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What Library Schools Offer that School Library Media Specialists and Youth Services Librarians Need

When asked to speak at this conference on the topic, "What Library Schools Offer that School Library Media Specialists and Youth Services Librarians Need," it was decided that personal experience needed to be supplemented with curriculum revision at Michigan and with the rather sketchy knowledge of what some colleagues at other universities are doing in library education for youth services with current information from other programs. Many library school catalogs, including Michigan's, did not reflect the most recent developments, and the professional literature seemed to focus more on what is not being done rather than what is being done.

An urgent plea along with a brief questionnaire, "Educational Programs for Librarians Who Work With Youth," was sent in September 1986 to a representative of each U.S. institutional member of the Association of Library and Information Science Educators (ALISE). Both regular and associate members were included in the survey. In most cases the representatives were persons designated as having graduate specializations in library service for children and young adults and/or school library media programs, as reported in the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* directory issue, 1985-86. In spite of the short time frame and busy schedules, fifty-two of the seventy institutions contacted (74 percent) sent responses. Findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that forty-nine of the fifty-two institutions responding (94 percent) have curriculum plans or concentrations for those preparing at the graduate level to be school library media specialists. Forty-one (79 percent) reported having curriculum plans or concentrations for youth services in public libraries. One might wonder whether failure to respond meant that those institutions do not have programs in either of these areas.

TABLE 1
INSTITUTIONS WITH GRADUATE PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH SERVICES

	<i>Have</i>		<i>Do Not Have</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
School Library Media Curriculum Plan	49	94	3	6
Public Library Youth Services Curric. Plan	41	79	11	21

N = 52 Institutions

That should not be assumed, however. Several are known to have specializations in school library media and/or in public library services for youth and have faculty who have expertise in these fields.

Fifty institutions answered questions on number of faculty, full and part time, who teach courses related to library services for youth in school or public libraries. The number of full-time faculty reported ranges from zero to seven, and for part-time faculty, from zero to twenty. No institution reported zero for both full- and part-time faculty. Whether or not they have concentrations in youth services, all institutions represented in the survey have one or more faculty members with expertise in this field. Although two of the respondents stated philosophical commitments to adjunct faculty who are library practitioners, many others seemed to prefer a balance between full-time faculty who have the responsibility to develop curriculum, conduct research, and counsel students as well as to teach, and the practitioner or doctoral student with recent experience in the field.

Forty-four institutions responded to the question: Approximately what percent of those who graduated from your program within the past two years have been employed in public library youth services or in school library media programs? The range was 5 percent to 100 percent with a mean percentage of 40.7. The median was 30 percent and responses were tri-modal (10, 30, and 33 percent). However, if the eight institutions which are virtually single purpose (those reporting that 90 percent or more of their graduates have been placed in school or public library youth services positions) were excluded, the mean for the remaining thirty-six would be 28.4 percent and the median would be 26.5 percent. For a majority of library schools responding, more than one-fourth of their graduates have been placed in school or public library youth services positions within the past two years.

Program requirements, in addition to the courses required for all graduates, differ from one institution to another, but there are consistent strands to be found. For school library media concentrations, administration of media programs; literature or materials for children and young adults (sometimes with several courses specified in this area); the teaching

or curriculum role of the library media specialist; design, production, and use of audiovisual media; computer literacy; and a practicum were often cited.

For a concentration in public library youth services, the number of required courses is usually less although library programs and services for children and young adults, literature or materials for children and young adults (several courses may be specified in this area), and a practicum are often listed. Design, production, and use of audiovisual media and micro-computers in libraries were frequent additions.

Some other required courses for students preparing to be youth services librarians in school or public library settings were listed by one or more institutions: planning information systems for children and young adults, oral programming for libraries, public library interagency cooperation, psychology of childhood and adolescence, multicultural librarianship, information transfer and children, communication and learning theory, inner city seminar, and teaching of reading. Most of the electives listed were variations of children's literature—e.g., information books for children, fantasy books for children, folklore and storytelling, multicultural literature for youth, contemporary literature for children, criticism of children's literature, history and development of literature for children, media for minorities, topics in literature for children and young adults (with variation from term to term), puppetry, and bibliotherapy. Another elective of interest was computer coordination for media centers.

One respondent cautioned against too much emphasis on special courses for youth services librarians. Many of the courses in a library school curriculum look at the information needs of youth as part of a larger perspective, she noted. She suggested that a content analysis of all courses offered would be a better way of determining what library schools are offering that youth services librarians need. It is indeed a point well taken although the task is beyond the scope of this survey.

A recent curriculum revision at The University of Michigan was developed by determining the essential content (competencies, skills, knowledge) for all graduate students in the program and then the additional content needed by those in each of the special curriculum plans offered. This planning process resulted in a number of new courses and a restructuring of most remaining ones. The faculty, working together over time on this revision, reaffirmed that, to a considerable extent, information professionals of all kinds have need for common learnings.

We found that several of the special emphases which had made school library media programs different—varied media, the understanding of technology necessary for their use, and even the instructional role of the librarian—have been mainstreamed by the profession. For example, a new course at Michigan, "Design of Information Products," adapted from a

course in instructional development which has been taken almost exclusively by students in the school library media concentration, was praised recently as highly desirable for students preparing for their own specializations by academic and public library members of Michigan Dean Robert Warner's advisory committee as well as by representatives from the information industry with whom the school has consulted. In addition, a program component on "communication," long required of school library media specialists, is now required for all students.

Table 2 reports the increase, decrease, and no change in number of courses and faculty, full and part-time, within the past two years, according to those responding to the survey described earlier. Ten institutions (19 percent) have increased the number of courses related to children's and young adult materials and service which they offer. Only one institution has decreased course offerings in this area. Most institutions (thirty-four or 65 percent) report no change, and seven (14 percent) did not respond to this question.

Loss in numbers of full-time faculty within the past two years is reported by five institutions (10 percent). That is higher than the decrease in courses reported and should signal concern. Also, a slightly lower number of institutions reported an increase in full-time faculty within the past two years than the reported increase in courses offered (eight or 15 percent). A large majority of institutions (71 percent or thirty-seven) reported no change within this time period. For part-time faculty, increases were greater (sixteen or 31 percent) within the past two years. Only one institution reported decreased part-time faculty, and twenty-six (50 percent) reported no change.

In reporting plans for program emphasis within the next five years, twenty-two respondents (42 percent) said their institutions plan to increase, two (4 percent) said they expect to decrease emphasis, and twenty-six (50 percent) said they do not expect any change in emphasis. Only two institutions (4 percent) did not respond to this question.

TABLE 2
CHANGES IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANS

	Increase		Decrease		No Change		No Response	
	No.	Per-centage	No.	Per-centage	No.	Per-centage	No.	Per-centage
Number of Courses (past 2 yrs)	10	19	1	2	34	65	7	14
Number of F/T Faculty (past 2 yrs)	8	15	5	10	37	71	2	4
Number of P/T Faculty (past 2 yrs)	16	31	1	2	26	50	9	17
Plans for Emphasis (next 5 yrs)	22	42	2	4	26	50	2	4

N = 52 Institutions

It should be noted that a much larger survey, "School Library Media Employment Questionnaire," was distributed to institutions with programs preparing school library media specialists by the American Association for School Librarian's Library Media Educators Section. Results from this survey should be of considerable interest to the field. That questionnaire did not seek information about public library youth services placement and projected need, however.

Of the fifty-two institutions represented in the present survey, forty (77 percent) reported that they had offered one or more continuing education (CE) programs intended for school and/or public library youth services librarians during the past two years. The range for all institutions was zero to seventeen within this time period. Table 3 shows the number of institutions which offered any of the following types of CE programs: (1) those given for academic credit and therefore applicable for a graduate degree, (2) those given for continuing education units (CEUs) as approved by the institution or by a state agency established to coordinate continuing education, and (3) those given as noncredit workshops, conferences, or seminars. Three library schools offered six or more continuing education courses for academic credit, another five institutions offered three to five CE programs for academic credit, and seventeen offered one or two such programs during the past two years. Twenty-five institutions, slightly less than half of the total response group of fifty-two, reported offering continuing education programs for academic credit to youth services librarians.

Programs offering CEU credits were not given quite as often for this audience. Two institutions gave six or more programs, six gave three to five programs, and fourteen gave one or two programs. The total number of institutions offering programs directed to youth services librarians for CEUs was twenty-two.

Noncredit programs for this audience were given by still fewer institutions; none gave six or more programs without credit, six gave three to five programs, and twelve gave one or two during the past two years. Although

TABLE 3
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANS
WITHIN THE PAST TWO YEARS

<i>Type of Program</i>	<i>Number of Programs</i>				
	<i>6 or more</i>	<i>3-5</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Academic Credit	3	5	17	4	23
CEUs	2	6	14	3	27
Noncredit	0	6	12	3	31

Number of Institutions offering 1 or more CE Programs in the past two years = 40 (77 percent)
Range of CE Programs offered = 0-17

the total number of institutions giving this type of continuing education program is smaller than the number giving either of the credit type programs (eighteen), the noncredit activities described by respondents seem to attract larger numbers of participants, often 200 or more for a single event. Thus they do provide a useful function in the professional development of youth services librarians. This may be especially important in geographic areas where other agencies—professional associations, regional service units, or interagency consortia—are not providing such a function. But even if other groups are available, there is value for the library school and for the practitioner to interact on matters of updating professional knowledge.

An impressive and extensive list of CE topics for credit and noncredit was offered by those responding to the questionnaire. They included many facets of materials and services of interest to youth services librarians. Several library schools offer updates on different topics for this audience each year. Some are day long activities, others are one week mini-courses, and still others are offered via television or on a series of Saturdays. It seems safe to say that most library schools would respond positively to almost any suggestion for continuing education activities they received from youth services practitioners.

Responses were mixed to the question: Within the past two years, to what extent have practitioners who work with youth participated in your continuing education activities which were *not* designed especially for this group (e.g., searching automated databases, financial management for librarians, using microcomputers in libraries)? Some respondents said they had no statistics to reflect the degree of participation of any type of professional in their continuing education activities, and others indicated little participation in these general interest topics. One respondent interpreted the question as meaning a lack of importance in these topics for school or public librarians who work with children or young adults. This was certainly not intended. A fair number of library schools reported experiences similar to those at Michigan in which a growing number of youth services librarians are seeking the same kind of professional development as are their colleagues in adult services in academic, special, and public libraries. Particularly in the areas noted earlier—online searching, management skills, and microcomputer applications—information professionals of many specialties seem to be feeling the need for more experience and acting on that need to gain or renew skills.

Conclusions

In summarizing the findings of this survey and drawing conclusions from it, I am modestly optimistic about what library schools are offering

youth services practitioners and those who wish careers in this arena. A large majority of library schools are offering graduate programs with curriculum plans in one or both of the youth services library settings, school or public. All but two of the institutions from which responses were received report that they have one or more faculty members in this area; for forty-nine (94 percent) of the total responding group of fifty-two, at least one of these faculty members has full-time status. This means that someone is there to listen to the needs of youth services librarians and to speak to those needs in curriculum planning activities of the institution.

The percent of graduates who have taken youth services positions in the past two years varies from one institution to another; for the majority in this survey, one-fourth or more of the total number of graduates took such a position. But many institutions, as is true with the library school at Michigan, would welcome the opportunity to increase the number. Twenty-two library schools reported that they plan greater emphasis for this specialization within the next five years. Several are actively recruiting students now to meet the need for youth services professionals in both school and public libraries. These and other library schools may find valuable support for such an action from this Allerton Conference and from the AASL survey mentioned earlier. Few institutions reported decreases in number of courses within the past two years.

The most negative indicator is that five institutions (10 percent) have decreased the number of full-time faculty who have teaching responsibility and expertise in materials and library services for youth. It is hoped and believed that this figure will be reversed in the next two to five years.

Continuing education to meet the needs of youth services practitioners appears to be healthy; many types of programs are offered and most library schools participate in some CE activities for this audience. Not all relevant CE is, or should be, directed exclusively to this audience. If youth services librarians are a part of the mainstream of the information profession, as they must be, then all instructors must understand and courses throughout the curriculum must address the needs of this group within the context of the total professional education as well as through separate segments of that educational program.