While many children experience social anxiety in certain settings, approximately 4 percent experience it so severely that it profoundly affects their lives. They are simply unable to participate in normal social activities. This debilitating anxiety experienced by children is the focus of a new book by Dr. Christopher Kearney, professor and director of clinical training at UNLV's Psychology professor Christopher Kearney.

Kearney, who worked with the book in part on his work at the clinic, delves into the issues involved in this complex problem that often incapacitates the affected children in social settings and deeply concerns their parents.

"Of all the expectations we have regarding our children, a basic one is that they will enjoy being with other people," Kearney writes. "We hope our children will be generally popular and well liked by classmates, happy to speak to relatives, respectful of others, compliant to adult requests, willing and able to have friends, enthusiastic about attending social events, and cheery and confident with peers." Kearney notes, however, that many of the children he sees at the UNLV School Refusal and Anxiety Disorders Clinic have "such strong social anxiety that they have great trouble making friends, going to school, or even speaking to people in public."

To compound the matter, Kearney says, full appreciation of the problem by the psychology community is relatively recent, dating from the 1980s. Even today, he notes, the prevalence of childhood social phobia is unclear.

In his book, Kearney describes assessment and treatment procedures that he and his colleagues have developed at the clinic and elsewhere. Kearney, who opens the book with a set of examples of the kinds of problems children experience, goes on to define several kinds of social phobias and related disorders. He then reviews the literature relating to the various personality traits—such as introversion, shyness, behavioral inhibition, social withdrawal, and social and performance anxiety—that, in extreme forms, become social phobia. Psychological assessment tools and treatment strategies follow.

Kearney became interested in the psychology of young people as an undergraduate at the State University of New York at Albany, where he assessed and treated children with anxiety disorders and school refusal behavior at an anxiety disorders clinic. Kearney notes, however, that there is a need to develop measures and to verify whether children with social anxiety have strong and unique associations with other behaviors that are not always linked to social anxiety. "I have always enjoyed the challenge of working with children and adolescents," he says, adding that he hopes the book helps the psychology community better understand the disorders. "To see kids becoming more comfortable socially—going to school, making friends, doing these things for the first time or doing them on a consistent basis for the first time—is very gratifying."

"I especially hope it helps institutions in states where limited funding has most seriously impacted accessibility to scholarly information," says Sugnet, who is responsible for obtaining such materials with the UNLV Libraries' acquisitions budget of $5 million—an amount that he acknowledges doesn't go far these days in stocking library shelves.

The guide opens with a discussion of different kinds of electronic material and offers advice on selection, examining the issues associated with such questions as, "What hardware will you need to use the material?" Discussion is offered on major issues to be considered during the acquisition process and the many factors involved in licensing.

"We are now immersed in an environment in which academic library budgets have been battered by the increasing commercialization of the scholarly communication process," Sugnet says. "This has led to extravagant annual pricing increases for journals and other resources. Unlike most European and all other English-speaking countries, the U.S. does not have a national licensing agency to negotiate the fairest deals. This guide is an attempt to help librarians level the playing field."

Sugnet's collaborators on the guide, Stephen Bosch and Patricia Promis, are librarians at the University of Arizona Library. The guide also contains contributions by Trisha Davis of Ohio State University.

"The electronic information environment is changing so rapidly that a year of change in the new millennium equals a decade or more back in the '80s," Sugnet says. "A guide like this should be very useful in today's market."