

**Analysis of a Survey of Youth Services Library Staff in  
North Carolina Public Libraries**

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## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of a survey of youth services library staff in North Carolina public libraries that was conducted by the Youth Services Advisory Committee of the State Library Commission in Fall 2006.

Specifically, the report compares the responses of staff with no undergraduate degree to the responses of staff with undergraduate and higher degrees. The report finds that:

- ✓ A total of 294 individuals responded to the survey.
- ✓ One fifth of the respondents had no undergraduate degree, while just over half of respondents had the MLS degree. Another 7 per cent were working on the MLS degree at the time of the survey.
- ✓ Respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees were more likely to have collaborated with outside agencies than had the respondents with no undergraduate degree. These agencies included park districts and recreation centers, Head Starts, health departments, and literacy programs.
- ✓ Respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees were more likely to report that their library systems had a long-range plan.
- ✓ Respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees reported more full-time and part-time employees working with youth at their branches.
- ✓ A slightly larger percentage of respondents with undergraduate degrees or higher reported that there was a system-designated youth services specialist at their libraries.
- ✓ A slightly higher percentage of respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher felt that their branches were most effective in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and a slightly smaller percentage of that group felt that their branches were least effective in serving high school students.
- ✓ A slightly higher percentage of those without an undergraduate degree felt least effective personally in serving high school students and a slightly lower percentage of those without an undergraduate degree felt least effective personally in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- ✓ Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were more likely to regularly communicate with school librarians and teachers via email and school visits and more likely to regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents via the library's Web page, the library's newsletter, and email.

- ✓ Respondents with at least an undergraduate degree also reported using significantly more mechanisms for regular communication with the community's youth and their parents and with school librarians and teachers in their areas.
- ✓ Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were more likely to prefer reading on paper and reading online as teaching techniques.
- ✓ Respondents without an undergraduate degree were more likely to rate highly the State Library's Summer Reading Program workshops, Summer Reading Program vouchers, public library Quiz Bowl program, and LSTA grant programs.
- ✓ Respondents with at least an undergraduate degree were more likely to rate highly the State Library's NCKIDS email list and NCTEENS email list. By contrast, those without an undergraduate degree were more likely to rate highly the State Library's Start Squad Website.

## Survey

In Fall 2006, the Youth Services Advisory Committee of the State Library Commission conducted a survey of youth services library staff in North Carolina public libraries. According to the letter that was sent to library youth services staff members, the purpose of the survey was to “help the State Library evaluate its current services and programs [supporting libraries serving children and teens in their communities] and plan for the future.”

A total of 294 individuals responded to the survey. However, because the total number of youth services librarians in North Carolina’s public libraries is not known, it is not clear whether this total serves as a representative sample and, consequently, the extent to which the results of the survey conducted by the Youth Services Advisory Committee are valid.

The analysis presented here, however, assumes that the sample is representative and that the results of the survey are reasonably valid. At worst, the results of the survey have a likely margin of error of 5 to 6 percentage points.

## Education as a Variable

One of the more important findings of the survey was that one fifth of the respondents (21 per cent) had no undergraduate degree. In other words, if the survey’s respondents are representative of the state as a whole, one fifth of the individuals working with children and teens in North Carolina’s public libraries do not enjoy the benefits of the training and education provided by an undergraduate education, much less those provided by a Masters degree in library science.

(By contrast, 78 per cent of the respondents did have an undergraduate degree, and 55 per cent of the respondents had a Masters of Library Science degree. Another 7 per cent of respondents were currently working on the MLS degree.)

This report compares the responses of staff with no undergraduate degree to the responses of staff with undergraduate and higher degrees to determine whether the differences in education might have an impact on various aspects of library service to children and teens.

## Collaboration

The survey asked respondents to list the agencies with which their libraries had collaborated to provide youth services in the past year. In every case, the respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees were more likely to have collaborated with the specified agencies than had the respondents with no undergraduate degree. (See Table 1 on the following page.)

Table 1.  
Collaboration with Agencies

With what agencies did your library collaborate to provide services to youth in the last 12 months?	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Schools	76% (47 of 62)	83% (191 of 230)
Child/Day Care Centers	74% (46 of 62)	77% (178 of 230)
High Density Housing Projects	5% (3 of 62)	13% (31 of 230)
Park Districts or Rec Centers	23% (14 of 62)	40% (92 of 230)
Museums	24% (15 of 62)	30% (70 of 230)
Head Start	35% (22 of 62)	50% (114 of 230)
Social Service Agencies (Welfare, Child Protection)	3% (2 of 62)	12% (27 of 230)
Health department	5% (3 of 62)	17% (38 of 230)
WIC Nutrition Programs	0% (0 of 62)	2% (5 of 230)
Law Enforcement	18% (11 of 62)	23% (52 of 230)
Literacy Programs	24% (15 of 62)	35% (81 of 230)
Religious Institutions	16% (10 of 62)	25% (58 of 230)
Other	21% (13 of 62)	26% (59 of 230)
Mean number of collaborations selected	3.2 (N = 62)	4.3 (N = 230)

The differences in the two groups were largest for:

- ✓ Park districts and recreation centers. 40 per cent of the respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees had collaborated with these agencies in the last 12 months, but only 23 per cent of the respondents with no undergraduate degree had done so.
- ✓ Head Starts. Half (50 per cent) of the respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees had collaborated with these programs in the past year, but only 35 per cent of the respondents with no undergraduate degree had done so.
- ✓ Health departments. 17 per cent of the respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees had collaborated with these agencies in the last 12 months, but just 5 per cent of the respondents with no undergraduate degree had done so.
- ✓ Literacy programs. 35 per cent of the respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees had collaborated with these agencies in the last 12 months, but only 24 per cent of the respondents with no undergraduate degree had done so.

The degreed respondents also reported more agencies with which their libraries had collaborated. Respondents with undergraduate or higher degrees reported collaborating with an average of 4.3 of the listed agencies in the last 12 months, compared with an average of only 3.2 agencies for respondents with no undergraduate degree. This difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.0062$ ), based on an unpaired t-test.

Table 2.  
Long-Range Planning

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Does your library SYSTEM have a long-range plan?		
Yes	58% (28 of 48)	75% (147 of 196)
No	6% (3 of 48)	4% (7 of 196)
I don't know	35% (17 of 48)	21% (42 of 196)
If your library system does have a long-range plan, does it include specific goals and objectives for youth services?		
Yes	79% (22 of 28)	79% (111 of 141)
No	7% (2 of 28)	8% (11 of 141)
I don't know	14% (4 of 28)	13% (19 of 141)
Does your library BRANCH have its own long-range plan that is more specific or somehow different than the system's plan?		
Yes	20% (8 of 41)	14% (26 of 183)
No	44% (18 of 41)	56% (102 of 183)
I don't know	37% (15 of 41)	30% (55 of 183)
If your branch has its own long-range plan, does it include specific goals and objectives for youth services?		
Yes	100% (7 of 7)	92% (24 of 26)
No	0% (0 of 7)	4% (1 of 26)
I don't know	0% (0 of 7)	4% (1 of 26)

### Long-Range Planning

The survey asked respondents whether their library systems or branches had long-range plans and, if so, whether those plans included specific goals and objectives for youth services. (See Table 2 above.) There were few differences between the two groups – those with an undergraduate or higher degree and those without – although the respondents with at least an undergraduate degree were more likely to report that their library systems had a long-range plan, 75 per cent vs 58 per cent. While a slightly higher percentage of the respondents without undergraduate degrees reported that their library systems did not have such plans, the largest gap was for the response “I don't know.” While only 21 per cent of the respondents with degrees did not know whether their library systems had long-range plans, over one-third (35 per cent) of the non-degreed respondents reported not knowing.

### Number of Youth Services Employees

The survey asked respondents how many full-time and part-time employees worked with youth at their branches. More of each were reported by respondents with an undergraduate or higher degree. (See Table 3 below.) Degreed respondents reported, on average, 3.5 full-time and 1.9 part-time employees at their branches, compared to 2.2 full-time and 1.1 part-time employees for the respondents with no undergraduate degree. The difference between the two groups of respondents was statistically significant for full-time employees, based on an unpaired t-test ( $p < 0.0231$ ), but not for part-time employees.

Table 3.  
Number of Youth Services Employees

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
How many full-time employees at your branch work with children and teens?	2.2 (N = 47)	3.5 (N = 187)
How many part-time employees at your branch work with children and teens?	1.1 (N = 44)	1.9 (N = 176)

Table 4.  
Youth Services Specialists

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Is there a staff member in your SYSTEM designated as the Teen or Young Adult specialist?		
Yes	50% (24 of 48)	59% (113 of 190)
No	38% (18 of 48)	35% (66 of 190)
I don't know	13% (6 of 48)	6% (11 of 190)
Is there a staff member in your BRANCH designated as the Teen or Young Adult specialist?		
Yes	51% (24 of 47)	51% (92 of 181)
No	40% (19 of 47)	48% (87 of 181)
I don't know	9% (4 of 47)	1% (2 of 181)

## Youth Services Specialists

The survey asked respondents whether there was a system-designated or branch-designated teen or young adult specialist at their libraries. (See Table 4 on the previous page.)

There was little difference between the two groups – degreed and non-degreed respondents – on the question of a branch-designated youth services specialist, but a slightly larger percentage of respondents with undergraduate degrees or higher reported that there was a system-designated youth services specialist at their libraries, 59 per cent vs 50 per cent. The difference between the two groups was primarily due to the fact that more non-degreed respondents reported not knowing (13 per cent vs 6 per cent).

## Youth Services Programming

The survey asked respondents to specify the percentage of their youth services programming each year that was designated to various age groups. (See Table 5 below.) There was little difference between the two groups – degreed and non-degreed respondents. On average, both groups reported that over half of their programming was designed for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Slightly less than one-third was designed for K-5 students, and smaller percentages were designed for middle school and high school students.

Table 5.  
Youth Services Programming

Roughly, what percentage of your youth services programming each year is designed for:	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers	57% (N = 41)	56% (N = 177)
K-5 students	31% (N = 41)	27% (N = 177)
Middle School students	11% (N = 40)	12% (N = 178)
High school students	7% (N = 37)	9% (N = 180)

## Youth Service Effectiveness – Branch Level

The survey asked respondents to specify the youth groups that their branches were most and least effective in serving. (See Table 6 on the following page.) There was little difference between the two groups of respondents – those with the undergraduate degree and those without – although a slightly higher percentage of respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher felt that their branches were most effective in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and a slightly smaller percentage of that

group felt that their branches were least effective in serving high school students. In general, the largest percentage (over two-thirds) of both groups reported that their branches were most effective in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and were least effective in serving high school students.

Table 6.  
Youth Service Effectiveness – Branch Level

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
What youth do you think your branch is MOST effective in serving?		
Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers	71% (32 of 45)	77% (146 of 190)
K-5 students	13% (6 of 45)	16% (30 of 190)
Middle School students	0% (0 of 45)	1% (2 of 190)
High school students	2% (1 of 45)	2% (3 of 190)
Other	13% (6 of 45)	5% (9 of 190)
What youth do you think your branch is LEAST effective in serving?		
Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers	0% (0 of 45)	2% (4 of 190)
K-5 students	2% (1 of 45)	6% (11 of 190)
Middle School students	13% (6 of 45)	16% (31 of 190)
High school students	73% (33 of 45)	67% (127 of 190)
Other	11% (5 of 45)	9% (17 of 190)

### Youth Service Effectiveness – Individual Level

The survey also asked respondents to specify the youth groups that they themselves were most and least effective in serving. (See Table 7 on the following page.) Again, there was little difference between the two groups of respondents – those with the undergraduate degree and those without – although a slightly higher percentage of those without an undergraduate degree felt least effective in serving high school students and a slightly lower percentage of those without an undergraduate degree felt least effective in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Nevertheless, the largest percentage (roughly half) of both groups reported that they themselves were most effective in serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and least effective in serving high school students.

Table 7.  
Youth Service Effectiveness – Individual Level

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
What youth are you personally the MOST effective in serving?		
Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers	44% (21 of 48)	44% (85 of 193)
K-5 students	31% (15 of 48)	26% (50 of 193)
Middle School students	10% (5 of 48)	12% (24 of 193)
High school students	6% (3 of 48)	8% (15 of 193)
Other	8% (4 of 48)	10% (19 of 193)
What youth are you personally the LEAST effective in serving?		
Infants/Toddlers/Preschoolers	9% (4 of 43)	16% (30 of 190)
K-5 students	2% (1 of 43)	3% (5 of 190)
Middle School students	16% (7 of 43)	16% (30 of 190)
High school students	63% (27 of 43)	55% (105 of 190)
Other	9% (4 of 43)	11% (20 of 190)

### Reference Resources

The survey asked respondents to specify the types of resources used in responding to reference questions from children and teens. (See Table 8 below.) There were few differences based on level of education. Both groups used print collections more than half the time and used Google and NC LIVE as the next most frequently-consulted resources.

Table 8.  
Reference Resources

When responding to reference questions from children and teens, roughly what percentage of your research is done using:	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Print collection	52% (N = 41)	55% (N = 175)
NC LIVE	21% (N = 36)	18% (N = 163)
Start Squad	5% (N = 14)	4% (N = 98)
Google	27% (N = 39)	23% (N = 167)
Other search engine	11% (N = 9)	12% (N = 42)
Other resource	13% (N = 7)	14% (N = 29)

## Communicating with Stakeholders

The survey asked respondents to specify how they regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents and with school librarians and teachers in their areas. (See Table 9 below.) Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were far more likely to:

Table 9.  
Communicating with Stakeholders

	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
How do you REGULARLY communicate with your community's youth and their parents?		
Signs in your library	73% (45 of 62)	80% (184 of 230)
Signs in the community	40% (25 of 62)	42% (97 of 230)
Media outlets (i.e., newspaper, TV, radio)	61% (38 of 62)	64% (147 of 230)
Library newsletter	35% (22 of 62)	50% (114 of 230)
Library web page	45% (28 of 62)	67% (154 of 230)
Email	11% (7 of 62)	21% (49 of 230)
Social networking sites (e.g. 'MySpace')	0% (0 of 62)	3% (7 of 230)
Other	15% (9 of 62)	24% (55 of 230)
Mean number of mechanisms checked	2.8 (N = 62)	3.5 (N = 230)
How do you REGULARLY communicate with school librarians and teachers in your community?		
Library newsletter	11% (7 of 62)	17% (39 of 230)
School visits	39% (24 of 62)	54% (125 of 230)
Meetings at the public library	13% (8 of 62)	14% (33 of 230)
Phone calls	50% (31 of 62)	52% (120 of 230)
Email	27% (17 of 62)	50% (116 of 230)
Other	16% (10 of 62)	18% (42 of 230)
Mean number of mechanisms checked	1.6 (N = 62)	2.1 (N = 230)

- ✓ Use email to regularly communicate with school librarians and teachers, 50 per cent to 27 per cent.
- ✓ Use the library's Web page to regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents, 67 per cent to 45 per cent.
- ✓ Use school visits to regularly communicate with school librarians and teachers, 54 per cent to 39 per cent.
- ✓ Use the library's newsletter to regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents, 50 per cent to 35 per cent.

- ✓ Use email to regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents, 21 per cent to 11 per cent.

Respondents with at least an undergraduate degree also reported using more mechanisms for regular communication with the community's youth and their parents and with school librarians and teachers in their areas. The differences were statistically significant, both for youth and parents ( $p < 0.0148$ ) and for school librarians and teachers ( $p < 0.0171$ ), based on unpaired t-tests.

### Personal Learning Preferences

The survey asked respondents to rate various teaching techniques in light of their personal learning styles. (See Table 10 below.) Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were far more likely to prefer reading on paper. Almost all rated this technique as "Great" or "OK," vs 72 per cent of respondents without an undergraduate degree. Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were also slightly more likely to prefer reading online; 85 per cent rated this technique as "Great" or "OK," vs 77 per cent of respondents without an undergraduate degree.

Table 10.  
Personal Learning Preferences

When it comes to your personal learning style, how do these various teaching techniques work for you? (Percentage responding "Great" or "OK")	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Reading on paper	72% (31 of 43)	99% (189 of 191)
Reading online	77% (34 of 44)	85% (161 of 190)
Web-based tutorial	70% (30 of 43)	74% (139 of 189)
In-person lecture	98% (43 of 44)	96% (184 of 191)
Online or distance education lecture	60% (26 of 43)	59% (112 of 189)
In-person group discussion	95% (42 of 44)	94% (179 of 190)
Online or distance education discussion	55% (24 of 44)	52% (98 of 189)
Experiential (learning by doing)	100% (44 of 44)	98% (187 of 191)

### State Library Services and Resources

The survey asked respondents to rate various State Library services and resources. (See Table 11 on the following page.) Respondents without an undergraduate degree were more likely to rate Summer Reading Program workshops as "Absolutely essential" or "Useful" than those with an undergraduate degree or higher, 89 per cent vs 74 per cent. Those without an undergraduate degree were also slightly more likely to rate as "Absolutely essential" or "Useful" the following services and resources: Summer

Reading Program vouchers (78 per cent to 70 per cent), public library Quiz Bowl program (45 per cent to 37 per cent), and LSTA grant programs (68 per cent to 61 per cent).

Table 11.  
State Library Services and Resources

How useful are the following services and resources provided by the State Library? (Percentage responding "Absolutely essential" or "Useful")	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
Summer Reading Program manual	86% (38 of 44)	86% (165 of 192)
Summer Reading Program vouchers	78% (32 of 41)	70% (131 of 187)
Summer Reading Program workshops	89% (39 of 44)	74% (142 of 191)
Public library Quiz Bowl program	45% (20 of 44)	38% (71 of 188)
Consulting with State Library staff by phone, email, or in person	65% (28 of 43)	63% (119 of 188)
Staff Development workshops by State Library staff	79% (34 of 43)	81% (154 of 190)
LSTA grant programs	68% (28 of 41)	61% (114 of 188)

### State Library Online Resources

Finally, the survey asked respondents to rate various State Library online resources. (See Table 12 on the following page.) Respondents with an undergraduate degree or higher were more likely to rate the directory of performers as "Absolutely essential" or "Useful" than those with an undergraduate degree or higher, 68 per cent vs 56 per cent. Those with at least an undergraduate degree were also more likely to rate as "Absolutely essential" or "Useful" the following online resources: NCKIDS email list (62 per cent to 48 per cent) and NCTEENS email list (42 per cent to 33 per cent). By contrast, those without an undergraduate degree were more likely to rate as "Absolutely essential" or "Useful" the Start Squad, 55 per cent to 44 per cent.

Table 12.  
State Library Online Resources

If you've used the following State Library online resources, how useful were they?	No Undergraduate Degree	Undergraduate Degree or Higher
'Making the Case for Library Services to Children and Teens' information and links	43% (18 of 42)	48% (86 of 179)
Summer Reading resources	81% (35 of 43)	86% (160 of 186)
Directory of performers	56% (24 of 43)	68% (124 of 183)
Directory of NC authors and illustrators	63% (27 of 43)	61% (111 of 183)
Lists of book awards	84% (36 of 43)	83% (152 of 183)
Start Squad	55% (23 of 42)	44% (80 of 183)
NCKIDS email list	48% (20 of 42)	62% (113 of 183)
NCTEENS email list	33% (14 of 42)	42% (74 of 177)

### Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey of youth services library staff in North Carolina public libraries, this report makes the following recommendations.

- ✓ The State Library should develop a set of competencies for youth services librarians in North Carolina, to ensure that a standard level of library service is provided to the children and teens of North Carolina. These competencies should also be marketed to public library directors as providing a “checklist” of skills to be used in hiring, evaluating, and promoting youth services staff members.
- ✓ The State Library should develop a series of workshops to promote the competencies for youth services librarians in North Carolina and to develop the specific skills embodied in those competencies.
- ✓ The competencies and training developed for youth services librarians in North Carolina should pay particular attention to the following skills:
  - Collaboration with outside agencies that also serve children and young adults. Youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree were less likely to have collaborated with outside agencies than had the respondents with no undergraduate degree. It is important that these individuals develop skills related to collaboration with such agencies.
  - Planning. Youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree were less likely to report that their library systems had a long-range plan. It is

- important that these individuals develop skills related to planning and to advocating for planning that includes youth services.
- Advocating for adequate staffing for youth services. Youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree reported fewer full-time and part-time employees working with youth at their branches and were less likely to report that there was a system-designated youth services specialist at their libraries. It is important that these individuals develop skills related to advocating for adequate staffing for youth services in their libraries.
  - Providing effective library services across a wide range of age groups, particular high school students. A slightly higher percentage of youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree felt least effective personally in serving high school students.
  - Communicating with stakeholders. Youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree were less likely to regularly communicate with school librarians and teachers via email and school visits and less likely to regularly communicate with the community's youth and their parents via the library's Web page, the library's newsletter, and email. They also reported using significantly fewer mechanisms for regular communication with the community's youth and their parents and with school librarians and teachers in their areas. It is important that these individuals develop skills related to communicating with stakeholders.
- ✓ In developing training for youth services librarians in North Carolina, the State Library should bear in mind the learning preferences of its target audiences. For example, youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree were less likely to prefer reading on paper and reading online as teaching techniques.
  - ✓ The State Library should evaluate the effectiveness of its NCKIDS email list and NCTEENS email list with youth services staff members without an undergraduate degree. Those individuals were less likely to rate highly these email lists.
  - ✓ The State Library should conduct a survey of North Carolina's public libraries to determine the number of youth services librarians – full time and part time – serving in those libraries. Because the total number of youth services librarians in North Carolina's public libraries is not known, it is not clear whether the total of 294 individuals who responded to the survey serves as a representative sample for the intended population and the extent to which the results of the survey conducted by the Youth Services Advisory Committee are valid.