As the Baby Boomer generation ages, libraries will be called upon to provide more services to seniors. With ever-present budget issues, providing more services with fewer resources requires innovative ways to meet the demand. This research evaluates an agreement between The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries and The Cedars of Chapel Hill to provide book delivery service to residents of this retirement community. Measuring user satisfaction with focus groups indicates that residents who use the service are generally satisfied with the wide selection of materials available, as well as the courier’s librarian services. Suggestions for improvement include a better welcome packet for new participants, catalog instruction sessions, more frequent delivery, and the provision of e-readers and e-books. Suggestions for improvement and positive feedback regarding the UNC/Cedars program will ensure that the program continues to meet the information needs of this group of older adults.

Headings:

- College and university libraries / Services to the community
- Library extension / College and university libraries
- Library extension / North Carolina
- Public Libraries / Services to senior citizens
- Public relations of libraries / College and university libraries
EVALUATING BOOK DELIVERY FROM AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY TO A
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

by
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A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
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Library Science.

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Approved by

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Introduction

According to the US Census, the population born between 1946 and 1964 is known as the Baby Boomer generation (US Census, 2006). As of July 1, 2005, the estimated number of baby boomers was 78.2 million and comprised approximately one fourth of the estimated 2005 US population (295,560,549) (US Census, 2008). In 2011, the oldest baby boomers will turn 65. As this sizeable portion of the population ages, library services to this segment of the population will be a growing concern, but services to those born in the 1920s and 1930s will continue to be necessary (Kahlert, 2000). Outreach to this group of older adult users will likely become a major concern for public libraries. At a time when library budgets are shrinking, public libraries will be looked upon to hire librarians who specialize in older adult users’ needs, hold programming geared towards baby boomers, offer well-lit and user-friendly facilities, and collect materials that cater to the unique information needs of the baby boomer generation. In addition, as this population segment continues to age, public libraries that offer home delivery, bookmobile services, or delivery to retirement homes may see an increased use of these services.

With library budgets getting smaller and demands for services increasing, libraries might consider innovative ways to collaborate with other institutions as a way to share costs and provide the level of service that public library patrons expect. Such collaboration exists between UNC Libraries and The Cedars of Chapel Hill, a private residential retirement community. Through this partnership, residents are able to purchase UNC Libraries borrowers cards and request books from the UNC library
catalog. The book courier takes the books to The Cedars every other week. The residents receive the home delivery, individual attention, reader’s advisory, and popular fiction that is associated with public library services, but with the added bonus of UNC Libraries’ extensive holdings. This paper proposes several research questions, the answers to which could be used immediately to make changes to the UNC/Cedars partnership and, in the future, to encourage the public library to become involved and encourage other universities to provide similar services.

How satisfied are users with the book delivery service and how can it be improved?
For residents who have never used the service, or who have stopped using the service, what can encourage them to use it?
Why have users opted to obtain books through this service, rather than through the public library?

When considering services to seniors, researchers can consult *The American Library Association’s Reference and User Services Association’s Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults* as a source of recommendations for services to seniors (ALA, 2008). First developed in the 1970s, these guidelines recognize the impending increase in the number of aging Americans, as well as the lengthening of the average lifespan. A series of seven guidelines address ways to provide information services to older adults (defined here as age 55+). All types of libraries, including public libraries, can use these standards to evaluate current practices and make changes to services accordingly (ALA 2008):

- Acquire current data about the older population and incorporate it into planning and budgeting.
- Ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults in your community are reflected in the library’s collections, programs, and services.
- Make the library’s collections and physical facilities safe, comfortable, and inviting for all older adults.
• Make the library a focal point for information services to older adults.
• Target the older population in library programming.
• Reach out to older adults in the community who are unable to travel to the library.
• Train the library’s staff to serve older adults with courtesy and respect.

Not all of the standards are directly relevant within the context of the UNC/Cedars program, but many of them can be adapted to measure the program’s level of success and indicate changes that need to be made. The ALA’s first recommendation is to “acquire current data about the older population and incorporate it into planning and budgeting.” This paper is intended to “determine [the UNC/Cedars participants’] needs and interests and to gauge how services…might be made more appropriate and relevant to this population (ALA, 2008).”
Literature Review

Reviewing existing relevant literature within the context of the UNC/Cedars program indicates that there is an abundance of research about the relationship between older adults and public libraries, and how public libraries can serve this age group effectively. Outreach and book delivery services to older adults already exist in a variety of formats, including book delivery from public libraries to seniors’ residential institutions. However, published literature about book delivery partnerships between academic libraries and local senior living facilities is lacking, either because these partnerships do not exist, or because they have not been studied.

Piper, Palmer, and Xi (2009) used the ALA’s seven guidelines for services to seniors to evaluate services to older adults at three Maryland public libraries. Through interviews with staff members and questionnaires to older adult library users, researchers found that the three libraries performed lower than was expected on most of the guidelines. This finding is troubling, particularly because of a growing number of older adult library users. It is important, however, to emphasize that library users in this study were still satisfied with their library experience. Researchers posited that the older adults may appreciate a friendly atmosphere that provides social and emotional stimulation, regardless of the actual library services offered. Researchers also speculated that users may not be aware of the range of services offered by other libraries, and thus may be aware that their own library is lacking services.

With the UNC/Cedars courier program, participants may be using the courier service because they are unaware of services available from the local public library. In addition, the social and emotional stimulation that the UNC courier program provides
may play a role in users’ desire to participate in the book delivery program. On “Library Day,” participants often spend time catching up with friends who also use the program, as well as talking with the book courier. In addition to examining the social aspects of the book courier program, it is also important to examine the information seeking behaviors of the participants. The numbers of older adult users at public libraries will only grow, as the baby boomer generation ages into retirement. Planning ahead is necessary to be ready for this surge in numbers of library users needing senior services.

Williamson, Bannister, Makin, Johanson, Schauder, & Sullivan (2006) sought Australian baby boomers’ perception of the public library’s role in their information seeking during retirement. Researchers present a description of the Australian baby boomer generation, which has many of the same characteristics of American baby boomers. Through focus groups and individual interviews, researchers identified four themes that were currently important to baby boomers and four themes that had future importance. Themes of particular significance to the current study are the life experiences (education, careers, travel, etc.) that older adults have under their belts, financial issues and equality of access regardless of financial situation, and information and reading preferences (e.g., books in print, but online resources as well). In regards to themes of future importance, retirement, post-retirement work, technological needs, and social needs in the forms of friendships and clubs are of importance to the current study.

Users of the UNC/Cedars program are retirees who have entire lifetimes of experiences that affect their information interests and reading habits. Most of them are retired, but many of them are still active in some type of post-retirement work. They are interested in learning about and using computers. In addition, members of the
UNC/Cedars program all seek out social interaction. The characteristics of this particular group of retirees affect their information seeking behavior, which in turn may also affect how they use the UNC/Cedars program.

In a follow up article, Williamson (2009) used her focus group data to present the idea of a public library as a village green that is the center of the community with an emphasis on social interaction. The public library village green is created through partnerships with other services, providing programs that attract the community, and providing resources that are relative to the community. Focus group data indicated that among other things, subjects were interested in public libraries as places to socialize and as an access point for technology, electronic resources, and the training in their use. Subjects were also interested in the possibilities for partnerships between public libraries and various senior organizations (social services, organizations supporting seniors, retirement homes, etc.). Although these are only a few focus groups with a few participants, the data gleaned from them has important implications. Study participants were interested in a communal area to be social, access relevant information resources, and be trained on and be able to use computers.

For the current study, UNC/Cedars users have an opportunity for socialization, informal book discussions, access to the 6+ million volumes in the UNC Libraries collection, and informal computer instruction (the courier explains use of the online catalog and how to send email). In establishing this service, an informal mobile village green has essentially been created, but it has taken place completely independent of the local public library.
Empirical studies regarding library delivery to homebound individuals are difficult to locate. The results of a survey sent to all public library authorities in the UK were compared with previous similar surveys to gauge current quality of library service and suggest ideas for best practice (Ryder, 2004). Criteria covered in the questionnaire included eligibility to receive a home library service; service structure and delivery; who delivers the service (specialist librarians or specialist non-professional staff, branch library staff or volunteers); training; range of material and services provided; reading aids; materials for reminiscence; information provision; transportation to and from the library; services to people in residential homes, sheltered accommodation, nursing homes and day centers; reader development; lifelong learning; and publicity and promotion. Of particular importance to this review is the discussion of services to residential homes, sheltered accommodation, day centers, and nursing homes. These services are provided via deposit collections, mobile library service, additional visits to individuals, and a combination of one or more of these. The UNC/Cedars program categorically falls somewhere between additional visits to individuals and mobile library service. Ryder (2004) indicates trepidation about the security of the materials loaned out through these services, with the implication that public libraries are concerned that their items will not be returned. This concern may stem from libraries checking out materials to an account with the residential facility itself, and not directly to the individual, as is done with the UNC/Cedars program. Ultimately, the individual is responsible for returning the book, not the institution. Also of importance to this literature review is the unfortunate observation that public libraries are “reluctant to publicize for fear of not coping with demand” (Ryder, 2004, p. 13). The UNC/Cedars program relies on one book courier to
pull all books and transport them herself. Currently, there are only fifteen residents who use the courier service, and while it would be beneficial for more residents to take advantage of the service, one book courier could not handle a large influx of users. Keeping the demand for use lower makes the program more manageable for the book courier. Ryder (2004) studied a variety of issues related to homebound delivery, and keeping up with demand for the service was of particular importance to the current study.

There are many examples within the library science literature of public library book delivery services, primarily in the form of bookmobiles and home delivery to patrons. These services are not geared specifically towards seniors, though they certainly benefit. Edmiston (2004) presents background information on book mobiles, examples of specific book mobile programs, and ways in which book mobiles serve two groups of underserved patrons (Amish and homeschoolers). Seniors are not considered an underserved group in this study, but this may be because other groups are even more underserved. Although services to seniors are not addressed in this article, the ways in which book mobiles serve these groups are still relevant to the UNC/Cedars study. Book mobiles are designed to target a particular area’s population, so it is important to know the users and train staff to be sensitive to their needs. With the small number of people who use the UNC/Cedars service, personal attention ensures that residents receive the books that interest them, regardless of whether UNC has collected them specifically for this age group. In addition, book mobiles offer the convenience of not needing to arrange transportation to the library. UNC/Cedars participants enjoy this luxury, but miss out on the act of browsing for books that the book mobile offers.
A second example of a book mobile service is the Tippecanoe County Public Library’s Mobile Library in Indiana (Clements, 2008). This service experiences challenges with providing mobile resources and services, namely the process of making decisions about services and struggling to provide regular delivery of resources. In addition, it is difficult to maintain a balance between customizing individuals’ service needs and maintaining standardization across the library system. The rewards of the system often outweigh the costs, however, as it is an “intimate, customer-driven service environment in which we learn their names and they learn ours” (Clements, 2008, p. 32). These are challenges and rewards experienced in all types of book delivery, including the UNC/Cedars program. The program is intended to be fairly standard across users, with a regular delivery schedule. However, sometimes the schedule is interrupted, sometimes the courier is unable to find the requested books, and sometimes the requested books are checked out. It is not always a smooth process, but the personal contact and attention can help smooth over road blocks.

In addition to book mobiles, libraries offer varying levels of home delivery to patrons. For many libraries, this is only available to homebound users, but the Orange County Library System in Orlando, Florida offers home delivery service to all of its users at no charge (Myers, 2009). This service replaced the system’s book mobile and instead uses a local package courier to provide delivery within two business days at a competitive cost. The package courier makes more than 2,000 stops per day at patrons’ homes. The library system has weighed the cost per transaction against patron satisfaction and decided that it is a cost-effective way to provide service to all patrons. While it does not specifically target senior or homebound users, these population groups certainly benefit
from the ease of access to library materials. This is an innovative way to reach library users who are unable to come into the library, and also to provide a convenient way for other users to receive their library books. For the UNC/Cedars program, it is such a small group that this technique may not be a viable option. In addition, it is a less personal option. However, if more residents began using the UNC/Cedars program, mailing books may become a viable option.

Several libraries also have book delivery programs that are targeted towards specifically towards seniors. The St. Johns County, Florida library system has started a book mobile that only serves senior residential facilities (Karp, 2005). The library’s long-range service goal to ensure access to resources to all residents of the area, including “the homebound, differently abled, elderly and those who cannot easily come to library because of distance or transportation problems” (Karp, 2005, p. 6) means that the seniors book mobile program has support from library administration. The bookmobile runs twice a month and makes thirty-two stops around the county. Residents of these facilities have had such a positive response to the book mobile that several facilities have developed book club programs and computer instruction classes to augment the services the library is providing.

On a smaller scale, the Marshall Public Library in Pocatello, Idaho uses a book wagon to transport books to the local Senior Center, a “very popular, vital and important meeting place for seniors” (Mercaldo, 2007, p.18). This service was created in response to their population demographics; in 2005 residents over the age of 65 comprised 10.4% of Bannock County’s population.
In a larger scale version of the UNC/Cedars program, Dunedin Public Libraries in New Zealand (in response to budget pressures) decided to begin charging the retirement homes they were already making deliveries to (Collett, 2009). Retirement homes were receptive to the change, namely because the owners of the facilities were large health care providers who found it easier to negotiate with noncommercial organizations, such as a library, and for the retirement facilities this provided a cheap alternative to buying books for its residents. Twenty-five retirement homes receive anywhere from fifty to over one hundred items per month. From an operational standpoint, the library does not have the resources to increase the number of retirement homes who can subscribe to the service. Collett (2009) said almost exactly what Ryder (2004) said: “Few libraries strongly promote their home library service as a result of a lack of resources to cope with more users” (Collett, 2009, p. 77). Revenue from the program only recovers a small percentage of the operating cost, but stretching the budget to ensure access to the library for individuals who find it difficult to get there is important to the library. This article bears particular relevance to the UNC/Cedars program in a variety of ways. Expenses incurred by the Cedars administrators are minimal, compared to the cost of using a for-profit book delivery service or purchasing books for its residents. In addition, this case study illustrates that libraries are trying to think of new, innovative ways in which to serve the aging population.

While reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that services and community outreach to older adult services are being implemented in public libraries, though to varying degrees. Research is being conducted on best practices for providing services to seniors, seniors’ perceptions of the public library, seniors’ information needs, book
mobile services, home delivery, and delivery to retirement communities. In all of this research, however, the academic library is not playing a role. Colleges and universities exist within the university community and the larger surrounding community, which should be impetus for schools to examine their impact on and their place within the surrounding community. Academic libraries are arguably one of a school’s most important resources, and while it could be argued that those resources are intended for the academic community, it could also be argued that information is meant to be shared and accessible to everyone. In a time period when budgets are tight all over, an academic library sharing resources and serving the role of a public library can be an innovative way to provide services to seniors. Evaluating the UNC/Cedars book delivery program could provide valuable information about improving the program and implementing it elsewhere.
About the UNC-Cedars Program

The UNC/Cedars program helps to augment The Cedars’ in-house library of books, VHS tapes, DVDs, books on cassette, and books on CD. The in-house library is located in The Clubhouse and is comprised entirely of donated materials. One of The Cedars’ residents manages the library on a volunteer basis. Books circulate using an honor system whereby residents take a book, keep a book for as long as they want and return it to the book return box when they are finished. There is no catalog of materials and no recording of circulation records. Because the in-house library relies purely on donations, the selection is limited and does not always include books residents want to read.

The UNC/Cedars Program began in 2004 when one of the residents was researching and writing a book about the United States highway system. He was interested in accessing UNC Libraries’ holdings for his research and proposed an arrangement allowing residents to purchase UNC Library cards and request books. The Cedars would hire someone to accept and process book requests and drivers for The Cedars would take the books to and from UNC. The Director of Programs at The Cedars and two head librarians at UNC began discussing the possibilities for such an arrangement. In 2005, UNC librarians gave a presentation to residents of The Cedars and explained how to request books. UNC Libraries card applications were passed out to those who were interested. For the first two years of the program, residents’ requests were submitted to a graduate student, who filled these requests. Drivers for The Cedars shuttled the books back and forth. In 2007, The Cedars agreed to hire a new courier at a rate of $12.00 per hour (for a sum total of approximately two to four hours per month).
Upon examining the request and delivery process, the courier decided to revamp the UNC/Cedars Program. The courier established a system whereby she received requests, filled the requests, and delivered them herself to The Cedars every other Saturday morning. This removed the need for The Cedars to provide drivers and made the process run more smoothly and efficiently. Additionally, the courier made changes to the way in which residents used her services. More specifically, the courier became more than simply a book carrier. Residents did not always know what specific book they want to read, so she provided reader’s advisory services. Also, when residents wanted information about a certain topic, the book courier conducted a reference interview (either in person on delivery day or asynchronously via email) and brought books that were of interest to the resident. The UNC/Cedars book courier became a combination book courier and mobile librarian.

In 2007 there were approximately seven individuals using the UNC/Cedars Program. At the time of this research, there were approximately twenty individuals who use the UNC/Cedars Program. In lieu of using an institutional library card, Cedars residents purchased their own renewable UNC Libraries card for $25 annually. This is the same card that all residents of North Carolina are eligible to purchase, but The Cedars residents’ cards come with the book delivery. Many members chose to join UNC Friends of the Library for the same cost, which also gave them book borrowing privileges. In the interest of the residents’ convenience, the courier accepted requests from residents in the format in which they are most comfortable, i.e. via email, telephone, or in person on book delivery day. The courier used a password protected Google Document to maintain the residents’ request lists. On book delivery day, the courier checked out the requested
books to the residents’ library accounts and delivered the books, along with a printout of what they currently had checked out. Book delivery occurred every other Saturday morning, with residents meeting the courier in the in-house library at The Cedars. The courier generally spent approximately thirty minutes passing out books, accepting any new requests, and socializing with residents.

Over the three years that the courier worked with this program, several issues have arisen. Residents were given a thirty day loan period, but since they rely on the courier to return their books, their due dates were extremely lax. Additionally, since they had relaxed due dates, they did not accrue overdue fines for late books. Lost books were a minor problem, but those were handled on a case-by-case basis. With the exception of one lost book that a resident replaced, all misplaced books were located later.

UNC/Cedars participants shared their library books with each other, as well as with other residents. This was not a problem, provided that residents understood that the person who had the book checked out on his/her account was ultimately responsible for the book’s fate. In fact, a book as never lost because of residents sharing it. Another minor problem occurred on book delivery day, when the members saw what other residents have returned and happened to see a title they would like to take home. The easiest way to handle this situation was for the courier to write down the book’s barcode, give the book to the person who wants to read it, and check the book out to the person when she returned to the library at UNC. Another issue that presented a problem was the residents’ desire to check out newer books and popular fiction. As in many academic libraries, it generally took some time for a book to be ordered, delivered, and cataloged, so there was frequently a delay from the time that a resident requested a new book and the time that it
was cataloged and ready for circulation. Residents were extremely understanding and patient while they waited for these newer books. There was frequently an additional delay when these books had a waiting list. They were extremely understanding with this process as well, primarily because the waiting list was generally shorter than it would have been at a public library. Books that are more popular have a waiting list regardless of how new they are, but again, residents were very willing to wait for their titles. Occasionally, residents requested books that were not held by UNC Libraries and according to UNC Libraries policies, unaffiliated borrowers are not eligible to use interlibrary loan (UNC Libraries 2010). To navigate this situation, the courier had a couple of options. The resident could try to get the book through the public library or the public library’s interlibrary loan, or the courier could help the resident find a comparable book that UNC Libraries does have. For the few times that this situation occurred, the resident was content with not being able to get the specific book. In addition to not providing access to interlibrary loan, the unaffiliated borrowers’ card does not grant off-campus access to electronic resources, including e-books and databases (UNC Libraries 2010). The courier expected that this would become a problem for residents, but that did not happen. UNC/Cedars participants were primarily interested in print books and audio books on CDs. If residents began to express interest in electronic resources, the book courier would need to point them towards the electronic resources that are available through the local public library. Being the book courier for the UNC/Cedars program requires being able to make quick decisions and find creative solutions for any problems that arise. Fixing minor issues before they become major problems keeps the UNC/Cedars program running smoothly.
1 At the time of the writing of this paper, the author was The Cedars' book courier.
Methodology

For this study, the researcher chose to use focus groups. Focus groups can be useful for qualitative research in which the researcher is seeking information about the reasons for subjects’ actions or their feelings about the topic of interest. A focus group is defined as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research.” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 242). A focus group lies somewhere between a group interview and a meeting, with the members encouraged to talk to each other and the researcher (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 242). Focus groups allowed participants to openly share information with the researcher. With a more structured method, such as questionnaire, the researcher would have made certain assumptions about what information the participants might divulge. By choosing to use focus groups, the researcher indicated that she had an initial idea of discussion topics and some specific questions, but chose to encourage a more unstructured flow of information. The open environment encouraged participants to share information, and the social interaction within the focus group allowed members to generate more ideas about the topic of discussion.

The identified population for this study was the residents of Cedars at Meadowmont. Designating a larger population would have been a mistake because the qualitative nature of the data from these focus groups is less generalizable to a larger population. Purposive sampling was used to select particular people from the population of interest. The criteria for inclusion in the sample was residents who have used the UNC/Cedars service at some point in the past or residents who are currently using the UNC/Cedars program. To form the focus groups, subjects were recruited from the book
courier’s current roster of residents who use the UNC/Cedars program. After acquiring Institutional Review Board approval, eighteen individuals were contacted via telephone and asked to participate in one of two focus groups using a telephone invitation script (see Appendix A: Telephone Invitation to Participate). During these phone conversations, no inducement for participation was mentioned, though coffee was provided during the actual focus groups. Costs borne by the subjects included the minimal time commitment needed to participate in the approximately one hour-long focus group.

Two focus groups were held on two separate weekday mornings at the Cedars Clubhouse (the main building). Of the eighteen individuals who were contacted, eight agreed to attend a focus group. The first focus group had six participants, while the second focus group had two individuals. As participants arrived, they were asked to read and sign the consent form. They were also given a general idea of what might be discussed, given the opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns, and privacy issues were explained. Once the focus groups officially started the researcher used a Sony voice recorder to make an audio recording of the proceedings. The researcher prepared a list of questions to guide the discussion and keep the conversation on-topic (see Appendix B: Moderator’s Guide), but the conversations were allowed to meander according to what the participants wanted to discuss.
Results

The following results are the answers to the primary questions that were asked. Answers to related follow-up questions were included with the original question. Due to the small number of focus group participants, all eight participants’ answers were combined for each question.

Figure one lists the answers to the question “Why do you use the UNC/Cedars program?” Although the public library was not specifically mentioned in this question, it was intended to find out why users have opted to obtain books through this service, rather than their public library. Focus group participants began answering this question without hesitation and presented the researcher with many answers.

Fig. 1: Why do you use the UNC/Cedars program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transportation</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Parking on campus is difficult</td>
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<td>Cannot drive or feel that should not drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t have to worry about being dropped off or picked up</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>The Collection</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to books that are not available at the public library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bigger collection that is more up to date than the public library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Went on a library tour one time and it was “kind of overwhelming”</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Librarian’s Services</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy having access to the librarian’s services, reader’s advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have to figure out how to navigate the library stacks or interpret call</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need help because of vision problems</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Social Interaction</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone talks to each other on delivery day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book courier brings her dog</td>
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Figure two represents answers to the question “How do you use the UNC/Cedars program?” This question was also intended to find out why focus group participants decided to use the UNC/Cedars program. Additionally, the answers to these questions could be used to attract new UNC/Cedars program users. Knowing how focus group
participants use the service can help the courier make decisions about ways to market aspects of the service to prospective users.

Fig. 2: How do you use the UNC/Cedars program?

| Pleasure reading                     |
| Reading all books by a particular author |
| “I’m a mystery fiend”                |
| Class readings/source material/recommended reading for when taking classes at UNC through continuing education |
| Share books with other residents     |
| Bigger selection of large print books |
| Audio books                          |
| Learning a language                  |

Figure three lists the answers to the question “How did you hear about the UNC/Cedars program?” This question was intended to find out how to encourage residents who have never used the service to begin using it. Successfully marketing the program requires the courier to know how best to reach potential users.

Fig. 3: How did you hear about the UNC/Cedars Program?

| Presentation by UNC Librarians in The Cedars ballroom in 2005 |
| The calendar in The Cedars monthly newsletter, The Cedars Post |
| Serving on the activities committee                           |
| From another member                                           |
| From the resident in charge of The Cedars’ in-house library   |

Figures four and five list the answers to the questions “How often do you go to the public library?” and “How does the public library play a role in your life?” These two questions were intended to probe into reasons why focus group participants have opted to use the UNC/Cedars program, rather than the local public library.

Fig. 4: How often do you go to the public library?

| Twice a week                        |
| Once every six months               |
| Has volunteered at their book sale three or four times |
| Six focus group participants don’t use the public library |
Fig. 5: How does the public library play a role in your life?

“I unfortunately use the [UNC] library as a second resort. I use the Chapel Hill Library a lot. I go there several times a week and when I don’t find what I want there then I use the UNC Library. But I still love the service. Even though I’m not a constant borrower, I still use it.”

Uses UNC first because had a bad experience setting up a card at the public library

Easier to get new books and bestsellers at UNC. The wait is less than at the public library.

Don’t have to wait that long at the public library because gets on the list as soon as the review comes out

Started out with the public library but for the waiting lists “nobody ever called me or emailed me so I just gave up”

“I don’t need them now.”

“I don’t use them much because I don’t think they’re a good library.”

“No they’re not a good library but they’re better than they were five years ago.”

“The Chapel Hill library has improved some over the years.”

Goes to hear authors speak

A friend went to a knitting program there but they were not welcomed

Book selection is limited

“The librarians there are great.” Will read the spines to someone who can’t see the titles because of vision impairment.

Figure six represents the answers to the researcher’s questions about what focus group participants liked about the UNC/Cedars program. There were several follow-up questions, as focus participants drifted away from the focus of the conversation, but all answers are combined in this chart. This question was intended to provide feedback about what aspects of the UNC/Cedars program the courier should not change. Questions during this part elicited the most conversation among focus group participants. This question and the question featured in Figure seven were intended to gauge satisfaction among UNC/Cedars program users.

Fig. 6: Positive aspects of The UNC/Cedars Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convenience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to make requests: “Here are six authors, get me something please.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have to worry about due dates or fines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“…very positive for some people who are…somewhat [physically/mentally] inadequate [and] who are living independently. [These] people are partially handicapped but still are very voracious readers. …and it really is an enormous service and psychologically very important.”

| Individuals with mobility problems (walking- or driving-related) can get reading materials |
| Residents can get books that The Cedars’ in-house library doesn’t have |
| Steady supply of audio books on CD |
| Five focus group participants think that delivery every other week is sufficient (“Things that are done every week get to be a source of irritation to me.”) |

Figure seven represents the combined answers to questions designed to elicit criticisms about or suggestions for changes to the UNC/Cedars program. Information was more difficult to elicit during this aspect of the focus group, possibly because focus group participants seemed satisfied with the service. Using follow-up questions and conversation, the researcher was able to elicit both criticisms and suggestions.

Fig. 7: What are some suggestions or criticisms regarding the UNC/Cedars Program?

| Implement at other retirement communities |
| Three focus group participants would like it to be more frequent (twice a week, every week); “The more often you’re here the better we like it.” |
| Streamline the email request process (provide instructions for copying and pasting from the online catalog into an email to the courier) |
| A new writeup for how to use the library website and distribute that more |
| Provide a Kindle/e-reader and e-books for check out |
| Provide an iPod and e-audio books for check out |
| Cassette players for the Cedars’ in-house library; more audio books on CD for the Cedars in-house library |
| Distribute more information to residents about the State Library for the Blind’s services |
| Concerned that the courier carries too many books by herself |
| Include a welcome sheet for new participants that describes exactly what the $25 card fee gets them |
| Returned some books on CD to the in-house library once and they disappeared |
Analysis

Data from this study was analyzed using directed content analysis. Recordings of the focus group were partially transcribed and common themes were identified. Because only eight Cedars residents participated in the focus groups, data for both focus groups were analyzed together.

When focus group participants were asked why they used the UNC/Cedars program, their answers fell into four categories, namely transportation issues, the collection, the courier’s services, and the social interaction. Regarding transportation, participants indicated that for those who are able to drive, parking on campus is difficult to maneuver. Some participants said they cannot drive or feel that they should not drive. One resident expressed relief that she does not need to worry about being dropped off or picked up. All participants who mentioned transportation issues said that not needing to worry about traveling to UNC Libraries was a significant factor in their decision to begin using the UNC/Cedars program.

Focus group participants also mentioned UNC Libraries’ collection as a reason for using the UNC/Cedars program. Residents enjoy being able to access a bigger collection that is more up to date than the public library’s collection, as well as books that are not available at the public library. Because they live in North Carolina UNC/Cedars residents would be eligible to purchase an unaffiliated borrower’s card regardless of their status as Cedars residents. This would also give them access to the collections at UNC Libraries. But, as much as residents appreciate UNC Libraries’ holdings, these focus group participants would be unlikely to visit the library themselves. One resident mentioned that she went on a tour of Davis Library at UNC and it was “kind of
overwhelming.” Access to UNC Libraries’ holdings is a reason for focus group participants to use the UNC/Cedars program, but only because the books are also delivered to them.

Focus group participants mentioned the librarian’s services as a reason for using the UNC/Cedars program. At this point, it should be noted that many of the UNC/Cedars participants refer to the current book courier as “their librarian.” The book courier has done this by going beyond simply delivery books and offering an extra level of service (reader’s advisory and reference assistance) to The Cedars residents. Focus group participants indicated that they enjoy having access to the librarian services that the courier offers. Additionally, focus group participants said that they appreciate not needing to figure out how to navigate the library or interpret call numbers. One focus group participant who has vision problems was especially appreciative of all services the courier offers, due to his inability to read the spines of books on shelves.

A fourth category of reasons for using the UNC/Cedars program is the social interaction that comes with book delivery day. One focus group participant said that when the program first started, nobody talked to each other. Gradually, however, as members spent more time with each other and began using the service regularly, residents talked with each other more. On book delivery day, The Cedars’ in-house library can get fairly noisy, as ten or more people talk with each other and the courier. Several focus group participants also mentioned that they love that the current courier brings her dog with her on delivery day.²

In addition to learning why participants use the UNC/Cedars program, the researcher was also interested in how residents use the program. As was expected,
several focus group participants mentioned pleasure reading, including some specific genres and authors. One focus group member said she requests source material and assigned readings for continuing education classes she takes through UNC. Focus group participants have also used the delivery service to acquire materials to learn a foreign language. One focus group participant indicated his interest in large print books, as well as audio books on CDs. Several focus group participants mentioned that they share the books they check out with other residents.

Marketing is a key concern with any library programming endeavor. Currently, there is no active marketing campaign for the UNC/Cedars program. The courier has relied on word of mouth to recruit new participants. There are usually other residents in The Cedars in-house library on delivery days and these residents often ask questions about joining the UNC/Cedars program. The lack of active marketing campaign primarily stems from the courier not being able to handle a significant increase in the number of users. This sentiment is not new, as both Ryder (2004) and Collett (2009) have stated that public libraries that lack resources to cope with more users do not strongly promote their library delivery services.

To investigate how effective this inactive marketing campaign has been, focus group participants were asked how they first heard about the UNC/Cedars program. One participant mentioned the presentation that UNC Librarians gave at The Cedars in 2005 when the program was being created. One participant heard about the UNC/Cedars program from serving on The Cedars’ activities committee. Two participants said that they heard about the program from The Cedars’ monthly newsletter, called The Cedars Post. Book delivery day is printed on the monthly events calendar, but since there is no
specific information about the program on the calendar, it primarily serves as a reminder for current participants. Four focus group participants said they heard about it via word of mouth from other residents. The four focus group participants who first heard about the UNC/Cedars program through the 2005 presentation, the activities committee, and *The Cedars Post* said that they continued to hear about it from other Cedars residents. Additionally, all focus group participants said that they had been trying to communicate information about the program to their peers. Word of mouth appears to be the most common method that these focus group participants have used to spread information about the UNC/Cedars program.

In an effort to find out why users have opted to pay for the UNC/Cedars service rather than check out books from the local public library, the researcher asked what kind of role the public library plays in the focus group participants’ lives. Six of the eight focus group participants said that they do not use the public library at all. One of the focus group participants goes to the public library twice a week and one of the participants goes once every six months. Additionally, one participant said that although she does not use the public library, she has volunteered at the Friends of the Library book sale a few times. These focus group members do not see the public library as playing an important role in their information seeking and/or pleasure reading. It should be noted that the local public library does not do any senior outreach, including institutional library cards, bifocal kits, etc. There was previously a bookmobile service, but that has not been operational since 1996.

For those focus group participants who do not use the public library, their reasons related to the collection, and the services offered by the librarians and/or library. Several
participants said that it is easier to get new books and bestsellers at UNC because the wait lists are shorter than they are at the public library. One resident said that when she first moved to the area, she tried using the public library but quit because she does not think it is a very good library, primarily because the book selection is limited. Other members were less negative about the library, saying that “they’re better than they were five years ago” and it “has improved some over the years.” Focus group participants also cited library services and librarian interactions as reasons they do not use the public library. One resident said she uses the UNC/Cedars program because she had a bad experience trying to get her library card at the public library. One focus group participant said that she signed up for waiting lists at the public library but “nobody ever called [her] or emailed [her] so [she] just gave up.” One resident mentioned a friend of hers who attended a program at the public library but she received a less-than-friendly welcome and did not return. Among the focus group participants who no longer use the public library, it is clear that the UNC/Cedars program has usurped their need for the public library. In the words of one resident, “I don’t need them now.”

Some focus group participants do still use the public library and their reasons for doing so also relate to the collection and the services offered by the public library and librarians. One resident who uses the UNC/Cedars program infrequently said that she goes to the public library several times each week and only uses the UNC/Cedars program when she does not find what she wants at the public library. Also relating to the collection, one focus group participant said that she does not have a problem with long waiting lists for new titles because she keeps an eye on bestseller lists and reviews and gets on the waiting list as soon as possible. In regards to the services offered by the
public library, one focus group participant with vision impairment has used the public librarians’ help in browsing the shelves. He found that the librarians were very willing to assist him with reading call numbers and titles. Another focus group participant mentioned programming, specifically author visits as a reason for her occasionally going to the public library.

A significant reason for conducting this study was to find out how satisfied users are with the UNC/Cedars book delivery service and how can it be improved. Overall, focus group participants seemed pleased with the program. They appreciated the convenience of having the books delivered to them, as well as the ease of access to library books. Five of the eight focus group participants were happy with frequency of delivery. Several participants were grateful that they can get books that The Cedars’ in-house library does not have. One resident was especially excited that he can access a steady stream of books on CD. Residents discussed the ease with which they are able to make requests, as well as the relaxed due dates and waived fines that made acquiring and reading books a pleasurable experience. Several focus group participants indicated their appreciation that individuals with mobility problems (walking or driving) are able to get reading materials. Speaking on behalf of someone else, one focus group member described the UNC/Cedars program as “…very positive for some people who are…somewhat [physically/mentally] inadequate [and] who are living independently. [These] people are partially handicapped but still are very voracious readers. …and it really is an enormous service and psychologically very important.”

Focus group participants had several concerns and suggestions for ways to improve the UNC/Cedars program. Several suggestions related to the way information
about the UNC/Cedars program is disseminated to participants and/or potential participants. When new participants sign up for the program, the courier should include an information sheet describing the details of the program, how to make requests, etc.

Focus group participants suggested that this information sheet should also include a new write up of how to use the library website. There is a set of instructions that is available for members, but the UNC OPAC has changed, so the instructions are not up to date.

Focus group participants also suggested that this updated information sheet be given to current UNC/Cedars members so that everyone can refer to it. Some focus group participants asked for instructions to streamline the request process, i.e. how to copy and paste information from the online catalog into an email to send to the courier. When the researcher suggested having a group instruction session to show members how to use the library website and the catalog, copy and paste information into an email, and send email (especially for those members who do not currently use email and would like to learn), focus group participants were receptive to the possibility of short instruction sessions.

Three suggestions and concerns related the logistics of the UNC/Cedars program, including how often the books are delivered, concern that the book courier is carrying too many books by herself, and concerns about UNC books becoming lost when they are returned to the in-house library and not the courier. Five of the eight participants were satisfied with the frequency at which books are delivered, but three focus group participants suggested that more frequent deliveries would be better. One person suggested every week, while one person said twice a week would be ideal. As one participant stated, “the more often [the book courier] is here the better we like it.” One focus group participant mentioned concerns that the book courier is carrying too many
books by herself. Demand for the program has nearly reached the point at which the book courier needs a different way of carrying books. On book delivery day, there are usually two to three medium-sized canvas bags’ worth of books to deliver and the same amount to return. With this amount of books, the book courier is still able to carry them herself without help. If the number of residents using the service increases, the book courier may need help in the form of an assistant or some sort of wheeled book cart.

With the current number of requests, however, the book courier is capable of handling the demand. A third concern relating to the logistics of the UNC/Cedars program is the fact that a UNC book on CD was returned to The Cedars’ in-house library by mistake and did not make it back to the book courier. This has happened only once or twice and when it has happened, the item in question made it back to the courier eventually. Lost materials are a cause for concern, but because there has not been a situation where the item is actually lost, there has not been a formal contingency plan established. These situations are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Focus group participants also had some valuable suggestions that go beyond the scope of the UNC/Cedars program. Several focus group participants said that the UNC/Cedars program is unique and should be used as an example for other retirement communities who are interested in establishing a similar program. The specific logistics of implementing a similar program elsewhere would be different, but there are certainly retirement communities that would benefit from a similar service. Several focus group participants mentioned being able to check out e-readers and iPods, along with the accompanying e-books and audio books. UNC Libraries does not currently circulate either of these, and as unaffiliated borrowers, The Cedars residents would likely be
unable to check them out if UNC Libraries decided to begin circulating e-readers or iPods. Access to this technology would likely be through The Cedars, but this is an option that should be explored. Also related to this, another focus group participant suggested that The Cedars have a cassette player in their in-house library for residents to use, since many of the audio books available in the in-house library are on cassettes. Because The Cedars’ in-house library offers books to check out using the honor system, offering a cassette player for check out may prove problematic, since there is no way of knowing who has the cassette player or no limit on how long they may keep it. A sign-out sheet for the cassette player might help with this. Alternatively, The Cedars in-house library could stock more audio books on CD. Because The Cedars relies on donations for its library, however, collecting more of a certain format of audio books may prove difficult.

Two focus group participants suggested that the UNC/Cedars courier distribute more information about the North Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NCLBPH), which would provide services to any Cedars resident “whose visual acuity, as determined by competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses, or whose widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.” (Eligibility and Application for Service 2010) Additionally, the NCLBPH would provide services to Cedars residents “whose visual disability, with correction regardless of optical measurement, is certified by competent authority as preventing the reading of standard printed material,” who are “certified by competent authority as unable to read or unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations,” and who are “certified by competent authority as having a
reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction and of sufficient severity to prevent
their reading printed material in a normal manner.” This service is free, since the
NCLBPH’s materials are in special formats that qualify for “Free Matter for the Blind”
mailing privileges, so there are no postal charges associated with sending NCLBPH
library materials (*How We Serve You 2010*). Focus group participants indicated that
providing this information would be helpful for all Cedars residents.

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2 He is a well-behaved, small dog who loves people.
Conclusions

This research project was intended to evaluate the UNC/Cedars program by answering three research questions: How satisfied are users with the book delivery service and how can it be improved? For residents who have never used the service, or who have stopped using the service, what can encourage them to use it? Why have users opted to obtain books through this service, rather than through the public library?

Focus group results indicate that these eight users are mostly satisfied with the book delivery service. Participants appreciate the convenience of having a wide selection of library books available for delivery. Participants also appreciate the librarian services that the courier offers (reader’s advisory, reference assistance, etc.). Suggestions for changes and improvements to the UNC/Cedars program include more frequent delivery, offering more clear instructions for how to use the website and make requests, including a welcome sheet for each new resident who joins the UNC/Cedars program, providing e-readers and e-books to check out, and working with the North Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NCLBPH) to make sure that residents are aware of the services offered by this organization. The courier intends to use this information to make some changes to the UNC/Cedars program. The suggestion to provide a welcome sheet is a wonderful idea. The courier already does this via email to new residents, but the information presented always varies slightly and those who do not use email do not receive as much information about the UNC/Cedars program. Additionally, the instruction sheet that describes residents how to search the catalog and make requests will be updated. The courier will explore options for offering short training sessions to those residents who are interested. Depending on residents’ interests, these training sessions
could be expanded to include Microsoft products, online shopping, online auction websites such as Ebay, locating health information online, or a variety of other topics. To address the suggestion regarding the NCLBPH, the courier will include information about the organization in the welcome sheet, as well as contact The Cedars to see how much information about the NCLBPH is dispersed to Cedars residents. These three suggestions are fairly easily to implement and will likely be put into effect in the coming months.

The remaining suggestions will be more difficult, or potentially impossible, to implement. More frequent delivery is possible, but only if The Cedars’ budget includes the money to pay for the additional hours, and if the courier is available to delivery books more frequently. The demand for more frequent delivery might not be enough to justify increasing frequency. Since only three of eight focus group participants indicated that they would like delivery to occur more often, the courier or The Cedars should ask for more feedback from the UNC/Cedars participants on this matter. If all twenty UNC/Cedars participants provided feedback, the result might be that every other week is frequent enough. Regarding the suggestion to provide e-readers, this would likely only be possible if The Cedars agreed to provide them at The Cedars’ in-house library and found a way to provide access to the e-books themselves. Both providing e-books and providing more frequent delivery would provide more library services to the residents of The Cedars, but they would require more planning for implementation.

To answer the research question regarding encouraging residents who have not used the service, or who have stopped using it, to take advantage of the UNC/Cedars program, the researcher can use the feedback related to publicizing the UNC/Cedars program. An advertising strategy that relies on word of mouth has attracted a fairly
substantial number of people. An advertising strategy that includes flyers, features in *The Cedars Post*, or talks that the courier presents would increase the number of residents who know about the program. However, there is a difference between knowing about the UNC/Cedars program and actually using it. There are some members who have signed up for the program, but have not used it or have used it extremely infrequently. They were invited to participate in the focus groups, but due to various reasons, they were unable to participate. The best way to find out what would encourage them to use the UNC/Cedars program more would be to ask them, so for now, this will unfortunately remain a missing part of this research and an important area for further research.

The research question asking why users have opted to obtain their library books through the UNC/Cedars program and not the public library was answered in terms of the collection and the delivery service. Focus group participants indicated that they like the larger selection of library materials that is available to them. Focus group participants also indicated that they appreciate the personalized librarian services that are available to them. The simple fact that the books are delivered practically to their front doors is a significant reason to use the UNC/Cedars program, since the local public library does not offer any such services to any area retirement communities. The lack of senior outreach is an area in which the local public library could improve its services.

The UNC/Cedars program is an example of a segment of the population that felt its information needs were not being met. By establishing this program, UNC and The Cedars have created a unique way to provide library outreach to seniors. Although this program is an agreement between an academic library and a retirement community, without involving the public library, the public library could be used to augment the
service. Additionally, this service could be viewed as evidence that senior outreach is desired in the community that this public library serves. As this population segment continues to age, and as the Baby Boomer generation reaches retirement age, outreach to seniors will continue to be a major concern for libraries. As library budgets are shrinking, public libraries will need librarians with additional training to specialize in older adult users’ needs, will need to hold programs that are targeted towards older adults, and collect library materials that cater to the information needs of the aging Baby Boomer generation. As this segment of the population continues to age, libraries that offer home delivery, book mobile services, or delivery to retirement homes might see an increased use of these services. Providing more services with fewer resources requires innovative ways to meet demand. Demand for services to the seniors at The Cedars of Chapel Hill is being met through their collaboration with The Libraries at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
References


Appendix A: Telephone Invitation to Participate

Email is certainly a viable option for inviting participants to participate, but not every member is comfortable with using email, so I plan to use telephone invitations. I will call each participant, and if they are home, I will invite them using the script below. If they are not home, I will leave a voicemail and ask them to call me back at their convenience and then I will read the invitation script. For households with multiple participants, I will address each participant individually.

Hello ________, this is Catherine Matthieu from the UNC Libraries. Do you have a minute to talk?
How are you today?

[pause for conversation]

I am writing my Master’s Paper at UNC and I am calling to ask for your help with my research project. My topic is Evaluating Book Delivery From an Academic Library to a Retirement Community, and I am interested in speaking with you about your experiences with using the UNC Libraries/Cedars program. I’m contacting you because you are on my roster of present or previous UNC/Cedars participants.

[pause for conversation?]

To gather my information, I am setting up two focus groups in which I will ask y’all some questions about the program, and we will talk about your experiences, thoughts, and opinions. I will be making an audio recording of the sessions so that I can remember what goes on, but I will be the only person who has access to that. I will respect your privacy when I write my paper, so I will not be using anyone’s names. Or, if you are uncomfortable with me using what you say in the focus group, I will not use any information that you provide.

The focus groups will be on xx/xx/2010 and xx/xx/2010 in the classroom next to the Cedars Library, but I would only ask you to come to the one that is the most convenient for you. The focus group will last approximately one hour. I will give you some time to think about whether you want to participate, so don’t feel the need to answer me right now. You can call me back or email me at your convenience, but I do ask that you respond by xx/xx/2010 (three days before the focus group) so that I can plan accordingly.

In the meantime, do you have any questions or concerns that I can address right now?

Thank you very much for your time! Have a great day!
Appendix B: Moderator’s Guide

As participants are arriving, explain to each of them individually what the focus group will discuss and explain that I will be recording the exchange. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form.

Begin the focus group by explaining again to the whole group what we will be discussing and that I will be recording it, but I will honor their privacy requests. Also, ask participants not to talk about the content of the focus group outside of the session, but explain that I cannot guarantee that everyone will follow these instructions.

Icebreaker: introduce yourself, tell us where you were born, and your favorite childhood book

1. How did you hear about the UNC/Cedars program?
2. What made you want to participate in it?
3. Do you have any ideas about why only some of you are using it?
4. How long have you been using the program?
5. How have you used the program? (pleasure reading, or something more “serious”?)
6. What do you like about the book delivery?
7. What would you like to change about the program?
8. If you were designing this program from scratch, how would you create it?
9. Do you also use the in-house library here at Cedars? How often? Do you find that it has titles that interest you?
10. How often do you go to a public library and what do you do there?
11. How often do you go to a library at UNC and what do you do there?
12. Do any of you have any questions or concerns about the program?