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This study examines the programming opportunities made available in public libraries for children with learning disabilities in the United States. Youth Services managers and librarians of public libraries from across the country were randomly selected to participate in a web survey. Along with a review of the findings in the literature, this study presents the results of the survey, examples of successful programming events, and data on the evaluation, training, marketing, and collaboration included within these events. The survey results indicate that many libraries do not provide staff with training or best practices information for work with children with learning disabilities and other special needs; however, there is clear preference for collaboration with and learning from special education professionals within the community. Results also suggest that public librarians are aware of this population and hold strong interest in working with children with learning disabilities and special needs and their families.

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      Handicapped, Library services for

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PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

by
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Introduction

According to the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

(NIDRR) (2010), approximately 19.4% of "noninstitutionalized civilians" in the United

States, "totaling 48.9 million people, have a disability" (Section 1, ¶ 1). Currently, 5.4

million children and youth between the ages of 3 and 21 years old with disabling

conditions are served under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of

1965 (reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and the more recent

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. According to the NIDRR, of

these children and youth, 51.1% have specific learning disabilities, 21.1% have speech or

language impairment, 11.6% have mental retardation, and 8.7% have serious emotional

disturbance. With over 2.6 million children and youth suffering from learning disabilities,

public libraries have a responsibility to reach out to this population in order to encourage

and support their learning and social mainstreaming process.

As community resources, public libraries provide a variety of services to their

communities to meet information, education, recreation, and socialization needs. In

particular, libraries target youth of all ages, from birth to young adult (0- to 18-years-old),

with services to encourage literacy, lifelong learning, and social interaction. According to

Jenkins (2005), youth services librarianship is evidenced by the fulfillment of five

conditions: (1) specialized collections, (2) specialized space, (3) specialized personnel,

(4) specialized programs and services designed for youth, and (5) all existing within a

network of other youth services organizations and agencies. Jenkins also suggests that, the "ultimate purpose of youth services library programming in both school and public libraries is the promotion of reading and literacy" (p. 103). Recently, public libraries have worked to include extra programming opportunities for youth with special needs, particularly those with learning or other cognitive disabilities (Banks, 2004).

Many public library programs are offered for children based on specific age groups, and these age limits are often strictly enforced. Yet rigidly adhering to age restrictions can be counterproductive when dealing with children with learning or other cognitive disabilities (Halvorson, 2000). To make up for not allowing older children into programs that might actually meet their needs, some public libraries have begun offering special programming for children with learning or other cognitive disabilities and other special needs in an attempt to include them in their services and to meet their information, education, recreation, and socialization needs (Akin & MacKinney, 2004). However, this may alienate these children while also causing confusion and chaos in programs since many target children and youth of a variety of ages and needs (Halvorson, 2000). Moreover, the librarians may not be fully educated about the needs of youth with learning disabilities or how to best work with them (Halvorson, 2000). A program at the public library could have a dozen children in attendance, but each child may have a different learning or cognitive disorder, possessing different needs and skills to participate.

Although the American Library Association recommends librarians train to work with people with special needs, it is not required (ALSC, 1994). With limited budgets, this may be a difficult goal for many libraries to accomplish. There is some published

literature available to librarians working with this population, though it is dated and focuses primarily on services for adults with physical disabilities (Deines-Jones & Van Fleet, 1995; Walling & Irwin, 1995; Deines-Jones, 2007). With a small amount of literature to assist them, public youth librarians offering programming for children with special needs have several disadvantages. Over half of all disabilities in children are learning disabilities, yet the majority of the literature available for youth librarians working with children with "special needs" focuses primarily on those with physical handicaps.

The United States federal government acknowledges that one definition of a learning disability is when there is a discrepancy between a child's age and ability and his/her achievement. However, the latest definition was provided with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and revised again in 1999. According to the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (2010), the term "learning disability" means

> a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (SLD Determination, ¶ 1)

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of America (2010), a child has a specific learning disability if:

- The child does not achieve commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the areas listed below, if provided with learning experiences appropriate for the child's age and ability levels; and
- The child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: Oral expression; listening

comprehension; written expression; basic reading skill; reading
comprehension; mathematics calculation; mathematics reasoning. (Eligibility:
Determining Whether a Child is Eligible for Special Education Services, ¶ 4)

However, a child may not be identified as having a specific learning disability if the

severe discrepancy between ability and achievement is primarily the result of:

- A visual, hearing, or motor impairment;
- Mental retardation;
- Emotional disturbance; or
- Environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. (Eligibility: Determining
  Whether a Child is Eligible for Special Education Services, ¶ 5)

Professionals in all fields who work with children with learning disabilities face

significant challenges, including public librarians who are still working to understand the

needs of this particular population. The purpose of this research is to identify what public

libraries are doing in terms of programming for children with learning disabilities and to

understand how librarians are educating themselves on the needs of this population. The

results of this study can help youth librarians better meet the needs and expectations of

children with learning disabilities and their parents. If public libraries can work toward

better assisting these children and their parents, the children themselves may grow to be

confident and capable adults who more fully integrated into mainstream society.

Literature Review

Prior to the 1990 amendment of the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA),

children with disabilities were often placed in segregated, special education settings or

were confined to the home without any participation in community life (U.S. Department

of Education, 2010). According to the disability theory research, this pattern has been

gradually changing in education for many years, but it has only been in the past ten to fifteen years that public libraries have also begun to change their focus (Halvorson, 2000). Since the passage of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, the special education field has been striving for inclusion of children and their families within the community. IDEA is a U.S. federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. Specifically, Part C states that "students with disabilities should be prepared for further education, employment, and independent living" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). As Feinberg, et al. (1999, p. vii) succinctly state, "this emphasis on community life experience allows libraries to be partners in the process," and programming opportunities allow children to socialize and learn in such a community environment.

Although there is a significant amount of literature that addresses the needs of and library services for people with visual, auditory, or physical disabilities for adults, the information and library science literature seems to have overlooked the information needs of and services for children with disabilities. More specifically, there is little research on children with learning disabilities. In their research, Walling and Karrenbrock (1993) found no studies with results that could be used to inform the information needs or programming services for children with sensory disabilities. In their book, *Information Services For People With Developmental Disabilities: The Library Manager's Handbook*, Walling and Karrenbrock (1993) offer a variety of suggestions for programming and strategies to work with various disabilities. They stress, though, that children with disabilities are first children and they should be treated as children, which

means including them as much as possible in services, programs, and materials for other children. However, the references Walling and Karrenbrock include supporting these claims are primarily from other areas of research, not information and library science. Rather, empirical research used in this book stems from disability studies, special education, and nursing.

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) supports the inclusion of disabled children in programming in public libraries. In fact, the ALSC programming pamphlet for serving children with special needs specifically states that "mainstreaming offers children with special needs opportunities for intellectual and social growth. Libraries are a natural place for mainstreaming, and programs should be planned to encourage it" (1994, p. 2). The 20-page pamphlet generically describes eight disabilities with suggestions for programming ideas and strategies. No research is cited, and there has not been another pamphlet published in the 16 years since this was first released.

Within the information and library science field, Chike (2006) researched how public libraries meet the information needs and services of adults with intellectual disabilities. To define intellectual disabilities, Chike (2006) used the American Association on Mental Retardation definition of mental retardation as "a disability that occurs before age 18 and is characterized by significant limitations in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills" (p. 2). This empirical study found that although many public libraries offer volunteer opportunities and computer instruction for this community, many libraries appear to be missing several opportunities to meet the needs of adults with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, the adults surveyed expressed interest in book clubs and arts and crafts programs, neither of which is commonly offered to this

community. In addition, most libraries lacked staff preparation to adapt or modify services or programs to individual users' needs (Chike, 2006, p. 41).

Another finding was that many public libraries do not evaluate programs once they are complete. Walling and Irwin (1995) strongly recommend the evaluation of programs, as it is "an opportunity to justify and strengthen service" (p. 160). While these findings are important for informing the needs of people with disabilities, these results do not specifically address the needs of children with learning disabilities or other special needs, nor does the research inform how best to design effective programming for this community.

Disability Studies

While there is very little research in the field of information and library science regarding the information needs of and best practices for programming for children with learning disabilities, the field of disability studies has done much research that supports the need for the inclusion of this community in public library programming. Because very little research focuses solely on individuals with learning disabilities, it was necessary to consider disability as a whole, including all physical, mental, emotional, language and sensory disabilities.

To begin, there are several contrasting paradigms on the worldview of disabled individuals. Gabel and Peters (2004, p. 590-591) review the four primary paradigms: functionalist, post-modernism, historical-modernism, and interpretivism. The functionalist paradigm contains the medical model and aims to focus on objectifying the disability to understand it within the body in order to diagnose and treat. The post-modernism paradigm looks into personal experience and individual bodies, assuming that

"ambiguity is at play in the world…revealing the tensions and paradoxes of the social world" (p. 587). The historical-materialist paradigm, or strong social model, considers the objectivism of the functionalist paradigm while also realizing the difficulties of living in the social world. Finally, interpretivism "emphasizes disability as an individual experience, albeit one situated within a social context" (p. 591).

Gabel and Peters (2004) argue that the more currently popular social model within the historical-materialist paradigm "is the result of resistance to the medical model, to the oppression of disabled people, and to ablesim" (p. 592). The authors suggest that, within the social model, resistance theory, which can be seen within each paradigm, is gaining popularity despite it crossing each paradigm. People with disabilities are resisting being labeled as such and are insisting on being included in mainstream society. This resistance can be seen in the passage of Part C of IDEA in 2004; students with disabilities are being considered as functioning human beings on their way to an independent adulthood.

Likewise, Reindal (2008) discusses the four primary paradigms in disability studies but suggests the social relational model is best suited for children in special education, which can also translate into the public library setting since public librarians engage in lifelong learning with their young patrons. Reindal points out the two influential perspectives on disability in learning: the individual approach to disability and the social approach to disability. The social model deals with both perspectives in that it is an attempt to deal with the social barriers of disability rather than the personal restrictions of impairment (p. 139). Further, Reindal suggests that with the social model "it is possible to distinguish between personal experiences of social restriction due to reduced function in a social setting…versus *imposed* social restrictions in social settings"

(p. 144). With this in mind, it is clear that, as community institutions, public libraries are the ideal place to make a real effort at including and making children with learning disabilities comfortable and confident in the process of reading and learning.

However, even within the field of disability studies there is a lack of understanding in the way children with disabilities experience and understand their lives, which may help to better inform the design of programs within the public library. This field has historically quantitatively measured children with learning disabilities or focused only on children who were most articulate verbally. This has caused a bit of a gap in the known experiences of children with disabilities. Fortunately, there is a growing amount of qualitative research focusing on the opinions and experiences of learning disabled children, including those who do not use conventional methods of communicating.

Kelly (2009) argues that it is no longer acceptable to exclude the direct study of learning disabled children simply because they pose a challenge to traditional research methods. Rather, the responsibility is on researchers to take greater account of diversity when designing their research and adopt inclusive research strategies. Kelly (2009) included all children who were labeled as having "autism, attention deficit disorder, Down's syndrome, or global developmental delay" (p. 22). This particular paper is a discussion of the researcher's dissertation research, which aimed to explore the perspectives of learning disabled children and their parents on their experience of family support services, identify the types and levels of family support services available for these families and examine their influences, and clarify some of the challenges facing professionals in relation to providing family support services and communicating with

learning disabled children in practice. Within the context of the study, Kelly explores key

methodological issues for researchers with regard to interviewing learning disabled

children and actively involving them in qualitative research and offers a number of

methods for researchers to include in future studies.

      Kelly (2009) found several methodological strategies to assist in the interviewing

and observation of children with learning disabilities, but her efforts illustrate the

difficulties of studying this particular population. This may be why there is so little

research within the field of information and library science; researchers may feel

intimidated toward interacting with and studying children with disabilities. In return then,

youth librarians may be uninformed about how best to meet the very particular needs of

this population.

Disability Studies and Children

      A few empirical research studies have been recently conducted that use some of

the methodological strategies that Kelly (2009) suggests in her dissertation; however they

focus on physical disabilities rather than learning or other cognitive disabilities. With the

social model and resistance theory in mind, the following studies recommend the

mainstreaming of young people with disabilities, validating the idea to include children

with learning disabilities in the youth programming of public libraries. Both Singh (2009)

and Naraian (2008) studied the social aspect of children with disabilities.

      Singh (2009) focused on the lived experiences and worldviews of children with

physical disabilities in order to understand their realities in their daily lives. To research

children's notions of self, semi-structured interviews, drawings and focus group

discussions were used with 14 children with mobility impairments aged 11−16 years. The

objective was to capture children's lived realities. The results of this study illustrated

great differences in children's understanding of "disability". Naturally, children desired

to appear similar to non-disabled children, and most attributed their disability to

existential causes. The study points out the unrelenting hope and potential of these

children, which, according to Singh, is often silenced by the overarching "negativism"

that surrounds even just the word "disability". These results suggest that children may not

need to be separated out into their own special program events within the public library.

Children want to fit in with their peers despite their differences or limitations. While

public libraries may not be excluding them from programming events as such, a rigid age

limit is still exclusion and may create shame and embarrassment for these children. Singh

found that these children believe they can do any activity as well as any other child

despite their differences. Yet when another child acknowledges these differences, the

children expressed sadness (p. 138). The results of this study may confirm that being

labeled and pulled apart is not helpful but is a source of pain.

Similarly, Naraian (2009) found that children with disabilities want to be included

as a member of a community. She studied two different children with physical and

mental disabilities, a boy in first grade and a boy in high school. Using narrative theory,

Naraian talked with classmates of the participants and observed the interactions between

the two parties in order to understand how peers made sense of their classmates with

disabilities. The first grader, Harry, was a part of a community-oriented class, in which

the teacher worked toward a family feeling. His peers enjoyed working with and helping

Harry, but at the same time he was a "job" for other students within the classroom. He

was not able to define how he could be understood or how he could participate. Still, he

had friends to assist him in the classroom. On the other hand, Michael, the high school student, always sat on the fringe of the classroom and was ignored in the hallways. Michael was not expected to participate in class; indeed his teachers did not think he could "be restored to normalcy" (p. 534). Harry's experience obviously varies vastly from that of Michael's, and Harry's learning and participation in class was improved and better than Michael's, possibly because of the individual empowerment from the community setting in the classroom (p. 539). In an open setting such as the public library, it may be possible to engage a child with disabilities in such a way to bring out positive aspects that might otherwise be hidden. It is the responsibility of the librarian to create such an environment, though. As Naraian ends her study, "the findings of this study strongly suggest that such systematic adult mediation of peer stories remains critical for the learning and development of students with significant disabilities" (540).

There have also been studies that suggest attention and encouragement from adults and inclusion in community settings at a young age can increase the possibility of the development of higher functioning adults with disabilities. Hall, Strydom, Richards, Hardy, Bernal, and Wadsworth (2005) used a prospective follow-up of a British birth cohort to identify children with mild and more severe intellectual impairment, and compare a range of social outcomes in adulthood with people in the rest of the cohort. Data was used from the MRC National Survey for Health and Development, and intellectual impairment was identified by intelligence tests and educational history. Adult outcome measures included employment and social class, education, marriage and children, home ownership, social networks and community use. Results suggested that although people with intellectual impairment were less likely to attain all adult outcomes,

they were rather integrated into mainstream society. They enjoyed contact with friends and family and were involved with social activities. More than half of the people with mild intellectual impairment had jobs (67%), were married (73%), had children (62%), and owned homes (54%). Those with more severe intellectual impairment were less likely to attain these outcomes. These results indicate that adults with intellectual impairments are fully capable of being integrated into mainstream society. With some special attention as children, their incorporation could potentially be greater and more successful. Public libraries can assist this integration through youth programming, but, as mentioned earlier in this paper and suggested by Chike (2006), librarians should be informed of the goals and needs of these patrons in order to best achieve such results.

Libraries and Children with Disabilities

While there is little empirical research in information and library science, there is much general discussion about the public library and its relationship with children with special needs. As with much of the discussion about adults in this field, most of the literature focuses on children with physical disabilities. For example, one feature article in *Young Adult Library Services* highlights the conversation between a special education teacher of children with physical challenges and a youth public librarian (Vogel, 2008). The youth librarian visits the middle school classroom once a month with books to lend and stories to tell. Many of the children are unable to physically visit the library, so the visits allow these children to explore the written work in the comfort of their own classroom. The youth librarian emphasizes the use of very visually-appealing picture books and the discussion of the books to help the children understand and remember the stories and facts they learn.

Another primary area of focus within the information and library science literature is that of the collection of materials. Jarombek and Leon (2010) discuss several public libraries that are making considerable effort to increase their collections to include special materials for children with various special needs. Computer software and hardware, books, journals, and DVDs are included in the expansion of the collection in Stamford, CT. In addition, the inclusion model is emphasized in South Florida. Youth librarians work toward including all children in each and every program available to them. However, there is some resistance from parents, but this is not explored further in the article.

The Brooklyn Public Library has a special place for children with disabilities: the Child's Place for Children with Special Needs, which opened in 1987 (Banks, 2004). This organization has five satellite sites and supplies materials, training, and assistance for and about children with special needs. The children who attend their programs have "developmental, learning, physical, sensory, emotional, and/or multiple disabilities" (Banks, 2004, p. 5). Their programs are based on the Multiple Intelligences Theory, which "posits that people have seven different intelligences and seven corresponding learning styles, which are separate from one another but function interdependently. These learning styles include linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal" (Banks 2004, p. 5-6). Banks suggests that the reason this organization has been successful relies on the flexibility of the programs. Each program must be designed with flexibility in mind, as anything can happen during any program. There are currently four types of programs: those in English, Spanish, or American Sign Language; Weekend Stories, which also have a bilingual

component; Read & Play, which includes socialization and language stimulation for children between birth and five years old; and After School Stories, which includes reading aloud, music, movement, and crafts for children between five and 12 years old. There is also much collaboration between youth librarians and school teachers, as many teachers bring their classes in for tours and programs. The organization mentors children in the volunteer internship program, which has helped several teenagers obtain their first paid jobs. Finally, the organization includes parent/caregiver resources and educator resources, including workshops and various materials.

Organizations like this example can support the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream society. As Banks (2004) states, "children with disabilities are often isolated from peers without disabilities. They go to separate schools or segregated classrooms within community schools. Out-of-school time is often spent at doctors' offices, at additional therapies, or in segregated after-school programs. What Brooklyn Public Library offers is unique – the chance to be a child like any other child" (Banks 2004, p. 10).

Finally, while there is no literature available right now on programming for children with learning disabilities, there is some literature specifically on programming for children with other cognitive disabilities. Akin and MacKinney (2004) discuss the necessity to consider the needs of autistic children when designing programs in the public library. According to Akin and MacKinney, autism "refers to disruptions in development in three main areas: language and communication, social skills, and sensory modalities and behaviors" (p. 35). They propose that "library literature has not closely examined how they can best serve autistic children" (36). Nevertheless, they suggest several

strategies for creating and designing story times and programs to include autistic children in regularly scheduled programs, including the use of common themes, repetition, and illustrated storybooks. The authors also give a plan for the evaluation of these programs, the first in the literature discussed to do so. Among suggestions are observing the children (are they enjoying themselves?); question teachers and parents (do the children seem to be retaining what they've done or learned in the program? Does the teacher or parent have suggestions for improvement?); rely on traditional measures, such as questionnaires or feedback forms and circulation statistics; and performing a self-check (are you consistent, calm, and patient?) (p. 40).

Connecting Disability Studies and Library Science

In an article on the evolution of early literacy and history of story times in public libraries (Albright et al, 2009), the authors note the six early literacy skills: print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness, and letter knowledge. It has been the goal of youth librarians to encourage the learning of these literacy skills since programming began in public libraries in the 1940s. In an effort to include all children, the authors suggest allowing for bigger groups during story time and including story times during the evening and weekend hours. The authors do not address children with learning disabilities or other special needs, but they do discuss the inclusion of "children and parents who truly need the teaching and coaching of the library" (Albright et al, 2009, p. 17). These special groups include families whose second language is English, and the authors suggest the importance of "adapting to the needs of the community" (Albright et al, 2009, p. 17). Reindal (2008) suggests the social model, with its inclusion theory, is the necessary standard in special education, and thus it could

be so within the public library. All children should be included in services and programs and not excluded based on developmental or learning challenges.

Nevertheless, it is impossible for public libraries to meet the needs and demands of every person. Therefore, it is also the role of the public library to act as connector to other community organizations. Spelman et al (2004) offer a multitude of examples of partnerships between public libraries and local organizations. Such collaboration can expand a child's immediate world. As the authors point out, "people in a learning society need libraries throughout their lives. Public libraries serve the entire community from birth by providing a bridge from infancy into formal learning, and access to resources that meet young people's educational, informational, recreational, and personal needs as they grow into self determining adult learners" (p. 4). Public libraries can especially assist young people with disabilities as they work toward discovering the world and how they fit into it. "The role of educators and information professionals is to facilitate young people's access to that information by working with all agencies so that young people can '…recognize the need for information and then identify, access, evaluate, and apply the needed information' in their daily lives" (p. 4).

This confirms the disability theories of the social model, to allow individuals with disabilities to experience their personal realities within the social world, as well as the resistant theory discussed earlier in this paper. By encouraging children with disabilities to resist their disabilities and embrace their personal challenges, youth librarians can help these people grow into confident highly functioning adults and contributing citizens. The Association for Library Service to Children (1994) supports this theory through the inclusion of children with disabilities in public library programs. Likewise, Walling and

Karrenbrock (1993) encourage partnering with outside organization to help better assist this community, as well as their parents, caregivers, and educators.

Summary

According to Feinberg, et al. (1999), the principle of inclusion, which aligns with the social theory of disability as well as the theory of resistance in disability studies, "maintains that children with disabilities should not be confined to separate facilities and programs, but rather they have the right to participate in typical community settings with children without disabilities" (p. vii). Indeed, it is based on the recognition that all children have needs, strengths, and something to contribute and that these commonalities outweigh any differences between children with special needs and others. As suggested by the studies conducted by Chike (2006) and Naraian (2009), with educated adult involvement children with disabilities can feel comfortable, confident, and encouraged in their process toward becoming high functioning adults. It is therefore "incumbent upon the librarians to develop a greater understanding of disabling conditions, be sensitive to the needs of families, ensure that children with special needs are welcomed and served, and effect the change needed to create an inclusive atmosphere in the library setting" (Feinberg, et al, 1999, p. x).

Methodology and Analytic Techniques

This study addresses the gap between the professional literature and the actual practice of librarians working with children with learning disabilities. It works to discover and determine what public libraries are doing in terms of programming for children with learning disabilities and how librarians are educating themselves on the

needs of this population. It is hoped that this research will fill a gap in the library science literature on this community and is modeled after a similar study on special education practices within school libraries (Allen, 2008). A web survey of a random sample of public libraries from around the United States was sent to 194 public librarians. An application seeking approval to conduct this research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill prior to this study.

In order to determine what programming and services are provided to children with special needs and more specifically, learning disabilities, as well as how public librarians are educating themselves on the needs of this population, an electronic survey that collected quantitative and qualitative data was distributed to 194 randomly selected public libraries from the current population of 16,671 public libraries and branches in the United States. The sample was pulled from the online databases American Library Directory and PublicLibraries.com. Websites from the public libraries were gathered, and contact information was researched within the library websites. Priority was given to youth services managers, coordinators, or directors. If an email address was not found for these people, the library directory was then searched. If the website did not list the contact information for any personnel within the library system, an email was sent to the reference desk. Because libraries were selected at random, there was a wide range of public libraries represented, including community libraries, city libraries, county libraries, and regional libraries, as well as branches of larger libraries. The subjects were sent an email with a hyperlink to the electronic survey (Appendix A). After clicking the link, subjects were sent to an online survey that requested the subjects to either accept or decline participation in the survey (Appendix B). With granted consent, subject

proceeded to the survey. Without consent, subjects were sent to the final screen of the survey, thanking them for their participation.

In keeping with ethical standards, participation was voluntary with no penalty to any subject who declines to participate in the survey. The survey was created and administered electronically using Qualtrics™, a web survey tool provided by the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. By using this survey software, participants' email addresses, IP addresses, names, and any other identifying information were not collected or recorded. Within the survey itself, questions were designed to gather information without soliciting personal details that might directly or indirectly identifying the participant.

Since gender, age, race, and ethnicity are not pertinent to this study, no demographic information about the participants of this nature was included in the survey. In lieu of demographic information as previously mentioned, participants were asked to identify the approximate size of the community the library serves, the number of staff members within the Youth Services department, percent of the library's budget spent on Youth Services programs and services, and the approximate number of Youth Services programs the library offers per year. In addition to these questions, which were designed to help characterize participants, the majority of the questions will gather data about self-reported: (1) programming for children with special needs and, more specifically, learning disabilities; (2) evaluation of programming for children with special needs; (3) instances of information gathering about best practices in special education and, more specifically, learning disabilities; (4) training of staff who work with children with special needs and, more specifically, learning disabilities; and (5) collaboration with

other persons or organizations to create programming opportunities or to inform the needs of the learning disabled community (see Appendix C). The survey items are largely based on many of the guidelines set forth by the Association for Library Service to Children pamphlet on *Programming for Serving Children with Special Needs* (1994) and the evaluation guidelines suggested by Walling and Karrenbrock in *Disabilities, Children, and Libraries* (1993).

Participants were given two weeks to complete the electronic survey. During this time, participants had the opportunity to stop and start the survey, returning to the unfinished portion at a later time. While taking the survey, participants could choose to not answer a question without penalty. If a participant chose not to answer a question, he or she could continue on to the next screen as if a response had been given. This further illustrates the voluntary process of the survey; participants were never forced to give a response. The one exception to this rule was with regard to the letter of consent at the very beginning of the survey. At the completion of the two weeks, the survey was deactivated for data collection and analysis. At this time, participants were no longer able to access the survey, finished or unfinished.

Data Analysis

Of the 194 subjects to whom the online survey was distributed, 53 accepted the terms of participation and were directed to the survey questions. One subject chose to formally decline participation in the study by email. All other subjects have no record since they opted to not select the survey as included in the recruitment email. Throughout the survey, the number of participants who responded to individual questions varies.

Discussion of responses will indicate the number of participants for each question in order to provide an accurate context for the responses and their corresponding percentages. The variance is a condition of the allowance for participants to select the questions or which they provide responses with no risk of penalty for skipping one or many questions. This allowance was in accordance with the intent for participation to be entirely voluntary. The only forced-answer question was with regard to the letter of consent.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide information regarding their community and Youth Services departments (see Table 1). Of 42 responses to the size of the community served, 21% served a community of less than 25,000; 19% between 25,000 and 50,000; 5% between 50,000 and 100,000; 12% between 100,000 and 250,000; 10% between 250,000 and 500,000; and 33% served a community of more than 500,000 patrons.
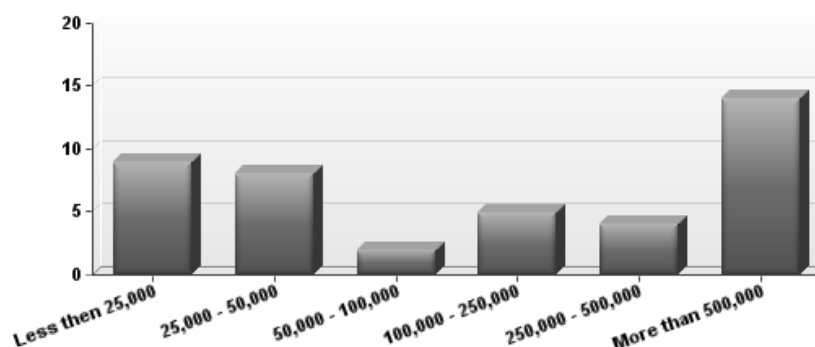

Table 1: Approximate size of the community served by participating librariesy

IAs Figure 1 shows , of 46 respondents, 93% worked in libraries in which the physical facilities and space had been adapted and arranged to make the program accessible to all

children regardless of need and capability. Literature suggests that it is required that public libraries have physical facilities and space that are adaptable to meet the needs of all children. Learning disabled children may have other disabilities that may hinder their participation in regularly scheduled programming. It is also required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (2010) that facilities be adaptable to meet the needs of physically handicapped persons.
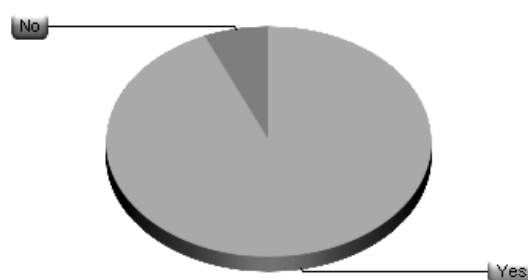

Figure 1: Physical facilities and space adapted to make the program accessible to all children

With regard to information about the Youth Services departments, responses were open answer, so these answers varied. Of 36 responses, 18 were unsure of the percent of the library's budget is spent on Youth Services programs/services. However, eight, or 22% of the total respondents, reported their library spends between 33% and 40% of their budget on Youth Services programs/services. Two subjects, or 5% of the total respondents, reported their department spends over 50% on programs/services, and eight people, or 22% of the total respondents, reported spending less than 25% on programs/services. One participant simply responded with "not enough," and one subject reported all programming had been cut due to budget issues.

Because the public libraries involved in this survey ranged from small community

libraries to large regional public libraries, number of staff members within the Youth

Services department and the approximate number of Youth Services programs the library

offers per year varied greatly. Thirty-eight people responded that the number of Youth

Services programs per year ranged from 49 to 14,506. Among the many programs stated

in this query, weekly storytimes were mentioned eight times. Class visits, home school

visits, homework help, performers, and other special events were mentioned by six

participants. In terms of number of staff for each library surveyed, 39 people responded

and were sure to distinguish between full-time and part-time staff and between

professional staff, assistants, and pages. The larger system-wide public libraries reported

a staff between 13 and 75 Youth Services people on staff; this made 13 of the 39

responses, or 33% of all participants. Six respondents included the total number of

branches in the system and the number of Youth Services staff members per branch. This

averaged one Youth Services staff person per branch. The small libraries reported on

average 1.5 Youth Services librarians on staff; this made up 18% of the participants.

Nineteen respondents, or 49%, reported a bit more vaguely, and answers varied from 2.5

to 11 Youth Services staff members; these included part-time librarians and assistants.

Available Programming for Children with Special Needs

Before addressing the specific nature of the relationship between the library and

unique programming for children with learning disabilities and other special needs, it was

necessary to understand whether or not the library works to include these children in their

programming and how they do so. Therefore, the first question addresses the issue of

whether or not this library or branch is even attempting to meet the needs of this population, and the following questions go into more depth, satisfying whether or not there are programs for children with learning disabilities or if these children are welcome in other programs for children.

For the first question, there were 52 total respondents, 58% which do not provide special programming for children with special needs (Figure 2). However, 87% of these 30 respondents who do not provide special programming for this population do make an effort to include these children in their regularly scheduled programming for children under 18 years old.
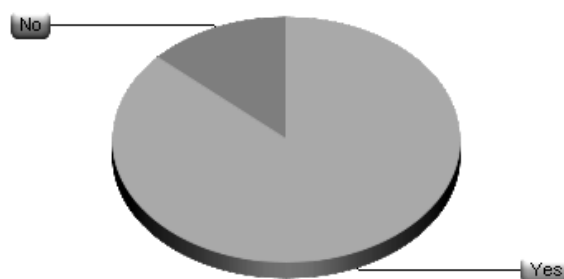

Figure 2: Does your library make an effort to include children with special needs in its regularly scheduled programs for children?

These 22 respondents described how they include this population every day:

- All programs are open to patrons with special needs. Staff make arrangements for equipment or additional furniture patrons may need during the event.
- Check with caregiver for information, then modify environment or strategy as needed.

- We provide some programming that is less structured than traditional classes. We also include caregivers who wish to participate and to facilitate participation.

- We partner closely with our local school system to promote our programs to children with special needs, especially children birth - five with attending story times, etc. We include all children in our summer reading program.

- Provide sign language interpreters when needed; inclusion of movement into storytime; literacy games and toys for independent use and to support socialization; music, instruments, and textures are frequently incorporated into storytime; scheduled outreach programs bring storytime to the classroom.

- By having [children with special needs] assist the young patrons with some of our arts and crafts activities and other weekly programs.

- Any children are welcome to participate. At present our building has handicapped accessibility issues. We are in the middle of a new building project to remedy the situation.

- All children are welcome to our programs. We adapt our programs to fit their needs. I have a nephew with Autism and an uncle with other mental and physical disabilities. I try to make parents and children feel welcome to all of our programs. I have a few children with Autism in my storytimes and a few in my Teen Advisory Group. I have attended local Autism parenting groups and try to keep up with their challenges and needs. We

hope to start some type of programming for special needs children in the future. I'm hoping to partner with the Autism group and the schools special needs preschool.

- We provide Braille, audio books, and tactile books.

- Offers reasonable accommodation, allows alternative participation, offers a quantity of programs so families can find a "good fit".

- All events take place in handicapped-accessible venues, sign language interpreters are available.

- Special needs children use our library frequently, and are welcomed at our programs. Because of shortage of staff, if the special needs child has limited physical and mental abilities, we require an adult to be with them during the programs.

- If they can follow the program, they are included with "typical" children in any program. We changed summer reading to hours-based rather than book-based so that children are rewarded for their effort rather than their completion rate.

- We always offer services, such as interpreters, for children with special needs, and encourage parents to contact us for further support.

- There is never a question - everyone is welcome!

- Children with autism regularly participate in several of our community storytimes.

- We try to structure our programs in such a way that all children can benefit. When we are aware of a special needs child, we talk with the parent to see how they can best be included.

- We try to implement as many types and kinds of activities as possible involving all senses.

- Attempting to use what we know about special needs to make programs accessible. Welcoming to children with special needs.

- They are invited to our regular storytimes, Lego building program and Love on a Leash- reading to dogs.

- Offered to provide sign language when requested 48 hours in advance; allowed mentally retarded children of an older age to sign up for a program with younger age limits.

- All our programming is open to any one. Those with special needs are encouraged to attend. We ask that they contact us if they have a need such as an interpreter.

While the responses vary with regard to the level to which children with special needs are included, these answers imply a very welcoming environment for all children of any ability. There appears to be concern for the inclusion of these children, along with interest in meeting their individual needs. There is collaboration with parents and local teachers, which demonstrates a desire to include children of any ability into the everyday programming available at these public libraries.

Forty-two percent of the 52 respondents to the question do provide special

opportunities for children with any type of special needs. Of these 22 respondents, 68%

also provide special programming specifically for children with learning disabilities
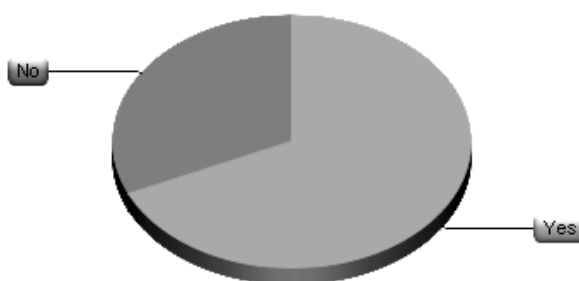
(Figure 3).

Figure 3: Is there any programming made available specifically for children with learning disabilities?

These participants described the programs they provide for children with learning

disabilities population and their goals. Since the descriptions below describe programs for

children of various special needs, this may illustrate confusion among librarians about the

needs of children with learning disabilities versus children with other cognitive

disabilities.

- Provide a fun atmosphere and program for special needs children of all

   ages and their parent or caregiver. Usually involves a craft.

- Storytime for Deaf and Hearing Impaired; Braille type program for sighted

   children; site for developmentally disabled teens to volunteer accompanied

   by their occupational therapists; Braille materials; ASL video and

   described video materials.

- We provide library evenings and sensory storytimes for children with Autism.

- Video programs featuring the Developing Minds videos of Dr. Mel Levine.

- Availability of toys, regalia, models; recorded books; Braille materials; large print books; oversized books; closed caption films; hi/lo materials; prints pictures and posters; descriptive videos.

- We have had one three-week series of storytimes for special needs children. Our main goal was to offer a storytime where parents of children who are uncomfortable with their children's behavior in ordinary programs may feel free to attend. All children have always been welcomed at all programs, but we find that few children with special needs regularly attend. We wanted this experience to be available to all children in the community.

- Sensory Storytime is a monthly storytime for preschool children, about half hour long.

- We have a special needs storytime each month. This is open specifically to children of all ages with any sort of special need or learning disability. The goal is for children and families who do not feel comfortable attending regular storytimes to have a warm and inviting experience at the library.

- Special Kids Music Extravaganza (story time for kids with special needs)

- We will be beginning in the fall a special story time geared specifically for children with special needs, especially those on the Autism spectrum.

- Reading Tutoring for K-5 Students: Free one-on-one tutoring in reading is available through a partnership with Tucson OASIS. Tutoring services, provided by senor volunteers, are available in metro Tucson libraries weekdays, weekends and throughout the summer. The OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program is celebrating 20 years of helping children read better. The OASIS Reading Club is housed within the Pima County Public Libraries. WYNN Wizard: Software and Optical Character Recognition Scanner Main Children's Room, First Floor: Kids' Homework Station For children with learning disabilities, reading disorders, dexterity impairments, vision loss, writing or typing difficulties. The library endeavors to make all of its services, programs, facilities, and employment opportunities available to, accessible for, and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Arizonans with Disabilities Act, and applicable regulations under these acts.

- Class visits - introducing special needs children to the library

- We offer class visits to the library for all students, therefore we have classes of students with a wide variety of handicaps.

Library Program Evaluation

The next question addresses evaluation of programming in the library. Despite the literature that suggests the importance of evaluations for library programming, research suggests that many public libraries do not practice regular evaluation for its services and

programs. Indeed, just 18% of the 49 participants responded that they conduct

evaluations after each program (Table 2). The respondents who answered "Yes" to this

query were allowed to select all of the possible methods of evaluation that were

applicable to their library. Of these nine responses, 100% ask for feedback from the

parents or caregivers of the children involved in the program. Two-thirds of the

respondents offer questionnaires to participants of the program, and 56% of all answers

considered the level of engagement of the children in their evaluation. Twenty-two

percent of participants interview attendees of the program and consider whether or not

there was an increase in circulation of the collection in their evaluation. Respondents had

the option to check all relevant answers to this query. Interestingly, of 49 respondents,

14% have hired a specific librarian or librarians to coordinate the programming for

children with special needs.

What do you include in the evaluations?	%
The majority of the children involved were engaged throughout the program.	56%
Feedback from parents or caregivers.	100%
Circulation of materials increased.	22%
Questionnaires from participants of the program.	67%
Interviews of participants of the program.	22%

Table 2: Methods of evaluation for library programming

Special Education Program Best Practices

In order to better understand the information needs with regard to learning about

the best practices in special education programs, the participants were asked about their

behaviors and preferences; respondents were allowed to select all of the possible answers

that were applicable to their library. Of the 47 respondents, 47% receive information about best practices in special education programs and 53% do not (Table 3). The 22 subjects who responded positively were then asked how they receive information about best practices in special education programs. There were five possible answers with an option to include another method to receive information. Eighty-six percent responded they receive data on best practices in special education programs from professional literature while 71% learn from special education professionals. The rest of the responses suggest librarians receive information from within their own organization with 57% learn from other librarians, 33% gain information from the public library system's administration, and 14% receive this data from their supervisor. Finally, ten participants included other sources:

- Conferences & webinars

- I have a friend who teaches special ed.

- State library system continuing education courses

- ALSC Library Services to Special Populations & their Caregivers Committee

- Library Association, State Library

- State Library

- Parents inform us

- I have a relationship with the Family Support Network here in town and also receive Autism updates online.

- professional development workshops; conference programs

- listservs

How do you or your colleagues receive information about best practices in special education programs?	%
From the public library system's administration	33%
From your supervisor	14%
From other librarians	57%
From special education professionals	71%
From professional literature	86%
Other	48%

Table 3: Current sources of best practices within special education programming

All respondents were asked how they prefer to receive information about best practices in special education programs and were allowed to select all of the possible answers that were applicable to their library. Forty-eight people responded to this question. Seventy-one percent would prefer to learn from professional literature, and 90% preferred to learn from special education professionals (Figure 4). Looking at the library's own formal structure, 63% of the subjects hoped to learn from their peers, 21% expect to learn best practices of special education programming from their library system's administration, and 19% preferred to obtain this information from their supervisors. Ten people had other suggestions:

- Parents and caregivers

- Our Youth Services Department - the coordinator has a master's degree in special education

- Conferences & webinars

- State library system's continuing education courses

- ALSC LSSPCC

- see above

- Parents inform us.

- From professional library literature

- Family Support Network and listservs

- Workshops

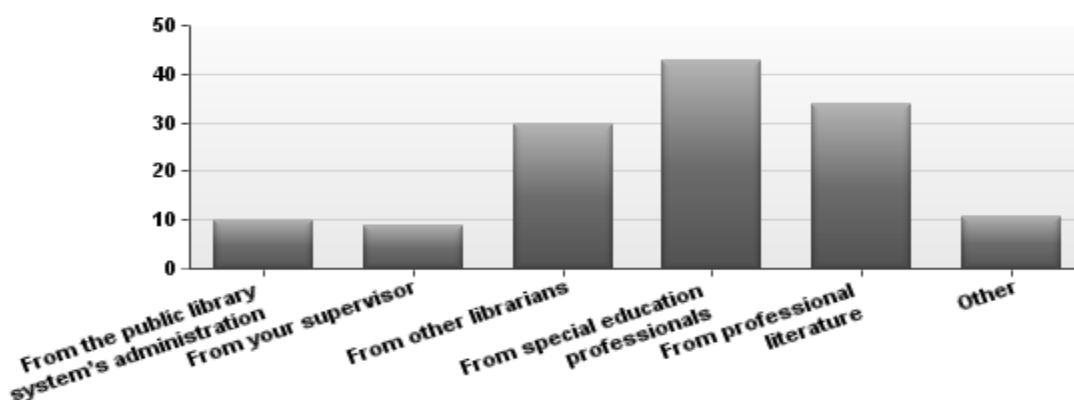- professional development workshops; attending conferences

Figure 4: Preferred sources of best practices within special education programming

The results of this specific area were consistent with the findings of a study

conducted by Allen (2008) with school librarians. Allen found that a small percentage,

just 22%, of school librarians nationwide receive information about best practices in

special education programs. However, all participants were asked their preferences on

receiving information about best practices in special education programs, and 50%

preferred to receive this information from special education professionals (Allen, 2008, p.

15). There is a clear partiality to learning firsthand from the people who are most familiar

with children with special needs, and the results found in Allen's study are consistent with those found in this research.

With relation to the immediate community, libraries gather information about how to work with the needs of individual children with learning disabilities through a variety of sources. Respondents were allowed to select all of the possible answers that were applicable to their library in terms how they learn about how to meet the needs of their immediate community. Of the 48 responses, 60% do not receive any information about the needs of the children with learning disabilities in their community. Of those 19 participants who do receive information about the children in their immediate community, 72% consult special education teachers, 44% read professional literature to support their work with patrons, 33% consult other librarians, 17% receive information from their supervisor, and 11% obtain this data from the public library system's administration. One-third of the respondents offered the following additional sources:

- Youth Services Coordinator

- They are parents of kids with disabilities and are hooked in to local networks.

- They are library patrons

- St Vincent's Special Needs, other community news

- School districts, therapists, marketing dept

- Parents

All participants were asked about their preferred sources to obtain information about the children with learning disabilities in their immediate community. Forty-six people responded to this query and were allowed to select all of the possible answers that

were applicable to their library (Table 4). Eighty-nine percent, the overwhelming

majority, preferred to consult special education teachers on how to meet the specific

needs of the children in their community. Forty-eight percent preferred to work with

other librarians on this responsibility, and 46% preferred to support this information with

professional literature. In contrast, 20% preferred to obtain information about the needs

of the children in their community from the public library system's administration, and

17% preferred to learn this from their immediate supervisor. Sixteen individuals offered

additional suggestions:

- Parents and caregivers

- The families

- Youth Services Coordinator

- From the parents or school district

- Parents groups.

- From their families

- see above

- School districts

- Parents

- From school specialists

- I would think there would be a privacy issue in sharing that info with

  anyone but a parent.

- Families coming into the library; Family Support Network

- Their families

- Parents/families

- Parents

- Workshops

It is clear from these additional responses that librarians prefer to learn about the children in the community from the parents and families directly. This makes the assumption that the parents and families are willing to approach librarians to inform them of their children and their specific needs. Since majority of the respondents prefer to learn about this information from special education teachers. These librarians may be more likely to learn of families that might not have been aware of the library's programming or other services, allowing the librarians to reach out to these families through a more effective third party.

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How would you prefer to receive information about the children with learning disabilities in your community?	%
From the public library system's administration	20%
From your supervisor	17%
From other librarians	48%
From special education teachers	89%
From professional literature	46%
Other	37%

Table 4: Preferred sources of information about the children with learning disabilities in the immediate community

Training to Work with Children with Special Needs

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) (1994) recommends training library staff to work with children with various special needs. ALSC specifically suggests training in staff meetings, workshops with local speakers, working with local

teachers and parents, and acknowledging national, state, and local agencies. Participants were asked these specific options in this query with an opportunity to include other ways to train and were allowed to select all of the possible answers that were applicable to their library (Table 5). First, subjects were asked if they and their colleagues are trained to work with children with various special needs. Of the 46 responses, 70% do not receive training to work with children with various special needs. The 14 people who responded positively to this question were asked how they learn and train to work with children with various special needs. Forty-three percent of the respondents learn from local teachers and from national, state, or local agencies, but 71% of subjects learn and train with the parents of the children. Sixty-four percent attend workshops with local speakers, and 578% receive training in staff meetings. Four participants suggested additional sources:

- Workshop with national speaker

- Conferences

- Previous experience working with special needs children

- Family Support Network; Autism Society

It is clear from these results that training for work with children with special needs is lacking in the public library system, making public librarians less capable of working with and meeting the needs of as many individuals and populations as possible.

Are you and your colleagues are trained to work with children with various special needs?	%
Staff meetings	57%
Workshops with local speakers	64%
Local teachers	43%
Parents of children with special needs	71%
National, state, or local agencies	57%
Other	29%

Table 5: Current sources of training to work with children with special needs

Forty-six participants were also asked how they prefer to learn and train to work with children with various special needs; respondents were allowed to select all of the possible answers that were applicable to their library (Figure 5). Sixty-seven percent reported to prefer to learn and train with local teachers and parents of children with special needs as well as a preference to learn and train from national, state, or local agencies; 48% prefer to do their training in staff meetings. An overwhelming 93% prefer to receive their training in workshop with local speakers. Five participants offered additional suggestions:

- A class with a trained special ed educator

- Conferences

- Same as above
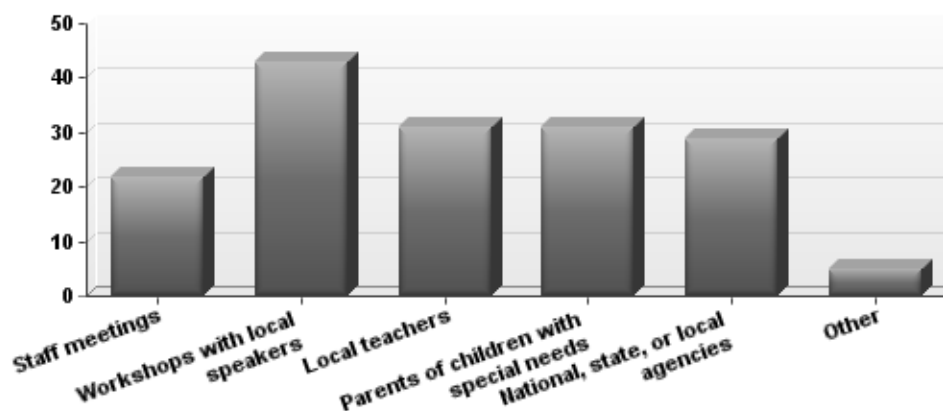
- Conference programs

- Videos

Figure 5 : Preferred sources of training to work with children with special needs

Training to Work with Children with Learning Disabilities

In order to understand how libraries train with children specifically with learning disabilities, the next query asked 46 participants whether or not they are trained to work with this population (Table 6). Eighty-seven percent are not trained to work with children with learning disabilities. The six positive respondents were allowed to select all of the methods to train and learn to work with children with learning disabilities that were applicable to their library. Of these respondents, 50% reported to receive information and training from the parents of children with special needs, staff meetings, local teachers, and national, state, or local agencies. Thirty-three percent learn in workshops with local speakers. Three participants offered additional suggestions:

- Workshop with national speaker

- Previous training

- articles, professional literature

Despite a rapid increase in children diagnosed with learning disabilities, a very small

percentage of public libraries are training their staff to meet the needs of this large

population.

How do you and your colleagues learn and train to work with children with learning disabilities?	%
Staff meetings	50%
Workshops with local speakers	33%
Local teachers	50%
Parents of children with special needs	50%
National, state, or local agencies	50%
Other	50%

Table 6: Current sources of training to work with children with learning disabilities

Marketing Programming to Parents, Teachers, Organizations, and Other Agencies

Both ALSC (1994) and Walling and Karrenbrock (1993) recommend publicizing

events and programming opportunities to the proper target audience. The next questions

address publicizing programs and include some suggestions from Walling and

Karrenbock (1993). Of 45 respondents, 60% reported to inform parents, teachers, and

other organizations and agencies of the library programs that are appropriate for children

with learning disabilities. Respondents who answered positively to this question were

allowed to select all of the possible methods of marketing that were applicable to their

library (Figure 6). The vast majority of these positive responses, 96% of the 27

participants who do market their programs, inform the targeted audience through personal

contacts within or visits to relevant organizations and agencies. Seventy percent post

flyers and posters within the library and 48% perform outside advertisements and

publicity. Seven participants also do additional forms of marketing:

- Newsletter

- Personal conversation with parents and teachers

- Word-of-mouth

- Teachers

- Regional youth program information

- Face to face if they are in the library

If only two-thirds of libraries are informing their community of programming for children with learning disabilities, there is a large population of families whose needs could be met that do not even know these services are available. With over half of all children in the United States being diagnosed with a specific learning disability, it would benefit libraries to let their communities know of their services and materials available to these families.
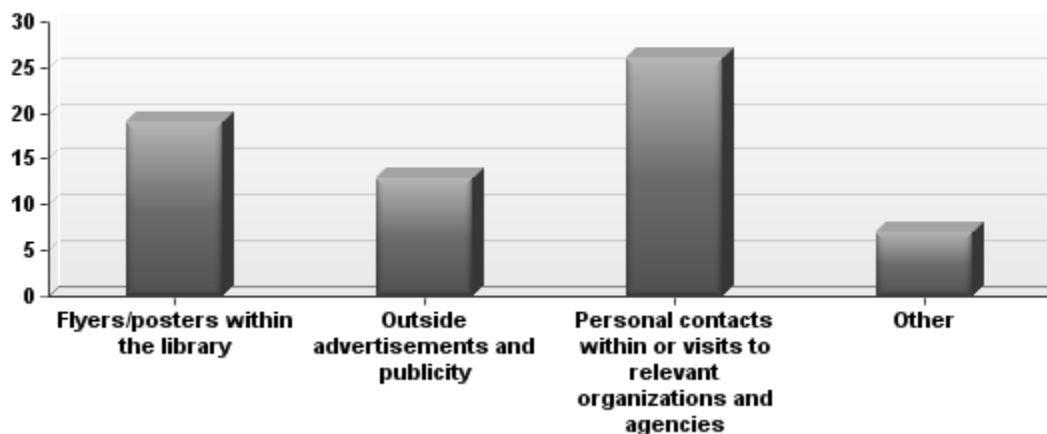

Figure 6: Current forms of marketing programs to parents, teachers, and other organizations and agencies

Collaboration

      The literature recommends collaborating with other persons or organizations in order to better meet the needs of the community. By collaborating, many people and ideas are involved, often making for a more successful event. Indeed, 57% of respondents do collaborate with other persons or organizations to create successful programs for children with learning disabilities (Figure 7). For this query, the options come directly from the ALSC *Programming for Serving Children with Special Needs* (1994), and respondents were allowed to select all that were applicable to their library. At 81%, the majority of these respondents collaborate with local teachers and 54% collaborate with parents of children with special needs and with national, state, or local agencies. Five respondents chose to offer additional suggestions:

- Other librarians

- Message boards

- Family Support Network

- Directly with the hired performers, as well.

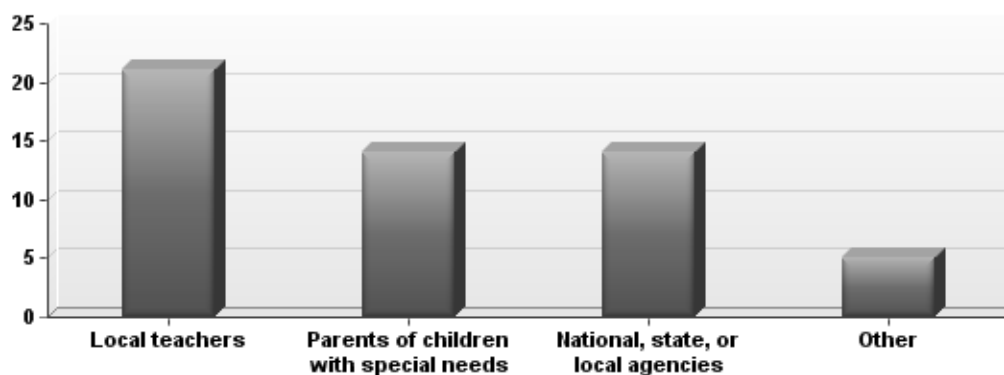- Outreach programs with a special needs child care agency

Figure 7: Primary preferred agencies for collaboration to create successful programs for children with learning disabilities

Conclusion

This study was driven by the recognition that public librarians, as professionals serving the public, have a responsibility to their immediate community of patrons with special needs in equal capacity to patrons without disabilities. As community resources, public libraries provide a variety of services to their communities to meet information, education, recreation, and socialization needs; these needs and expectations may vary greatly from patron to patron. Of the 5.4 million children and youth between the ages of 3 and 21 years old with disabling conditions, 51.1% have specific learning disabilities. With over 2.6 million children and youth suffering from learning disabilities, it is necessary that public libraries reach out to this population in order to encourage and support their learning and social mainstreaming process.

With this in mind, this study was designed to determine what programs are available within the public library for children with special needs or, more specifically,

with learning disabilities; the goals and objectives of these programs and how they are being met and evaluated; and what librarians are doing to inform the development of the programming they provide to children with learning disabilities. In summary, participants' responses indicated areas of need with regard to learning about best practices in special education as well as training with children with special needs or, especially, learning disabilities. In addition, there are inadequacies in the evaluation and marketing of programs in the library. Finally, the answers to this study suggest that librarians are not being included in the decision making of the budget for Youth Services programming, which may or may not have an effect on programming for this population.

Nevertheless, despite indications of these inadequacies, there is a significant awareness of and concern for this population within the participants' responses. Nearly all of the participants reported to have some sort of program to include children with special needs in their library services, as well as having physical facilities and space that can be adapted to arrange to make programs accessible to all children. There is clear interest in collaboration with outside professionals, particularly local special education teachers. Indeed, answers indicate good relationships with these contacts, relying on them for nearly every aspect of programming: from understanding best practices of special education programs to the actual learning and training to work with children with special needs, from the creation of the program to the marketing and promotion of the programs themselves. These strong community associations can build the reputation of the public library while creating a place for all children to grow and learn comfortably.

With these positive connections and possibilities, there are additional methods of educating librarians on best practices of special education programming and of learning

and training to work with this population. There may be too strong a dependency on the knowledge and time of local special education professionals. The library administration could play a larger role in the distribution of special education information and allowing librarians to train with national professionals at conferences and workshops. It would also behoove the administration to help inform their librarians of the needs of their immediate community with regard to families with children with special needs or with learning disabilities. This information can be researched through periodic community analyses and passed on to the librarians who actually work with and reach out to the community. In addition, additional community contacts to promote services and resources would help to increase the library's awareness and familiarity within the residents and local taxpayers.

There is a need for libraries to conduct evaluations and assessments of their programs. The majority of respondents do not evaluate their programs, which suggests a lack of time or commitment. In either situation, information about the strengths or weaknesses of the programs, who attended, and similar data would only strengthen the services and resources that the library provides. Evaluating these specific programs can help to provide data to a community analysis or any report to the library's administration. In addition, the indication that librarians are not involved in the creation and decision making of the budget suggests a lack of communication between librarians and the library's administration. It is important that all stakeholders be aware of major decisions, and an iterative budget process can help make librarians be an active part of the entire organization.

Literature in the fields of education, disability, and medicine suggest that children with disabilities perform better, both educationally and socially, when treated as

nondisabled children and integrated into mainstream settings. This study provides a brief look at the many ways in which libraries are working toward that goal. It gives credit to those librarians who are not only making very real efforts to provide services for all children in their community but also recognizes that they have areas in which they can learn more. Indeed, this data provides only a small impression of what public libraries are doing with and for children with special needs and with learning disabilities. More efforts must be made to understand the actual needs and expectations of the families of these children and whether those are being met in order to improve the field of library science.

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Appendix A

Mass Email Solicitation

To: All public library mailing list participants

Subject: Programming for Children with Learning Disabilities

Dear (name),

By way of introduction, I am a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. I am researching the programming available in public libraries for children with learning disabilities, and I am very interested to know how you include this population in the programming you make available to children. In addition, I would like to know how librarians in your public library keep themselves educated on the needs of this community.

The survey will take 10-15 minutes of your time. The survey is online, and you can take it anywhere and anytime you choose in the next two weeks.

To learn more and to volunteer to take the survey, visit this URL:
https://uncodum.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9pKmVaRUXAFbRis

*** Choosing or declining to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You will not be offered nor receive any special consideration if you take part in this research. Your answers to the survey will remain completely anonymous at all times. This study has been approved by the UNC Behavioral IRB (IRB Study No. 11-0088) ***

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Appendix B

Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study for any reason without penalty.

 If you are unwilling to participate after reading this informational website, then you are free to leave the study without penalty. In fact, you are free to leave the study *at any time* should you decide to withdraw your consent. In this study, you will be asked to answer questions in an onscreen survey. You are free to skip questions if you choose not to answer them. You cannot go back to questions once you have answered them.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to understand what programming is available in public libraries for children with learning disabilities. This involves any program for all children that also includes this population as well as programs that are specifically designed for children with learning – or other - disabilities. The study also is examining how the librarians working in public libraries educate themselves about the needs of this population.

How many people will take part in this study?
It is anticipated that more than 600 people will participate in this study by answering this online survey.

How long will your participation in this study last?
Your participation in this study will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to answer an online survey containing approximately 20 questions.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Your participation in this study will help us understand more about programming that is being made available in public libraries across the country for children with learning – and possibly other - disabilities. The data you provide may be used to help libraries and other institutions improve the quality of their collections and services. Additionally, if you wish to learn more about this study (including the answers to the survey questions), you will be provided with the address of a website containing further information, after the study is complete.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved in being in this study?
There are no foreseeable risks to being in this study. However, there may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher. Please

use the email address or phone number provided if problems arise after you have completed participation.

How will your privacy be protected?
Your personal information will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although the survey will ask for information about your library's community, this data will not be linked to your responses in any way and will only be compiled with data of the other participants to broadly describe the overall group of participants. Your email address will not be used for any purpose other than the initial informational email during or after the study. After we send you the web link to this finished study, your email address will be erased. All answers that you give to the survey questions during the study will be stored on a secure server in a password-protected account. There will be no way for anyone else to link your email address with your responses to the survey questions.

Will you receive anything for being in the study?
There are neither anticipated risks should you participate nor anticipated benefits from being involved in the study. However, there will be educational or professional benefits from the study. The information you provide will help identify current practices in public libraries with regard to programming for children with learning disabilities – what is working as well as areas in need of improvement. There is no cost to you or financial benefit for your participation.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
It will cost you nothing to be in this study, other than 10-15 minutes of your time.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the principal researcher listed at the top of this page.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research involving human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact (anonymously if you wish) the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or at IRB_subjects@unc.edu; please reference study #11-0088.

Participant's Agreement
By clicking "Start Survey", you confirm that (1) **you are at least 18 years of age**, (2) **you have read the informational website**, and (3) **you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study**.

Appendix C

Electronic Survey Questions

1. Does your library provide special programming for children with special needs?
    Yes ___ No ___

2. {If yes} Is there any programming made available specifically for children with learning disabilities?
    Yes ___ No ___

3. {If yes to #2} Please briefly describe the programs and their goals.
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. {If no to #1} Does your library make an effort to include children with special needs in its regularly scheduled programs for children?
    Yes ___ No ___

5. {If yes to #4} How does your library include children with special needs in its regularly scheduled programs for children?
    _____
    _____
    _____

6. Does your library conduct evaluations after each program?
    Yes ___ No ___

7. {If yes} What do you include in the evaluations? (Please select all that apply.)

    ___ The majority of the children involved were engaged throughout the program.
    ___ Feedback from parents or caregivers.
    ___ Circulation of materials increased.
    ___ Questionnaires from participants of the program.
    ___ Interviews of participants of the program.

8. Does your library have a specific librarian(s) to coordinate programming for children with special needs?
    Yes ___ No ___

9. Do you or your colleagues receive information about best practices in special education programs?
    Yes ___ No ___

10. {If yes} How do you or your colleagues receive information about best practices in special education programs? (Please select all that apply.)

___ From the public library system's administration
___ From your supervisor
___ From other librarians
___ From special education professionals
___ From professional literature
___ Other _____

11. How would you prefer to receive information about best practices in special education programs? (Please select all that apply.)

___ From the public library system's administration
___ From your supervisor
___ From other librarians
___ From special education professionals
___ From professional literature
___ Other _____

12. Do you or your colleagues receive information about the children with learning disabilities in your community?
Yes ___ No ___

13. {If yes} How do you or your colleagues receive information about the children with learning disabilities in your community? (Please select all that apply.)

___ From the public library system's administration
___ From your supervisor
___ From other librarians
___ From special education professionals
___ From professional literature
___ Other_____

14. How would you prefer to receive information about the children with learning disabilities in your community? (Please select all that apply.)

___ From the public library system's administration
___ From your supervisor
___ From other librarians
___ From special education professionals
___ From professional literature
___ Other _____

15. Are you and your colleagues trained to work with children with various special needs?
    Yes ___ No ___

16. {If yes to #15} How do you and your colleagues learn and train to work with children with various special needs? (Please select all that apply.)

    ___ Staff meetings
    ___ Workshops with local speakers
    ___ Local teachers
    ___ Parents of children with special needs
    ___ National, state, or local agencies
    ___ Other _____

17. {If yes to #15} How would you prefer to learn and train to work with children with various special needs? (Please select all that apply.)

    ___ Staff meetings
    ___ Workshops with local speakers
    ___ Local teachers
    ___ Parents of children with special needs
    ___ National, state, or local agencies
    ___ Other _____

18. {If yes to #15} Are you and your colleagues trained to work with children specifically with learning disabilities?
    Yes ___ No ___

19. {If yes to #16} How do you and your colleagues learn and train to work with children with learning disabilities? (Please select all that apply.)

    ___ Staff meetings
    ___ Workshops with local speakers
    ___ Local teachers
    ___ Parents of children with special needs
    ___ National, state, or local agencies
    ___ Other _____

20. Do you or your colleagues inform parents, teachers, and other organizations and agencies of the library programs that are appropriate for children with learning disabilities?
    Yes ___ No ___

21. {If yes} How do you or your colleagues inform parents, teachers, and other organizations and agencies of the library programs that are appropriate for children with learning disabilities? (Please select all that apply.)

___ Flyers/posters within the library
___ Outside advertisements
___ Personal contacts within or visits to relevant organizations and agencies
___ Other _____

22. Do you or your colleagues collaborate with other persons or organizations to create successful programs for children with learning disabilities?
Yes ___ No ___

23. {If yes} How do you or your colleagues collaborate with other persons or organizations to create successful programs for children with learning disabilities? (Please select all that apply.)

___ Local teachers
___ Parents of children with special needs
___ National, state, or local agencies
___ Other _____

24. Are the physical facilities and space adapted to arrange to make the program accessible to all children?
Yes ___ No ___

25. Approximately what is the size of the community served by your library?

___ Less than 25,000
___ 25,000 - 50,000
___ 100,000 - 250,000
___ 250,000 – 500,000
___ More than 500,000

26. How many staff members do you have in your Youth Services department?
_____

27. What percent of your library's budget is spent on Youth Services programs/services?
_____

28. How many Youth Services programs does your library offer per year?
_____