



Living in the State of Stuck : How Assistive Technology Impacts the Lives of People with Disabilities, 3rd Edition

Marcia J. Scherer

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Assistive technology is transforming the lives of persons with disabilities. After setting the historical and social background for this transformation, Dr. Scherer discusses the implications of assistive technology in these persons' lives.

The two groups of people she introduces demonstrate differing needs and concerns. Some were disabled through accidents (spinal cord injuries) as young adults; they have had to come to terms with their loss of function and the resulting changes in their life plans. Others were born with disabilities (cerebral palsy) and grew up adjusting to their limitations.

Assistive technology has radically changed their lives, enabling them to work and perform in ways they might never have dreamed possible for themselves. But while these devices do improve the physical capabilities of persons with disabilities, this functional gain is not synonymous with enhanced quality of life. The larger questions are too often ignored: What does the individual define as "rehabilitation success"? Within that person-centered context, how does a given device contribute to fulfilling that person's needs? And are environmental factors -from psychological resistance to insufficient training for use -compromising the effectiveness of the device?

The personal and psychological factors must be better understood by professionals, educators, employers, parents, and most importantly, the persons with disabilities themselves. While Dr. Scherer agrees with the importance of assistive devices, she seeks long-overdue attention for these human dimensions. She stresses the need to help persons with disabilities relate these devices to their own lives and understand their potential utility, the ways they may enhance their lives, and how to integrate them into their everyday functioning.

Forewords by Tom Harkin, U.S. Senate; Frank Bowe, Hofstra University; and Peter Axelson, Santa Cruz.

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