

How do Autistic students experience a university library?

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Phd Candidate – Topic - East meets West in the University library : cross cultural phenomenological study

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Aim of my presentation

- To raise awareness of Autistic student experiences in a University Library : the good, the bad and the opportunities



Invisible Disability
often has this
reaction.... "You
don't look Autistic"

Late diagnosis, Autistic PhD student

Director of Library & Learning Skills at Melb Pol

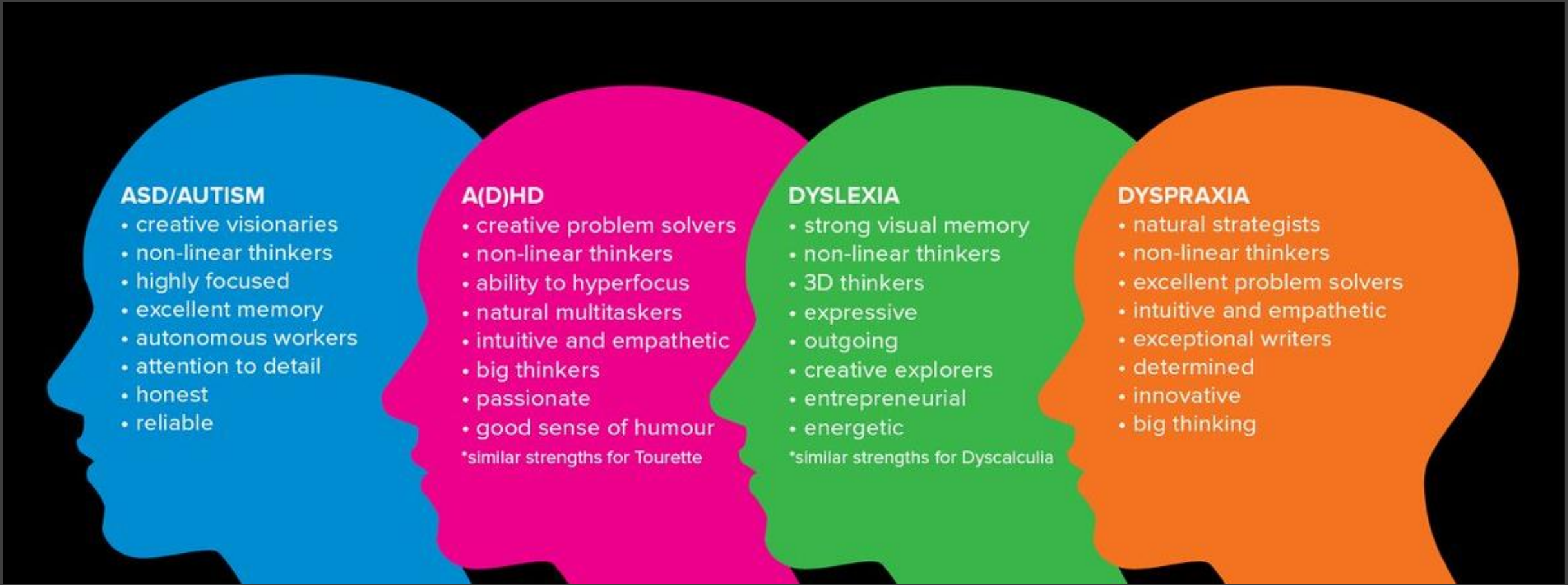
Mother, wife and cat wrangler

Traveller, worked & lived in Vietnam for 3.5 years

2nd Soprano



Ambidextrous



ASD/AUTISM

- creative visionaries
- non-linear thinkers
- highly focused
- excellent memory
- autonomous workers
- attention to detail
- honest
- reliable

A(D)HD

- creative problem solvers
- non-linear thinkers
- ability to hyperfocus
- natural multitaskers
- intuitive and empathetic
- big thinkers
- passionate
- good sense of humour
- *similar strengths for Tourette

DYSLEXIA

- strong visual memory
- non-linear thinkers
- 3D thinkers
- expressive
- outgoing
- creative explorers
- entrepreneurial
- energetic
- *similar strengths for Dyscalculia

DYSPRAXIA

- natural strategists
- non-linear thinkers
- excellent problem solvers
- intuitive and empathetic
- exceptional writers
- determined
- innovative
- big thinking

My Autistic strengths – vary from Autist to Autist

- Enthusiastic learner and library client
- See patterns, correlations easily
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Creativity

Positive experiences



Libraries have always been my sensory calm space, since childhood



Librarians in person are very patient and kind



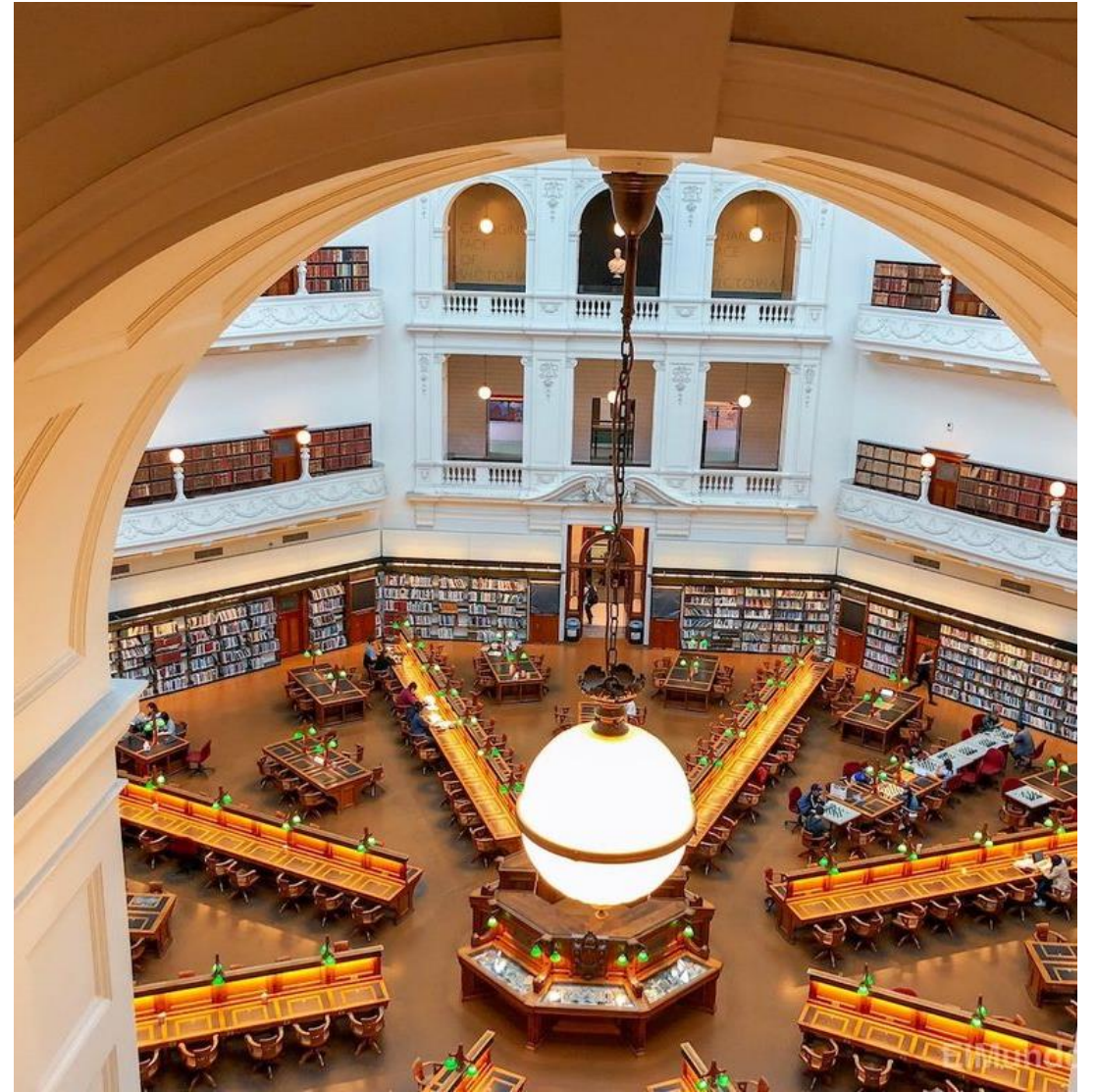
Lots of collections to choose from to teach myself stuff



Book delivery changed my life for the better



Libraries are space that I feel connected to the world via books



Autistic challenges

Anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders – can lead to losing the ability to speak

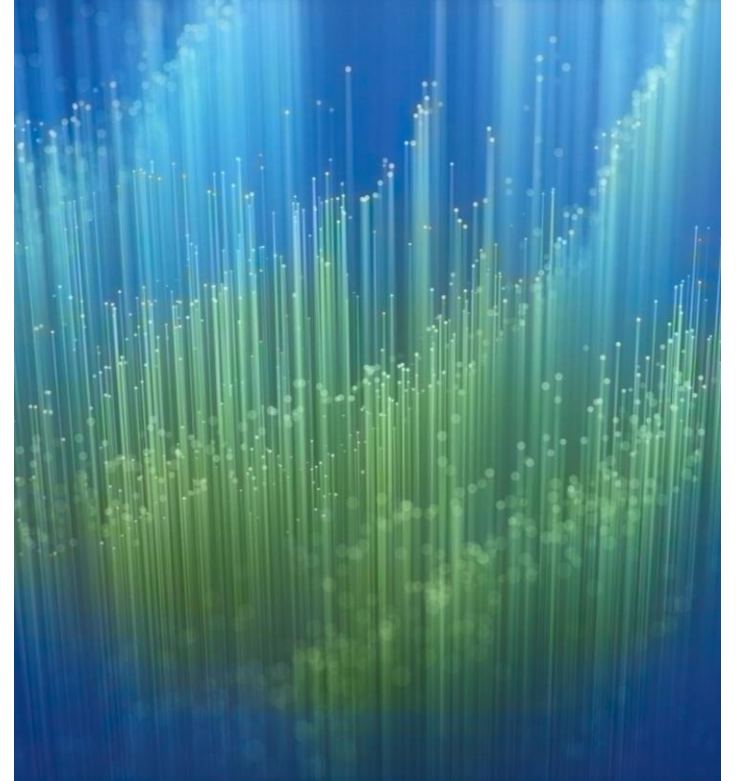
Communication challenges – lost in translation, hate phones

Difficulties with emotional regulation – snap at inanimate objects, like printers!

Executive functioning problems – filling out forms & ethics applications

Sensory processing issues – light, sound and scent sensitive

Social awkwardness – not sure how to engage, feel like a foreigner in my own country



Negative library experiences

- Where are the Librarians? Looking for in person help at PhD level.
- Signage not clear for collections – where am I?
- Equitable Learning linkage - You have been notified of my disability, but I keep having to let you know.
- No sensory study space or special opening hours.
- Please don't make me fill out forms and wait for an answer at some time in the future.
- Stopping the book delivery service without rhyme or a reason.
- Asking for my feedback mechanism is a barrier to my feedback.

Opportunities

**NOTHING ABOUT US
WITHOUT US.**

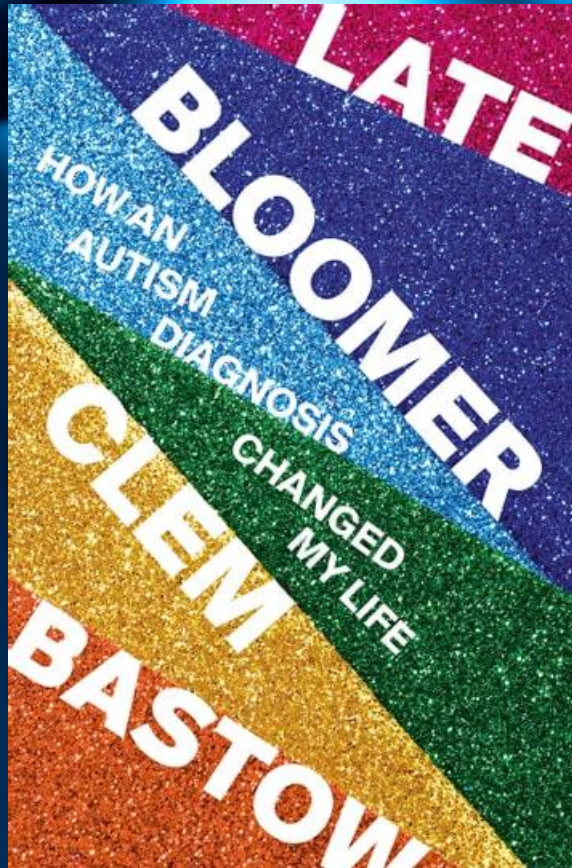


Autistic students are passionate about libraries – can be your advocate

Employ Autistic students, and other humans with disability

Professional development of Library staff in disability, from people with a disability

Co-design, evaluate services with us in new ways



Key resources for Autistic Women

Following the social media accounts of Autistic women – Grace Tame, Hannah Gatsby, Professor Sandra Jones, ACU

AMAZE _ includes a helpline, resources
<https://www.amaze.org.au/>

Tony Attwood & Michelle Garrett – Psychologist's specialising in female Autism - <https://attwoodandgarnettevents.com/about/>

Clem Bastow, Phd Candidate, RMIT – new book "Late Bloomer"