

Guiding Children's Reading: Surveys of Youth Services Methods and Emerging Professional Specialization Before 1900

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The emergence of children's librarianship as an accepted specialty in public libraries is generally marked as the year 1900, when Anne Carroll More was becoming a visible and vocal champion of work with children. The following year, 1901, the Pittsburgh Carnegie Training School was established, which soon became the most influential training program for children's librarians in the United States. The year 1900 also marks the formation of the children's librarians' section of the American Library Association.¹ However, much experimental work in guiding children's reading took place throughout the time period from 1876 to 1900. The methods established during this time period reflect both larger issues in the development of public libraries, such as the specialization of services and departments, and an emerging sense of urgency regarding the role of the library in educating young people.

These early experimental methods of service for children were documented and influenced by a series of national surveys, begun by Caroline Hewins in 1882 and continued by Hewins and other women librarians until 1898. Although in *Apostles of Culture*, Dee Garrison characterizes early library work with children as "sentimental," this series of surveys provides evidence that the librarians who opened public library doors to children were thoughtfully rigorous in collecting both quantitative and qualitative data regarding services to youth. The administration of these surveys was passed from librarian to librarian in a cooperative effort, presaging the collaborative spirit that would come to

characterize youth services as a professional specialty. Librarians also administered surveys to children themselves, demonstrating respect for their youngest library patrons and a professional commitment to understanding and meeting their needs. This paper explores how early youth services methods, or “adjuncts of the children’s room,”² were created by innovative librarians as they opened the doors of public and subscription libraries to children and sought effective means of guiding their reading.

The 1876 Report and the 1879 ALA Conference

1876 was a significant year for public libraries and librarians on many fronts, heralding the formation of the American Library Association, the initial publication of *Library Journal*, and the publication of a major report on the status of public libraries, *Public Libraries in the United States of America*. One paper in this report, “Public Libraries and the Young”³ written by William Fletcher, addressed the reading of young people, and its inclusion in the report demonstrated that children were coming to be recognized as “legitimate users of the library.”⁴ In perhaps the most famous quote from his paper, Fletcher asks:

“Who will presume to set the age at which a child may first be stirred with the beginnings of a healthy intellectual appetite on getting a taste of the strong meat of good literature? This point is one of the first importance. No after efforts can accomplish what is done with ease early in life in the way of forming habits either mental or moral, and if there is any truth in the idea that the public library is not merely a storehouse for the supply of the wants of the reading public, but also and especially an educational institution which shall create wants where they do not exist, then the library ought to bring its influences to bear on the young as early as possible.”⁵

Fletcher’s article showed great concern over children and “directing their reading into right channels.”⁶ He also demonstrated an attitude of sympathy towards children that became a foundational element of the philosophy of children’s services, writing: “In the

first place, among the special requirements of the young is this, that the library shall interest and be attractive to them.”⁷

The importance of guiding children’s reading is emphasized and echoed in many documents published around the same time, including the proceedings of the 1879 American Library Association conference in Boston, where speakers addressed the problems of the reading of the young and emphasized the urgency facing librarians of developing methods to guide young readers to better books.⁸ These problems included the general neglect by parents of their children’s reading,⁹ the attraction and deleterious effects of sensational fiction,¹⁰ and the problem of the “tide of indiscriminate reading” and “inordinate consumption of story-books.”¹¹ Cooperation between schools and libraries¹² and annotated lists or catalogues of book for the young¹³ were cited as possible methods to remedy some of these problems, as was Mary Bean’s plea to “*lessen the quantity and improve the quality*”¹⁴ (emphasis in original) of books available to children in libraries. Among the attendees at this 1879 ALA conference was Caroline Hewins,¹⁵ librarian of Hartford, Connecticut, who would pioneer methods of work with youth as well as inaugurate a series of national surveys to determine precisely what was being done to address the reading of the young.

Initial Surveys of Methods for Guiding Children’s Reading, 1882-1890

In 1882, Caroline Hewins surveyed 25 libraries, asking: “What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?” This survey was the first in a series of eight surveys that generated the data for “Reading of the Young” reports. These surveys were administered by various librarians in 1883, 1885, 1889, 1890, 1893, 1894, and the series was concluded by Hewins herself in 1898 (see table 1). Each of the

women who undertook these surveys modified the questions asked, the libraries surveyed, and had different numbers of survey respondents. The numbers of survey questions asked ranged from Hewins' initial one to Hewins' 1898 list of seventeen questions (see appendix C). Although most of the surveying librarians were based in the northeast, respondent libraries were geographically dispersed across the United States in the Northeast, Midwest, West, and South, including libraries in Canada¹⁶ and one in England.¹⁷

These surveys, published as reports on "Reading of the Young," offer snapshots of local methods as well as emerging philosophies that were evolving for guiding children's reading. In her dissertation on the foundation of youth services, Fannette Henrietta Thomas discusses selected survey responses from these reports to illustrate her analysis of the five developments (specialized collections, spaces, personnel, interagency cooperation, and specialized techniques of service)¹⁸ that signaled the genesis of youth services work in public libraries, but Thomas's analysis neither treats these surveys as a series nor investigates the relationship of these surveys to the emergence of youth services. Sybille Jagusch does discuss these surveys as indicative of increasing specialization in her dissertation *First Among Equals: Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore*, but her primary emphasis is on the leadership contribution made by Caroline Hewins as the instigator of these surveys.¹⁹ Similarly, in her biography of Anne Carroll Moore, France Clark Sayers cites the reports of Hewins (1882) and Stearns (1894) as indicative of the emerging "concern for the minds of the young."²⁰ However, none of these sources deals with the fact that this early series of surveys was undertaken when few such surveys of evolving practice were being done within librarianship generally.

These surveys deserve scrutiny as an indicator of outstanding professional rigor amongst the first librarians to serve youth in public libraries.

To some extent, the responses Hewins collected in her 1882 survey seemed to follow from the recommendations made at the 1879 conference. Libraries reported having lists of books available, whether printed or manuscript, as well as marked catalogues.²¹ Many libraries mentioned cooperation with the schools, and those who were less than successful bemoaned the teachers' own disinterest in reading.²² However, libraries were also providing teachers with special borrowing periods to allow them longer access to more books so that they could share literature with their pupils.²³ The 1882 survey indicated continued worry over too much reading, including the fear that "instead of turning out to be prodigies of learning, these library gluttons are far more likely to become prodigious idiots."²⁴

Hewins concludes her report by summarizing major issues revealed by the collected responses, including the problems of parent and teacher indifference toward questions of reading and students' meager knowledge of literature. Her conclusion also emphasizes possible solutions, such as establishing branch libraries in schools, changing teacher certification to include knowledge of literature, using newspapers in schools to encourage knowledge of current events, and, finally, the importance of direct interaction between librarian/assistant and children.²⁵ Hewins stresses this last point, that "[l]ibrarians should like children,"²⁶ arguing that a librarian should interact with children not as an "abstracted scholar," but instead as a "winsome friend, to meet them more than halfway, patiently answer their questions, 'and by slow degrees subdue them to the useful and the good.'"²⁷

The next two in the series of eight “Reading of the Young” surveys were undertaken by librarians who had been respondents to Hewins’ 1882 survey, Mary M. Bean, and Hannah P. James. Bean, of Brookline, Massachusetts, had already made her voice heard through her paper “The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the Use of Juvenile Fiction,”²⁸ which she read at the 1876 ALA conference. In conducting the 1883 survey, Bean requested information from the same 25 libraries that Hewins had asked on premise that “they would have progress to report” and queried an additional 25 “institutions of lesser celebrity,”²⁹ although she received only 25 total replies to her 50 requests. Bean presented her results as a series of excerpts, some of them extensive, from the replies of each respondent library, following the model Hewins had set the previous year. Bean also concluded her report in Hewins’ format, interweaving a synthesis of the replies with her own opinions about the best ways to guide children’s reading. Bean’s conclusion summarized those issues agreed upon by survey respondents: that children read too much, that selection of reading matter is of great importance, that better books are being written for the young, that cooperation between schools and libraries can influence reading, and that children themselves are “easily influenced by people whom they love and respect, be they parents, teachers, or librarians.”³⁰

Hannah P. James conducted the next survey in 1885, which was titled “Yearly Report on the Reading of the Young,”³¹ although more than a year would pass between almost all of the surveys. James’ survey asked questions about connections with schools, methods of influencing book selection, and “whether lists of books for the young had been prepared.”³² James also expanded the number of libraries surveyed, sending 125 circulars and receiving replies from 75 libraries.³³ In this report, excerpts of replies were

organized systematically, arranged alphabetically by state and town, unlike the previous reports in which replies were arranged loosely by theme.

The 1885 survey concluded with ten specific recommendations, the first four of which addressed methods of connecting with schools, such as personal conferences with teachers, offering teachers extended borrowing privileges, classroom distribution of library registration slips, and making lists to complement school courses.³⁴ Other recommendations included suggestions for creating and distributing or posting lists of books, including printing such lists in newspapers.³⁵ Finally, James asserted that librarians should offer to supervise reading “if the authority to do so is given by parents” and that school-children should be limited to borrowing one or two books per week.³⁶

The reports of 1889 and 1890, compiled by Mary Sargent and Minerva A. Sanders respectively, pulled back somewhat in scope. In contrast to James’ survey of 75 libraries, Sargent surveyed only 49 libraries, and Sanders did not report her number of respondents, although she listed excerpts from 20 libraries. Both reports followed James’ organizational format, arranging excerpts of replies alphabetically and by geographical location. Sargent’s 1889 report opened with a concluding summary, which touched on issues of connecting with teachers, reaching the very young readers, the importance of “personal influence” and the idea of hiring people who are “especially fitted” to work with children.³⁷ Sargent argued that the problems of “aimless books which have so long been favorites” should not preclude notice of “the beneficial results from the reading of good novels.”³⁸ Sanders’s 1890 report similarly reflected shifting attitudes towards recreational reading, declaring that excessive reading is not a problem “since the novelty

of a free use of a card is past.”³⁹ These points are made as part of Sanders’ lengthy introductory discussion of what is and is not meant by “good reading.”⁴⁰

“To influence the children by judicious guidance, and help them to such reading as will awaken the imagination, sharpen the observation, develop the humanities, and cultivate in them a respect for the English language pure and simple, is the librarian’s privilege; and, as our personal influence is exerted, in just such proportion will our communities be uplifted. That this is the growing sentiment of librarians is seen in the extracts from their letters received for this report.”⁴¹

Doubtless such lofty phraseology inspired Dee Garrison’s assertions that work in children’s departments was defined by “sentimentality.”⁴² However, poetic as Sanders’ language may be, the first five national surveys of work with children undertaken between 1882 and 1890 confirm that librarians were diligent in forging professional strategies aimed toward guiding the reading of the young; the publication of these surveys served both as data collection and as systematic idea dissemination for a developing specialization. Most importantly, librarians were continually refining methods of more effectively establishing influence with young people, through their schools and teachers as well as through the increasingly reported positive effects of librarians’ personal influence.

Further Surveys of Methods for Guiding Children’s Reading, 1893-1898

The 1893 survey was again undertaken by Hewins, who substantially changed the content, format, and venue, presenting her paper at the World’s Library Congress⁴³ instead of the ALA annual conference, where previous reports were presented. Hewins opened with a brief review of themes from major reports on young people’s reading, including Fletcher’s 1876 paper, the Boston conference of 1879, and the earlier “Reading of the Young” surveys, crediting the librarians who administered and reported them.⁴⁴

For this survey, Hewins sent out 11 questions (see Appendix A) to 160 libraries and received 152 replies; this remarkably high percentage of returns may reflect Hewins' established importance in the area of work with youth. Rather than using the previous format of a geographically arranged listing of excerpted replies, Hewins synthesized the survey data, giving the numbers of libraries that reported positive or negative answers to each of her 11 queries along with some brief information about replies that were more complex than "yes" or "no" answers.

In her conclusion, Hewins offered her "own opinion on the subjects treated in the questions,"⁴⁵ asserting the importance of lists, the wisdom of limiting children's borrowing to one book per week, and desirable characteristics for assistants. Hewins hoped that assistants might be "elder sisters in large families who have tumbled about among books, and if some of the questions asked of applicants for library positions relate to what they would give boys or girls to read."⁴⁶ Hewins' 1893 survey marked a change from selectively reported qualitative data to a richer mixture of qualitative and quantitative information as well as her own authoritative observations. Using this more synthetic format, Hewins reported quantitative data about current library practices without neglecting qualitative descriptions of particular local innovations when appropriate.

The following year, 1894, Lutie Stearns of the Milwaukee Public Library administered a survey which followed Hewins' expanded format, eliciting answers to fifteen questions from 195 libraries, 145 of which responded. Stearns' fifteen questions (see Appendix B) again elicited both quantitative and qualitative data, and her report interwove quantitative data, such as numbers of books circulated to schools by particular

libraries,⁴⁷ with explanatory excerpts from replies to such questions as “Why do you have an age limit?”⁴⁸ Stearns published another version of her survey results in the Milwaukee Public Library Annual Report for 1894.⁴⁹

Hewins conducted the last survey in the “Report on Reading of the Young” series in 1898, receiving 125 answers to 17 questions (see appendix C) that probed particular areas of service. Of all the surveys, this was the most comprehensive, reflecting the growing formalization of library services to youth. It was also the most quantitative, with only a short page of descriptive material before a four-page spread of primarily quantitative data in the form of a chart which featured the respondent libraries in rows and, in seventeen columns, their answers to each of Hewins’ questions. Most of the cells were either filled in with “Yes” or left blank to indicate “no” regarding whether that library used that method as a means of guiding children’s reading.

In contrast to Sargent’s and Sanders’ surveys, Hewins’ 1898 survey avoided questions about which books or authors constitute “good reading” for the young; Hewins notes that, based on the 1893 report, libraries were buying the best books and letting the poorer ones wear out.⁵⁰ The 1898 survey focuses instead on the formal implementation of seventeen methods in 125 libraries.⁵¹ The two methods that are implemented by the largest numbers of libraries are general work with schools (100 libraries) and the creation of lists of books on special subjects (39 libraries).

Table 1: Scope of the “Reading of the Young” Surveys

Author and Date of Survey	No. of Replies	No. of States Represented	No. of questions asked
Hewins, 1882	25	*	1
Bean, 1883	25 (50 contacted)	8	*
James, 1885	75 (125 contacted)	17	4 (questions not

			given in report)
Sargent, 1889	49	19 (included one library in England)	*
Sanders, 1890	20	*	*
Hewins, 1893	152	*	11 (see appendix A)
Stearns, 1894	145 (195 contacted)	(included libraries in Canada)	15 (see appendix B)
Hewins, 1898	125	*	17 (see appendix C)

* = data not available

From 1882 to 1898, librarians shared responsibility for these surveys, both in their administration and as respondents. Hewins' first survey led the way in creating a network of librarians; she received responses from the librarians who would conduct the next two surveys in the series, and later survey administrators were also respondents to some of these subsequent surveys. The shared administration of these surveys indicates the earliest professional networks of librarians serving youth, before there was training in specialized children's librarianship. This cooperative responsibility presages collaborative approaches that have come to be a hallmark of youth services librarians' work.

Surveying Children

Other librarians working with the young continued to use surveying techniques to ascertain methods and effects of work with children. In 1897, Mary Wright Plummer of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, created a survey in her own library of 100 children, "boys and girls who were regularly using the library,"⁵² for their opinions on how to improve the library. The children had many ideas, and results of this survey lead to the development of new ideas for events and programs in the children's department. As Plummer wrote in her 1897 article: "[w]ith lectures and experiments, reading clubs,

and possibly original stories in contemplation, there is no danger of rust from inaction.”⁵³

Attempting to ascertain the needs and desires of children using the library, Plummer used this local survey to measure the library’s success in captivating children’s attention and to gain their input on what services would further the goal of gaining children’s confidence and trust. Plummer’s survey demonstrated that librarians were not only taking children’s needs and wishes seriously but were also collecting them systematically.

Plummer again surveyed children in connection with the Pratt Institute hero exhibit in February of 1898.⁵⁴ This exhibit is an example of the burgeoning creativity in methods of attracting children that was evident by 1898; the exhibit combined bulletin board displays of portraits of heroes and corresponding biographical sketches with books about heroes on reserve in the exhibition room. Plummer’s survey was undertaken to “discover the effects of the exhibition upon the children...”⁵⁵ and the effects were decidedly positive. Plummer also cited the high circulation of the exhibit books after the exhibit period as evidence of positive results.⁵⁶ The brief report in *Library Journal* describes this exhibit as “a new way of reaching the children and of leading their reading in a definite and desirable direction.”⁵⁷

By 1900, survey techniques were firmly established as an early element of the professional repertoire of librarians serving youth. For example, in order to address the problem of discipline in libraries, Lutie Stearns undertook another national survey in 1901.⁵⁸ Garrison described early librarians working with youth as lacking any “realistic assessment of the work being accomplished,”⁵⁹ but the professional use of survey techniques, both nationally and locally, contradicts this characterization. Plummer’s 1898 surveys show that librarians were making systematic assessments of the impact and

effectiveness of their methods of work with children even as they continued to develop new methods.

Experiments in Guiding Children's Reading

Between the first lists of books for children and the creation of elaborate exhibits, there emerged myriad methods of working with children, some of which eventually became formalized in the training of children's librarians. Through these experimental methods, librarians were balancing the dual purposes of attracting children to the habit of reading and controlling the content and amount of their reading. Tensions between these purposes are evident in the divergent calls for, on the one hand, greater freedom in amount of reading emphasized in reports by Sargent (1889) and Sanders (1890) and, on the other hand, for restricting circulation to one book per week, which was both reported and sanctioned by Hewins in the 1893 report. Throughout the surveys, there are adamantly different viewpoints reported on the merits of collecting controversial authors, particularly Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic, in libraries for children. Although no librarian outright advocates for the merits of these books, some report that they carry such "interesting books" in order to lead children to better reading⁶⁰ while Hewins herself clearly deplors these authors' works.⁶¹ Stearns' 1894 report notes the "great difference of opinion in regard to the relative value of these authors [Alger, Optic, Castlemon, Trowbridge, etc.]."⁶² Despite tensions over which books belong in the library, the surveys do reveal general agreement about the importance of engaging children's interest and gaining their trust in order to guide their reading, which was the impetus for the development of many methods of work with youth.

The earliest records of experimental methods include John Jay Bailey's storytelling at St. Louis Public School Library⁶³ and Hewins' pioneering work with children, which she established with the 1878 publication of "Library notes," a newsletter containing recommendations for children's reading materials."⁶⁴ As early as 1882, isolated innovations in work with children included activities such as the celebration of authors' birthdays at Cincinnati public schools⁶⁵ and reading groups at Wells School in Boston.⁶⁶ Except for the creation of books lists, which was widespread in libraries, these early examples of methods appear to have occurred in relative isolation.

The following three sections offer a sampling of the methods that were developed from approximately 1880 to 1900 as they were reported in the series of "Reading of the Young" surveys. These methods are divisible into three non-mutually-exclusive categories based on the medium used and the approximate historical order in which the methods were adopted: early methods, visual methods, and group methods. Early methods include lists and work with schools; visual methods consist of displays, pictures, picture bulletins, and exhibits; and group methods include reading clubs, book talks, lectures, and storytelling. Although not mentioned in the surveys, the parallel development of home libraries (discussed below) was also influential in shaping the training of professional children's librarians in methods of guiding children's reading.

Early Methods: Lists and Work with Schools

Creating lists of good books for young people was one of the first methods of guiding children's reading reported by numerous libraries. While some librarians mentioned connecting those lists to school subjects,⁶⁷ others mentioned independent guided reading plans.⁶⁸ Some librarians marked in the catalogue margins those books that

are suited to young people,⁶⁹ while others asserted that catalogues were not a useful method for reaching children.⁷⁰ Hewins' list "Books for the Young," which was published in 1882 as the first issuance of the ALA Publishing Section,⁷¹ was mentioned numerous times in the first few surveys as a source for finding good books. However, the availability of commercially published lists did not preclude the generation of local lists, and many such lists were generated by the Superintendents of Schools in their respective districts.⁷² In Hewins' 1898 survey, one of the questions asked whether libraries used the Maxson book-mark, a book list which originated in Milwaukee, designed with boxes to check so that it functioned as a call-slip.⁷³ Not only were lists of books firmly established as a primary method of guiding children's reading, but particular lists had spread from their local origins to use in multiple cities and states.

Forging connections with the schools was another common method of guiding the reading of the young, and early mentions of this work highlight the provision of reading to complement or supplement pupils' courses.⁷⁴ However, respondents frequently lament the difficulty of working with teachers,⁷⁵ and some emphasize their connections to schools through direct personal assistance to the children themselves, not through the teachers.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, cooperation between schools and libraries was so pervasive by 1883 that Bean was mildly apologetic in her report about the extensive overlap between her own findings regarding "juvenile reading" and the topic of "cooperation of school and library."⁷⁷ Although the complex history of the connections and overlaps between school and libraries is beyond the scope of this paper, the "Reading of the Young" surveys confirm the importance of pioneering librarian Samuel Swett Green of

Worcester, MA, whose efforts and publications made him a renowned expert in fostering productive institutional collaborations.⁷⁸

Visual Methods: Pictures, Picture Bulletin Work, Exhibits, and Games

Lists of books paved the way for more elaborate creations and publications designed to attract children's interest and guide their book selection, such as picture bulletins and exhibits. The earliest visual displays were posted lists of books, such as the 1885 use of a bulletin board for displaying "reference lists."⁷⁹ Survey responses from 1889 mention the use of books themselves as an attractive display⁸⁰ and the display of lists of the newly accessioned juvenile books.⁸¹ Similarly, displays were created of visually interesting objects like "engravings, maps, pictures, relics, curiosities, etc....,"⁸² which were mentioned in an 1885 response as supplemental materials for pupils' studies. Bulletin board displays, objects, and pictures were made available both as a matter of popular demand and as a matter of educational purpose.

Pictures were such a salient feature of work with children by 1894 that Stearns devoted a question to them in her survey, asking: "Do you circulate pictures in schools and homes? In what form issued?"⁸³ Some replies elaborated on the importance of training children's aesthetic values, "training the child's sense of beauty and imagination."⁸⁴ Some collections of pictures were created by such basic means as cutting out images from periodicals and pasting them onto tag-board, while others were portfolios of photographs.⁸⁵ The New York Children's Library Association's response to the 1889 survey mentioned the availability of visually stimulating "stereopticon views after the first hour and a half, and also dissecting maps."⁸⁶ In an 1897 *Library Journal* article, Librarian Emma Louise Adams described "picture scrap-books for the very little

ones” which featured “pictures of places, events, etc., as illustrative of geography, history, and other studies, photographic reproductions of famous pictures, pieces of sculpture or notable buildings for art classes.”⁸⁷ Adams also described “Buffalo’s well-known [children’s] room” which, as early as 1879, provided “even for the tiniest with games, scrap-books, dissected maps, etc.”⁸⁸

However, not all visual displays were meant to attract children; others were meant to guide their reading by providing deterrents to “dangerous” reading choices, such as the scrap-book of newspaper clippings at Sanders’ library in Pawtucket, RI. This scrapbook, reported in the 1885 survey, featured “crimes committed by boys instigated by reading dime-novels.”⁸⁹ Sanders reported that the scrap book was effective at directing their reading interests elsewhere.

Nonetheless, most visual methods were designed to attract children’s interest, both individually and in groups, and successes with these methods led to further experiments in library events that attracted children, such as the inclusion of games and amusement both in library rooms and in circulating collections. In her 1894 report, Stearns advocated the circulation of “...lanterns and lantern slides, tennis and croquet sets and the best indoor games...,” writing: “...if ‘Books of Refreshment,’ why not ‘Games of Refreshment?’”⁹⁰ Although some libraries were providing games for young people, there had been debate about the appropriateness of providing “amusement” in the 1879 Boston conference, where Charles Francis Adams had questioned “whether furnishing any sort of amusement... is a proper function of the government.”⁹¹ In an 1897 *Library Journal* article, Plummer similarly expressed her doubt about the “desirability of amusements,” saying that, although games can be useful for drawing

children in, they may result in crowds that are too big for the space.⁹² Even as accepted means of guiding children's reading began to include amusements, debate continued over the merits of techniques that provided entertaining experiences and activities not directly related to educational purposes.

Group Methods: Reading Clubs, Book Talks, Lectures, and Storytelling

The 1885 survey mentioned a few library-sponsored book discussion groups and reading clubs in conjunction with the schools,⁹³ but in general such groups were rare before 1880. Hewins formed one such group, the Agassiz Association, sometime between 1878 and 1881,⁹⁴ which consisted of a group of young people who met out-of-doors in summer and in the library in winter to discuss their readings of books by Thoreau and others and to walk together, practicing plant and bird identification.⁹⁵ Hewins' pioneering methods were also indicative of her involvement with the settlement house movement. As Holly Willet writes, "[m]any of the activities that she introduced—reading, storytelling, and nature walks—bear a family resemblance to settlement house activities and contemporary children's public library programs alike."⁹⁶ The 1889 and 1894 surveys also report reading groups in Gloversville, NY, in the form of "one or two reading circles among the school children of the Grammar and High schools...."⁹⁷ Reading topics were selected in conjunction with school work and current events were discussed, "...guiding the children in proper newspaper reading."⁹⁸

Some of these group experiences may have been as entertaining as they were instructive. For example, in 1889, the Lowell, MA library reports that children were raising funds for the library through the "...proceeds of an entertainment by themselves;

so that they have a personal interest in their department...”⁹⁹ Similarly, the 1890 survey response from Boston mentions a group of girls who had an informal acting club, which the library assisted through provision of copies of Shakespeare’s plays¹⁰⁰

Other group methods, such as book talks, were similarly designed to encourage children to read specific library materials. Such librarian-led talks were used to supplement studies and as a remedy for too much thoughtless reading. Hewins reports giving a talk in 1885 to pupils studying U. S. History, after which the pupils “used with interest nearly one hundred volumes of historical stories, biography, poetry, etc.”¹⁰¹ In the same survey, Boston librarians described an “informal chat with two classes in a vacation school,” which consisted of finding a title that most of the children had read and asking children questions about why they liked the book, “finding in the end that a book could be enjoyed more if read slowly, if thought about, if talked over.”¹⁰² The awareness of vacation as a time when reading could serve as a substitute for less productive pursuits is also reflected by Hewins’ 1898 series of summer book talks, given “one afternoon every week.”¹⁰³ These early vacation activities presage later public library summer reading programs. Book-talk presentations were useful for reaching entire groups of children at one time and directing their attention to particular titles.

One of the few descriptions of lectures for youth is made in the 1890 survey, which mentions a course of lectures at Providence on American history; at which “[p]rinted sheets of references with the book numbers were placed in the hands of each pupil as he entered the hall.”¹⁰⁴ Following the successful Heroes exhibit in 1897, “[t]he first of a projected series of lectures for children was given at Pratt Institute Free Library on Saturday afternoon, May 7,”¹⁰⁵ which engaged children in the topic of “spring” and

was accompanied by a spring exhibition in the children's room. Admission tickets were given out a week ahead of time, and 150 children attended. "Aside from children under 14, most of whom had library cards, and of whom there were about 150 present, no one had been notified or was in attendance, except some of the library staff and students and a few kindergartners [trained kindergarten teachers]." ¹⁰⁶

Perhaps the most creative, perennially successful, and sometimes controversial means of guiding children's reading through group experience was the use of storytelling. Although Anne Carroll Moore has been credited with making the first mention of storytelling in 1898, ¹⁰⁷ storytelling was mentioned in the "Reading of the Young" surveys as early as 1890 and again in 1894. Fred M. Crunden of St. Louis, where John J. Bailey was using storytelling as early as 1865, reports in the 1890 survey that he visited schools to talk to pupils about reading, "tell them a story, or read extracts from some interesting book." ¹⁰⁸ In her 1894 survey, Stearns included a section on work at her own library in Milwaukee, WI, where librarians would visit "...the class-rooms of the public schools and tell the children stories, thereby arousing a desire for books." ¹⁰⁹ Storytelling would soon become a defining feature of library work with children, formalized in the Pittsburgh Carnegie Training School beginning in 1901.

Methods From Outside the Public Library: Home Libraries

Unlike many other experiments in guiding children's reading, home libraries did not originate within public libraries (or subscription libraries that became public), although some of their methods were highly influential for early librarians serving children. First established in 1888 under the direction of Charles Birtwell of the

Children's Aid Society in Boston, home libraries consisted of a small collection of books (15 or so) and some magazines which were taken to the homes of "of poor and morally exposed children" and left there for the use of a group of about ten resident and neighboring children.¹¹⁰ By 1891, Birtwell reported 37 such libraries in the Boston area, supervised mostly by older children in the family who were appointed "librarians" of the collections. They were also supervised in part by "friendly visitors," adults who came weekly to talk about books with the children, exchange books, and engage in other activities that bear strong resemblance to methods later established for guiding children's reading in libraries. Birtwell, in 1891, writes:

"For each library there is a volunteer visitor, who meets the children at the regular weekly exchange of books, becomes acquainted with them, encourages intelligent and thorough reading, arranges pleasant outings, teaches home games, induces the children to save their pennies and open accounts at the savings-banks, and enters in a hundred ways helpfully into the lives of the youthful readers."¹¹¹

Children or visitors would also read aloud to the assembled group,¹¹² as Hewins did with her Agassiz Club, which anticipated later storytelling activities in public libraries.

Visitors to home libraries, much like Friendly Visitors in other volunteer social work of the time, were usually "upper- and middle-class women volunteers,"¹¹³ and they adapted their activities to the needs they saw amongst the children.

Birtwell led meetings of the Friendly Visitors, and from these meetings came the realization that the children had need of "amusement, home amusement, an amusement that they do not have to run into the street or dime show to get."¹¹⁴ To this end, they engaged in a wide variety of activities, from holiday celebrations to outings and games. Friendly Visitors found that children were "very ignorant of the commonest games,"¹¹⁵ and so games were added to the activities that visitors shared with children. In 1892,

Birtwell wrote that visitors were required to “learn all they can about games; standing-up games, sitting-down games, noisy games, quiet games, games that tax the brain and games that do not.”¹¹⁶ Games were also seen as ameliorating children’s skills of attention and concentration. For example, visitor and home library organizer Mary S. Cutler writes that children improve their minds through the game of 20 questions “...from a wandering, haphazard medley asked in a slow and painful way by self-conscious children, to quick, intelligent, carefully planned questions.”¹¹⁷ The influence of the home library idea can be seen in the increasing tendency for activities of children’s librarians to embrace entertainment and amusement in libraries and beyond as they took their book talks and storytelling to children in schools and playgrounds.

1898-1901: Professional Specialization of Children’s Librarians

The opening of training programs for children’s librarianship at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn (1898) and at the Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School (1901) marks the end of the formative period of youth services librarianship. Both programs drew on the early experiments in youth services reflected in these surveys, formalizing the techniques and knowledge base that continue to constitute the professional jurisdiction of youth services librarians. The Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School Course Catalog for the 1901-1902 school year lists required courses for children’s librarians in the new specialty. The Pittsburgh school was the second of its kind, the first being Anne Carroll Moore’s relatively short-lived training program at Pratt founded in 1898 and disbanded 2 years later.¹¹⁸ The Pittsburgh brochure included the following courses in techniques for guiding children’s reading:

“...FIRST YEAR [...]

Bulletin and Picture Work. The bulletin as a means of directing attention to books—How to procure illustrative and mounting materials.—Arrangement of pictures, considering sequence of subject, composition and harmony.—Selection and classification of pictures.—Preparation of pictures to be loaned to the children through the children’s room, the school, or the home library.

Story telling and reading aloud. Organization of ‘story hours’ and reading circles.—Essentials of a good story.—Manner of presenting a story.—Adaptation of stories from the classics.

Relation between libraries and schools. Work of the library among teachers and pupils.—Methods of book distribution through the schools.

Home libraries. Methods of procuring home libraries.—Finding and training friendly visitors.—Organization of groups.—Preparing the programmes (sic) for group meetings (stories, games, etc.).—Visiting the homes.”¹¹⁹

[...] SECOND YEAR [...]

Story telling and reading aloud. Adaptation of stories from the classics.

Relation between libraries and schools. Work of the library among teachers and pupils.—Brief course in the history of education....”¹²⁰

Approaches to guiding children’s reading would continue to evolve over time; however, the implementation of this influential curriculum marks the definition of accepted methods for guiding children’s reading. Out of the Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School came many of the prominent youth services librarians who would influence subsequent generations of practitioners, right up to the present day.

Conclusion

Although Garrison argues that the activities of children’s librarians “did not exceed the Victorian stereotype of the female,” (*Apostles of Culture*, p. 180) these earliest librarians serving children were in fact far exceeding stereotypical female gender roles through the use of surveys as a professional strategy for gathering quantitative and qualitative data. In fact, the women who were developing services to youth before 1900 conducted systematic surveys at a time when few other librarians were undertaking such

ambitious research. These librarians created the first foundations of evaluation practices for library services by investigating both the existence and effectiveness of methods for youth services. From the earliest days, librarians were making systematic attempts to cultivate new practices in service to youth by continually assessing the state of this emerging professional specialization. These surveys are particularly important because they provide an unusual series of snapshots during a time of emerging professional specialization, when practice and theory were evolving in tandem. By situating local data about methods and attitudes as elements in the national emergence of library service to children, these surveys give valuable data about shifting library practices and philosophies during a time of intense growth in public library history.

Appendix A: Hewins' 1893 Survey Questions

1. Are your children's books kept by themselves?
2. Are they classified, and how?
3. Have they a separate card catalog or printed finding list?
4. Are they covered?
5. Do you enforce rules with regard to clean hands?
6. Have you an age limit, and if so, what is it?
7. Do you allow more than one book a week on a child's card?
8. Are children's cards different in color from others?
9. What authors are most read by children who take books from your library?
10. What methods have you of directing their reading? Have you a special assistant for them, or are they encouraged to consult the librarian and all the assistants?
11. Have you a children's reading room?

Appendix B: Stearns' 1894 Survey Questions

- i. At what age may children draw books? Why do you have an age limit?
- ii. Do the children use the library to an appreciable extent?
- iii. Is the number of books a child may take per week restricted?
- iv. What per cent. of your circulation is children's fiction?
- v. Do you circulate Alger, Optic, Castlemon, Trowbridge, and kindred authors?
- vi. Do you have special lists or catalogues for children? State price, if not free.
- vii. Do you have Teachers' cards? How many books may be drawn at a time? Are these books issues by teachers to pupils, or used solely for reference?
- viii. Do you send books to schools in proportion to size of classes, *i.e.*, fifty pupils—fifty books, to be issued by teachers to pupils for home use?
- ix. Do you send a number of copies of the same work to schools for supplemental reading?
- x. Do you circulate pictures in schools and homes? In what form issued?
- xi. Do classes visit the library?
- xii. (a) Have you a children's reading-room? (b) Is there a special window in circulating department, for children?
- xiii. Have you a special supervisor of children's reading?
- xiv. What other important work are you doing for children, not included in these questions?

Appendix C: Hewins' 1898 Survey Questions

1. Have you a children's room or children's department?
2. Have you a Library League pledge?
3. If not, do you expect to have one?
4. Do you work with schools?
5. Do you circulate school duplicates?
6. Have you branch libraries in schools?
7. How many books at a time do you allow teachers?
8. Have children access to the shelves?
9. Have they a separate finding-list?
10. Are their books separated in the general finding-list?
11. Do you use the Maxson book-mark?
12. Do you give talks in schools?
13. Are talks or lectures to school pupils given in the library?
14. Do you make book lists on special subjects, as holidays?
15. Is the home reading of certain books required by schools?
16. Do you circulate pictures?
17. Do you give exhibitions of pictures?

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- ²³ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*

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