

## Library Public Service Practices to Support the Multidisciplinary Care Team for the Dementia Community\*

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### Book Review

Authored by Timothy J. Dickey (2020), the book *Library Dementia Services: How to Meet the Needs of the Alzheimer's Community* provides an informational guide to dementia care resources. Emerald Publishing released the first edition in February 2020. The book can be purchased from distributors for \$59 in paperback and \$45 in electronic formats. In his book, Dickey explores concepts associated with dementia care and information resources that librarians and caregivers may reference when supporting persons with dementia. The author aims to aid the more than 55 million people globally living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias with library public service practices to support the dementia community of patients, families, caregivers, and clinicians.

Dickey focuses mostly on social activities and interpersonal interventions for dementia care, and mentions advice from some celebrity doctors, but does not venture into the realm of more technical diagnostic and therapeutic medical sciences. Nevertheless, the book's content references information resources to educate the intended audience of librarians about promoting social interaction, echoing the widely held belief that patients need multiple different levels of care to fit their individual condition and situation. While Dickey addresses primarily Alzheimer's disease, he also discusses the diverse range of progressive stages of decline from early initial symptoms to later dysfunction and incapacitation common to the dementias. Statistics are presented and discussed in order to support his descriptions that cover the range of severity for cases of dementia. Dickey encourages the librarian readers of his book to assume the responsibility of improving available resources and public library services for the dementia community.

Dickey works as an adult services librarian at the Columbus Metropolitan Libraries. His previous publications have appeared in a number of journals, including the *ASIS&T Bulletin*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, and *Plain Song and Medieval Music*, and have been featured in presentations at the ALA Annual Conference, the Charleston Conference, and the University of Wisconsin Library History Seminar, among other conferences. To write this book, he received inspiration from an array of colleagues and friends who share diverse first-hand stories about dementia, which coalesce together as a general theme in his book. He recognized the need for resources to help librarians interested in providing customer services and programming to support the dementia community including both patients and their caregivers. This informational guide has been written with chapters covering the history

of dementia, the role of communication in the dementia community, the importance of making health information accessible, and library practices and programs.

Each topic is introduced and explained to reinforce Dickey's advocacy in multiple ways to enable better understanding and appreciation by the readers. The text has been organized well with a clear structure that helps readers learn more about supporting the dementia community. Dickey reaches a larger audience with a style of writing not overwhelmed with technicalities in order to assure a wider understanding for layperson audiences of how caretakers and communities may best aid dementia patients. The book adopts an approach that follows a persuasive writing pattern: claims supported by evidence with commentary to reinforce those concepts. Because each chapter ends with a review of the ideas presented in brief summaries, the steps recommended for librarians can also be appreciated readily by laypersons. Dickey emphasizes the importance of libraries as resource centers for information on caring for dementia patients and the potential benefits possible when implementing recommended best practices. The book provides readers with an understanding of ethical approaches for caregivers to maintain practices for optimal care and well-being of dementia patients as much as possible despite the progressive decline of patients with incurable dementias.

Dickey agrees with the consensus that pharmaceuticals have been essentially ineffective. He argues that librarians should focus on providing the dementia community with helpful social stimulation and interaction services. To support his argument for a focus on the social aspects of combating the dementias, Dickey provides an extensive array of information resources for caregivers to become more knowledgeable, thoughtful, and compassionate when prioritizing this social stimulation and interaction. Dickey advocates for social activities in the dementia community through places and programs (Memory Cafes, Tales & Travel Memories, etc.), which have been demonstrated to enhance the patients' cognitive stimulation, thereby ideally promoting neuroplasticity, enhancing support for as much brain health as possible, and slowing the cognitive decline of patients with dementia.

Caregivers' health may also be impacted by their service when caring for dementia patients. Statistics reveal that they are at a higher risk of developing stress anxiety and depression, leading to heart disease and substance abuse. Because caregivers are the persons who ensure the well-being of their loved ones or patients, librarians who share information resources with these caregivers must remember to acknowledge their efforts and show compassion for them as well. To empower librarians, Dickey summarizes his overall assertion in support of the use of cognitive and social stimulation in the hopes of alleviating and slowing

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Table 1: Comparison of Dementia Care Guides

|                                 | McDaniel 2022 | Snow 2018 | Samadani 2022 | Dickey 2020 | Rabins et al. 2016 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Cost                            | \$9.99        | \$25.00   | \$34.95       | \$58.99     | \$72.00            |
| Audience                        | Families      | Families  | Caregivers    | Librarians  | Professionals      |
| Page Count                      | 126           | 112       | 380           | 208         | 304                |
| Books cited                     | 8             | 0         | 5             | 132         | 2                  |
| Dissertations cited             | 2             | 0         | 0             | 0           | 0                  |
| Government reports cited        | 0             | 0         | 1             | 0           | 0                  |
| Magazine articles cited         | 10            | 0         | 2             | 47          | 0                  |
| Newsletters cited               | 0             | 0         | 1             | 17          | 0                  |
| Organizations cited             | 0             | 0         | 0             | 44          | 1                  |
| Primary research articles cited | 12            | 0         | 20            | 54          | 40                 |
| Removed articles cited          | 0             | 0         | 0             | 2           | 0                  |
| Scholarly review articles cited | 15            | 0         | 39            | 36          | 14                 |
| Scientific posters cited        | 0             | 0         | 1             | 0           | 0                  |
| Videos cited                    | 0             | 0         | 0             | 2           | 0                  |

the progression of dementia with the phrase “lifelong learning, mental stimulation, and social connections” (Dickey 2020). Despite the important benefits of this idealistic approach with hope and optimism, the accompanying risks associated with the phrase “lifelong learning” (ibid.) must also be considered if and when it sets unattainable and unrealistic goals for those dementia patients in situations for which it contributes to a frustrating path toward anxiety and anger — which unfortunately may then lead to actual physical violence. Therefore, use of the phrase “lifelong learning” may apply to librarians and caregivers but not necessarily to dementia patients. An alternative phrase such as “lifelong engagement” or “lifelong activities” may be more appropriate for dementia patients without incurring the risk of creating unhelpful or misleading expectations. Instead, with these alternative phrases that focus on enjoying and engaging in the present moment the experience of interpersonal connections and social interactions together with other people in activities such as art, music, or simple physical movement and exercise, then hopefully the benefits without the risks can be communicated, shared, and encouraged by caregivers for patients.

Reviewing other books related to Dickey’s *Library Dementia Services* for comparison, the book *Dementia Guide: Practical Ways For Caregivers To Overcome Stress During The Three Stages Of Dementia* by Atwater McDaniel, written in August 2022, expresses similar themes and may be purchased for \$10 (McDaniel 2022). This book provides guidance on helping persons with dementing disorders and how these behavioral conditions can best be managed. While McDaniel’s *Dementia Guide* and Dickey’s *Library Dementia Services* both include practical advice on caring for dementia patients, they target different caretaker audiences. Whereas *Dementia Guide* orients its content towards family members and a more general audience, *Library Dementia Services* addresses and advises librarians and library staff. Specifically, *Library Dementia Services* includes information and tips for libraries that can be used to assist dementia patients and their caregivers through library programs, physical collections, media and materials for social activities.

Another affordable book priced at \$25 is the *Dementia Caregiver Guide* (Snow 2018). Authored by Teepa Snow, an occupational therapist with 40 years of clinical practice, the book highlights the “GEMS State Model” approach and method by which caregivers are advised to view and treat each dementia patient as moving through different states with conditions given gemstone names and associated with vary-

ing characteristics, abilities, and behaviors. From sapphire representing normal aging to pearl representing a late stage of dementia, the book offers a description of practices for caregiving at each stage. Snow advocates for a positive approach to dementia caretaking and encourages use of the phrase “evolving abilities” instead of the phrase “lost abilities”. Both Snow’s and Dickey’s books share the similar aspect of providing basic descriptions of dementia in order to educate readers as laypersons. However, the books diverge in treatment approaches. Dickey’s book delves further into aspects of dementia as a condition, exploring programming services, consumer health information databases, and social stimulation by interacting with people. Snow focuses on the caretakers’ perspective of the patient in an effort to counter negative stigma about dementia, asserting that progressive states of brain change can be identified with a sequence of gemstone names, using this metaphor about precious gems to emphasize communication with respectful support and compassionate care. Each in their own way, both Snow and Dickey present dementia as a condition not to be feared, but rather best approached with an understanding of how to support patients through positivity with social stimulation and interpersonal interaction.

Another book that pursues similar goals in educating caregivers and providing practical steps to address the needs of dementia patients is *Dementia Care Companion: The Complete Handbook of Practical Care from Early to Late Stage* written by Mehdi Samadani at \$35 (Samadani 2022). He is “the founder of the Dardashna Project (literally, ‘one who knows pain’, an educational and advocacy project for dementia caregivers in Persian” (ibid.), and has been a caregiver for more than seventeen years. Samadani’s book serves as a “complete handbook of practical care” of dementia patients, rather than an informational guide. Both Samadani’s and Dickey’s books mention the needs of caregivers in addition to dementia patients. However, Dickey’s book not only provides guidance to aid caregivers managing patients in all stages of dementia, it also addresses the symptoms caregivers themselves may experience and provides steps for caregivers in addition to patients. Samadani’s handbook provides methods for creating specific routines and environments that support the patient, while Dickey’s guide focuses on providing a wide variety of cognitive and social stimulation methods.

At the higher price of \$72, *Practical Dementia Care* edited by Peter Rabins et al., a book with first edition originally written in 2002, offers a comprehensive guide for professionals to the care and management

of patients with dementia at each stage “from time of diagnosis to the end of life” (Rabins et al. 2016). Rabins is a geriatric psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and a Professor of Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases, who “continues to lecture, consult, and conduct research on issues relevant to older individuals with dementia”. As a comprehensive text intended for healthcare professionals, the tenth chapter of this book addresses pharmaceutical treatments for neuropsychiatric symptoms, while elsewhere the book also addresses non-pharmaceutical therapies for specific behavioral and psychological symptoms. In contrast, Dickey’s book promotes non-pharmaceutical methods of managing dementia symptoms. Though the two books both encourage approaches that emphasize social interactions over pharmaceutical interventions, *Practical Dementia Care* can be used as a reference for daily management of dementia patients, whereas *Library Dementia Services* adopts the role of informational guide intended for librarians, also available to caregivers, to learn about essential resources for best serving the dementia community.

In recognition of their important contributions to the dementia community, all of the books discussed in this comparative review have helped to make significant progress in fighting against dementia and dementing disorders with their collective efforts to educate, support, and provide the best resources possible to caregivers and their patients in the dementia community. Dickey’s *Library Dementia Services*, intended for librarians and library staff, provides a collection of informational resources for giving ethical and compassionate care to persons with dementia while encouraging this librarian audience to provide assistance to the multidisciplinary care team for the dementia community. *Library Dementia Services* serves as a useful guide for librarians, also readily accessible to caregivers and laypersons alike, to public community library services that can be helpful in assisting dementia care and supporting the dementia community.

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