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NEW JERSEY PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR HOMESCHOOLERS

by  
Beth Buchhofer

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 5, 2008

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved May 5, 2008

2008 Beth Buchhofer

## ABSTRACT

Beth Buchhofer  
NEW JERSEY PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR HOMESCHOOLERS  
2007/08

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Master of Arts in School and Public Librarianship

The purpose of this study was to determine if public libraries in New Jersey were effectively serving the needs of homeschoolers. This was done by researching the suggestions of experts in the field of homeschooling and public libraries. The researcher then created a survey using SurveyMonkey to evaluate the materials, programs, and services that public libraries were offering. The survey was completed by fifteen representatives from the New Jersey county public libraries. Many of the libraries reported having programs for homeschoolers, unfortunately many of the materials, programs, and services were not designed specifically for this population. In conclusion, a small number of the libraries offered outstanding services for homeschoolers, while others were in need of reconsidering their service offerings.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Significance of the Topic

Among the transient trends of education one that has become a constant is home schooling. Up until 1850 most children in America were educated in the home. For the past 25 years homeschooling has been resurging in America and now between two and three million children in the United States are learning at home. “Approximately 1.1 million students (1,096,000) were being homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2003, an increase from the estimated 850,000 students who were being homeschooled in the spring of 1999” (NCES, 2003, para.1).

Homeschooling and its curriculum are as diverse as the many families who take on this challenge, but where does this population attain materials. “Parents may seek information about the school curriculum from the local board of education. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) request such information, the board must provide it since a district’s curriculum is a matter of public record. A board of education may, but is under no obligation to, loan books or materials to a child educated elsewhere than at school” (NJDOE, 2006, para.10). Consequently many families look to the public library, Internet, and support groups for information and materials for their home studies. Public libraries have a responsibility toward home schoolers because the public library is there to serve the community, and homeschoolers are a legitimate part of their service group

“Homeschoolers using the library represent a ‘market segment’ of your population ... By viewing homeschoolers as simply another market segment of your population you’ll see that services geared toward them can be nothing more elaborate than a rearrangement of your collection...” (Lerch & Welch, 2004, pg. xi).

The public library is a paramount educational resource for homeschoolers and should provide a myriad of information and services to enhance their curriculum. In 2004 it was estimated that 2700 students were home schooled in New Jersey, although this number is hard to estimate due to New Jersey’s lenient laws. “The provision, ‘to receive equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school,’ in N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 permits parent(s)/guardian(s) to educate the child at home. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are not required by law to notify their public school district of their intention to educate the child elsewhere than at school” (NJDOE, 2006, para 4).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if homeschoolers were provided recommended services by public libraries in New Jersey. This was done by identifying what prior research recommended public libraries should provide for home schoolers and comparing that information to the services actually provided by the public libraries in New Jersey.

#### Research Questions

The following were the research questions for this study:

- 1) What literature was written about public library services for homeschooled students?



- 2) What public library services, materials, and programs were frequently suggested by the experts?
- 3) What public library services, materials, and programs were actually being provided by public libraries in New Jersey?
- 4) Did public librarians feel that the services they were providing were adequately meeting the needs of homeschoolers?

### Definition of Terms

Homeschool- The term "homeschooling" is used to describe the situation where parents or guardians choose not to send their children to public or private schools, but prefer to educate their children at home (Reisburg 1995).

Homeschool family- parents or guardians who choose not to send their children to public or private school but prefer to educate their children at home.

Homeschool students- children who are educated in the home by one parent, both parents, or tutors as an alternative to attending public or private school.

Homeschool teachers- parents, guardians, teachers, or tutors who educate children outside of the public or private school realm.

Homeschoolers- this term includes parents, children, teachers, and tutors who educate or learn outside of the public or private school realm.

Public Library- A community library that is supported by public taxes and serves all residents of the area (Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 2004, para 9).

Children's Librarian- holds the responsibilities for planning, managing and delivering library services to children (Association for Library Services to Children, 1999, para 4).

## Assumptions and Limitations

For the purpose of this study it was assumed that there was a homeschooled population living in New Jersey. The research was limited to chosen libraries within the twenty county systems of public libraries. It was also assumed that public librarians knew that there were homeschoolers who frequent their library in search of materials for curriculum and that libraries had put in place some services for homeschoolers.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Homeschooler's Needs and Use of the Public Library

Homeschoolers have taken on the challenge of educating their own children without help from a public school. They have decided that the children would receive the best education at home. Many families choose to subscribe to an established curriculum. “Close to 50, 000 students nationwide subscribe to a curriculum in the 1985-86 school year” (Gemmer, 1987, para.11). Other homeschool families choose to create their own curriculum. “It is estimated that between 25 and 75 percent of homeschoolers design their own course of study” (Gemmer, 1987, para. 11). Either way providing materials for homeschoolers in the public library is more than just buying textbooks. “Many follow a block learning approach where they allow their children’s interests to determine what will be taught when” (Gemmer, 1987, para 11). Research has been done in the past through surveys to determine how often this population uses the public library and what materials, programs, and services they would like to see.

In his book, *Strengths of their Own—Home Schoolers Across America: Academic Achievement, Family Characteristics, and Longitudinal Traits*, Brian Ray found that 53 percent of the homeschoolers surveyed visited a library at least once or twice each month. He found that 47 percent reported that they go even more often. The whole group averaged 3.8 monthly library visits. This study was conducted in 1997.

“To learn more about homeschoolers’ library use and service needs, a survey of Whatcom County, Washington State homeschoolers was designed and implemented in March 1988”(Gemmer, 1991, para 3). “A questionnaire was distributed to members of local home school associations, and through all public library branches in Whatcom County. Altogether, 165 surveys were distributed and 86 were returned. One hundred seventy-nine children were represented by the survey respondents” (Gemmer,1991, para 3). All of those returning the survey indicated that they had used at least one library within the last six months. Ninety five percent of those reached outside the library used the library once a month or more often.

The survey asked participants to identify which library services and materials they used from a list provided. From the survey “it is apparent that homeschoolers are familiar with, and make use of a variety of library resources”(Gemmer, 1991, para 7). The survey showed that the use of young adult fiction was low, but there were few young adults represented in the group. It was found that children’s library services were used less than other programs without explanation. As far as library materials, social sciences were in very low use. Many of the respondents added that they wanted music or story tapes. They wanted to see more foreign language tapes for children and twenty nine percent indicated a desire for educational videos or films.

In 1991 Robin L. Schwartz examined homeschoolers use of public libraries and specific services the parents would like to see public libraries provide. “Schwartz distributed a questionnaire to the 1,175 families attending the 1991 state convention of the Christian Home Educators in Ohio” (Wikel, 1995, p.3). Results from the survey indicated that Ohio homeschooled children and their parents used the library frequently.

“The 150 responses to the survey distributed at a Christian homeschoolers conference showed a 99 percent use of the public library” (Collins, 8). Other information provided was that 78% of the surveyed group used a prepared curriculum. Public libraries were used by 99% of the group as additional sources and 82% used the public library several times a month. Twenty seven percent of the homeschoolers never attended a children’s library program. Only 30% sometimes came to children library programs and a majority of 57% never attended adult library programs. Schwartz found that homeschoolers wanted to see several services provided: (1) to receive the same treatment as public school teachers with the right to check out larger numbers of materials for longer periods of time; (2) to provide more religious (Christian) materials; (3) to provide additional information and books about home schooling; (4) to give more assistance in book selection and library orientation; (5) to foster positive relationships between library staff and homeschoolers; (6) to supply more computer equipment and software, and instruction in their use (Schwartz, 1991).

Nancy Wikel conducted a small informal survey among the approximately 200 home schoolers in Waco Texas. The manager at one of Waco’s branch libraries was asked to distribute the questionnaire to parents of home-schoolers because of the large number of homeschool patrons using that particular facility. Wikel found that 93% utilized a prepared curriculum, but 86% relied heavily on the public library. A large amount, 93% used the library on a weekly or monthly basis. Wikel found that there were certain services that they wanted such as longer checkout time, assistance with curriculum development, as well as more classic and traditional children’s literature.

Jane-Agnes Stanwood conducted a survey of homeschool educators in Atlantic County, New Jersey in 2001. She distributed twenty nine surveys at two different meetings of homeschool educators. She obtained a 96.6 % response rate when 28 of the surveys were returned. She found that 42.8% of those surveyed used the public library several times a week to prepare or supplement their homeschool curriculum. Twenty one point four percent used the library once a week and 14. 3% used the library at least once a month. The survey found that 39% used inter-library loan most of the time and 35.7% stated that they used it sometimes when they did not find a material they were looking for. The survey asked what kind of resources homeschooled educators typically used in the library. Juvenile non-fiction was the most used followed by Easy Readers. Last, the survey asked what types of activities and programs homeschool educators attended. Children's storytime and craft programs were said to be used most often.

Caralyn Bayne Campbell conducted a survey in 2002 in the Shelby County public library system in Alabama. Survey forms were sent to ten public libraries with six out of ten participating. The survey found that "74% of the home schooled families are likely to follow a purchased, prepared curriculum for all or some of their studies. The remaining 25% reported using no purchased curriculum for their lessons" (Campbell, 2002, para 8).

The most widely used library services

were research and checkout for home school needs (93%), children's recreational reading (87%), video check out, particularly videos that supplement lessons (81%), and parents reading or information needs (77%). Traditional story time was attended by slightly more than one quarter of Shelby County homeschoolers (26%). Homeschool families also used interlibrary loan and reserve services to

obtain materials for their lessons (62%)(Campbell, 2002, para 8). The survey showed that 82% reported using the Internet to prepare for lessons and to meet other needs although most indicated that they used the Internet at home. Sixty two percent of the homeschoolers visited the library one or more times a week and thirty four percent visited the library several times each month.

(Campbell, 2002, para 8)

The survey included space for comments and suggestions. In this area homeschoolers in Shelby County suggested most often that they needed library tours, assistance with research, and help in understanding how to find what they needed. A widely requested program was a story time or book club for elementary age homeschooled children. More history and science videos were a popular suggestion. Lists were requested frequently such as lists of home schooling resources available at the library, age-appropriate reading lists, and lists of home schooling and subject area content Web sites. Ideas for teenagers included scheduling volunteer opportunities at the library and help with college and financial aid information.

#### Recommendations of Public Library Services for Homeschoolers

After reviewing the research and reading suggestions from librarians, parents, and homeschool associations the following list of recommendations was compiled:

1. Homeschool Vertical File - local laws pertaining to homeschoolers, a resource list of homeschooling organizations, associations, and support groups, bibliographies of books on home education with library holding noted, publisher catalogs of homeschooling



materials, sample copies of homeschooling magazines, a list of helpful Web sites, local school district grade level objectives.

2. Longer borrowing time- like those extended to teachers.
3. Offer traditional programs (story hours, film, crafts, etc) at non-traditional times.
4. Offer library tours to a single family or group- Take adults on a tour of the reference area while another staff member tours the children's section.
5. Create booklists historical fiction, science, and social studies as well as fiction and mathematics.
6. A bulletin board in the library where homeschoolers can post such things as newsletters, projects, and special events.
7. Access to career and college materials or workshops.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Rationale for the Study

The review of literature established that experts agreed that public libraries should provide a plethora of resources for homeschooled students. Also in reviewing the literature it was discovered that homeschooled students and parents felt that the public library was one of the primary sources for their educational needs. This study used applied research in the form of a descriptive survey to observe the present status of services to homeschoolers by New Jersey public libraries.

The items on the survey were created from the researcher's compilation of suggested services. Librarians interested in adequately serving the homeschooled population would benefit from these researched suggestions.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate public library contributions to homeschool education in New Jersey. This was done by researching expert advice and identifying programs, services, and materials that public libraries should be providing for homeschooled students. The researcher selected a children's or young adult librarian from each library. They were asked to complete a survey using SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, 2008).

## Research Questions

The following were the research questions for this study:

- 1) What literature was written about public library services for homeschooled students?
- 2) What public library services, materials, and programs were frequently suggested by the experts?
- 3) What public library services, materials, and programs were actually being provided by public libraries in New Jersey?
- 4) Did public librarians feel that the services they were providing are adequately meeting the needs of homeschoolers?

## Population and Sample

According to the New Jersey State Library there were approximately 309 public libraries in New Jersey. The libraries used for the sample in this study were selected by county location and by the availability of an online email account. The purposeful selection of the counties was expected to provide a view of the range of New Jersey county public library services to homeschooled students. There were 21 counties in New Jersey. Fifteen of the counties were from a library system in which there was a home branch connected to smaller branches. The Bergen County Cooperative includes the counties Bergen, Essex, Passaic, and Hudson. The counties that did not have systems are Teaneck Public Library for Bergen County, the Newark Public Library for Essex County,

the Jersey City Public Library for Hudson county, the Free Public Library of Elizabeth for Union County, and Phillipsburg Free Public for Warren County.

The New Jersey county libraries surveyed in this study included: Atlantic County Library System (ACLS), Bergen County Cooperative Library System, (BCCLS), Burlington County Library System, (BCLS), Camden County Library System (CCLS), Cape May County Library, Vineland Free Public Library for Cumberland Libraries Electronic System (CLUES), Newark Public Library for Essex County, Gloucester County Library System (GCLS), Jersey City Free Public Library for Hudson County, Hunterdon County Library (HCL), Mercer County Library System (MCLS), Middlesex County Library Consortium(LMXAC), Morris County Library, Ocean County Library, Passaic County Library System (PALSpplus),Sussex County Library System (SCLS), Somerset County Library System, the Free Public Library of Elizabeth for Union County, and Phillipsburg Free Public Library for Warren County (Collins, 2005).

### Variables

Variables investigated included best practice, services offered, policies in place, and materials offered.

### Instrumentation

A survey (see Appendix C) and a cover letter (see Appendix B) were developed by the researcher to provide measurable information. The survey was designed to provide information on the services provided for homeschoolers by the county public library.

The librarian survey was created by the researcher using SurveyMonkey.com. The survey (see Appendix C) was designed to provide quantitative information on the services being carried out by New Jersey Public libraries for homeschoolers. The researcher contacted a representative at each library (see Appendix A) and was given permission to email a cover letter (see Appendix A) with link to the survey. Each representative agreed to answer the survey. Fifteen surveys were answered and the results were collected on the Web site SurveyMonkey.com.

The first question on the survey sought to provide quantitative information on the number of homeschooled patrons that frequented that county public library. The second question sought to provide information on the type of homeschooled patron that frequented the library. The researcher was curious as to whether the librarians saw homeschooling students or parents more often. The responses to Question 3, about homeschooling resources, indicated the number of surveyed libraries that were following the recommendations of homeschooling experts to provide certain resources. Questions 4, 6, 8 and 9 ask about certain services, such as longer borrowing time, that experts felt should be extended to homeschoolers. Questions 5, 7, and 9 addressed programs that experts felt should be provided for homeschoolers such as college and career workshops. Question 11 was an opinion question that asked if the librarian felt the library was adequately serving the needs of the homeschooled patron. The librarian was asked to answer yes or no and to explain why they felt this way.

## Validity and Reliability

A draft of the survey was pre-tested by a total of five people including the instructor and four classmates in the Rowan graduate thesis class. A revised survey was tested by the same instructor and four classmates. The survey was designed by compiling suggestions of researched experts in the areas of homeschooling and public libraries. The results were considered valid only for participating New Jersey county public libraries.

## References

Collins, P. A. (2005). A study of the services, materials, and policies provided for Homeschooling families by New Jersey public libraries. Unpublished Master's thesis, Rowan University, New Jersey.

Survey Monkey. (2008). Retrieved on March 15, 2008 from [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Sample

The New Jersey public libraries used in this study were selected by county status, location, and by the ability to contact the librarian by email. The selection of the libraries was done purposefully to provide a view of the range of New Jersey public libraries' services and materials provided to homeschoolers in different regions of New Jersey. Fifteen of the twenty selected librarians completed the survey.

#### Methods of Investigation

A cover letter and a survey were developed by the researcher. The survey was developed to discover which suggested services were actually being provided to homeschooled patrons in New Jersey. The researcher contacted each librarian and obtained permission to email the cover letter including the link for the survey. All participants were either children's or youth services librarians. Each participant agreed to complete the survey and was emailed a cover letter with a link to the survey on Survey Monkey.com.

#### Response Rate

Nineteen librarians contacted by telephone by the researcher and they agreed to complete the survey. A total of fifteen surveys were returned and used for the study, for a response rate of 79%.

## Data Coding

SurveyMonkey and Microsoft Excel were used to collect data and to create a spreadsheet to record and summarize the results from the survey. Microsoft Excel was used to create multiple pie graphs to determine the percentages of the results of the survey. Microsoft Excel was used to create bar graphs to illustrate the number of libraries carrying out the suggested programming.

## Presentation of Results

### *Survey Question 1*

1) Approximately how many homeschooled patrons does your library serve?

Figure 1 is a bar graph showing that seven of the libraries served more than thirty homeschooled patrons. All the libraries surveyed showed that they had homeschooled patrons. Three libraries reported having less than 10 homeschooled patrons. Two reported having between 11 and 20 and three reported having between 21 and 29 homeschooled patrons.

### *Survey Question 2*

2) Does your library provide services for homeschooled ...students, parents, teachers, tutors, or none of the above?

Figure 2 is a bar graph showing the patrons that the library served for homeschooling needs. The question was formatted as multiple choice in which the subject could choose multiple answers. The bar graph shows that eleven libraries served parents and ten served homeschooled students. Four libraries reported servicing teachers, four reported servicing none of the above. Three libraries reported servicing tutors of homeschooled students.

Figure 1: Question 1,  
Number of Homeschooled Patrons  
n=15

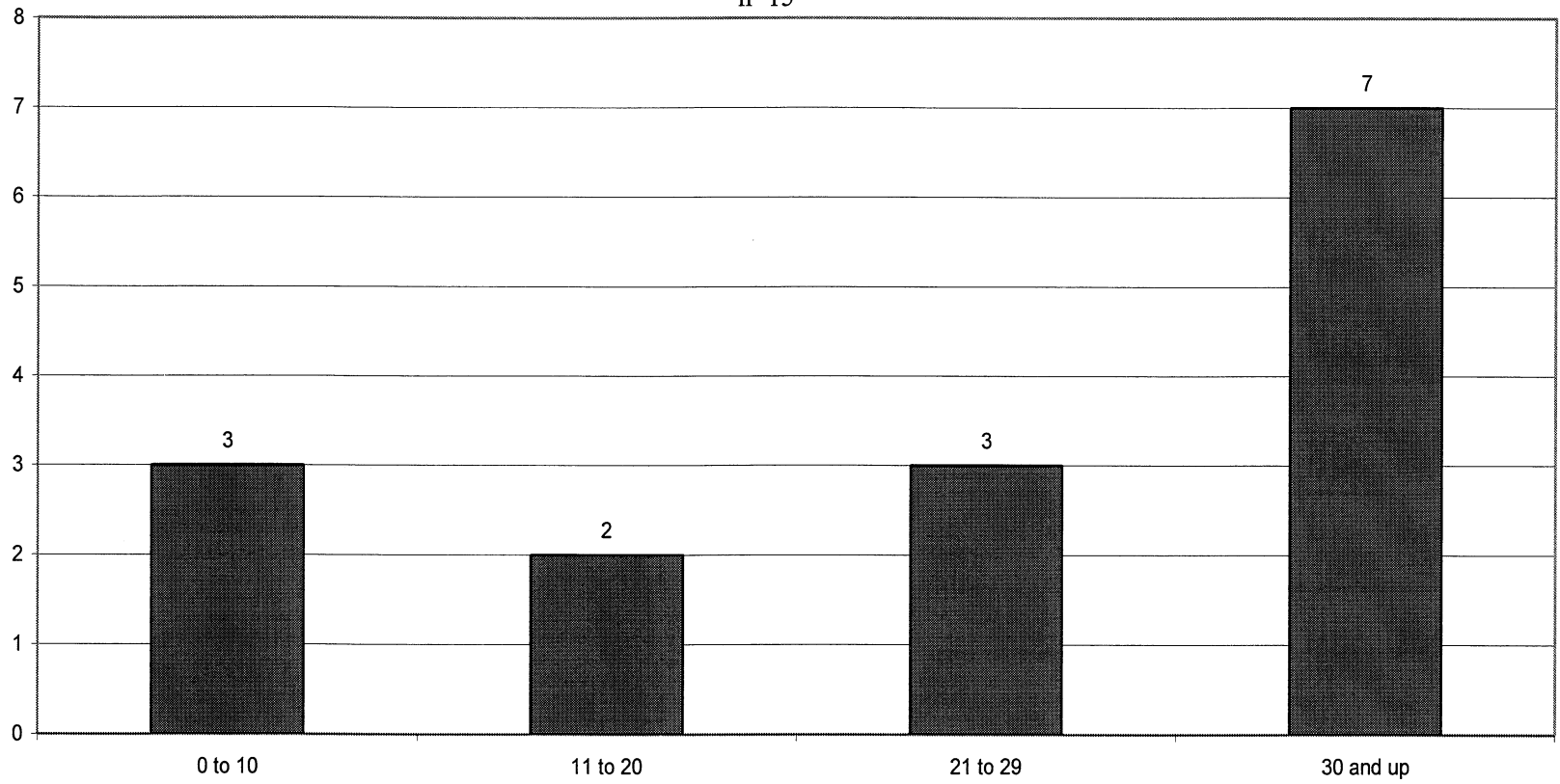
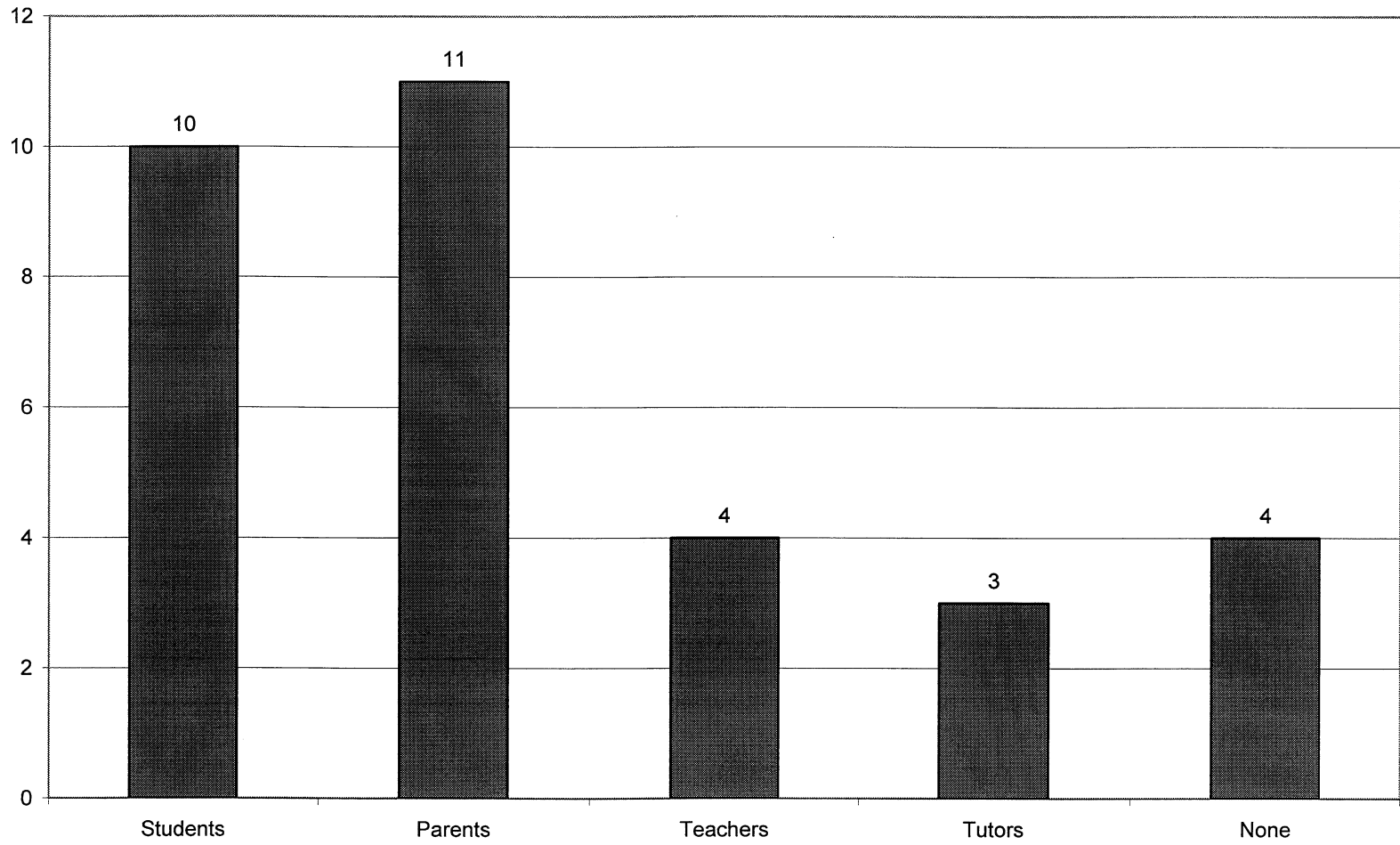


Figure 2, Question 2, Who is Served?  
n=15



### *Survey Question 3*

3) Does your library provide any of the following homeschooling resources? Check all that apply.

Figure 3 is a bar graph showing the results of question 3. When asked if they provided textbooks to homeschoolers one library out of fifteen responded yes. Five libraries responded yes to providing paper or electronic links to local laws pertaining to homeschooling. Lists of homeschooling organizations, associations, and support groups were provided by nine of the fifteen libraries. Ten of the fifteen libraries provided bibliographies of books on homeschooling. One library responded yes to providing catalogs of homeschooling materials. Five libraries provided sample copies of homeschooling magazines. Six of the fifteen libraries provided online resources such as Web sites, chat rooms, blogs, podcasts, or virtual field trips. One library had available local district grade level objectives. Three libraries provided pathfinders for homeschooling information and curriculum ideas. Three libraries had staff training to help librarians meet the needs of homeschoolers. Fourteen of the fifteen libraries provided access to computers, the Internet, and software.

### *Survey Question 4*

4) Is longer borrowing time extended to homeschoolers?

The survey asked this question as a yes or no. Figure 4 shows that 47% did allow homeschooled patrons to borrow materials longer than other patrons. The pie graph shows that 53% of the libraries did not allow materials to be borrowed longer.

Figure 3: Question 3, Homeschooling Resources Provided by Library  
n=15

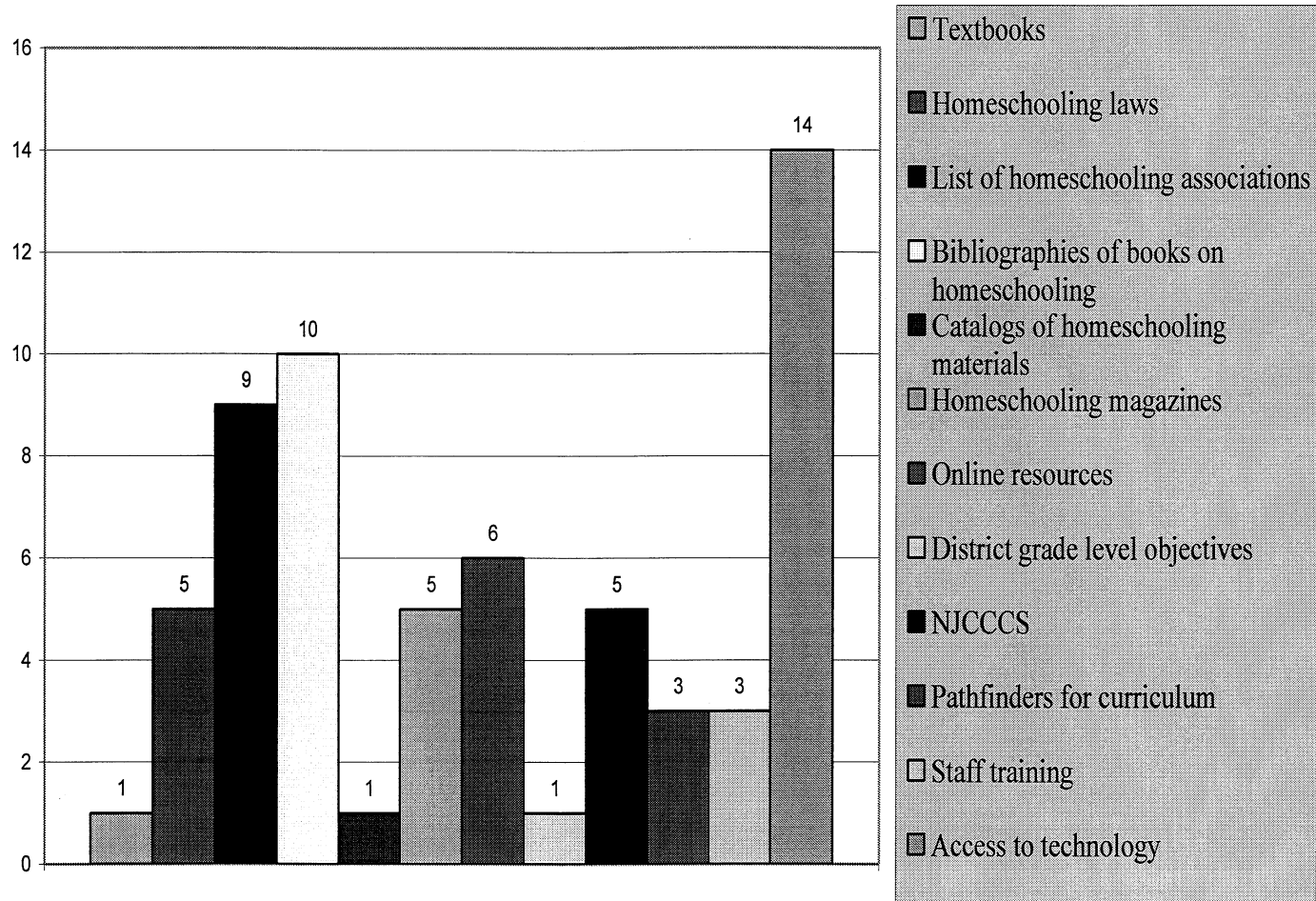
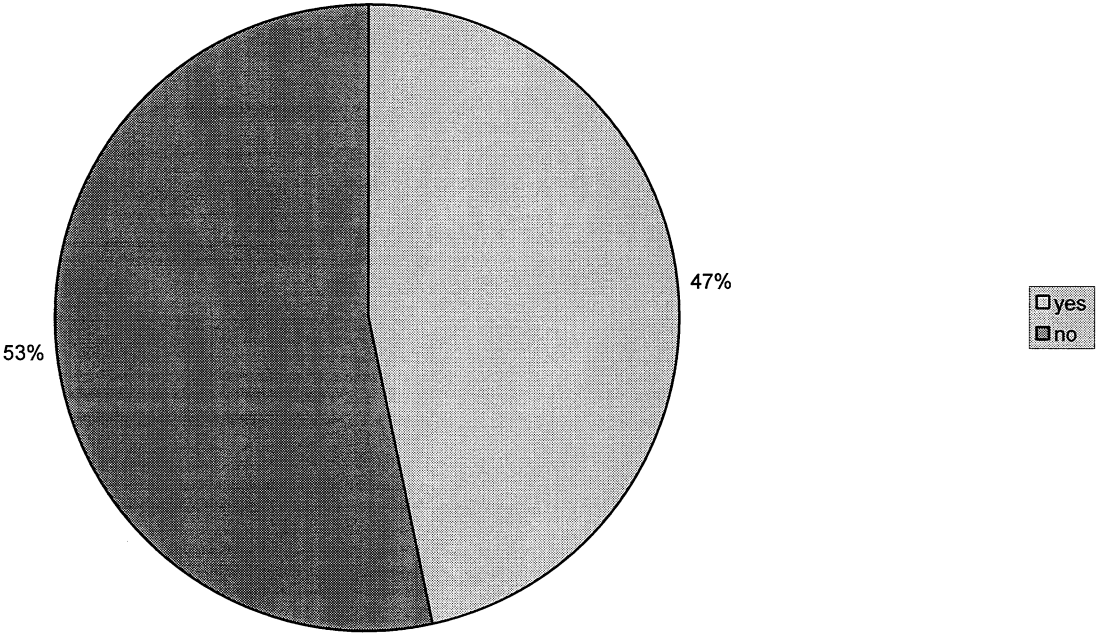


Figure 4: Question 4, Longer Borrowing Time  
n=15



*Survey Question 5*

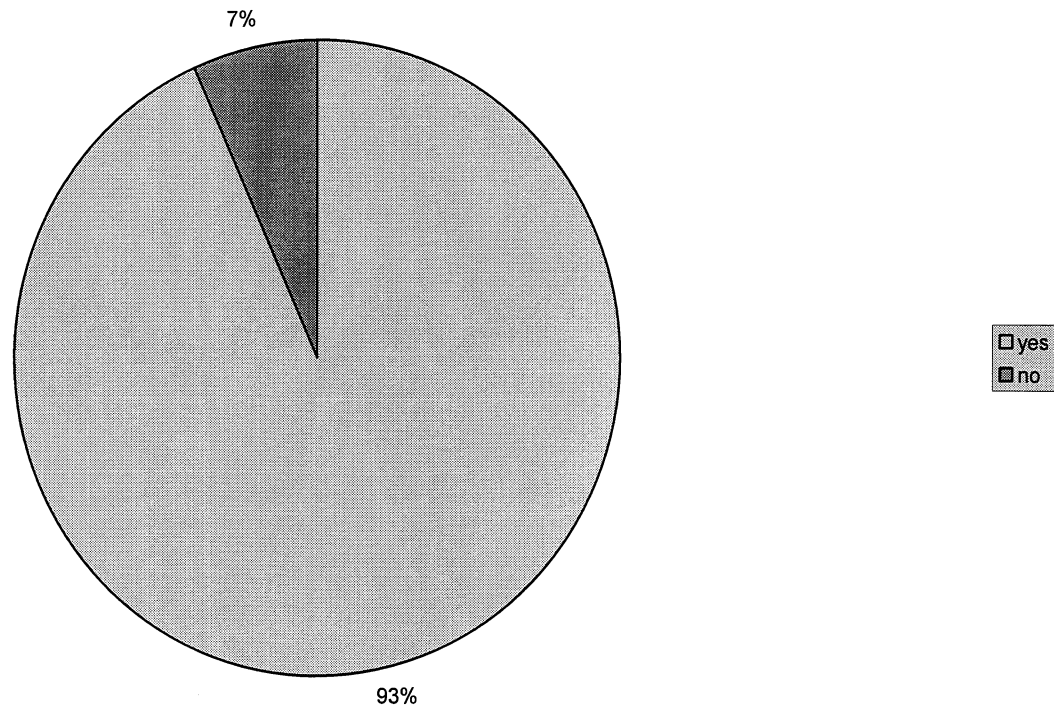
5) Do you offer traditional programs such as story hours, films, crafts, etc., during school hours? If yes please provide some examples.

The pie graph in Figure 5 demonstrates that 93% of the libraries had programs during school hours. The pie graph shows that 7% of the libraries surveyed did not have programs during school hours. The question asked the librarians to give some examples of the programs that they provided. The examples were as follows:

- Library 3 noted “story times with crafts for ages two years through 4th grade, tours.”
- Library 4 said we “offer preschool story times in the afternoon regularly, offer craft programs during the day, during school vacations either public or private.”
- Library 5 wrote “Story times for ages 2 yrs to 7 yrs crafts music programs movies science programs.”
- Library 6 gave “We have preschool story time ages 3-5 toddler time age 2 and baby time 6-23 mos that meet three times each week. We also have monthly homeschool game day that meets the last Fri each month. We recently started a preschool music time and a baby music time which is run by a volunteer.”
- Library 7 noted “Preschool story times only during school hours up to age 5.”
- Library 8 wrote “Science workshops, poetry contests, school age story and craft, films.”
- Library 9 noted “Book discussion group, open house held periodically for local homeschooling families to meet each other.”
- Library 10 said “Morning and afternoon story times for preschoolers.”



Figure 5: Question 5, Programs During School Hours  
n=15



- Library 11 “We offer monthly book club: Bagels, Brownies and Books, where we discuss the books, give out monthly assignments pertaining to the story (WWII diff. types of art, etc.) and then do an activity, a craft, a writing assignment etc. Also, special workshops with presenters.”
- Library 12 noted “Thursday story times are open to all ages, Monday and Tuesday 11:15 story times are open to ages 4 and up.”
- Library 13 wrote “Story hours.”
- Library 14, “We have tours, story times, and crafts. We also do research with the older children and help them with different sources we have in the library.”
- Libraries 1, 2, and 15 did not add any additional comments.

*Survey Question 6*

6) Do you offer library tours specifically to homeschoolers?

Figure 6 shows that 73% of the libraries surveyed provided library tours specifically for homeschoolers.

*Survey Question 7*

7) Do you offer booklists for homeschoolers on the following subjects: historical fiction, science, social studies, fiction, math, or none?

This question was asked as a multiple choice question where the respondent could choose multiple answers. Figure 7 shows that two libraries provided lists for science and social studies, eight provide lists for fiction. Seven of the libraries provided lists for historical fiction and six libraries provided lists for none of the subjects.

Figure 6: Question 6, Library Tours for Homeschoolers  
n=15

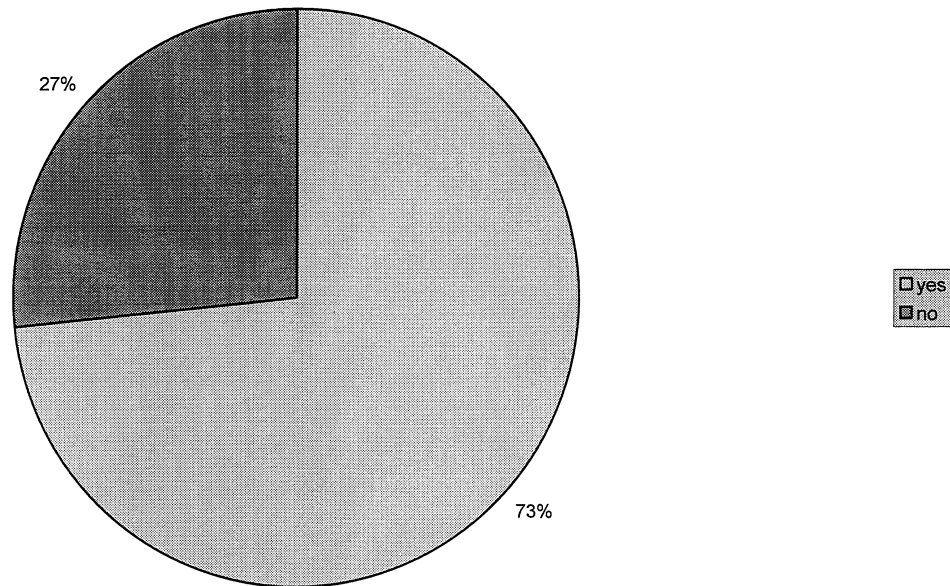
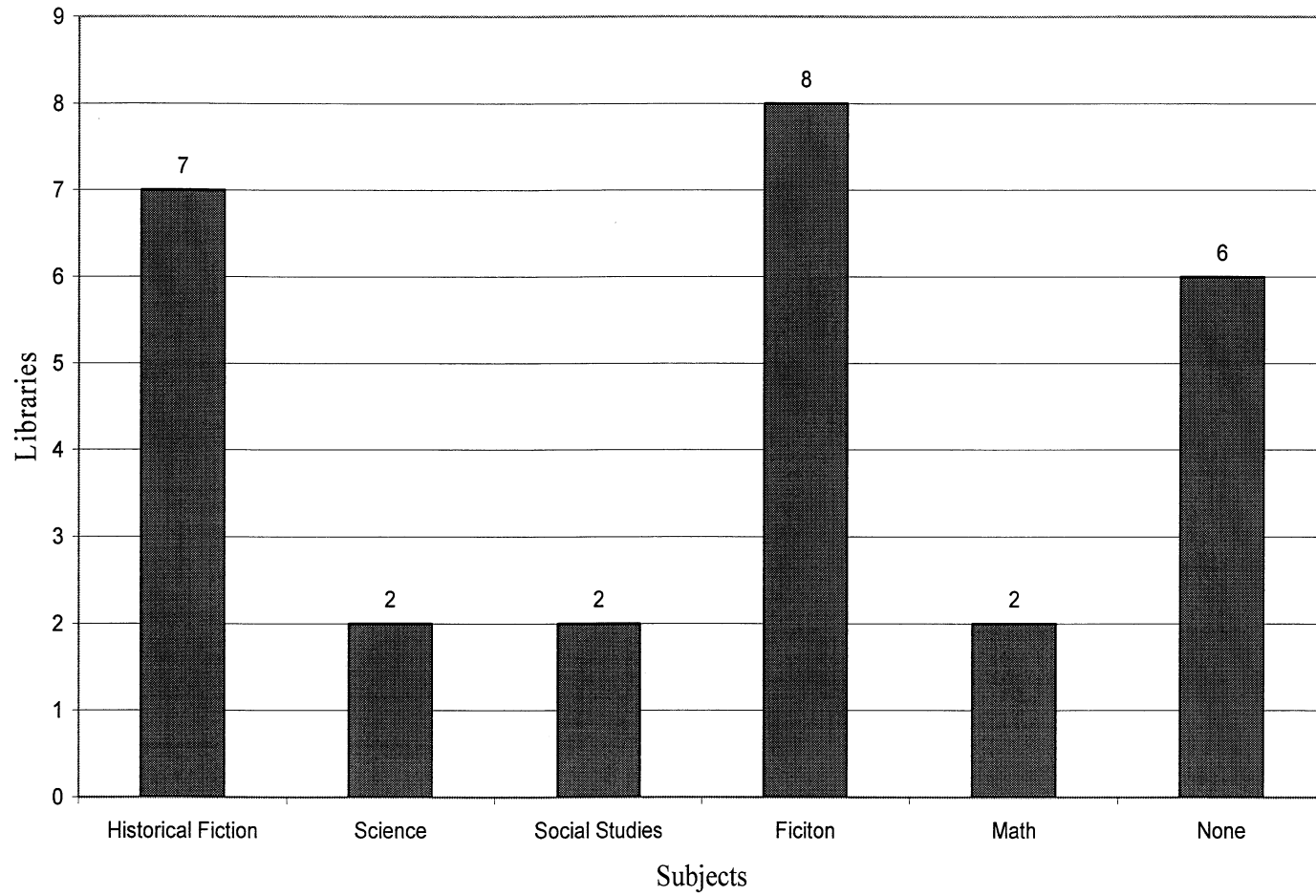


Figure 7: Question 7, Booklists for Homeschoolers by Subject  
n=15



*Survey Question 8*

8) Do you provide a bulletin board in the library where homeschoolers can post such things as projects, newsletters, etc.?

Figure 8 indicates that 60% of the libraries surveyed did not provide a bulletin board in the library specifically for homeschoolers.

*Survey Question 9*

9) Does your library provide meeting spaces for homeschoolers?

Figure 9 indicates that 80% of the libraries surveyed provided meeting space for homeschoolers.

*Survey Question 10*

10) Do you provide career and college workshops specifically designed to assist homeschoolers? If yes please provide some examples.

Figure 10 shows that 87% of the libraries surveyed did not provide career and college workshops specifically for homeschoolers. The librarians were given space to provide examples.

- Library 14 said “Only if requested?”
- Library 13 wrote “Creating transcripts, SAT workshops, financial aid for college, and learning styles of students.”
- Library 11 said “That is something we are hoping to do just for Homeschoolers.”
- Library 9 indicated “At our last open house, the main discussion topic was information for college bound homeschoolers.”
- Library 8 said “Library provides career center with college test guides, application and financial aide booklets.”

Figure 8: Question 8, Homeschool Bulletin Board

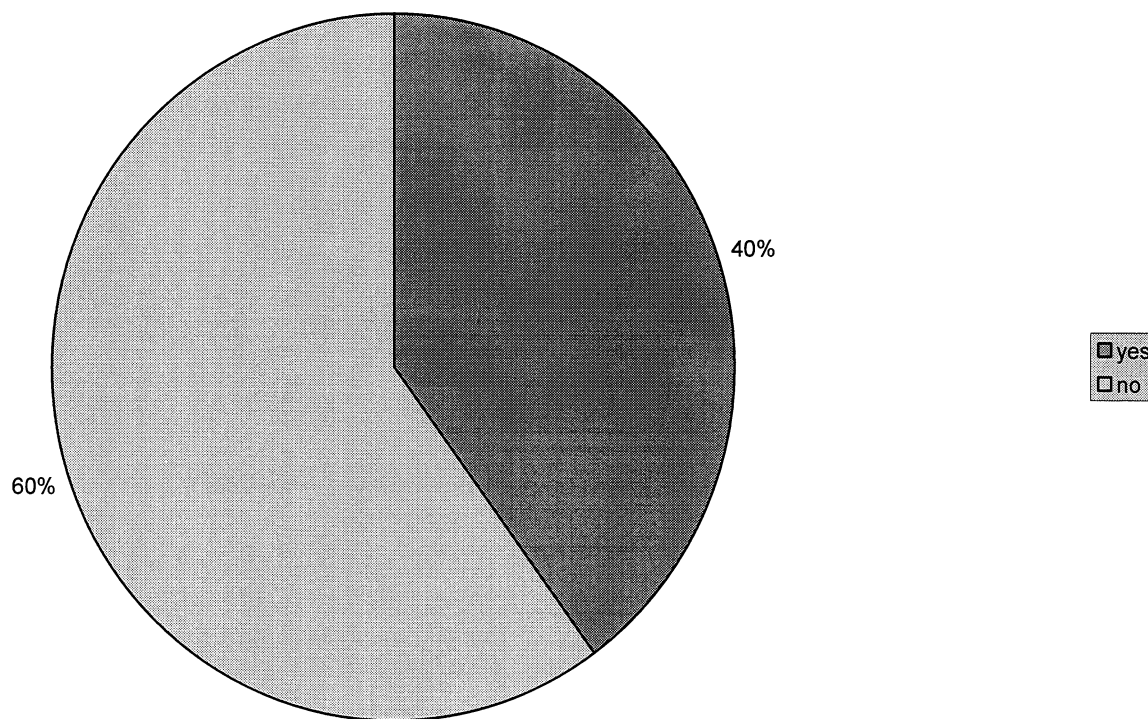


Figure 9: Question 9, Meeting Space  
n=15

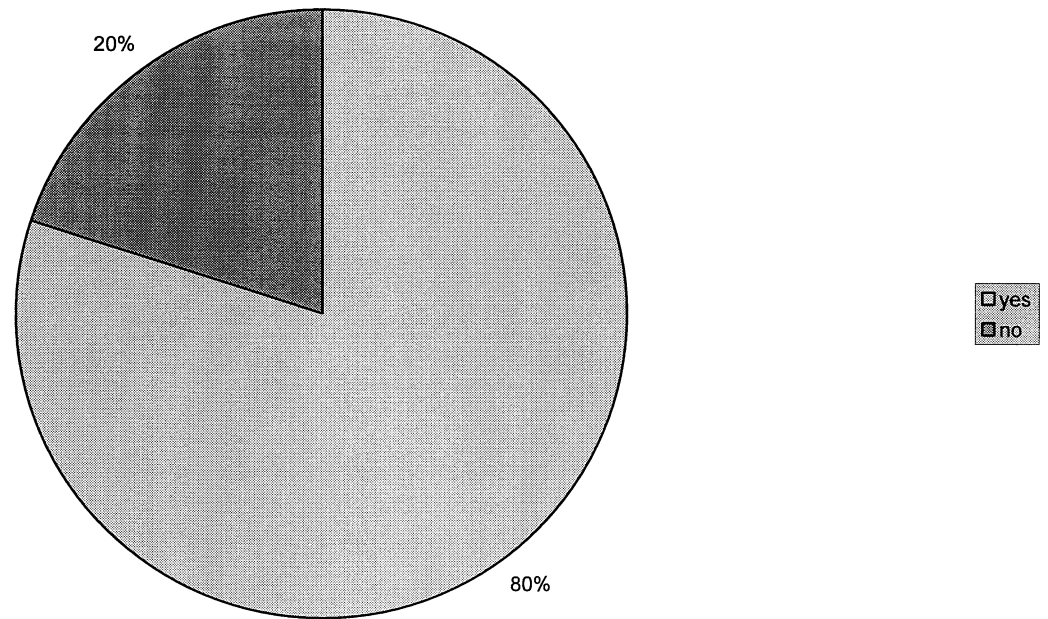
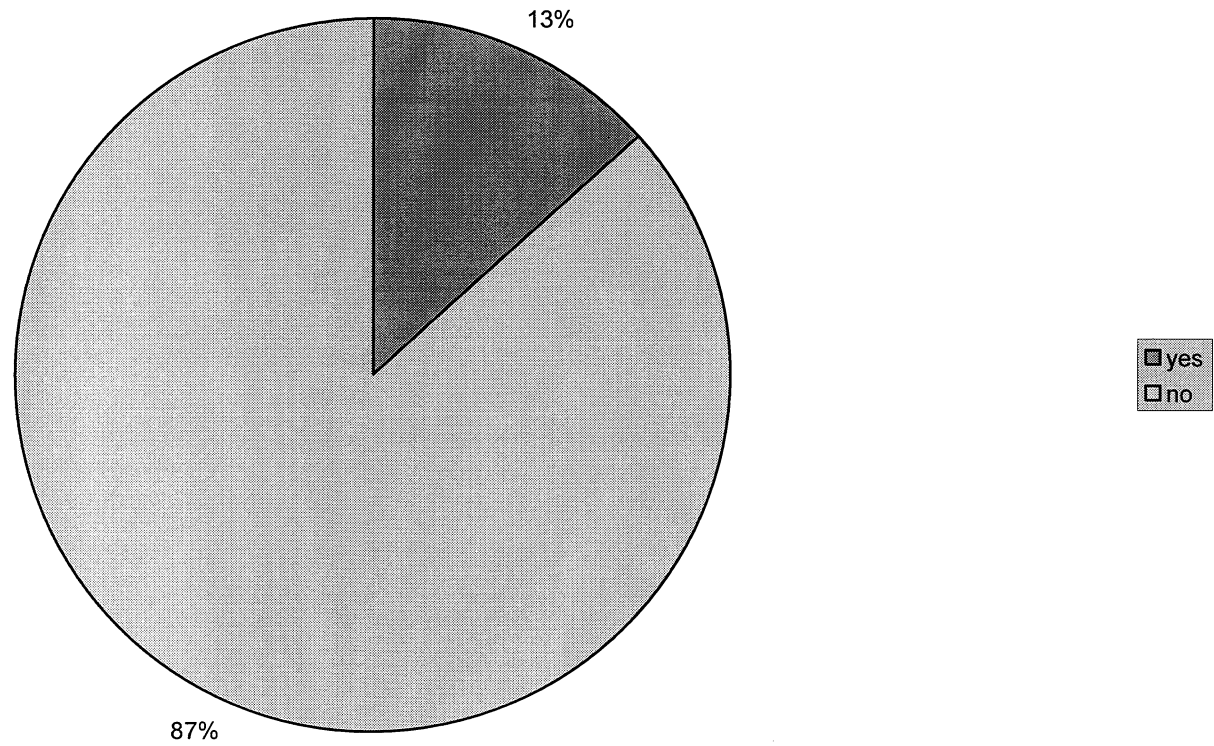


Figure 10: Question 10, College and Career Workshops  
n=15





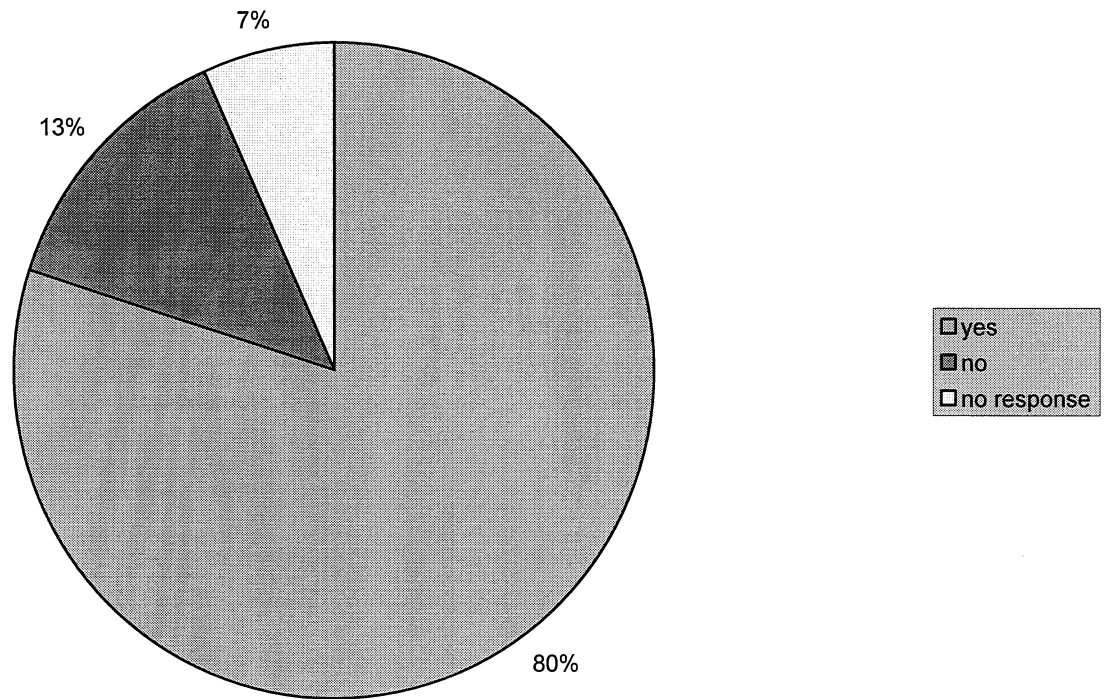
### *Survey Question 11*

11) Do you feel that your library adequately serves the homeschooled population in your community? Please explain why you feel this way.

Figure 11 indicates that 80% of the libraries surveyed felt that they adequately served the homeschooled population. This question was completely the librarian's opinion therefore the researcher asked them to provide examples as to why they felt this way. The comments were as follows:

- Library 3 “Based on the requests for meeting space, programming and access to relative print and non-print resources, I feel we adequately serve the homeschooled population in our community.”
- Library 4 “Currently I'm not necessarily aware of any homeschooled families, in the past we have had at most 2-they have their own curriculums -we offer the same resources we offer for the schools. Primarily they made good use of our extensive collection of materials on all subjects and took advantage of interlibrary loans.”
- Library 5 “There is no request for these programs.”
- Library 6 “We have materials for our homeschool families as well as a brochure listing many of the books we have in the library for their use. We also provide the homeschoolers with tours and visits if it is requested by the families.”
- Library 7 “I did until I saw all the other types of options that you list on this survey! In general, we work on a case by case basis with homeschool families.”
- Library 8 “Homeschoolers have expressed great satisfaction with services provided.”

Figure 11: Question 11,  
Library Adequately Served Homeschooled  
n=15



- Library 9 “I am a home schooling parent as well as a children's librarian at our library. Though our library provided some services before my employment, I was able to expand these services and make it a special project.”
- Library 11 “We certainly are starting to service the community but we still have a long way to go. There are still more materials we wish to obtain for them, and more programs we'd like to provide for the homeschoolers on a more frequent basis.”
- Library 12 “We work with homeschoolers in Gloucester County to provide materials and services as requested. Instruction is provided to individuals and groups on the use of the catalog and databases to make lists rather than provide booklists which 1) may not include titles listed in their purchased curriculum yet, and 2) which are available on other websites and accessible through interlibrary loan. Some individuals who homeschool are known to the youth services staff and are notified when we have deleted materials available or are offering programs of possible interest to their families. Requests for materials are taken into consideration for acquisition.”
- Library 14 “We do everything that we can to include homeschoolers. When we have an author visit we set up a time for the author to talk to the ungraded children. We include them in our book clubs for their reading level rather than their grade level. Most of the time we do not have many children or young adults attend, but if we do we are very sensitive to their religious persuasions and do not choose book that would not be accepted by their parents.”
- Library 15 “We provide library space and any help needed to the homeschooler.”

CHAPTER FIVE  
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS, AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

A Summary of the Study

A unique set of public library materials, programs, and services for homeschoolers was suggested, and reported in Chapter Two. The purpose of this study was to determine if New Jersey public libraries were providing suggested materials, programs, and services for homeschoolers. A survey was completed by selected librarians of fifteen county libraries in New Jersey. The data were collected on a spreadsheet and figures were created using Microsoft Excel.

The fifteen public libraries all reported having some services specifically for homeschoolers. Many of the services for homeschoolers were provided for the general public as well. A small portion of the public libraries in this study should be commended on their efforts to provide outstanding services for the homeschooling community.

Discussion of Results

The first two questions of the survey were asked to reveal if there was a community of homeschoolers that needed to be served by public libraries. Overall the libraries reported having a community of homeschoolers within their county. The researcher confirmed that homeschoolers were a group that depend on the public library for materials and should be provided certain services and programs.

The survey revealed that homeschooling parents were contacting youth librarians frequently for assistance in educating their children. Although parents will need assistance when beginning homeschooling, the materials, services, and policies should be designed to assist parents in all stages of homeschooling.

#### Materials Offered

Question three surveyed the libraries mostly about materials that they provided for homeschooled patrons. This question asked the librarian to check all the suggested materials that their library provided. The question listed ten suggested materials. Fourteen librarians answered this question and one librarian skipped the question. The surveyed libraries reported offering a list of Web sites, resources, chat rooms, blogs, podcasts or virtual field trips. A large number of the libraries reported providing bibliographies of books on home education and providing lists of homeschooling organizations, associations, and support groups. The preceding were valuable resources for beginning homeschoolers and the libraries polled were doing an outstanding service for their patrons.

A small number of the libraries reported having paper or electronic links to local laws pertaining to homeschooling, and to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Having access to these laws is paramount when beginning homeschooling and more of the libraries should have had this information ready. These are both resources that homeschooling parents may need to access at any point in their child's education. It is important for libraries to have this information available.

Homeschooling magazines, pathfinders, and staff training were occasionally offered by the surveyed libraries. The libraries rarely offered textbooks, local district grade level objectives, and publisher catalogs of homeschooling materials. Many homeschooling families want to have the textbooks that the local school district is using but public libraries did not provide these because of the expense. Conversely providing local district grade level objectives and publisher catalogs are inexpensive, easy way to fulfill the patron's needs.

Booklists on historical fiction and fiction were offered by a majority of libraries. These booklists were generally available to all patrons, so whether the lists were specific to homeschoolers was not clear to the researcher. Science, social studies, or math booklists were only offered by two of the libraries.

#### Programs Offered

Many of the libraries reported having programs during school hours for homeschoolers, but these programs were mostly for all preschool aged children. The question was two parts in that the researcher asked the librarian to give examples of these programs. After reviewing the comments the researcher noted that most of the programs were not specific to homeschoolers and were mostly for young children. Only two of the libraries mentioned programs specifically for homeschoolers, which were a homeschool game day and an open house for local homeschool families to meet. Those libraries should be commended on their service and other libraries should consider having similar events.

One program that was often reported being offered was library tours specifically for homeschoolers. Offering tours is great way to start a personal relationship with

homeschooling families. Youth librarians can use this time to ask questions and assess the needs of this population. Three libraries reported offering staff training or professional workshops about homeschooling topics. If more libraries offered these workshops, novice youth librarians would recognize the need to serve these patrons. The survey asked if the library provided career and college workshops specifically designed to assist homeschoolers. The majority did not provide these workshops. The question asked the libraries that do provide these workshops to give some examples. Two libraries did provide this type of workshops, and one librarian gave the following examples; “creating transcripts, SAT workshops, financial aid for college, learning styles of students.”

#### Services Offered

All of the librarians reported providing access to computers, software and the Internet. These were provided for the general public and therefore open to anyone. Many homeschoolers wanted to be provided the same time extension as teachers on borrowing materials. The question asked if longer borrowing times were extended to homeschoolers. Sixty-seven percent of the libraries reported that they did extend borrowing time for homeschoolers. The researcher found this to be outstanding. Many libraries reported not providing a bulletin board in the library where homeschoolers can post such things as projects, newsletters, etc. This is a relatively simple way to make the homeschooling population feel recognized in a library. Time constraints, space, or lack of patron involvement may impede this being carried out in libraries. Eighty-percent of the libraries surveyed reported that they did provide meeting space for homeschoolers.

Most libraries provided meeting space for the public; therefore the researcher assumes that the libraries that did not lack the space for any group not just homeschoolers.

### Librarian's Opinions

The final question asked the librarian's opinions as to whether they felt that their library adequately served the homeschooled population in your community. The librarian was asked to explain why she felt this way. Eighty-six percent felt that they adequately served the population that was twelve out of fifteen. The explanations of the librarians were the interesting part of this question and varied. Some answered that they saw no need for these services, others felt that they had been serving the patrons needs until they read this survey. Others reported having many programs that were not on this suggested list because they have a special relationship with the homeschooled community and invest time in their services. Many felt that having space for meetings and tours for homeschoolers was adequate and additional services were unnecessary.

### Recommendations

After researching what experts suggested libraries should provide for their homeschooling patrons and surveying county libraries in New Jersey, the researcher developed some recommendations. Homeschooling patrons should be given materials, programs, and services to fit their unique needs and situation. Librarians first must be aware that there is a need for these services.

1. Public libraries should provide staff training and workshops for youth librarians on homeschooling topics.



2. General services and programs should be adapted to specifically fit the needs of homeschoolers. Traditional programs such as story hours could easily be modified to meet the specific needs of the homeschooling population. Career and college workshops might be tailored to answer the questions homeschooling students would ask.
- 3) Librarians should take advantage of providing tours specifically for homeschoolers as a time to create a relationship with the patrons. The librarians could use this as a time to reveal homeschoolers particular needs.
- 4) Librarians that are providing excellent services should create a blog or email group to share ideas for programs, materials, and services.

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APPENDIX A

List of Libraries

## LIST OF LIBRARIES

County	Email Address	Library	Contact Person
Atlantic	Jenmur68@yahoo.com	Galloway Township Branch 306 East Jimmie Leeds Road Galloway, NJ 08025	Jennifer Murphy
Bergen	sears@bccls.org	Teaneck Public 840 Teaneck Road Teaneck, NJ 07666	Amy Sears
Burlington	kgruver@bcls.lib.nj.us	Westampton Branch 5 Pioneer Boulevard Westampton, NJ 08060	Kathleen Gruver
Camden	rjohns@camden.lib.nj.us	Allan M. Vogelsson Branch 203 Laurel Rd. Voorhees NJ 08043	R. Johns
Cape May	mbj@cmclibrary.org	Cape May Courthouse Branch DN2030, 4 Moore Road Cape May Court House, NJ 08210	Mary E. James

Cumberland	stai@vineland.lib.nj.us	Vineland Free Public Library 1058 East Landis Avenue Vineland, NJ 08360	Samantha Tai
Essex	pvolpe@npl.org	The Newark Public Library 5 Washington Street P.O. Box 630 Newark, NJ 07101-0630	Paul Volpe
Gloucester	pcollins@gcls.org	Mullica Hill Branch 398 Wolfert Station Road Mullica Hill, NJ 08062	Pat Collins
Hudson	afdeangelis@verizon.net	Jersey City Free Public Library 472 Jersey Avenue Jersey City, NJ 07302	A. F. Deangelis
Hunterdon	agardner@hclibrary.us	Hunterdon County Library Headquarters 314 State Rd 12	Adrien Gardner

Mercer	<a href="mailto:lgruning@mcl.org">lgruning@mcl.org</a>	Lawrence Headquarters Branch 2751 Brunswick Pike Lawrenceville, NJ 08648	Laura Gruning
Middlesex	<a href="mailto:emplamer@lmaxac.org">emplamer@lmaxac.org</a>	East Brunswick Public Library 2 Jean Walling Civic Center East Brunswick, New Jersey 08816	E. M. Palmer
Morris	<a href="mailto:Thomas@main.morris.org">Thomas@main.morris.org</a>	Morris County Library 30 East Hanover Ave. Whippany NJ 07981	Princess Thomas
Ocean	<a href="mailto:jmacaluso@theoceancountylibrary.org">jmacaluso@theoceancountylibrary.org</a>	Long Beach Island Branch 217 S. Central Ave Surf City, NJ 08008	J. Macaluso

Passaic	<a href="mailto:reiherp@waynepubliclibrary.org">reiherp@waynepubliclibrary.org</a>	Wayne Public Library 61 Valley Road Wayne NJ07470	Pauline Reiher
Somerset	<a href="mailto:jtrujill@sclsnj.org">jtrujill@sclsnj.org</a>	Somerset County Library Headquarters 1 Vogt Drive Bridgewater, Nj 08807	J. Trujill
Sussex	<a href="mailto:egoodin@sussexcountylibrary.org">egoodin@sussexcountylibrary.org</a>	Main Branch Rt. 655 Frankford Twp., NJ	E. Goodin
Union County	<a href="mailto:cgeeding@elizpl.org">cgeeding@elizpl.org</a>	Free Public Library of Elizabeth 11 South Broad St. Elizabeth NJ 07202	C. Geeding
Warren County	<a href="mailto:bmoon@pburglib.org">bmoon@pburglib.org</a>	Phillipsburg Free Public Library 200 Frost Ave Phillipsburg, NJ 08865	Beverly Moon



APPENDIX B

Cover letter to Librarians

Dear Children's Librarians,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, and am currently writing my thesis. My thesis topic centers on public libraries and the services provided for homeschoolers. I have researched what experts suggest the libraries might provide. I have created a survey to learn what services are provided by New Jersey public libraries.

I am requesting assistance from Children's or Young Adult librarians in New Jersey to complete an online survey on the topic of public library services for homeschoolers. The survey can be accessed by going to SurveyMonkey.com at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fIjbc2tTsKRpcBCjzkU4zw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fIjbc2tTsKRpcBCjzkU4zw_3d_3d) by March 15, 2008.

Responses to the survey will be kept anonymous and confidential. Results of the survey will be sent to participants who wish to include their email address in the space provided at the end of the survey. Inclusion of e-mail addresses to obtain survey results is voluntary and optional.

Your participation in the survey is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Beth Buchhofer  
Rowan University  
Glassboro, NJ  
[Beth.buchhofer@gmail.com](mailto:Beth.buchhofer@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX C

### Survey

## Public Library Services for Homeschoolers

### Homeschooling Survey

This survey is asking questions pertaining to the services you provide for homeschooled patrons.

1. Approximately how many homeschooled patrons does your library serve?

- 0-10
- 11-20
- 21-29
- 30 and above

2. Does your library provide services for homeschooled...?

(Check all that apply)

- students
- parents
- teachers
- tutors
- none of the above

3. Does your library provide any of the following homeschooling resources? (Check all that apply)

- textbooks
- Paper or electronic links to local laws pertaining to homeschooling
- Lists of homeschooling organizations, associations, and support groups
- Bibliographies of books on home education
- Publisher catalogs of homeschooling materials
- Sample copies of homeschooling magazines
- A list of Web sites, resources, chat rooms, blogs, podcasts, or virtual field trips
- Local district grade level objectives
- Paper or electronic links to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards
- Pathfinder for homeschooling information and curriculum ideas
- Staff training or professional workshops about homeschooling topics
- Access to computers, software, and internet

4. Is longer borrowing time extended to homeschoolers?

- Yes
- No

5. Do you offer traditional programs such as story hours, films, crafts, etc., during school hours? If yes please provide some examples.

- Yes
- No

Examples

6. Do you offer library tours specifically to homeschoolers?

- Yes
- No

7. Do you offer booklists for homeschoolers on the following subjects? (Check all that apply)

- historical fiction
- science
- social studies
- fiction
- math
- none of the above

8. Do you provide a bulletin board in the library where homeschoolers can post such things as projects, newsletters, etc.?

- Yes
- No

9. Does your library provide meeting spaces for homeschoolers?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you provide career and college workshops specifically designed to assist homeschoolers? If yes please provide some examples.

Yes

No

Examples



11. Do you feel that your library adequately serves the homeschooled population in your community? Please explain why you feel this way?

Yes

No

Comments



Done >>

