Sarah D. Thornton. Factors Influencing Changes in Public Library Adult Programming: A Look at Program Practices in Two North Carolina Public Libraries. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2015. 44 pages. Advisor: Mary Grace Flaherty

This study describes an examination of the history and current practices of adult programming in two North Carolina public libraries. The examination was conducted to determine the current state of adult programming in public libraries, as well as the factors that have influenced its changes.

Public libraries have begun to offer more diverse types of adult programming for their patrons. For example, some categories of programming being offered that have recently grown in prevalence are Entertainment, Arts/Crafts, and Health. This is due to a combination of many factors, and reasons vary between communities. The most significant factor affecting the planning of adult programs is the preferences of an individual community. Librarians must take into account what their communities need and desire from the library in order to have successful programs.

Headings:

Library activity programs -- Activity programs in public libraries

Public Libraries -- Adult services in public libraries

Public libraries -- North Carolina

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGES IN PUBLIC LIBRARY ADULT
PROGRAMMING: A LOOK AT PROGRAM PRACTICES IN TWO NORTH
CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2015

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<u>Table of Contents</u>

I. Introduction

Public libraries have a very significant and important history in the United States. They have routinely given us access to books and materials, but some have done more than that—they have provided the public with services and programs to enrich and educate patrons' lives. Readers' Advisory was important in the first public libraries, as was simply providing books to which people would not normally have access. The idea was to get the public reading (though popular reading was not always encouraged). In fact, in many cases, as D.W. Davies, author of *Public Libraries as Culture and Social Centers: The Origin of the Concept*, points out, libraries justified "non-book activities on the grounds that they stimulated reading." These "non-book activities," however, were not what we might think of today as non-book; they included mostly lectures *about* books and authors. (61). Adult programming that is independent from books and the desire to increase the reading habits of individuals has only recently emerged as a prominent area of focus for public libraries. Additionally, most public libraries generally provide some type of children's summer reading programming over the summer, but far fewer libraries provide alternative adult summer reading (Library Summer Reading Programs, ALA Fact Sheet 17). With more adults in the population of the United States than children, (Age and Sex Composition: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs) and taking into account that children cannot get to the library with the assistance of library-supporting adults, one might wonder why adults have historically been less important in library programming.

Public library programming is an important part of adult services. When discussing the activities and events that public libraries provide for their patrons, the words 'services' and 'programming' are often used interchangeably. However, it is important to distinguish between the two, as they have different meanings. Simply put, programming is a type of service. Programming can be for children, adults, teens, older adults, or for the general public. Adult services, however, is defined by Kathleen Heim, as "a term used to describe all aspects of library work with adults" (1). This would include things like book recommendations, reference, book clubs, and other types of programming. Libraries are public service institutions, and as Eliza Dresang describes, "library public service has four functions: information, instruction, guidance, and stimulation" (Dresang 13). The way that public libraries choose to embrace these functions is sometimes portrayed in the form of programming. Programming can meet any of these four functions, and it can even demonstrate all four at once. For example, if a librarian were to teach a class on how to download eBooks through the library, she would be providing information, giving instruction and guidance, and patrons would be stimulated in learning a helpful new skill. Although programming is not the only way to provide adult services, it is becoming an increasingly important part of libraries.

Helping prove the case for the importance of public libraries and the services, including programming, that they offer, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) released a Public Libraries Survey for the fiscal year of 2012. The survey examined the levels of use in public libraries in the United States, including factors such as circulation, program attendance, and visits per capita. The future of public library

programming looks promising, as the study confirmed that program attendance is

growing:

> There were 92.6 million attendees at public library programs in FY 2012. This is a
> 1-year increase of 4.1 percent and an 8-year increase of 37.6 percent. Total
> attendance per 1,000 people was 306.0—in other words, for every 1,000 people in
> a library service area, there were 306.0 attendees at a public library program.
> Average attendance at library programs was 23.1 people per program. (7).

Why has public library programming seen an increase in attendees? It could be at

least partially attributed to the growth in program variety. Recently, public libraries have

become more creative in the types of programming that they offer. Some guidance on

how to go about putting together useful and effective programming has been offered by

the American Library Association, (ALA) including "five key action areas" through

which to "showcase the vastness of your library's resources" (ala.org). These five areas

nicely coincide with the four functions of library public service mentioned above: "21st

Century Literacy, Diversity, Education and Continuous Learning, Equity of Access, and

Intellectual Freedom." Focusing on providing services and programs that fit into these

areas is a good way to reach patrons. One of the examples given by the ALA supports

reaching out to other professionals in the community: "bring in local travel experts to

host a travel planning workshop and feature Web pages and other reference materials on

how to find the best bargains, learn about foreign currency and plan a family vacation."

While the ALA encourages libraries to plan programs that can help to promote the

library's collection, many libraries are going beyond the stacks to give their communities

programs whose value are in the program itself and the experience of the patron.

This new frontier of public library programming is a fascinating area that can

encompass anything from knitting clubs to yoga classes to legal assistance. Libraries

have gone beyond book clubs to try to appeal to a larger group of people with more diverse needs. Communities are constantly evolving and growing, and it seems as if the libraries that are serving them are also evolving and growing with them. Additionally, the need to draw in new patrons and appeal to adults who buy their books from Amazon.com may necessitate more creativity in programming. In this shift towards a larger variety of programming, libraries have, in a way, begun to redefine themselves. No longer is the public library only a place you go to check out the newest mystery novel – now you can learn a skill, get in shape, get help with your finances, and so much more. It is interesting to look at how libraries have started to take on these new roles in communities, and to consider how these new kinds of programs fit into public libraries' missions. Fitness, while not traditionally something libraries are known for promoting, may very well fit into a public library mission—if your library has a goal to provide patrons with tools to learn and improve themselves, then fitness classes could definitely be justified.

The beginning of public libraries' shift to include more adult services, including new programming for adults, was not accepted as a good idea across the board; there are those who thought that libraries should keep their focus solely on books. For example, D.W. Davies concludes his book (published in 1974) with the claim that "any attempt to perpetuate that tradition of 'something for everyone' is doomed to failure" (125). Davies makes the point that an institution having a narrower focus is expected, so while libraries would have less patrons if they kept their focus on books, they would gain respect as being "specialist[s] and expert[s]" (126). This thought has obviously not pervaded in the public libraries of today, as many public libraries truly do have something for everyone.

The purpose of this research is first to explore the history of public library programming in the United States. Next, this research will examine the role of the public library, and look in particular at two public libraries in central North Carolina in order to determine how and why their programming has evolved. Using current and recent programming offerings, in addition to perceptions and opinions of public librarians, a picture of the role of the public library and adult programming evolution will be presented. Knowing how programming has evolved will provide insight into how libraries have adapted and taken on new roles in order to better serve their communities' needs. This research is needed in order to track the evolution of public library programming, specifically for adults, and to provide an explanation for why changes occur.

Research Question: How do current adult programming practices in two Central North Carolina public libraries demonstrate the overall changes in public library adult programming, and what factors have influenced these changes?

II. Literature Review

The Role of the Public Library

The role of the public library is constantly evolving. Not long after their advent, public libraries were tasked with supporting adult education in 1926 by the ALA-appointed Commission on the Library and Adult Education. At the dawn of the twentieth century, public libraries were in a huge state of growth and were taking on a role that involved providing more access to resources to a larger population of people. Kathleen de la Peña McCook notes, "Librarians configuring adult services must consider all aspects of the human condition." McCook cites several groups including older patrons, non-English speakers, and disabled patrons as some of the populations to which libraries must be sure to provide equal access. (202). In the 1980s and 1990s, libraries began to provide computer services for patrons in the dawn of the digital age. While libraries provided different services as the years progressed, they always seemed to try to fill the educational or entertainment voids in their communities or the needs of the patrons. Regardless of whether a library focuses on the needs of the entire community, or a specific subset of patrons within that community, the general consensus among libraries is clear: provision of programming and services is necessary to remain relevant to your patrons. The current President of Reference & User Services Association (RUSA), Kathleen Kern, states in a 2014 article, "programming is where libraries really tailor themselves to the needs of their community" (210). While Kern notes that services like

readers' advisory, book clubs, and author talks are important, it is impossible to not notice the variety that is emerging in adult programming in the U.S. These new types of adult programs are indicative of the evolving needs of library patrons. This sort of thinking supports what the authors of *Transforming Libraries, Building Communities* call a "community-centered library." They challenge, "We need to look beyond information and toward how people in our communities use the information, services, and programming that we provide. In doing so, we will revitalize our institutions and strengthen our communities" (3). Since communities are the library's main source of support, this idea to center the library on the community seems fitting.

The new variety in programming has been significant enough to motivate the American Library Association (ALA) to take a closer look at how programming expansions are affecting patrons and communities. In December 2014, the ALA's Public Programs Office published a paper entitled "National Impact of Library Public Programming Assessment." This project was born from the realization that programming in public libraries has changed and grown dramatically in the past quarter century. The project tackles several important questions such as, "What are the current best practices in this service? Who initiates public programming in libraries? What criteria guide program selection?..." (6).

Public Library Beginnings

To understand the beginnings of public library programming, we need to understand the beginnings of the public library as an institution in the United States. In 1949, Shera makes the distinction between earlier libraries such as social libraries and circulating libraries, and the beginnings of the actual public library. In summary, "social

libraries in general represented the more sophisticated book requirements of the community, and circulating libraries reflected much more popular reading tastes" (127). Both types of early libraries required fees for use, but through their existence the idea of book lending in the U.S. was born from these institutions.

While there is no definitive claim on who opened the first truly public library and when, there are particular libraries that brought together certain elements for the first time in a way that our modern public libraries are still doing. For example, in Salisbury, Connecticut, in 1810, townspeople decided that the Bingham Library for Youth should be funded in part by the town. (159). Although this library eventually was absorbed by the Scoville Memorial Library, (158) this decision by the town marked "the earliest real recognition by a municipality that aid to library development was a proper function of the town" (160). Following suit, in 1833, the Peterborough Town Library of New Hampshire was "founded with the deliberate purpose of creating a free library that would be open without restriction to all classes of the community – a library supported from the beginning by public funds" (Shera 169). Public funds are still the main source of operating funds for public libraries, thus it is significant that these early libraries set this precedent.

The Boston Public Library's founding in 1854 was significant for the public library institution in that it was "opened in 1854, with state law enacted in 1848" with the support of taxes, and it is generally considered the first tax-supported public library. (McCook 20). The founders of the library knew that they were setting a precedent in "ventur[ing] into untried paths of municipal administration – trails which would soon be beaten by the feet of many followers" (McCook 179). The larger size of Boston as

compared to other towns that had instituted public libraries is the most significant aspect

– "Salisbury, Lexington, and Peterborough were only small, isolated New England

towns..." (170). Being a large and influential city, it is likely that Boston would have a

major impact on other cities, both larger and smaller.

Another concept of early libraries is that of the "popular library." Davies

describes these libraries as existing before 1850 in both Great Britain and America. One

example of popular libraries is that of "commercial subscription libraries" These libraries

were used heavily by the "middle class," and "the standard fare of the two hundred

thousand who obtained books from circulating libraries was novels" (3). Some of the

more extreme examples in America include William Pelham's library that "also sold

playing cards," and John Mein's combination of "a circulating library [and] the sale of

liquors and linens" (12). These libraries were not for all of the public, as one had to buy a

subscription to be able to use them. Public libraries today would not go so far as to sell

liquor for a profit, but some of the available programs in public libraries today definitely

take popular culture into account.

The inclusion of the entire community is a facet of public libraries that sets them

apart from other types of libraries. The existence of this idea set the stage for public

libraries to begin adding services and providing programming. Additionally, public

libraries are possible because of the funding and support that they receive from the

community, an idea that these early public libraries wisely developed.

History of Adult Services and Programming

As previously discussed, programming is just one facet of adult services, but it is

a facet that is relatively new in popularity. Adult services in public libraries began in the

form of readers' advisory. The librarians who provided this service were extremely popular in early libraries. Often, they went by different names such as "'readers' consultants,' 'readers counselors,' 'readers' assistants,' and 'library hostess.'" (Rubin 95). These names indicate that the job of these librarians was primarily to assist, but it would probably be more fitting to call them readers' directors. This readers' advisory was not in the give-the-patron-what-they-want form that librarians perform now; however, it was a tool used to steer the public toward the type of reading that librarians considered appropriate and intelligent. Sometimes, this readers' advisory was actually a type of programming. For example, in tracking the history of "non-book activities as a means to stimulate the use of books," Davies observes that librarians often held book talks as a means to provide guidance "to the best and most profitable lines of reading" (61). Libraries held these types of activities as early as the 1890s.

In 1926, the ALA-appointed Commission on the Library and Adult Education was "convinced that since books are fundamental factors in all education, librarians, as collectors of books, and organizers of public book service, have an unusual opportunity in, and a definite professional responsibility to, the cause of adult education" (8). The Commission recognized three crucial adult education activities that libraries had a responsibility to fill:

> 1. consulting and advisory service, supplemented by suitable books, to those who wish to pursue their studies alone, rather than in organized groups or classes
> 2. furnish complete and reliable information concerning local opportunities for adult education available outside the library
> 3. supplying of books and other printed material for adult education activities maintained by other organizations (9).

People saw the need for supporting adult education, so libraries were appointed to fulfill it. In 1938, Alvin Saunders Johnson wrote a book that examined how adult education was

being provided in public libraries. While it was recognized that libraries were beginning to provide a larger array of reading materials to satisfy the needs of all of the public, it was also noted that this, unfortunately, "seemed to throw the responsibility for determining directions upon the public rather than upon the library" (The Public Library—A People's University 25). Johnson goes on to claim that the library's "prestige in the present and its hopes for the future rest upon the explicitness and effectiveness of its adult educational activities" (27). While we have shifted from a solely educational focus to a more rounded inclusion of adult informational needs, Johnson was onto something here: adult services, including programming, holds the key to library effectiveness.

Heim notes the more official start of adult programming came in 1957 through the establishment of the Adult Services Division (ASD) within the ALA. What came of this is reminiscent of the earliest forms of programming – but definitely more elaborate and modern. The ASD defined adult services as including things like displays, readers' advisory, book talks, "library-sponsored programs... and community advisory services" (16-17). Displays and readers' advisory do not fit into the programming definition supplied earlier, but they are a form of adult services that could have helped to bring about programming events that were centered around book and author interests. While certainly other forms of programming existed for adults, there was no real designation or requirement for such programming until the ALA established this division. Since then, adult programming has gone through many different phases. In fact, Heim notes, "the nature of [adult] services is diverse and constantly changing" (19). This is appropriate, as

the adult population is also diverse and constantly changing, and can differ dramatically depending on in which what part of the world you reside.

The 1980s was an important decade for public libraries. The dawn of the Internet and the rise of personal computers called for a shift in library services from librarian-led research to more hands-on research initiated by library patrons. Along with these changes came the Adult Services in the Eighties project (ASE). ASE lasted from 1983 until 1989, and it involved an "intense discussion and analysis of adult services...it was a new way of looking at roles public libraries can play in a dynamic society" (Heim and Wallace vii). The idea behind this seems to be that, although the ALA had established the Adult Services Division nearly thirty years ago, there was no clear definition for what all adult services encompassed, or should encompass. Being that this was the case, there was certainly room for some investigation and clarification. This research was carried out by the distribution of questionnaires to 1,758 library systems, which consisted of more than 8,000 libraries (28). This research helped the library world get a picture of what sort of programming was being offered in what regions of the country. What resulted from the surveys was the development of "essays on key adult services." These essays were meant to describe the methods and need for the ASE, and also to take specific survey results and discuss how they are important and what can be done in the future of libraries. Part of the purpose of the survey was to find out what types of programs were being offered to specific types of patrons. Some of the results included provision of book talks or reviews, and live programs. They found that "In both cases, the North Central, and West regions were roughly comparable, and the South lagged somewhat behind." (40). Even though the regions were mostly comparable, still only around half of libraries

actually provided programs in the book talks/reviews category. More significant perhaps were the findings of categories of programming for special groups: parents, older adults, job seekers, and minority groups. The most striking result of these categories is that minority groups were only offered programs by 13.8% of the North, 15.6% of the West, 9.8% of the South, and 10.5% of the Central region. (40-41).

In a publication of the ALA written by Gene Martin in 1984, some recommendations for programming are given. Martin indicates the changed role of the library: "Now, the library patron expects more for the tax dollar that goes to support library operations and is not above questioning why a just return in terms of service is not available." (1). That being said, how can libraries fulfill these new needs of patrons? Among other things, Martin asserts that the community the library serves is part of the answer to that question. Martin goes on to discuss working with specific groups in the community, providing "specialized services," demanding attention through "displays, exhibits, and demonstrations," and of course, programming. (4-6). He mentions that this programming should be "planned both for interest and diversity" (6). The proposed ideas for particular programming in this publication are interesting. They show a definite shift into a new type of adult services, and one of the examples is particularly indicative of the library's new role:

> *The Toast of the Town*: a cosponsored event with a local wine dealer involving a series of wine tastings and discussions. Each session could highlight the wines of a different country. (7).

This type of program that is not book- or reading-focused indicates that libraries are beginning to understand that their role lies not solely in providing reading materials and

guidance for the public, but also in providing opportunities to engage communities in cultural events to which they may not otherwise have access.

As we moved into the 21st century, libraries began to embrace technology even more with the demise of the traditional card catalog. To accompany this makeover, programming for adults received special attention. In a 2005 book by Ranier entitled *Programming for Adults: A Guide for Small- and Medium- Sized Libraries*, the state of adult programming is described: "Adults have long been, so to speak the neglected stepchild of public libraries, despite being responsible for two-thirds of the circulation and a majority of the funding. Instead, they were viewed as chauffeurs for the real patrons: their kids" (2). In looking back at the history of programming in public libraries, we see that this is largely true. The idea seemed to be that adults only needed access to checking out books, and eventually to computer use. The adult services that did exist before were typically traditional services such as readers' advisory and book clubs, and according to 1998 statistics from the ALA, not all public libraries offered even those services. (3).

The dawn of the 21st century called for the expansion of adult programming, and more diverse types than ever. Ranier discusses many different types of programming, including such things as "crafty programming." He discusses how humans have a "need to create," and asserts that we are relaxed by working with our hands. Citing the boom of craft stores in the U.S. as evidence, Ranier infers, "What else are we to do, but follow the community's lead and offer them the one place they can come to have all their needs met?" (139-141). This idea of a community congregating in an area to learn and create is seen in today's maker spaces, which could possibly be the most significant aspect of 21st

century public libraries. Maker spaces are essentially labs in which patrons can make or create things. One impressive example of these is found in the Chicago Public Library. The Library has equipment available for use, but they also give workshops to teach patrons how to use them. Their equipment includes: 3D printer, laser cutters, milling machines, a vinyl cutter, and digital design software. (http://www.chipublib.org/maker-lab/).

Current Adult Programming Practices

Programming in public libraries can be recurring, or it can be in the form of a special one-time event. It can be passive, or it can be active. As we can see, adult programming has evolved over the years, and now there are more diverse programs than ever. A bit discouraging, however, Lear points out, "although most libraries offer some type of adult programs, many do not see programming as central to their mission" (Lear xvii-xviii). Judging by the large number of available programming types that are currently available today, this claim is either now untrue, or it is irrelevant to public libraries in providing good forms of programming. Adult programming is bigger than ever, and it has even begun, in some libraries, to warrant its own librarian—the term "'programming librarian' has come into use in public libraries as a professional designation and specialty," according to Mary Davis Fournier, Deputy Director of the ALA Public Programs Office (National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment 4).

Referring back to the results of the Public Libraries Survey conducted by the IMLS in 2012, we see that programming is a growing part of public libraries, as it has seen a 37.6% increase in the past eight years. These numbers indicate a growing

significance of programming as a public library service. Throughout their history, libraries have redefined the nature of their services in response to community needs. Programming, whether it be for job-seekers, students, new Americans, or curious retirees, is a profound indicator of how libraries have continued to shift and add services that meet emerging changes and critical concerns in their surrounding communities.

Some examples of these new types of services and programming that fit into communities can be found in current texts such as Lear's *Adult Programs in the Library* (2002). This book is an ALA edition text, and it echoes the view that libraries are meant to serve communities. Upon discovering the community's needs, librarians can then decide which type of programming will be most beneficial to *their* patrons. If patrons are looking for entertainment, then a murder mystery program, such as was offered at the Twinsburg Public Library, Ohio, may be appropriate (193). If you are looking to cater to older patrons in your community, you can partner with the AARP to provide specialized presentations like the Norfolk Public Library in Virginia did. (197). The New York Public Library – Mid-Manhattan Library hosted a recurring Anime night for their patrons. (201). If you are looking to provide a cultural outlet for your community, you can host a concert series like the St. Louis Public Library in Missouri did. (223). The consensus seems to be that, when it comes to adult programming in public libraries, you can pretty much do anything. However, the "anything" that libraries do has to be justified—there needs to be a need or desire in the community for what librarians do at their libraries.

III. Methods

Methodology

Qualitative research involves analyzing the meaning implicit in verbal data. It uses such methods as interviewing, observation, and participation to get at a deeper reasoning of why things occur. Zhang and Wildemuth describe qualitative analysis as a method that "pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon, rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts" (309). This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. One method that was employed in this research was interviewing. There are several different ways a researcher can go about interviewing, and these interviews were conducted using a semi-structured and in-depth approach. Luo and Wildemuth state: "semistructured interviews involve less rigidity and more leeway than structured interviews but are more organized and systematic than unstructured interviews in developing the conversation" (233). Marshall and Rossman refer to this type of interviewing as "the interview guide... [in which] the interview is scheduled, and the interviewer comes prepared with a list of topics or questions..." (144). While I prepared specific questions to be asked during the interviews, additional questions were asked when deemed necessary. Since meanings and details that lie behind basic facts and figures are being sought, questions were necessarily improvised in order to get the kind of answers that provide insight to the topic of programming. Additionally, I encouraged the interviewees to offer perspective outside

the realm of the questions asked if they felt the information would be useful for this research.

Data Collection

The current and recent history of public library programming in two local public libraries was analyzed in order to discover why programming has changed over the years. The criteria for choosing libraries included ease of geographic access, and that they regularly offer various types of programming. Additionally, if the libraries were part of a larger library system, only one of the branches was taken into consideration from each system. This means that only programs offered at the library branch being studied were included in the research. In that vein, only librarians who worked at the specific library branches being studied were considered for interviews. Two public libraries in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina were chosen. The adult services and/or programming librarian(s) were interviewed at their libraries in sessions lasting no longer than one hour.

The librarians chosen for interviews were contacted by the researcher in a brief email message that explained the basics of the research study. Their email addresses were obtained through public library websites. Any discussion via email was read only by the researcher and was deleted as soon as interview times were set. During the interviews, notes were recorded on a laptop, and audio recordings were taken. These recordings and notes were not linked with library or librarian names, and were stored on a password-secured laptop. These files were deleted as soon as the necessary information was recorded. The research was deemed exempt by The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Institutional Review Board. (12/16/14)

The following questions were used as a starting point for all interviews in this research, and the questions found in the December 2014 NILPPA White Paper (page 6) were used as a starting point for question development:

1. How do you differentiate between "programs" and "services" at your library?

2. What, in your opinion, is the role of the public library? Has that role changed in recent years?

3. How does programming help the library fulfill that role?

4. What do you think is the most important function of the library in its community?

5. What is the history of programming at your library?

6. What sorts of resources are allocated by your library to programming?

7. How do you get funding?

8. How do you determine what programs to provide?

9. What sort of statistics do you keep, and how do you take them?

10. What is the impact of public library programming on the people who attend?

11. Supporting documentation? Strategic plan, community needs analysis, programming statistics, etc.

Data Analysis

In addition to the interviews that were conducted with the librarians, the libraries' programming data from recent years was analyzed. This data included program types and attendance numbers. Supporting documentation was provided by librarians, including documents such as library strategic plans, community needs analyses, and program press releases. Additionally, other sources of information such as website information and library newsletters were reviewed.

In order to provide context for the types of programs available at the two libraries that were examined for this study, I examined two other libraries' programming offerings. The other libraries were chosen because they were in communities of a comparable size to the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. Additionally, the two libraries chosen were also in communities that have ranked Library and Information Science Programs in nearby universities. They were chosen in different states of the United States—one library in Illinois, and one in Wisconsin. Additionally, after choosing towns/counties based on their populations and proximity to library schools, I checked their libraries' websites to see if they had an events calendar with multiple months of program information available. No other examination of the programming these libraries offered was done prior to their choosing.

In order to categorize the types of programming that are/have been offered at the public libraries studied, I created a list of programming categories possible for adult programming. This list was based on findings of programming offerings across the country, and categorizing the programs offered at the libraries studied helped to present the variety of programming currently available for adults. Although children's programming is a large component of public library programming that encompasses many different types and age groups, this study was focused on adult programming's variety and evolution, therefore children's programming was not included as a category for this research.

1. Book-related, such as book clubs, book-finding informational sessions, and author talks

2. Professional, such as job search/resume help, computer classes, business resources, and school information

3. Health, such as exercise classes and informational health sessions

4. Arts and Crafts, includes activities such as knitting, jewelry-making, etc.

5. Special Presentations, such as special topic lectures

6. Entertainment, such as movie showings, games, and musical performances

In the next section of this paper, I will first present the results of my findings on the adult program offerings in the two North Carolina libraries I examined, to which I have given the names Library A and Library B. Next, the findings from the Wisconsin and Illinois libraries will be presented in the same format.

IV. Results

Current Adult Program Offerings – Library A & Library B

This research looks at program offerings in two libraries for January 2015 through May 2015. The first date was chosen as the research was begun in January 2015. The second date was chosen because it is the latest month available with a significant number of programs already scheduled. Table 1 presents the sum of programs available in the categories listed above for both Library A and Library B. The program information has been taken from the libraries' websites event calendars. It should be noted that all programs, especially those that are standalone (rather than recurring) might not yet have been scheduled for later months. Additionally, there are likely some recurring programs that are scheduled farther in advance than other recurring programs, so this may affect the results of some of the categories.

	Book-Related	Professional	Health	Arts/Crafts	Special Presentations	Entertainment
Library A	33	53	2	3	12	3
Library B	11	7	2	7	1	23
Total	**44**	**60**	**4**	**10**	**13**	**26**

- **Table 1**

The purpose of compiling this table is not to compare between Library A's and Library B's number of program offerings and their categories; rather, it is to provide a

picture of the variety of programming of these two libraries, and to compare separately the number of programs offered in different categories of the libraries. It is indicative of the current state of adult programming in public libraries that in neither Library A nor Library B did book-related programs have the largest number of current program offerings. Even after the program offerings of both libraries were totaled, book-related programming still came in second place with 44 programs, and Professional programs was the largest number at 60 programs.

Current Adult Program Offerings – Library in Illinois and Library in Wisconsin

Table 2 presents the sum of Library C's and Library D's program offerings in the categories listed above from January 2015 through May 2015.

	Book-Related	Professional	Health	Arts/Crafts	Special Presentations	Entertainment
Library C	7	5	0	0	5	10
Library D	10	121	0	0	39	0
Total	**17**	**126**	**0**	**0**	**44**	**10**

- **Table 2**

This table is provided to show how the two public libraries in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina compare to libraries in other parts of the country. This table looks completely different than the table that contains the sums of the North Carolina libraries' programs. The most striking difference is that neither Library C nor Library D currently offers any Health or Arts/Crafts programs. Library A and Library B have their programs a bit more evenly spread out amongst the various categories than Library C and Library D. Book-related programs are still not the highest-number category. Furthermore, looking at the Library D's numbers, book-related programs are

not even the second-highest number category. Even after the two library's program categories have been totaled, book-related programs still only make third place. Different libraries prioritize different types of programs—while entertainment seems to be a big priority at Library C, Library D does not offer any entertainment programs. However, Library D does put an enormous focus on professional programs, as evident from the number offered.

Community Needs – Do Program Categories Fit?

To understand why these North Carolina libraries offer the types of programs they do, it is important to understand the communities in which they are located. Research Triangle, North Carolina is comprised largely of three counties, with many other counties that border the area. The three major counties in the area are: Orange County, home to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Durham County, home to Duke University; and Wake County, home to the state's capital city, Raleigh, and North Carolina State University. The area is somewhat urban, well-populated, and diverse, thanks to the many universities and the large research and development and technology companies located in Research Triangle Park. From the small, sleepy streets of Hillsborough (located in Orange County) to the busy city blocks in downtown Raleigh (located in Wake County), the Research Triangle counties' combined population comes to approximately 1.5 million people. With such diverse needs, how do the public libraries of the area decide what programs to offer to their patrons?

One way that public libraries can begin to understand their communities is to have a community needs analysis or assessment done on their potential patrons. The Orange County Libraries did just this, and they did it rather recently, near the end of 2012. While

the identity of the libraries I studied for this research have been anonymized, using the Orange County Libraries Community Needs Analysis was helpful regardless of whether or not I looked at one of their libraries. There are other libraries in Orange County that are not a part of this system, and their service areas overlap.

The information in this analysis that presents data found in community interviews is the most interesting, as it contains anecdotal feedback on the library's services. A summary of the interview data is given: "Everyone viewed libraries as very relevant, maybe even more so, given the emergence of the Internet. Libraries can help those who can't; job seekers for example along with resources, programs, and lecture series" (24). When asked about where the local libraries could improve, one respondent felt that entertainment options should be a priority: The library should...participate more in the community and offer 'fun' things as much as possible" (27). This seems like a legitimate concern, as approximately 90% of survey respondents viewed their library as "a place to get books." Only about 40% saw it as "a venue for interesting events" (32). While this could mean that residents of Orange County are not interested in attending events or programs at their library, we find that this is not the case when the community quotes are examined. The quotes include things like "More programs, please!," "Would like more activities," "I like speakers coming in – I like the library being the information and social hub of the community – a place for people to gather – a friendly and welcoming place," "it would be nice to see more robust programming," and, "would love to see more senior oriented programs" (33-43). Here are some specific programs that are being offered within the categories desired by Orange County citizens:

Professional:

- Resume & Job Search Assistance Lab

- SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) Business Counseling

- Introduction to Entrepreneurship

- How to Manage Your Investment Portfolio Yourself

- SAT Ten Question Challenge

Book-Related:

- Evening Book Club

- Blind Date With a Book

- Mystery Book Discussion

- There's a Book for That

- First Monday Classics

Entertainment:

- Music in the Library

- Chess Club

- Movie Matinee

While it is evident that libraries in the area are offering varied types of programs, it seems that the most robust programming offerings are in the professional category, although programs fitting into this category were not mentioned in the community interviews. Finding what your community needs is not always a one-step process. As I found in my interviews with local librarians, there are many different factors that go into planning programs, and sometimes trial and error is a big part of creating success.

Interview Results: Two North Carolina Public Libraries

Library A

Library A's explanation of the difference between programs and services is all about the level of engagement with individuals. According to the librarian interviewed, a program is "something that has been designed and is delivered by staff members...it is usually more formal in how the staff gets involved with it." The librarian was excited to talk about the difference in programs and services, as they are currently evaluating this very issue in their library system. As of now, services can be self-moderated, or very personal. They would like to make their services more personal, as they believe that it is what their patrons want. They mentioned: "We're focusing pretty heavily almost on what you'd call a concierge service—a one-on-one engagement with a person...In the past we would offer a class, and show a PowerPoint, and then we figured out that wasn't working...So we're actually scheduling appointments with them [now]." This piece of information is an example not only of how programs stand out as different from services, but also of how libraries/librarians customize their offerings to the public depending on their patrons' needs. A type of non-traditional program that Library A has seen to be successful is a concert—in the library. "One night we had an African drumming program, and it was pretty cool because everybody was dancing in the front of the library! Even the teenagers were there and they were clapping their hands and dancing around and I thought, 'Really? Wow, that's pretty great!'"

Having established how Library A defines programs, I learned that they have only recently begun adult programming at their particular branch. The branch has been open for about eight and a half years, and it did not start off with a particularly strong adult

programming component. The librarian whom I spoke with was excited to begin adult programming at Library A, stating, "I never ever believed it would fail here. I always felt it would succeed," but there was some reticence from the library system at first, as it seemed safer to stick with children's programming—that's where the numbers were high. But, as the librarian explained, that does not mean that adults aren't interested in programming: "It's an interesting population that we serve. Twenty-seven percent of residents in the area are from India, so there are some cultural things we've learned about, for example, the whole family comes to programming." This element puts the focus on making sure that the family area of adult programming is given more attention. Once they took the plunge into offering sixteen adult programs and four book discussions per month, Library A was rewarded with "the highest average [attendance] numbers for adult programs in the library system."

Library A follows the library system's rubric for providing their adult programming, in which they have four target areas (quartiles):

- Personal Development: "This is really about development of all types, not just literacy and reading. We focus on financial literacy, computer literacy, and how to teach yourself things."

- Arts and Literature: "This focuses on Literature with a capital L, lectures, humanities, artists and artisans."

- Recreational Reading: "This area focuses really on guiding a reader to the next book. We'll have author programs, and we'll have something called 'Suggestions on the Spot,' which is like readers advisory right there, right up front—so you can find the next great book to read."

- Career and Education: " This area includes things like information on starting a small business, SAT programs, job-searching, etc."

Creativity and specific program planning within each of the four quartiles is at the discretion of the adult services librarian(s), and Library A librarians will often meet with other librarians in their system to discuss the types of programs that they could offer. When asked in what other ways they choose their programs, the librarian mentioned that they try to tailor their offerings to the community, as well as learn from past successes/failures. "We have to make sure offering the same sort of consistency for our [library system] members so that people in the Western part of the county don't get something more than people in the Eastern part of the county and vice versa. But within that realm, we do try to fit things a little bit better. For instance, we just had some programs on urban gardening. If this library was in [a different area] the program on using goats in your garden might be very good, but here it's going to be more like vegetable gardening. So, we'll have that same sort of concept, but suited to the needs of the community."

When asked at the close of the interview if she had any further thoughts on the role of the public library, the librarian at Library A responded with passion: "I have always been a believer that the public library is the center of activity for the community. To me, [the library] is the one true last place in the community that everybody can come, and everybody is welcome. It is a place that people can get to know each other, and it forms that sense of community. As librarians, sometimes we have a tendency to think about the library as ours. But it's not ours. It's the community's. The library is for the people."

Library B

Library B described the difference between services and programs in public libraries simply: services are "on demand." Specifically, the librarians explained that, according to the State Library, "one-on-one anything can't count as a program." The history of adult programming at Library B, has, like Library A, a very recent beginning. They have only been in the building they are currently in since 2010, and before that, they did not have a real position or budget for adult programming. That being said, adult programming was not non-existent. Library B relied a lot on community members' interest in helping to create programs. One of the librarians recalled, "Every once in a while, local authors would come when they released new books. One would just come to the library and say, 'hey, do you need someone to give a talk?' That was very popular." The library did have someone that was technically "in charge" of adult programming, but they did not have a budget for it—they had to be creative. "They were very innovative, they would go around to different businesses and people and ask them if they wanted to come do a program at the library. For example, [the librarian] would go to the flower shop and see if they would like to come and do a presentation on flower arranging. Local businesses loved to come, so from there [adult programming] sort of grew. It seemed like the library realized then that there was an audience for this, so they began to put money into it."

Since Library B did not have a huge say in the programming that they offered for adults before they relocated to a new building, they have only recently had the task of really figuring out how to go about choosing and providing programs. The first thing that the library did was create a position for programming, Adult and Teen Programming

Librarian. They still rely a lot on free programming options, such as having authors come

and give talks on their books, as their budget is not huge. Other than that sort of

convenience method, Library B uses a lot of different methods in planning their

programs. First and foremost, they try to keep in mind what their role in the community

is, and go from there: "I really see us as a community center—just a place that anyone

can go and get information and have free access to resources, to entertainment, to space."

Most telling is that Library B likes to think of themselves as a "bridge." "Instead of

simply being a place to archive information (since most people have the ability to archive

their own information, or have access to information online) the library [should] serve as

a bridge to make sure that they can access information." This bridge concept applies not

only to research and computer literacy, but also to cultural literacy.

Library B provides events like movie nights in order to be the bridge to popular

culture for those who need it: "If you don't have a certain amount of money/disposable

income, then you are at risk of not being fluent in your own popular culture. If you can't

afford a Netflix subscription or if you can't afford satellite TV, the things that you're

exposed to are completely different from what we would consider mainstream culture. So

having things like free movie nights [is important]."

Showing movies at the library has become a pretty common thing, but it is still a

form of entertainment, and entertainment itself is not always the most sought after quality

in programs for libraries. However, according to the librarians at Library B,

entertainment and fun is perfectly fine for libraries to offer, in fact, "We fought to have

the word 'fun' in one of our missions, or our vision, and there's nothing wrong with fun."

Another different type of program that they have offered in the past that was successful

was called "Spanish Lunch & Learn." This idea came from a community member who approached the librarian with her idea to host a series of conversational-style meetings in which English speakers could work on their Spanish, and vice versa. The librarian explained, "The idea was that over the course of the six weeks [patrons] would be able to get to know each other, and to help make Spanish-speakers feel more comfortable in the library. People were super interested in it, and we had a huge long waiting list."

V. Discussion

My research question asked how two North Carolina libraries' current programming practices demonstrate the changes in public library adult programming, and what factors have influenced the changes in public library programming. The first component of the question was answered by the variety of programs available at the two libraries chosen. First, in both libraries, book-related programming was not the largest category of currently available programs. This fact alone shows that libraries' programming initiatives are not defined by events about, related, or pertaining to books—this is of note because libraries still are most often and primarily thought of as institutions in which people can learn about and check out books.

If there was one thing that stood out in my interviews with North Carolina librarians, it was that public libraries exist for their communities. This brings me to the second component of my research question, of which the answer is clear—the most basic factor that has influenced the changes evident in public library adult programming is the changes of needs in communities. These needs changes come from many factors, including city/county growth and expansion, industrial growth, technology advancement, and unfortunately, even negative community changes such as company layoffs and natural disasters. If there is a need, public libraries are pretty good about filling it, and it is particularly interesting to observe how they fill needs through new and varied programming options for their adult patrons.

Determining Success: Library A and Patron Involvement

One of the most significant things I learned in speaking with public librarians is that the number of people who attend an event should not be the sole indicator of program success. When librarians see patrons not only attending their programs, but also actively participating and enjoying them, it is encouraging. While funders focus heavily on the number of patrons who attend programs, oftentimes the experience had by the ones who attend is more important in judging the success of a program—this was conveyed most clearly when the librarian at Library A described the patrons' reaction to a concert in their library. It was much more indicative of program success to see how enthusiastic the librarians became when talking about patrons' reactions and participation during programs. The problem with this is that this representation of success is not always easily conveyed, quantified, or impressive to the decision makers of communities—libraries need to have the attendance numbers to prove their worth.

The success of Library A's adult programming initiative lies in their staff's commitment and, most importantly, their community's investment. They began the push for more adult programming during a time of economic downturn, and it really paid off. While they had to cut from some areas of the library system's offerings, they increased programming across the board. The librarian explained, "in order to remain relevant to the time when you're losing funding, you have to up the ante." Libraries have to adjust what they offer and how they offer it all the time and for many different reasons, but it is clear that Library A feels that the community should always be at the center of what you do in your library. Programming helps them to fulfill the role of the library by providing another way to provide information to the public.

Community Partnership: Library B's Programming Approach

Going out into the community not only accomplishes finding programs that won't cost your library, but it also keeps the community's interests in mind. Library B established connections in the community, and this allowed their library to be able to provide even more for the community. Keeping the community involved is key for libraries, because they may be able to think of program ideas that you had not considered. And, what better way to include the community's interests than to collaborate with them and develop programs together? Even if you don't have a community that is interested in starting programs, you always need to consider their needs: "We don't have a clear thing to say [about our role]. We are what they want us to be, and that changes constantly. And [we are] fine with whatever that is." I believe that this attitude is absolutely essential for public libraries if they are to remain relevant to their patrons—you cannot just provide what you feel is an ideal set of programs for your community, you have to make an effort to find out what they want, and then you have to find a way to make it happen.

Limitations

Since the research only included the study of public libraries in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina, it is possible that some or all of the librarians interviewed were graduates of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. Given this possibility, the results of the interviews conducted could have been skewed in that the librarians could all have similar views because they went to the same school. Additionally, as the libraries chosen for this research were in the same geographic area, the libraries possibly had overlapping

patronage. In order to decrease the probability of this problem, the research was conducted at libraries located in different counties of central North Carolina.

The major limitation of this research is that it only looks at two libraries in the same geographic area in order to determine the factors that influence changes in public library programming. While some of what can be said for these two libraries will apply to other libraries, there are certainly more factors that need to be discovered in researching a larger number and wider variety of public libraries.

VI. Conclusion: A Bright Future

As technology increases, the need for classes that teach patrons how to use it increases. As the economy grows, the need for resume help and job seeking skills grows. As communities and families grow and change, the need for programs at the public library that strengthen community and family bonds grows.

This research found that there is currently a significant variety of adult programming in public libraries, and that this variety is often indicative of the type of community in which the library is located. Libraries are looking to their communities for programming inspiration. Not only are they offering events that may appeal to their communities in particular, they are also acting on ideas posed to them by citizens. As one librarian proudly stated, "We are what they want us to be." Public librarians have taken on the responsibility of not only providing traditional services like books and book clubs, but also of being a community center that provides anything from entertainment and professional development to fitness.

The next Public Libraries Survey (fiscal year 2013) will most likely be released by the IMLS sometime in the summer of this year, 2015. I predict that it will show an even greater increase in public library program attendance, and as long as libraries continue to reach out to and partner with their communities, the increase should happen with every passing year. The future of public library adult programming is bright, and limitations are shrinking with every passing day. It's not about providing programs that

are unique just for the sake of their uniqueness; rather, it's about providing programs that either benefit or fill a gap in your community.

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