This study seeks to examine how North Carolina public librarians use book lists. Literature explains the importance of using book lists as a form of readers’ advisory, but there are many book list formats in addition to ways for creating, promoting, and using lists. In order to find out how North Carolina librarians utilize book lists, 204 emails were successfully sent using a youth services directory inviting librarians to participate in an online survey. Results showed that while 93% of libraries use book lists, there are differing ways of creating, promoting, and using book lists. Formats also differed, although having lists in full pages was the most popular option. When book lists are available in both print and on the Web, print is overwhelmingly preferred. Book lists compiled by grade, age, and awards were the most popular lists. Suggestions are included for further research regarding patrons’ thoughts on book lists.
BOOK LISTS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: HOW LIBRARIANS UTILIZE BOOK LISTS TO INFORM THEIR PRACTICES

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

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
November 2011

Approved by

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Introduction

Public libraries exist to meet a wide variety of needs within the communities where they are established. With over 16,000 public libraries in the United States, the services that are offered by public librarians have the opportunity to be widespread and incredibly influential (Public Library Association, 2011). Public libraries are founded upon the belief that access to information should be open and available to everyone, thus standing firm in supporting the idea that no one should be denied information because they cannot afford it (American Library Association, 2011). According to the Public Library Association (2011), more than 25 million Americans used public libraries more than 20 times in the past year for a variety of services including job databases, test preparation, reference sources, and downloadable books and audio.

While those services are definitely needed and obviously used by many Americans, public libraries also offer a variety of other services. Despite the fact that services may differ depending on the public library, some other services offered through public libraries might include reference and information services, programs for adults and children, book discussion groups, and readers’ advisory. These types of functions and services of public libraries are not recent phenomena, instead having been initiated into public libraries during the days of Andrew Carnegie’s public library involvement (Harris, 1972). While these services were originally integrated into public libraries in response to pressure from benefactors, children’s programs, reference services, and readers’ advisory often feel expected in today’s public library atmosphere.
One form of readers’ advisory that can and does occur in many capacities in the public library involves providing readers with recommended titles, genres, and ‘next-reads’ through book lists. While book lists may be described by other names such as reference lists, recommended reading lists, read-alikes, bibliographic lists, or even booklists, for the remainder of this paper these lists are thought of as materials that are structured around a theme, genre, author, or other describable characteristic and created for patron and/or librarian use.

Through anecdotal observation, book lists are used by both patrons and librarians throughout libraries. This use of book lists includes use in the youth services departments of libraries. However, not all public libraries have an active collection of book lists in their youth services departments. Furthermore, because there are many ways to create, promote, and use book lists, youth services departments that do have such lists may utilize them in very different ways.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how librarians working in youth services departments in North Carolina public libraries use book lists to inform their readers’ advisory practices. A review of the literature regarding readers’ advisory and book lists in a variety of libraries reveals the ways these lists can be used, in addition to the far reaching effects this readers’ advisory service can have. A survey of public librarians working in youth services departments in North Carolina was conducted regarding book list use, creation, form, and promotion in the library. The results reveal how youth librarians across the state of North Carolina are enacting this type of readers’ advisory service to inform their practices and aid their patrons.
Literature Review

Readers’ Advisory

According to Moyer and Stover (2010), “One of the fastest growing services in libraries is readers’ advisory. This service has long since sprinted past merely suggesting books to faithful library patrons while chatting at the circulation desk” (p. ix). Because libraries have seen tremendous growth in services to readers in recent years, services such as readers’ advisory continue being paramount to meeting the wide variety of the community’s needs (Moyer & Stover, 2010). Readers’ advisors are tasked with the mission to find a good fit for each and every patron, paying particular attention to the readers’ needs, interests, moods, and reading goals (Dali, 2010). While readers’ advisors seek to complete this mission time and time again, it is vital that such interactions be as efficient and effective as possible. In keeping with the idea of maximizing the patron’s time, readers’ advisors can look to Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science, resting upon the 4th law: Save the time of the reader (as cited in Rimland, 2007, p. 24).

The service of readers’ advisory is designed in such a way that a variety of patrons’ reading needs may be met. While originally defined as a “patron-oriented library service for adult fiction readers” by Nancy Brown and Joyce Saricks, the definition of readers’ advisory has since been updated to reflect the actual practices of librarians as they serve their patrons (Saricks, 2004). These updated needs no longer include exclusively fiction materials, nor do they exist only for adult patrons. Readers’ advisory exists to meet patrons’ needs for their leisure-hour reading and may include
recommendations regarding fiction or nonfiction materials in a variety of formats (Saricks, 2004).

Readers’ advisory has evolved from being recognized as a service that is for more than just fiction materials. Readers’ advisory has been able to stay relevant in the lives of both patrons and librarians because it is adaptable as a public service that constantly seeks to provide readers with what they will enjoy (Saricks, 2008). As an adaptable method of service that connects patrons and librarians, the readers’ advisory service is discussed in current literature as shifting from focusing simply on what people read to why people read (Trott, Beard, & Thi-Beard, 2008).

As a service focused on meeting readers where they are and connecting readers with materials they will enjoy, the field of readers’ advisory has new opportunities for expansion. One such opportunity lies with the increase of varying formats of library materials. While readers’ advisory shifted from strictly fiction to include narrative nonfiction, it has also shifted, and will continue to do so, towards including varying formats such as audio books, music, and films (Trott, 2008). This does not mean that readers’ advisors must learn something new or rid themselves of their current practices. Instead, expanding the formats in the realm of readers’ advisory only means taking the existing knowledge and skills and aligning it with the new format (Trott, 2008).

With new formats for readers’ advisory also comes the knowledge that genre classification is no longer the easiest or preferred way for readers’ advisory. With new genres sprouting from old staples (i.e.: chick lit from romance) and standard genre lines becoming increasingly blurred, readers’ advisors have the opportunity to embrace the
genre chaos and meet their readers where they are by delving into these new classifications (Trott, 2008).

While genre lines may be blurring for advisors, the importance of seizing the opportunity for Web 2.0 readers’ advisory is becoming increasingly clear. Because readers’ advisory has always been about listening to individual readers, making suggestions to meet their specific needs, and building a community of readers, the service fits nicely into the Web 2.0, user-focused technology (Trott, 2008). Blogs, wikis, online book discussions, reading groups, and personalized reading lists and forms are being incorporated by some librarians into their readers’ advisory experiences in hopes of reaching readers where they are. In addition to these measures, some catalogs are being upgraded to incorporate data from sites such as LibraryThing and to allow users to comment or tag materials (Trott, 2008). Furthermore, Trott (2008) explained that readers’ advisors can save their readers time by ensuring that the new ways in which they expand their services (i.e.: blogs, personalized reading lists, interactive catalogs) are extremely user-friendly. This again supports Ranganathan’s 4th Law of Library Science: Save the time of the reader (as cited in Rimland, 2007, p. 24).

While some patrons may have the time and/or desire to work with librarians in one-on-one situations, other patrons do not have time or prefer to search for materials independently. The independent readers’ desires to be matched with a book that meets their needs are no less important than readers that do have the time to spend interacting with librarians. In order to reach out to all patrons, bookmarks, themed book lists, and book list displays can be established. These types of readers’ advisory services are known as passive readers’ advisory (Staley, 2010). While insisting that passive readers’
advisory services like bookmarks, book lists, and displays are not new concepts, Staley (2010) assured busy librarians that may be questioning the time involved with these services with the following statement:

You do not have enough time to talk to each patron about her or his reading preferences and help find the perfect book, and some patrons may not appreciate this offer anyway. By creating timely and interesting displays, printed lists, and online lists, you can market library resources to your patrons and help them discover new titles on their own. Passive readers’ advisory is an essential part of any library’s readers’ advisory services because it reaches a group of readers who cannot or will not take advantage of real-time or face-to-face services. (p. 73)

*Book Lists as a Form of Readers’ Advisory*

Busy readers’ advisors may find that they do not always have the time for in-depth readers’ advisory interviews with every patron requesting a recommendation (Welch, 2010). This does not mean, however, that these patrons must wait for direct interaction with the librarian or that they necessarily need to be in the physical library. Welch (2010) explained that themed book lists can be used as tools by readers’ advisors as they work with the public, as lists patrons can pick up from the library, or as ways to enhance readers’ advisory on the library website. Furthermore, Kuzyk (2006) discussed that the benefits to online readers’ advisory include being faster and saving money for printing costs. Furthermore, Kuzyk (2006) stated, “Clever lists become the go-to source for hungry readers, and online they can feed folks beyond the library’s base” (p. 33). Lists that can be accessed remotely not only provide access to an extended service to patrons, but they may also link to the library’s catalog or take advantage of the online medium by connecting to other resources (Staley, 2010).
Whether accessed via the library’s website online or available in print in the library, book lists share many common elements regarding their purposes, sources for information, compositional elements, and organization / presentation as explained in Figure 1: Components of Book Lists.

### Figure 1: Components of Book Lists

<table>
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<th>Purposes of Book Lists</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Marketing the library’s collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Supporting school curricula</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Definitive lists of titles by an author and/or series</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sources for Book Lists</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fiction_L electronic discussion list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Booksellers (ex: Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commercial readers’ advisory databases (ex: Gale’s Literature Resource Center, EBSCOhost’s NoveList, Readers’ Advisory Online from Libraries Unlimited, Fantastic Fiction)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Elements of Book Lists</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Genre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Character types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Subject (library subject heading or topical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quality (ex: “Best of…” lists)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization and Presentation of Book Lists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Alphabetically by title or author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Date of publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Call number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Short annotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bookmark format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Notebook / binder with full page lists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While the above figure is by no means exhaustive, it does contain an array of options regarding the components of book lists. Another common inspiration for book lists occurs when patrons request a book by a more abstract concept: the concept of appeal. In fact, Saricks (2009) stated, “Not a week goes by without someone posting a query on the RA e-mail list Fiction_L asking for read-alikes, prompted usually by a patron asking for more authors ‘just like’ a favorite” (p. 19). These read-alikes are not just materials that match in genre, however. The requests that Fiction_L and librarians
receive for something ‘just like’ another material center on a match of author or title based on what *appealed* to the patron about their item, not simply on a genre match (Saricks, 2009). Whether it is the pacing of the story, the character type, the author’s tone, or another appealing factor, having read-alike lists, especially if they include an explanation of why the materials match, can ultimately assist both librarians and patrons in readers’ advisory (Saricks, 2009).

As is evident in *Figure 1: Components of Book Lists*, there are many different characteristics that may make up an individual book list. There are also different forms in which the lists may be presented to patrons. According to the literature, two common forms are bookmarks and book lists. Staley (2010) defined the differences between bookmarks and book lists using the following criteria:

> By definition, a bookmark should be small enough to mark one’s place between the pages of a book. A booklist, on the other hand, is generally printed on standard letter-size paper and may take the form of a small folded pamphlet, a stapled multipage handout, or anything in between. (p.75-76).

While there are similarities between the two presentation forms, there are also differences that are typically associated with bookmarks and book lists. Bookmarks may include authors and titles of materials, but are usually not annotated (Saricks, 2005). They are used in readers’ advisory in hopes to provide visually appealing lists for patrons that promote a variety of materials in a convenient fashion (Staley, 2010). While bookmarks are typically smaller and include authors and titles, book lists may be annotated to include a summary. Because of the information included, these lists can benefit patrons with different comfort levels concerning readers’ advisory. As Saricks (2005) explained, “Annotated book lists provide some of the benefits of readers’ advisory
to patrons who feel uncomfortable talking with staff about their reading interests” (p. 146).

Whether the readers’ advisory tools take the shape of a bookmark, book list, or something in between, the importance of displaying these resources cannot be forgotten. Bookmarks and book lists may be displayed in holders, racks, on bulletin boards, slat walls, tables, counters, or even in shelves of related materials (Staley, 2010). In discussing bookmarks, Saricks (2005) expressed how bookmarks were created on card stock so they could stand up when in the display units. Furthermore, displayed book lists and bookmarks can be easily browsed when readers are looking for suggestions, or incorporated into the readers’ advisory interview by librarians (Saricks, 2005).

As Figure 1: Components of Book Lists shows, there are many places one may go to access information and materials for book lists. While the importance of these resources cannot be denied, literature also stresses the benefit of producing library-created and annotated book lists. Book lists that have been produced by someone that knows the library collection are able to focus on subjects that appeal specifically to that library’s patrons (Saricks, 2005). However, these library specific book lists take a great deal of time and effort. In regards to annotated book lists centering on library collections and patrons’ interests, Saricks (2005) doesn’t believe these lists must be created by someone with the title of ‘professional librarian.’ In fact, Saricks (2005) believes that anyone willing to commit the time and effort involved in creating a book list should provide this service for patrons.
While academic libraries have many functions, one function that might not immediately come to mind when thinking of academic libraries is their promotion of extracurricular reading. Literature reveals that while this is often not the first service people seek out in an academic library, it is a service that can be offered. Smith and Young (2008) expressed that while academic libraries have concentrated attention on supporting their university and/or collegiate pedagogical missions, these same libraries should be fulfilling any expectations patrons may have of the availability of pleasure reading (p. 521). Due to increasing demands on professional librarians’ time and resources, in addition to the usual suspects such as budget, staffing, and space, supporting the recreational reading needs of an academic community may not be at the forefront of the academic library’s services (Elliot, 2007).

However, despite the literature discussing the idea that extracurricular reading is not always promoted in academic libraries, there is literary support for this endeavor including success stories regarding the promotion of pleasure reading in academic libraries. One such study on academic libraries and extracurricular reading promotion revealed that creating popular genre displays, browsing collections and/or rooms, and blogs with popular materials were ways academic libraries succeeded in promoting and marketing their pleasure reading collections (Elliot, 2007). Extracurricular reading displays in academic libraries could be created by using book jackets, highlighting national events, or promoting local events or celebrations with related materials from the collection (Smith and Young, 2008). Jones, McCandless, Kiblenger, Giles, & McCabe (2011) discussed a recent study from James Madison University where themed book
displays comprised of materials from other floors were promoted through print and
digital signs. When combined with other techniques to increase book visibility and user
access, the increase in awareness increased book circulation. Using online resources such
as NoveList or informal tools like reader blogs are two potential ways that academic
libraries may connect patrons with pleasure reading (Smith and Young, 2008).

Furthermore, public library collaboration and the creation of book lists are two
ways pleasure reading may be promoted by academic libraries. While these options were
presented as tactics being implemented in academic libraries found in one study, Elliot
(2007) found that more than half of those surveyed in that study (55.7 percent) did not
use book lists. Book lists available both in print and electronically may help in the
promotion of pleasure reading in an academic library collection, in addition to
encouraging broader browsing by patrons (Smith and Young, 2008).

Readers’ Advisory, Book Lists, and School Libraries

The mission of the school library program according to the American Association
of School Librarians (2009) includes the development of learners’ twenty-first century
learning skills. One specific section of the AASL mission reads:

The mission of the school library program is to ensure that students and staff are
effective users of ideas and information. The school librarian empowers students
to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users
of information by: providing access to material in all formats, including up-to-
date, high-quality, varied literature to develop and strengthen a love of reading
(American Association of School Librarian, 2009, p. 8).

Furthermore, the American Association of School Librarians (2009) stated, “The
school library program promotes reading as a foundational skill for learning, personal
growth, and enjoyment” (p. 21). There are many actions listed within the publication that
the school librarian should take to ensure reading is promoted in this way, one of which declared, “The school librarian … motivates learners to read fiction and nonfiction through reading aloud, booktalking, displays, exposure to authors, and other means” (p. 21). School librarians serving students across all grade levels of K-12 education enact different strategies to help learners develop this love of reading as they become enthusiastic readers in the twenty-first century.

Sonnenberg (2010) discussed the importance of connecting with students and establishing relationships as a necessary piece of promoting reading for pleasure in the school library. Circulation more than doubled in a two and a half year period at one library and the success is attributed to things like knowing students’ names, letting students advertise books and library services through book trailers and logo competitions, and collecting books that actually interested students (Sonnenberg, 2010). When coupling relationship building with a library environment and collection that is created specifically with students in mind, readers’ advisory and reading for pleasure fall into place naturally.

Taking the collection and library environment one step closer to the realm of readers’ advisory often involves things like signage, displays, and marketing your resources. According to Young (2010), “We [school library media specialists] can communicate better with our students and faculty if we study and apply techniques that bookstores use to communicate with customers” (p. 18). One such tip involves having a library where materials can be accessed easily with signs highlighting events, new books, or popular themes (i.e.: movie tie-ins). Young (2010) offers other tips ranging from having a display of staff recommended titles to using social media and Web 2.0 tools to
promote your library’s collection and programs. Another tactic used to promote materials in school libraries according to Riesterer (2002) is booktalking books so students know what titles are in your library. These book talks could be structured by booktalking a new book each week to the entire school or by having themed carts full of books for passive promotion in the library (Riesterer, 2002). Riesterer (2002) found that these strategies of booktalking new and themed books significantly increased the circulation of library books.

While the above ideas were offered as ways to promote library materials and services and are often the same services shown through passive and active readers’ advisory, Minkel (2003) recommended that schools and public libraries connect to promote summer reading by compiling book lists together. By compiling these lists together, whether just titles or annotated lists, both public and school librarians are able to ensure that the titles on the lists are in the libraries so students and parents alike can access them (Minkel, 2003).

Readers’ Advisory, Book Lists, and Public Libraries

Academic and school libraries promote their collection and advise readers in ways that are often similar, but retain differences directly related to the audiences they serve. Public libraries are no exception to this. Some public libraries have found that merchandising and marketing their libraries specifically to their patrons’ needs increases circulation and the use of their services, one of which is readers’ advisory.

Within the context of readers’ advisory for public libraries, much like was discussed with school libraries, bookstore models have been considered for many years
as libraries seek to meet patrons’ needs. Green (1981) discussed the importance of displaying materials when attempting to showcase what the library offers. Paperback books piled together in a box that patrons can sift through while waiting at the circulation desk or book stacks centered around themes, genres, or even age groups are some ways public libraries can increase their passive readers’ advisory to patrons (Green, 1981).

Saricks (2007) reiterated this sentiment stating:

> Displays are the best and easiest way to promote library collections. They remind readers that the library is the place to find titles they will enjoy. Best of all, displays allow us to offer a form of readers’ advisory without saying a word. Now that’s effective marketing (p. 70).

Displays may be topical or comprised of an assortment of interesting titles picked by staff, but regardless of a connecting theme, displays should be inviting and allow patrons to interact with the materials (Saricks, 2007).

> Displays are one avenue for promoting services in public libraries. Other services librarians have found to be beneficial to their practice and ultimately their patrons is the use of electronic resources and databases such as NoveList and Fiction_L, colleague recommendations, and Internet book list sites such as Webrary (www.webrary.org/mgplhome.html) (Kreutter, 2005). Regarding the specific service of book lists as an online readers’ advisory service, Smith (2005) stated, “Basic library readers [sic] advisory sites include features such as online versions of book lists created by librarians, as well as links to lists of award-winning titles and other credible book lists” (p. 18).

Smith (2005) continued the online readers’ advisory discussion sharing that the Fargo Public Library has a site with book lists available, but there are future plans to expand this book list and readers’ advisory service to include librarian and customer
written reviews, links to book clubs, discussion lists, and school summer reading lists. Furthermore, Wright and Bass (2010) stated, “An increasingly popular service in libraries large and small is Personalized Reading Lists” (p. 9). This idea comes from the notion of providing patrons with a list of materials that match their specific interests and may also be available through an online form (Wright & Bass, 2010).

Despite the assertions regarding thematic displays that could easily be inspired by themed book lists and the discussions supporting the use of book lists in public libraries, Riechel (1991) found that in regards to services to children and young adults, book lists are only moderately in demand as library services, while general readers’ advisory services are described as very important (p. 50). However, as discussed previously and stated by Moyer and Stover (2010), readers’ advisory, including passive readers’ advisory such as book lists, is becoming an increasingly relied upon service provided by the public library. Economic times have shifted over the last twenty years and it seems as though what may have been true in 1991 for service to children and young adults may be different in the current time.
Research Questions and Methodology

Research Questions

Given the literature describing the components of bookmarks and book lists and often supporting the use of book lists in academic, school, and public libraries, how are book lists being used in the field today? Specifically, how are book lists being used to inform the practices of youth librarians in North Carolina public libraries? If book lists are used in service to youth in North Carolina public libraries, what form do they take and how are they created, used, and promoted for library patrons?

Methodology

As discussed previously, readers’ advisory, including passive readers’ advisory through book lists, is a service that continues to be an important component of public libraries (Moyer & Stover, 2010). Because of the importance of readers’ advisory, in addition to my anecdotal observations of the use of book lists in youth services departments in public libraries, I chose to study the questions proposed in the previous section through a survey of North Carolina public librarians working in youth services.

When deciding whether I would conduct my survey online or in print, I ultimately decided to create an online survey for participants because of the advantages online surveys have over the limitations of such surveys. According to Dillman, some of these advantages of Web-based surveys include lower costs for the research and reduced time for implementing the study (as cited in Archer, 2003). Archer (2003) offered the ease of
follow-up communication and the ability to import data for further analysis as two additional advantages for online surveys. While these advantages may be true, Dillman also discussed disadvantages to Web-based surveys that include the potential for not reaching everyone electronically due to access and/or technology issues, and the issue of sampling email addresses that are not readily available (as cited in Archer, 2003). Another limitation to Web-based surveys could be the ease with which one may ignore or discount an invitation to an electronic survey (Archer, 2003).

Despite the potential limitations to online surveys, the survey data and responses were created via Qualtrics Labs, Inc. © 2011, software version 23,551 of the Qualtrics Survey Research Suite. Librarians listed on a North Carolina youth services directory were invited to participate in the survey. In order to obtain as equal a representation as possible, an email was sent to one contact from every unique branch or library listed. Because of this attempt at equal representation, every email listed on the directory was not used.

Of the 255 emails that were initially sent, 51 emails were returned as undeliverable. While Dillman discussed one Web-based survey disadvantage as access to the survey because of technology (as cited in Archer, 2003), one positive aspect of survey dissemination via email is that the researcher has the ability to know when participants do not receive even the initial contact. Of the 204 emails that were successfully delivered via email, 42 were completed, yielding a response rate is 20.59%.

The survey asked both closed and open-ended questions regarding general library information, the creation of book lists, varying forms of book lists, the promotion of book lists, and book list use (see the Appendix for the survey instrument). The survey was
open for two weeks and participants could complete the survey one time via the link distributed through the invitation. Every question did not have to be answered in order to continue completing the survey. Answers to some questions directed participants to answer further related questions making response percentages relative to the direct question discussed.
Results and Discussion

General Library Information

In order to obtain a general sense for the types of libraries participating in this anonymous survey, respondents were asked very general library information. As seen in Figure 2: Type of Libraries in Book List Study, more than half of participants answered the survey questions on behalf of branch libraries. Fifteen survey participants represented main libraries while only 1 independent library was represented. For those selecting ‘Other,’ three participants represented regional libraries and one participated on behalf of a youth library.
Of the 42 libraries participating in this survey, the sizes of the youth services staff ranged from 1 staff member up to 12 staff members. Eleven participants responded that they only had 1 member on their youth services staff making this the most prevalent answer choice. When combining responses for staff sizes ranging from 1-3 members, 64% of total responses are accounted for. Twenty-nine percent of responses were comprised of youth services staff ranging from 4-8 members. Rounding out the staff size totals were three libraries with 12 members each, totaling 7% of participants.

Regarding the number of people on the youth services staff with a Master’s degree in library science, responses ranged from 0 members up to 6 members. Thirty-eight percent of participants responded that 1 member of their youth services staff had a Master’s degree in library science. The next most frequent responses were 0 members with a Master’s degree in library science (24% of responses) and 2 members with a Master’s degree in library science (21% of responses). Only 1 library responded with 6 members having Master’s degrees in library science.

After inquiring as to this very general information regarding the type of library, the size of the youth services staff, and the number of staff members with Master’s degrees in library science, participants were asked specifically whether their library has book lists available for librarian or patron use. Ninety-three percent of participants responded ‘Yes’ to this question. In order to get the most accurate results regarding how librarians are currently creating, promoting, using, and forming their book lists, only participants that answered ‘Yes’ to this question were asked to continue on with the survey (n=39).
Creation of Book Lists

Of the 39 libraries participating in the survey that do have book lists available for librarian or patron use, 92% of responses indicated that they use book lists created by library staff. Only 3 libraries (8% of participants) that do have book lists available for librarian or patron use do not use book lists that have been created by their staff. With the overwhelming majority of participants using book lists created by their staff, the views expressed by Saricks (2005) that emphasize the importance of creating book lists in-house so they reflect the library’s specific collection seem to be supported.

Of the 36 libraries that use book lists created by library staff, 67% of respondents expressed that book lists were created both by staff with a Master’s degree in library science and staff without a Master’s degree in library science. Nineteen percent of libraries use book lists created solely by staff without a Master’s degree in library science, while only 14% of libraries use book lists created solely by staff with a Master’s degree in library science. With over two-thirds of participants expressing that staff with and without Master’s degrees in library science create their book lists, the survey results support Saricks’ (2005) opinion that anyone willing to create book lists, Master’s degree in library science or not, should provide this service for patrons.

Participants were asked how many book lists their library has and could respond to one of four options: 0-20, 21-40, 41-60, 61+. As seen in Figure 3: Number of Book Lists in Libraries, more than 60% of participants have between 0-20 book lists. It seems reasonable to assume based on this survey information that between 0-20 book lists per library is a popular standard for North Carolina public libraries with service to youth. Because librarians from all types, sizes, and locations of North Carolina public libraries
were asked to participate, the hope is that this information provides as accurate a glance as possible into the current situation regarding book lists.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Book Lists</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the survey found the majority of participating libraries had between 0-20 book lists, 72% of participants responded that their libraries use previously published book lists from sources like *The New York Times*. The data was weighted less in one direction when participants were asked if their libraries use book lists from sites such as NoveList. Fifty-six percent of libraries do use sites such as NoveList compared to 44% of libraries that do not use such sites for book lists.

As seen in Figure 4: *Previously Published Book Lists Used by Librarians*, lists made up of award winning books like the North Carolina Children’s Book Award and the Caldecott and Newbery medals were popular choices for librarians when seeking published book lists. The American Library Association (ALA) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) were also mentioned by multiple participants as sources for accessing book lists. *The New York Times* was also listed as a source for book lists, as were other news sources, professional organizations and publications, book sellers, and school related lists.
When participants were asked to list the websites they used for book lists, results were much more definitive in what librarians were using. While librarians were asked what sites they use to find book lists in hopes to gauge which websites were most frequently utilized by librarians, some responses did include book lists by name or topic instead of the specific website source. Despite this, NoveList was the most prevalent choice with 9 participants offering that as a site they used for book lists. The American Library Association (ALA), specifically the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and Notable Children’s Books, was the next most frequent response with 5 libraries referencing this source. *Figure 5: Sites Used by Librarians for Book Lists* provides participants’ responses in the categories of Awards and Award Winners, Book Sellers, News Sources, Professional Organizations and Publications, Payment or Subscription Services, and Other.
**Form of Book Lists**

The book lists used as part of readers’ advisory can take many forms including full page lists, bookmarks, lists with annotations and/or summaries, and even print or Web-based lists. Because of the multitude of options, participants were asked to answer questions regarding the forms their book lists take. These questions focused on the types of information included on the book lists, the way book lists were accessed, and the actual formats the lists took.

Participants were first asked if book lists were available in print, on the Web, or both to gauge how these lists could be accessed. Five percent of libraries responded that lists were available **only** through the Web, while 46% of participants provide lists **only** in print. Forty-nine percent of libraries have lists available both in print and on the Web. With 95% of libraries offering some type of print list for patrons and librarians, it seems as though print is still a viable option for a book list form in youth services departments.
of North Carolina public libraries. With so many things moving online, it is easy to wonder what other libraries are doing to meet their librarian and patron needs regarding book lists. With only 5% of libraries using solely Web-based book lists, it seems as though at this time book lists have not transitioned to an online phenomenon. With almost 50% of participants offering lists both in print and on the Web, having both options available for patrons and librarians seems to be the popular choice.

Libraries offering lists in print were asked about the actual form those lists take. Participants were asked to select all options that applied to their library and to describe any other forms their lists might take. As seen in Figure 6: What Form Do Print Book Lists Take?, full pages, folded pamphlets, and bookmarks are the most common forms of book lists. Interestingly enough, one library responded that their book lists take the form of posters in the youth section of the library. While this was the only library that provided this response, it was a creative idea that seemed to take the readers’ advisory service of book lists to a whole new level, finding a way to incorporate these lists into décor for the section.

![Figure 6: What Form Do Print Book Lists Take?](image-url)
If lists were available in print, participants were also asked whether the lists were available for patrons to take from the library. Seventy-six percent of libraries responded that print lists were available for patrons to take, while almost a quarter of libraries do not provide this option. For Web-based lists, participants were asked whether the lists linked to the library’s catalog. For this question, 62% of libraries responded that yes, lists available on the Web do link to the library’s catalog.

The majority of libraries offering print lists have them available to take from the library and the majority of libraries offering Web based lists have them linked to the library’s catalog. Having lists available for patrons to take, in addition to lists that link to the library’s catalog, provides patrons with resources they can access efficiently both in and outside the library. These options expand the readers’ advisory service and allow readers’ advisors to cast a larger net for their services in hopes to reach a greater number of patrons.

Participants were asked to share what information was included on library book lists. Because participants were asked to select all choices that applied to their book lists, responses cannot be compared with one another. Thirty-one libraries reported including bibliographic information, and 29 libraries included call numbers on book lists. Summaries were included by 18 participants, while only 3 libraries included number of pages as an aspect of their book lists. Other types of information supplied by participants as part of book lists included read-alike titles, groups based on themes, reading levels, and book covers. While the importance of creating book lists in-house has already been discussed, choosing the information that patrons and librarians find most helpful may
differ from library to library. However, the two most popular response choices for this study include bibliographic information and call numbers.

Promotion of Book Lists

Because book lists are a readers’ advisory resource that many North Carolina public libraries with service to youth are taking advantage of, survey participants were asked questions regarding the promotion or display of their book lists in the library. Eighty-seven percent of participants stated that they do display their book lists in the library. Of those 34 libraries that display their book lists in the library, the question was asked how these book lists were displayed in hopes to gain information regarding popular and successful display locations. Participants were asked to mark all answers that applied with choices of display rack, end of aisles, or other (please explain). As seen in Figure 7: How are Book Lists Displayed?, displaying book lists in display racks, on the end of aisles, and on service desks like the circulation, reference, or youth desks are popular display locations.
When asked where non-displayed book lists were kept, 7 libraries responded that all of their book lists are displayed. Nineteen libraries that did not display all of their book lists shared that non-displayed lists were kept behind the desk. Keeping non-displayed lists in notebooks that patrons can browse was an option for 14 libraries. Another option chosen by multiple libraries was keeping non-displayed book lists on the Web. Fifteen libraries responded that this is an option they use for non-displayed lists. Other responses included keeping book lists in a specific notebook for series lists, on the staff intranet, or in seasonally themed folders. Having lists printed on demand or rotated on the library website for seasonal and/or popular interest were also offered as options used by libraries for their non-displayed lists.

Keeping the survey results in mind, while display racks are the most popular choice for displayed book lists, non-displayed book lists are most likely kept behind the desk. Having book lists kept at the desk provides librarians with access to them as resources during readers’ advisory services. Having book lists available on the Web
allows readers’ advisory services to extend beyond the physical boundaries of the library. While not the most popular location for keeping non-displayed book lists, having a notebook available for patrons to browse may appeal to patrons who prefer independent browsing or do not have the time or desire to seek book lists at a service desk.

**Use of Book Lists**

Because book lists act as a resource for librarians in readers’ advisory services, survey participants were asked questions regarding how book lists are used. If book lists are not used or patrons do not seem to prefer this type of service, it is important to adjust library services to meet the needs of the patrons. More than half of libraries (54% of participants) responded that patrons ‘Occasionally’ ask to use book lists. Twenty-eight percent of participants stated that patrons ask to use book lists ‘Very often,’ while 18% of participants have patrons that ‘Seldom’ ask to use book lists. No participants responded that patrons ‘Never’ ask to use book lists.

This type of information can be very valuable to librarians and ultimately patrons because if patrons are not asking to use this resource, services can be reexamined to make sure patrons’ readers’ advisory needs are being met. It should be noted that if book lists are constantly displayed, patrons may not need to ask to use book lists because they are available to them without librarian help. However, it is still data that is important to consider when deciding how to promote and display book lists for patron and librarian use.

Because lists are often available both in print and online, librarians were asked which format patrons seem to prefer. An overwhelming majority (89% of participants)
responded that patrons prefer to use print lists. This is something to consider as services are adapted with new technologies and as librarians continue striving to meet the needs of the patrons. Despite so many things moving online, librarians surveyed for this study believe that patrons prefer the print option for book lists. Because over half of libraries (54% of participants) offer book lists on the Web, participants were asked if they track book list Web page views. Ninety percent of participants stated they do not track book list page views on the Web. At this time it seems as though knowing the use of online book lists through tracking Web page views is not a method used by the majority of youth services librarians in North Carolina public libraries.

It is important in a study of book list use to shed light not just on how the lists are used, but also on which book lists are being used. **Figure 8: Most Popular Book Lists Reported by Librarians** showcases participating librarians’ reports of the most popular book lists at their libraries. Book lists compiled by grade, age, awards, Battle of the Books, and read-alike titles were the most popular, with graded book lists being the overwhelmingly popular choice for librarians.

It should be noted that certain categories in **Figure 8: Most Popular Book Lists Reported by Librarians** represent multiple book lists and are signified by an asterisks in the table. These lists were interpreted and categorized accordingly in hopes to accurately represent popular categories, regardless of the differences that exist in how libraries name their book lists. For example, 15 responses involved a popular book list grouped by age. Because of the theme of book lists for certain ages (not grades) that existed with multiple participants’ responses, these lists were grouped together so the appropriate weight for book lists grouped by age could be reflected in the table. **Figure 9: Book List Categories**
Comprising Multiple Titles provides the names of the book lists which make up each combined category.
Figure 8: Most Popular Book Lists Reported by Librarians

- 100 Top Classics
- 1001 Children's Books You Must Read Before You Grow Up
- African American Authors
- * Age
- American Girl
- Animals
- Annotated Bibliographies
- * Awards
- Banned
- Battle of the Books
- Boys / Guys Read
- Character Education
- Christian Fiction Authors
- Community Helpers / Workers
- Cuffies
- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Death, Illness, Moving
- Diversity
- Good Read Alouds
- Graded
- GrossBooks
- Level / Guided Reading
- Library Staff Picks
- Mock Newbery Club
- New York Times
- Novelist
- Potty Training
- Princess
- * Read-Alikes / If You Liked This...
- Safety
- * School
- Seasons / Seasonal
- Special Needs
- Storytime / Themes
- Summer Reading
- * Transportation

Number of Times a Book List Was Mentioned
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 9: Book List Categories Comprising Multiple Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read-alikes / If You Liked This ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
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Limitations and Future Research

While measures were taken to minimize survey limitations prior to the start of the study, there are limitations to every study that are potentially unavoidable. Because this study was designed with an Internet-based survey, a glaring limitation is one of access to the survey. While a directory for youth service librarians was used in order to contact participants, as discussed previously, there were emails that were returned as undeliverable. Because of this and the ease for ignoring email invitations, the study was inherently limited based on the number of responses and the types of libraries represented in those responses. Furthermore, because every effort was taken to contact one representative per physical library space, results may be biased towards larger library systems if book lists methods and/or procedures are dictated at the library system level.

The survey was constructed in an anonymous nature in hopes to garner unbiased responses regarding book lists and libraries. However, because there were opinion-based questions included, there is an inherent bias for responses that should be considered with analyzing responses from questions like ‘In your opinion, what are your five most popular book lists?’

Furthermore, this was a study designed to research how librarians create, form, promote, and use book lists. Despite some questions addressing librarian opinions regarding patrons’ preferences, the survey was overwhelmingly dominated by librarian-centric questions. Because this was a study for librarians, future research into the patron
side of book lists might provide a more complete picture regarding the use of book lists as a readers’ advisory tool. Future research might involve asking patrons what they like or do not like about book lists, how often they use them and/or find them to be helpful, how lists could be designed to better meet their needs, and/or if they even have access (or know about) book lists in their library.
Conclusions

Book lists are used in youth services in many North Carolina public libraries regardless of the type of library, size of youth services staff, or number of staff members with a Master’s degree in library science. With 93% of surveyed libraries having book lists available for librarian or patron use, this resource continues to be used in readers’ advisory services today.

The majority of libraries that responded have between 0-20 book lists and use lists created by library staff both with and without Master’s degrees in library science. Previously published lists from sources like *The New York Times* are heavily used by librarians with lists comprised of award winning books being among some of the most popular. Although responses were split more evenly regarding the use of websites for published lists, NoveList was the most popular site used by librarians that do use these resources. With busy schedules and the time involved in creating original book lists, it seems as though participating librarians are taking advantage of the resources and book lists created by others whether they are created by fellow librarians or popular websites. While this is by no means considered a negative tactic and in many instances can be very helpful, librarians should always consider the fact that previously created lists may need to be adapted to work for their patrons. When patrons and readers' advisory services move from genre or author recommendations to focus on appeal factors, it is vital that lists are analyzed deeper than surface level to ensure that what appealed about the original title is reflected in the recommended list.
Furthermore, if librarians are using book lists to recommend titles in readers' advisory interactions, it is important to consider that the summary or highlights that one book list creator used to showcase the title on their list might not align with how you would market the title. Using book lists that are previously created is a valuable resource currently being used by many librarians surveyed for this study and can save time and provide new ideas and angles on ways to group books when creating lists. However, it is important to always remember that book lists should be used as a supplement to readers' advisory, not as a way to bypass the readers' advisory experience altogether.

A multitude of sources are used as inspiration for book lists, many of which are found in popular culture and are familiar to both librarians and patrons. Using sources like *The New York Times* allows librarians to see what their patrons are exposed to as ‘popular literature’ in the media. While participating libraries were asked to provide names of book lists and websites they use to find or compile book lists, the importance for creating book lists that reflect patrons’ desires and the library’s collection should always be considered when establishing or continuing the development of a book list collection.

Book lists have not yet become a resource that is solely on the Web, instead being available in print or both in print and on the Web by 95% of responding libraries. More than three-fourths of responding libraries have print lists available for patrons to take from the library with the three most popular print formats being full pages, folded pamphlets, and bookmarks. Just over 60% of responding libraries with lists available on the Web have their lists linked to the library catalog. With book lists being tools for librarian and patron use that can supplement readers' advisory interactions and/or extend
readers' advisory beyond the library walls, linking a Web-based book list to the online catalog can be a way to connect the book list's suggestions with the actual resources that patrons can access. As Welch (2010) discussed, some of the purposes of book lists include marketing the library's collection, supporting school curricula, and providing lists of titles by specific authors or within certain series. Connecting online book lists can fulfill these purposes while providing a direct connection to the library collection. By connecting book lists to the library's catalog, patrons are able to find whether materials are immediately available and if not, potentially put the material(s) on hold depending on the constraints of the online catalog. When book lists are connected to the online catalog, the previously mentioned features become enhancements that save the patron or librarian time, make the online readers' advisory experience more efficient, and take a previously static book list and make it interactive.

Regardless of print or Web-based lists, bibliographic information and call numbers are the two most popular types of information to include on lists. As librarians are creating book lists for their library, it is important to know not only what other libraries are doing, but also how your patrons make use of the library’s resources. Whether your library utilizes print resources with bibliographic information, online lists with book covers that link to the library’s catalog, or something in between, finding what best fits the needs of your library patrons should dictate how you maximize the book list resource.

Thirteen percent of responding libraries do not display their book lists, but for the libraries that do display book lists, display racks, end of aisles, and service desks are the most frequent display locations. Keeping book lists behind the desk, in notebooks for
patrons to browse, or on the Web are the most common ways to keep non-displayed book lists. While the majority of responding libraries do display their book lists, different factors can affect whether a library chooses to display book lists. While not directly asked of the survey participants that reported not displaying lists, some reasons behind this decision might involve the maintenance involved in creating, updating, and monitoring the display locations. From casual observation, lists that are accessible to children can become damaged, 're-organized' by eager children, or strewn about the library. By keeping lists behind service desks, in notebooks designed for browsing, or on the Web, these maintenance issues are kept to a minimum and help to ensure that lists are available. Knowing your patrons and what will best meet their needs is the most important way to determine whether displaying some, all, or none of your library book lists will be most beneficial.

Of all the possibilities for book lists topics, the three most popular book lists are book lists compiled by grade (K-2, 3-4, etc.), age (baby, toddler, teen, etc.), and awards (Caldecott, Newbery, ALA, etc.). These book lists topics could rank as the most popular by the surveyed librarians not only because of parents or children asking for things they are hearing about through school, but also because of what parents or even librarians think of as quality literature. When book lists are utilized by librarians as supplements to readers' advisory experiences, award-winning lists seem to be reliable resources when recommending books to patrons looking for the ever-popular 'good book.' When recommending these 'good books' to parents, award winners may resonate with what they grew up learning was quality literature, and they may take comfort in knowing the books they are passing along to their children have been recognized for various awards.
Furthermore, when assisting parents with recommendations for their children, grade and age-appropriate books are common criteria to consider. Having these types of lists ready for patrons not only alleviates the stress of the librarian having to immediately recall every book that a third grade child might be reading, but also provides patrons with the freedom to access lists both above and below grade levels to find a fit that is not only appropriate for their reading level, but also appealing to their reading interests.

Compiling grade, age, and award-winning lists with materials from a variety of genres, styles of writing, etc. may help patrons bridge the gap from reading simply what is 'grade level appropriate' to reading what is both appropriate and appealing. For example, if a patron in fourth grade is reading on a seventh grade level, having grade level lists with a variety of texts allows a younger child to find a book that might challenge their reading level while still appealing to their interest and being appropriate for a potentially shorter attention span. Furthermore, if a seventh grade patron was reading on a fourth grade level, having a variety of lengths of texts and styles of writing on book lists by grade allows both the librarian and the patron to find a text that is appealing while furthering the patron's literacy.

Displaying the popular book list topics by grade level, age, or awards appears to be a natural way to not only advertise your resources, but also to provide access to some of the most sought after book lists. Because two of the most popular book lists topics related to grade levels and ages, connecting with local schools and daycares for input could be one way to develop these lists. If patrons are seeking books on a certain grade level and the resources used in the schools are known, well-developed lists can be provided that connect both the school and public libraries.
Eighty-two percent of responding libraries report that patrons ask to use book lists 'occasionally' (54% of libraries) and 'very often' (28% of libraries). While these reports comprise over three-fourths of responding libraries, over half of libraries do report their patrons asking for lists only 'occasionally.' While it is true that what seems 'occasional' in one library might seem 'very often' in another, it is important to consider that because book lists are only 'occasionally' asked for in 54% of responding libraries, using previously published lists may be the best use of a librarian's limited time. However, for libraries that feel as though lists are only 'occasionally' or 'seldom' requested, displaying and highlighting lists or creating lists based on patron suggestions or popular themes may increase patron demand and desire for lists.

Almost 90% of participants believe that patrons prefer print lists when lists are available in both print and on the Web. When lists are available on the Web, only 10% of libraries track the Web page views. As technology continues to become integrated into the everyday lives of librarians and patrons both inside and outside the library, librarians may find that tracking Web page views and providing book lists in electronic formats become sought after resources.

With the amount information one could glean from the survey results, in the end libraries and librarians must know how they can take advantage of the book list resources to best inform their practices and ultimately assist their patrons. Regardless of the size of one’s library or the preference of using previously published lists or creating lists in-house, librarians in youth services departments in North Carolina public libraries are taking full advantage of book lists as they serve their patrons. Book lists are valuable readers’ advisory resources and in order to maximize their effectiveness, librarians must
stay informed of the options for creating, using, and promoting book lists and adapt their services to best meet their patrons’ needs.
References


Appendix: Survey Questions

1. Is your library a main library, a branch library, an independent library, or other? If other, please describe.

2. How many people are on your youth services staff?

3. How many people on your youth services staff have a Master’s degree in library science?

4. Does your library have book lists available for librarian or patron use?

5. Do you use book lists created by library staff?

6. Who creates the book lists in your library?

7. Approximately how many book lists does your library have?

8. Do you use previously published book lists such as the New York Times' "Best Illustrated Children's Books of 2010"?

9. Do you use previously published book lists from sites such as NoveList?

10. Are your book lists available in print, on the web, or both?

11. If lists are available in print, are they compiled as folded pamphlets, full pages, or other? If other, please describe. Please check all that apply.

12. If lists are available in print, are they available for patrons to take from the library?

13. If lists are available on the web, do they link to your library's catalog?

14. What types of information do your book lists include? Please check all that apply.

15. Are any of your book lists displayed in the library?
16. Are your print book lists displayed in a display rack, on the end of aisles, or other? If
    other, please explain. Please check all that apply.

17. Where are non-displayed book lists kept? Please check all that apply.

18. In your opinion, what are your five most popular book lists?

19. How often do patrons ask to use book lists?

20. If lists are available in both print and on the web, which format do patrons seem to
    prefer?

21. If lists are available on the web, do you track book list page views?

22. If you answered yes to the previous question regarding your use of previously
    published book lists such as the New York Times' "Best Illustrated Children's
    Books of 2010" in your library, please list those book lists.

23. If you answered yes to the previous question regarding your use of published book
    lists from sites such as NoveList, please list referring sites.