

**Lidia Kulikovski: *Library Services for People with Special Needs*
(Textbook for Librarians)**

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An exceptional book deserves some introductory words about its author. Dr Lidia Kulikovski, born in the village Nicoreni, Drochia (Republic of Moldova) in 1951 is the Director General of the “Bogdan Petriceicu-Haşdeu” Public Library, the Associate Professor of the Department of Librarianship and Informational Assistance from the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences. During her 33 years of professional activity she published over 200 scientific articles, numerous bibliographies and monographs out of which we should like to mention: *Cartea, modul nostru de a dăinui: contribuții la dezvoltarea domeniului biblioteconomic* (Books, Our Way of Life: Contributions to the Development of Librarianship); *Servicii de bibliotecă pentru persoanele dezavantajate: istoric, prezent, tendințe* (Library Services for People with Special Needs: History, Present, Tendencies); *Monografii bibliografice Iurie Colesnic: bibliografie* (Iurie Colesnic Bibliographic Monographs: A Bibliography); *Mihai Cimpoi: bibliografie* (Mihai Cimpoi: A Bibliography). At the present time she is the Chief-Editor of *BiblioPolis*, a librarianship and information sciences periodical, and a member of the Editorial Board of the publication *Symposia*.

The book we are going to speak about has an accessible structure, having eleven chapters each one beginning with a motto intended to render the reader sensitive and ending in a practical activity for the consolidation of the knowledge. The volume is based on the information gathered while elaborating the study *Servicii de bibliotecă pentru persoanele dezavantajate*, the main theme being the access of people with special needs to the library.

In the first chapter the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion are defined, and library activities are identified meant to ensure social inclusion. In the second chapter entitled *Social groups: characteristics, statistics, tendencies* the author characterizes and identifies the following types of deficiencies, underlining how important is to be familiar with the

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terminology and the specificity of each disability: sensorial deficiencies (such as visual disability, hearing deficiency), locomotor disorders (arthritis, paralysis, ankylosis, malformations etc.), mental deficiencies (including intellectual disability, linguistic disability, behavioural disability), multiple or associated disabilities (persons with multiple deficiencies, blind-deaf-mute etc.). Elderly people, persons deprived of their freedom, cultural and linguistic minorities are also included in the category of disadvantaged persons. Being familiar with the types and specificities of each disability helps the librarian to organize the activities with disadvantaged persons correctly, to offer special services in conformity with the needs of each group.

The problem of architectural accessibility is discussed in the third chapter of the book, where the author attempts to systematize the requirements the libraries have to meet in order to comply with the access necessities of the different groups of disadvantaged people. In order to ensure accessibility the libraries have to take into consideration international legislation, disabled people's needs and they have to consult the organisations of these groups when they carry out renovation, construction and extension plans.

In the chapter entitled *Accessible collections and formats* the specific problems related to the development of an accessible library collection are analyzed. The collections of an accessible library have to comply with the information needs of different user categories and have also to contain, besides the traditional documents, "alternative formats" (accessible formats) such as: audio tapes, CD-ROMs, telephone based informational services, Braille books, electronic formats, books printed in large type, speaking books, tactile books etc.

The author surveys some "inclusion principles" a library collection has to comply with. The library collection must represent disabled persons clearly and without stereotypes, the information referring to disabilities, services and the rights of disadvantaged people must be actual, accurate, correct, without prejudices and stereotypes.

Chapter five entitled *Inclusive informational society: disabled people's informational and communicative technologies* analyzes the way in which technology influences the relationship between the library and people with special needs. Computerization produces a series of mutations in libraries, the services offered to disadvantaged people improve and become diversified. Technological achievements have changed everything for disadvantaged people, as they may help to overcome the disadvantages by removing technological barriers. These

days there is a wide range of machines facilitating the use of library resources (varied depending on the particularities of the disability), including: modified typewriters and computer keyboards, stations controlled by voice, modified telephones etc.

The longest chapter of the book (chapter six) discusses library services. To ensure accessible services one must be familiar – besides the users' information necessities – with the barriers of studying and reading which the disability causes. Usual library services must be extended depending on the disabled peoples' needs and interests by including some new services such as: home services, services to the place of institutionalisation, multicultural services, special reading equipment for people with physical or sensorial disabilities, special materials for people with difficulties, electronic communication services.

All these services can be really accessible to disadvantaged people only if the five service principles are respected. According to these principles services must be orientated towards the beneficiary; they must be socially inclusive; they must be useful, efficient and always at the users' disposal. A service is efficient if it is physically and intellectually accessible. In the evaluation of library programs and services, disadvantaged users should also be involved in addition the library personnel. Special attention is given to elderly people as well. They constitute a highly varied group from the point of view of education, profession, ethnicity, disabilities. In the library collections there must be materials referring to the special interests of elderly people too (information on health, medicine, special legislation, information on organizations and foundations which help these people to find a job). Libraries also organize programmes for promoting minority cultures, for supporting cultural diversity and the accessibility of the different cultures; they support cohesion by varied actions, policies and programmes.

People in prison also belong to the category of disadvantaged people who are the beneficiaries of some library services. In prisons the library helps in offering educational, recreational and rehabilitation programmes. The diversity, extent and level of library services for people in prison must be based on their demographical, social and educational profile.

Libraries offer programmes and services to disadvantaged children too, these programmes being based on the principle of inclusion, which means the possible adaptation of all the library programmes and services so as the children can participate in the programmes they like.

The author enumerates some programmes for children: Story-telling hour, Homework, Summer clubs. Other activities with children in difficult situations are the reading camps. In the activity with disadvantaged people bibliotherapy, melotherapy, the therapy of graphic and plastic expression, ludotherapy can also be applied. This chapter is a real guide in the interaction with disadvantaged people; it instructs us how to deal with different categories of disabled persons.

The chapter entitled *Management* points out the central role of management in rendering some library services for disadvantaged people. Inclusive management ensures the institutional, structural and political supporting frame for inclusion in library.

The next chapter of the book focuses on marketing issues: *The marketing of informational services for disadvantaged people*. Marketing is a part of the library policy regarding disadvantaged people and has as its aim the inclusion of excluded people, being the instrument which reunites the techniques employed to attract disadvantaged persons by promoting the library services and programmes. Working with disadvantaged people requires the "accessible instruction" of librarians. In the course of the instruction programmes the importance of the services offered to this segment of the population must be stressed in order to avoid the stereotypical attitude towards disadvantaged people.

In the penultimate chapter, *With small means... and little time* the author offers some practical suggestions for the improvement of access for disabled people, taking into consideration the different categories of disability. The book ends with a chapter of appendices, which contains an ALA guide and a list with the organizations of disadvantaged people.

Having as its aim the complex presentation and analysis of disadvantaged people's accessibility to libraries, this book is addressed to students and librarians, constituting an excellent support in their professional preparation and improvement.