
Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons charter schools decide to implement a library program. According to previous studies, budget constraints are the main obstacle faced by charter schools, thus limiting their ability to develop libraries and hire certified school library media specialists. To investigate charter schools with libraries, interviews were conducted with librarians and administrators from six charter schools in North Carolina. Despite lack of funds, all six schools found alternative means to staff their libraries and to develop their collections. Contrary to previous research, a lack of physical space was the main deciding factor in when and how to develop their libraries.

Headings:

School Libraries

School Libraries/Charter Schools

School Libraries/North Carolina
THE REASONS BEHIND IMPLEMENTING A SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM IN NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOLS

by
Kathryn D. Roth

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

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
April 2010

Approved by

_______________________________________
Sandra Hughes-Hassell
# Table of Contents

Table of Contents ..........................................................................................1

Introduction .................................................................................................2

Problem Statement .......................................................................................3

Literature Review ........................................................................................4

School Libraries and Student Achievement

Charter Schools and Libraries

Study Design ................................................................................................8

Sample Selection

Results and Discussions..............................................................................11

Charter School Librarian Profile

Decisions behind Implementation

Present State and Use of Library

Administrators

Study Limitations .......................................................................................23

Future Research ..........................................................................................24

Conclusions ..................................................................................................26

References ....................................................................................................28

Appendix A Interview Questions for Administrators .................................30

Appendix B. Interview Questions for School Media Specialists ..................31
INTRODUCTION

The charter school reform movement began in 1991 in response to dissatisfaction with public schools and their ability to help students achieve. According to Bulkley and Fisler’s article *A Decade of Charter Schools: From Theory to Practice* (2003), “charter schools are an important aspect of current efforts to promote educational reform and are often touted by politicians as examples that the traditional system of public education is not the only option” (p. 318). By creating alternative schooling, proponents of charter schools argue that parents will be empowered to decide where their children will attend school and what type of education they will receive.

Typically charter schools, have a “contract” with an organization, like a university or a school board. The contract lists what the school plans to accomplish, its mission and academic goals, methods of evaluation to be used, and demographic information about the students served. If a charter school cannot meet its goals or fails in its mission after a period of time, then the charter is revoked by the State’s Board of Education. Each state creates it owns laws for charter schools with few restrictions in place from the federal government (US Department of Education, 2007).

Funding for charter schools varies. In some states funding is provided by the school board and donations from the community. When a child moves from a traditional school to a charter school, the school district’s per/pupil expenditure is transferred to the charter school. Some states and the federal government provide extra funding through grants for charter schools when they are in early development; however, most states do
not, leaving the schools with just their annual budget for funds. Charter schools in these states have to make do with buildings, classrooms, and supplies that are already available which makes the budgeting process more stressful for a new school (US Department of Education, 2007).

In North Carolina, charter school reform began in 1996 with the passage of the North Carolina Charter School Act. This law mandates that there can be no more than one hundred charter schools statewide and no more than five per school district. Additionally, charter schools are given five-year contracts. After five years, the school is reviewed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and Office of the Charter Schools. These groups observe and note the charter school’s progress in terms of its instruction, governance, and financial reports (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2006). Currently there is a new policy under consideration that would revoke charters after two or three years of low academic performance (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2009). North Carolina charter schools receive funding like most state public schools, from state, federal, and local taxes. Currently, there are 98 charter schools in North Carolina with an enrollment of over 30,000 students (North Carolina profile, 2007 and North Carolina Office of Charter Schools, 2008).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are many studies that have examined the effectiveness of charter schools and whether or not they are fulfilling their original plans. The bulk of these studies report (Whelan, 2004) that many of the students enrolled in charter schools are academically a half year behind students in traditional public schools (p. 16). Multiple reasons have been
proposed for why many charter schools have been unable to provide effective learning environments for students. These include lack of funding, scarce resources, and the absence of a school library (Immroth 2002; Whelan, 2004).

Although research suggests that the presence of a school library and a certified school librarian contributes to increased student achievement (Scholastic, 2008), few charter schools have school libraries (Immroth, 2002; Whelan, 2004). Instead, the majority of the schools rely on other means to provide reading materials and teach information literacy skills. There are however, some charter schools that have made the decision to include school libraries. The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons these charter schools have made this decision and what role the library plays in these schools. Specifically, it will look at charter schools with libraries in North Carolina.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will begin with a discussion of the research studies that have demonstrated the importance of school libraries to student achievement, including a study that looked at the correlation between school libraries and student achievement in charter schools. Next it will focus on other studies which have focused on the type of information literacy services charter schools offer and the reasons why charter schools do not have libraries.
Numerous studies have focused on the relationship between school libraries and student achievement. The document School Libraries Work! (Scholastic, 2008) provides a summary of some of the most important studies. Key findings suggest that:

- Increased access to books and libraries contributes to higher reading and test scores of students (Scholastic, 2008).

- The presence of a certified library media specialist increases reading scores. In the state of Florida, for example, Baumbach (2002) found that schools which staffed librarians sixty hours a week or more saw an increase in reading scores.

- The availability of both libraries and certified librarians has a direct impact on English and reading scores of students in all grade levels (Burgin and Bracy, 2003, 11).

- Differences in the size of library staff and collection explain much of the variation in reading scores. In Colorado, for example, Lance (1993, 2000) found that 21% of variation reading scores among seventh graders (p. 10).

Drawing on this body of research, Allen (2007) investigated the correlation between test scores and the presence of libraries in charter schools in North Carolina. While Allen was unable to find statistically significant evidence of a positive correlation, she did find a general pattern of positive correlation between students’ test scores and schools with a library. Two of Allen’s other findings are also noteworthy. First, she found a negative correlation between per pupil expenditures and the presence of a library/librarian; wealthier schools were no more likely to have a school library than were
poorer schools. This is surprising, since much of the literature suggests that funding is the main reason charter schools do not have library programs. Additionally, Allen found that only six of the 41 charter schools in North Carolina that had libraries employed certified school librarians. The rest relied on parent and community volunteers to run the library program.

Charter Schools and Libraries

Olsen and Meyer (1998) looked at the current state of libraries in charter school. In their online survey of 24 schools, 13 schools reported having a library facility, although in some schools the libraries resembled “clossets” (p. 12). The other schools reported having only classroom collections or partnering with public libraries to provide library services. Olsen and Meyer also investigated how the school libraries created their collections. The majority of the schools indicated that they used donations. One of the schools even reported that they got “cast-offs from other schools” (p. 14).

Immroth (2002) conducted a study on Texas charter schools to learn more about how they provide information services. Out of the 95 schools who responded, 36 had a facility (41%). Only nine of the 36 schools were staffed with a full-time librarian and only five were certified, a workforce demographic also noted in Olsen and Meyer. The rest of the schools either had part-time staff, parent volunteers, or no staff at all. In terms of access to books and computers, 25 of the libraries indicated having fully stocked libraries and access to computers, though only two claimed to have internet access.
According to Immroth, charter schools without libraries are lacking programs that many public schools have and this can hinder them. She concluded that the lack of librarians and library services in charter schools can usually be attributed to budget. She suggested that; “when charter schools have been established for more time and have gained more funding and resources, it will be interesting to see if they establish and nurture libraries to contribute to the achievement of their students” (p. 167).

Salpini (1998) used a survey to study how many charter schools take advantage of relationships with public libraries. She investigated the information services charter schools without libraries provided students in the North Carolina Triangle Area. Five of the seven schools that responded reported having an information skills curriculum as part of their charter and four of the seven schools reported having book collections for their students in support of the curriculum. Out of the seven schools, six claimed that their students used the public library, but only two had an actual formal agreement with the public library. In both instances, however, the public library provided programming within the school.

Deuink and Reinsfelder (2007) discussed charter school libraries and their roles with in the school. They claimed that while most educators recognize the importance of libraries, due to limitations in funding, most charter school libraries have modest facilities and smaller collections. In addition, Deuink and Reinsfelder observed that many educators believe that students get most information from the internet. They also noted that information skills are often taught by classroom teachers, especially in schools that cannot employ a librarian (p. 58). For these two reasons, they concluded that many school administrators and teachers believe hiring a certified librarian is unnecessary.
Deuink and Reinsfelder also discuss the importance of partnerships. Like Olsen and Meyer, Deuink and Reinsfelder believe that charter schools should make the most out of partnerships with organizations like the public library. In a related study, they found that many of the charter schools in Pennsylvania encouraged students to use local libraries for their studies and that some classes even took trips to the library. They contend that even though schools may be without libraries, the local public librarian will almost always help instruct teachers and students on information literacy skills and new searching strategies (Deuink and Reinshfelder, 2007, p. 59).

From this literature, it can be concluded, that funding and a limited budget are among the factors contributing to why many charter schools go without a library program. In order to make up for this deficit, charter schools struggle to find relationships with other organizations to help to meet the needs that a school library could serve. Furthermore in those schools that do support a library, the library is usually lacking in resources and space. The schools utilize parent support and part-time workers to keep a library working, instead of hiring a certified degree-holding librarian.

STUDY DESIGN

This study sought to understand why charter schools in North Carolina have created libraries. It was meant to be an exploratory study. According to Babbie (2007), an exploratory study has three purposes: to “satisfy the researcher’s curiosity” and develop “better understanding,” to research whether or not a topic needs more “extensive undertaking,” and to develop a method to “be employed in any subsequent study” (p. 92).
For this study interviews were conducted with school librarians and administrators employed at charter schools in North Carolina. Babbie explains that because interviewing requires “the presence of an interviewer [it] generally decreases the number of ‘don’t knows’ and ‘no answers’” (p. 275). Interviews also allow the researcher to discover more in-depth information and allow “observation of respondents” as well. In interviews, the researcher can ask follow-up questions and probe for clarity if a response is either not expected or incomplete. Additionally, questions can be skipped if the researcher feels a previous answer was sufficient and ask other questions that the respondent’s answers suggest.

There are, however, disadvantages of using interviews. Interview research, though high on a scale of validity, tends to falter on reliability. Validity means that “measurements actually measure what they’re supposed to rather than something else” (p. 327). Reliability refers to “dependability” of the measurement; in other words, whether the respondent will give the same answer every time a question is asked. This is a consistent problem in interviews. Interviews also tend to be more personalized and therefore biases from both the researcher and the respondent can interfere with the data collection process.

The first step in selecting the sample was to determine which charter schools in North Carolina had a school library media center. A complete list of charter schools with libraries that can be accessed by the public does not exist, so I contacted an expert in the field. The expert consulted documents from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and contacted DPI personnel from the different regions of North Carolina asking each to report on which charter schools in their region had a library. Not
every region reported back, but I was given a list of the charter schools in three regions that had libraries. Since not every region reported back, I needed to find additional schools in order to be able to recruit the number of participants I needed. This led me to search the North Carolina Office of the Charter Schools website and look at each county’s listing of charter schools. If a charter school had a website, I searched the site for evidence of a school library. In total I was able to identify 18 potential participating sites.

For the recruiting process, I sent emails to school librarians and school principals for a total of 18 schools, not all of which had a librarian, but all of which had a library. In total five school librarians and two principals responded to my request. Due to physical distance, it was only possible to get to some schools to conduct the interviews in-person; other interviews were conducted over the phone. The interviews that were done in-person were performed at each participant’s schools. This presented less difficulty for the participants and allowed the opportunity to meet on each participant’s schedule. The recruiting email requested 30 to 45 minutes for interviews, but no interview was longer than 30 and some were closer to 15 minutes.

It was my intention to record all interviews and I received permission from the participants to use a digital recording device. Recording telephone interviews proved difficult and instead I had to rely on heavy note-taking during those interviews. In-person interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the recordings being destroyed after transcription. In order to preserve identities of the participants, some details had to be removed from the transcripts and left out in the discussion section (Refer to Appendices
A and B for the research questions). After transcription, an analysis was performed. I looked for patterns across the interviews and noted similar themes when they occurred.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After sending out 28 recruitment emails to 18 schools, only seven responses from six schools were received: two administrators and five librarians. The interviews only lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. There were several themes apparent after transcribing and analyzing these interviews.

Charter School Librarian Profile:

*Questions asked: What is your title and role at the school? Are you a full-time employee? Do you have a Master’s Degree in Library Science? What responsibilities do you have?*

The purpose of these questions was to examine the educational background of the librarians and the responsibilities they have. Many charter schools employ parental volunteers and part-time workers rather than hire full-time certified school librarians (Olsen and Meyer, 1998; Immroth, 2002). From the interviews, I noticed a different pattern.

Four of five librarians identified themselves as full-time employees at their schools. The one part-time librarian still meets with all grades three days a week. Three librarians held a Master’s degree in library science, one librarian is currently obtaining a Master’s degree, and one librarian did not have a Master’s. The librarian without a
Master’s is certified in Information Systems and functions as a technology specialist. Only one of the librarians was certified before being hired and one librarian had just recently applied for certification.

Previous research found that many librarians who work in charter schools are not full-time certified employees (Immroth, 2002; Olsen and Meyer; 1998); however, most of the librarians in my sample are full-time, although they are not all certified. Despite lack of certification, the number of Master’s degree holding librarians is higher than expected. Previous authors focused mainly on the certification of librarians, not on the degrees held. All the librarians in my sample had degrees in library science or related areas, thus suggesting that have the ability to run a successful library program thanks to their well-educated backgrounds.

Further investigation into the librarian’s responsibilities revealed another pattern. Two of the five librarians have more than the media coordinator duties. One librarian teaches classes for students across grades in English, while another also serves as the Assistant Administrator and Information Technology Specialist for the school. The dual role that these librarians fulfill suggest that though they are full-time, they are not in the library all day.

I followed-up with these two librarians on the typical breakdown of their time. One librarian teaches all day in a classroom, so her time in the library is mainly in the mornings and afternoons. The second librarian spends three days a week in the library with classes, one day working with the technology throughout the school, and the remaining day doing work in either area. The necessity of these librarians' dual roles could be explained by budget, though this is merely speculative. Due to charter schools
frequent lack of budget, many employees take on multiple roles within the school to use
the budget to its full extent. This dual role was also seen in one of the administrators who
also teaches classes in addition to being the school’s director.

Though each librarian has a different set of responsibilities within their school,
there are several commonalities. In two cases the librarians manage other staff. One
librarian manages both the staff in the upper school library and the staff and library for
the lower grade levels. Another librarian has assistant library staff, she supervises.

All five librarians had two additional responsibilities in common: collection and
library maintenance, and enhancing the curriculum through instruction and/or collection
support. Collection and library maintenance involves weeding and cataloging the current
collection as well as purchasing or developing a new collection. Enhancing instruction
and curriculum consists of providing materials for specific classes. The librarians who
see elementary school students also prepare materials that connect with the class lessons
and assist with research. In addition to these duties one librarian teaches about copyright
and plagiarism in assessing resources and helps teachers write letters for copyrighted
information. While all librarians interviewed share these responsibilities, it is unsure how
the librarians serving dual roles manage to fulfill them. However, the librarians see that
their role is important for enhancing the curriculum and therefore strive to achieve these
goals for their school.

The conclusions that can be reached from these answers are that charter school
librarians either hold degrees in library science or information technology or are
obtaining them, but are not necessarily certified. Additionally, the librarians take on
multiple roles throughout the school including technology facilitators, administrators, and
classroom teachers. Based on these interviews it appears charter schools are slowly seeing the importance of staffing a library with a professional instead of a parent volunteer as called for by Olsen and Meyer (1998).

**Decisions Behind Development.**

*Questions asked: Who was part of the original decision to include a library in the school development? What reasons did they have to include a library? What criteria went into the library? Was the library developed when the school opened or later?*

These questions were meant to investigate the history behind each library’s program and the main influences that led to each library's development. All five librarians reported that the original decision for building a library came from the Director of the school's chartered organization. This was expected considering these organizations make the programming decisions for charter schools.

When asked why the Directors wanted a library included, three of the librarians did not know and could only offer guesses. One of them felt that the administration knew the importance of the role of a library program in the school. A second librarian said they were informed by administration that they wanted a library since public schools had them and they felt they should too. These three librarians discussed the inability of the school to have a library when the school opened due to space constraints, but noted that one was built once the school expanded.
Two other schools had slightly different circumstances. Both had libraries when the school opened. The standards set forth by the accrediting body of one librarian's school required having a library with an up-to-date collection and so the administrator was in full support of developing a library program. This school luckily found a building in a previous school's facility which included a space for a library. When the school expanded to include more grades levels a new facility was built for upperclassmen which included a new library, showing that the school's director placed having a library high on the list of priorities. The second school had a library open for the first day but located in a trailer, so while space was not an issue for opening day, if the library wants or needs to expand, then space may become an issue.

Three of these charter school libraries shared similar circumstances to the schools surveyed by Olsen and Meyer (1998): the schools started in a small space which could only support classroom space. Once the school expanded the administrators wanted a library developed to meet their students’ needs. Referring back to Allen’s (2007) study, it was space not funding that was the key contributor to the slowed development of a library. The two libraries that had space available had libraries ready for the first day of school, while other libraries were open when space became available. Though budget was still a factor in development of the libraries' services, space was the more prominent factor in all five cases.

In addition to space, librarians mentioned another reason that led to development of library services. One librarian said that the library added “completeness” to the school and the facilities and one librarian was informed by administration that they wanted a library because “other schools had one.” These answers reveal the motivation of tradition,
a factor not mentioned in other literature. Responses from the administrators also follow this same concept (see Administrators section).

The librarians were asked what criteria the administration or school board presented to the librarian for the creation and management of the library. In three cases simple criteria such as “keep the design space” and “you are the librarian, you figure it out,” allowed the librarian to have free-reign in the library. One librarian was required only to keep a fixed schedule and keep up with the collection maintenance. One librarian could not provide a response since the library was already developed when he was hired. However, he did propose changes to the libraries and the administration was supportive of these changes. As administrators did not give many criteria for their libraries, it is likely that while they understand the importance of having a school library, they do not fully understand what the library can do for the school.

Without direction from administration the librarians created their own goals. One librarian wanted to organize the library by Dewey Decimal call numbers for nonfiction and author name for fiction to aid students in finding books. Two librarians wanted to maintain their libraries at IMPACT standards. IMPACT (2006) is a program in North Carolina in which:

“Teachers and media and technology personnel collaborate to create a 21st century learning environment in which student learning is the focus. Students simultaneously collaborate with each other and their teachers to learn how to solve problems, complete real world tasks, and take charge of their own progress” (p.1)
This program focuses on collaboration with other departments to help students achieve more technology driven goals. One librarian adopted the IMPACT standards as part of meeting the accrediting body standards. The second librarian designed the program from scratch, creating an MTAC (Media Technology Advisory Committee) that handled the technology decisions of the school.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this section is that availability of space is a major factor that impacts the decision to include a library facility when a charter school opens. This corresponds with Allen’s (2007) study, which suggested that budget was not necessarily the main reason charter schools did not have libraries; however, this does not correspond with other authors (Olsen and Meyer, 1998; Immroth, 2002) who claimed budget was the primary reason. Additionally, each librarian had a different vision for their library, which led to differing comments about their specific criteria for their libraries. The librarians who incorporated IMPACT standards demonstrated that they were prepared to fulfill their schools curriculum and information needs, hopefully inspiring other charter school librarians to follow suit.

Present State and Use of Library.

Questions asked: In what role do you see the library in the education of your students?
Describe the library in terms of strengths and weaknesses. How do teachers and students use the library? Is the library open to the community?
These questions are meant to assess the current use of the library, both by the community and in the education of the school as seen by its educators.

The use of the library varied among the schools, but it was clear that the biggest weakness was gaps in the collections. All of the school libraries were started by donations and very limited purchasing, which corresponds with Olsen and Meyers (1998). Two librarians noted how the quick expansion of their school made it more difficult to keep a well-rounded collection. In both cases, when the school expanded the library could not afford to get books to support newer grade levels. One of these librarians collaborates with the local public library for the older students in order to provide them with more reading materials. This is a clear indication of using partnerships as suggested by Whelan (2004) and Deuink and Reinsfelder (2007). A unique strength mentioned was the overall newness of the general collection for one school. The average copyright date of the collection is the year 2000 and the collection contains materials for every grade level. This was unique not only compared to the other charter school libraries but to most public school libraries. However, not every librarian felt their collection was lacking. Three librarians discussed how certain parts of their collections were nicely developed and helpful for a selected group of students, typically those in elementary grades.

While both the collections and budgets are claimed as weakness, every librarian noted the administration's support of the library program as a strength. All the librarians felt that the administrators and directors trusted their judgments and allowed the librarians to develop programs by their standards.
When asked about the role of the library in education, every librarian placed the library in three roles: reading, technology, and curriculum support. Two librarians mentioned exposing students to materials as a major role of their libraries due to the remote location of the schools in relation to local libraries and book stores.

All five librarians saw their libraries as enhancing the curriculum in the classrooms. A specific example given was a class project on penguins; the librarian would provide and read materials to the class that talked about penguins and then demonstrate how to research with additional materials about animals. Another specific example involved issues of copyright and plagiarism. Teachers brought classes into the library so the librarian could cover rules regarding copyright and plagiarism.

The librarians had a variety of answers on how the library is used by teachers and students. In four schools the students came in to use the facility for both research and reading for pleasure. In one case the librarian said that though students do come in to read or research, they are far more likely to surf the internet than check out books. Many students come to the library throughout the week as part of a fixed schedule (three librarians talked about fixed scheduling), while one librarian noted flexible library scheduling for their school. Teachers on the other hand would come in to use the printers, copiers, and laminators for their class work. Though only one librarian specifically mentioned a professional collection, it is possible that the other libraries maintained them.

All five librarians had similar responses when questioned about community presence in the charter schools' libraries. In all five schools parents can check out books following the library's protocol for check-out. In three libraries parents wait for their children to finish school for the day in the library. In one of those schools parental
volunteering is required in the school and many parents help out in the library as part of this requirement. In another library, parents talk with the librarian about their children’s reading progress and ask for recommendations on books for their child’s reading level. All five schools valued community support for the school and the library, as was seen in the answers to previous questions. Though school directors made the decisions to develop a library in all schools, in two schools the parent organization was also involved in the decision.

Administrators.

Questions asked: What is your title and role at the school? Were you a part of the development of the school when the charter was originally created? Who was part of the original decision that led to a library being included in your school development? What reasons did they have to include a library in the development? What criteria went into the library? Was the library developed when the school opened or later? What were/are you looking for in a librarian?

These questions were created to correspond with the librarians’ set of questions. This was done to either verify information or retrieve more information from a school who had a library, but no librarian. I was able to talk to two administrators: one administrator from a school with a librarian, one administrator from a school that has yet to employ a librarian.
When asked on title and role at school both administrators answered with director, a title which corresponds to a public school principal position. One director not only has administrative duties but also teaches classes, serving a dual-role similar to some of the librarians surveyed. The second administrator solely serves as director. Neither administrator held their positions when their charter schools were created; one administrator became the director just last year and the other director started when the school expanded from their previous small building to a new larger facility.

Each director gave a different answer about their part in the development of the library. One director explained that he felt it had an integral role in his school; he had never known a school without a library and so felt that it was a necessity for his school.

The second director had a different explanation. Though the library had already been developed when he became director, he radically changed the development criteria and library space. As the director explained more of the history, he noted that before the school's seventh year it was remodeled after another school; both share the same founders. Though the founders and parent organization wanted a library, the library originally developed was a room used by teachers' assistants to check out materials for students and was only organized and updated at the end of a year; students were not allowed in. The arrival of a new director brought a new direction in the education of students in the school which included a review of the library's role in the curriculum. It should be noted that this review was a collaborative effort; the director and parents created a library committee to discuss the role of the library and took into consideration the desires of all members of the community including the students themselves. While the new direction in the library can be credited to the director and parents' organizations, the
final changes in the library's services came from consulting outside resources including professional librarians, articles, and technology standards. The development of this library shows the power of community commitment and the strength of administration support in affecting library services and consequently students' educations.

When asked on the criteria they wanted for future development of their libraries, one administrator planned to write letters to the community and vendors to ask for contributions and donated materials. The second administrator wanted a quiet space for students to read, a place that would have a rich collection of fiction and non-fiction to enrich the curriculum, and a place with comfortable furniture, rules for check-out, organized collection, and lots of light to meet with student suggestions. This was the only school that took into account the student body's requests.

In regards to the opening of the library, one administrator answered that the library opened when the school moved into a new space and when new administration came in. The second administrator did not know if the library opened when the school opened, but knew that the library was established close to the beginning of the charter start date.

When questioned about qualification criteria for librarians, one director admitted the librarian came seeking her and was originally hired as a volunteer. The librarian had a Master’s degree and was hired full-time for the library once there was room available in the budget. The second administrator is currently looking for a librarian. The committee has not decided on particulars yet, but it is certain that in the upcoming school years they will be hiring a librarian. The administrator wanted three things from a future librarian: the librarian should be able to work with a fixed and flexible schedule so students can
“see” the library every week and get additional help for instruction; the librarian should be able to use technology in support of the classroom and reading; and the librarian should have knowledge on ethical research. This administrator feels that the internet is like the “wild west”, with a broad collection of information and wants a librarian who can help students learn about this collection and the best approaches to researching it, teaching students how to become “savvy searchers”. Despite these requirements, the director and the committee were still unsure on the educational requirements for a future librarian.

The second director's criteria for the librarian are specific and address many of the duties librarians fulfill in their institutions. The second director knows the role the library can play in education and is working with the school's parent organization to match the library with the vision. An interesting future study would be to follow-up with the school director in a few years to ask about progress. The support that both administrators gave to their libraries is critical in the libraries' development. If it were not for such support in the second school’s case, the library would not have an impact or integral role in the student’s education. Though informative, due to only two responses from administrators the results are inconclusive.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Some general weaknesses with the interview methodology are apparent in this study. Not all participants were available for in-person interview and the telephone does not allow the chance for observation and discussion. In the telephone interviews there was also increase in pauses. Since I took notes there was more pressure to go slowly and
have participants repeat answers. This led to shorter answers and more follow-up questions that needed to be asked.

The selection of schools and their employees for interviewing also presented another limitation in this study. As mentioned previously, to find more participants, I searched the North Carolina Office of Charter Schools website to find more schools that had libraries. This limited the amount of schools to find. First, only schools that had a website were located on this search. In some cases searching the website never revealed whether or not the school had a library. This method may have missed schools that did have a library but did not have clear information on their website indicating this. Additionally, finding contact information on the school's website was also problematic. In many charter schools there was no position readily identified as a librarian. In these cases I tried recruiting an administrator, but the return rate was not as successful.

Most of the respondents that agreed to participate were librarians in the schools; however, some of the questions asked would have been better answered by school directors who are more involved in the decision making of the school and would know a more detailed history of the schools' development. While the librarians could provide answers about the current state of the library and its role in the education of the students, most librarians could not provide answers to questions about the libraries' history and development which lead to an inability to generalize results on these subjects.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has only skimmed the surface of charter schools and libraries. Future researchers should investigate the contrast between lack of funding and lack of space as
the main factors for lack of libraries in charter schools. Though budget was the most commonly stated reason in literature (with Allen’s study (2007) as the exception), the interviews mentioned lack of funding as a fault in the current library programs but stressed space as the limiting factor. Use of a more comprehensive list of charter schools with libraries would be another great improvement. This would hopefully generate a higher return rate and allow for more in-depth analysis.

Future research should include more administrators and school directors in addition to librarians in order to get a better sense of the libraries' actual roles in the schools. Since school directors and board members are the ones who make the initial development decisions for a charter school, their opinions and thoughts should matter more to the researcher for choices in a library. In fact, many of this survey's respondents recommended talking to their administrators for information on the library history. However, many administrators that I contacted were busy especially at this time of year when open lottery practices occur. Talking to administrators during summer hours would increase return rates and generate more information.

Researchers should also consider the charter school community as potential resource. Parental organizations were a factor in some library development studied; therefore, they could be a great potential resource. The librarians I spoke to discussed about the presence of the parental community and its support in the school. Investigating the parents' views of the role of the library in charter school education would be valuable future study for this field.

Future research should expand this study by comparing charter school libraries to those schools without libraries. While it was clear that administrators of these charter
schools supported the library and wanted a trusted librarian to head the program, this should not imply that charter schools without libraries have unsupportive administrators; therefore, a comparison study to see the decisions behind not developing a library could provide more insight.

In addition, doing all interviews in person would be beneficial. Examining the library itself while present for interviews supplemented each interview with an element of observation, another great methodology for collecting data in this area. It would allow the future researcher to see a more accurate picture of how the library is used and to monitor the daily routine of the librarian.

CONCLUSIONS

As is evident from the literature review and interviews, charter schools libraries have constant road blocks when it comes to development. Charter schools receive limited funds for construction and therefore rely on their operating budget and any supplemental grants to keep collections and programs. However one notable conclusion is that space is often a bigger contributor to development of a library than budget, as all five librarians mentioned space as circumstance for development. Many charter school libraries rely on community involvement and donations to help through an otherwise unstable financial situation. They generally have a very strong support base from their administrators and school board. It is also apparent that administrators see the importance of the library in students' education; though some may not fully understand what the library can do for the school, when given an opportunity to develop a collection they did so without hesitation. Though charter schools are with little funding, these librarians strive to make the most of
the situation and sometimes must rely on vendors and local libraries for support. The librarians generally have the experience and expertise to help charter schools further their information skills. Although funding may disrupt these plans, these librarians are working with all available tools to support their institution. Investigating further to find specific inspirations for their decisions should be a future step to learning more about charter schools and their library programs.
REFERENCES


North Carolina State Board of Education. (2006). *Policy regarding charter schools renewal process (GS 115C-238.29G)* Raleigh, N.C.

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2009). *Revocation of charter for lack of academic performance (GS 115C-238.9F(d)).* Raleigh, N.C.


Appendix A. Interview Questions for Administrators

Formal Interview opening for individual one-on-one interviews with School Administrators.

“I would like to interview you on the reasons schools decide to include a school library in charter schools. I would like to ask you questions specifically about the development of your school’s library. Before beginning, I just want to make sure that you have read the consent form I sent out in my original email and that you consent to this study. I have provided here another copy for you to review in case. Do you give consent to be interviewed? Please note that I want to take an audio recording, if you give consent. You have no obligation to consent to being recorded, and can indicate this to me now. Remember that you do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with and we may skip any questions at any time.

-What is your title and role at the school?

-Were you a part of the development of the school when the charter was originally created?

-Who was part of the original decision that led to a library being included in your school development? (e.g. a committee, or a board)

-What reasons did they have to include a library in the development?

-What criteria went into the library?

-Was the library developed when the school opened or later?

-What were you looking for in a librarian?
Appendix B. Interview Questions for School Media Specialists

Formal Interview opening for individual one-on-one interviews with School Librarians.

“I would like to interview you on the reasons schools decide to include a school library in charter schools. I would like to ask you questions specifically about the development of your school’s library. Before beginning, I just want to make sure that you have read the consent form I sent out in my original email and that you consent to this study. I have provided here another copy for you to review in case. Please note that I want to take an audio recording, if you give consent. You have no obligation to consent to being recorded, and can indicate this to me now. Remember that you do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with and we may skip any questions at any time.

-What is your title and role at the school?
-Are you a full-time employee?
-Do you have your Masters degree in Library Science?
-What role do you see the library in the education of the students?
-Who was part of the original decision that led to a library being included in your school development? (e.g. a committee, or a board)
-What reasons did they have to include a library in the development?
-What criteria went into the library?
-Was the library developed when the school opened or later?
-Describe the library. What do you see as the strength and weaknesses?
-How do teachers and students use the library?
-Is the library open to the community? If so how do you use them?