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This paper examines the experiences of five public libraries in adopting and implementing readers' advisory service as an innovation. Using the criteria of allocation of resources, support of library administration, professional status of practitioners and promotion of leisure reading, degrees of implementation are examined. Of the five libraries, one had completely implemented the innovation and started re-inventing it to meet local needs. Three had committed to the innovation, but did not meet all of the criteria that comprised full implementation. One seems to be still in the decision-making stage, and cannot be said to have yet adopted the innovation. The processes followed by each library were grounded in behaviors identifiable through the study of the diffusion of innovations. Understanding of innovation diffusion makes it possible for library administrators and funders to identify and encourage innovative staff members.

Headings

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READERS' ADVISORY SERVICE:
ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN
INNOVATION IN SELECT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by
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The ability to learn about, adopt and implement innovations is a key factor in the survival and growth of any organization. In this sense, innovation is far more than technology; it encompasses new ways of thinking, new solutions to existing problems and inevitably new behavior. Within the public library in the past 15 years one innovation, the resurrection of readers' advisory service, has offered practitioners an opportunity to exercise their own capabilities, has provided a new and much-needed service to patrons, and has positioned librarians as informed and compassionate mediators between readers and the vast and confusing world of fiction. Tools for providing readers' advisory service are available; networks of advocates give encouragement, along with practical advice; scholars offer their insights and research. Furthermore, it seems to be something that patrons want. With these supports, it seems that any library wanting to offer readers' advisory would have the information it needs to begin or improve its service.

But how does the practice of readers' advisory service stack up as an innovation that may offer renewal and growth opportunity to public libraries? Is the new service being given the resources it needs to thrive alongside core library services? Is it receiving the support of library administrators? Are the individuals who provide the readers' advisory service considered innovative and valuable members of the staff? Do their patrons perceive the libraries as a center of such service?

By examining the literature of innovation and the recent history of readers' advisory in comparison with the actual practices of five library systems, this paper will

illuminate areas where this innovation is being implemented as well as areas where further experimentation and effort might be considered. While these five case studies are too few to draw conclusions about libraries in general, the stories are valuable in that they illustrate the tension between theoretical ideal practices and the compromises that libraries make in day-to-day operations. The staff from these five libraries exhibited a range of attitudes regarding the readers' advisory innovation. Those attitudes suggest that there is ample room for the adoption of improvements in the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Any discussion of innovation diffusion must begin with Everett M. Rogers, and the insights he developed in his *Diffusion of Innovations* (4th ed., 1995). Defining innovation as an “idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (11), Rogers diagrammed an S-curve that depicts the pace of successful innovation adoption, which he defined as the point when the actual decision to adopt the innovation was made.

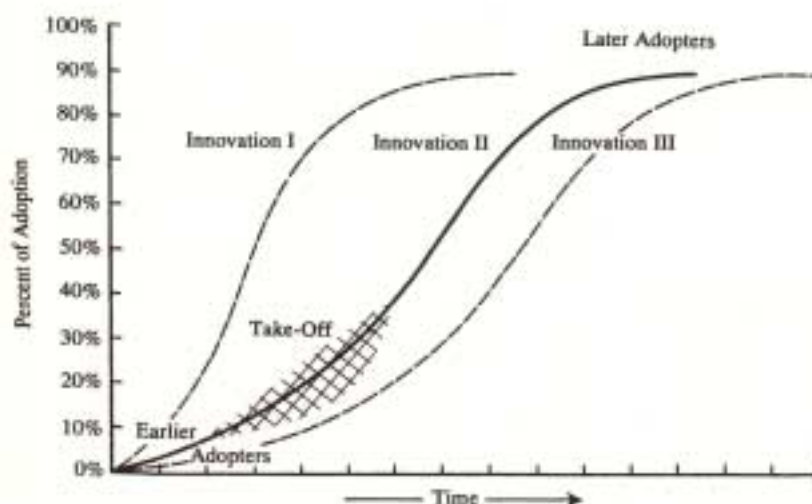


Figure 1. Innovation Adoption S-Curve, from E. M. Rogers (1995), *Diffusion of Innovations* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press. 11.

The growth curve of the diagram occurs when the innovation extends beyond the portion of the population willing to experiment with any new idea and begins to penetrate into that portion of the population who are characterized as being in a position to learn about innovations, synthesize them into their behavior, and communicate the advantages of the innovation to the remainder of the system. The steepness of that growth stage is determined by the characteristics of the innovation, which include its advantages over an old idea, its compatibility with the current system's norms, and the ease of understanding the innovation. The degree of commitment required to experiment, and the visibility of the innovation are also essential to the success with which the earliest adopters are able to disseminate information about the innovation.

Once the decision to adopt the innovation has been made, the adopter moves into the period Rogers (1995) terms the "implementation stage," the point at which the process moves from investigation of the innovation to actually putting it into use (172).

It is at this point that problems are experienced with assimilating the innovation into standard behavior, and introduce a potential juncture for the innovation to be abandoned.

When the adopter is an organization,

a number of individuals are usually involved in the innovation-decision process, and the implementers are often a different set of people from the decision makers. Also, the organizational structure that gives stability and continuity to an organization may be a resistant force to implementation of an innovation (173).

In addition, Rogers (1995) notes that implementation does not always end the decision stage - adopters may begin to shape or re-invent the innovation in response to individual circumstances, to accommodate a need for other component parts associated with the innovation, or to resolve a more focused problem than the innovation itself was designed to accomplish.

Karahanna, Straub & Chervany (1999) further break down the innovation process and offer insight into which innovation characteristics govern or influence the pre-adoption behavior, and which are prominent in post-adoption attitudes. Their study, which they believe to be “the first to empirically examine the differential influence of a *comprehensive* set of innovation attributes on both adoption and usage behaviors” looks at the perceptions and subjective norms of potential adopters of Windows 3.1 at a Midwestern financial institution as compared to the post-adoption perceptions and subjective norms of earlier adopters (184; authors’ emphasis). The results revealed that potential adopters were concerned primarily with perceived usefulness, trialability, result demonstrability and the visibility of the adoption. In other words, they wanted to know before adopting the new technology that their use would find the tacit approval of their superiors and secondarily that it would improve their job performance with minimum disruption. Post-adoption respondents indicated a higher concern with perceived usefulness, ease of use, and the image that use of the technology projected; they were already comfortable with the program’s ease of use, had incorporated it into their daily work, and even left the program visible on their computer screens for comment by their peers. Post-adoption respondents also revealed a higher level of concern with their standing among the innovation’s change agents (in this case, the institution’s management information systems department) than with any other social group identified in the survey, including their superiors.

One of the authors’ principal findings was that potential users, in this study, were more influenced by the expectations of their perceived social group leaders (top management, supervisors and the MIS department), and that the higher those respondents

rated leaders' subjective norms the more likely they were to adopt the innovation. In contrast, those who had already adopted the innovation were more influenced by its continued utility than the perceptions of their social groups. The researchers were also surprised to find that potential adopters had what they termed "a richer set of behavioral beliefs" about the program than users, and cite as a possible factor the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in adopting a new technology (200). In this case, post-adoption concerns were limited to two characteristics of innovation adoption, where the pre-adoption responses could be characterized in five separate areas.

The study does have some weaknesses. The actual rate of response was only 25 percent (230 responses out of 951 potential subjects); the authors ended up with 77 potential adopters and 153 users. Another problematic aspect was with the technology adoption policy of the institution itself. Although the organization had committed to moving to Windows technology, individuals and departments were able to schedule their own transitions individually. However, even though the authors say there was no overt pressure to adopt within a certain timeframe, certainly having a public commitment to moving to that technology could be construed by employees as an unspoken expectation that they would adopt the innovation at some point; even the most reluctant likely would feel some pressure to consider the technology.

Much attention has been paid to why innovations are adopted; less attention has been given to the opposite situation. Parthsarathy and Bhattacharjee (1998) examined post-adoption discontinuance of an innovation, looking for factors that might influence those who choose to abandon the innovation. They hypothesized that early and late adopters would look at different sources for their adoption information, have different

needs and expectations, different commitments to continuing to use the innovation, and different reasons for discontinuing. By looking at the relative position of adoption, they believe that it is possible to predict whether an adopter will retain the innovation, and under what circumstances the adopter will discontinue.

The authors studied users of an online service, randomly selecting 500 continuing users and 500 discontinuing users from an initial population of 28,000 randomly selected subscribers. They received 443 brief responses, evenly distributed between the two groups. They then sent a four-page survey to those informants, and received 145 completed questionnaires, again approximately evenly distributed between the two groups.

Their analysis of the results suggests that early adopters, by virtue of their predisposition to collect information individually from outside sources before adoption, are less prone to disenchantment, more willing to experiment with the innovation, and more likely to use complementary products, such as how-to books, to develop their skill level. Later adopters, on the other hand, are more likely to adopt the innovation because of interpersonal influences (the satisfaction level of a peer), and are therefore more likely to suffer from what the authors call “the *expectation-reality gap*, i.e., inability of adopters to achieve expected level of benefits” (365). They also use the innovation less frequently, and for periods of shorter duration than those of early adopters. Based on their information sources and expectations, later adopters who discontinue are also more likely to abandon the innovation completely, where early adopters might discontinue a particular technology but move to a replacement that they perceive as more useful.

This study offers interesting insights into ways of responding to the changing needs of adopters. Early adopters look for information about the innovation, consulting sources that may be seen as neutral. As the S-curve begins to rise, potential adopters develop different information needs that must be addressed to ensure their continued satisfaction with the innovation. If those information needs are not met, later adopters become dissatisfied, move to abandon the innovation, and use their own social networks to disparage the innovation.

The study does have some issues of concern, though. The final response rate is only 14.5 percent of the actual study population, so replicating the study with a higher response rate might generate more significant results. In addition, the authors recognize that the innovation under study, the adoption of an online service, takes little effort to adopt and little effort to discontinue.

These studies have dealt with areas of interest in the diffusion of innovations in general. Diffusion has also been studied in the specific arena of library and information science, but has not achieved the depth or breadth of innovation research in other disciplines. There is no lack of evidence that innovation and change do occur in the library setting; what has not been as frequently recorded is a set of quantified data regarding the perceptions with which library staff view, accept, promote or create innovations.

Various writers, particularly Malinconico (1997) and Carmichael (1998), have commended United States librarians in general for being “among the most innovative and earliest adaptors of information handling technologies” (Malinconico, 55), while others have noted that “libraries have by and large been conservative in actually making the

changes” called for by new information systems (Fatzer, 1996). A number of narrative accounts of innovations introduced and successfully adopted in a variety of library settings exist (e.g., Bender, 1997; Diaz and Pintozzi, 1999; Wehmeyer, Auchter & Hirshon, 1996), recounting everything from instituting a “Learning Organization” mentality to implementing a customer service plan with measurable results. Additional background can be found in Musmann (1982).

Wilson Luquire (1983) speculated that the overall perception of a librarian in evaluating an innovative system is closely related to and affected by the interplay of five factors: library decision-making style, rank, library size (by volume count), amount of preparation required, and demographics relating to age, education and experience. Using the adoption of Ohio Central Library Catalog (now Online Computerized Library Center, or OCLC for short) by member institutions of the Association of Research Libraries as his independent variable, Luquire surveyed the technical services departments of 23 of the 25 institutions who had moved to OCLC between 1971 and 1976. Using a combination of survey instruments and follow-up interviews, he assessed librarians’ perception of OCLC. Overall, those hypotheses anticipating negative perceptions relating to rank in the administrative hierarchy, and those relating to age and experience were most likely to be unsupported. He concludes that internal communications is a key to managing perceptions of change - the larger the organization, the more centralized the decision-making, and the less preparation given to the staff, the more likely librarians were to resist or evaluate the particular innovation negatively.

Luquire’s study does have some limitations. The five-year delay between the earliest adoption by surveyed libraries and the survey itself may mean that those most

likely to evaluate the innovation negatively may have left. In addition, the study was limited to technical services departments, where differences between standardized and localized cataloging procedures may be greatest, a reason cited as a problem by librarians at larger institutions. Nor does he explore the different systems used to communicate, train and support the transition, although he does offer four hypotheses directed at what he terms “attitudinal” and “technical” preparation (349).

More recently, Karen Finlay and Thomas Finlay (1996) sought to establish a connection between current knowledge and personality types in measuring librarians’ attitude towards and use of the Internet. Along with the two individual characteristics, the research also measured other factors, including the level of support and the amount of training individuals received to enhance their knowledge or acceptance of the new technology. Using methodology from marketing studies of consumers’ objective and subjective knowledge as a backdrop, they recruited a number of full-time librarians as study participants. Participants’ objective knowledge about the Internet ranged from high to low, and personality types from a high level of innovativeness (although how that was determined was not specified) to a low level. The researchers hypothesized that those who had a higher level of knowledge and a more innovative personality were likely to have a more positive attitude towards the innovation; however, the hypotheses related to knowledge were supported, but the hypothesis that predicted innovativeness to relate positively to actual Internet use was not supported. In sum, those who used the Internet most knew most about it.

Perhaps more important were the results uncovered by studying the background variables. More than age, education, position or a host of access issues, encouragement

and support in the workplace led to higher levels of acceptance of the innovation.

Although not a feature of the initial study, the authors reported informal follow-up discussions that revealed the communications processes by which knowledgeable or interested people gained experience – via conversation, reading and self-study, rather than formal training programs. However, the study was conducted at only one location, and suffered from the loss of about half its informants by the end, so the conclusions are less generalizable to the library profession at large.

Looking beyond technology to programmatic innovation, Audunson (1999) measured the response of librarians in three European cities to varying degrees of change that stemmed from formal political or community-driven initiatives. Introducing what he calls “environmental turbulence” into a model for change, he suggests that the external environment has a strong influence on willingness to accept changes and may be at odds with a professional ethic (528). Depending on where the turbulence originates and whether the source is perceived as compatible or conflicting with the organization’s professional values, Audunson (1999) postulates that even change that is initially perceived to be contrary to professional values can be accommodated, if it is perceived as originating within the professional community.

Audunson (1999) looked at three library systems undergoing varying levels of restructuring. In each case, he found that when reforms were grounded in professional norms (for instance, charging fees for non-print circulation items to maintain budgets for print materials), and when librarians filtered their responses to change and innovation through those norms, it was possible to accommodate and even to accelerate change. On the other hand, when innovations were perceived as outside or opposed to professional

norms, a high level of resistance would be encountered, increasing the likelihood that the innovation would not succeed.

While this was an interesting study, Audunson (1999) also observes, but does not attempt to quantify, that professional self-interest may drive those active in the field to accommodate change. He found that, contrary to his early expectations, those who were most active in professional development or exposed to professional literature were most likely to challenge current practices or norms. Particularly in areas where fundamental political or economic change requires institutional change, he speculates (but does not assert), that career interests may drive acceptance of innovations as a function of continued professional development. Although the study was conducted in three European library systems, it does have important implications for libraries in the United States. Budget pressures, social and political changes, and technological innovations may require a fundamental rethinking of the structures of public and academic libraries. While the range of change would be difficult to emulate, this would be an interesting study to replicate in the United States.

In a smaller study incorporating the changes required by technology and organizational growth, Rena K. Fowler (1998) measured perceptions of change against the framework of organizational theory, particularly the theory of the “Learning Organization.” She conducted an in-depth case study of an (unspecified) Association of Research Libraries university, which she describes as “innovative,” in an attempt to discover “the means by that innovation is communicated or organizational learning occurs...and to understand the mechanisms by which organizational learning facilitates innovation” (223). Using both qualitative data from interviews and quantitative data

from surveys, she sought to develop a link between the organizational and individual learning of the library, and its collective and individual perception of the Internet. Looking at individual, departmental and organizational activity against three levels of learning (individual, team, and organizational), measured by use of the Internet, she was not able to draw any clear causation between innovation and organizational learning. Continuous learning at the individual and team levels was significantly associated with positive perceptions of the innovation. At best, she was able to speculate that organizational learning and innovation are mutually reinforcing and iterative, but since that was not a point of the study, she does not draw that as a direct conclusion.

This study was also not without problems. Fowler (1998) selected an “innovative” university, but does not provide any criteria by which the organization’s innovation is measured; then, working with the results from various departments, she selected those that stood out as her benchmarks for innovative teams. Still, she was unable to establish a connection between innovation and a shared vision extending beyond even the most innovative work team to the larger department, and acknowledges that the data only partially support her hypothesis.

From these studies, we can see that the degree to which an innovation is adopted into an organization relies not just on the intrinsic value of the innovation itself, but on the attitudes, priorities and resources which are dedicated to exposing potential adopters to it. At an innovation’s earliest stages, attitudes towards it are going to be formed by exposure to the thoughts and experiences of influential peers within a professional network. With wider exposure and practice, the innovation must become a priority of those who will oversee its implementation at the local level so they can include less

senior members in the adoption process, demonstrate their support, and make preparations for the implementation. After the innovation is adopted, they must provide resources to increase learning and use at the individual, group and organizational level.

These studies also demonstrate that commitment to such learning is a determining factor of the ease with which the innovation is adopted and the depth to which it penetrates to exert its influence on the organization. When multiple individuals or organizations adopt the same innovation across time, those who adopt early tend to be more self-reliant or engage in continuous informal learning, and will commit for a longer period. Those who adopt later may need more training and support to ensure that the process is meeting their expectations; they are also more likely to abandon not only the innovation but the whole culture surrounding it if their expectations are not met.

The literature suffers from the perception that computer technology is the only innovation that can be measured and studied. With the exception of Audunson's European libraries, all of the studies cited focused on computers or the Internet. Looking back to Rogers, though, we see that he also classes ideas and practices as innovations; establishing a practice as innovative requires looking at the history and alternatives that foster or compete with a potentially innovative practice.

Readers' advisory in its current form encompasses ideas and practices, and so is considered innovative. While I do not propose to give a detailed history of readers' advisory service here, I do hope to introduce the factors that establish its current practice as an innovation.

READERS' ADVISORY: AN OVERVIEW

According to Boone (1996), readers' advisory can be divided into five periods: Pre-formal (1876-1920), Formal (1920-1940), Null (1940-1980), Renaissance (1980-Present) and Electronic Revolution (1990-Present). The Pre-formal period is based on a time during the development of the identity of the public library within the community and of the librarian within the practice. The Formal period is characterized by such programs as the American Library Association's Reading With a Purpose, a guided reading list intended to educate or elevate the user, and by the characterization of readers into such presumptive and judgmental categories as Lowbrow or Timid and Inferior (Boone, 1996; Baker, 1992).

Boone (1996) asserts that "Readers' advisory appears to have been one casualty" of World War II, with the disappearance of leisure time in favor of paid or volunteer war work, and the post-war emphasis on technology and information both in the library and in the surrounding culture (19). A concurrent focus on quantifying services within the library for budgeting purposes inevitably led to cutbacks, since most readers' advisors had neither statistics nor other hard evidence that their services were essential to the library's information function. At that point, as a service in most libraries readers' advisory ceased to exist. The Null Period, as Boone (1996) characterizes the years between 1940 and 1980, was a time when intermittent interest in readers' advisory was not sustained by professional practice, development opportunities, or tools that transcended individual library systems. During that period, the emphasis on reference practice dominated librarianship, and readers' advisory became the diluted service provided by everyone, professional and paraprofessional, who had contact with patrons.

Boone (1996) even points out that the more general “reader guidance” was substituted for “readers’ advisory service” as a heading in the 1958 Library Literature “to reflect the diffusion of the service within the library” (19).

Both Boone (1996) and Duncan Smith¹ assert that readers’ advisory began its comeback in 1980 with the publication of Betty Rosenberg’s *Genreflecting: A Guide to Reading Interests in Genre Fiction*. Suddenly, librarians had a reference tool at their fingertips, to which they could turn with difficult patron questions to find an “objective” answer. The publication of *Genreflecting* was followed by a plethora of such tools offering guidance to readers’ advisors, along with editorial columns in *Booklist* and articles in library and school media journals encouraging the practice.

During the same period, libraries were forced to question their identity as a primary source for reference information. The shift to information technology, including the advent of the personal computer, the growth of CD-ROM databases, and the birth of the Internet all meant that libraries began to ask, “On what territory can we win?” (Smith, 2001). The obvious answer was fiction and readers’ advisory. As Smith (2001) quotes Nesbitt, “It is our ‘high touch response to high tech.’ ”.

The emphasis changed, however, in such a way that I consider the reborn readers’ advisory practice an innovation straight from Rogers (1996) – an “idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by the adopting unit” (11). With a forty-year gap in the practice, those who were interested in readers’ advisory had to rely on their own instincts, on the newly available print and electronic tools, and on the initially informal networks they built with like-minded practitioners. One of those instincts was to turn the purpose of

¹Creator of the *NoveList* search engine, an advocate for readers’ advisory, and 1997 winner of the ALA’s Margaret E. Monroe Award for Library Adult Services for his work with readers’ advisory.

readers' advisory on its head – no longer was it intended to be a form of assimilation or of patron classification, but was instead to rely on the radically simple concept that patrons should be offered introductions to the books that might please them. That practice was and is not without difficulties, as both librarians and patrons needed to develop the communications processes that allow them to work together.

On the patron's side, the mass of books available to each reader ensures that some effort must be brought to bear on the question "What would I like to read now?" Many factors influence the question itself; some of those are conscious ("I like this author" or "I enjoy the settings found in science fiction"), but many operate at levels below the average reader's ability or training to articulate easily. In addition, given the library's focus on reference, it is entirely likely that some fiction-reading patrons have had at least one negative encounter that established the perception that library employees only deal with "serious" questions. Thus, without the words to express their inquiry, and without a welcoming atmosphere for that inquiry, patrons do not instinctively turn to librarians for information about leisure reading.

On the librarian's side, no vocabulary or process existed to introduce or conduct the readers' advisory transaction. With the advent of Joyce Saricks' *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* in 1989, that began to change. Saricks (2nd ed., 1997) offered a vision for readers' advisors that "knowledgeable, nonjudgmental staff help fiction readers with their reading needs...[a] philosophy that reading, of, and by itself, has intrinsic value" (1). Her vision was so appealing, and her leadership so evident that the Public Library Association awarded her the 1989 Allie Beth Martin Award for her service to public libraries.

Following publication of Saricks' work, a surge of English-language articles about "reader guidance" in library journals began appearing – from six in 1989 to 14 in 1990, to twelve in 1991. A 1993 volume of *Collection Building* was dedicated to readers' advisory, and in 1996 *Guiding the Reader to the Next Book*, edited by Kenneth Shearer, was published. Shearer's book was developed from an article he and Pauletta Brown Bracy wrote in response to Sharon L. Baker's 1992 "Readers' Advisory Services: A Call for More Research". Shearer and Brown put to the test the notion that readers' advisory service was being offered, was performed professionally and in fact accomplishing what Shearer (1996) viewed as its purpose: "the reader discovering a book...that is enjoyable, entertaining, stimulating, mind-stretching and eye-opening" (3). Shearer (1996) found that readers' advisory was handled professionally far less often than the 55 percent rate of correct reference responses which caused an outcry in the library profession and led to the creation and dissemination of the Maryland model of reference interviewing. His findings indicated that at the time of publication, in North Carolina public libraries, adult fiction accounted for 37 percent of all circulation, and juvenile fiction 32 percent of all circulation. Shearer (1996) argued that at the rate patrons were using fiction, librarians who did not provide professional readers' advisory were doing their communities a disservice and may even be damaging their overall credibility.

Shearer (1996) also created a template for the practice of readers' advisory in public libraries, using the implications from his research and the work of his contributors to lay out a series of standards he believed constitute good readers' advisory service.

Customer Service ranks first on this list - as he states,

Even fast food restaurants employing high school students are able to maintain far better customer service standards that was widely observed in both Shearer's and

Bracy's research. The positive side of this finding is that customers are willing to forgive a multitude of other sins in the staff is friendly and attentive (175).

The physical layout of the library can contribute to the patron's ultimate discovery of an enjoyable read. Shearer (1996) lists *Genre Classification* of the collection to facilitate passive readers' advisory, and the presence of *Fiction Search Engines* to provide a list of titles or to jog the memory of the readers' advisor as two important features within the library. Although no research relates physical location to the effectiveness of the readers' advisory service, Shearer (1996) demonstrates that patrons' ability to identify professionals to approach with questions does increase the likelihood that those questions will be answered well. The implication of that finding can be extended to the conclusion that the establishment of a Readers' Advisory Desk staffed by an interested practitioner will meet those needs better than the patrons' random approach to any staff member.

Shearer (1996) also lists organizational and individual attitudes which enhance the practice. He believes that there is a "very strong match between what many, possibly a majority, of public library customers want...and what a great many of the service employees of public libraries like to provide." (177) That match is based on enjoyment of narrative conveyed through books, music and films. When given a "structured, supported stage", like that found in professionally performed readers' advisory, patron enjoyment (which transforms readers' advisory into a value-added service) and staff satisfaction (which adds to a sense of professionalism) are likely to be increased. His terms for the elements within this basket of attitudes are *Capitalizing on What Staff Does Best*, *Value Added Orientation*, and *The Diagnostic Model for Readers' Advisory*. Finally, staff awareness of the inherently individual nature of the transaction is essential. Asking the suggested first question, "Tell me about a book you have really enjoyed" is

only the beginning step in an unmapped process that changes with each patron and each advisor. Mapping the alternatives at each step in the process requires continuing study, experimentation, evaluation and modification of techniques - which cannot be learned at a single training session.

In the five years since Shearer's book was published, readers' advisory has continued as a topic of discussion at national, state and local conferences, and in the professional literature. But no attempt has been made to follow up with local libraries to determine whether or not it has been adopted and put into practice following the growing body of professional norms. This paper attempts to do so on a small scale.

METHODOLOGY:

In an attempt to trace the level of implementation of readers' advisory service as advocated by Saricks and Shearer, I selected five of the ten largest county library systems in a Mid-Atlantic state. Each of the five was located at the physical or political center of its respective county. Several served as a main information source for county or city employees and major businesses, and so had a strong and well-funded reference collection. Each was in an urban area, and could be considered a principal branch, if not the main branch, of the library system. Each library serves a diverse set of patrons – in every case the patronage was described as ranging from homeless people to the very wealthy, of all ages from young children to senior citizens, and of all races and languages represented in the area. Each library system has access to *NoveList*² via the Web, and some have additional electronic sources, such as GaleNet's *What Do I Read Next?*

² *NoveList* is the fiction search engine created in 1994 and now found in one of every five public library systems. Users can search by favorite titles or authors, subject headings, genres or prize-winning fiction.

With the approval of the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I initiated contact with the directors of the five library systems and asked permission to interview members of their staff. The libraries are not identified, since their experiences are intended to convey generic information. See Appendix A for the contact letter and a sample release form.

County populations run from just over 200,000 people to slightly below 600,000 people. Service levels range from one staff member per 3566 citizens to one staff member per 1887 citizens. Twenty-four to forty percent of staff members at the various systems have a Master's in Library Science degree. Percentage of the budget dedicated to the collection ranges from eleven percent to twenty-one percent, with adult materials representing a fairly consistent 50-65 percent of the collections; budgets themselves ranged from \$5.6 million to \$10.5 million. Adult fiction circulation ranges from 26 to 39 percent.

The librarians who were my main informants were primarily mid-level staff members who, by professional designation or reputation, were considered by their supervisors and peers as the local authority on readers' advisory. At one library, I had an opportunity to formally interview a senior manager who was able to provide perspective on the library as a whole, so for the five libraries there were six interviews. Four of the six people had their Master's Degree in Library Science, one was completing the Master's program, and one was beginning coursework for an MLS, and had a background in bookstore work supplemented by years of experience volunteering with local libraries and literacy programs. In nearly every case, these individuals were responsible for purchasing both fiction and readers' advisory tools, and some had subject specialties for

purchasing in non-fiction. All expressed a personal love of reading, either general fiction or specific genres such as adventure/thriller, romance, fantasy and science fiction, that were the mainstays of their own reading knowledge. All were responsible, at one level or another, for coordinating special events such as author readings, or book groups. Two were male, four female.

I interviewed each respondent from a set protocol that followed Rogers' (1996) five characteristics of innovation adoption. For information on the individual's *exposure*, I tried to determine where, when and under what circumstances they had first heard about readers' advisory, as well as about the availability of training, time for journal reading, and conference attendance opportunities as an indicator of involvement in professional practice. To determine *relative advantage*, I asked about other core library services, such as reference, and tried to establish the level and importance of readers' advisory in the system and in the individual library. *Compatibility* was established by asking about the promotion and role of fiction reading in the library, and about the relative allocation of resources to readers' advisory compared to other core services. Questions about *ease of understanding* were centered on any difficulty in the library's use of electronic tools, as well as different attitudes towards the practice of readers' advisory in general.

Commitment was based on the history of readers' advisory in the library, the number of staff members involved in it, and the placement of formal centers for the tools and service. Finally, I asked questions about the *visibility* of both readers' advisory service and tools, both to the staff and to patrons, and about the status of practitioners within the system. I also asked follow-up questions and clarifications, and explored other areas as necessary. In some cases, based on responses, I deliberately eliminated lines of

questioning that appeared to have no bearing on the actual practice of readers' advisory at that individual's library. The interview protocol is attached as Appendix B.

Following the interview, I made an unaccompanied tour of the library, looking for materials – signage, brochures, bulletin boards and so on – that may have communicated the presence of readers' advisory service, an emphasis on fiction reading, or access to print and electronic tools for individual patron use in discovering new books. I also created diagrams of the library's floor plan, looking for the relative distances and positions of the fiction collection and other key library areas – any clearly identified readers' advisory service, the reference desk, the on-line public catalogues or internet terminals, the circulation desk and the main entrance. During that tour, I also looked for other evidence of interesting uses of technology or programs that might have created a sense of innovation in the library for both patrons and staff.

Finally, with assistance from EBSCOHost, I obtained usage logs of *NoveList* access from each library system. These statistics do not break down by building or individual use level, so cannot be correlated with the behaviors of the library staff with whom I spoke; however, they record the overall use of *NoveList* in the system, and can be viewed as an objective standard of the level that this aspect of the readers' advisory innovation has been adopted.

PROFILES:

BLUE LIBRARY

Blue Library is located in the most populous of the five counties examined. Because the county that the system serves is so large and diverse, branch heads are given

a great deal of latitude in establishing programs to meet the needs of their local customers, a characteristic that was frequently described in encounters with several different system employees. Blue Library has a history of being the first adopter of innovations in its system, a position facilitated by the local decision-making authority granted by the system head. At Blue Library, this is perhaps best exemplified by the branch head's championing of the establishment of word processing as a customer service over the strongly voiced concerns of other branch heads, and by her creation of the Readers' Advisory Librarian position: "[She] is the first regional supervisor to have created this position and absolutely wanted it."

The branch itself is located near the center of an urban area, serving local colleges and universities, city and county employees, and a sizable residential population. The building itself is older, and the local collection has substantially outgrown its shelf space – books are everywhere, stacked on tables, shelved on carts, and placed on top of the packed shelving units. Since expansion does not seem feasible, the system is beginning to look for a new location.

The branch is spread across a single floor, and its focus on fiction is apparent when the user first enters. Displays flanking the front entrance hold both fiction and fiction reference materials, such as the *New York Times Book Review* and a collection of titles from Oprah's Book Club interspersed with staff suggestions for "read-alikes". Printed handouts and themed bookmarks are readily available and stocked in multiple locations. A third display holds hardcover copies of readers' advisory materials, such as *Genreflecting*, and the new fiction shelves, along with new biographies, are placed so that people walking straight through the main entrance pass them before encountering the rest

of the collection. Behind the print readers' advisory materials, and next to the biographies shelf is a dedicated readers' advisory terminal with *NoveList* and GaleNet's *What Do I Read Next?* Large, brightly colored overhead signage indicates different areas of a collection divided by genre. Without a doubt, the lack of room in the branch lends itself to publicizing the fiction collection; there is hardly a place in the building that does not include some evidence that leisure materials are available.

The physical organization of the floorplan is supported by the staff organization at the branch. The branch manager, in addition to having prior library experience, also has a bookstore background. She pushed for the expansion of readers' advisory service to add value to the customers' fiction reading experience. This branch was one of the first in the state to obtain a grant to put the CD-ROM version of *NoveList* in the library for both patron and staff use. When system budget cuts eliminated the position of head of circulation, the branch manager responded by creating the position of Readers' Advisory Librarian, which gathered all the circulation staff under a single supervisor who was also responsible for developing and marketing the fiction collection. Although the current Readers' Advisory Librarian is also responsible for between eight and twelve hours per week on the Reference Desk, the remainder of her time is spent working on readers' advisory issues, and her job performance is evaluated based on the readers' advisory initiatives she undertakes.

In promoting a librarian already employed by the system to the position, the branch manager sought and found someone who shared her interest and belief in readers' advisory as a core library service. While working on her MLS degree, the Readers' Advisory Librarian was advised by a professor with a strong interest in readers' advisory

and public libraries in general. As an independent study, she developed the framework for a Popular Materials course to be taught at her library school. She is a great believer in training, and has developed programs to train as many readers' advisors as possible:

Every year, I've created training just for my branch – the first year on the readers' advisory interview and the book's appeal, the second year on electronic information and this year I'm doing marketing and merchandising. Training is for the entire branch, [but] is open to everyone, so other branches in the area will send people over. I try to make sure there are weekend and evening sessions, even if it means coming in on a weekend I wouldn't normally be here, because I worked part-time for many years and know what that's like. The system has done things in the past several years, but with the creation of the Readers' Advisory Librarian positions, and the Committee, we've been able to formalize it and develop a system-wide approach.

The Committee she refers to is a 17-member, system-wide group of Readers' Advisory Librarians, all creating local programs and emphasizing individual strengths, but meeting together on a regular basis to converse, share techniques and encourage each other's practices. The Committee is also an advocate for the higher visibility of readers' advisory service on the system's Web page. Although electronic tools are available, navigating the page to find them is not easily accomplished.

She has also looked for ways to build the visibility of readers' advisory to both the staff and patrons. A program she created for adult summer reading has helped to do both. By adapting readers' interest questionnaires from a conference and *The Unabashed Librarian*, she was able to expose staff to the readers' advisory transaction with actual patrons. She distributed surveys through the branch's newsletter, and found 61 patrons who were interested in having a personalized reading list developed.

What I found was that [staff] who were maybe reticent to get into that one-on-one interaction and not as comfortable doing that in-person interaction, loved the ability to take this survey and, given a week's time, look at these electronic sources and some selective print sources, give back the survey, and learn more about readers' advisory.

Informal follow-up with the 58 patrons who returned for their ten-book reading list indicated a high level of satisfaction with the book selections (even those they had already read), and, importantly, gave the staff a sense of the potential satisfaction that readers' advisory offers. She hopes to capitalize on the early success of the program for both staff and patrons, and has seen her idea adapted for the library's Young Adult summer reading program.

On a personal level, Blue's Readers' Advisory Librarian also challenges her own skills, whether in readers' advisory or her professional practice. She uses personal time to read professional journals and book review sources, and has attended conferences sponsored by library organizations. Specifically, she has been to the national Public Libraries Association meetings twice, attended readers' advisory conferences, taken courses in professional development through the library system, and courses on management offered through a local university. Although she has not presented at a conference outside her system, she anticipates doing so in the near future.

WHITE LIBRARY

White Library belongs to a system serving a fairly compact geographic area with six branches; of nearly 300,000 citizens of the county, more than a third live within the principal city. The library system has a strong reputation both in the state and nationally.

The director has been recognized for community-building and library expansion work, and within the system has a great deal of personal support from the staff.

When a patron enters the main library building, the first impression is one of space. A large expanse of empty floor, a near-total lack of signage and bulletin boards, with a few small display shelves holding new fiction, themed non-fiction (Black History Month was featured during this visit), and digital video discs give the impression of ample room. The focal point of the main floor is a large square “Information Desk” that serves as both a reception area and reference desk; well-stocked brochure holders have information about local services and programs, including library-sponsored book clubs. A reference area and spacious computer arrangement with multiple terminals are close by the desk.

The fiction and popular materials area is on the second floor, and suffers somewhat by comparison to the spaciousness of the first floor. Stacks with video and audio cassettes parallel and seem to crowd the stairs leading from the first floor. Collections of genre titles on spinner displays are well-marked, but seem crowded together, without much room to browse. With the exception of the spinners, the collection is not divided by genre. A desk near the top of the stairs has bookmarks suggesting alternate books to substitute for popular works.

Part of the director’s support stems from the system’s encouragement of professional development. Staff members perceive that innovations are encouraged to flow up and down the hierarchy, and long-range planning involves “input from all departments, at all levels, and actually people from the outside, focus groups.” Staff members are given latitude to develop and champion programs, which was how

electronic tools for readers' advisory were introduced to the system. In 1996, one of the branch managers learned about *NoveList* through the state library association, applied for and received a grant for a single stand-alone terminal:

it was a grant for one year to utilize it and it was only at that branch library and we could only have it on one computer, and so it was put on the reference desk. We sent staff over there to take a look at it and see how it worked.

Discussion of the program was encouraged, and when that branch manager moved to the main branch as the head of services, she was recognized as an advocate of readers' advisory.

Readers' advisory itself came to be recognized as critical to customer service, and its development was facilitated by recognition that it was something that library users wanted. In 1998, a relatively new staff member serving as a reference librarian was influenced by Duncan Smith's article "Valuing Fiction", and submitted a proposal to create a formal readers' advisory program. The proposal was approved by the head of services.

Although a formal Readers' Advisory Librarian position was not created, the reference librarian who became the principal readers' advisor developed a training program that was quickly worked into the library's regularly scheduled staff development cycle with the support of the senior management. One of the earliest sessions, which attracted nearly 30 employees, came about through a series of emails exchanged among personal friends, which came to Duncan Smith's attention and resulted in an offer to visit the system. In addition, a two-hour training session on readers' advisory techniques and marketing has been offered as frequently as once every six weeks to ensure that all interested staff members (both professional and paraprofessional) have the opportunity to

take part. On staff meeting days, customer service and readers' advisory sessions are offered, and most recently, working with a paraprofessional adjunct, the system's principal readers' advisor created a genre familiarization program offered on a staff day – 42 people crowded into a room meant for 25, to learn more about romance fiction.

Not all of the recommendations suggested in the initial proposal have yet been implemented. Readers' advisory tools are still kept at the first-floor reference desk, away from the fiction collection. A formal readers' advisory station for interacting with patrons has not been set up. *NoveList* and *What Do I Read Next?* are both available on the public access computers, but signage does not indicate where the programs are, what they do, or how they can be accessed by the public. With no individual in the position of Readers' Advisory Librarian, the duty is still spread among the staff, although the principal readers' advisor reference librarian is considered the expert and is likely to be called from her off-desk duties to help with particularly difficult questions. The staff is mutually supportive, and frequently individuals who are widely read in a particular genre help other staff members answer questions. Networks between readers' advisors at the individual branches have not been established, and there is little evidence of informal discussion outside the formal training sessions. On a visit to the fiction area, when a possible readers' advisory transaction was initiated, the paraprofessional at the desk closest to the fiction area referred me to the first floor reference desk, then turned back to another task.

Patrons who might be interested in readers' advisory service learn about it either through one-on-one interaction with the staff, or by a small sign posted slightly above eye level of the new fiction shelf. If they choose to formally initiate the service (as opposed

to informal conversations), the staff has access to both a print form and a form on the library's web page to elicit more information about the patron's reading interests. The form, which was developed by the reference librarian, asks what the patron likes best in their favorite book, what genre areas, or character types they prefer, and what settings they enjoy. With such detailed information, the potential for keeping individual records on patrons' reading tastes (which has not been implemented) and sustaining what the principal readers' advisor calls "the conversation" increases. When combined with a Reader Profile Evaluation meant as a follow-up tool, the staff can make the necessary adjustments to their picture of the individual reader for future use. (See Appendix C for a sample form and evaluation.)

The principal readers' advisor and her supervisor also envision readers serving as each other's advisors. During a "Staff Picks" display,

one of the things we included was a little slip of paper that we stuck in every book with the staff member's comments so that the reader getting it could pull it out and look at it and say 'wow, another real person read this book and this is his or her impression.'...We thought about doing something over the winter called 'What's Your Opinion Worth?' And it would be taking three by five index cards and sticking them in books and asking people, if you got the book with the thing stuck in it, to fill out the card and return it when they return the book so we could get an idea of what people thought of stuff, and then we would have a drawing for a prize for that. We may do it next winter. I think people just really appreciate the opportunity to give their feedback.

Although she is a recent recipient of her MLS degree, the principal readers' advisor is already deeply engaged in professional development. She has presented at national and statewide conferences, sharing her experience with readers' advisory with her peers. She is a frequent contributor of both queries and answers to Fiction_L³, and reads fiction selection materials, particularly review sources, on a regular basis. The

library system's support for continuing training is echoed by her own desire for development – in addition to readers' advisory, she was also one of two librarians who elected to attend training on the statewide computer consortium, and was involved with training other system employees to use it.

GREEN LIBRARY

Green Library is the main unit of an eleven-branch county library system serving about 290,000 people. Within the state, the library system does not have much visibility as an innovator, but its partnerships with other community organizations include cooperative arrangements with a technical college that created classroom space in the central library and a branch library on the campus of the school. This library is also proud of its growing collection of Hispanic materials and its work with the burgeoning Hispanic population in the area. A new director with a reputation as an innovator has recently taken over the system.

The main branch library is located in the heart of the downtown business district. It houses a business reference service on the second floor, along with a nonprofit resource center and a separate collection dedicated to small business needs. Parking is at a premium, and entry into the building from the closest parking area is through what seems like a basement. However, the main floor is spacious, and the recently redone children's area is bright, colorful and welcoming. The main floor holds a few public Internet access computers, the audiovisual collection and the fiction collection, which is not divided by

³ Fiction_L is a listserv that offers suggestions and support for readers' advisors. See <http://www.webrary.org/rs/flsubunsub.html> for subscription information.

genre. A reference desk devoted to the humanities is the point of access to the library's readers' advisory service.

One librarian is recognized as the best source for readers' advisory at the main branch:

...it seems to be where I get the most questions – maybe not the most, but maybe half the questions I get deal with fiction – ‘How can I find this book’ or ‘Can you point me to something else like this one.’ Yeah, [patrons and staff] kind of ask for me. And sometimes are directed to me. And others of my co-workers do read other genres and we would refer to them for those particular genres. But I tend to read a pretty wide variety and make it a point to be acquainted with people who read genres that I don't so I can farm those questions out.

A former bookmobile librarian (who would still be providing that service if new branches and budget cuts hadn't eliminated the position), he has established relationships with patrons, many of whom have been coming to see him for many years for information on books and reading. His own reading tastes are very broad, and he cultivates family, friends, fellow workers and patrons who provide him with descriptions and reviews of books they have read.

That interaction, and possibly his knowledge of the biases of his personal sources, leads him to view electronic and print readers' advisory materials with caution, perhaps even skepticism. As he says, “The thing about *Genreflecting* or readers' advisory in general is that it's a really subjective thing. I may love this book and someone I respect may think it's the worst thing that's ever written,” so he is very conscious of the influence his “recommendations” has with his patrons.

The library has recently acquired GaleNet and access to *What Do I Read Next?*, which Green's readers' advisor has had some interest in trying. His early use of *NoveList*, on the other hand, was unsuccessful. He looked at the description of one of his

favorite works, and found discrepancies between the database's description and his own perception of the book. That lack of success was echoed by the experiences of his supervisor "[who] has used it the most of anybody, but is probably the most frustrated with it". With the unfavorable collective judgment of the principal readers' advisor and the head of the reference department at Green Library, the program is little used, and not promoted to patrons. Given access to Web materials and book review sources that are useful in increasing his awareness of books, he relies on his own memory to characterize the books he has read or read about, and to help him make suggestions.

In the library system as a whole, only one other person was mentioned as a strong advocate of readers' advisory, a higher-level administrator who is part of the system's management team. No formal networks of people interested in fiction were mentioned, although many of the branches (not the main branch) sponsor reading groups that are led by librarians, and

there seems to be at least one person at each branch who's recognized as someone to ask. That's not true at all the branches, but most of them have people who love to read and to recommend to others.

The system does have regular training sessions, bringing in outside experts to teach the staff, particularly on new electronic tools; however, there are few opportunities for informal training, or staff time dedicated to learning new tools outside patron requests.

We technically rely on the formal sessions, but to really get familiar, comfortable with it you've got to play around with it and try it out on your own. Time is a big factor – you've got to squeeze it in whenever you have the opportunity or sometimes you just have to learn it as the patron's learning.

Green Library's principal readers' advisor does not have much opportunity to read the professional literature, but does look at the print review sources on a regular basis. Other

than a conference that was held at Green Library, he has not attended any professional meetings.

Although it may change under the new system head, his perception of most innovations in the library is that they are brought into the system by higher-level administrators, based on conference proceedings and journal articles, developed by department heads in meetings, and given to the staff to implement. The most recent innovation adopted was a system-wide acquisitions policy, about which he says, “I don’t feel like the local patrons are being served as well...we’ve had a lot of glitches.” Given that the program is in its first year, though, he hopes that changes can be made to remedy the problems.

RED LIBRARY

Red Library’s system serves a population of about 200,000. The library itself sits on a fairly large piece of property located in a downtown area undergoing redevelopment efforts. The library is a key feature of downtown, and is close enough to the city and county offices to be considered a resource for government employees. It is on the edge of one of the poorest areas in the county, but also draws from nearby middle and upper middle class neighborhoods, so the population it serves is economically diverse. The building itself is three stories high, with the first floor dedicated to circulation, the children’s collection, and the audio-visual department. Non-fiction, reference, and employment and literacy programs are on the second floor, and young adult, biography, local history, fiction and administrative offices are housed on the third. The third floor

location of the fiction collection has been identified as problematic, but ample signage on each of the first two floors directs patrons, even though some of that signage competes for attention with original art and community bulletin boards.

The system identified readers' advisory as a priority in 1990, and attempted to create the position but was blocked by the county for several years. When asked how the position of Readers' Advisory Librarian was created, the system's first practitioner said:

The position came from the realization that there needed to be professional help for all the patrons and to better use our fiction collection. There was also interest in there being more adult programming so that was tagged on to the job. (Which I do very little, due to lack of support staff and the fact that just the readers' advisory part is a more than full time job!)

The head of the main branch was the primary advocate for readers' advisory service, and with the addition of adult programming to the job description, won the support of the library director for the new position. Finally, a 1998 reshuffling opened room in the organizational chart for an officially designated Readers' Advisory Librarian.

The advocacy for and establishment of the Readers' Advisory Librarian position seems to be one of the few innovations championed from the top down. When discussing other programs, the Readers' Advisory Librarian seemed to imply that staff is sometimes delayed or frustrated in their attempts to try new things in the library, "...it isn't the best way to do it, but sometimes that's what we do, we do end runs to make stuff happen. I think that there are pockets of innovation, but it's not the flavor of the organization." In one instance related to readers' advisory,

The head of Reference at that time was a wonderful guy, but technophobic and I told him I would be writing a grant for *NoveList* and he said no. I told him 'it won't be here, it will be in fiction, it's OK' and I went to the branch head and he said yes. One of my bosses says yes to everything, one says no to everything. As long as it wasn't going to be at the reference desks it was OK.

Another attempt at changing the established order was division of the fiction collection by genre, a suggestion that was turned down repeatedly by the system head. Only after a grant to the Friends of the Library organization was funded, volunteers recruited to do the work, and off hours scheduled to shift the collection did the project receive the approval of the system head. The project was an immediate success, earning praise from patrons and other librarians in the system.

The current Readers' Advisory Librarian was the first person hired for the position. She moved from the Red Library's reference desk, where she had been working since leaving the bookmobile many years before. She quickly found that the job required far more resources than a single person was able to provide; in addition to readers' advisory, she is also the primary fiction collection development person for the system, including acquisitions and weeding of all books from the eight branches. With the exception of a part-time reference position (currently unfilled) in the local history room located beside the fiction collection, she is the only public service employee on the entire floor. Her time is divided between readers' advisory for adults and young adults, history reference, volunteer training and supervision, and answering Red Library's telephones. Several aspects of her readers' advisory work surprised her with the time they required to sustain:

I've added marketing and collections to my job description, because I had no idea those three displays I have would sometimes take me an hour to stock, at least every two days, and then creating the list for stocking it and getting the ideas, it's a much bigger, more time consuming thing than I anticipated. Plus the brochures and bookmarks...

In spite of the time demands, the Readers' Advisory Librarian is very assertive about initiating transactions with patrons. She contrasts the two or so recorded readers'

advisory transactions that occur on the weekends in her absence with the ten to twenty she does on a daily basis. By greeting patrons as they enter the fiction area, offering assistance, and following up to ensure that people have found what they want before they leave, she has developed ongoing relationships with many readers that enable her to make suggestions for their reading pleasure.

The regular people pretty much know to ask, but it has taken three years to get them knowing it's OK. And it's something that's going to take five years or longer to ingrain into patrons that it's OK.

Not every program developed by the Readers' Advisory Librarian meets with that level of success. She has been unable to establish successful book groups with the exception of a mystery group that draws only six members on a regular basis. Working with an interested colleague, she attempted to market an inspirational fiction club through local churches and bookstores, and had no interest. Similarly, a Southern fiction group and a brown-bag lunch romance group drew no attendance beyond the individuals who suggested them; both were dropped. Nor has readers' advisor training been a success:

I have been given carte blanche to do training, and that's one area I have failed at. Before I was in this job, maybe for three or four staff days I had done readers' advisory workshops – I have not done one since I've been here because our staff days have been for inventory. I do very intensive training with the volunteers, and sit with them for two or three shifts until they feel comfortable. But some staff that have been here a long time are very averse to readers' advisor training, especially the people from Technical Services who chose that because they did not want to do public service. They are not readers, and when they staff the desk on weekends, their focus is the switchboard.

Despite these setbacks, the Readers' Advisory Librarian is firmly convinced that the service she is providing is essential to the library system's future. Her new supervisor agrees with her, pointing out that readers' advisory is one sure way of retaining the support of voters who have alternate access to hard information via the Internet. She

views the subjective challenges of readers' advisory as being more difficult, yet more rewarding than reference work:

because in reference you frequently are looking for specific answers or specific sources or in the right ballpark, but with fiction you don't really know until someone comes back, that that book has met that need at that time. Until we get the appeal factor down, the mood thing, it's the interface with me and with *NoveList* that's the value-added service.

To ensure that she remains knowledgeable about readers' advisory, she takes every opportunity to develop her skills, attending national and state library association conferences, and maintaining conversational and email contacts with other readers' advisors. She has attended every readers' advisory conference she learns about, including one where Joyce Saricks spoke:

She's the one that gave me the freedom – 'you're not doing reading recommendations, you're doing suggestions, so you don't have to like [the book]'. But you have to be able to suggest it, matching it with the people, which is a real freeing thing for me.

While she has not done presentations since taking the new position, in her prior position she was very active in bookmobile associations, speaking and leading groups. In addition to skimming the print selection tools, she carefully reads journals like *Public Libraries*, *Library Journal*, *American Libraries*, and the state library association publication, and quotes from the literature to sustain her argument that readers' advisory is an essential service within the library.

YELLOW LIBRARY:

Yellow Library's system serves a county population of more than 300,000 people. Within the county, there are two municipalities, each of which is the primary funder of its own library, although the libraries allow their patrons mutual access to their collections.

Yellow also opens its services to residents of the five surrounding counties, three of which do not have library systems of their own.

In response to a question asked in each interview at the five libraries examined, Yellow Library's system consistently placed as the top innovator in the state. Programs, community involvement, unique items purchased for circulation, and well-organized fiction programs with wide usage were all cited by the other systems' librarians as top reasons for ranking this system so well; all had heard about these programs through presentations and conversations at the state library association meetings, which are regularly attended by the system's staff.

A sense of welcome is captured throughout the new building where Yellow is housed – the spacious lobby is lit by a skylight that transmits diffuse light through the top floor onto a monumental piece of sculpture that greets visitors. The fiction collection (which is divided by genre) and children's collections are housed on the first floor, with the stacks running perpendicular to high windows that illuminate the entire floor with natural light. The stacks are widely spaced, encouraging browsing, and terminals for the online public catalogue and Internet access are spread in twos and fours, rather than being clustered. The library has a volunteer-staffed coffee shop and bookstore, a gallery with rotating exhibits, and meeting spaces that offer video conferencing and satellite downlinks.

Only two years old, the building itself is located in a cultural arts district, with museums, theaters and historic buildings within walking distance. Parking could have been a problem, but a nearby parking garage that accepts validated tickets from the

library helps to alleviate the situation. Because it was developed with a great deal of community input, small and personal touches keep the library from being imposing.

One of those touches also reflects the importance of readers' advisory to Yellow Library: a formally designated Readers' Advisory Desk in the front lobby. Built to the side of the circulation desk (so that anyone entering the fiction area passes it), the desk is staffed four hours a day by either the Readers' Advisory Librarian or the Popular Materials Coordinator, both of whom have a background in bookstores and libraries. Both also work with fiction selection, reading groups, and author visits, (a popular and well-attended feature of the entire system) so they are well informed about both the fiction collection and their communities' interests.

The system's interest in promoting the reading and enjoyment of fiction is evident on its Web page, which offers an extensive list of reading resources as well as online readers' advisory that

we've just revised so we try to provide an answer within a day. We were trying for a couple of hours, but we weren't sure about the logistics, especially on the weekends. But if we had people helping at the desk, they could pull that up every couple of hours and see if there are any questions.

Links to publishers, to genre sites and to review sources encourage readers to learn more about their selections, or to ask for assistance in finding information on books and authors. These bookmarks are repeated on the terminal reserved for readers' advisory in the library, and serve as the major tools for service to patrons.

In addition, Yellow Library has taken a very active stance towards reading groups as a path to encouraging reading:

We also have a readers' group library that book clubs can check out. It's separate from the regular circulation, and we work very closely with [the acquisitions

librarian] choosing those titles. We will loan those out to members of reading groups in the library system and also members of groups in the community.

The library offers a forum to any reading group in the community, including planned opportunities to recruit new group members at a reading group festival scheduled to coincide with the end of the library's summer reading program. Reading groups are flourishing in the community, with at least 20 known to the library staff, and the practice of readers' advisory with groups adds an interesting dimension.

The ultimate sense, reflected in the library's strategic planning and performance evaluations, is that readers' advisory is so important to the system that they are willing to dedicate time, employees, and other resources to facilitate it.

It's very patron driven and it helps circulation go faster because questions are referred to us that we can answer better than reference. We can answer questions about titles, like books, and so on...I think the position was created to improve customer service and to do things a little more like the bookstores...One of the basic goals is if the patron comes in to make sure they leave with a book.

In turn, many members of the staff, not just the readers' advisors, respond by participating on their own time in the many book groups organized and sponsored by the library, so enthusiasm for the service and for reading in general is generated throughout the staff.

The major difficulty in interviewing the Yellow Library staff was that the Popular Materials Coordinator is very new to the system. The Coordinator has only been officially employed for three months, although she volunteered with the library and served on the planning commission for the new building. Although the Librarian moved to the system from the smaller system in the county in the past three or four years, she was not aware of the origins of the interest in readers' advisory within the system, but knows it predated her. Neither had participated in formal training on readers' advisory,

but both bring a bookstore background emphasizing customer service and marketing to the position, and have had assurances from their supervisors that they would be encouraged to attend conferences, visit other libraries, and develop their readers' advisory skills at every opportunity.

DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF READERS' ADVISORY IN FIVE LIBRARIES

Library	Allocation of Resources				Support of Library Administration		Professional Status			Promotion of Leisure Reading				Average Monthly <i>NoveList</i> Queries
	Established Readers' Advisory Networks	Genre Division	Available Fiction Search Engines	Readers' Advisory Signage	Designated Readers' Advisory Librarian	Established Readers' Advisory Desk	Job Evaluated on Readers' Advisory	Continuing Readers' Advisory Training	Conference Attendance	Dedicated Patron Terminals for Fiction Search Engines	Reading Groups	Author Events	Printed Readers' Advisory Materials	
Blue	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1007
White	No	Some	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	340
Green	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	One	No	95
Red	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	315
Yellow	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Unsure	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	161

FINDINGS

Based on these interviews and examinations of the five libraries, it is evident that four of the five have made both the decision to adopt the innovation of readers' advisory, and to implement it in their regular service to patrons. At these libraries, implementation is proceeding at different rates, depending on local factors such as levels of management support and the presence of a champion to maintain readers' advisory as a priority. One of those four has taken the additional step of re-inventing readers' advisory to meet needs specific to their situation; the service has been implemented, become a routine part of the library and is now strong enough to support additional features.

Looking at the different elements that create an atmosphere for readers' advisory to thrive, I see a variety of experiences that suggest implementation is more like a puzzle with pieces being gradually added rather than a linear route with mileposts that must be passed in succession. The elements, which are adapted from Shearer (1996), include:

- 1) Allocation of resources;
- 2) Support from library administrators;
- 3) Status and professional standing of service providers, and
- 4) Promotion of reading as a worthwhile leisure activity

Taking these elements one at a time, we can compare how much individual libraries have accomplished in assembling this puzzle.

Allocation of Resources

An atmosphere that lends itself to successful readers' advisory service begins with the availability of resources to those who undertake the practice. When assessing whether the library supports promoting readers' advisory service by staff, I looked at

elements like formal support networks among the members of the system, genre separation of the collection, availability of print and electronic tools for easy access, and signage. This aspect of the library's character was largely beyond the ability of the librarians interviewed to affect directly – policies and procedures were set at a higher level that enabled or restricted such promotion.

With the support of branch and system heads, Blue Library and Yellow Library both made strong efforts to provide visibility and resources for their readers' advisory service. Blue Library, with its separated collection clearly delineated by signs, and its circulation staff trained to perform readers' advisory transactions at any of the easily available Internet access terminals, has fully implemented a marketing effort based on a solid foundation. That effort is duplicated in other libraries in the system, and with the allowance of staff time by branch heads, the readers' advisors have formed a committee to address readers' advisory needs. That was the only system that showed evidence of regular formal or informal discussion among readers' advisors at various branches. Yellow Library has taken a different tack by placing a visible Readers' Advisory Desk in the high traffic area of the front entrance and by giving the service prominence on its Web page and in its automated telephone menu. The fiction collection is divided by genre, and the staff has access to a terminal reserved for readers' advisory electronic tools. Based on resources alone, Blue Library and Yellow Library have an advantage over the other libraries visited.

Red Library has made some strong, though unsustained, efforts to promote the service: the Readers' Advisory Librarian is very assertive in approaching patrons, in attempting to ensure that they are happy with their selections, and in following up with

regulars to learn more about their needs. The separated collection is enhanced by genre references in the online public access catalogue, which is helpful when the Readers' Advisory Librarian is not on duty and no other advisor is as experienced or committed. Resources to train or recruit other readers' advisors, to refocus time on marketing efforts, and to further rearrange the collection have not been made available.

White Library has genre titles in paperback separated from the rest of the collection and a good stock of printed booklists. Readers' advisory is offered, though not heavily promoted, since the library manager prefers limited signage. Based on another management decision, the information desk nearest the fiction collection does not house the print tools, and the computer does not connect to fiction search engines; to reach those, patrons must go to another floor.

Green Library's management does not seem to have much interest in readers' advisory. The collection is not separated by genre, and the fact that a readers' advisor may be on duty is only conveyed to a patron who asks a member of the staff. I found no bookmarks or other printed material suggesting additional reading, and the only reference to an electronic tool gave information on how to access it from home.

Support of Library Administrators

In addition to the support expressed by allocating resources such as those detailed above, library managers can demonstrate their backing of readers' advisory by creating identifiable staff responsible for the service, and by establishing physical locations where the service is centered. Channeling the elements of readers' advisory, such as performance of the actual service, creation of displays, staff training and development,

through one or two people is strong evidence that the service is valued and an important step to establishing performance standards. Having a concentrated area where patrons can feel comfortable asking readers' advisory questions, or where staff members can focus their resources, is also important to give visibility to the service.

Red Library and Yellow Library's administrators have made such demonstrations, although Yellow Library has made more of an effort to allow the readers' advisors to focus on the fiction marketing and customer service components than Red has. Both have a clearly established and identified Readers' Advisory Desk close to the fiction collection. Individuals who are designated Readers' Advisory Librarians staff both desks during select hours. The chief differences between Red and Yellow, however, are also important. Yellow's desk is on the first floor, where all visitors pass it; two staff members share the on-desk duty, and with the Circulation Desk nearby, the tools are available if a patron should need help when the desk is not officially staffed. Red Library's desk is on the third floor, and although signage on other floors does help patrons find it, there is a possibility that both the collection and the service could be missed. The Readers' Advisory Librarian is only on duty during weekdays, and the quality of service during her off-hours is variable.

Blue Library, while having a designated Readers' Advisory Librarian, does not have a single center dedicated to the service. Most transactions take place at the Circulation Desk, and may be affected by the number of other patrons waiting for service. Otherwise, patrons wanting such assistance might be assisted at the reference desk, or choose to take advantage of the self-service tools found on the print displays or at the dedicated terminal.

White Library encourages staff, both professional and paraprofessional, to engage in readers' advisory, but it has taken neither of the steps which would formalize the service in the library. In addition, by locating the tools for readers' advisory away from the fiction collection, the service is potentially diluted for patrons who must make trips between floors.

Green Library has also not taken the steps to create a publicly visible readers' advisory service, and gauging the level of support for such a step as implied by their staff, does not seem likely to in the near future.

Professional Status

It is evident to me that each of these libraries is committed to serving their patrons to the best of their abilities. Every librarian with whom I spoke expressed belief that patrons were entitled to find and read books that gave them pleasure, and they practiced readers' advisory to achieve that goal. The status of their professional practice within the individual libraries, however, was uneven. When asked whether they were evaluated on the successful accomplishment of readers' advisory, their answers revealed a gap between the institution's expectations and their own. Of the five libraries, only three had performance evaluations that mentioned readers' advisory service as a primary criterion. While Blue Library and Red Library both specifically include assessments of transactions and of patron interaction, the main focus is on time management and on marketing initiatives. At Yellow (which has not done an evaluation of the new advisor), the service is specifically identified as a focus of the job; it is not known how performance will be evaluated. White Library includes readers' advisory near the bottom of a twenty-point

list of job criteria; by contrast, reference is first on the list. Green Library does not mention it as a part of the evaluation, although it has been added to the job description of new employees joining the staff. Based on these responses, it would seem that the library systems are not fully invested in a framework of customer service that includes stringently assessing the quality of readers' advisory as performed by these librarians.

To assess the professional development opportunities of practitioners at these libraries, I examined the availability of internal training, of conference attendance or external training, and of efforts to read and assess professional literature. This area represents an overlap of individual interest with priorities set by supervisors. It also represents negotiation between staff and management and could be a yardstick of the determination with which readers' advisors pursue their own development.

The systems of Blue Library and White Library each gave internal training priority. This enhanced the availability of readers' advisory service with an added cost-saving benefit. With experienced trainers coming from selected branches and working with people throughout the system, larger groups could be exposed to the service and at least acquainted with the tools, without having to develop individual training programs at each branch. Presenting these programs multiple times also allowed the trainers to modify and polish their programs, making them more desirable as presenters for state and national programs which enhance the libraries' reputations among their peers. While the Readers' Advisory Librarian at Red Library has not done staff training in several years, she joins the readers' advisors at Blue and White as the practitioners who are doing the most to add to their skills. Through literature and conferences, all three study what other readers' advisors are doing, experiment with different techniques and incorporate

successful modifications into their own practice. Green Library does not seem to offer readers' advisory training to the staff as a whole, and the main advisor has not had an opportunity to attend any external training sessions.

Promotion of Leisure Reading

Looking at the culture of the library and trying to determine the esteem with which fiction reading was held was very subjective; to understand it, I decided to look at the public programs offered by each library. Library-sponsored book groups, readings and other author events, and any sustained effort to promote reading gave an indicator of the emphasis on reading for enjoyment at that library.

Yellow Library has gone the furthest in making fiction reading for enjoyment highly visible – scheduling events with nationally known authors (at the central library and in the branches), sponsoring multiple reading groups around the community, and offering a circulating collection solely for the use of reading groups. These programs are accomplished by a conscious allocation of time and money by the system's management, who may have made a decision that well-executed public programs required such investment. Blue Library and White Library also sponsor several reading groups that work with library staff, as well as a lecture series tying themes of interest to the library's collection. Not as ambitious as Yellow Library's effort, it still represents a commitment to programming on the part of the management. Red Library's experience with creating reading groups and attracting attendance to author events and lectures has been disappointing, with an attendant loss of the energy required to mount such efforts. This lack of success and effort can be traced to the scarcity of resources available to the

Readers' Advisory Librarian and to the fragmentation of her time by other tasks. Green Library has had a single event with a local non-fiction writer, and does not have any reading groups that use this branch as a meeting place. While no direct policies were recounted which might have a negative bearing on public programming, it does seem that at best such programming has been subjected to benign neglect.

Comparing each of the above elements across the responding libraries should demonstrate that Blue, White, Red and Yellow Libraries have all made the innovation adoption decision with regard to readers' advisory service. They examined the service, found it relevant to their mission and patrons, and added it to their core services. Each of those libraries has subsequently made implementation decisions that alter the practice to match the specific needs and available resources of the library. Such implementation decisions make it very difficult to say that one library is performing readers' advisory better than another - each has areas of strength that commend it and areas of weakness that could stand improvement.

Of the four libraries, however, Yellow Library stands out as having taken the additional step of fully incorporating the readers' advisory innovation into its routine package of services. Having concluded that readers' advisory was a core service, each decision related to it seems to have been made to improve the service, not to save money, time or staff for another purpose. With that kind of foundation, the staff of the readers' advisory service at Yellow Library have begun to explore the possibilities of collection development, community-building, and validation of reading for enjoyment that appears to be the next logical step.

At the other end of the spectrum, Green Library does not appear to have come to the same conclusion as the other four. Whether because of a lack of interest on the part of the staff as a whole or on the part of the management, or because critical people in the organization were not exposed to the influence of respected advocates, Green Library still seems to be wrestling with the information they have and trying to fit it into the current structure. This is not to say that Green Library is unsuccessful; the system reports the highest percentage of adult fiction circulated of all the libraries visited. Since the practice of readers' advisory is compatible with the established fiction reading patterns of the system's patrons, it would probably be both popular and well used.

DISCUSSION

Assessing the experiences of the people responsible for readers' advisory service at these five libraries seems to confirm the conclusions found in the literature of innovation in general and of libraries in particular. Not only are the five libraries at different stages of innovation adoption or implementation, those that have fully committed to readers' advisory have begun the process of re-inventing the innovation to meet their local needs. As Rogers (1996) suggests, in those libraries readers' advisory is seen as desirable, a natural extension to their purpose, and easy to understand. Those libraries see the potential reward of increased patron satisfaction. On the other hand, the libraries where readers' advisory was either acceptable as practiced by available staff, or perceived as requiring too many resources have not adopted the service or implemented it as fully. In those systems, readers' advisors still must prove their value while continuing to uphold their regular duties.

The adoption behaviors of the libraries where readers' advisory was introduced during the tenure of the staff members interviewed for this project seems to echo Karahanna, Straub and Chervany's (1999) findings. Implementing the service met with the tacit approval of their superiors and they perceived that it improved their job performance with minimum disruption. Readers' advisors at Blue Library and White Library demonstrated not only to their direct superiors but also to the heads of their systems that their work had a positive effect. It generated an active image for the library, met their customers' needs, and did not entail an extreme shift of either money or resources to accomplish. Red Library's readers' advisory was actually initiated at the top of the organization, perhaps to achieve the same goals while improving other areas of the library's service.

After the libraries' adoption of the service, the readers' advisors all focused on perceived usefulness, ease of use, and the image that use projected by improving access to it – through signage, increased training of both themselves and of other staff members, and by creating visible centers of readers' advisory in the library. Blue Library used displays and print tools, along with a stand-alone readers' advisory computer. White offered consultations to patrons, and trained the staff to initiate transactions. Red also set up a visible terminal, and began offering the service to visitors; Yellow created a readers' advisory desk in a high traffic area.

These four libraries all learned about readers' advisory through similar paths – exposure during library school, personal relationships with advocates of readers' advisory and professional reading. The findings of Parthsarathy and Bhattacharjee (1998) suggest that because they invested so much of themselves in discovering and creating the service

that they would be more likely to rely on their own resources, have expectations grounded in their experience, and a higher level of commitment to continuing the service.

By contrast, Green Library did not invest much effort into the service and perhaps as a result the innovation has not been fully adopted, and may not successfully take hold. It is practiced by any available staff member, by people who have not necessarily had any training or exposure to readers' advisory tools, and who may not even be comfortable with the idea of suggesting fiction reading material. Green Library relies heavily on one individual to perform the service, and that individual has set high expectations for the tools he uses and for his knowledge of the reading materials he recommends. Using Parthasarathy and Bhattacharjee's (1998) term, he has a high expectation-reality gap, but one which stems from his desire to provide excellent service. His personal investment in providing the service does not appear to transfer to the rest of the staff, and were he to leave the library, it is questionable whether readers' advisory would be performed at the level of skill he has acquired.

Turning to Luquire's (1973) findings, again his observations seem to be supported by the experiences of these librarians. Age, number of years in practice, and number of years ago their MLS degrees were obtained had little to do with the enthusiasm these librarians brought to readers' advisory. Management and decision-making style within the library systems did seem to have some bearing: in Blue Library, where the management structure was nearly horizontal, this particular innovation was implemented with a great deal of success. At White Library, initial support by a visible member of the management structure lent weight to the efforts of a staff member with relatively little influence that was able to successfully introduce the service to the system. Red Library

had the initial support of senior management to adopt readers' advisory, but the culture of the organization slowed the efforts of an innovator to enhance the service beyond managers' comfort level. With the input and preparation of staff, Yellow Library moved quickly beyond the initial adoption of the innovation, and is continuing to push into providing new services.

As management control moved higher and allowance for individual initiative declined, the rate of adoption of readers' advisory slowed. The most hierarchical organization, Green Library, again was the organization where the innovation seems to have made the least headway. Luquire (1973) seems to suggest that flattening the hierarchy would open more channels for innovation and perhaps speed the implementation of innovations.

That same shift in method might also have the effect of encouraging innovators to learn about, structure and propose additional changes. As Finlay and Finlay (1996) wrote, encouragement and support in the workplace led staff members to explore informal learning methods that increased their awareness about and commitment to innovations during the early stages of implementation. Discussions with peers through networks and professional organizations, reading time dedicated to professional journals or development, and time to study and practice a new skill increase support for professional use of an innovation. Formal training programs, as valuable as they are, function best as supplements to daily individual discussion and effort. Of the five libraries in this study, only Blue had access to a formal network of other readers' advisors. White Library and Yellow Library both had contacts in other libraries within the system, but those were occasional and not generally found outside formal training

times. Red and Green Libraries had no networks within their systems, although the Readers' Advisory Librarian at Red was actively involved in professional networks outside the system. Finlay and Finlay (1996) seem to imply that resources, in the form of time to contact and visit other practitioners, could only serve to enhance the quality and frequency of the service at these libraries.

That finding is also borne out by Audunson's (1999) conclusion that librarians who were involved in professional development opportunities and networks outside their own systems were more likely to promote change within their libraries. Of the five libraries, three (Blue, White and Red) made it possible for their readers' advisors to attend national, state and local conferences; White and Red's librarians were even responsible for presenting to their peers from around the country. Their own adoption of this innovation was reinforced in that capacity, and they put themselves into the position of exposing others to the modifications they had made to the innovation which in turn leads to further adoptions, additional modifications, and growth. Blue's Readers' Advisory Librarian anticipates having the opportunity to do similar presentations. Neither Green's nor Yellow's readers' advisors had attended professional development opportunities outside their own libraries, but both hoped to do so.

Finally, the experience of these five libraries suggests that such professional development, when it takes place in the system, can itself be a promoter of further innovation. As Fowler (1998) reports, opportunities for continuous learning at the individual and team levels create an atmosphere in which innovation is positively received and iterative. When training is performed on a regular basis, it seems to have the effect of encouraging additional modifications and innovations. Blue Library's

experience with distributing readers' interest surveys then offering readers' advisory bears this out – the enthusiasm with which patrons received their customized reading lists encouraged more openness towards the readers' advisory transaction among staff members who were not confident of their abilities. The rapid recognition that White Library's readers' advisor attained following her advocacy of increased service demonstrates that the organization rewards innovation, and may inspire other staffers to take that kind of risk. The culture of innovation in Yellow Library is perhaps the best support for Fowler's (1998) view – the innovative organization attracts innovators who help to keep it growing. The organizations where innovation was not as highly prized, Red Library and Green Library also demonstrate that when innovation is not encouraged, potential innovators are enervated by the effort required to make even incremental changes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper shows that these five libraries followed different processes in the course of adopting and implementing the innovation of readers' advisory, yet those processes were grounded in behaviors identifiable through the study of the diffusion of innovations. However, the limited scope of this exploratory study means that the results should be viewed with caution.

It is hoped that this paper will encourage study of the role of readers' advisory in the overall picture of public library service. The field is currently lacking a quantifiable mechanism to measure successful service, as well as a vocabulary to demonstrate value to

administrators and the public. Many of the current standards that look only at numbers of reference questions or circulation of books do not tell librarians or funders if the libraries are meeting their patrons' expectations. SERVQUAL is at present the closest the field has to an objective standard, although some writers, particularly Cook & Thompson (2000), have questioned the applicability of its existing form in library practice.

Rethinking the measures and means of SERVQUAL, as suggested by Hernon, Nitecki & Altman (1999) could offer both the numbers and the terminology to strengthen the case for providing readers' advisory or any other library service. Though it has been applied in academic libraries, it needs additional adaptation to the particular requirements of the public library.

This paper has also looked at a limited number of variables and questioned whether relationships exist between those variables and the implementation of innovation in the five libraries. A larger survey of indicators might help clarify these relationships or identify other factors that may play important roles in the innovation diffusion process in libraries.

If readers' advisory service, or any innovation, is to be fully realized in the public library, managers should be aware of the established paths of innovation adoption and implementation, and should also respect the known needs of innovators. They should make room for continuous staff training and exposure to experimental ideas, provide support and offer encouragement to creative members of the staff, regardless of professional standing. When innovation decisions are made, administrators should clearly communicate the anticipated benefits and required changes to the rest of the organization, preferably during the decision-making period. They should offer time for

professional development and opportunities for innovators to dream, plan and carry out the ideas that may offer the library alternate and exciting paths into the future. Such a progressive attitude towards change contains the seeds of staff revitalization, mission invigoration, and perhaps patron renewal.

APPENDIX A

ANDREW W. SMITH
 School of Information and Library Science
 CB #3360, 204 Manning Hall
 Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3360

Master's Candidate
 UNC-Chapel Hill

smita@ils.unc.edu

Date

Director
 Library
 Street Address
 City, State Zip

Dear,

As a student working on a master's paper at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I am writing to invite your library system to participate in a study I am conducting. I am interested in examining the culture and environment of various North Carolina libraries to see if they have any common factors which might predict how readily they adopt library-related innovations. Specifically, I would like to look at your central library's adult fiction collection, its staffing, marketing and relationship to the rest of the library, then compare those elements to that library's use of the online reader's advisory program NoveList.

At the convenience of your staff, I would like to visit the central library to conduct a single audiotaped interview, which I expect will take approximately one hour. Ideally, the interview would be with the senior person who deals with adult fiction collection development and/or circulation; however, if there is another staff member who would be a more appropriate participant, I would be glad to speak with that person. The discussion will revolve around the ways your library has of marketing its collection, and what tools are available to the staff to answer user questions. I would then like to spend some time walking through the collection and recording my impressions and observations. These will be collected through notes, photographs and diagrams. With the exception of the interview time, I expect the impact on your staff and users to be negligible.

Following my visit, I plan to assemble the collected data and evaluate it against the usage logs of NCLive, the state host of the NoveList reader's advisory program. I hope to detect patterns, which might serve to generate hypotheses about communications among libraries, users and vendors. All conclusions will be general in nature, and will not identify any participating library; nor will I form or attempt to convey judgement of any aspect of any individual library's management.

This project has received the approval of the University's Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board, and is being supervised by Dr. Evelyn Daniel at the School of Information

and Library Science. If you or your staff have any questions or concerns about the nature of the project or my inquiry, please feel free to contact:

Dr. Evelyn Daniel
UNC School of Information and Library Science
CB #3360, 204 Manning Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3360
(919) 962-8062
daniel@ils.unc.edu

Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board
Dr. Barbara D. Goldman, Chair
CB #4100, 201 Bynum Hall
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100
(919) 962-7761
aa-irb@unc.edu

I am also enclosing a sample of the Study Consent Form, which I will ask the interviewed staff member to sign, in case it may answer any additional questions.

If there are any questions that I may answer, please contact me at the home phone number or at the e-mail address listed on the letterhead. I will follow up with a phone call to your office within two weeks. If the project meets your approval, I hope you or your office will provide me with contact information to reach the prospective interviewee.

I very much appreciate your time and willingness to consider participating in this study, and look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Andrew W. Smith
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ANDREW W. SMITH
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STUDY CONSENT FORM

This interview is part of a research project called “Innovation Adoption in Public Library Settings: The Case of NoveList”. I will be interviewing the staffs at selected libraries in North Carolina about their levels of use of the reader’s advisory program NoveList; depending on staffing patterns, I hope to interview at least 5 people, and invite you to participate in the study.

I expect that your part of the interview will take no more than one hour. While you are a participant, I will ask you a series of interview questions from a formal interview guide, and may ask follow-up questions which arise from your answers. With your permission, I would like to audio tape our discussion to minimize errors and increase my understanding of your viewpoint. Your answers will be incorporated into the general findings of the project, and brief portions of your answers may be quoted, although anonymously. While I will provide general information on the library systems where I am conducting interviews, I will not associate any comments with personnel at those libraries, nor will I reveal the source of any particular statement to any individual, company or institution.

I am not affiliated with NoveList, EBSCO, or any other commercial organization, nor am I acting as a consultant or in any official capacity. This is a research project for a master’s paper and is not intended for commercial application.

If you wish to terminate this interview at any time, tell me and we will end at your request.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at smita@ils.unc.edu.

You may also contact my faculty advisor with any questions or concerns:

Dr. Evelyn Daniel
 UNC School of Information and Library Science
 CB #3360, 204 Manning Hall
 Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3360
 (919) 962-8062
daniel@ils.unc.edu

Thank you for your time and attention. I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this study, and I would like to assure you of the following rights:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. They will not be shared with supervisors, colleagues or other respondents.
- Excerpts, analysis and summaries of the data collected may be presented in the research report. However, under no circumstances will your name or personal identifying information be included without your permission.
- Upon your request, the results of this study will be available to you once they are formulated.

If you have any additional questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact:

Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board
 Dr. Barbara D. Goldman, Chair
 CB #4100, 201 Bynum Hall
 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100
 (919) 962-7761
aa-irb@unc.edu

Please sign and date this form to show that you have read it, or that I have read it to you.
 Again, thank you very much.

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Andrew Smith, Researcher	Date

APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL****JOB**

In addition to reader's advisory, do you also do reference work? If so:

Is reference or readers' advisory part of your job description? Your performance appraisal?

What percent of time do you spend on reference/readers' advisory issues – research, planning, working with users?

Does your library mention reference in its mission statement?

Does your library mention reader's advisory in its mission statement?

Is reference part of the library's strategic planning?

Is reader's advisory part of strategic planning?

Do you have supervisor support or backing to perform reference/reader's advisory?

Does staff have training sessions in reference/readers' advisory?

Who attends?

Is training followed up on after the session ends?

When a new tool comes in, how is staff trained on it?

How are users informed about it?

When you do reference/readers' advisory, how much time, in general, do you spend with the patron?

EXPOSURE

How did you personally first hear about NoveList? About readers' advisory?

Do you remember the first description you had of the program?

If yes, what was that description?

What was your first impression of the program as it was described to you?

RELATIVE ADVANTAGE

Did anyone in your library/library system have special training or interest in fiction reader's advisory?

What tools are available for staff members who may assist patrons in finding fiction materials?

Follow-up list

How does NoveList compare with those tools?

In usefulness:

In frequency of use:

In patron independent use:

When using NoveList, do you search through one of the main areas more often than others? If so, which?

Follow-up: Do you feel equally comfortable with each of the main search areas? If not, would you put them in order? Best Fiction, Match a Title/Author, Explore Fiction Types, Browse Subject Headings.

What do you perceive as your co-workers' attitudes towards NoveList?

How frequently do they use it for their own or for patron searches?

How many other library staff work in the fiction area? Professionals, paraprofessionals, volunteers?

COMPATIBILITY

Does your library support any special fiction reading groups?

If yes, do the groups select books with librarian input?

Does your library have any programs aimed at increasing fiction readership and enjoyment?

If yes: What role do you envision or witness NoveList playing in those programs?

Do you enjoy learning about and using new tools that promise to improve your work performance?

Do you have training opportunities at work to learn about library resources?

Do you spend personal time reading library journals or publications? Which ones?

Have you attended professional conferences sponsored by library organizations?

Have you presented at professional conferences sponsored by library organizations?

Have you helped to organize professional conferences sponsored by library organizations?

EASE OF UNDERSTANDING

Do you experience any technical difficulties in using NoveList in your system?

If yes, what are they?

Does NoveList provide technical support (in-person, telephone, online)?

Are the problems resolved in a timely manner?

Are you satisfied with the resolution?

Did you or anyone on your staff have any difficulty in learning to use the program?

Do you feel comfortable using the program?

In general, do you agree with the results that NoveList gives?

If you could change anything about the program, what would you change?

COMMITMENT

Did your library subscribe to NoveList before it became available on the state consortium? If so, do you know when your library first purchased or installed it?

VISIBILITY

Did you ever see NoveList in use outside your own library, either before or after it was installed in your library?

If so, where did you see it in use?

How was/were the terminal(s) site(s) selected in your library?

Do you think the placement is appropriate?

Have you seen any mention of NoveList outside a library setting – for instance, in magazine or newspaper articles, discussions or conversations with friends/family/acquaintances?

If you were given the assignment to promote the program's use in your library, how would you go about it?

Please tell me about other technologies your library has adopted, or other changes in programs or service delivery which your library has recently implemented.

Was the implementation smooth?

Was the staff aware of the change in advance?

Was staff represented in the decision-making process?

Please tell me about your general background:

Do you have a degree in library or information sciences? If yes, what year did you graduate?

Have you taken courses in library or information science? If yes, how many credit hours?

What year did you complete your last course?

Experience: How many years' experience do you have working in libraries? (Please include unpaid, student and/or professional experience)

Based on your current knowledge of other libraries, please rank the following library systems on your perception of their innovativeness. Please place the most innovative at the top of the list.

Blue

White

Red

Green

Yellow

APPENDIX C

READER PROFILE

If you like to read more than one type of fiction, please complete a separate profile sheet for each type of fiction

Name: _____ Telephone number: _____

Library card number: _____

1. Do you have a favorite author or authors?

Yes. Author(s) name: _____

No

2. Do you have a favorite book? What do you like best about it?

3. What type of fiction do you prefer?

General	Mystery/Thriller	Romance	Science Fiction	Fantasy
	Inspirational	Horror	Adventure	Western

4. What other characteristics do you prefer? (Please specify)

Ethnic (e.g., African American, Hispanic American, etc.)

Historical (e.g. Regency, Victorian, Prehistoric, Time travel, Middle Ages, etc.)

Other: _____

5. Do you prefer that the main character be

Female Male No preference

6. Do you have an occupation preference for central characters? (Please specify)
(Note: choices are NOT limited to the examples)

Professional (e.g., lawyer, doctor, police officer): _____

Technical/Skilled (e.g., carpenter, nurse, caterer): _____

Writer or Artist: _____

Other: _____

(continued on back)

7. Do you enjoy reading about characters who are:

Single Married Divorced single/working
mother or father

8. Do you have a preferred setting for novels? (Circle all that apply)

big city small town rural/farm medical

legal/courtroom exotic/foreign wilderness/outdoors

business (type): _____

war (e.g., Vietnam, WWII): _____

other: _____

9. Do you want to read books that have won awards such as:

Booker Award, Bram Stoker Award, Edgar Awards, Hugo Awards, Mythopoeic Award, National Book Award, National Book Critic's Circle Award, Nebula Awards, Nobel Prize for Literature, Pen/Faulkner Award, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Yes. Name of award? _____

No preference.

READER PROFILE EVALUATION

Thank you for taking time to complete this evaluation. Your responses will help us determine how useful the Reader Profile Service is to our customers. Please indicate your answer below by filling in the blank or circling the appropriate letter.

1. What type of fiction were you looking for today?

2. Were you satisfied with the titles that you found as a result of your use of the Reader Profile Service?
 - a. I was completely satisfied with the titles I found.
 - b. I was almost completely satisfied with the titles I found.
 - c. I was somewhat satisfied with the titles I found.
 - d. I was not satisfied with the titles I found.
3. Did you find that the Reader Profile Service was easy to use?
 - a. I found that it was very easy to use.
 - b. I found that it was somewhat easy to use.
 - c. I found that it was somewhat difficult to use.
 - d. I found that it was very difficult to use.
4. Would you use the Reader Profile Service again to locate fiction titles?
 - a. I would definitely use it again.
 - b. I would probably use it again.
 - c. I would probably not use it again.
 - d. I would definitely not use it again.
5. Did the library own, at any of our locations, the titles that you found through the Reader Profile Service today?
 - a. The library owned all the titles.
 - b. The library owned most of the titles.
 - c. The library owned some of the titles
 - d. The library owned very few of the titles.
 - e. The library did not own any of the titles.

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