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The needs of people with intellectual disabilities have been largely neglected by public libraries due to various factors. The purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which public libraries in Orange, Durham and Wake counties meet the information and service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities and to determine what information, materials and programs are important to this user population. Along with a review of the findings in the literature, this study presents specific examples of information, materials and programs important to individuals within this user group as expressed by individuals with intellectual disabilities. The findings indicate that some libraries do provide effective service in particular areas of service and programming, but overall the public libraries surveyed could improve service to adults with intellectual disabilities predominantly in the areas of needs assessment, planning for services, outreach, and adaptation of services.

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A Study of the Information and Service Needs of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and
How Public Libraries Meet These Needs

by
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Introduction

As community resources, public libraries provide the citizens of their communities with information services as well as opportunities for recreation, socialization, and education. Adults with intellectual disabilities have similar information needs and interests as their non-disabled counterparts, as well as unique and individual interests and needs and should expect that their libraries will offer them appropriate services and programs to meet these needs. Unfortunately, the needs of people with intellectual disabilities have been largely neglected by public libraries due to factors which include misunderstanding of the population as a whole, erroneous assumption of them as non-readers and non-library users, and limited exposure to this population (Standards Committee Subcommittee to Develop Guidelines for Library Services for People with Mental Retardation, 1999).

Until the latter half of the 20th century, people with intellectual disabilities were generally cared for in residential facilities, but initiatives resulting largely from families' advocacy efforts spurred the trend toward de-institutionalization that began in the 1970's and has resulted in the integration of people with intellectual disabilities into the community (Standards Committee Subcommittee, 1999). Adults with intellectual disabilities now live in a variety of settings: nursing homes, group homes, independently in their own residences, and in supportive semi-independent arrangements (Standards Committee Subcommittee, 1999) with the opportunity to fully participate in community life.

But, in order for citizens to participate fully in a community, its resources must be fully available to all of its members. As community resources, public libraries are in a prime position to offer opportunities for community participation to adults with intellectual disabilities by providing them with needed information, resources and services. Unfortunately, the literature reveals that adults with intellectual disabilities have been largely underserved by public libraries.

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which public libraries in Orange, Durham and Wake counties meet the information and service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities and to determine what information, materials and programs are important to adults with intellectual disabilities. Along with a review of the findings in the literature, this study presents specific examples of information, materials and programs important to individuals within this user group as expressed by individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Literature Review

Approximately 3% of the general population or 7 to 8 million Americans are estimated to have an intellectual disability (President's Committee, n. d.). The American Association on Mental Retardation defines mental retardation as "a disability that occurs before age 18 and is characterized by significant limitations in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills".

Although the term "mental retardation" is still used by some federal and state agencies, the term "intellectual disability" is generally considered more acceptable and will be used in this proposal in keeping with the efforts to "promote a more positive image for people with intellectual disabilities among the general public and employers"

(President's Committee, n. d.). The term "developmental disability" is also often used to refer to people with intellectual disabilities, but this term encompasses a broader scope of disorders and is defined as "severe chronic disability that occurs before age 22 and is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of these impairments" (Arc, n. d.). In addition, the definition of the term "developmental disorder" does not include an IQ requirement. The terms "mental retardation" or "developmental disorder" will be used in this paper only in a direct quotation from a cited reference.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities are included as a covered population by the Americans with Disabilities Act which requires that state and local governments must provide programs and services that are "accessible to and usable by people with disabilities" ("Introduction", n. d.). Often, "visible" disabilities such as hearing and vision impairments or mobility disabilities requiring assistive devices are more easily understood by non-disabled individuals than intellectual disabilities are, and effectively implementing accessible programs and services for people with intellectual disabilities may appear less clear cut than providing accessibility for specific physical impairments.

Although there is a significant amount of literature that addresses library services to people with visual, auditory or physical disabilities, the library literature appears to have overlooked the service and information needs of people with intellectual disabilities. In their research, Walling and Irwin (1995) have found no studies whose results can be used in informing service pertaining to the information needs of adults with mental retardation and a "complete absence of discussion of information needs, information agencies, and/or libraries among researchers who study ways to integrate adults with mental retardation into society" (p. 183). Dennis Norlin, a researcher who has studied the

user needs of this population attributes the general lack of study of the information needs of adults with intellectual disabilities to several assumptions: they have no information needs; they are unable to use any information provided; their needs are the same as the general public; and their needs are too costly to assess and meet (Norlin, 1995). The research literature does address particular aspects of individuals' lives such as leisure, socialization and literacy, from which some information needs may be extrapolated as well as some meaningful roles that public libraries, as community resources, can assume in providing appropriate library services.

Some literature suggests that information needs of the non-disabled population are also shared by their intellectually disabled peers. In one study of young adults with intellectual disability, a discussion of their future plans revealed "fairly typical aspirations concerning their futures and saw the future open with opportunities" and listed "unremarkable events such as weddings, honeymoons, having children and working" (Todd, 2000, p. 611) as relating to their futures. Hall, I., Strydom, A., Richards, M., Hardy, R., Bernal, J. & Wadsworth, M. (2005) identified 111 people with mild intellectual disability and found that in adulthood, 67% of this group held jobs, 73% were married, 62% had children, 54% owned their own homes and 12% participated in adult education. Because findings such as these imply that the interests and concerns of adults with intellectual disabilities are similar to those of the non-disabled adult population, it follows that they also have needs for information in these areas of shared interest.

In discussing the service needs of people with mental retardation, the Standards Committee Subcommittee (1999) maintains that "people with mental retardation have similar interests as, and use the library for the same reasons as their peers; they seek

information, recreation, instruction and inspiration” (p. 8). Pamela Gent (1991) provides an example of this similarity in interests in her discussion of the provision of reading materials to people with intellectual disabilities; she points out that although some individuals read at a low level, their reading interests are often at a much higher age and grade level, as evidenced by books on the subject of parenting – an adult area of interest - that are written at a lower reading level.

Finding out what kinds of information, services, and resources people with intellectual disabilities would like for their libraries to offer supports choice making and includes this population in the library, not only as users, but also as stakeholders. The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies Standards Committee Subcommittee to Develop Guidelines for Library Services for People with Mental Retardation lists one of its service outcomes as “individuals help design and have access to the services of the library they choose” (Standards Committee Subcommittee, 1999, p.17). This guideline underscores the importance of having this user group involved in deciding how they can best be served, and again, emphasizes the need for research on the information needs of this group.

From his study of adults with intellectual disabilities and their information needs, Dennis Norlin (1995) concludes that “one cannot assess the information needs of adults with mental retardation by inference from the known information needs of other groups” and proposes that “direct interview of adults with mental retardation is the only appropriate and successful method to employ in determining their information needs” (p. 192). In the course of his research, he has conducted personal interviews using an interview form that he designed to assess the effectiveness of bibliographic instruction for

adults with intellectual disabilities at the Champaign Public Library. The value of directly interviewing this user population is corroborated by the Standards Committee Subcommittee (1999), which asserts that to effectively evaluate a service based on service outcomes, a library must “discover the personal goals and objectives of the users of the services” and recommends that “library users with mental retardation must be interviewed or surveyed directly rather than through an intermediary” (p. 16). These findings have implications not only for library and information research studies of this population, but also for the methods used to gather information by those libraries that conduct user surveys and are interested in determining the information needs of adults with intellectual disabilities in their communities.

Results of studies conducted within other disciplines also have implications for public library service to this user population. Wehmeyer and Garner (2003) examined how the personal characteristics of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities impact self-determination and autonomous functioning. This study (2003) assumes two major contributors to self-determination: the capacity of the person to act in a self-determined manner, and the degree to which a person’s environment provides opportunities to exert control and make choices. The authors find that intellectual ability and how much individuals can do for themselves is not the primary predictor of self-determination; instead, the ability to make choices and cause things to happen is a greater predictor of self-determination (Wehmeyer, 2003). The authors also note that the degree to which other people, technology, and other supports enable and provide support to the person also affects the degree to which a person with a disability can become more self-determined (Wehmeyer, 2003). Public libraries are in a prime position to promote and

support people with intellectual disabilities in becoming their own “causal agents”, or “people who retain meaningful control over their own lives” (Wehmeyer and Garner, 2003, p. 263). Technology and supports as they apply to public libraries and this user population may include resources such as appropriate reading materials at appropriate reading levels, multimedia materials, and computer software. Programming, tutoring, and instruction on requested topics of interest provide support in the form of opportunities that enable choice-making. Additionally, staff that is knowledgeable about intellectual disabilities, prepared to communicate with adults with intellectual disabilities, and prepared to provide services or adapt existing services also act as supports to these users. By making an effort to understand their needs (both expressed, as in a specific information need, and unexpressed needs due to an intellectual impairment), and offering knowledgeable appropriate library services, as well as an approachable, understanding human intermediary, library staff acts as “support” to this user population, assisting them to make choices and retain control over their lives.

As public places that are available to all citizens, public libraries are also in a position to provide a sense of place and a means for people with intellectual disabilities to take part in the community. Pam Walker (1999) studied adults with developmental disabilities and their individual experiences in the places they spend time in and found that unlike the general public, adults with developmental disabilities usually spend time in places designated for people with disabilities; in addition, they spend time in public versus private places, and places characterized by business transactions rather than social interactions. She found that a sense of place was associated with “a sense of safety, identification, familiarity, being known, feeling accepted, and a sense of

accommodation”, and recommends that communities focus on “increasing and cultivating the places where people spend time which afford opportunities for a sense of place and community connections” (Walker, 1999, p. 30).

On the other hand, the “public” aspect of public libraries may be perceived as a drawback for adults with intellectual disabilities. In another study of young adults with intellectual disability and community relationships, S. Todd (2000) refers to public places as “representing a potentially hostile space, predisposing individuals towards invisibility as a strategy to avoid negative and potentially humiliating interactions” (p. 601), and he emphasizes the need for “more participatory forms of social interaction in public places” (p. 617). Perhaps, providing ways for these users to be meaningfully involved in integral library functions or services, such as volunteering at the library or sitting on a committee for programming to this population, providing diverse, continuing programs such as a speaker series or book club, or collaborating with community agencies that serve this population will create a venue for positive, meaningful interactions as well as a friendly accepting atmosphere.

As opposed to literature on information needs, there seems to have been more written on the provision of materials and services to this population and the roles of libraries in providing these services. A review of the literature indicates that one particular area of library service that is noticeably lacking is the provision of appropriate reading material for adults with intellectual disabilities. Dennis Norlin (1995) remarks that there is “much written about adults with mental retardation and so little written for them” (p.181). Efforts have been made to create lists of appropriate reading materials for adults with intellectual disabilities that can be used as guides for librarians in selecting

resources for this population. One such guide for collection development is provided by Cruce and Walling (1995) who have compiled a list of age-appropriate books written at a low reading level for developing a collection for adults with intellectual disabilities.

These authors considered six selection criteria in assembling their list: appeal to adults; content and typography; illustrations; special considerations; datedness; and subtle messages (1995, pp. 198-199). Some of the specific points addressed in these criteria are the following: the book as a whole has to appeal to adults; the content must be of interest to adults, and if children appear in the story, they are not the main focus; the print must be fairly large with adequate space between words and lines, and the font should be sans serif and of a familiar shape; illustrations should include adults; books written at a higher reading level should be included as long as they contain interesting content sufficient to attract beginning readers; settings should be contemporary unless the book's setting is historical; subtle messages intended for children should not be present; and otherwise appropriate books may include notes to parents or teachers or juvenile series titles (Cruce & Walling, 1995).

Another guide for collecting reading materials for this user population is provided by Gent (1991), who describes specific types of materials that should be considered in developing a collection. This author considers reading to be the most problematic academic area for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and suggests multimedia materials, high interest/low vocabulary materials, highly visual print materials, supplementary materials, realia, and audiovisual materials as especially useful to include in collections for this user population.

Norlin (1995) describes public library programs addressing a wide variety of subjects and interests for intellectually disabled adults that can be used as models by other libraries to provide effective service. One program in particular stands out as an example of thoughtful, need-based programming in response to the then recent trend of de-institutionalization of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Project LISTDD (Libraries in Service to the Developmentally Disabled), was in existence from 1981-1983 in Los Angeles County and provided library instruction to recently de-institutionalized adults with intellectual disabilities. This program offered a series of classes that focused on helping these users feel more comfortable in the library and addressed their responsibilities as library users as well as providing an orientation to various programs and areas of the library including audiovisuals, periodicals, and a section for adult new readers (Norlin, 1995). In addition to this programming, a separate collection of materials for this user group was assembled and housed in the adult collection. Deines-Jones and Van Fleet (1995) point out that “many people who have developmental disabilities or mental impairments need individualized orientation to the library” (p. 16) and provide a list of general guidelines to follow in providing library orientation to these users. These guidelines include assisting patrons individually or in small groups; conducting orientation in small amounts; keeping language clear, simple and concise; using the same terms and procedures when repeating instructions; encouraging patrons to ask for help; and of course, treating people with these disabilities with respect (Deines-Jones & Van Fleet, 1995, p. 17).

Recognizing that there are increasing numbers of people with intellectual disabilities present within communities, the lack of guiding materials for libraries to use

in serving this user group, and the “limited understanding of the library and information needs of people with mental retardation and their families” (Standards Committee Subcommittee, 1999, p. 2) the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) of the American Library Association has published *Guidelines for Library Services for People with Mental Retardation*, which was written by the Standards Committee Subcommittee to Develop Guidelines for Library Services for People with Mental Retardation. This publication is a revision of the 1981 *Standards for Libraries at Institutions for the Mentally Retarded*, and is intended to aid public libraries in providing services to people with intellectual disabilities and in evaluating and designing services for this user group (Standards Committee Subcommittee, 1999). The guidelines cover three areas: service needs of people with mental retardation, needs for information about mental retardation, and service outcomes. The service needs section is organized into Functional Disabilities and Access to Programs and Services.

The Functional Disabilities section includes “typical functional disabilities sometimes associated with mental retardation” and guidelines for implementing adaptations to assist users to “focus on ability” (p. 8) in the areas of cognition and perception, communication, behavior, motor functions, chronic health conditions, and multiple disabilities. Following are explanations of specific functional disabilities within these areas followed by guidelines for adapting services to users with these disabilities as found in the “Service Needs” section of the ASCLA *Guidelines*.

Cognition and perception

Impairment of cognition or the inability to learn is the “most familiar feature of mental retardation”, although if special conditions are met, an individual is still able to

learn (p. 8). Impairment of perception is described as “impairment of the ability to correctly interpret and use information they receive through the senses” (p. 8) and may be manifested in specific ways such as difficulty in using visual information; for this reason, people with cognitive or perceptual impairments often have difficulty reading, and may be confused by complex interior decoration and complicated floor plans (p. 8).

Guidelines for libraries in assisting users with impairments of cognition or perception include providing “interesting age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction materials at low reading levels” as well as multi-sensory materials such as tangibles, large print, picture books, video and audio materials, and adaptive computer hardware and software (p. 9). To adapt the library space to accommodate users with perception impairments, libraries can plan the facility to “avoid complex, complicated floor plans and color schemes” (p. 9).

Communication

Communication difficulties can involve difficulty in understanding verbal and written communications and in sending messages so they can be understood by others (p. 9). Users may have severe hearing or visual impairments and may communicate with spoken language, sign language, adaptive devices, or through their behavior; although all have a system of communication, not all these systems are easily understood (p. 9).

ASCLA suggests that to enhance communication, library staff can be “prepared to discover and use a communication system that meets the needs of the individual for both expressive and receptive communication” (p. 9).

Behavior

The ASCLA *Guidelines* lists various behaviors that are sometimes associated with intellectual disabilities. Some of these are inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, disruptions, demand for attention, fascination with objects, self-destructive behaviors, involuntary tics, and minimal social skills (p.9).

The ASCLA guidelines suggested for serving people exhibiting such behaviors include library staff recognize that some people are not able to control their own behavior and that bizarre behavior may be due to fear of the unknown or may be a means of communication (p. 9). In addition to tolerating a wide range of behaviors, library staff should attempt to understand the meaning of the behavior and “help other people to learn greater tolerance for unusual behaviors” (p. 9).

Motor functions

Difficulty in speech, standing, walking, and using fingers and hands are motor impairments and may be present in individuals with intellectual disabilities, but these disabilities do not necessarily accompany intellectual disability. People with other types of disorders or disabilities in which intellectual disability is not present may also manifest motor impairments.

ASCLA guidelines suggest that the library makes “reasonable accommodations for wheelchairs and other mobility devices” and provide as examples adapting door handles, water faucets, and other equipment for library users who don’t have the use of their hands (p. 10).

Chronic health conditions

Chronic health conditions, such as “congenital heart defects, seizures, respiratory problems and immune deficiencies” are another area of functional disability that may be experienced by non-intellectually impaired individuals, but are included in ASCLA *Guidelines* because they sometimes accompany intellectual disability (p. 10).

Guidelines for service to individuals with chronic health conditions specify that library staff members are prepared to accommodate individual needs of this user group and are prepared to respond appropriately to health emergencies (p. 10).

Multiple disabilities

Although multiple disabilities are not unique to individuals with intellectual disabilities, they are included in ASCLA’s publication because they often accompany and interact with intellectual disabilities, making learning and other life activities more difficult for people with intellectual disabilities (p. 10). The ASCLA guidelines for service to people with multiple disabilities emphasize that “staff members are prepared to work with people individually to discover their strongest communication mode, their level of understanding, and their information need in any given situation” (p. 10).

The other broad area addressed by ASCLA in the service needs section of its *Guidelines* is Access to Programs and Services. Guidelines within this area address planning for services, getting around in the facility, interactions with library staff, locating and retrieving library materials, and using materials and services.

Planning for services

This particular area addresses planning for services and modification of services in order that people with intellectual disabilities can use libraries successfully.

ASCLA offers several guidelines for libraries to assist in planning for services to this user population: the library promotes services to people with intellectual disabilities in the community; there is an advisory committee that includes members who have intellectual disabilities and their advocates; the library considers the most effective methods for providing services to this user population in the community, such as outreach, special needs center, or inclusion; the library designates a staff member to coordinate and supervise these services; collections, services and programs are adapted for the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and carried out by all staff; the library provides adaptive technology; public relations activities and publicity are modified for these users; and the library evaluates their services to this user population, their families, advocates and people who work with them (p. 11).

Getting around in the facility

Because individuals with intellectual disabilities require directional signs that they can understand, barrier-free access to and within the facility, and attention to their safety and security, the ASCLA provides the following guidelines.

As regards communication, the ASCLA provides these guidelines to libraries: directional signs are large, simple, and placed in a highly visible location; in addition, universal symbols and auditory, visual and tactile symbols and signals are used to support communication (p. 11).

Concerning access to the facility, the ASCLA offers these guidelines: the facility provides barrier-free mobility for wheel-chairs and other mobility devices, the barrier free routes are clearly marked, door handles and other devise are easily manipulated by people

with motor disabilities, and the floor plan and interior decoration of the library are planned with recognition of the need for a facility with minimal confusion (p. 11).

Guidelines for ensuring the safety and security of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the library include the following: fire alarms and emergency alert signals have auditory and visual components which consider the frequencies most likely to cause seizures and the library has a plan for the safe evacuation of people with intellectual disabilities in the case of an emergency (p. 11).

Interactions with library staff

Perhaps the most important area of service to users with intellectual disabilities, and one which can be effectively implemented by all staff is that of patron-staff interaction. An excellent collection, physical facility and program offerings may not be remembered by a patron has had a poor experience interacting with library staff, and will not matter if the user does not return to make use of these services. Like other users, people with intellectual disabilities require respectful treatment and positive interactions with staff; in addition, they may need extra time and guidance in order to make choices and utilize services (p. 11).

ASCLA guidelines for fostering positive interactions include the following: library staff views all patrons as “people of ability, worthy of assistance” (p. 12). Staff receives ongoing training to meet the needs of this user population and models appropriate interaction for other staff and other patrons; in addition, library staff establishes effective communication, allow sufficient time for patrons with intellectual disabilities, provide guidance and assure that the information need is satisfied (p. 12).

Locating and retrieving library materials

Locating materials in the stacks or from the library catalog may also prove difficult for people with intellectual disabilities because they have had limited involvement with or opportunity to choose books and other materials for themselves or because of reading difficulties or mobility impairments (p. 12).

The guidelines offered by ASCLA for this area of service also focus on positive staff-patron interactions. Specifically, they state that library staff members take time to help users choose materials according to individual interests, help them to understand and use the catalog and other finding tools, and help them to locate and retrieve materials (p. 12).

Using materials and services

People with intellectual disabilities may not understand library policies and may require that policies or services be adapted for them (p. 12). ASCLA guidelines for this area include that library staff explain and be prepared to modify policies to meet the needs of individuals; provide adaptive equipment if needed; modify library instruction and programs; explain and demonstrate in a way that can be understood by the individual, the care of materials; provide opportunities for interaction with intellectually disabled and non-disabled people during programs or activities as well as opportunities to learn and practice social skills; and model appropriate interactions for intellectually disabled users and other patrons (p. 13).

From the Service Needs section of the ASCLA *Guidelines* as well as from other findings reported in the literature, it is clear that the unique library service needs of this user population require libraries and library staff to respond by acknowledging,

understanding, planning for, and adapting to the special requirements of these users.

The literature addressing the information needs of this population is somewhat conflicting as to whether information needs can be generalized from the needs of the non-disabled adult population, or whether the information needs of adults with intellectual disabilities are unique, but taken as a whole, the literature seems to indicate (although individual studies differ) that the information needs of adults with intellectual disabilities share similarities with those of the non-intellectually disabled population as well as being unique to the individual.

Significance of this Study

This research attempts to identify the library services and programs currently provided to adults with intellectual disabilities as well as areas in which public libraries are lacking in provision of services to adults with intellectual disabilities through a survey based on the ASCLA Service Needs guidelines. In addition, this study attempts to gather some original data on library service and information needs as perceived by individuals with intellectual disabilities, without relying on inference from the needs of the general population.

Because the needs of adults with intellectual disabilities have historically been overlooked by public libraries, studying this subject will help to bring attention to this user population and their library service and information needs. The results of this survey will hopefully encourage libraries to re-examine the services they provide and inform their policy making as well as outreach and program planning.

The findings may be useful as an indication of how well the libraries in this three-county area serve the needs of this user population, and in what areas of service

improvement is needed. Since there is an Arc (in addition to other agencies that serve adults with intellectual disabilities) located in Orange, Durham and Wake counties, these study results may be especially relevant to these libraries. On a broader scale, the results of this study may be useful to a wide range of public and other libraries in developing services that address the information and service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which public libraries in Orange, Durham and Wake counties meet the information and service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities. The methods used to investigate this question are a web survey of these public libraries and personal interviews of adults with intellectual disabilities. An application seeking approval to conduct this research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and this study (#2005-091) proceeded after approval was granted.

In order to determine what materials, programming and services are provided to this population, 27 of the 30 public libraries in this three county area that are listed on the North Carolina State Library web site were surveyed. The remaining three public libraries listed for this three county area were excluded for the following reasons: one does not provide services to adults; one has a specialized subject focus; and, one is being renovated and is not open for service at the time of this study.

The survey was created and administered electronically using SurveyMonkey, a web survey tool, and was publicized via an email solicitation sent to the contact person listed as branch manager or library director for each of these libraries. The solicitation

email included information about the purpose of the study, a brief description of the study and the survey, consent information, and the url for accessing the survey. An offer to provide the participants with a copy of this completed paper was also included in the solicitation. One of the participants was sent a paper copy of the solicitation after the initial email solicitation was returned as undeliverable due to this participant not having a working email address at the time of this study. Two follow up emails were sent at one week intervals to remind recipients of the survey, and to express appreciation to those recipients that had completed the survey.

The survey attempts to assess what kinds of library services, programs and materials these libraries provide for this user group. The 19 survey items included closed ended questions, questions asking respondents to choose items from a list, and the option of expounding on some closed-ended questions (See Appendix A). The survey items are largely based on many of the guidelines set forth by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies in *Guidelines for Library Services for People with Mental Retardation*, and address types of materials, programming, and services provided to adults with intellectual disabilities as well as staff development, policy and planning concerning service to this user group. In particular, the survey attempts to determine what types of materials and library programs are provided expressly for this population; if library staff receives training in communicating with and providing services to people with intellectual disabilities; if library policy is adapted to serve this population; if programs and services to this population are evaluated; if adults with intellectual disabilities or their advocates are included in the service and program planning process; if outreach services to this population are provided; whether staff is aware of community

agencies that serve this population and if so, if there is collaboration with these agencies; and if services to this population were addressed in the latest community needs assessment.

In addition to investigating the services and programs offered by public libraries, this study attempts to determine what information, materials and programs are important to adults with intellectual disabilities. A questionnaire via interview was administered to 7 adults with intellectual disabilities (see Appendix B). Because the literature indicates that the personal interview is the most appropriate method for determining the information needs of adults with intellectual disabilities, this method was chosen to assess the information needs of individuals in this study. The participants are all clients of the Arc of Orange County, an organization that works “to promote full participation in areas of life in our community” (Arc of Orange County, n. d.), and are all age 18 or over and self advocates. The participants were informed of the opportunity to take part in the interviews via a flyer that was posted at the Arc. The flyer was also made available at an Arc community meeting of self advocates. The flyer indicated that participants could take part in the interview either in person or via telephone. Those clients that were willing to take part could either arrange to be interviewed the next time they were physically at the agency, or by telephone at a time that was convenient for them. The consent statement was read to each participant and a printed copy of the statement was provided to each participant. It was made clear to the participants that no identifying information would be collected during the course of the interviews. Participants were also given a novelty pen, notepad and candy as an inducement and expression of appreciation for their time and input.

This questionnaire attempted to learn what subjects and activities are important to these individuals. The questionnaire was formatted similarly to the interview form included in Walling and Irwin (192-193). The questionnaire consists of 10 predominantly open-ended questions (See Appendix B). Specifically, the questions address what topic(s) a participant is interested in learning more about; how he/she would find out more about the stated topic; and what activities a participant enjoys, i.e. movies, books, magazines, and books on tape. Other questions address computer use; hobbies and crafts; and other activities. The final question addresses past library use and transportation to the library. The questionnaire was read as a script by this researcher, and prompting was provided if needed for some of the questions. In addition, the opportunity to expound on any response was provided. Before beginning the interview, each participant was assured that there is no right or wrong answer for any question, and that the researcher was interested in his/her individual responses. The responses were recorded in writing by this researcher as they were given, and every attempt was made to record them verbatim.

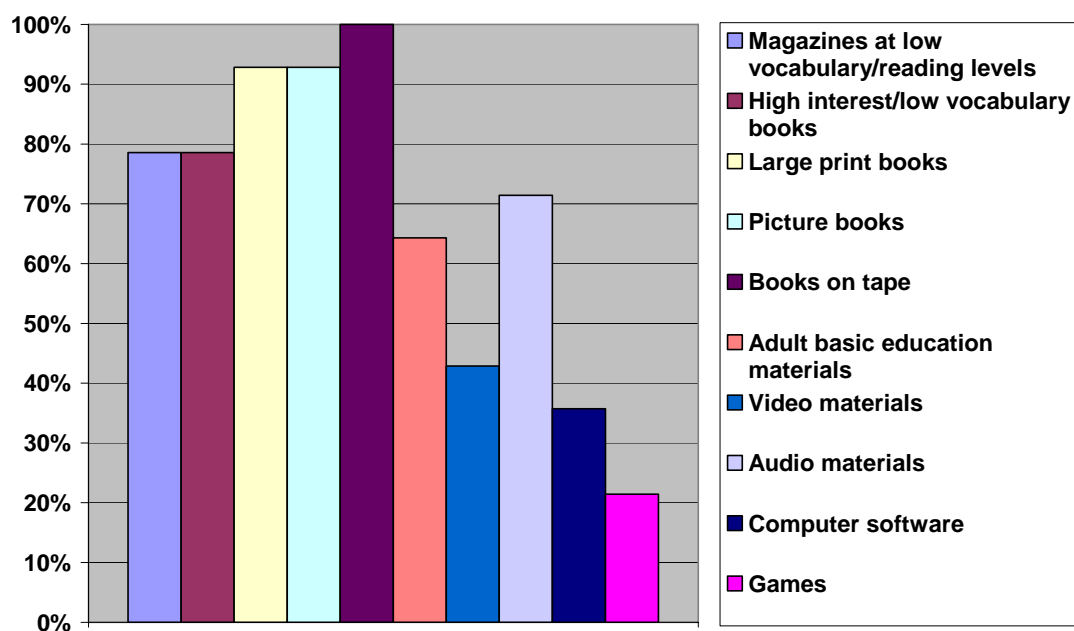
Results

Fourteen of twenty-seven libraries, or approximately 52%, responded to the web survey. Seven personal interviews of adults with intellectual disability were completed; one was conducted in person and six were conducted by telephone at the request of the interviewees. Following are the results of the library surveys and personal interviews in the areas of materials, programming and services, staff-patron interaction, communication, planning for services and programming, outreach and collaboration, and budgeting and needs assessment. The results of the surveys and interviews are presented together within each service area.

Materials

Figure 1 shows the percentage of these 14 libraries that provide particular materials for the general user population.

Fig. 1 Libraries Providing Specific Materials



In response to the first interview question, “Is there anything you like to learn more about?”, six individuals indicated a specific topic or topics that they were interested in learning more about; one participant responded “not really” despite prompting, although he did indicate topics of interest to him in responses to later questions. The second question, “If you wanted to know more about (participant’s stated topic, or “something you are interested in”) how would you find out more about that topic?” generated responses from six participants; one participant did not indicate how she would find out more about her stated interests (indicated in the first question) despite prompting.

Table 1 lists specific responses from each interviewee regarding interests and how they would find out more information about a topic of interest. Some interviewees offered multiple responses for questions #1 and #2.

What would you like to learn more about?	How would you find out more?
getting my poetry published	internet; magazines; ask friend that is a book editor
how people can protect themselves	speakers; police department; library; books
movies; <i>Starsky and Hutch</i> (movie); bowling	(no response)
not really	books
computers	library; ask somebody
terrorism; Stephen King; Italian language	library; magazines; asking someone about these things
working on computers	go to someone in charge at the library

Table 1: What each interview participant would like to learn more about and how he/she would find out more

It is clear from the responses to these first two questions that these seven individuals have diverse and unique interests, some of which, such as publishing poetry, Italian language and working on computers may not be easy to find as subjects of books for adults written at a lower reading level. It is also evident that these individuals rely on various sources of information to satisfy their information needs, and notably, four respondents indicated the library as one means of finding out more about a subject of interest to them.

All seven participants responded positively to question #3 which asks if they enjoy watching movies. The kinds of movies participants stated they like to watch are listed by individual response in Table 2. Again, several participants responded with more than one film or kind of film.

Types of Films
family films; tearjerkers; Broadway; chick flicks
Disney; <i>Bambi</i> ; true films that really happened
PG rated movies
<i>The Lone Ranger</i> ; anything at the movie theater
comedies
action; horror; scary; comedies
all kinds; DVDs

Table 2: Types of films enjoyed by interview participants

When asked about reading books, six participants indicated they do like to read books, and one participant reported that he/she does not. Five participants indicated they do like to read magazines, one stated “not really”, and one participant stated “only once in a blue moon”. The kinds of books and magazines read by those participants that stated they enjoy reading these materials are listed by individual response in Tables 3 and 4 respectively; some participants indicated multiple kinds or titles of books and magazines, and some indicated authors they enjoy.

Books
fantasy; philosophy; biography; poetry; best sellers philosophy; animal care
Maya Angelou; <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> ; depends on book and author
Bible
math; any kind
Stephen King; comedies
<i>Little House on the Prairie</i>

Table 3: Types of books enjoyed by interview participants

Magazines
<i>Reader's Digest</i>
<i>CBS; Soap Opera Weekly</i>
any kind
<i>People</i>
<i>Time; Newsweek</i>

Table 4: Types of magazines enjoyed by interview participants

Many of the genres, authors, and titles of books and magazines listed by the respondents, such as biography, best sellers, Stephen King, the Bible, *People*, *Time* and *Newsweek* reflect typically adult areas of interest, as do the films and film genres listed.

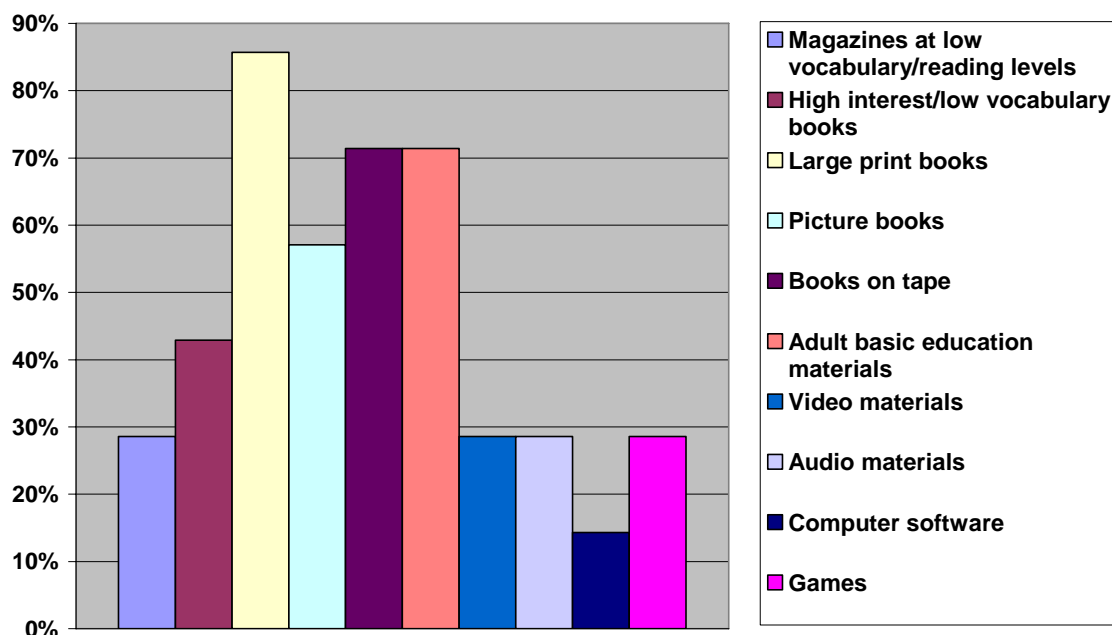
When participants were asked if they enjoy listening to books on tape, responses varied; three participants reported they do enjoy listening to books on tape and two reported they do not. Of the remaining two participants, one stated “I used to, but now I don’t as much”, and one stated he/she does not because of a hearing loss.

These responses indicate that movies, books and magazines are important to the majority of these respondents. It is interesting to note the extent to which the libraries surveyed provide these materials for their general user population and also specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Magazines and high interest/low vocabulary books are provided by almost 80% of these libraries, while slightly more than 40% provide video materials. Books on tape are offered by all of the libraries.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of libraries that provide these materials specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities; seven (50%) libraries responded to this survey item.

Fig. 2 Libraries Providing Materials Specifically for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities



Large print books, books on tape, and adult education materials are the items provided most frequently by the libraries that responded to this item. Books on tape, which 3 interview participants indicated that they enjoy listening to, are offered by all 14 libraries surveyed, and 5 libraries reported providing books on tape specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Only 2 (30%) of the 7 responding libraries report that they provide magazines at low vocabulary/reading levels specifically for this user population, and 3 (40%) provide high interest/low vocabulary books for these users. Because the individuals interviewed were not asked about reading material format, it is not known whether the books and magazines indicated in their reading interests are low vocabulary materials. Further, because 11 libraries indicated that they offer low vocabulary books and magazines and far fewer libraries reported they provide these materials specifically for this user

population, it would be helpful to know what criteria are used by the responding libraries in categorizing low vocabulary materials as specifically intended for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Only 2 of the 7 libraries that responded to this survey item indicated that they provide video materials specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities, while 6 libraries reported that they offer video materials as part of the collection in general. Again, the criteria used to differentiate video material for adults with intellectual disabilities and video material for the general adult user population would be interesting to learn. It is possible that these results are a reflection of some libraries holding a large number of juvenile videos, and few if any video material for adults.

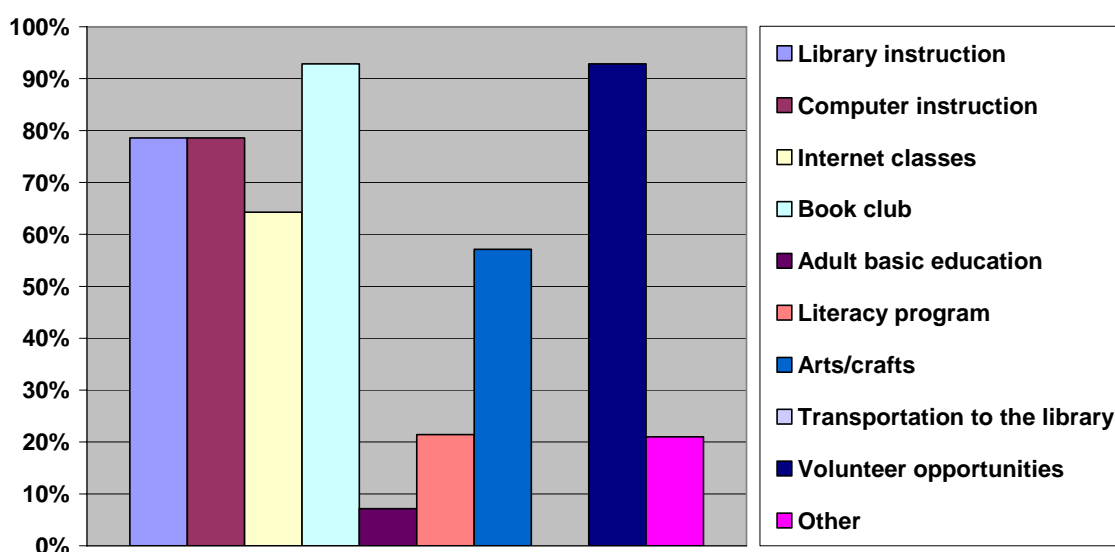
The libraries that indicated that they provide materials specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities house these materials in various locations. Three libraries reported that these materials are located in both the main collection and the children's collection, and 2 libraries reported that these materials are located only the main collection. No libraries reported housing these materials in a separate collection. One library reported that materials for this population are interfiled in the main collection, but labeled high/low. Another branch library reported holding a special collection that is housed at several of the larger branch libraries in the system, but is available to anyone at any branch by request. No libraries reported locating these materials solely in the children's collection.

Programming/services

Figure 3 shows the percentage of libraries that offer library instruction; computer instruction; internet classes; book clubs; adult basic education; literacy programs;

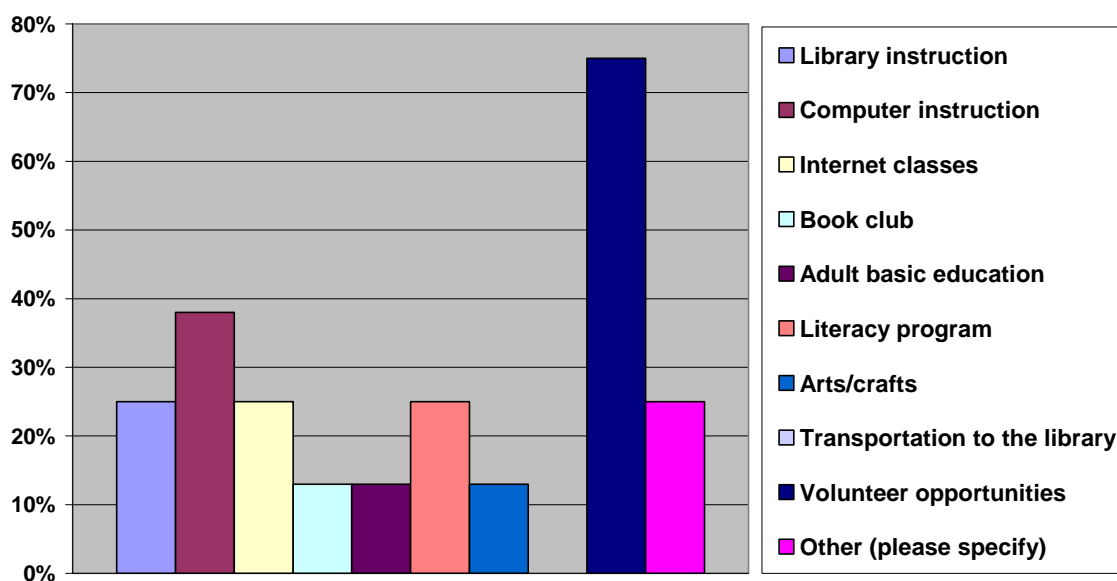
arts/crafts; transportation to the library; volunteer opportunities; and other programs and services. Three libraries indicated they provide other programs and services: one library provides individual and group library and computer instruction; one provides story times for children; and one provides classes in English as a second language.

Fig. 3 Libraries Providing Programs/Services



The percentage of libraries providing these or other services specifically for adults with intellectual disability is displayed in Figure 4. Volunteer opportunities are by far the program/service offered by the most libraries. Under “other” programs/services provided, one library reported that it adapts the services and programs it offers to each individual, regardless of intellectual disability, and another library reported that it regularly provides use of its computers and book collection - specifically picture books, graphic novels, juvenile non-fiction, and magazines to residents of a nearby group home on a weekly basis.

Fig. 4 Libraries Providing Programs/Services Specifically for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities



The majority of individuals interviewed reports having some experience using a computer and use it for purposes of work, recreation, education, email, and other “typical” adult activities. Six participants reported they know how to use a computer; one reported not having experience with a computer, but he/she would like to be able to use a computer. One participant reported that although he/she uses a computer at school, he/she would also like to learn how to use it for “gaming”. Table 5 shows the types of computer use reported by participants and the locations where these activities are performed.

Computer Activities	Location
math and reading	night school
look up names; look at mopeds	friend’s house
email; ordering books and clothes	home
surf web; math; weather; “see what’s going on”	home
email; printing labels	work
games; email; internet	public library

Table 5: Types of computer use and location of computer used

Two of the participants indicated specific information needs regarding computer training: basic computer instruction and computer gaming instruction. It is not known what kind of gaming instruction is indicated, whether the individual desires the opportunity to learn specific games, or more generally, how to access games on the internet. The library survey indicates that 11 of the 14 libraries (79%) offer computer instruction and 9 (64.3%) offer internet classes. Only 3 libraries reported offering computer instruction specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities; two libraries offer internet classes expressly for this user population.

When asked about hobbies or crafts that they enjoy, six participants responded with particular hobbies or crafts, and one stated he/she doesn't have one. Several participants required prompting with examples of hobbies and crafts (from the interview script) before responding to this question. The participant that reported no hobbies or crafts was also prompted with examples, and he/she may have thought that only activities such as those provided as examples – cooking, pottery, knitting, drawing, gardening, etc. – are considered hobbies and crafts. This participant did report that he/she enjoys “playing ball” and “singing” in response to question #9, so it is possible that the terms “hobby” and “craft” may have caused some confusion for this participant. In order to include all activities and reduce the potential for confusion, questions #8 and #9 should have been combined to include hobbies, crafts and other activities. Six participants reported other activities in response to question #9; one participant did not report other activities. Table 6 lists individual responses to these questions.

Hobbies and Crafts
Special Olympics; cycling
walking; hook rug
crosswords; cooking
reading; listening to music; watching TV
writing poetry; rubber stamping; wreath-making
fishing

Table 6: Hobbies and crafts reported by participants

Other Activities
playing ball; singing
walking; biking
resting
cleaning; collecting for fundraiser
going to movies; playing Scrabble; cats
Special Olympics

Table 7: Other activities enjoyed by participants

As with the diverse interests and reading materials indicated by the individuals interviewed, these responses reflect a broad range of interests and activities.

The survey results reveal that although book clubs are offered as a program by 13 of the 14 libraries surveyed, only one provides a book club specifically for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Similarly, although arts and crafts are offered by over 50% of the libraries, only slightly more than 10% of those that offer services and programs specifically for this user population offer arts and crafts opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities.

When asked if they had been in a library in the last year (question #10), five interview participants stated yes, and 2 responded they had not. Table 8 lists the reasons stated for the last library visit. Of the two participants that had not been to a library in the

last year, one indicated he/she had not been because it is “just not my stuff to go”, and the other stated “there’s nothing there I need”.

Reasons for Last Library Visit
looked up automobiles
books and movies
checked out a book
looked at books
magazines

Table 8: Reasons for interview participants’ latest visits to library

Given that none of the 14 libraries surveyed indicated that they offer transportation to the library, it is fortunate that none of the five participants who had been to a library in the last year reported having any difficulty getting to the library. Four participants reported taking a bus to get to the library and one was taken to the library by a work acquaintance. In addition, one of the participants who reported taking a bus to the library also stated he/she sometimes rides a bike to the library.

Staff-patron interaction

Three participants reported that they had asked someone for help the last time they visited a library. One of these three participants stated a “lady who worked there helped me”, but did not elaborate on the experience. Another participant stated that he/she asked “where something was” and “they helped me”, but also did not offer further information when asked to tell about the experience. Another participant described visiting the library and having staff help him/her to “find books and movies” and “put books on reserve for me that they didn’t have”. This same participant also related a negative experience at another public library in the community that might have been

prevented if library policy had been modified to adapt to this particular individual's needs. This individual reported that he/she was denied use of a public computer because of an overdue fine, and did not return to this particular library because "I refused to pay 50.00 for a book." This individual indicated that he/she would have been happy to buy another copy of the book to replace the missing one, but was unable to pay 50.00 in overdue fines.

Seven survey respondents reported that their libraries are prepared to modify existing programming, instruction, or policies to meet the needs of an individual with intellectual disability, a guideline suggested by ASCLA to ensure that individuals are able to effectively use materials and services. Six respondents reported that their libraries are not prepared to make such modifications. One library did not respond to this survey item. Of the libraries prepared to make modifications, one stated it always modifies as appropriate; one would modify on a case by case basis; and one reported that it depends on the modification required, but the library will accommodate whenever it can. Another respondent gave an example of how the library is prepared to modify services; this library offers computer instruction classes which are attended by an adult with a learning disability whom the class instructor provides with one on one attention. One library indicated that it has many volunteers with intellectual disabilities, and that the training provided them is modified to meet their needs. Modifying existing policy and services to meet the needs of individuals on a case by case basis seems a relatively low cost and easily implemented guideline to meet the needs of individual users; it is surprising and dismayed that only seven libraries reported that they are prepared to adapt policy and services to accommodate individual adults with intellectual disabilities.

Communication

Of the 13 libraries that responded to the question regarding directional signage within the library, 7 reported that directional signs were supplemented with visual symbols, an important implementation of communication support; 6 libraries reported they were not.

Eleven of the survey respondents reported that library staff does not receive instruction for interacting with patrons that have communication impairments; three libraries reported that they do. One of these three respondents described specific instructions that are provided to staff: not to speak loudly to patrons that are visually impaired, and to face the patron when speaking to patrons with hearing impairments. Another library respondent stated that staff is trained to use TDD, and “no specific formal instruction is offered regarding patrons with communication impairments, just the basic reference interview instruction”. The third library respondent stated that the library provides staff with customer service workshops which are designed to include patrons with disabilities.

Planning for services/programming

Eleven (79%) of the survey respondents also indicated that library staff does not receive instruction for providing services to patrons with intellectual disabilities, and 3 (21%) reported that their library staff does receive preparation. The types of instruction/preparation described are a short training for new employees; basic training in the reference interview; and customer service workshops that are designed to include patrons with disabilities.

Only 2 (14.3%) of the libraries reported having a designated staff member to coordinate and supervise services for people with intellectual disabilities; 12 (85.7%) do not. It would be interesting to learn more about these roles, but unfortunately, no data was gathered regarding what specific activities these staff members perform regarding this responsibility.

Two libraries that provide programming/services to adults with intellectual disabilities reported that they do solicit input from adults with intellectual disabilities or their advocates when planning for programming or services. 5 of the libraries providing programming/services to this population reported that they do not solicit such input; one library that provides programming/services to this population did not respond to this survey item.

None of the 14 libraries reported having a committee for planning for services to adults with intellectual disabilities, and of the 8 libraries that provide services and programming to adults with intellectual disabilities, none of them reported having a means of evaluating these services/programs. This is a surprising finding considering that 2 of the libraries do report having a designated staff member to oversee services to this user group.

Outreach/collaboration

When asked about outreach services, an important component of planning for services according to the ASCLA guidelines, the overwhelming majority of these libraries reported that they do not provide outreach to adults with intellectual disabilities. Only one of the 12 respondents to this survey item indicated that their library provides outreach services to this user population; this library has several outreach programs that

reach various populations including patrons with disabilities. One library did not respond to this survey item.

Nine of the libraries reported that they are aware of community agencies that provide services to adults with intellectual disabilities; 4 report that they are not aware of community agencies providing services to this population. One library did not respond to this survey item. Some of the community agencies identified by respondents include the Arc, Autism Society, Raleigh Vocational Center, Orange County Literacy Council, an adult day treatment center, and Department of Social Services. Of the 13 libraries that responded to this survey item, 3 indicated that they collaborate with community agencies, and 10 indicated that they do not. (Again, one library did not respond to this survey item.) One library reported that clients of an un-named agency come to the library to work with their job coaches and another library indicated that it works “with social services on various projects”.

It seems ironic that four of the interview participants indicated they would go to a library to find more information on a subject that interests them and that 4 participants report having been to a library in the last year, but only one of the library survey respondents indicated awareness of the Arc as a community agency.

Budgeting and needs assessment

Regarding budgeting, 11 (79%) of the libraries indicated that their budgets do not include funds for collection development, programming or services specifically for this user population; only three libraries (21%) indicated that funds for the specific needs of this user population are included in their budgets. One combined public and school library reported that money from its existing school library budget is used to purchase

materials for students with intellectual disabilities, many of whom are over the age of 18. Another library states it purchases large print materials and equipment to support disabled users. One library indicated that it purchases books on autism for parents and caregivers rather than the challenged adult.

Adults with intellectual disabilities appear to be overwhelmingly overlooked by these libraries in terms of assessing the needs of their user communities. Eleven libraries reported that this user population was not addressed in their latest community needs assessments, while only one library reported that its community needs assessment included adults with intellectual disabilities. Two libraries did not respond to this survey item. As the interview responses indicate, adults with intellectual disabilities are library users, and their needs and input are required if a library's community needs assessment is to accurately reflect the community it serves.

Discussion

This study reveals areas of service in which some public libraries are meeting the needs of adults with intellectual disabilities, and areas in which improvement is needed in providing library services to this population; in addition, the responses to the interview questionnaire reveal important aspects of this user population regarding the information, library services, and materials that are important to them.

Foremost, it is clear from the interview responses that these seven individuals have diverse interests, hobbies, and preferences in reading materials that are typical only in the sense that they are similar to those of their non-disabled peers, and the majority of the respondents are readers and use the library for reasons not unlike those of the general population.

It is heartening to note that materials specifically for this user population are provided by some public libraries; large print books, adult education materials and books on tape are the most frequently offered materials for adults with intellectual disabilities. Books on tape, in particular, are provided by all 14 libraries surveyed. Although only three interview participants reported that they enjoy listening to books on tape, 5 libraries provide this type of material specifically for this user population. It is unclear why this particular material is reported this frequently by the libraries surveyed. Perhaps this reflects a lack of understanding regarding the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities or misinformation regarding this disability in general. It could also be that these particular survey respondents categorized all special format materials together when responding, and did not differentiate materials specifically for one user group - people with intellectual disabilities – from materials aimed at the needs of users with other impairments such as visually or hearing impaired users. Lastly, it is possible that this response suggests a perception of all persons with intellectual disabilities as non-readers. Future study of public library service to this population should address library staff perceptions of intellectual disability and their perceptions of the abilities and needs of persons with intellectual disability.

One aspect of library materials that was not fully investigated is the extent to which adults with intellectual disabilities utilize special formats in reading materials; most of the libraries surveyed reported they offer special format materials although not specifically for these users. It is not known if the interview participants utilize large print books as this was not asked in the interview and it was not specified by the participants. Adult education materials were also not mentioned by the participants during the course

of the interviews, so it is unknown whether these materials are utilized. The ASCLA guidelines suggest large print, low/vocabulary, and picture books among appropriate reading materials to include in a collection for this user population; the extent to which these types of materials are utilized would be important to include in further study of the needs of his population.

It would be interesting to learn why the three libraries that house materials for adults with intellectual disabilities in both their main and children's collections choose to do this and what types of materials are housed in each. How individual adults with intellectual disabilities feel about seeking materials in various locations in the library – especially the children's collection - and whether they perceive this as negative or embarrassing was not addressed in the interviews. The location of materials to provide thoughtful and effective access to these materials is an important aspect of service that should be addressed in future studies and may help libraries gain an understanding of how location of these materials affects this user population.

It is also notable that some of the libraries surveyed also seem to acknowledge this user population in the programs offered specifically for these users. Volunteer opportunities in particular, are offered specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities by over 70% of the libraries that offer volunteer opportunities. This perhaps reflects an understanding on the part of these libraries of the various abilities and contributions that persons with intellectual disabilities can offer their libraries, as well as the importance of providing opportunities for positive, meaningful interactions. Computer instruction and internet classes were also reported to be offered specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities, and are particularly significant in light of the interview results: computer use

was reported by the majority of the interview participants, and two participants indicated a desire for specific types of computer instruction.

On the whole, considering that 6 of the 7 individuals interviewed expressed that they enjoy reading, the libraries surveyed appear to be missing an opportunity to provide programs, such as book clubs, book talks, or author readings that may be appreciated by this user group. Of course, it is possible that although these libraries don't provide book clubs specifically for this user group, the book clubs that are offered are also open to and appropriate for these users. The same may be true of the arts and crafts programs offered by over 50% of these libraries; these programs may be attended by and appropriate for adults with intellectual disabilities, or adapted to the needs of individuals (as one library indicated), although not expressly offered for this user population.

Two very important areas of service that are not addressed by the majority of the libraries surveyed are staff preparation and modifying or adapting services and programs for individual users' needs. The majority of libraries indicated that they do not provide instruction to staff for providing services to this population, and only half of the libraries indicated that they would be willing to modify or adapt programs, instruction or policy to meet the needs of an individual with intellectual disability. It is surprising that these areas of service were not more frequently reported, because these areas seem to be easily implemented by all libraries and don't appear to be budget dependent as materials or a designated staff person would be.

Perhaps the survey results are indicative of a lack of awareness of this population as library users. Only one library reported that its most recent community needs assessment addresses services to adults with intellectual disabilities. Only one library

reported that it provides outreach services to this user population, and although nine libraries indicated they are aware of community agencies that serve adults with intellectual disabilities, only one library respondent specifically indicated being aware of the Arc, the organization of which the seven interview participants are clients. An increased awareness of this population as library users might spur libraries to include input from adults with intellectual disabilities or their advocates when planning for services, and encourage collaboration between public libraries and agencies that serve these users.

One limitation of the interview portion of this study is the small sample of participants. Although the interview responses from the 7 participants yielded information that furthers understanding of the information and service needs of these individuals, the results from this small sample cannot be generalized to the population of adults with intellectual disabilities in Orange county or to the population as a whole. Ideally, further study of this subject would include a greater number of interview participants. Perhaps publicizing the study earlier and at a number of group meetings and community activities (such as Up with Orange County, a self advocacy group) over a longer period of time would result in additional participants.

Another limitation of the interview portion of this study is the relatively short amount of time allotted for each interview. Although all of the interview participants were very forthcoming with their responses to the interview questions, some of them seemed rather shy initially; this was not unexpected considering that this researcher was unfamiliar to these participants before the interviews. As the interviews continued, these individuals seemed to become more at ease with the interview process and with this

researcher and were increasingly expansive in their replies. Some of the participants may have had more to say regarding their responses to some of the earlier questions in the interview, but did not elaborate due to perhaps feeling somewhat shy. In order to ensure that these interview participants feel comfortable enough to respond fully to the interview questions, it is recommended that future studies of this type take place over more than one session; the first session will provide an opportunity for the participants to become acquainted with the researcher and the interview process, and any questions that were not fully answered during the first session could be revisited, giving the participant an opportunity to elaborate if needed.

In addition, it is possible that because all participants interviewed are clients of the Arc of Orange County that the library experiences related during the course of the interviews occurred at the same library or libraries. In order to gain a broader perspective on the information and service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities and their library experiences future studies should include interviews with individuals from a broader geographic area, perhaps including participants from the Arc of Durham and Wake counties or other area agencies that serve adults with intellectual disabilities.

Further study of this user population should also address particular aspects of the interview responses that were not addressed in this study. For instance, it would be interesting to know whether the individuals interviewed feel it is important to provide their input regarding planning for library services and programs and whether there are programs or materials that they would like for their public libraries to offer.

Ideally, further study would also include more participants from the 27 libraries in this area. It is possible that the email invitations to participate in this survey were

dismissed or overlooked by some of these contact persons because of the overwhelming number of unsolicited emails that are received by many people today. Perhaps administering a paper survey with a stamped, addressed return envelope would have increased the survey return rate.

Conclusions

The results of this study have identified the current state of particular areas of library service to adults with intellectual disabilities provided by some of the public libraries in Orange, Wake and Durham counties. Although some libraries report effective service in particular areas of library service to this user population, the results of the survey indicate that overall the libraries that responded are not effectively serving these users - predominantly in the areas of needs assessment, planning for services and outreach and adaptation/modification of services to meet the needs of users.

Further research is indicated, either by additional surveying and/or by personal interview of library staff to examine the reasons, policies or attitudes behind these survey responses. In particular, libraries' perceptions of this user population and their abilities and needs are important areas for further study. For instance, understanding how libraries view adults with intellectual disabilities may help to better explain why book clubs and arts/crafts are so infrequently offered specifically for this user population despite the interview responses indicating that books and arts/crafts are enjoyed by the majority of the respondents. This may also help to shed light on why libraries provide books on tape, when this type of material was reported as not enjoyed by the majority of the interview participants, and whether this indicates that libraries tend to not distinguish between the service needs of people with intellectual and physical impairments.

Studying the library and information service needs of adults with intellectual disabilities is important because the needs of this user population have historically been overlooked by public libraries. As indicated in the survey results, some of the libraries in this study do acknowledge the needs of adult users with intellectual disabilities and offer materials and services specifically for this user population, such as computer instruction and a book club. In addition to bringing attention to adults with intellectual disabilities and their library service and information needs, it is hoped that the results of this survey emphasize ways in which some public libraries effectively serve this population as well as encourage libraries to re-examine the services they provide and inform their policy making, outreach efforts, and program planning.

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Appendix A - Library Survey

Which materials does the library provide? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ magazines at low vocabulary/reading levels
- ☐ high interest/low vocabulary books
- ☐ large print books
- ☐ picture books
- ☐ books on tape
- ☐ adult basic education materials
- ☐ video materials
- ☐ audio materials
- ☐ computer software
- ☐ games

Which materials does the library provide specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ magazines at low vocabulary/reading levels
- ☐ high interest/low vocabulary books
- ☐ large print books
- ☐ picture books
- ☐ books on tape
- ☐ adult basic education materials
- ☐ video materials
- ☐ audio materials
- ☐ computer software
- ☐ games
- ☐ other (please indicate) _____

If materials are provided for adults with intellectual disabilities, where are they located? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ children's collection
- ☐ main collection
- ☐ separate collection (i.e. special needs center)
- ☐ other (please indicate) _____

Which programs/services does the library offer? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ library instruction
- ☐ computer instruction
- ☐ internet classes
- ☐ book club
- ☐ adult basic education
- ☐ literacy program
- ☐ arts/crafts
- ☐ transportation to the library
- ☐ volunteer opportunities
- ☐ other (please indicate) _____

Which programs/services does the library offer specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities? Please mark all that apply.

- ☐ library instruction
- ☐ computer instruction
- ☐ internet classes
- ☐ book club
- ☐ adult basic education
- ☐ literacy program
- ☐ arts/crafts
- ☐ transportation to the library
- ☐ volunteer opportunities
- ☐ other (please indicate) _____

Are directional signs within the library (i.e. restrooms, circulation, exit, etc.) supplemented with visual symbols?

Yes __

No __

Does library staff receive instruction for interacting with patrons that have communication impairments?

Yes __ (please describe)

No __

Does library staff receive instruction or other preparation for providing services to patrons that have intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

Does the library have a designated staff member to coordinate and supervise services for people with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___

No ___

Does the library have a means of evaluating its services and programs for adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

If programming/services are provided, does the library solicit input from adults with intellectual disabilities or their advocates when planning for programming or services?

Yes ___

No ___

Does the library have a committee for planning for services to adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___

No ___

If yes, does the committee include people with intellectual disabilities and/or their advocates?

Yes ___

No ___

Is the library prepared to modify existing programming, instruction, or policies to meet the needs of an individual with intellectual disability?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

Does the library provide outreach services to adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

Is the library staff aware of any agencies in the community that provide service to adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___ (please list)

No ___

If yes, does the library collaborate with these agencies to provide library services to this population?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

Does the library's budget include funds for collection development, programming or services specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___ (please describe)

No ___

Did the library's most recent community needs assessment address services to adults with intellectual disabilities?

Yes ___

No ___

Appendix B - Interview Questionnaire

“As you respond to the following questions please realize there are no right or wrong answers.”

1. *“Is there anything you like to learn more about?”*

If prompting needed, suggest “such as movies, games, news, a famous person, etc.”

2. *“If you wanted to know more about (participant’s stated topic, or “something you are interested in”) how would you find out more about that topic?”*

If prompting needed, suggest “such as newspapers, TV, radio, books, magazines, asking another person, etc.”

“I’d like to know what kinds of activities you enjoy.”

3. *“Do you like to watch movies?”*

If yes:

- *“What kinds?”*

4. *“Do you like to read books?”*

If yes:

- *“What kinds?”*

5. *“Do you like to read magazines?”*

If yes:

- *“What kinds?”*

6. *“Do you like to listen to stories or books on tape?”*

7. *“Do you know how to use a computer?”*

If yes:

- *“What kinds of things do you use it for?”*

If prompting needed, suggest “such as games, email, surfing the Web, etc.”

- *“Where do you go to use a computer?”*

If no:

- *“Would you like to be able to use a computer?”*

8. *“Do you have a hobby or craft that you like to do?”*

If prompting needed, suggest “such as cooking, pottery, knitting, drawing, gardening, etc.”

If yes:

- *“Please tell me about your hobby.”*

If no:

- *“Would you like to learn a hobby or how to make crafts?”*

9. *“What else do you enjoy doing?”*

10. *“Have you been in a library in the last year?”*

If yes:

- *“What did you do there the last time you went?”*
- *“Did you ask anyone who worked at the library for help while you were there?”*
- *“If yes, please tell me about this.”*
- *“When you go to the library, how do you get there?”*
- *“Have you ever had trouble finding a way to get to the library when you’ve wanted to go there?”*

If no:

- *“Please tell me the reason you have not been to a library in the last year.”*