

# BOOK REVIEWS

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*Included in this issue are five book reviews covering a diverse set of topics. I have solicited the assistance of members from Connecticut's Rehabilitation Engineering Center to provide their insights on the selected publications. Three of these resources are guides to give the rehabilitation professional access to current state-of-the-art technologies and information. A third review centers on the fundamentals of essential foundation information for rehabilitation personnel who assist persons with physical disabilities. A final selection is a first-person account of experiences growing up disabled. All of these resources will add greatly to your general ability to assist individuals with physical disabilities.*

## **I RAISE MY EYES TO SAY YES A Memoir**

**R. Sienkiewicz-Mercer and S.B. Kaplan**

*Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.*

Ruth Sienkiewicz-Mercer provides a first-person account of her life experiences. Ms. Sienkiewicz-Mercer has cerebral palsy and has spent the majority of her life in institutional settings. Her account is a portrayal of events that limited her ability to have many choices in her developing years. Her frustration at communication, the callousness of some care providers, and her inability to have control over daily events had tremendous impact on her day-to-day living. Most readers who are professionals in rehabilitation may find themselves comparing the events that surrounded their own lives and the lives of persons for whom they have provided assistance, in the historical context of Ruth's experiences. The question arises, "How many other untold stories do individuals have to relate?" Although Ruth provides experiences from her perspective, parts of her story are woven within the nightmares, daydreams, and realities of countless other persons who experienced an institutional existence.

### **General highlights**

- The reader shares in the struggles for survival as Ruth strives to maintain her sanity under conditions as adverse as one may encounter in a prison or internment camp.
- The coauthors relate the process by which the book is written. Steve Kaplan obtained key words and phrases from Ruth. As he added words and context to these phrases, she would signify her agreement by raising her eyes to say yes. It is emphasized that Steve is talking on behalf of Ruth but that the subtleties of the paragraphs are her own.
- In light of this book and movies such as *My Left Foot*, stories of the lives of persons with disabilities are beginning to be available for helping professionals. The general message

is, "You can walk with me and provide assistance, but I want to choose and have control over my life!"

- The principal author is a skilled interpreter of events. The choice of her descriptions reminds me of some of the passages from Christopher Nolan's *Under the Eye of the Clock*.

### Specific areas of excellence

- "Nothing has been as consistently painful in my life as the departure of friends who have worked with me. Despite the best intentions, and regardless of the physical distances involved, almost every time a friend has left for another job, we have lost contact for good" (p. 176). I felt this sentence captured the up and down experiences of forming valued friendships with individuals who are paid to be with you. The grieving process occurs more frequently when attachments are developed that typically end in separation after a short period of intense interactions.
- I found the following passages to be especially insightful:

"Breakfast in bed isn't such a big treat when that's how you get every meal."

"I was the last chore on the breakfast/dressing detail."

"You soon learn that going through life playing a perpetual game of 20 questions is extremely frustrating."

"Without a doubt, my inability to speak has been the single most devastating aspect of my handicap."

"The State School used television very much as it used drugs!"

- The relationship between Ruth and her family members provides a keen insight into the struggles that occurred both internally and externally.
- Ruth's story must be heard by all. It captures the historical context of how slowly changes have occurred. In light of the recent signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I wonder how many horror stories continue to go untold, unreported, and unnoticed.

### Areas in which this publication could be improved

- Ruth wrote this book between 1976 and 1988 and the primary focus is on her first 30 years. I would appreciate a sequel that contains her speeches, writings on critical issues of current advocacy, and her perspectives on the similarities between her story and those of her colleagues.
- At first, there was a tendency on my part to be critical of the choice of words used to describe situations in her life. For example, phrases such as "confined to a wheelchair," "victim of cerebral palsy," "body of functional uselessness," "imprisoned within a useless body" bothered me. However, these are her words to describe her experiences in her life. *Her* experiences are *her* experiences, and *her* words should be *her* words.

### Common threads throughout this publication

- It takes a lot of energy to survive the impact of negative, dehumanizing conditions.
- The probability of bad things happening in institutional settings is enormous. Nobody deserves to live in institutions. The resources that are currently allocated to institutions should be reallocated for community-based supports to enable persons with disabilities to lead as independent a life-style as possible.

### Recommended usefulness for rehabilitation professionals

- I believe that each rehabilitation professional must continue to read first-person accounts of life experiences from individuals with disabilities.
- We must not lose focus that our work involves the provision of supports for assisting persons with disabilities to write chapters in their biographies that relate how they obtained their own American Dream.
- I would recommend that this book be required reading in all courses of professional development at the pre- and in-service level.

*Ernest L. Pancsofar, Ph.D.*

## REHABILITATION ENGINEERING

**R.V. Smith and J.H. Leslie, Jr.**

*Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1990.*

The rapidly growing and changing field of rehabilitation engineering can at times leave the already overburdened rehabilitation counselor feeling helpless in his or her pursuit of up-to-date information and practical solutions. This book is designed as a problem-solving tool for both the novice and the experienced professional. It will assist the rehabilitation counselor with addressing the nature of problems confronting individuals with disabilities, making educated judgments as to the technical solutions for these problems, and applying the results of experienced persons in the field to successfully solve these problems. This compilation of information by experts in the field of rehabilitation engineering focuses on the practical application of assistive technology toward improving functional capabilities and increasing opportunities for independent living for persons with disabilities.

### General highlights

- Each chapter varies in its writing style. Most of the chapters are generally easy to read.
- The information in each chapter is grouped by its technical nature (medical, evaluation, special applications, and device assessment).
- There is a list of references, some extensive, at the end of each chapter.
- Specific information is provided on the device matching and selection process.
- There is good use of pictures, charts, graphs, and illustrations to reinforce content.
- Each chapter contains a table of contents for specific reference to content areas.
- Chapters are organized in a format of general information to specific application.

### Specific areas of excellence

- This book serves as a valuable information resource. It provides a listing of vendors for

vehicle modification and driving control devices and of service organizations for independent living, recreation and leisure, and rehabilitation engineering.

- The information provided on driver assessments and vehicle modification is extensive.
- The chapter on selection of augmentative communication devices provides an invaluable listing of some of the criteria to consider when you are involved in the device selection process (e.g., portability, size, weight, overall appearance, level of sophistication).
- The chapter on seating and positioning provides a great deal of clarity on specialized seating, seating and positioning terminologies, and descriptions of seating systems.
- There is some reference to the role of rehabilitation engineering and the function of work-site modification in competitive employment. The chapter sites specific examples of adaptations to the work site that have been successfully implemented.
- The illustrations used in the chapter on seating and positioning are extremely helpful in clarifying information that is highly technical and medical in its nature.

### Areas in which this publication could be improved

- A glossary of terms would be extremely useful for both the novice and the experienced professional.
- There is very little discussion of the simple and low-cost adaptations to cover the low-technology spectrum.
- More information on funding options could be useful.

### Common threads throughout this publication

- Rehabilitation technology, when prescribed and implemented appropriately, is very effective in improving the lives of persons with disabilities.
- Rehabilitation technologies are rapidly changing and improving.

### **Recommended usefulness for rehabilitation professionals**

- This publication will be a good resource for counselors making determinations on the appropriateness of a device.
- This publication can be useful for counselors who must communicate with therapists, engineers, and vendors on a regular basis for clarification of procedures and recommendations specific to seating, positioning, sensory feedback, transportation, and communication.
- Due to the cost of this resource, I recommend viewing the book on 30-day preview.

*Rosemary Navickis  
Assistant Director of the Connecticut  
Rehabilitation Engineering Center*

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SOURCEBOOK**

**A. Enders and M. Hall, eds.**

*Washington, DC: RESNA Press, 1990.*

Rehabilitation professionals and human service providers now have an excellent information source for obtaining practical information on all aspects of assistive technology. This book is a must in all respects for anyone involved in prescribing, providing, or using assistive technology. In addition, this resource provides a solid starting point for persons who are interested in assistive technology information. The 18 chapters are organized into four major sections:

- Identifying current resources
- Matching technology to individual needs
- Specifying areas of technology support
- Ensuring that technology needs are met

Contributions from a diverse group of professionals (all experts and leaders in their respective fields) cover search strategies, information resources, assessment, equipment evaluation, follow-through, safety, personal care/home, education/children, employment, recreation/leisure, technology, mobility, communication control, computer access, clinical/treat-

ment, systems/policy, service delivery, and audiovisual resources. Each section covers the state-of-the-art and emerging trends and also identifies resources and selected publications pertinent to each area.

### **General highlights**

- A well-developed table of contents makes this book easy to use as a quick reference guide.
- Extensive information can be found on assistive technology resources in terms of products, programs, and organizations.
- There is a clear identification of databases, information centers, clearinghouses, and computer networks dealing with assistive technology.
- An entire chapter is devoted to informal resources.
- An easy-to-follow discussion begins each chapter and presents state-of-the-art information on the chapter's specific topic.
- Each chapter identifies additional resources and selected publications.

### **Specific areas of excellence**

- The first chapter provides the reader with strategies that can be used when looking for information.
- Chapter 2 is a wealth of information on resources available for rehabilitation and assistive technology and is extremely helpful in clarifying information that is highly technical and medical in nature.

### **Areas in which this publication could be improved**

- While the book has an excellent subject index, it is difficult to identify programs.
- The four major sections are not identified for easy reference.

### **Common threads throughout this publication**

- The publication is devoted to locating information on assistive technology, programs, and resources.

### **Recommended usefulness for rehabilitation professionals**

- Each rehabilitation agency in the country should have a copy of this book in its resource room.
- Individuals involved in recommending or providing assistive technology should have a copy of this book in their own resource files.
- Every information and referral service should have a copy of this book available for their information specialists.

*Ricardo Cerna  
Director of the Connecticut  
Rehabilitation Engineering Center*

### **FINANCING ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY A Guide to Sources and Strategies for Blind and Visually Impaired Users**

**S.B. Mendelsohn**

*New York: Smiling Interface, 1987.*

This book provides a comprehensive appraisal of available technology-funding options and strategies for persons with blindness and visual impairment. Although written in May 1987, the book possesses much currency for the consumer seeking to purchase or fund technology. This timely guide is written to provide an organizing framework describing third-party funding sources and self-funding strategies. Using extensive and detailed descriptions of consumer experiences in seeking technology, the author promotes the idea that greater numbers of resources exist to fund technology than are commonly thought and that access is possible with self-advocacy, forethought, and planning.

The series of applications portrayed in the guide depict not only the range of funding options now available but also proactive strategies that can assure successful acquisition of technology. As such, the guide can provide an informative resource between the Scylla of limited financial circumstances faced by the av-

erage consumer and the Charybdis of fiscal constraint characterizing most available funding for technology.

### **General highlights**

- The guide is written in simple, nontechnical language.
- The importance and benefit of the consumer as a knowledgeable self-advocate are continually stressed.
- The guide provides detailed overviews of most major financing options potentially available to blind and visually impaired users and includes descriptions of the following:

Other programs of state blindness agencies  
The Social Security Administration  
Tax code  
The education system  
Miscellaneous sources and special situations  
What agencies can do

- The guide explains the relevance and operation of each of the major funding resources for technology, analyzes the issues that will arise for the average consumer seeking to use them, and attempts to alert the visually impaired user of technology to the problems that can be anticipated.
- The guide, through providing illustrations of consumer-managed strategies to secure technology, supports the role of the consumer as knowledgeable self-advocate.
- The responsibilities and accountability of providers at each step of the process are depicted with precision and clarity.

### **Specific areas of excellence**

- The guide is available in Braille, large print, audiocassette, and diskette, thus assuring ease of access by a variety of users.
- Descriptions of the regulations and procedures of each funding source are written with direct applicability to persons with visual impairment, but they can also be applied and used by persons with other disabilities.
- The author translates policies and regulations into everyday language. It defines key

terms, concepts, and stages of service used by each funding source; assesses the direct impact of these regulations to individual situations; and presents methods for surmounting obstacles.

- Interrelationships between major funding sources (vocational rehabilitation, Social Security Administration, Medicaid, and education funds) are explained.

#### **Areas in which this publication could be improved**

- The length of the text is daunting, but the book is worth the time required to read it.
- Abstracts preceding each chapter could provide a quick and easy overview of key points.
- Cross-referencing and subject index for key material would prove helpful to the reader seeking to review a key point.
- A state-by-state listing of the key technology resources with addresses, key personnel, and telephone numbers would assist consumers in initiating their own within-state search strategies.

#### **Common threads throughout this publication**

- The likelihood of acquisition of technology is increased with persistence, diligence, and the development of adequate knowledge on the part of the consumer.
- Consumers are responsible for developing their own body of information on the regulations, practices, and policies of technology funding and can formulate their own funding strategies.
- Centers for Independent Living represent a major source of advocacy and assistance to consumers with disabilities.
- The importance of the consumer as self-advocate cannot be overemphasized.

#### **Recommended usefulness for rehabilitation professionals**

- This publication provides an excellent primary text for reviewing and understanding federal, state, and private funding options.

- Key barriers and constraints to acquisition of technology are defined and explained, while strategies to acquire technology are illustrated.
- The text provides an excellent starting point for the professional seeking to analyze and circumnavigate federal and state funding policies.

*Penelope Caragonne, Ph.D.*

### **EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES A Transdisciplinary Approach**

**F. P. Orelove and D. Sobsey**

*Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 1987.*

Rehabilitation professionals who interact with individuals with physical disabilities need a foundation of the nature, needs, programming, and orientation for providing adequate supports for these individuals as adults. This book provides the novice with a wealth of information and also acts as a refresher for those professionals who received an introductory course during college about persons with physical disabilities.

#### **General highlights**

- The emphasis on the transdisciplinary approach to team decision making for persons with multiple disabilities is infused throughout this publication.
- The primary and contributing authors' expertise spans physical therapy, occupational therapy, and education. The blend of these backgrounds contributes to a well-rounded, thorough publication.
- Respectful language is incorporated throughout this book. Authors emphasize, through their terminology, their adherence to viewing persons with disabilities as people first, disability second.
- There is a logical sequence to the chapters including a basic introduction to the transdisciplinary process with an emphasis on

role release. The concluding chapter contains a focus on legal and ethical issues involving persons with multiple disabilities.

- In several chapters there are sections of advantages and disadvantages to common practices across the country.
- Extensive references follow each chapter.

### **Specific areas of excellence**

- The opening chapter on normal growth and development provides a quick refresher for the reader prior to coverage of persons who deviate from this normal pattern of development.
- The use of the word *atypical* rather than *abnormal* demonstrates a sensitivity to viewing persons with physical disabilities from a more positive perspective.
- The illustrations in the chapter on handling and positioning are superb. Using drawings in this manner provides an excellent fit with the written content.
- A comprehensive list of vendors of adaptive equipment is available to the reader.
- There is extensive reference to Lou Brown and his colleagues who have pioneered efforts in the area of adaptations to enable persons with physical disabilities to participate as fully as possible in community-based activities.
- The advantages and disadvantages of specific curriculum development orientations are discussed.
- An in-depth discussion exists for recommended techniques for lifting and positioning.
- The language of the book is easily understood to a reader with limited experiences with persons who have physical disabilities.
- The specific adaptations (including modified card holders, toothpaste pumps, dusting mitts, and spoon splints) are excellently presented with great illustrations.

### **Areas in which this publication could be improved**

- The format of the diagrams and illustrations in the handling and positioning chapter

should have been the standard for the remaining chapters. Such illustrations would have enhanced the remaining chapters immensely.

- The discussion on toileting skills relied too heavily on the Azrin and Foxx methods without a corresponding emphasis on gentler, nonaversive approaches. For example, a segment of the Azrin and Foxx technique requires that the care provider “admonish” the person for wet pants. There are better ways!
- Information on adapted software and hardware for the computer would have been a welcome addition.

### **Common threads throughout this publication**

- A team approach using competent professionals provides essential skills that can be shared across professional and nonprofessional team members.
- There is an emphasis on locating adequate supports for the person rather than requiring that a person be ready before benefiting from community activities.
- Practical advice is provided by each author after she or he has thoroughly investigated the literature on the topic of attention.
- The authors provide guidance for the professional who works on behalf of persons with disabilities. An array of options are provided with advantages and disadvantages presented.

### **Recommended usefulness for rehabilitation professionals**

- Don't let the book's 1987 publication date discourage you. It contains essential information for the 1990s.
- This book contains critically important information that each rehabilitation professional needs to know to be a contributing team member.
- Because of the extreme readability of this book I highly recommend that it be part of each professional's personal library.

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