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REASONS FOR CONDUCTING CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAMS
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS
IN SELECTED PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by
Helen A. Cowan

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved August 2, 1999

ABSTRACT

Helen A. Cowan. *Reasons for Conducting Creative Writing Programs for Children and Young Adults in Selected Public Libraries*. 1999. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

This study assessed and analyzed the reasons a selected sample of librarians chose to conduct or not to conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults (ages 8-18) in public libraries. Surveys were sent to 100 youth service coordinators in 22 states, with a 67% response rate. Half of the survey recipients were chosen on the likelihood they conducted creative writing programs and the second half were chosen on the basis of geographical location and population served in relation to the first set of libraries. Sixty-one percent of respondents conducted creative writing programs in their libraries, citing literacy promotion as the main reason (85%). The figures indicate one of the major reasons librarians conduct these programs is that they believe the programs to be valuable. Ninety-three percent of respondents from libraries with creative writing programs answered that the programs should be offered in public libraries, compared with 44% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Helen A. Cowan. Reasons for Conducting Creative Writing Programs for Children and Young Adults in Selected Public Libraries. 1999. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

This study assessed and analyzed attitudes of a selected sample of public librarians toward conducting creative writing programs for ages 8-18. Respondents from libraries with creative writing programs believed these programs should be offered in public libraries (93%), compared with 44% of respondents who do not have writing programs.

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Chapter 1—The Problem

Introduction

Public libraries worldwide include creative writing programs for children and young adults as part of their literature services. Programs include writing workshops conducted by published authors or library staff members and writing contests.

Are creative writing programs valuable? In his preface to *Creative Writing in America*, Joseph M. Moxley quotes *AWP Newsletter* contributor David Smith as saying creative writing “ ‘creates more intelligent, informed and responsible readers by immersing them in the actual process of imaginative exploration and accomplishment’ ” (Moxley, 1989, p. xii). If creative writing creates better readers, what better place than the library to provide a program to encourage this activity? As librarians continue to find ways to encourage and promote reading among young people, are they encouraging the continued creation of the written word? Librarian Linda Rome asks, “Where will the new writers of the more than 40,000 books published every year come from? Perhaps from the teens of your community... encouraged and nurtured in a workshop sponsored by their local library” (Rome, 1992, p. 51). The library does not only have to house the written word but can be a place in which young people can be free to create the written word. Are public librarians encouraging young people to write creatively?

Statement of the Problem

This study assessed and analyzed the reasons a selected sample of librarians chose to conduct or chose not to conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young

adults in public libraries. Public librarians interested in learning more about creative writing programs for children and young adults have a minimal amount of literature to consult on this topic. Should public libraries provide a creative writing outlet for children and young adults? A review of the literature has not indicated that many librarians provide this service. What motivates librarians to conduct or not to conduct programs that promote creative writing among children and young adults? This study was limited to creative writing programs for children ages 8 to 18. The types of programs offered were explored through a study of literature on nationwide creative writing programs in schools and libraries, as well as through communication with other librarians via e-mail and surveys.

Surveys on this type of programming were sent to 100 children's and/or young adult (YA) librarians nationwide. The assumption was made that librarians who conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults may be few in number and that a random sampling would not have yielded enough respondents who conduct creative writing programs to understand their motivations; therefore, the surveys were sent to a specific group of librarians. Fifty of the recipients were carefully selected through a study of literature on creative writing programs and listserv communications. Subscribers to the Pubyac listserv (an online forum for librarians who serve children and young adults) who currently conduct creative writing programs were asked if they would like to receive a survey on this type of programming. The surveys were sent to the 14 librarians who responded to the initial request as well as to 36 other librarians who likely conducted creative writing programs, based on findings of searches on the Pubyac archives and through the literature review. The next fifty recipients were in libraries

similar to the first fifty. An analysis of geographic location, population served and existence of a children's and/or young adult librarian using the *American Library Directory* determined how "similar" a library was to the libraries in the first mailing group. The purpose of the study was not to find a representative national sampling of the number of librarians who conduct creative writing programs, but to find out what the motivating factors are behind conducting or not conducting such a program.

The majority of the 67 respondents to the survey (74%) answered that they thought creative writing programs for children and young adults should be offered in public libraries though a smaller majority (61%) of respondents actually conduct creative writing programs in their libraries. The results of this study should be useful for librarians who are interested in implementing new programs or in justifying an existing creative writing program.

Purpose of the Study

Librarians often seek information from their peers on programming ideas. Little literature exists on creative writing programs in public libraries, especially for children ages 8-12; however, the value of creative writing for children and young adults does not appear to be questioned. Creative writing is taught in the classroom, especially in high school English classes. Cynde Gregory, a visiting writer to classrooms for ages preschool through high school as part of the Alternative Literacy Program in the Schools (ALPS) says "possessing the written word as something of their own making enables children to proceed with greater courage and passion through the manifold experiences their lives will hold." (Gregory, 1990, p. xi). Gregory traveled to schools to teach creative writing,

but public libraries could provide the same type of service. Any program that encourages the creation and appreciation of the written word in children and young adults should have a firm place in the library. This study, ideally, will reveal the thoughts and feelings of librarians on this topic and will perhaps encourage more librarians to implement creative writing programs for children and young adults. The information given by librarians in this study can be used to aid others in their decision whether or not to do such a program.

Theoretical Framework

Creative writing programs for children and young adults are valuable. The Young Adult Library Services Association's (YALSA) *Excellence in Library Services to Young Adults* lists 50 exceptional library programs. A grant program entitled "Poetry in the Branches" combined community partnerships, poetry collection development and poetry workshops for teens in the New York Public Library. The benefits of the program are that "[t]eens have said the workshops provide a forum for discussing published contemporary poetry and for sharing and critiquing their own work; two needs which are not met in the schools they attend" (Chelton, 1997, p. 25). Can public libraries fill an educational gap as far as creative writing is concerned? Creative writing programs in the library setting that result in the publication of a booklet of the children's and/or young adults' works can be especially satisfying. "Seeing the fruits of their labors in print in the shape of published anthologies gives teens a final product which they can treasure and share with friends and family" (Chelton, 1997, p. 25).

Creative writing programs at public libraries are voluntary on the participant's part, encourage creative thinking, encourage reading, are non-threatening (no grades are given), encourage literacy, are available to any child and allow children to contribute to the literature available in the library (if a publication results). Do librarians agree with this assessment?

Hypothesis

Creative writing programs are valuable services for children and/or young adults in public libraries but seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Why? Do librarians consider other programs to be more important? Other reasons for the apparent lack of creative writing programs could be

- a shortage of library staff.
- a lack of interest on the part of staff and the public.
- librarians' assumption that schools are responsible for creative writing.
- a lack of writing experience or expertise on the part of librarians.
- a lack of funding for this type of program.

It is doubtful the programs are not conducted because the librarians do not see value in teaching children and/or young adults creative writing. Creative writing programs just do not get the publicity and support that other programs do (such as reading promotion for ages birth to five), and have a more limited audience than some of the more "exciting" library programs for children. Another factor could be that the librarians' job responsibilities continue to grow, especially regarding new technologies, without an increase in staff. The librarian simply may not have time to conduct such a

program. The surveys included questions about other programs in the library, as well as direct questions as to the reasons why a particular librarian offers or does not offer creative writing programs.

Definition of Terms

Children. The Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) defines children as anyone from the ages of birth to 14. For the purposes of this study, “children” will be defined as anyone from the ages of birth to 12. Most instances of “children” will mean 8-12 year olds, as they are the age group considered for this study.

Creative writing programs. Programs that promote written creative expression such as writing clubs in which participants write original poetry and/or prose. These programs may include writing contests, publication of in-house literary magazines, script writing, and newsletters. For the purposes of this study, storytelling programs in which nothing is written down will not be considered a creative writing program.

Librarian. For the purpose of this study, “librarian” will refer to anyone with an MLS or equivalent or anyone pursuing the MLS or equivalent who has professional responsibilities in a public library. The term will also be used in this study to describe the person who is in charge of children’s and/or young adult programming.

Young Adults (YAs). YALSA’s definition of a young adult as a person between the ages of 12 and 18 will be modified to mean a person between the ages of 13 and 18.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the number of completed questionnaires received and questions answered accurately. A delimitation of the study was the careful selection of

50 librarians who already conduct creative writing programs, as well as the limitation of the study to 100 children's and/or young adult librarians. The study does not reflect the national status of public library creative writing programs, but offers some insight as to why some librarians conduct or do not conduct creative writing programs.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of the study examined the literature on this topic in more detail, as well as revealed results of further communications with other librarians via e-mail, surveys and the World Wide Web. The surveys were sent to the selected librarians and the answers given were recorded and presented to the reader (see Appendix).

Chapter 2—Literature Review

Introduction

Educational literature has shown that children who participate in creative writing programs improve their writing skills, enjoy writing more and increase their desire for reading. An extensive review of library and educational literature has indicated that research has not yet been done on creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries. Both schools and public libraries report success with creative writing programs for young people, but much of the literature on public library creative writing programs describes a particular program and not the motivation for conducting such a program. Public librarians who participate in the Pubyac listserv are vocal about the types of writing programs they conduct for children and young adults in their libraries, yet few articles describing the importance of this type of programming have been written. The review of the literature indicates a need for an assessment of the value of and librarians' attitudes toward creative writing programs for children and/or young adults.

Historical Context

A library science textbook, *Introduction to Library Public Services*, includes a quote from Jean Gates in its section on municipal public libraries defining the public library's mission.

It is the function of the municipal public library to provide the printed and nonprinted materials to meet the individual and group needs

of its constituency for information, education, self-realization, recreation, and cultural growth and for assistance in carrying out their duties as citizens and members of the community. (Evans, 1992, p. 30)

The textbook goes on to describe “special programming activities,” which would include story hours, puppet shows and summer reading programs, as a characteristic of the municipal public library. A big difference between the school and public library, according to the authors, is that the public library tends to focus on “recreational needs” (p. 31). Aside from this focus, the public library takes an active role in the improvement of the overall literacy skills of the general population (p. 32). Public libraries also respond to changing social needs while maintaining some areas of constancy:

Probably the three constant threads that run through public library service, in spite of changing emphasis, are education, information and reference, and recreation. Almost all the specialized service programs will have some element of all three threads. (p. 25)

Creative writing programs for children and young adults in public libraries are specialized service programs whose existence seems to be at the discretion of the individual librarian. Thorough searches through the Educational Resources Information Center’s (ERIC) electronic database (1982-98) and *Library Literature* (1959-98) did not reveal a large number of articles written about creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries, and failed to reveal any guides for conducting these kinds of programs in a public library setting. However, the concept of conducting creative writing programs for young people in public libraries is not new. British librarian Lionel R. McColvin, in the 1957 UNESCO manual *Public Library Services for Children* suggests librarians conduct creative writing programs for children as “extension work,” which he defines as activities which can be conducted in and outside the library to

make children more interested in books and in the library. McColvin (1957) gives this advice:

In addition to encouraging children to speak, one should encourage them to write. The library can have a magazine – probably a single copy manuscript production - to which they can contribute stories, articles, poems and drawings. Display their drawings and painting on the walls and on exhibit panels and let them make lettered shelf guides and notices. (p. 36-7)

Literature on public library programs. Librarians have written articles that describe creative writing programs for children and young adults in public libraries, such as writing workshops, poetry contests, and the publication of in-house literary magazines. Most of the existing literature simply describes a particular program, with no real attention paid to the theoretical framework for doing such programs. Though the authors of the articles describe their programs with enthusiasm and with their own measures for success, they do not generally call for other libraries to do the same types of programs, nor do they take the position that the program they have done is unusual. Why, then, is it so difficult to find articles on this topic? It seems equally acceptable for librarians to conduct creative writing programs for young people as it is for librarians not to conduct these programs.

Need for research. The literature reviewed has not yielded any information on studies conducted on creative writing programs in public libraries for children and/or young adults. The closest attempt at such a study was found during a search on the Pubyac listserv's archives from 1994, in which Donnie Curtis from New Mexico State University asks for help in writing a newsletter article on the role librarians can play in encouraging children as creative writers. Correspondence with Curtis revealed the article

had never been written due to a lack of responses to her query. A research project conducted in one county in England explored adult education and the factors that affect adult participation in literary events in public libraries, which included creative writing. The literature review revealed no similar American study of creative writing programs in public libraries. This thesis will attempt to fill a gap between literature that explains specific creative writing programs and literature that discusses research on other public library programs for children, but does not include a framework for creative writing programs.

Assessment of Previous Studies

Research in schools. Marjorie Donato's study, *Cooperative Learning and Process Writing Experiences to Improve the Writing of Fifth Grade Students*, measured an increase in the quality, quantity and variety of writing of fifth graders who completed an experimental writing program which included a strong focus on creative writing (Donato, 1990). Donato surveyed the 60 students and 10 teachers who participated in the study before the program began to learn more about their attitudes toward creative writing. The teachers were asked to respond to 10 matrix questions, given the choice of "always," "sometimes," or "never." Six of the ten teachers surveyed said they "always" avoided teaching creative writing, three said they "sometimes" avoided teaching creative writing and one teacher said he/she "never" avoided teaching creative writing. The survey indicates that the avoidance of these programs was not based on a theoretical disagreement with teaching creative writing, but in the lack of confidence of teachers (in this case) to conduct these lessons. All ten of the teachers surveyed said they would

“always” teach more creative writing if they had an easy guide to follow which complemented their language textbooks. Donato’s study is limited, of course, to a small number of teachers in a particular school, but it would be interesting to discover if librarians who do not conduct creative writing programs for children and young adults would conduct them if they had a guide.

Research in public libraries. Searches through ERIC, *Library Literature*, other periodical databases and the World Wide Web did not yield information on any studies on creative writing programs for children and young adults in public libraries. The most relevant study on this topic was a two-year research project on adult education and creative writing in Cleveland County in England. Researcher Rebecca O’Rourke visited libraries in Cleveland and interviewed 161 adult library users regarding the frequency and nature of their library use, what books they read and why, and whether they themselves wrote. Sixty percent of O’Rourke’s sample said they used the library only for borrowing books. Of the 40% who made further use of the library, 5% used the library for creative writing class. O’Rourke’s findings indicated 12% of the sample would or had joined a writers group, with another 9% saying they would seriously consider joining one. Though O’Rourke’s figures show creative writing to be a minority interest, she asserts that the percentage of people interested in creative writing is “respectable enough” to indicate further consideration and investigation (O’Rourke, 1994, p. 80).

Siting cultural activities, such as poetry readings or creative writing groups, in libraries is a positive move. Libraries are amongst the few public spaces that are generally unrestricted in their use and which women, old and young people, people on their own and with children can enter without anxiety. They are also important to community educators as they are free from the often negative institutional weighting that designated educational buildings, especially schools, have. (O’Rourke, 1994, p. 82)

The study, however, did not show an interactive relationship between writing, reading and the library. O'Rourke states participants in the writing groups she visited said they drew inspiration from being surrounded by books, but further questioning revealed the participants rarely read books. O'Rourke concluded writing groups appeared to simply happen in libraries, rather than being part of their interactive use.

At the harshest, you could say that because somebody somewhere once made the connection Libraries=Books, Books=Writing, Writing=Libraries, we all behave as if those connections will be recognised and fully exploited with no effort needed beyond putting writers in residence and writing classes and groups in libraries.
(p. 82)

O'Rourke concludes that librarians who expanded their role in the promotion of these activities could make these programs more effective, but ends her article by asking how already overworked librarians and adult educators should be expected to do that kind of promotional work.

Authors of articles published in American library journals on creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries do make a closer connection between program participants and the library and between writing and reading than the O'Rourke study. The authors of the articles also tend to be enthusiastic librarians who actually promoted and ran the creative writing programs in their libraries.

Justification of the Topic

Successful school creative writing programs. Though research on creative writing programs for children and young adults in public libraries is minimal, educators place a high value on creative writing for children. Gloria Solomon, an elementary school principal in Alabama, conducted a creative writing experiment in her school in which

teachers encouraged students to write creatively. Non-teachers from the community critiqued the writing, focusing on content rather than mechanics and on encouragement of the students. Solomon states outcomes of the program included improvements in students' writing such as more attention to writing complete thoughts, more use of descriptive language, and more fully developed paragraphs. Students also demonstrated better mechanics and editing skills, were more willing to correct mistakes and to share their writing with their peers, and increased their use of dictionaries (Solomon, 1984). The children's eagerness to share their work with their peers increased reading reinforcement (Solomon, 1984).

Judith Gold Bent and Stephen P. Plaskon conducted a creative writing program in a school in which 4th, 5th and 6th graders wrote stories for preschoolers. Bent and Plaskon (1983) describe the versatility of the creative writing program:

Creative writing workshops are easily adapted to serve as a focus for other related activities. The children could read their books aloud to their peers and to nursery and kindergarten-age children. They could put their books on display in the library, invite their parents to a "reading" and have discussions about their own particular favorites. (p. 26)

For Native American high school students, creative writing proved to bridge a culture gap. As a teacher of creative writing (among other duties), Albert F. Spencer was challenged with encouraging students with a background in oral tradition and an almost absent desire to write to develop their writing skills. With the help of old silent movies (Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, etc.), Spencer used the universal language of laughter to encourage his students to write frames for the movies and invent dialogue for the characters. As the class became more interested in writing for the films, they gradually

began to improve their writing skills as Spencer helped transform his students from being “passive viewers to participatory writers” (Spencer, 1995, p. 68).

Creativity first, mechanics second, seems to be the trend in school creative writing programs. Teacher Julie Landsman describes her creative writing students at first as constantly guarded about grammar, spelling and vocabulary. Landsman says the students “paralyze their creative impulses by censoring themselves, and the effect on their work is devastating” (Landsman, 1994, p. 59). By allowing the students to express themselves without fear of proper writing mechanics (revision takes place later), they generate more material and gradually lose their writing anxiety. Landsman also encourages the students to read their work aloud, without fear of repercussion from her or their classmates.

An article by high school teacher Robert Liftig echoes the importance of encouraging student creativity. Liftig writes of students who came up through a curriculum of emphasizing only the “basics,” or mechanics, of writing.

... [T]he result has been a rise in *aliteracy*, an ability to understand the written word only in bits and pieces of isolated sentences in grammar or punctuation exercises and an inability to gain from a creative sequence of related sentences any aesthetic experience. (Liftig, 1982, p. 47)

As a teacher of an Imaginative Literature class, Liftig was challenged with a group of students whose previous writing experiences had been limited to essays, paragraph construction and sentence correction assignments. Liftig decided to get the students involved in a literature experience by having them brainstorm in groups, giving them an immediate audience for their work (each other), physically acting out their roles and setting goals for each stage of their composing. The end result would be the creation of a short story that could be published in a school-produced anthology of their writing.

I hoped this program would lead (the students) to a greater involvement with the literature they read... I hoped it would lead them to a heightened appreciation of the trials and triumphs of all writers. (p. 48)

Liftig said the program was a success, and after the exercises the short stories showed dialogue, description and a sense of movement and timing that did not exist at the beginning of the school year. When creativity was encouraged, the students could improve all aspects of their writing and gain a better appreciation of literature.

Successful public library programs. Library trade journals such as *School Library Journal*, *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*, *Wilson Library Bulletin* and the *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries (JOYS)* have all published articles on successful individual public library creative writing programs. Creative writing programs appear to be a good “extra” program for children and/or young adults, but librarians are not guided by their peers on the “how-tos” of creating a successful writing program for themselves. Librarians who wish to begin a creative writing program in their libraries must either already have something in mind or do some serious digging to find other librarians who have done programs they may want to adapt to their own situation. If librarians see the programs as valuable, why are they not striving to make them more common in public libraries and public library literature?

The educational value of creative writing programs for children and young adults has its advocates, but should public librarians assume this educator role? In describing a successful public library program on story writing and recording for children 8 and up, librarian Emily Schuder Chasse explains one of the appeals of the program “came from the fact that the children who chose to participate knew they wouldn’t be graded” (Chasse, 1984, p. 52), a sentiment echoed in several articles by librarians who have

conducted successful public library creative writing programs. Voluntary, informal creative writing programs can encourage children to enjoy writing without the pressure of performing for a grade.

It is a common assessment among educators that children will express themselves more openly in their writing when freed from the constraints of grades and the technical aspects of writing. As public librarians respond to the needs of their communities, they may wish to take into consideration the needs of children to express themselves in a no-pressure forum. In 1958, Bernice Bruner began a Creative Writing Club for fifth through eighth graders at the Evansville (Illinois) Public Library because there were no existing community groups for children who wanted to write poetry, stories or puppet plays. The library was seen as a possible outlet for the children's creative activities. The children who participated in the program shared their writing with their peers.

While an effort is made to avoid a strict classroom atmosphere, the children are taught the colorful use of words in prose and poetry, the clear expression of thoughts and ideas, and the use of imagery and conversation. (Bruner, 1958, p. 653).

The club members published a bulletin of their writings, and went on to form a young adult Creative Writing Club as they got older.

Creative writing programs have also been used to attract non-library users to the public library. One library attracted users into the library simply by requiring them to come to the library to pick up an entry form for a library-sponsored writing contest (Moran, 1988, p. 272). One librarian took her creative writing program on the road. As an assistant children's librarian in the Lincoln (Massachusetts) Public Library, Sheila Williams taught an elective class in journalmaking at the public middle school. By going into the schools, Williams reached a bussed population with no access to the public

library as well as middle schoolers who were not regular library users (Williams, 1996, p. 385). Williams reported the class made the library visible to that segment of the community and built a stronger relationship between students and the librarian.

Writing programs also tend to encourage participants to read. A New York Public Library program for teens allowed them to participate in poetry workshops. After writing and discussing their own poetry, the teens' interest in published poetry increased.

Before and after workshops, teens can be observed checking out poetry from both the young adult and adult collections. The fact that participants never leave the workshops at the official finishing time, but stay on to pick the facilitator's brain, and that they have all stressed in evaluations and by word of mouth that three [workshop] sessions are not enough is proof that this program is filling a deep need in these teens' lives. (Chelton, 1995, p. 26)

Reluctant readers are also more comfortable in a non-structured writing environment. Young adult librarian Diane Tuccillo describes a teen pen-pal program in 1983:

Reluctant readers—who are usually reluctant writers, too—can be found diligently preparing a letter to their new friend and a week or so later call me on the phone excitedly telling about the letter they received in response. (Tuccillo, 1983, p. 261)

The benefits and diversity of creative writing programs make public libraries a good forum for this type of program. Though the literature discussing the reasons to conduct creative writing programs for children and young adults is scant and little literature exists which describes specific programs, other research indicates that librarians are conducting these programs; they just may not be writing about them.

Internet searches on writing and public libraries yielded results from Australian, Canadian and American public libraries that run creative writing contests for children and/or young adults. Some of the contests are run by the Friends of the Library, with

participation by the public schools, like the Olean Public Library in New York. Others run contests in conjunction with sponsors, such as Nestlé, which sponsors Write Around Australia for primary school students. The Richmond Public Library in British Columbia sponsors its own young adult writing contest and not only publishes the winning works on the web, but uses the medium to its advantage and allows visitors to download RealAudio to hear the young writers reading their own work at a gathering for the contest winners. The Ohio Valley Area Libraries' website has a picture posted to inspire child visitors to the page to write a story. Under the picture is a link for children to click on to publish their own story on the website.

A search on the Pubyac listserv archives from 1993-1997 yielded 149 hits for the search term "creative writing" compared to 13 hits in *Library Literature* from 1984-1998 for the same term. The difference in results may have something to do with better natural language searching in the Pubyac archives, but could also indicate that librarians are doing these programs, they are just not writing journal articles about them.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was designed to gather information from 100 librarians across the country to find out why they do or do not conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults. A survey was used to assess this information because it is a tried and true research tool that will reach the most people in a short amount of time.

YALSA's *Output Measures and More: Planning and Evaluating Public Library Services* advocates the use of surveys to gather information from young adults on what programs they would like to see at their library (Walter, 1995). Donato (1990) uses surveys to

assess creative writing attitudes among students and teachers. Solomon (1984) also uses surveys to assess the effectiveness of the creative writing experiment among her students, faculty, parents and community readers.

Theoretical Framework

Though creative writing programs for children and young adults have many benefits for their young participants, the role of public librarians in supporting this type of program is not quite known. Should public librarians go out of their way to provide this type of program, or should the schools assume this responsibility? This thesis attempted to find out why librarians conduct or do not conduct these programs. The literature review did not indicate that any attitude survey or research has been done on creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries. A study of librarians' reasons for doing or for not doing this type of program could shed new light on this topic and perhaps encourage librarians to implement a creative writing program or justify the funding of an existing creative writing program for children and/or young adults.

Chapter 3 — Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and analyze the reasons librarians chose to conduct or chose not to conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries. The study was limited to writing programs for ages 8 to 18. The variety of programs offered was explored through a study of literature on nationwide creative writing programs in schools and in public libraries, as well as through communications with other librarians via e-mail and surveys.

Methodology

Self-administered surveys were the chosen method of data collection in this study due to their ability to reach a large sample of people in a short period of time. Librarians who received the survey were asked questions concerning whether or not they conducted creative writing programs and why they do or do not conduct creative writing programs. The questionnaires consisted of multiple choice questions with an option to comment and open-ended questions (see Appendix). The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions, not all of which should have been answered by any one respondent, as some were contingency questions. Questionnaire recipients were in a position to conduct or not to conduct creative writing programs in their libraries. The completed questionnaires reflect the *opinions* of the respondents. The opinions of these librarians were noted and analyzed. What was the same? What was different? Did geographical location, population served and staffing affect the answers? Or was it just a matter of attitude? Earl

Babbie states in *The Practice of Social Research* that survey research is “the best method available to the social scientist interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly” (Babbie, 1998, p. 256). Though survey research has its limitations, this study was limited more by the number of surveys rather than by the survey research method used. The study was designed to analyze existing attitudes among the librarians surveyed and in no way represents all librarians in this country.

Design of the Study

The study was designed to address the motivations of children’s and/or young adult librarians for conducting or not conducting creative writing programs. Taken into consideration were attitudes, staffing, population served, and funding. The study tested the hypothesis that most librarians see value in creative writing programs, but few actually conduct creative writing programs. Librarians may perceive themselves as ill-equipped to handle such programming, as little literature exists on how to conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries. Surveys were sent to 100 librarians in the contiguous United States. Fifty of the libraries were chosen because research indicated that they currently conduct creative writing programs or that they had in the past. The other 50 libraries were chosen based on their geographic location and population served in relation to the first 50 libraries. The returned and completed surveys were originally to be analyzed to see if librarians from similar locations in similar situations had the same opinions regarding creative writing programs. The surveys were analyzed as a whole to determine trends among librarians who conduct or do not conduct creative writing programs. Once the data were tallied and analyzed,

the information was compared with findings from the review of the existing literature. Did this sample reflect any of the trends of the published literature, or is there a huge “underground” of public librarians who conduct creative writing programs, but who do not write about them in the trade journals?

Sample and Population

The first 50 survey recipients were chosen based on the likelihood they conducted creative writing programs in their libraries for children and/or young adults. A posting to the Pubyac listserv (see Appendix) asking librarians who conduct creative writing programs if they would like to answer a survey on this topic yielded 14 positive responses. A search through the Pubyac listserv’s archives from 1994-1998 yielded 22 more librarians who conducted creative writing programs (after the duplicates were removed). Eleven librarians who had conducted creative writing programs were chosen based on the literature review and three librarians were chosen on the recommendation of personal acquaintances in the library field. The first fifty libraries represented 22 states.

The next fifty libraries were chosen based on their relationship to the first 50 libraries. The *American Library Directory 1997-1998* was used to get the complete mailing addresses of the first 50 libraries (no easy task, as many of the archived Pubyac messages gave incomplete library and staff names), and the population the library served. If the “population served” was not listed, the population of the city in which the library was located was used. A notation was made as to whether the library listed a children’s librarian, a young adult librarian or other youth services coordinator, or if no mention was made. Each of the first 50 libraries was paired with a similar library, with “similar”

meaning a library from the same state serving a comparable population and being the same type of library (i.e., municipal, county, a central library or a branch library of the same system). Originally, the intent was to find libraries that met the above criteria and also listed a children's and/or young adult librarian, matching the original library's listing. The *American Library Directory* was found to be unreliable in this area – the inclusion of the name of the children's or young adult librarian was arbitrary. *The American Library Directory* did not list children's librarians for libraries from which the children's librarians responded to the Pubyac request. It was noted if the *American Library Directory* listed a children's or young adult librarian position, but it was not used as a determining factor in choosing the second library. Acceptable population ranges for pairs were under 10,000; 10,000 - 49,999; 50,000 - 99,999 and 100,000 and above, with two exceptions, when matches could not be made. The type of library was a more important factor than the population range. Libraries of large cities (1,000,000 or more) were paired with other large city libraries. Some of the original libraries' addresses (due to branch names and indexing) were not easily found in the *American Library Directory* but were located on the Internet and then double-checked in the *American Library Directory*.

The sample was not representative of all librarians in the United States. It was selected based on the likelihood of a creative writing program so the motivations for conducting the programs could be analyzed. If the literature is indicative of the trend of these types of programs nationwide, a completely random sample of 100 libraries across the country would result in little or no information from any librarians who conduct creative writing programs. The assumption was that half the librarians receiving the

surveys conduct creative writing programs while the other half does not, but no indication of a lack of these programs had been given from the second group of libraries.

Instrumentation

The self-administered surveys were filled out voluntarily by the recipients. A letter sent with the survey indicated the recipients need not answer all the questions. The surveys were numbered and color-coded, blue for libraries that most likely had a creative writing program, and yellow for the similar libraries in which it was unknown whether or not creative writing programs were conducted. For example, a library in New Jersey that conducts creative writing programs may be coded “1 B,” while its similar library, also in New Jersey, would be coded “1 Y” (B = blue; Y= yellow).

Survey questions asked the job title of the recipient, whether or not the recipient conducted creative writing programs for children and/or young adults, the reasons for conducting or not conducting these programs (with multiple choice and open-ended questions), the factors that would convince the respondent to conduct a creative writing program, whether or not the librarian saw creative writing programs as valuable and questions related to library staffing and job experience (see Appendix). All data collected has been kept anonymous and confidential.

The surveys were pretested by the thesis advisor and a classmate and revisions were made. The revised survey was pretested by a library assistant in the Children’s Department of the Vineland Public Library in New Jersey.

Data Collection

The bulk of the data was collected through self-administered confidential questionnaires. The surveys were mailed directly to the selected libraries, addressed to the Youth Services Coordinator if the librarians' names were not available. Recipients had two weeks to return the surveys before they received a reminder/thank you postcard (see Appendix) extending the deadline another week, to March 15, 1999. Surveys received later than the March 15 deadline but before March 26 were still used.

Data Analysis Plan

Collected data from closed questions on the surveys were tabulated. Comments from librarians were listed and analyzed. The analysis was designed to put comments into the context of the library's location, population served and staffing. Survey responses regarding library staffing were taken into consideration when motivations were analyzed, but a problem in methodology made many of the staffing responses unusable (see Chapter 4). Analysis of the survey responses were then compared with the literature review to attempt to reveal a new perspective on the reasons for conducting or not conducting creative writing programs for children and/or young adults.

Chapter 4 — Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

Surveys were sent to the Youth Services Coordinators of 100 public libraries in the United States to determine librarians' motivations for conducting or not conducting creative writing programs for ages 8-18. Half of the librarians were chosen based on the likelihood they conducted creative writing programs for children and/or young adults, and the second half were chosen based on their similarity to the first 50 libraries. The libraries were "paired" if they were from the same state, served a similar population, and were the same type of library (i.e., municipal, county, a central library or a branch library of the same system).

The sample was not representative of all librarians in the United States. It was selected based on the likelihood of a creative writing program, so the motivations for conducting the programs could be analyzed. The assumption was that half of the librarians who received the survey conduct creative writing programs, while the other half do not, but no indication of a lack of these programs had been given from the second group of libraries.

Survey responses were to be analyzed based on similar geographic location, population served and staffing in the libraries' Children's and Young Adult departments. Survey recipients were also asked their opinions on the value of creative writing for children and young adults in general and whether or not creative writing programs for these age groups should be conducted in public libraries. The original hypothesis was

that librarians would find value in these programs, but for various reasons (lack of staffing, funding, expertise, etc.), would not conduct the programs.

Survey Responses

Of the 100 surveys sent, three were returned unopened due to incorrect addresses (possibly due to obtaining the addresses from Pubyac archives and *The American Library Directory* from 1997), 68 were completed and returned, of which 67 were usable, for a rate of 67% usable responses. Responses were returned from 19 of the 22 states to which they had been sent.

Forty-one of the 67 respondents (61%) indicated that they did conduct creative writing programs in their libraries, while 26 of the respondents said that they did not conduct creative writing programs. (Note: one of the “yes” respondents checked “no” when asked if he/she conducted creative writing programs, but clearly answered the rest of the survey as someone who conducts creative writing programs).

Problems in the Methodology

The questionnaires were color-coded for libraries that most likely conducted creative writing programs (blue) and for libraries for which it was unknown whether or not they conducted programs (yellow). However, 11 of the blue surveys were returned from librarians who said they did not conduct these programs. The reason for this could be the likelihood of the libraries doing the programs was based on searching the Pubyac archives or from published articles more than two years old. The librarians who at one time had conducted these programs may have relocated or stopped offering the programs.

Of the 36 blue surveys returned, 25 were from libraries in which creative writing programs are conducted and 11 were from libraries in which creative writing programs are not conducted. Of the 31 yellow surveys returned, 16 were from libraries in which creative writing programs are conducted and 15 were from libraries in which creative writing programs are not conducted.

The original plan was to compare “similar” libraries, ones which conducted programs and ones which did not, and analyze the reasons why similar libraries from the same state which served similar populations did or did not conduct creative writing programs. Though 25 pairs of similar libraries returned the surveys, only 13 pairs were split, with one library conducting creative writing programs and one not conducting creative writing programs. Since 13 pairs did not seem enough to do a comparison, the respondents have been divided into two groups: libraries with creative writing programs for children and/or young adults and libraries without creative writing programs for children and/or young adults.

Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

Survey results indicate that 38 of the 41 respondents from libraries that have creative writing programs for children and/or young adults are responsible for children’s and/or young adult programming in their libraries, two respondents were not responsible for programming and one respondent was only responsible for some children’s programs.

Creative writing programs were most likely designed for ages 8-17. Table 1 shows the breakdown of ages for creative writing programs in the respondents’ libraries. Most of the creative writing programs focused on young adults aged 13-17 (66 %).

Table 1

Breakdown of Age Levels in Libraries That Have Creative Writing Programs (n=41)

<u>Ages</u>	<u># Libraries</u>	<u>%</u>
7 & under	7	17%
8-12	24	59
13-17	27	66
18+	9	22
No Answer	2	5

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them. Number of respondents = 41. Age levels taken from answers to Question 4 of the survey.

Types of creative writing programs varied. Respondents were asked what types of programs they conducted with the choice of writing clubs, in-house literary magazines, poetry contests, Internet posting of original stories, Writing/Fiction/Essay contests, newsletters, newspapers, and three lines for “other” programs (see Table 2).

Table 2

Creative Writing Programs Offered (n=41)

<u>Programs</u>	<u># Libraries</u>
Writing Clubs	15
In-house Literary Mag.	8
Poetry Contest	20
Internet Story Posting	0
Writing/Fiction/Essay Contest	21
Newsletter	10
Newspaper	2
Poetry Workshop	5
Writing Workshop	5
Other	17
No Answer	1

Note: Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them.

Survey respondents were asked why they conducted creative writing programs in their libraries and were given the option of answering the following: 1) the programs encourage literacy; 2) the programs are fun; 3) there is community interest in the programs; 4) the respondent enjoys creative writing; 5) the respondent was inspired by other successful librarians doing creative writing programs; and/or 6) another reason they could fill in themselves. The most frequent answers were that creative writing programs encourage literacy (35) and that creative writing programs are fun (34). Other reasons given included young adults wished to sponsor the programs, the programs were part of National Library Week activities and the programs brought attention to the library. One respondent said the creative writing programs were suggested by a board member's spouse. See Table 3 for a breakdown of the results.

Table 3

Reasons Respondents Conduct Creative Writing Programs in their Libraries
(n=41)

<u>Reasons</u>	<u># Respondents</u>	<u>% Respondents</u>
Encourage Literacy	35	85%
Fun	34	83
Community Interest	27	66
Enjoy it	14	34
Success of others	7	17
Other	14	34
No Answer	0	0

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them.

Eighty percent of the respondents answered that librarians conduct the creative writing programs, with support staff, volunteers, guest authors and others conducting programs in smaller numbers. See Table 4 for the results.

Table 4

Who Conducts Creative Writing Programs in Respondents' Libraries (n=41)

<u>Who Conducts Program</u>	<u># Respondents</u>	<u>% Respondents</u>
Librarian	33	80%
Support Staff	4	10
Volunteers	4	10
Authors	13	32
Other	13	32

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them.

Most of the respondents who conduct creative writing programs responded “Yes” when asked if they saw any value in children ages 8-12 writing creatively (40) with one respondent answering “Not Sure.” All 41 respondents answered “Yes” when asked if they saw value in young adults ages 13-18 writing creatively. When asked if they thought creative writing programs for children and/or young adults should be offered in public libraries, 38 responded “Yes,” two responded “Not Sure” and one did not answer the question.

One of the respondents who replied he or she was not sure if creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries stated that creative writing programs are good if they fit the mission of the library’s programming, receive public interest and are conducted by a skilled programmer. Otherwise, the respondent said, the programs are “too time-intensive and stressful” to implement.

Respondents who reported they did think creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries gave reasons such as readers are often writers, the programs give teens a creative outlet, the next generation of authors has to come from somewhere, writing fosters reading and sharing original writing with peers sparks an interest in

exploring literature. One respondent asserted that not all librarians should attempt to teach writing, but they can encourage and support it (see Appendix for comments by survey respondents).

Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

Of the 26 respondents from libraries that do not conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults, 24 are responsible for children's and/or young adult programming in their libraries and two are not responsible for this type of programming. An original hypothesis was that survey respondents who did not conduct creative writing programs for children and/or young adults would see value in these programs but would not conduct the programs for a variety of other reasons (staffing, know-how, etc.). Of the 26 respondents who said they did not conduct creative writing programs in their libraries, 25 answered the questions (see Appendix survey questions #12-14) on the value of creative writing for ages 8-12 and ages 13-17 and if public libraries should conduct creative writing programs. Of the 25 respondents, 23 said they saw value in creative writing for ages 8-12, and two answered not sure. Twenty-four respondents said they saw value in creative writing for ages 13-17, and one answered not sure. When asked if they thought creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries, 11 respondents said yes, one said no and 13 (52%) said they were not sure. When compared with respondents from libraries that do creative writing programs, the value judgments of creative writing programs is quite different. See Table 5 for the results.

Table 5

Comparison of “Yes” Responses on the Value of Creative Writing Programs in Public Libraries

	# NCW	% NCW	# CW	% CW
Value 8-12	23	92%	40	98%
Value 13-18	24	96	41	100
Offered in Public Libraries	11	44	38	93

Note. NCW = libraries without creative writing programs. CW = libraries with creative writing programs.

Though percentages are close on the respondents’ opinions on the value of creative writing for children and young adults, 44% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs responded creative writing programs should be conducted in public libraries, compared with 93% of the respondents from libraries with creative writing programs.

Survey recipients from libraries without creative writing programs were asked if they had ever considered implementing creative writing programs in their libraries and were given a list of possible answers (See Appendix, survey question #9). Answer choices were: respondent had not thought about it, it was the responsibility of the schools, respondent already had too many job responsibilities, library programming concentrates on reading and book promotion, library programming concentrates on preschoolers, lack of community interest, not enough funds, programs would be too time-consuming, not enough staff, respondent did not know how to implement the program, and an option for “other” reasons. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 6

Reasons for Not Conducting Creative Writing Programs in Libraries Overall Compared with Reasons of Respondents Who Support Creative Writing Programs

Reason	Overall n=26		Support C.W. n=11	
	n	%	n	%
Had not thought about it	7	27%	2	18%
School's responsibility	3	12	0	0
Too many job responsibilities	4	15	1	9
Reading/Book programs	13	50	6	55
Preschool Programs	6	23	1	9
No community interest	4	15	1	9
No funds	3	12	2	18
Too Time consuming	3	12	2	18
Not enough staff	9	35	4	36
Don't know how	1	4	0	0
Other	7	27	4	36

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them. "Overall" indicates all the respondents who do not conduct creative writing programs who answered the value question. "Support C.W." indicates the 11 of the 26 respondents who do not conduct creative writing programs in their libraries, but indicated they thought creative writing programs should be conducted in public libraries.

The results are not that different for respondents who think creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries compared with the answers overall. Programming that concentrates on reading/book promotion is still the main concern of these libraries. "Other" comments are in higher concentration among respondents who think creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries. Other comments from this group include attempts at creative writing programs that either fell by the wayside or did not get community support or an indication that the community offers writing programs outside of the library.

Comments from librarians who were "not sure" whether or not creative writing programs for children and/or young adults should be offered in public libraries include lack of community interest in a "school" type program, the programs do not fit in with

the library’s mission, and a lack of training (graduate school and in-service) for librarians to do this kind of program.

One respondent said offering creative writing programs does not determine the value of a Children’s/Young Adult department and that creative writing programs are good “extra” programs if the public will show up for the programs to make the preparation time for them worthwhile.

Population Served and Staffing

Population. Survey results indicated that respondents who conduct creative writing programs are more likely to work in libraries that serve populations of 100,000 or more (49%). Respondents who did not conduct creative writing programs were more likely to work in libraries that served populations between 10,000 and 49,999 people (50%). See Table 7.

Table 7

Population Served by Respondents Who Conduct and Do Not Conduct Creative Writing Programs for Children and/or Young Adults

	Population Ranges							
	9,999 or fewer		10,000-44,999		50,000-99,999		100,000+	
Libraries	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
Writing Programs	5	12%	11	27%	5	12%	20	49%
No Writing Programs	3	11.5	13	50	2	8	8	31

Note. *Percentages may add up to more than 100% due to rounding. n = actual number of responses. Population numbers taken from the *American Library Directory*.

Staffing Concerns. An original hypothesis was that a lack of staffing might prevent librarians from conducting creative writing programs. In libraries that did not conduct creative writing programs, lack of staffing was the second most frequent answer for not doing creative writing programs, after more concentration on reading/book promotion. Survey results show libraries in which creative writing programs are conducted overall have more staff in the children’s and young adult departments than those that do not conduct creative writing programs. The staffing questions were problematic (see Appendix), though, because many librarians reported sharing staff in the Children’s and Young Adult departments as well as splitting their duties between being a reference librarian or director/assistant director of the library while also being responsible for children’s programming. See Table 8 for a comparison of full-time professional staff in the Children’s Department.

Table 8

Percentage of Libraries with Full-Time Children’s Librarians in Libraries that Conduct and Do Not Conduct Creative Writing Programs

	Number of full-time librarians						
	0	1-2	3-5	6-9	10+	Other	No Answer
CW	5%	41%	29%	5%	10%	7%	2%
NCW	12	69	8	4	4	0	4

Note. CW = libraries with creative writing programs. NCW= libraries without creative writing programs. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Though a higher percentage (77%) of libraries without creative writing programs has 1-5 full-time children’s librarians compared to libraries with creative writing programs (70%), a higher percentage of libraries with creative writing programs (15%) has 6 or more children’s librarians compared to libraries that do not conduct creative writing

programs (8%). Table 9 indicates libraries that conduct creative writing programs are also more likely to have full-time young adult librarians. Again, some respondents may have duplicated Children’s Department answers due to shared duties. The additional staffing may also be a result of the larger populations served by libraries in which creative writing programs are conducted.

Table 9

Percentage of Libraries with Full-Time Young Adult Librarians in Libraries that Conduct and Do Not Conduct Creative Writing Programs

	Number of full-time librarians						No Answer
	0	1-2	3-5	6-9	10+	Other	
CW	32%	32%	10%	2%	2%	20%	3%
NCW	42	35	0	0	4	12	8

Note. CW = libraries with creative writing programs. NCW= libraries without creative writing programs. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Other Library Programs

Table 10

Types of Library Programs Offered in Respondent Libraries

Programs	#CW		#NCW	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Preschool storytime	41	100%	26	100%
Reading groups (age 6+)	25	61	12	46
Summer Reading Program	41	100	26	100
Contests (poster, art, etc.)	27	66	19	73
Family Story Times	36	89	15	58
Teen/YA advisory	21	51	9	35
Other	21	51	14	54

Note. Respondents checked as many answers as applied to them. CW = libraries with creative writing programs. NCW= libraries without creative writing programs.

Both libraries that reported conducting creative writing programs and those that did not report conducting creative writing programs offer a variety of other library programs (see Table 10). Overall, respondent libraries that do creative writing programs tend to do a higher percentage of other programs as well.

Summary

The results indicated that the motivating factors for respondents who conducted creative writing programs were that the programs encourage literacy and that they were fun. Though staffing results were, for the most part, not usable, libraries with creative writing programs tended to have more full-time professional staff in the Children's and Young Adult departments than libraries without creative writing programs. Populations served were also higher in libraries with creative writing programs.

According to the surveys, the reason most often indicated for not conducting creative writing programs was a library focus on reading/book promotion, followed by a lack of staffing. The biggest difference indicated by the survey results was in the respondents' attitudes toward the value of offering creative writing programs in public libraries. Of the libraries that conducted creative writing programs, 93% of respondents said creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries compared with only 44% of respondents from libraries in which creative writing programs were not conducted.

Chapter 5 – Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

This study attempted to analyze a select group of librarians to uncover their reasons for conducting or not conducting creative writing programs for children and/or young adults. The study was intended to be used as a guide for librarians to gain an understanding of their peers' attitudes on this type of programming. The majority of librarians surveyed found creative writing valuable for ages 8-12 (95%) and for ages 13-18 (98%). The majority of the 67 librarians who responded to the survey also answered they thought creative writing programs for children and/or young adults should be offered in public libraries (74%), though a smaller majority (61%) of respondents actually conduct creative writing programs in their libraries.

Staffing and Population. Survey results on staffing, though problematic (see Chapter 4) did show respondent libraries with creative writing programs to have a higher percentage of full-time librarians in the Children's and Young Adult departments, but that may be a result of the higher populations the libraries with creative writing programs serve. The modal population served by respondent libraries with creative writing programs was 100,000 or more. The modal population served by respondent libraries without creative writing programs was 10,000-44,999. Forty-nine percent of respondent libraries with creative writing programs serve populations of 100,000 or more, while 50% of libraries without creative writing programs serve populations of 10,000-44,999 people.

The biggest difference between respondent libraries with creative writing programs and respondent libraries without creative writing programs was the respondent's attitude toward whether or not creative writing programs should be conducted in public libraries. Ninety-three percent of respondents from libraries with creative writing programs answered that creative writing programs should be offered in public libraries, compared with 44% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs. As indicated by the variety of programs conducted in respondent libraries, public library programs are often at the discretion of the librarians, with perhaps the exception of preschool story times and summer reading programs, which 100% of the respondents answered they conducted in their libraries. Though promotion of literacy was the most frequent answer respondents from libraries with creative writing programs chose for conducting these programs (85%), the second most important factor for conducting the programs was that they are "fun" (83%). (Note: The wording of the questionnaire does not clarify whether the program is fun for the librarian or for the participants. The statement "I enjoy creative writing" received a 34% positive response).

Why do librarians conduct creative writing programs? Survey respondents corroborate many of the same attitudes as the librarians and educators in the literature review (see Chapter 2): creative writing programs encourage literacy; writing fosters reading; libraries provide a non-threatening atmosphere for creative expression; the programs build self-esteem; the community responds positively to the programs and the programs attract children and young adults to the library. Any program that accomplishes these goals would seem to be a worthwhile public library program. Why, then, is creative writing an almost ignored topic in the library journals and in library

education? Are creative writing programs better left in the schools? The answers to these questions depend upon who is asked. The general consensus of the field appears to be that creative writing programs are good “extra” programs. This attitude will not likely change until public librarians help each other with guides to conducting the programs and move to make these programs more prevalent.

Conclusions

The original hypothesis of this study was that librarians surveyed would see value in conducting creative writing programs for children and young adults in libraries but would not conduct the programs for a variety of reasons such as a shortage of library staff, a lack of interest on the part of the staff and the public, an assumption that schools should be responsible for creative writing, a lack of writing experience on the librarian’s part, and/or a lack of funding for this type of program. Based on the survey answers, the reason librarians may or may not conduct creative writing programs has more to do with their attitudes toward the appropriateness of creative writing programs in public libraries and less to do with extenuating circumstances.

Survey question #9 (see Appendix) asks recipients who do not conduct creative writing programs if they have ever considered implementing the programs. Respondents were asked to check as many answers as applied to their situations. Half of the 26 respondents answered that their libraries concentrate more on reading and book promotion. Thirty-five percent answered that they did not have the staff to cover it. The specific questions on staffing and volunteers #16-25 (see Appendix) were too rigid for most respondents to give accurate answers.

Lack of community interest. Only 15% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs answered they had considered/tried conducting creative writing programs but the community was not interested.

School's responsibility. Three respondents agreed the schools should be responsible for teaching creative writing, and later comments reinforce that some librarians see no need to duplicate any program that may be taking place in the schools already (see Appendix). It is also interesting to note that 24% of respondents in libraries that conduct creative writing programs have had teaching certificates at one time compared with 15% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs. Though not a large difference, the one-time teachers may have less of a problem doing a "school" program.

Librarians' writing experience. Nothing conclusive was found to confirm that a lack of writing experience or expertise on the librarians' part might make them less likely to conduct creative writing programs, though 34% of respondents from libraries with creative writing programs answered that they enjoyed writing themselves. A lack of publicity for these types of programs may be a factor. As one respondent comments, "I've never heard of any public libraries offering creative writing programs."

Lack of funding and time. An original hypothesis was that a lack of funding may prevent some librarians from conducting creative writing programs, but only 12% answered that this was the case, the same percentage that answered they did not have time to conduct creative writing programs. Since both respondent libraries with and without creative writing programs do a variety of programs for children and/or young adults, it seems less likely that a lack of funding or time would prevent them from

conducting creative writing programs. Aside from the more standard preschool story times and summer reading programs, the libraries offered quite a selection of “other” programs (see Appendix), which in large part seem to be at the discretion of the librarian. If the librarian does not see a place for creative writing programs in libraries, and only 44% of respondents from libraries without creative writing programs responded that they thought the programs should be conducted in public libraries, they will not conduct the programs.

Recommendations

A national survey of librarians taken from a more representative sample of librarians would yield more accurate results on the national attitude toward creative writing programs in public libraries, as well as a more accurate number of how many children and young adult librarians actually conduct creative writing programs in their libraries. A survey of library school programs and educators, especially those that concentrate on children’s and young adult services, would shed an interesting light on the profession’s attitude on the placement of creative writing programs in public libraries. Are future librarians trained to do library programs? Are programs like preschool story times and summer reading programs stressed at all in library school or are they just staples of public libraries? Should there be more uniformity in public library programming or should librarians decide what is best for the community they serve? Are creative writing programs for children and/or young adults important enough to be strongly encouraged in public libraries?

Public librarians who believe in the importance of creative writing programs should not only submit information on their specific programs to library trade journals,

but should consider collaborating on a guide, much like the existing publications on preschool and toddler story hours, to help and encourage librarians who have not thought of implementing these programs in their libraries. Survey results and the literature review confirm that librarians and educators see value in creative writing for children and young adults. Even if a school is already conducting creative writing programs, the library still offers a different setting and a different place to channel literary creativity. Librarians do not consider dropping preschool story hours just because the children may be read to at home or at daycare centers. Creative writing programs in libraries can offer a unique perspective regardless of what the children are already doing at home or in school. If librarians see value in the creative writing programs they conduct and see excellent results from these programs, the time has come for librarians to be more vocal about the importance of creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries.

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Appendix



February 17, 1999

Dear Youth Services Coordinator:

I am a graduate student in the program in School and Public Librarianship at Rowan University. I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Holly Willett as part of my Master's thesis concerning librarians' and/or youth services coordinators' motivations for conducting or not conducting creative writing programs for children and/or young adults ages 8 to 18. I am requesting you please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the envelope provided by March 8, 1999.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. You need not respond to all the questions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey, please contact me at (609) 794-4246 or contact Dr. Holly Willett at (609) 256-4759. Thank you for taking the time to help with this research.

Sincerely,

Helen Cowan

Note: The Survey was originally formatted on 8 1/2" by 14" paper and folded like a booklet

Creative Writing Programs In Public Libraries Survey

Please mark answers with a "✓" in the appropriate boxes. The term "creative writing" in this survey includes any activities in which children and/or young adults are encouraged to write an original piece of text. Examples of creative writing programs include, but are not limited to, writing clubs, the production of a literary magazine, poetry/essay/story writing contests and newsletters. Storytelling programs in which nothing is written down will not be considered creative writing programs in this survey.

1. Are you responsible for the design and/or implementation of children's and/or young adult (YA) programming in your library?

- Yes No

2. What is your official title?

- Children's Librarian
 Young Adult Librarian
 Other, please specify _____

3. Does your library offer creative writing programs any time during the year?

- Yes (Please go to question #4)
 No (Please skip to question #9)

4. For what age levels? Check as many as apply.

- 7 and under 8-12 13-17 18+

5. Who conducts the creative writing programs? Check as many as apply.

- Librarian(s)
 Support staff
 Volunteers
 Authors
 Other (please specify) _____

6. Why do you offer creative writing programs at your library? Check as many as apply.

- Creative writing programs encourage literacy.
 Creative writing programs are fun.
 There is a community interest in creative writing programs.
 I enjoy creative writing.
 The success of other librarians encouraged me to offer creative writing programs.
 Other, please comment _____

Continued on Back of Page

7. Do you personally conduct any of the creative writing programs?

- Yes No

8. Please describe the type(s) of creative writing programs conducted in your library in the past five years (to your knowledge). Check as many as apply and please fill in the age group of participants.

- | | |
|---|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Clubs | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-house literary magazine | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry contest | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet posting of original stories | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/Fiction/Essay contest | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Additional comments: _____

Please skip to Question 11.

9. Have you ever considered implementing a creative writing program in your library?
Check as many as apply.

- No, I haven't thought about it.
- No, the schools should be responsible for teaching writing.
- I have too many job responsibilities to take on a new project like creative writing programs.
- Programming in my library concentrates more on reading and book promotion.
- Programming in my library concentrates more on preschoolers, who can't write.
- I have considered and/or tried conducting creative writing programs, but the community was not interested.
- I have considered creative writing programs, but I don't have the funds to support this kind of program.
- Creative writing programs are too time consuming.
- I do not have the staff to support a creative writing program.
- I do not know how to implement such a program.
- Other _____

10. What would encourage you to conduct creative writing programs in your library?

11. What kinds of children's and/or YA programs does your library provide for the public?
Check as many as apply.

- Preschool story time (ages 5 and under)
- Reading groups (ages 6+)
- Summer reading program
- Contests (poster, art, etc.)
- Family story times
- Teen/YA advisory board
- Other _____
- Other _____

12. Do you see any value in children (8-12) writing creatively?

- Yes No Not Sure

13. Do you see any value in YAs (13-18) writing creatively?

- Yes No Not Sure

14. Do you think creative writing programs for children and/or YAs should be offered in public libraries?

- Yes No Not Sure

15. Why or why not?

16. How many librarians are full-time in the Children's Dept. in your library? _____

17. How many full time support staff in Children's Dept.? _____

18. How many part-time professional staff in Children's Dept.? _____

19. How many part-time support staff in Children's Dept.? _____

20. How many librarians work full-time in the YA Dept. in your library? _____

Continued on Back of Page

21. How many full-time support staff in YA Dept.? _____

22. How many part-time professional staff in YA dept.? _____

23. How many part-time support staff in YA dept.? _____

24. How many volunteers assist with children's programs? _____

25. How many volunteers assist with young adult programs? _____

26. How are programs funded in your library? Check as many as apply.

- Specific program budget
 Friends of the Library
 Grants
 Other (please specify) _____

If you are a librarian (have a master's degree, are pursuing a master's degree or work in the capacity of a librarian), please answer the following questions.

27. How long have you been a librarian? Please check one answer.

- Fewer than 2 years 2-5 years 6 -10 years More than 10 years

28. How long have you been a children's and/or YA librarian?

- Fewer than 2 years 2-5 years 6 -10 years More than 10 years

29. How long have you worked in public library?

Fewer than 2 years 2-5 years 6 -10 years More than 10 years

30. Do you have a teaching certificate?

Yes No

31. Your age:

Under 25 25-35 36-45 46-55 56+

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

Reminder/Thank You Postcard

March 7, 1999

Dear Youth Services Coordinator:

About two weeks ago, you received a survey on creative writing programs for children and/or young adults in public libraries. If you have already completed and returned the survey, thank you for your valuable answers and comments.

If you have not yet completed the survey, I encourage you to fill it out and return it to me in the envelope included with the survey by March 15, 1999. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Thank you for taking the time to help me with my research.

Sincerely,

Helen Cowan
Graduate Student, School and Public Librarianship
Rowan University, New Jersey

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

Forty-one (41) respondents answered they conducted creative writing programs in their libraries. Numbers in brackets [] indicate the frequency of a response. The number of respondents who did not answer a particular question is noted. Comments are also included, however, identifying details have been removed and grammatical errors have not been corrected. Each response from a different library has been bulleted. Some questions had several answers.

1. Are you responsible for the design and/or implementation of children's and/or young adult (YA) programming in your library?

[38] Yes [2] No [1] Other: I design some programs, but not all. [0] No Answer.

2. What is your official title?

[5] Children's Librarian

[7] Young Adult Librarian

[29] Other, Please Specify:

- Manager, Youth Services
- Assistant Director, Children's & Parents' Services
- Youth Services Coordinator
- Assistant Director
- Site Coordinator/Principal Librarian
- Youth Services Librarian
- Branch Librarian
- Coordinator Of Youth Services
- Reference Librarian
- Head Of Children's Services
- Youth Services Supervisor
- Regional Young Adult Services Manager
- Supervisor Of Reference & Youth Services
- Youth Services Librarian
- Young Adult Services Coordinator
- Director Of Public Services
- Head-- Children And Youth Services
- Youth Services Librarian
- Assistant Children's Librarian
- Children's/Youth Services Librarian
- Youth Services Librarian
- Teen Services Librarian
- Sr. Librarian For Teen Services
- YA Services Coordinator
- Youth Services Dept. Head
- Asst. Director
- Head of Children's Services
- Librarian I Reference/Young Adult
- Youth Services Coordinator

[0] No Answer.

3. Does your library offer creative writing programs any time during the year?

[40] Yes (Please go to question #4)

[1]* No (Please skip to question #9)

*Note: Respondent answered "no," but answered rest of survey as doing creative writing programs.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

4. For what age levels? Check as many as apply.

[7] 7 and under [24] 8-12 [27] 13-17 [9] 18+ [2] No Answer.

5. Who conducts the creative writing programs? Check as many as apply.

[33] Librarian(s)

[4] Support staff

[7] Volunteers

[13] Authors

[13] Other (please specify): [Note: *2 additional comments not written on "other" line are included.]

- Outside presenters.
- Resource people we hire such as aspiring authors or teachers.
- Librarians organize Poetry Night; introduce Guest Poet and facilitate evening; paid person for summer poetry workshop; we have a quarterly Poetry Night (guest poet, then "open mike" sharing of poems).
- Special guest professional storytellers.
- Director and librarians.
- Authors (as judges).*
- Library assistants.
- Volunteers (usually teachers); in the past, the librarian has held creative writing workshops for ages 8-12.
- Librarians on staff.
- In conjunction with school staff.
- Myself.
- Authors (local).*
- I had 2 local poets offer a creative writing course as part of the summer reading program.
- Staff from local organizations [name of city omitted] Writers & Artists.
- Local Creative Writing groups.

6. Why do you offer creative writing programs at your library? Check as many as apply.

[35] Creative writing programs encourage literacy.

[34] Creative writing programs are fun.

[27] There is a community interest in creative writing programs.

[14] I enjoy creative writing.

[7] The success of other librarians encouraged me to offer creative writing programs.

[14] Other, please comment:

- This is in conjunction with a school district book club--we often do creative writing as a literature-related project.
- Our system holds an annual storytelling festival each April w/ professional storytellers & qualifying community children storytellers (100's). Total event audience is 3,000.
- Do in conjunction with Reading Rainbow writing contest.
- It is a contest.
- Essay contest is part of National Library Week activities.
- My young adult advisory committee enjoys sponsoring writing contests.
- Brings attention to the library.
- To encourage young writers & provide a comfortable forum for them to share their work with their peers.
- The current program for YA's & adults was suggested by a board member's wife.
- I wanted to encourage young writers & bring them together for peer support.
- To encourage & reinforce cultural identity.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

- I have a degree in creative writing & experience teaching (on the college level)
- Community support.
- Teens need a place to voice their creativity, and we give them a place to do that. Eventually, people of all ages came to share poetry—their own or famous poets’.

[0] No Answer.

7. Do you personally conduct any of the creative writing programs?

[23] Yes

[17] No

[1] Other.

[0] No Answer.

8. Please describe the type(s) of creative writing programs conducted in your library in the past five years (to your knowledge). Check as many as apply and please fill in the age group of participants.

[15] Writing Clubs

Ages:

- All ages
- Ages 9-12
- Ages 8-13
- Adult
- [Ages not given]
- Age 13-17
- Ages 8-12
- Ages 11-15
- Ages 7+
- Ages 13-18
- Ages 11-17
- Ages 12-18
- Ages 8-12
- School age
- Writing club/in house lit magazine (same program) , ages 8-12 [Note: Even though this was a combined program, this response was counted as two programs.]

[8] In-house literary magazine

Ages:

- Ages 12-99
- Ages 13-18
- Ages 12-17
- Ages 13-17
- Ages 11 & up
- [No ages given]
- Ages 12-18
- Writing club/In-house literary magazine (same program) , ages 8-12 [Note: Even though this was a combined program, this response was counted as two programs.]

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

[20] Poetry contest

Ages:

- Ages 8-14
- Ages 5 up
- Ages 13-18
- Grades 9-12
- Ages 12-17
- Ages 6-18
- Ages 10-18
- Grades 6-12
- All ages
- Ages 14-18
- All ages
- Ages 7-15
- Ages 11-17
- Ages 12-18
- Ages 8-18
- Ages 5-18
- Ages 13-18
- Ages 11-17
- Ages 8-12
- [No ages given]

[0] Internet posting of original stories

Ages _____

[21] Writing/Fiction/Essay contest

Ages:

- Ages 6-17
- Ages 6-10
- Ages 5 up
- Age 10
- [No ages given]
- All ages
- Ages 14-18
- Grades 9-12
- Ages 12-17
- Ages 13-17
- Age 6-12
- Ages 10-18
- Grades 6-12
- Ages 14-18
- [No ages given]
- Ages 13-18
- Ages 11-17
- Age 12-18
- Ages 7-16
- Ages 8-18
- Ages 13-18

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

[10] Newsletter

Ages:

- Ages 13-18
- Ages 12-17
- Ages 11-18
- Ages 11 & up
- Ages 13-18
- Ages 11-17
- Age 12-18
- Ages 10-14
- Ages 14-18
- Ages 13-18

[2] Newspaper

Ages:

- Ages 11-14
- [No ages given]

[17] Other:

Note: Poetry workshops & writing workshops were grouped together and omitted from "other."

- [Name of program omitted] make a book program (6-12); Poetry writing (teens).
- Reading club that does creative writing as one component, ages 10-14.
- Poetry readings (quarterly, with guest poet).
- Storytelling workshops; storytelling programs.
- Creative writing class 18+; YA checkerboard diary; bulletin board for YA writings and drawings.
- Coffeehouse style sharing, ages 12-15.
- Slam-audience style forum for reading work aloud.
- Exercises in writing poetry.
- In -house books published from group short stories.
- Poetry writing program.
- Internet posting of poetry; Electronic Newsletter.
- Creative writing classes--fee charged-- ages 5-17.
- Teen write book reviews.
- Internet posting of creative reviews.
- Poetry program, ages 9-12.
- Writer's conference (adult).
- Internet, I hope within the next year.

Additional comments: [7]

- We sponsor poetry contests in conjunction with Beat Nights, young adult open mike poetry readings. We encourage participants to read original writings.
- There is 1 essay contest each year during National Library Week-- for all ages.
- My program is called [name omitted due to identifying title] I have an article about it in [library trade journal's name omitted for anonymity].
- The program runs five weeks once a year & culminates in the production of a hard cover book.
- Reviews of books only are published in the newsletter. Writing contests, essays, fiction & poetry are published each year in a book.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

- The writing programs we have offered have been so wonderful and rewarding that my hope is to provide support for writing within the community of children and teens. There are programs I can hold in the library and other types of support I can provide to other community organizations & teachers.
- The newsletter was reasonably well attended but not a lot of creative writing got done b/c the kids just wanted to socialize; it was changed to a book review newsletter group & was poorly attended; it's now a well attended young adult group, which is mostly social.

[1] No Answer.

Please skip to Question 11.

Note: Questions 9 & 10 should have been skipped by these respondents, but a few answered them and their responses are included.

***9. Have you ever considered implementing a creative writing program in your library?**

Check as many as apply.

[1] No, I haven't thought about it.

[1] No, the schools should be responsible for teaching writing.

[1] I have too many job responsibilities to take on a new project like creative writing programs.

[3] Programming in my library concentrates more on reading and book promotion.

[3] Programming in my library concentrates more on preschoolers, who can't write.

[0] I have considered and/or tried conducting creative writing programs, but the community was not interested.

[2] I have considered creative writing programs, but I don't have the funds to support this kind of program.

[0] Creative writing programs are too time consuming.

[2] I do not have the staff to support a creative writing program.

[0] I do not know how to implement such a program.

[4] Other:

- I have a teen poetry night each month, which encourages teens to write their own poetry and recite it before the group.
- Librarian from another site presented program series for adults. This librarian presented the series on her own time.
- [Supposed to be #8] I work *with* the schools -- I let the teachers, teach, but innovative creative writing programs offered by the library supports the schools mission & their students by helping make reading/writing success fun -- & "cool"
- Just haven't gotten around to doing another try yet! We also have not teen processing dept., so I have to process everything I order-- Time is a big commodity for me!

***10. What would encourage you to conduct creative writing programs in your library?**

- I don't feel that this is a library function. We have organizations that meet at the library that pursue this avenue -- writer's guild, writer's alliance. Storytelling is another ball of wax. I see this related to books and what librarians should do.
- Program series pre-planned with presenter who takes care of all responsibilities, ex. grant funded project
- More time.
- Complete "how to" packets.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

11. What kinds of children's and/or YA programs does your library provide for the public?
Check as many as apply.

[41] Preschool story time (ages 5 and under)

[25] Reading groups (ages 6+)

[41] Summer reading program

[27] Contests (poster, art, etc.)

[36] Family story times

[21] Teen/YA advisory board

[21] Other:

- Story sharers; letter writing project.
- Parenting, programs for Babies-Toddlers; program for children w/special needs, cartooning, family fun nights, etc.; we offer between 15-25 programs each month for ages babies -6th grade & parents.
- Toddler times 18mos-3yrs; reading club in connection with school district.
- Author visits.
- Poetry nights (quarterly); girl power for 5th-grades girls (club with positive themes).
- First Friday for Teens (poetry).
- YA checkerboard Diary-- to post poems, drawings, etc. on bulletin board in Young Adult area.
- Cultural heritage series.
- Storytelling club, puppet club; activity nights, family stories/crafts specials.
- SAT prep program; student art show.
- Teen mystery party, children's & YA safety programs, YA babysitting classes; magic card tournaments, YA summer volunteers, YA summer programming, YA battle of the books.
- Battle of the books (gr. 4-6).
- Craft programs, bandfest, storytellers, mystery programs; teen art show.
- Book based elementary aged programming-- books, crafts, games, songs, etc.
- Crafts, many other types; theatre performances.
- Crafts, theatre.
- Provides "Escape" a late night program for teens; a Teen-oriented web page.
- Achve [sic-- Achieve?] teen volunteer program.
- Mini reading programs during the year; school/class visits.
- Reading groups (ages 6+) -- School age storytimes; young adult club; magic, the gathering league; sign language for kids.
- Performers, art programs.

[0] No Answer.

12. Do you see any value in children (8-12) writing creatively?

[40] Yes [0] No [1] Not Sure [0] No Answer.

13. Do you see any value in YAs (13-18) writing creatively?

[41] Yes [0] No [0] Not Sure [0] No Answer.

14. Do you think creative writing programs for children and/or YAs should be offered in public libraries?

[38] Yes [0] No [2] Not Sure [1] No Answer.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

15. Why or why not?

Comments:

- Readers are often writers as well. Encourages use of the library--promotes library--increases circulation.
- If it fits with the mission of the library's programming, interest with the public and skills of the programmer, it will work well. If not, it is too time-intensive and stressful to implement such a program.
- Encourages literacy, public place to display & share
- Teenagers especially need an outlet, and they really responded to quarterly poetry nights. We set our art gallery up as a cafe, and they really liked it.
- By outside organizations or a one time library event tied into books.
- The next generation of authors has to come from somewhere!
- My question to you would be why not?
- Possibly as a special program from time to time.
- Encourages Creativity; encourages connection to library.
- It is easy to spark an interest in exploring literature when we share our original stories and poetry with each other.
- Writers are readers.
- Writing fosters reading, just as reading fosters writing. Writing provides a creative outlet for young adults and a sense of accomplishment.
- Rewards teens for engaging in a positive activity and encourages exploring the creative process.
- Writing is a literary and professional asset to young people and their goals to pursue [sic] college and professional lives [sic]. In order to promote this very important part of their academic growth, I feel libraries must fully support these types of programs.
- It's a great opportunity to connect kids to books and authors.
- These are the future writers of the books we'll one day add to our collections.
- Studies have shown that reading improves among children who write as well as read.
- Helps students express themselves, develops positive self-esteem, rewards them for their work and makes them aware of the library.
- If there is a need & interest—yes.
- See for caveats-- not all librarians can or should attempt to teach writing—but we can encourage & support it.
- For all the reasons I checked in #6. Also, I think my group fills a niche for some of these YAs whose friends don't write. It lets them write with & for other peers.
- Good place for kids to gather & learn about writing.
- Enhances reading and writing skills and introduces young adults to the information resources of the library.
- It is the perfect place without the confines of school!
- To encourage reading and future writing by making a connection between the writers and the reader.
- It promotes literacy.
- Because it's fun to write for competition & not a grade—it gets some kids to write who won't in school.
- Where there is someone with teaching or writing experience and a willingness (,) the programs bolster both self-esteem and literacy/writing skills and are valuable to the service community.
- Spurs interest and/or provides a creative outlet for all ages in a non-academic setting.
- Writing is an important part of society-- in promoting good writing, we also promote reading. Someone has to read in order to judge good writing.
- Libraries are in the business of education-- education takes many forms & it is our role to provide fun, exciting ways to develop basic skills and to enhance creativity.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

Note: Questions 16-25 were too rigid for most respondents to give accurate numbers. Some answers were duplicated, and were, for the most part, unusable. See Chapter 4.

26. How are programs funded in your library? Check as many as apply.

[30] Specific program budget

[32] Friends of the Library

[34] Grants

[7] Other (please specify): *[2 additional comments included near "grants"]

- There is no budget for programming.
- [State name omitted] Cultural connect*
- Fundraising and small budget.
- Grants (for Escape).*
- My pocket. It's one of my local charities to fund YA programs (approx.) \$500/year for 2 branches.
- We have [discretionary] funds to use.
- Classes for fees.
- Community sponsored programs.
- Local donors, volunteers.

[0] No Answer.

If you are a librarian (have a master's degree, are pursuing a master's degree or work in the capacity of a librarian), please answer the following questions.

27. How long have you been a librarian? Please check one answer.

[3] Fewer than 2 years [4] 2-5 years [10] 6 -10 years [23] More than 10 years

[1] No Answer.

28. How long have you been a children's and/or YA librarian?

[4] Fewer than 2 years [10] 2-5 years [9] 6 -10 years [17] More than 10 years

[1] Other [0] No Answer.

29. How long have you worked in public library?

[3] Fewer than 2 years [2] 2-5 years [12] 6 -10 years [24] More than 10 years

[0] No Answer.

30. Do you have a teaching certificate?

[10] Yes [30] No [1] Other. [0] No Answer.

Additional comments on this question. [4]

- But it's probably lapsed! Last used 1980-81.
- Teach cert -- not current
- Have undergraduate degree in education
- Yes, but it's expired.

Survey Responses from Libraries with Creative Writing Programs

31. Your age:

[0] Under 25 [14] 25-35 [10] 36-45 [13] 46-55 [3] 56+
[1] No Answer.

Additional comments at the end of the survey:

- I was hired to replace a YA librarian but I am not a YA librarian. The decision has been made to discontinue that.
- Plato claimed their [sic] were not teachers-- only students & those further along the [path? both?] -- Even if a librarian is at the same level as her students in a particular area She can & should be a part of hooking them up with other folk who do fit that description -- living-- or dead-- in person or preserved in book, video or CD--!

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

Twenty-six (26) respondents answered they did not conduct creative writing programs in their libraries. Numbers in brackets [] indicate the frequency of a response. The number of respondents who did not answer a particular question is noted. Comments are also included, however, identifying details have been removed and grammatical errors have not been corrected. Each response from a different library has been bulleted. Some questions had several answers.

1. Are you responsible for the design and/or implementation of children's and/or young adult (YA) programming in your library?

[24] Yes [2] No [0] No Answer

2. What is your official title?

[5] Children's Librarian

[3] Young Adult Librarian

[18] Other, please specify:

- Branch Supervisor.
- Young Adult Outreach Librarian.
- Senior Librarian.
- Senior librarian/children's and young adult services.
- Head of Youth Services (covers preschool -grade 8).
- Young Adult Librarian & Reference.
- Youth Services Coordinator.
- Head of Youth and Outreach Services.
- Head of Youth Services.
- Coordinator of Children's and Young Adult Services.
- Branch Librarian.
- Manager.
- Library manager.
- Youth Services Coordinator.
- Youth Services Manager.
- Head of Youth Services.
- Management Librarian, Coordinator, Children's Services.
- Coordinator, Youth Services.

[0] No Answer

3. Does your library offer creative writing programs any time during the year?

[0] Yes (Please go to question #4)

[26] No (Please skip to question #9)

Note: Questions 4-6 were not answered by this respondent group.

4. For what age levels? Check as many as apply.

7 and under 8-12 13-17 18+

5. Who conducts the creative writing programs? Check as many as apply.

Librarian(s)

Support staff

Volunteers

Authors

Other (please specify) _____

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

6. Why do you offer creative writing programs at your library? Check as many as apply.
- Creative writing programs encourage literacy.
 - Creative writing programs are fun.
 - There is a community interest in creative writing programs.
 - I enjoy creative writing.
 - The success of other librarians encouraged me to offer creative writing programs.
 - Other, please comment _____
- _____
- _____

Note: Respondents were not supposed to answer this question, but one did.

7. Do you personally conduct any of the creative writing programs?
- Yes
 - [1] No

Note: Respondents were not supposed to answer this question, but one did.

8. Please describe the type(s) of creative writing programs conducted in your library in the past five years (to your knowledge). Check as many as apply and please fill in the age group of participants.

- | | |
|---|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Clubs | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-house literary magazine | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry contest | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet posting of original stories | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing/Fiction/Essay contest | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | Ages _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> [1] Other | |

Additional comments: _____

Please skip to Question 11.

9. Have you ever considered implementing a creative writing program in your library? Check as many as apply.
- [7] No, I haven't thought about it.
 - [3] No, the schools should be responsible for teaching writing.
 - [4] I have too many job responsibilities to take on a new project like creative writing programs.
 - [13] Programming in my library concentrates more on reading and book promotion.
 - [6] Programming in my library concentrates more on preschoolers, who can't write.
 - [4] I have considered and/or tried conducting creative writing programs, but the community was not interested.
 - [3] I have considered creative writing programs, but I don't have the funds to support this kind of program.
 - [3] Creative writing programs are too time consuming.
 - [9] I do not have the staff to support a creative writing program.
 - [1] I do not know how to implement such a program.
 - [6] Other:

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

- Our community (schools, park district, other groups) already offers lots of writing programs.
- As the YA librarian (2 years ago) I had a YA newsletter that published teen reviews. Unfortunately it fell by the wayside, very busy with booktalks and grant implementation.
- I may try creative writing in the future.
- A group of teens comes each week to read plays. I have encouraged to write their own plays, but in six month I have received only 3 very short plays.
- I have a degree in literature, and ran a newspaper, but, I don't think this is the time and place. It's difficult enough to get some of these kids to read a book, without trying to get them to write one.
- Writing has been an element of past programming and may be again in the future. As we try to engage young people in reading, other literature-related activities are used when appropriate and effective.

[0] No Answer.

10. What would encourage you to conduct creative writing programs in your library?

Comments:

- More cooperation between the library system & the area's 5 school systems.
- I would have to be sure that the number of participants would justify the time.
- More staff and funds; information about different creative writing programs (manual).
- Perhaps a volunteer to run it.
- Someone to do it
- To have a group of interest [sic] writers.
- If library users expressed an interest in participating in it. I've never heard of any public libraries offering creative writing programs.
- If I could have some feedback from our patrons telling me they were interested, we would try again.
- My supervisor wanting to implement such a program.
- Having staff member fired up about it!
- Community interest.
- Requests from community.
- A YA librarian who wants to do the work--doesn't neglect other areas of the job.
- More space--someone to run the program -- more funds.
- More time, more staff and volunteers, more space.
- If I thought there was demand, I would do it.
- Perhaps funding/staff -- but probably not. By the time school is over the are not ready to focus on something like this-- and that's when YA's are here.
- Again, as an element, writing could be used as part of a program. Our programming is designed to promote our library mission and vision, and usually involves multiple activities.
- More staff and some good examples of successful programs, more time.
- Community interest.

[6] No Answer.

11. What kinds of children's and/or YA programs does your library provide for the public?

Check as many as apply.

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

[26] Preschool story time (ages 5 and under)

[12] Reading groups (ages 6+)

[26] Summer reading program

[19] Contests (poster, art, etc.)

[15] Family story times

[9] Teen/YA advisory board

[14] Other:

- Craft programs; outside entertainment.
- Math tutoring program; library instructional use through the use of reference scavenger hunts.
- Volunteer opportunities for ages 9+.
- Seasonal programs; volunteer opportunities.
- Special events (magic shows, storytellers, other paid performers); Author birthday, afterschool crafts, paperback swaps, etc., etc., etc.!
- Special entertainers, puppet shows, RIF program.
- Summer reading clubs, booktalks, health, college and SAT programs.
- Teen volunteers, teen monthly programs; elementary-age monthly programs.
- Promote PTA's author and PARP programs.
- Book discussion groups -- 3 for grades 2-3; 4&5; 6-8.
- Summer magic shows and the live, teen murder mystery nights, teen summer reading game, teen play readers, magic the gathering card game club.
- Teen/YA advisory board--in planning stages; volunteer program for teens; special interest programs, learning center, SRS parents, parents as teachers, computer club.
- Infant storytime, toddler time.
- Storytime, ages 6-9.

[0] No Answer.

12. Do you see any value in children (8-12) writing creatively?

[23] Yes [0] No [2] Not Sure [1] No Answer.

13. Do you see any value in YAs (13-18) writing creatively?

[24] Yes [0] No [1] Not Sure [1] No Answer.

14. Do you think creative writing programs for children and/or YAs should be offered in public libraries?

[11] Yes [1] No [13] Not Sure [1] No Answer.

15. Why or why not?

Comments: [20]

- Possibly, would depend on school systems curriculum, if they are offering variety of creative writing why duplicate the program. Also in a system like ours -- we lack the space to conduct some programs in all the branches (includes 5 branches & bookmobile).
- Reading & writing go together!
- The nature of libraries is evolving. To remain a viable institution, we'll no longer be able to simply warehouse print mat'ls and control access. We must find innovative ways to meet the information and literary recreational needs of our communities.

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

- Very valuable activity -- good for libraries to do if no other community organizations are offering it.
- To help them make the connection between writing and the books that they read or the TV shows they watch or the movies they go see. Also, personal fulfillment-- journal, diaries.
- I don't really see what the tie-in with public libraries is, unless you're specifically discussing book authorship.
- It seems like our patrons do not like to attend programs that are "school related." We only seem to get a handful of people at those types of programs.
- Try not to duplicate school programs. Considering doing a story telling project next summer.
- It's a great setting for them! Lost of resources to draw info on how to get published, 'net access for e-zine publications, etc.
- It depends on whether or not there is interest within the community & there is time (within the library).
- Our programs have been primarily craft oriented--it would involve a major shift in the public's perception of what we do -- which would be a good thing and I will make that happen at some point. I've only been here 7 mos.!
- For reinforcement.
- A nice thing but not necessary for the library's mission. Information first.
- Writing is not only to express ourselves but important in any subject area we might want to do.
- It's a great goal, especially in small and/or financially beleaguered school districts. Would require a lot of staff time and training, however.
- [Note: Originally this was an answer for #9, but respondent drew a line from it to question #15] Our mission, Goals & Objectives clearly state we strive to not duplicate services being offered by other agencies in the community.
- Creative writing is an aspect of literacy and so it should be encouraged.
- It's a worthwhile goal but in addition to motivation, we have to deal with funding and staff shortages.
- Allow [sic] I realize that the skills of reading and writing are interrelated there is no real training (grad school or in-service) to promote this idea
- I don't feel that offering creative writing programs determines the value of a Children's/YA dept. or whether or not the librarian is effective. Creative writing is a very good "extra" program if the public will not only sign-up but also show up for programs that often take hours to prepare.

Note: Questions 16-25 were too rigid for most respondents to give accurate numbers. Some answers were duplicated, and were, for the most part, unusable. See Chapter 4.

26. How are programs funded in your library? Check as many as apply.

[21] Specific program budget

[13] Friends of the Library

[12] Grants

[6] Other (please specify):

1. Public donations; children's/YA library budget.
2. Sponsors.
3. [State] Cultural Connect \$.
4. Some restricted gift/donations.
5. From the parents taking part in the program.
6. Most programming is just done as part of the job.

[0] No Answer.

Survey Responses from Libraries without Creative Writing Programs

If you are a librarian (have a master's degree, are pursuing a master's degree or work in the capacity of a librarian), please answer the following questions.

27. How long have you been a librarian? Please check one answer.

[4] Fewer than 2 years [3] 2-5 years [7] 6 -10 years [10] More than 10 years

[2] No Answer.

28. How long have you been a children's and/or YA librarian?

[5] Fewer than 2 years [7] 2-5 years [5] 6 -10 years [4] More than 10 years

[5] No Answer.

29. How long have you worked in public library?

[2] Fewer than 2 years [6] 2-5 years [6] 6 -10 years [10] More than 10 years

[2] No Answer.

30. Do you have a teaching certificate?

[4]Yes [20] No [2] No Answer.

31. Your age:

[0]Under 25 [4] 25-35 [7] 36-45 [12] 46-55 [1] 56+

[2] No Answer.