone to migraines, or even a remote work plan.

Below are a few examples of specific accommodations including remote work and specialized/alternative workspaces. While COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the workforce, it has shown that many in the archives profession can, in most cases, successfully work from home, even if it is just one or two days a week.<sup>23</sup> Because of this, it might be easier than ever to get an established remote work accommodation, be it ad hoc (also called situational, episodic, intermittent, or unscheduled) or regularly scheduled. Like most accommodations, a remote work accommodation will require some homework on the part of the employee. Such homework might include a letter from their therapist or doctor explaining the benefits of a remote work agreement in terms of both the employee and the employer, or a list of projects that can be completed successfully from home such as blog posts, transcriptions, instruction, or exhibit planning.

During the pandemic when physical offices were closed, those who had caretaking responsibilities often opted for alternative schedules instead of the usual eight hour time block. This might have meant that an employee logged in for a meeting in the morning, but then took time off to help their child with virtual schooling, and then worked after the normal work/school day to meet the required hours. For some with invisible disabilities, this setup can be incredibly helpful. For example, commuting during the morning rush hour may give an employee anxiety attacks, so working an atypical schedule (coming in earlier or later), could allow them to be wholly present and capable in their job.

Other accommodations should be standard, much like those in the ADA that require ramps, motorized doors, and standard doorway widths. These are often easy to implement as the features already exist, like in-time captioning on video-conferencing meetings. Others, like headsets and microphones for virtual meetings, require an upfront investment, but allow everyone access. Ergonomic keyboards and mice could also be offered to everyone. Not only have they helped some with arm and wrist disabilities, they allow a person's wrists to rest at a more natural angle and can prevent typing related injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Providing padding on the floor where people stand for long periods of time, such as at a digitization workstation, may be a way to alleviate

back stress. Other examples of accommodations that are easy to offer and have broad-based benefits include offering earplugs to help with noise sensitivity, or trackball mice, computers with voice software, text-to-speech software, speech-to-text software, recordings of meetings, and adjustable desks.

## Be an Accomplice, Not an Antagonist<sup>24</sup>

Studies have shown that positive personal contact with a person with a disability leads to lower levels of endorsing stigmatizing beliefs and actions.<sup>25</sup> Positive interactions in the workplace can begin with a commitment to being an accomplice for individuals with invisible disabilities. Accomplices are vital in creating and maintaining a diverse working environment. Mio and Roades define an ally or accomplice as “an individual in a sociopolitical demographic group on the upside of power who actively advocates for individuals or classes of individuals in a different sociopolitical demographic group on the downside of power.”<sup>26</sup> On the topic of what makes a good accomplice, Vilissa Thompson writes: “For individuals seeking to become allies to communities they do not possess membership in, one first step that fails to be taken is actually the easiest—listening to the voices of marginalized people.”<sup>27</sup> To be an accomplice, one needs to step beyond performative allyship; they need to move beyond acknowledgement to action. Beyond mere advocacy, allyship can and should be defined as “the attitudinal position of a person, the willingness to learn about an identity, and the actions taken as a mark of commitment.”<sup>28</sup>

Encouraging accomplices in the workplace can benefit everyone. There are some very simple ways to start being an ally and move towards accomplice-ship. Allies both support and advocate—it has been shown that displaying stickers in support of discriminated groups and attending ally training seminars helps to improve the perceptions and experiences of coworkers in that group.<sup>29</sup> To move beyond passive allyship, both administrators and colleagues can engage and reach out to people. Simply asking how someone is doing and listening without judgement can make a difference to an individual. It helps to learn and understand their unique situations.<sup>30</sup>

Be aware that while empathizing is important, one should not minimize the experiences of others by trying to claim similar experience, or by offering unsolicited advice. It is important not to make assumptions about a person’s ability or their mental state. While it may be easy to make a broad statement such as “we all go through that,” it is not helpful nor is it necessarily accurate. Disabled people know more about their disabilities than anyone else, and understand their needs and options. Similarly, offering unsolicited advice takes away a disabled person’s agency; not only is it demeaning, it changes the power dynamic of the interaction.



Another way to support disabled coworkers is to simply receive disclosures with acceptance and positivity.<sup>31</sup> Be aware that one should not pry if a coworker is not ready or willing to disclose—they should work on creating an accepting atmosphere for all coworkers, regardless of ability. Once someone does disclose, an ally will make the effort to educate themselves. Because information helps inform understanding, an ally reads books and articles to help understand the information someone with a disability may give them.

Being a good ally also means thinking about how others move through the world. They recognize that personal boundaries may vary between individuals—not everyone is comfortable with making direct eye contact<sup>32</sup> or physical contact like hugging.<sup>33</sup> Accomplices find ways to allow people to thrive in the workplace, regardless of how they interact with the world. Administrators and colleagues can be advocates for change in the workplace that can improve the environment for everyone, including coworkers and patrons with disabilities. According to the social model of disability, social structures and attitudes create disability, rather than a person's medical condition.<sup>34</sup> In other terms, a disabled person wastes time, energy and resources trying to 'pass' as able-bodied or trying to make the 'standard' model work for them. Advocate for universal design, which aims to create environments that are accessible to everyone. People without disabilities, or those with unrealized disabilities, can all benefit when universal design is considered. However, Sabat et al. warn: "Allies must be careful when advocating for more accommodating workplace practices and make sure that they do not unintentionally 'out' a coworker with an invisible disability."<sup>35</sup>

One way to "show up" for disabled coworkers is to normalize asking for accommodations. Institutions often have accommodation policies for the reading room and public-facing events that are along the lines of "Please request accommodations as far in advance as possible." Policies for internal events are more sparse. By having an employee ask for an accommodation such as captions for a presentation, whether they are disabled or not, accommodations become more commonplace. It means any employee can show up at the last minute to that job talk or the awards presentation without worrying about having previously asked for an accommodation.<sup>36</sup> It normalizes certain behaviors and processes as normal and routine, and therefore makes everything a little more inclusive.

Proactively standing up for coworkers is another way to be a good ally. "[People] who live with chronic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis and who may have a visible disability are more likely targets [of workplace bullying]."<sup>37</sup> Lack of understanding, resentment of accommodations, and beliefs that workers are "faking it" can all trigger bullying in the workplace. Disabilities that are invisible or concealed can also add to the stigma that one's disability is a false claim or an attempt to acquire special treatment.<sup>38</sup> As Berentz explained, "American

culture has a profound discomfort with disease and disability. We equate health with ability and power. . . . As a corollary, we tend to blame people for their disabilities. We see illness as a lack of self-control; chronic illness as failure to 'shape up.' People fighting illness [or disability] are considered weak in spirit and mind, as well as in body."<sup>39</sup> For employees in this position, they may be less likely to respond in fear of confirming their disabilities. In addition, studies suggest that confronting workplace harassment is more effective and viewed more positively when enacted by an ally rather than the targeted individual.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to active bullying, the use of stigmatizing language and stereotypes in the workplace also can cause hostile work environments for employees with disabilities. Language like "psycho" or "crazy" not only maligns mental illness, but perpetuates negative stereotypes and stigmas.<sup>41</sup> When someone uses stigmatizing language, it is important to interrupt and correct them. For example, when an individual makes a joke by calling themselves "OCD" when getting fussy about details, it trivializes a condition that causes daily disruption to those with the disorder. In this situation, allies in the workplace correct the person and inform them of the implications of language, without judging the individual. Even providing non-verbal disapproval of prejudicial and discriminatory language and actions can help curb the use of stigmatizing language in the workplace.<sup>42</sup> Intention does not outweigh impact.

## Tips for Managers and Supervisors

Being a leader means setting the standard that everyone follows. First and foremost, workplace supervisors should be allies by modeling expected behavior and creating an environment that is inclusive by default. Leaders reflect inclusiveness with staff and stand up for them in any discriminatory situation, or in any situation where inappropriate language is used. Leaders assist employees with invisible disabilities by supporting them within the structure of the organization. Employees are more likely to disclose disabilities and ask for accommodations when they expect to be accepted and perceive positive attitudes toward organizational and supervisor support. In these environments, employees with disabilities have higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, and can be more productive with accommodations.<sup>43</sup>

Managers should normalize employee choice in the disclosure of reasons for leave. By stating something as simple as "If you want to tell me why you're taking leave, go for it. But I will never require it. All I require is a heads-up so we can schedule desk coverage or intern supervision," managers can show support for individuals who are requesting accommodations. Management should foster an environment where staff are not punished for absence; where there is no retribution for requesting or actively using accommodations; and where

employees can discuss their needs with administration at all levels of the organization (supervisor/upper administration/HR) in a safe environment. Without this support, individuals may not feel comfortable or able to take action out of fear of losing their jobs.

Remember that as long as a person can perform the essential duties of their position, with or without a reasonable accommodation, they legally cannot be treated differently because of their disability, and employers must provide reasonable accommodations. According to the ADA, a reasonable accommodation is “anything that does not create an undue hardship or a direct threat.”<sup>44</sup> Reasonable accommodations are not considered, and should never be considered, “special treatment.” This includes such tasks as asking a coworker or student worker for help in reshelving or moving exhibit cases.

All of this is designed to move the onus of responsibility for addressing inclusivity and accommodation from the disabled person to the institution. As has been repeated throughout this article, that means providing the accommodations that someone might need to everyone. By making accommodations available on request, the supervisor is making the disabled person ask for a special accommodation. They are forced to out themselves, and this may make it easier for their colleagues to marginalize them. Providing everyone with the same accommodations gives everyone the chance to benefit from an accommodation they may not have even known they needed. Provide people with a separate/private space for phone calls or zoom meetings (especially in a shared office space). Allow people to create a workspace that is comfortable for them.

For supervisors and managers who work with college students, remembering self-care is crucial. After all, self-care is part of a healthy work-life balance. College students are especially prone to anxiety and depression, making student workers in archives a particularly at-risk population.<sup>45</sup> One example of normalizing self-care would be to create kits for students and staff that include snacks, beverages, stress toys, and personal care items. Having these items available may help encourage students to take breaks, stay hydrated, and de-stress.

## Handling Coworkers

Coworkers may question accommodations made for individuals with invisible disabilities, and as noted above, addressing coworker backlash or having to constantly explain a disability is taxing. If a person has the support of their supervisor and/or HR, an individual with a disability should address backlash or other questions by responding that the issue is a question being addressed between the worker and others in the organization. If, however, an individual feels that they continue to be questioned, or are being bullied, they should inform a supervisor or HR. These pointed questions could be classified as disability

discrimination, which most institutions have policies against, and has been codified in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Rehabilitation Act.<sup>46</sup>

When a person has a disability, whether temporary, permanent, or undiagnosed, most do not want to hear jokes about it or might not even want to talk about it. Colleagues cannot compare their own experience with slightly similar experiences because each disability or injury is different. Comments such as telling someone they did not think an injury or their disability appears to be that bad or should not warrant surgeries or time off are inappropriate. Complaining about someone's absence or having to "cover" for a person because they are absent is also inappropriate and unnecessary. It is important to note that it should not be considered covering when the work being done is necessary for the progress of the institution.

This type of behavior not only can create a hostile work environment but can make people feel guilty for needing or using time off. If people do make these comments, it is important to address them. If one does not feel comfortable going to that person directly, or if it is more than one person who is making comments, they should go to their supervisor or to human resources.

## Conclusion

How do individual employers and the archives profession keep people with invisible disabilities from feeling isolated in the workplace? It is vital to create an environment for employees that is actually inclusive. Archivists need to go beyond considering accessibility for their patrons and the bare minimum of physical accessibility requirements, and accommodate all people within the archive—researcher and archivist alike. The best way to achieve inclusivity is to encourage all employees to model the behavior they want to see in others and to normalize disabilities and accommodations. In an environment where accommodations for everyone are normalized, many of the micro- or macro-aggressions may be eliminated from the workplace as it can help remove the stigma surrounding disability. Everyone wants to work in a supportive environment where they feel respected.

Where to learn more

- Accessibility & Disability Section Blog (<https://adsarchivists.home.blog/>)
- Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>)
- Job Accommodation Network (<https://askjan.org/>)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI.org)
- A Guide to Disability Rights Laws (<https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm>)

## NOTES

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- <sup>15</sup> “Idiopathic Hypersomnia,” National Institutes of Health, Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center, <https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/8737/idiopathic-hypersomnia>.
- <sup>16</sup> “Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,” National Institutes of Health, Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center, <https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/7121/chronic-fatigue-syndrome-myalgic-encephalomyelitis>.
- <sup>17</sup> The word “idiopathic” even means “having an unknown cause.” People are told everything from part of their brain controlling wakefulness is dead to “I don’t know. You just have it.”
- <sup>18</sup> Rebecca Spirito Dalgin and James Bellini, “Invisible Disability Disclosure in an Employment Interview: Impact on Employers’ Hiring Decisions and Views of Employability,” *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin* 52, no. 1 (October 2008): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355207311311>.

- <sup>19</sup> Pooja Jain-Link and Julia Taylor Kennedy, “Why People Hide Their Disabilities at Work,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 3, 2019, 2–3, <https://hbr.org/2019/06/why-people-hide-their-disabilities-at-work>.
- <sup>20</sup> Alecia M. Santuzzi et al., “Identity Management Strategies for Workers with Concealable Disabilities: Antecedents and Consequences,” *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 3 (September 2019): 848, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12320>.
- <sup>21</sup> A survey conducted in 2017 by New England Archivists showed almost 30% of the 283 respondents were in contract or project positions. Micha Broadnax, Elizabeth Carron, Anna J. Clutterbuck-Cook, Katie Fortier, and Allyson Glazier, “New England Archivists Contingent Employment Study Report to the Executive Board, January 2017,” accessed August 23, 2021, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aFVWuA6zJsrTGfPuKeU8K6SJIsggv2h/view>, p. 7. Additionally, a study of job positions from ArchivesGig between 2014 and 2020 showed 24.2% of jobs posted were term positions. Johnson Melvin, L. Rebecca, Sheridan Sayles, and Amy C. Vo, “Perspectives on Precarity: A Multifaceted Look at the Status of Project Archivists,” Research Forum presentation given at SAA Annual Meeting, August 5, 2020, <https://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/27825>.
- <sup>22</sup> Steve Foelsch, “Reporting on Disability with Dignity,” Starkloff Disability Institute, July 17, 2020.
- <sup>23</sup> Towards the beginning of the work-from-home period in March 2020, the Accessibility and Disability Section of SAA started an “Archivists at Home” document that included tasks and projects that archivists could complete from home. The resulting document spawned several articles, including one in *Library Journal* where the public praised archivists’ and librarians’ adaptability and productivity during a difficult time. Another article in CLIR, noted that the success of archivists’ working from home had showcased how it could push repositories into seeing the value of similar accommodations for their disabled employees. Lydia Tang and Nicole Kang Ferraiolo, “Advocating for Archivists at Home: An Interview with Lydia Tang,” CLIR, May 15, 2020, <https://www.clir.org/2020/05/advocating-for-archivists-at-home-an-interview-with-lydia-tang/>; Ryan P. Randall and Jennifer LC Burke, “Library, Archives Workers Share Work-from-Home Ideas,” *Library Journal*, April 23, 2020, <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=Library-Archives-Workers-Share-Work-From-Home-Ideas>.
- <sup>24</sup> We use the term “accomplice” instead of “ally” as “ally” is often used in the performative sense—someone saying “I support you,” instead of doing the work in creating an inclusive work environment. As stated in “Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex. An Indigenous Perspective,” “Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don’t just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling. . . . As accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other.” Indigenous Action Media, “Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex. An Indigenous Perspective,” accessed August 31, 2021, <https://www.indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/Accomplices-Not-Allies-print.pdf>, p. 8.
- <sup>25</sup> Angela M. Parcesepe and Leopoldo J. Cabassa, “Public Stigma of Mental Illness in the United States: A Systematic Literature Review,” *Administration and Policy in Mental Health* 40, no. 5 (2013): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-012-0430-z>.
- <sup>26</sup> Jeffery Scott Mio and Laurie A. Roades, “Building Bridges in the 21st Century: Allies and the Power of Human Connection across Demographic Divides,” in *Culturally Diverse Mental Health: The Challenges of Research and Resistance*, ed. Jeffery Scott Mio and Gayle Iwamasa (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 117.
- <sup>27</sup> Vilissa Thompson, “What Is the Role of Allies? The Macro Social Work Approach to Understanding Disability and Online Disability Advocacy,” *New Social Worker* (Spring 2017).
- <sup>28</sup> Karen A. Myers, Jaci Jenkins Lindburg, and Danielle M. Nied, “Increasing Awareness: Allies, Advocacy, and the Campus Community,” *Allies for Inclusion: Disability and Equity in Higher Education*, ASHE Higher Education Report, 39, no. 5 (December 2013): 72 (emphasis in original).
- <sup>29</sup> Isaac E. Sabat, Larry R. Martinez, and Jennifer L. Wessel, “Neo-Activism: Engaging Allies in Modern Workplace Discrimination Reduction,” *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 6, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 483.
- <sup>30</sup> Sabat et al. cite that listening to coworkers about their work situations helps improve the experience of targets of discrimination. Sabat et al, “Neo-activism,” 483.
- <sup>31</sup> Sabat et al, “Neo-activism,” 483.
- <sup>32</sup> Helen Uusberg, Jüri Allik, and Jari K Hietanen, “Eye contact reveals a relationship between Neuroticism and anterior EEG asymmetry,” *Neuropsychologia* 73 (July 2015): 161-8.

- <sup>33</sup> Lena M. Forsell and Jan A. Åström, “Meanings of Hugging: From Greeting Behavior to Touching Implications,” *Comprehensive Psychology* (January 2012).
- <sup>34</sup> JJ Pionke’s article “The Impact of Disbelief: On Being a Library Employee with a Disability,” mentions that “passing” as an able-bodied librarian caused more PTSD symptoms and sick days, than if they had been accommodated and accepted from the beginning. JJ Pionke, “The Impact of Disbelief: On Being a Library Employee,” *Library Trends* 67, no. 3 (Winter 2019), 428.
- <sup>35</sup> Isaac E. Sabat et al., “Invisible Disabilities: Unique Strategies for Workplace Allies,” *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 262.
- <sup>36</sup> Anecdotal, for the University of South Carolina University Libraries, the switch to online meetings has increased these automatic accommodations as technology on Zoom and Microsoft Teams allows real-time captioning and employers use these features regardless of if someone has asked for the accommodation previously.
- <sup>37</sup> Kelly Pate Dwyer, “Handling the Office Bully,” *Momentum* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 50.
- <sup>38</sup> Alecia M. Santuzzi et al., “Identity Management Strategies for Workers with Concealable Disabilities: Antecedents and Consequences,” *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 3 (September 2019): 848, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12320>.
- <sup>39</sup> Elaine M. Beretz, “Hidden Disability and an Academic Career,” *Academe*, 89, no. 4 (July/August 2003).
- <sup>40</sup> Sabat et al., “Invisible Disabilities,” 263.
- <sup>41</sup> For a more complete list of ableist language to avoid, see Lydia X.Z. Brown, “Ableism/Language,” Autistic Hoya, last updated June 20, 2020, <https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html>.
- <sup>42</sup> Sabat et al., “Invisible Disabilities,” 263.
- <sup>43</sup> Stacy A. Hickox and Keenan Case, “Risking Stigmatization to Gain Accommodation,” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Business Law* 22, no. 3 (April 2020): 541, 548.
- <sup>44</sup> Northwest ADA Center, “Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace,” ADA National Network, 2018, <https://adata.org/factsheet/reasonable-accommodations-workplace>.
- <sup>45</sup> Randy P. Auerbach et al., “WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and Distribution of Mental Disorders,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 127, no. 7 (October 2018): 623–38, <https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000362>.
- <sup>46</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Disability Discrimination,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>.

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