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Round Robin

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Round Robin is a forum intended for our readers' use to express or comment on any topical subject affecting the field of reading. Send your letters or comments to Dorothy E. Smith, Round Robin Editor.



Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

Dear Editor,

The State University of New York conducted a study of the reading interests of adults whose reading level was below third grade. The results (printed below) were interesting, and I began to wonder whether those interests would match the ones of college students who were taking a reading improvement course. This naturally led me to wondering how well formal reading programs match the interests of their students.

The college students who acted as my subjects were 19 men and 8 women who were taking a reading improvement course at a university. The formal reading program I chose to examine was the SRA IV A, College Level Series. This consists of seven reading levels, with twenty reading selections in each one, for a total of 140 selections.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK'S
RANK ORDERING OF THE READING INTERESTS
OF ADULTS READING BELOW THIRD GRADE LEVEL

1. Family and self-improvement
2. Jobs
3. Health
4. Religion
5. Science
6. Social studies, history & civics
7. Children
8. Animals
9. Humor
10. Sports, adventure & travel

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PREFERENCES		CONTENTS OF SRA IV A, COLLEGE LEVEL SERIES
<i>MALE</i>	<i>FEMALE</i>	
1. Sports, adventure and travel	1. Children	1. 64 Social studies, history and civics
2. Humor	2. Social studies, history and civics	2. 28 Science
3. Animals	3. Family	3. 22 Sports, adven- ture and travel
4. Health	4. Humor	4. 7 Humor
5. Family	5. Sports	5. 7 Jobs
6. Jobs	6. Animals	6. 5 Family and self
7. Social studies, history and civics	7. Health	7. 4 Animals
8. Science	8. Jobs	8. 2 Religion
9. Children	9. Religion	9. 1 Health
10. Religion	10. Science	10. 0 Children

By looking at the male and female preference charts in relation to the overall content chart I find a few basic points calling out for the need of a new SRA series. While science is disliked by both sexes, SRA contains 28 science articles, its second largest category. Subject matter liked by both groups exist in very small numbers. Female college students chose "children" as their favorite, yet SRA had no articles on this subject. Humorous articles were second choice for males and fourth for females, yet there were only 7 humorous articles of a total of 140.

I think that the number of science articles should be greatly reduced so as to allow a more equitable distribution in the other areas. I also question the dominance of a few subjects because I should think it would be detrimental to the main purpose of trying to hold every reader's interest. I wonder too who decided which categories to concentrate on, and how they arrived at this decision, because according to all three preference charts, the actual choices SRA made are poor. One last point is that out of one hundred and forty authors only twenty-three were females.

My basic conclusion is that SRA needs more concern for what people would like to read, rather than what they think they should read.

Sincerely,
Valerie Hill