

LIVING WITH DISABILITY RESEARCH CENTRE

2023 RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

13 September

Libraries as places of belonging and exclusion for people with intellectual disabilities

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Presentation for La Trobe University Research Seminar 13 September 2023

Thinking with place

- Reflect on these two propositions:
 - How can we make La Trobe University more inclusive of people with disabilities?
 - How can we make Bundoora campus more inclusive of people with disabilities?

Presentation outline

PART 1: Conceptualising inclusion and place

- Inclusion and belonging
- The elements of place

PART 2: Public libraries as spaces of belonging and exclusion

- Outline of 'Disability Inclusive Cities' study
- Public libraries in Australia as urban spaces of inclusion and exclusion

Part 1:
Conceptualising inclusion and place

Theory!



What is inclusion?

- The inclusion agenda from the 1990s – redefining the problem and solutions of social (and disability) policy
- Critiques of inclusion, and its alternative: belonging



DISABILITY INCLUSION **STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

(2022 - 2027)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Action Plan 2021-2025



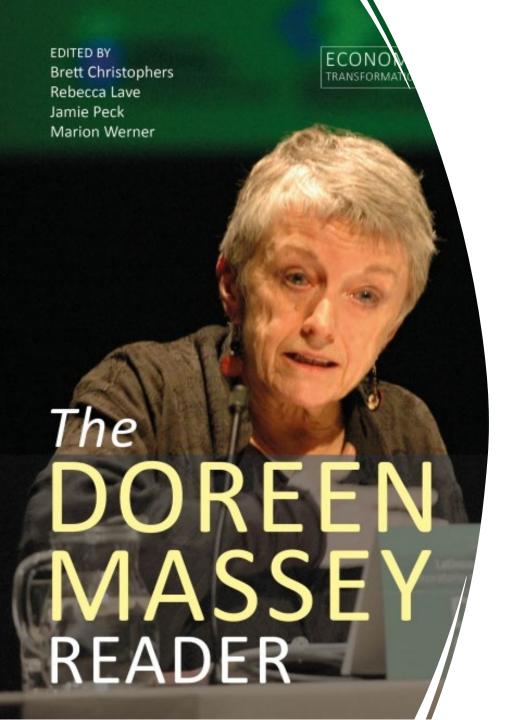


Inclusion in place, exclusion from place

'In place' or 'out of place' –
 everyday exclusion as the
 experience of being 'out of place'

 'shut in' institutional, specialist places /'shut out' of mainstream places

SOCIAL INCLUSION Having meaningful relationships with family and friends; Feeling valued, welcome in interactions with others, including strangers: INCLUSION POLITICAL INCLUSION ECONOMIC INCLUSION Having options to participate in paid Being able to influence decisions or voluntary work and contribute as a affecting your life, for example by voting productive member of society; in elections or participating in civil and political activities; Having choices as a valued consumer of goods and services;



What is 'place'?

- A space imbued in meaning and attachment
- Different scales from body or restrooms (Broyer, 2020) to libraries and cities
- Not a bounded area, but a "particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey, 1991, p. 28)
- A 'throwntogetherness'

The elements of place

Materialities

Atmospheres

Attachments

Norms

Encounters and solidarities

Institutions

Geometries of power

Materialities

The materialities of place influence functional capacities

Sustain social relations

Project norms



Atmospheres

- The 'mood' of a place
- Material and immaterial
- Certain atmospheres inviting for some, but deter or alienate others
- A shared sense of atmosphere a form of connection (Sumartojo, 2020)



Attachments

- Emotional attachments to places, by individuals and collectives
- A sense of belonging-in-place or ownership-of-place; feeling 'at home'
- Memories



Norms

- Places reflect and reproduce wider societal norms (such as ableism)
- Different places can have unique, localised place-based norms
- When people fail to comply with norms they are marked as 'out of place'



https://www.flickr.com/photos/photopaname/36187990383

Encounters and solidarities

- Throwntogetherness of people in place
- Fleeting encounters with strangers moments of conviviality (Wiesel and Bigby, 2014)
- Ongoing relations in place e.g. neighbours – opportunities for placebased solidarities (Samararatne and Soldatic, 2015)



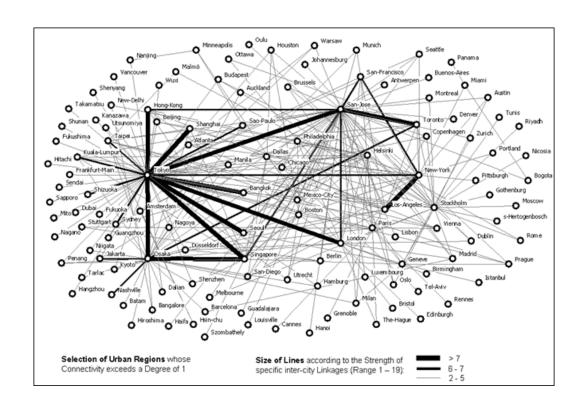
Institutions

- Places are shaped through the interaction of social, economic, cultural, legal, administrative and bureaucratic institutions.
- Mainstream, specialist and hybrid organisations
- State, private and civic organisations



Geometries of power

- Places are situated differently in relation to global flows and networks
- Global flows of disability policy ideas shape local contexts differently
- Differentiated experiences of belonging, inclusion and exclusion within/from transnational collectives



From theory to empirics

How do the different elements of place – materialities, atmospheres, attachments, norms, encounters and solidarities, institutions, power geometries – come together to generate inclusion or exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities within/from specific places?

Part 2: Public libraries

Libraries in disability studies and geography

Access Is Not Problem Solving: Disability Justice and Libraries

ALANA KUMBIER AND JULIA STARKEY

Perceptions of Public Library Accessibility for People with Disabilities

Susan K. Burke

Pages 43-54 | Published online: 14 Jan 2009

66 Download citation

□ https://doi.org/10.1080/02763870802546381

Peer reviewed research-in practice

It's All in the Plan: A Document Analysis of Victorian Council and Public Library Disability Access and Inclusion Plans

Rebecca Muir **№ (0)** & Mary Carroll **(0)** Pages 102-115 | Published online: 01 Mar 2020

The role of the internet for people with disabilities: issues of access and equity for public libraries

Kirsty Williamson, Don Schauder, Louise Stockfield, Steve Wright & Amanda Bow Pages 157-174 | Received 01 Nov 2000, Published online: 28 Oct 2013 Geographies of the public library: Institutions, architectures, interactions

Salene Schloffel-Armstrong X, Tom Baker, Robin A. Kearns

First published: 26 August 2021 | https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12592

The public library and the futures of social infrastructure

Salene Schloffel-Armstrong D 🖾 View all authors and affiliations

OnlineFirst https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206231177065

The Disability Inclusive City study

Interviews with 40 people with intellectual disability in Sydney, Melbourne, Geelong and Newcastle

Interviews with 49 mainstream service providers in housing, health, transport, sports and community services

Reference group composed by 4 self-advocates with intellectual disability

Research team: Ilan Wiesel, Christine Bigby, Brendan Gleeson, and Ellen van Holstein

Funded by the Australian Research Council

The 21st century public library

• "There is still a perception ...that libraries are dying, when in fact they're busier than ever." (Librarian, Melbourne)



Would you believe there are more libraries than Starbucks or McDonald's?

New leader of a USC Marshall master's program says public libraries are alive and well in today's fast-paced society



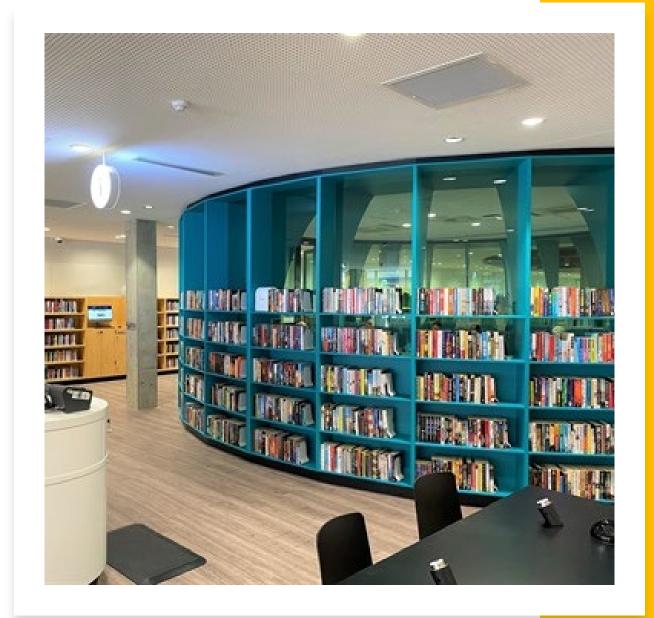
Public libraries and people with intellectual disabilities

"Now in terms of people with an intellectual disability... there does seem to have been an increase in recent years." (Librarian, Melbourne)



Place for a 'lovely day'

"The library here is very good....That's a lovely day....You meet the lovely people there....Oh yeah, nice people wait inside there....You go in there, you read books, or you go on the computer, or anything like that....They help you out." (Darcy, Melbourne)



A place to connect with the world

Jack: [I go to the library] every now and then so I can look at stuff to see what's new.

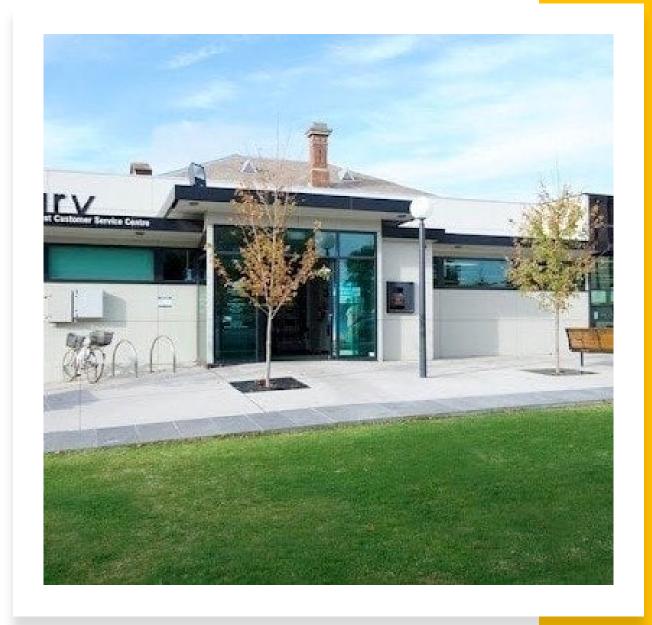
Miriam: I have to look at a newspaper....Yeah, all kinds of stuff to do with current affairs. .. What's going on in the world.



A place that gets you out of the house

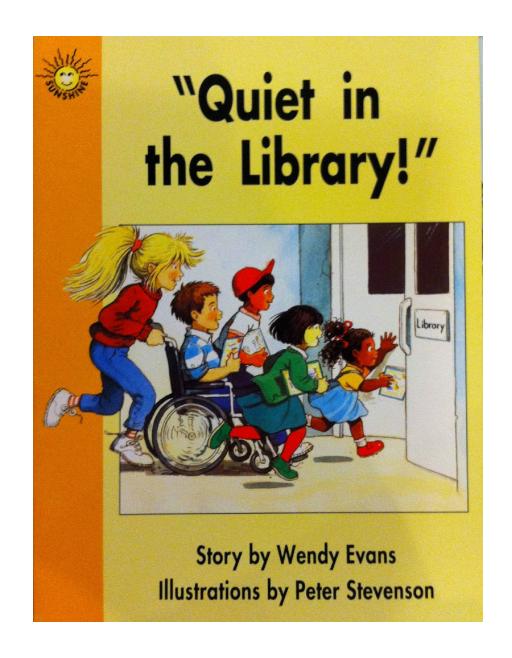
Facilitator: Which library do you go to? Which one is your favourite?

Rose: One that gets me out of the house.



A quiet place

"If they're shouting, then we would come up and say we need to keep this down, we'll negotiate with the carer. The worst-case scenario is when we have to ask them to leave." (Librarian, Geelong)





A quiet place

Ella: The library has more space.... You get a lot more space you need to do some quiet work.

A place of attachment

- Moving library to a new building to improve accessibility and separate quiet and noisy activities
- Loss of memories and attachments
- New modern building can be 'intimidating'



A place for sharing

Fines for late book return removed from many libraries

Improving affordability and comfort for some people with intellectual disabilities

Will the library manage to maintain a culture of sharing?

National Victoria City life

This was published 3 years ago

Libraries start new chapter by ditching fines for late returns

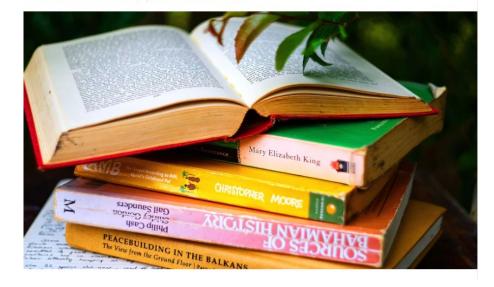
Robyn Grace and Broede Carmody



Canberra pardons \$1.86 million worth of outstanding library fines, abolishes late fees

By Tom Maddocks

Posted Thu 31 Oct 2019 at 9:15am, updated Fri 1 Nov 2019 at 8:12am



A place to linger

Sometimes I sit there and relax. You get away from people and sit there and read, (Ron)





A place to linger... but not for everyone

Facilitator: How long would you stay there?

Natalie: Oh not long.

Carer: So 15 minutes Sue?

Natalie: Yeah.

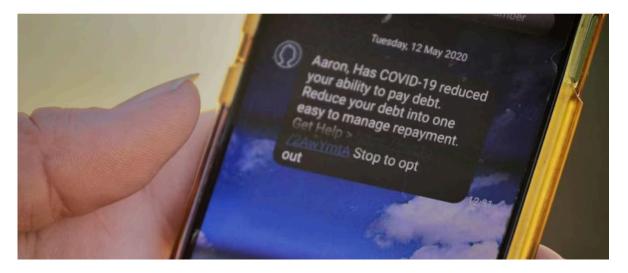
A contact zone for diverse institutions

"I have had a gentleman with an intellectual disability who wanted me to apply for one of those payday loans for him and got quite agitated when I didn't want to...What do I do in this situation? This person's obviously not capable of understanding what he's committing t" (Librarian, Melbourne)

Concerns over payday lenders offering coronavirus relief loans

7.30 / Peter McCutcheon

Posted Thu 21 May 2020 at 5:44pm



A place for encounter

The library itself, and most activities in it are open to all – creating a space for encounter across difference



A place for encounter

[During] children's story time.... the person with the intellectual disability will probably enjoy listening to the story, the child probably won't even notice it, but the parents tend to go oh, what's happening here? ...We have enough trouble with adult men sitting in the children's area as it is. (Librarian, Geelong)



Conclusion (1): The library as a place of belonging and inclusion

- The new generation public library is a more inclusive place for many people with intellectual disabilities – but still not all
- Library materialities, atmospheres, norms, institutions, encounters, attachments – all play a role
- For people with disability and allies, one challenge is to identify and utilise existing inclusive places, such as libraries, and to create new ones.
- The transformation libraries have gone through in recent decades is an inspiration to move beyond marginal 'adjustments' to more radical reimagining what different 'mainstream' places in the city might become

Thank you!

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