

Measuring the IMPACT of Early Childhood Information Literacy Programs on Children

Eliza T. Dresang
University of Washington iSchool
PO Box 352840
Seattle, WA 98195-2840
01-206-542-0169

edresang@u.washington.edu

Kathleen Burnett
Florida State University, SLIS
PO Box 3062100
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2100
01-850-644-8124

kburnett@fsu.edu

Janet Capps
Florida State University, SLIS
PO Box 3062100
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2100
01-850-644-5775

Capps.janet@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This roundtable discussion proposal supports the IMPACT theme of the conference as well as the conference area of interest in "Information behavior: theoretical, empirical and methodological advances in everyday life settings. . .information literacy." It complements the new research stream for papers developed by the Associate Deans for Research of the iSchools, "Measuring Research Impact." And it brings focus on a user group, very young children, who are often overlooked in information research. The proposal for this discussion stems from an initiative in the state of Washington, which appears to have an exemplary and unique program for providing early learning, particularly early information literacy programs, in which libraries, public and school, play a leadership role. To find out whether what appears to be the case is indeed the case, the University of Washington Information School, the Washington Early Learning Public Library Partnership (ELPLP) consisting of 25 urban, suburban, and rural library systems, the Washington Foundation for Early Learning (FEL), a non-profit organization supporting early childhood development, and the Florida State University College of Communication and Information, have joined forces. The ELPLP, FEL, as well as a cabinet-level Department of Early Learning, appear to be unique to Washington.

In September, the four partner institutions, with the University of Washington as the lead, received a one-year National Leadership Planning Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to develop a plan to assess or measure the impact on children of the early childhood literacy programs in which Washington libraries are involved. This partnership is firmly committed to developing a national model that includes an assessment of the impact (rather than the inputs) of library-related early learning programs on children.

The researcher submitting this proposal developed, with other colleagues, a method for assessing impact of technology use in libraries for older children in the early part of this decade (see Dresang et al. Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome Based Planning and Evaluation). Although certain components of that model might apply to early learners, in general it is not developmentally appropriate for this age group.

Aspects of this round table discussion that will interest various iSchools Conference participants include

--reflection on the information needs of a user group that does not appear often in iSchool research, preliterate children and how information literacy is provided to these young users

-- proposed research methods, some of which are uncommon in the field of information, e.g., Bayesian networks, a statistical method involving probability of certain observable behaviors in relation to achieving desired learning outcomes

-- a tool that the doctoral candidate (Capps) is developing to measure core knowledge of early literacy providers (an input that will surely affect the outcome)

-- insight into a unique and very strong collaborative community partnership with library leadership that focuses on research results as a primary goal

-- the opportunity to contribute ideas to a multi-year information-related project that is under development.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

A. General Literature

General Terms

Measurement, Performance, Experimentation,

Keywords

Information seeking and use, literacy, research, methods