Graeme Smith, *Coming to Life: The History of Ability, 1991-2021*, Sydney, Ability Technology, 2021; v, 116 pp.; ISBN: 9798404072273; RRP: $19.99 (AUD).

This short book is a very personal study by Graeme Smith, who completed a PhD at the University of Sydney and began an assistive technology company, Ability, in 1991. Smith was technologically highly competent (I recall that he brought an optical character recognition scanner to a Religious Studies postgraduate seminar and amazed all present with it), and had read widely in the research area of work, and how using talents and capabilities brought fulfillment to individuals and communities. Ability began when he took a contract with the Spastic Centre in 1990 and became centrally involved in a remarkable change of attitudes and practices in the field of disability in Australia. Many factors simultaneously coalesced; new technologies, 1981 as International Year of the Disabled, the Disabilities Services Act in 1986, and growing interest in fulling including disabled people into society, including the workforce, sports, the arts, and public office. In the 1990s Ability partnered with medical organisations like the Royal Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde, law firms including McClellands, and worked to realise government programmes such as Lifetime Care and Support, JobAccess, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Each chapter is titled for a part of the body, and some, like Chapter 4, “Staff: The Hands” pay tribute to the many employees, patients, partners, volunteers and patrons that have assisted Smith and Ability to realise the goal of helping disabled people lead fuller lives over the past three decades. Ability has moved premises many times, shared spaces with a range of different businesses and groups, and the changes in available technologies over time are illustrated in the drawings that accompany the text. In one sense, this book is about one particular company in Sydney, and might not seem to be of great interest to other readers. However, the story it tells is of value for all countries, societies and individuals. Disabled people have only recently emerged from the shadows as a group that have been ignored, underestimated, abused, and generally regarded as having little to offer. In 2023 Dylan Alcott (b. 1990) is Australian of the Year, Alcott, a Paralympian who excelled in wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis, is a prominent figure whose office makes it clear that the days of neglecting and ignoring the contribution of disabled people are over. In addition to publishing an autobiography, *Able* (2019), he founded AbilityFest, Australia’s first and only accessible music festival. Jordon Steele-John (b. 1994) is an Australian Greens Senator who is wheelchair bound due to cerebral palsy.

*Coming to Life* is a book that explains how people with disabilities optimise their lives through assistive technologies and intensive support. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in contemporary Australian society, human rights, and disability activism. It is also an object lesson in how to realise a vision, how to build a business, and how to find fulfillment in life, as Smith has through his valuable work.

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