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This research describes the results of a study of homeschool administrators (i.e., parents) in Alamance County and Orange County, North Carolina and their use of the Mebane Public Library. A survey was conducted to determine if the programming and library collections available to homeschooling parents meet their curriculum needs.

As this alternative form of education has gained popularity, many public libraries have seen an increase in the number of homeschoolers that use their facilities. Among the suggestions made by librarians experienced in this area are programming opportunities for homeschoolers as well as a well-rounded collection consisting of a variety of formats. Homeschoolers using the Mebane Public Library feel that enough programming is offered to meet their curriculum needs despite the fact that their attendance of these programs is very low. Suggestions for future programming were made. In general, homeschooling parents find that the Mebane Public Library's collection meets their needs, with additional materials available elsewhere in the system as well as through Interlibrary Loan.

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HOMESCHOOLERS AND THE MEBANE PUBLIC LIBRARY:
A CASE STUDY

by
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INTRODUCTION

Public libraries, in their quest to serve their patrons, must be sensitive to the ever-changing needs of their clientele. One area that has become an important topic for staff members in public libraries to address is support of the ever-growing number of parents who homeschool their children. Since the 1980's the United States has undergone an important development in its approach to education: the emergence of a growing population of families that prefer to educate their children at home. "Homeschooling today is experimented with and embraced by a huge variety of educational stakeholders" (Brostrum 106).

This study was designed to answer the following question: Do public libraries' current collections and program offerings meet the curriculum needs of homeschooling parents? Using the Mebane Public Library as a case study, this study sought to answer the research question by investigating the following three concepts:

1. Level of respondent *awareness* of the collection and programs offered by the Mebane Public Library in relation to homeschooling curricular needs;
2. Level of *use* of the current collection and programs by respondents who homeschool their children;
3. Level of *adequacy* of the current collection and programs in meeting respondents' homeschooling curricular needs.

The intention of this study was to identify strengths and weaknesses in the areas of collection development and programming so that the Mebane Public Library, and other

public libraries, could alter and/or enhance their services in a way that would help homeschooling parents teach their children.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While libraries have attempted to treat the homeschool community as well as they would any other of their patron groups, the Mebane Public Library has not taken a close look at this special population to see if they have special needs. “Dealing with homeschoolers is a challenge to public libraries, but it is a challenge that can...lead to positive change...that can only benefit the library and all its patrons” (Dembeck 203).

The public library often becomes the school library for many homeschooling families. For this population, the library often becomes their source of textbooks, programming, volunteer opportunities, etc. “Home schoolers are just another community group that needs and deserves our special expertise” (Vanek 205). Along with public libraries across the country, the Mebane Public Library has seen an increase in the number of homeschoolers that walk through its doors. According to statistics provided by the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, 180 homeschools were operating in Alamance County (the county in which the Mebane Public Library is located) during the 1998-1999 school year (NC Home School 3). Statewide, the number of homeschool students has grown from 809 in 1985-1986 to 13,801 in 1995-1996 (98-99 North Carolina 1).

Because the homeschool community is growing, staff members at the Mebane Public Library, and other public libraries across the nation, must recognize that this special community might have special needs. This study was designed to help librarians at the Mebane Public Library identify areas within their collection and program

offerings that need improvement. The results of this study would be used to make adjustments in library services that will better aid the homeschool population in and around the Mebane area as homeschooling parents strive to educate their children. In addition, this study would open the lines of communication between the homeschool population and the staff of the Mebane Public Library. It would let homeschoolers know that their opinions are valued by the staff of the Mebane Public Library, and it would let staff members know that their community is willing to offer their suggestions to librarians as they attempt to meet the needs of a constantly changing population.

Much has been written on the topic of homeschooling in recent years. Many librarians have shared their experiences and have provided suggestions through the literature. However, the needs of any population will change over time. This study could provide librarians in public library settings similar to the Mebane Public Library's with ideas for evaluating their own homeschool communities. Libraries will be able to use the findings of this study as suggestions when preparing for their own community analysis. This study will provide fresh insight into the needs of the homeschooling population for libraries that might be faced with serving this population for the first time. It will also bring new information to libraries that have been dealing with a homeschool community for years.

Although the results of a community analysis will vary among geographic areas, it is important for libraries to periodically assess their community's interests and needs in order to determine the library's future services. The profile of library users constantly changes. Therefore, it is crucial for the public library to be aware of its changing

demographics and make the necessary alterations to their services in order to meet the needs of their users.

HISTORY OF HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling, as defined by Susan B. Madden, is “the educating of one’s offspring at home rather than the traditional public or private school” (23). Parents elect to homeschool their children for a variety of reasons. Some want to include religion in the child’s curriculum, others wish to spend more time with their children and avoid long bus rides, and some parents believe that they “can do a better job educating a child than the public school system” (Sager 210).

Homeschooling is not a new phenomenon. Children were educated in the home long before public schools were established in the mid-1800’s. “The first compulsory education law, enacted by Massachusetts in 1852, required children aged 8-14 to attend school for a minimum of twelve weeks per year unless their families were so poor that to part with their children would create a financial hardship” (Kleist-Tesch 232). Parents began to return to the notion of homeschooling in the 1960’s and 1970’s, but the real surge in popularity began in the 1980’s. Homeschooling has become more common in the west and the south than in other areas of the United States (Hunt 63).

Many homeschooling families identify themselves with one of two philosophical camps: the idealogues and the pedagogues. “The ideological or religious group includes fundamentalist Christians who are unhappy with what they perceive as the public school’s ‘secular humanist’ curriculum” (Avner 30). This group is most often associated with the work of Raymond Moore, a former U.S. education official and the author of Better Late Than Early, who felt that “when children enter the public school system at the

young ages of seven or eight years old, they actually achieve at a lower level than their potential because they are not psychologically ready for school at this age” (Hunt 63-64). Moore felt that children who were schooled at home until they were eight years old would adjust to public school, both physically and psychologically, better than children beginning school at an earlier age. The ideological group uses traditional teaching methods, following a formal, religious-based curriculum and using textbooks and workbooks.

The pedagogical group consists of “parents who school their children at home because of deep misgivings about the quality of education in formal school settings” (Avner 30-31). They follow the work of John Holt, a professional educator and the author of How Children Fail and How Children Learn, who believed in child centered education. Holt believed that “children learn by doing things in everyday life...” (Hunt 64). The pedagogical group often chooses to discard a formal curriculum plan in favor of developing the child’s own interests and talents. They combine the use of books on a variety of subjects with everyday experiences to give their children a well-rounded, self-motivated education.

Every state, including North Carolina, has enacted legislation regulating homeschooling. “During the 1988 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, Article 39 of chapter 115C of the General Statutes was amended to allow home instruction, under certain conditions, as a means of complying with compulsory school attendance requirements” (North Carolinians for Home Education 1).

North Carolinians who wish to homeschool their children must first notify the Governor’s Office, Division of Non-Public Education. (The same office should be

informed when the homeschool closes.) Homeschooling teachers must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Attendance and immunization records must be maintained for each student. In addition, standardized testing should occur each year, with the corresponding results kept for one year.

Homeschooling has become a popular way to educate one's children. "In America in 1995, the National Home Education Research Institute estimated the number of homeschooled children, K-12, to be at 500,000 students – approximately one percent of the total school-age population" (Pearson 32). The homeschool population continues to grow across the nation. "The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) projects the number of homeschooled youth will continue to grow until it levels off at about five percent of the total school-age population" (Klipsch 47). As this group becomes more visible in the community, it is only natural for public libraries to begin to reevaluate the way they deal with and serve this special population's needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW: MEETING HOME SCHOOLERS' NEEDS

The literature concerning the homeschoolers' relationship with public libraries, overwhelmingly, deals with the libraries' need to adapt their services in a way that includes the special needs of this group. Many librarians have drawn from their own experiences, sharing these with libraries that may be just beginning to see the effects of having a growing homeschool population in their community.

According to a study conducted by Debby Morley and Toni Wooten, "homeschooling families do depend on public libraries for their educational materials" (42). In many cases, the library becomes the homeschoolers' primary source for materials. One way to serve the needs of homeschoolers is by providing a "balanced library collection. Both children's and adult material representing a variety of viewpoints in varying formats should be available" (Kleist-Tesch 240).

Librarians in public libraries often see homeschoolers leave the library with armloads of books on a variety of topics. "More people are now creating their own curricula or heavily supplementing a less-structured curriculum with library materials rather than purchasing a whole package" (Scheps 38). As a result, libraries sometimes experience "subject wipeout" when homeschool students check out everything on a particular topic. Rebecca N. Hunt, a former homeschooled student, suggests that libraries communicate with homeschooling families in order to avoid some of these problems (67).

Homeschoolers want information on a variety of subjects. In Guide to Homeschooling for Librarians, David C. Brostrom states that “curriculum support could mean providing books on social studies, English, math or any other non-textbook materials that fit into the homeschooler’s lesson or life plan” (33). Brostrom also suggests compiling pathfinders, collecting materials about how to homeschool, and acquiring curriculum guides from the local public school district. Other suggestions include offering more religious materials (Wikel 14).

Generally, librarians should practice their skills in collection development by providing a balanced collection. This will help homeschoolers by providing supplementary resources for teaching their children and will help foster interests in additional subjects.

According to several librarians, homeschoolers often want their public libraries to offer more programming, sometimes at nontraditional times, in addition to a balanced collection. “Regular programming – story hours for preschoolers, summer reading clubs and craft and film programs for school-aged children – should find a ready audience” (Avner 33). Additional programming might include an extension of the library’s Summer Reading Program, if one is already offered, which can be extended into a program that lasts throughout the year.

Programming can become an educational alternative for homeschoolers. For instance, LaRue and LaRue suggest that libraries “find community specialists, people with unusual knowledge in any field, and engage them to conduct workshops during the usual school day” (37). Suzanne C. Blackwell has used her experience at the Amherst Public Library in Virginia to suggest that libraries offer classes on library use, including

bibliographic instruction (10). Libraries can also offer workshops on using the Internet. These programs will bring homeschoolers into the library, enhancing their education by exposing them to community specialists as well as showing them how to use the library more effectively.

By using their creativity, and by building a bond with the homeschool community, public libraries can provide innovative programs for this special population. In her experience with homeschoolers, Margaret Martin found that homeschoolers asked for programs specifically designed for them, including a “reading incentive program to encourage their kids” (Anderson 22). In this situation, brown bag lunches provided the vehicle for storytelling, booktalking, and socializing. These programs became very popular with the local homeschool population.

Public libraries might hesitate to offer additional programs for this special population if their available staff is already limited. Planning and implementing additional programs for homeschoolers will inevitably take time away from other duties. Librarians, particularly those in small libraries, often have limited resources in terms of time, support staff, materials, etc. However, creativity and a willingness to help homeschooling parents will help librarians over this hurdle. In addition, by communicating with homeschoolers on a regular basis, librarians will be able to identify additional needs for this group, and can begin to create new and improved services.

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on homeschooling parents that currently use, or have, in the past, used the Mebane Public Library. The Mebane Public Library is a branch of the Central North Carolina Regional Library, which consists of one main library located in Burlington, North Carolina, six branch libraries, and one bookmobile. The library system serves patrons in Alamance County and Chatham County. The city of Mebane, North Carolina (population 6,446) lies on the border between Alamance County and Orange County. The Mebane Public Library currently holds 35,771 volumes with 10,986 registered borrowers. In 1998-1999, library patrons used the library 78,246 times. The library had a circulation of 163,915 items and an Internet usage of 1,693.

The subjects in this research were obtained from a list of homeschools and their primary administrators (i.e., parents) in Alamance and Orange Counties. The list was provided by the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education. A list from both counties was obtained so that those homeschool administrators whose address is in an Orange County section of Mebane would not be excluded from the study. In addition, some patrons that live in neighboring cities located in Orange County, such as Efland and Hurdle Mills, also hold library cards with the Mebane Public Library.

For the purposes of this study, the names contained in the lists were cross-checked with the Mebane Public Library's database in order to identify homeschool patrons that obtained a library card from the Mebane Public Library. In the event that the primary homeschool administrator was not found in the database, the address given for the

location of the school was used to identify other members of the household that had obtained a card from the Mebane Public Library. In some instances, parents had chosen to obtain cards for their children only. In order to broaden the sample size, subjects were chosen based on the fact that at least one member of the household had a library card. Sixty-five homeschool administrators were identified through this process.

It is important to recognize the fact that patrons within the library system move freely between several public libraries within Alamance and Chatham Counties. This study focused on those patrons that obtained their card from the Mebane Public Library in an attempt to target those individuals who use this branch more frequently than the other branches. However, there was no way to determine from the database if the Mebane Public Library was their primary source within the library system. In addition, several homeschooling parents who had obtained a card from one of the other branch libraries in the system may also use the Mebane Public Library. Because there was no simple way to identify these individuals, only those that had a card with the Mebane Public Library were chosen because it was assumed that those individuals would be familiar with the services and programs offered.

Several of the library patrons identified had not used the Mebane Public Library in some time, years in some cases. Although they were not able to evaluate the current collection and program offerings, they were included in the study so that they could provide insight as to why they had not used the Mebane Public Library in recent times. For instance, these individuals might have stopped using the library because of a lack of relevant materials in a particular area. They would be able to evaluate the library based

on past experiences. The library would be able to use their valuable opinions to evaluate its collection and available programming based on past library use.

Once the subjects were identified, a questionnaire [*see Appendix A*] was mailed to the school address. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included, as well as a cover letter [*see Appendix B*] explaining the intent of the study. By returning the questionnaire, subjects were consenting to be included in the study. The questionnaires were numbered so that those participants who had completed the questionnaire would not receive a follow-up mailing. However, once the questionnaires were returned, all identifying information was removed so that there would be no link between the data and the participant. A second mailing occurred two weeks after the first mailing in an attempt to increase the response rate.

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the three concepts related to the research question: the level of awareness, use, and adequacy of the current collection and program offerings as they relate to the homeschooling parents' curricular needs. The curriculum is the formal or informal course of study used by homeschooling parents to teach their children. It must be recognized that homeschooling parents use a wide variety of curricula when teaching their children. For the purposes of this study, "curriculum needs" included the search for and location of materials that directly relate to and support the chosen curriculum, as well as available programs that directly relate to and support the chosen curriculum. In addition, while the questionnaire would assess the library's current collection and program offerings, it would also be used to generate areas that need improvement in terms of both collection development and programming.

Questions included in the questionnaire were grouped into three sections. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the current programming offered by the Mebane Public Library. At the time of the study, the Mebane Public Library offered public and daycare preschool storytimes, a toddler storytime, a monthly storytime sponsored by the Mebane Jaycees, and the annual Summer Reading Program.

Respondents were asked to focus on the programs' usefulness as they relate to the chosen curriculum. Respondents were asked if they had attended any or all of the current programs offered by the Mebane Public Library, and why they had not attended, if applicable. In addition, respondents were asked about the kinds of programming that they would like to see at the Mebane Public Library, what the convenient day(s) and time(s) would be, and whether they would be willing to volunteer their time to help staff members plan. This section was designed to help librarians evaluate the current program offerings as well as identify ideas for future programs.

The second section of the questionnaire asked about the library's current collection. Respondents were asked to focus specifically on the library's collection of books, audiocassettes, videos, periodicals, and other in-house materials as they relate to the schools' chosen curriculum when answering these questions. The questions included in this section asked respondents about the availability of materials within the Mebane Public Library, within the library system as a whole, and through Inter-Library Loan (libraries outside of the system). In addition, respondents were asked to evaluate the availability of materials in certain broad subject areas, such as history, math, science, and the arts. This section of the questionnaire would be used to identify broad areas of the

collection that might need improvement and would assess the overall availability of useful items for homeschoolers.

The final section of the questionnaire dealt with some basic demographic questions, including how many children were being homeschooled in each family and their ages. This section also asked other general questions concerning the respondents' homeschool choices, such as whether they identify their school as religious or non-religious, what kind of curriculum they follow, and how often they use the library.

The data gathered from the questionnaires were coded and entered into The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 9.0. Descriptive analysis was performed on the data to test the concepts under research. The analysis of this questionnaire would give staff members of the Mebane Public Library, as well as librarians in other public libraries, a broad look at how the homeschool population in Mebane views the library's collection and program offerings. The results of this research were made available to staff members as well as to those respondents who wished to view the outcome of the study. While the questionnaire may not have obtained specific information about each homeschool's practices, which was not its intent, it does provide a general impression of homeschoolers' needs in this community which allow staff members to make necessary improvements.

ANALYSIS

Sixty-five surveys were mailed to homeschool administrators. Of the forty-three surveys returned, two were no longer at the mailing address, two expressed they used a different library, and one respondent answered only a few of the questions. Therefore, over the course of two mailings, thirty-eight usable surveys were returned, resulting in approximately a fifty-eight percent response rate.

Part One: Programming

The first section of the survey asked homeschoolers about their use of the programs available at the Mebane Public Library, particularly the annual Summer Reading Program, a monthly program offered by the Mebane Jaycees, a preschool storytime, and a toddler storytime. In addition, those who did not attend one or more of these programs were asked to provide a reason for not attending.

The annual Summer Reading Program is offered to children ages five to eight, and lasts six weeks in June and July. Nearly ninety percent (89.5%) of respondents did not attend, while 10.5% did attend the Summer Reading Program. Of the 89.5% that did not attend, 34.2% said that they were not aware of the program, 26.3% said that their children were too old, 21.1% said that the time was not convenient, 10.5% gave other reasons, and 7.9% did not answer the question. The explanations given by those who gave other reasons for not attending included health problems, the family continued their education through the summer, the family was too busy, or the family had moved.

The Jaycees' storytime was offered for the first time in 1999 as a monthly event on Saturday mornings for children of all ages. None of the respondents attended this program. Seventeen respondents (44.7%) said that they did not attend because they were not aware of the program, fifteen respondents (39.5%) said that their children were too old, four respondents (10.5%) said that the time was not convenient, and two respondents (5.2%) gave other reasons. Those reasons included the respondents' disinterest in the program as well as those that had moved from the area.

The survey also asked administrators if they had attended the toddler storytime (for children ages walking to three years) in the past year. As with the Jaycees' storytime, none of the respondents had attended. The majority of respondents (86.8%) said that their children were too old for the program, 5.3% said that they were not aware of the program, 5.3% gave other reasons, and 2.5% said that they attend a toddler storytime at another library. Those who gave additional reasons stated that they had either moved or their child(ren) attended preschool storytime with another child.

Preschool storytime is offered bi-monthly to both daycares and the general public. Thirty-seven respondents (97.4%) said that they had not attended this program, while one respondent 2.6% said that they had attended. Of those who did not attend, 84.2% said that their children were too old, 5.3% were not aware of the program, and 5.3% said that the time was not convenient. An additional 5.3% did not respond to this question. (*See Tables 1 and 2 on page 19 for summaries of program attendance.*)

Homeschoolers were also asked if they felt that the Mebane Public Library offered them enough programming to meet their curriculum needs. Approximately forty-five percent (44.7%) felt that the library does offer enough programming, 36.8% said that

Table 1:
Homeschool Attendance of Library Programs

Program	Yes	No
SRP	10.5%	89.5%
Jaycees' Storytime	0%	100%
Toddler Storytime	0%	100%
Preschool Storytime	2.6%	97.4%

Table 2:
Reasons Given for Not Attending Library Programs

Program	Time Not Convenient	Children too Old	Attend program at other library	Not aware of program	Other
Summer Reading	21.1%	26.3%	NR	34.2%	10.5%
Jaycees' Storytime	10.5%	39.5%	NA	44.7%	2.6%
Toddler Storytime	NR	86.8%	2.6%	5.3%	5.3%
Preschool Storytime	5.3%	84.2%	NR	5.3%	NR

*NR = No respondents selected this answer

NA = Not applicable to this program

Missing data is not included in this table

the library does not offer enough programming, and 18.4% did not answer the question. Although more homeschoolers feel that the library offers enough programming, there are some indications that more appropriate programming could be offered for this group. For instance, the most-cited reason for not attending the preschool storytime or the toddler storytime was the fact that the respondents' children were too old to attend. This was also the second-highest reason for not attending the Jaycees' storytime offered by the library. Therefore, the data indicates that additional programming is needed for school-aged children.

In addition, respondent awareness of library programs was also quite low. In fact, this was the most-cited reason for not attending the Summer Reading Program (34.2%) or

the Jaycees' storytime (44.7%). At the time, these were the only two programs offered for older children, indicating that the homeschool segment of the community is not being made aware of the kinds of programming that are available to them. One respondent made a note on the returned survey, stating that keeping homeschoolers informed of the kinds of programming available through some kind of mailing would be beneficial to this group.

In order to get a feel for the kinds of programming that homeschooling parents would be interested in attending at the Mebane Public Library, respondents were asked a series of questions that dealt with types of programming, and convenient dates and times. First, they were asked about the kinds of programming they would be interested in attending. They were allowed to pick, from a list of eight, as many as interested them.

The most popular program selected by homeschoolers (65.8%) was an educational program that would bring in knowledgeable guests from the community. Next, 47.4% said that they would be interested in instructional workshops on how to use the library. Instructional workshops on how to use the Internet ranked third by homeschoolers, with 44.7% saying that they would like to attend. Nearly twenty-four percent (23.7%) of respondents said that they would be interested in both a program similar to the Summer Reading Program that continued throughout the year as well as a reading discussion group, while 15.8% said that they either were not interested in attending any programs, or they gave additional ideas, such as French or Spanish classes, special classes such as history or arts and crafts, math programs, and volunteer opportunities for their child(ren).

Next, homeschoolers were asked about the time of day that would be most convenient for them, in terms of attending programs at the library. Respondents were allowed to pick more than one time of day. Twenty respondents (52.6%) selected 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., twelve (31.6%) respondents chose 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., five homeschoolers (13.2%) said that they did not know, two (5.3%) selected other, and one respondent (2.6%) said that no time is convenient. Of the two homeschoolers that selected “other,” one listed the time frame of 6:00 p.m. to 8 p.m., and the other mentioned 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Table 3:
Ranking of Possible Programs, Times, and Days

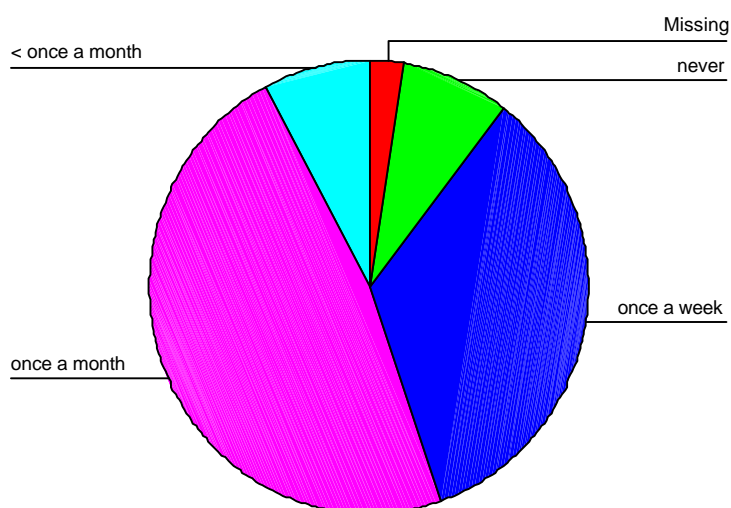
Program		Time		Day	
Educational Programs	65.8%	2:00 to 5:00 p.m.	52.6%	Thursday	44.7%
Workshop: Library Use	47.4%	9:00a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	31.6%	Tuesday	42.1%
Workshop: Use Internet	44.7%	Don't Know	13.2%	Wednesday	31.6%
Homeschool Support Group	31.6%	Other	5.3%	Friday	28.9%
Similar to SRP	23.7%	No time is Convenient	2.6%	Monday	26.3%
Reading Disc. Group	23.7%			Don't Know	21.1%
None/Other	31.6%			Saturday	2.6%

Homeschoolers were also asked to select a day of the week (or more than one, if applicable) that would be convenient for attending library programs. Thursday was the most frequently selected day of the week, with 44.7% of respondents selecting it. Tuesday received a 42.1% positive response, Wednesday was the third most convenient day, with 31.6% saying that they would attend on this day. Friday was selected by 28.9% of the respondents, Monday was selected by 26.3% of the respondents, 21.1% said that

they did not know which day would be most convenient, and 2.6% chose Saturday as the most convenient day of the week. (*See Table 3 on page 21 for a summary of programs, times, and days.*)

Homeschooling parents were also asked how frequently they would attend if one or more of the programs they had selected were offered. Eighteen respondents (47.4%) chose once a month, thirteen (34.2%) said that they would attend once a week, three respondents (7.9%) said that they would either never attend or would attend less than once a month, and one person (2.6%) did not answer the question. (*See Graph 1*)

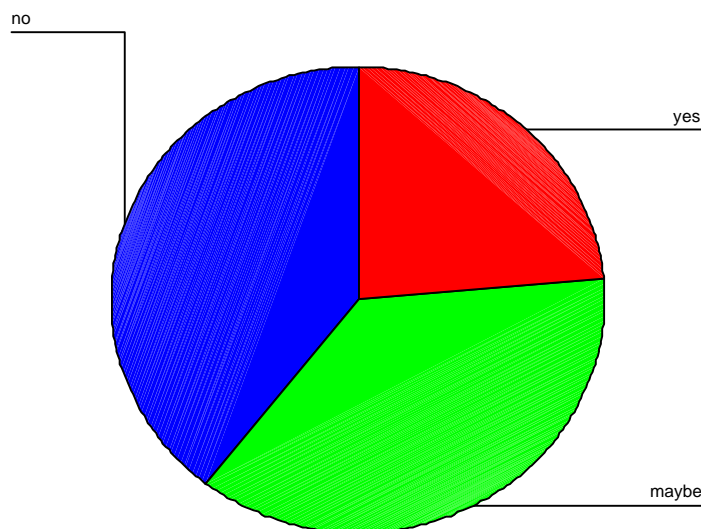
Graph 1:
Frequency Homeschoolers Would Attend Library Programs



The final question in part one asked homeschooling parents if they would be willing to help library staff prepare for the programs that they had selected. Because the number of available staff is limited, as well as preparation time, volunteering would help alleviate many of the pressures of creating new program opportunities. In addition, the

literature has often cited volunteer opportunities as one service that homeschool parents want libraries to provide. In this case, 39.5% of homeschooling parents said that neither they or their students would be willing to volunteer, 36.8% said that they might be willing to volunteer, and 23.7% said that they would help library staff prepare for programs. (*See Graph 2*)

Graph 2:
Would Homeschoolers Volunteer?



In general, although 44.7% of respondents felt that the Mebane Public Library offered enough programming to meet their curriculum needs, homeschooling parents do appear to be interested in attending programs that are geared towards them. Most of the educators said that they would attend either once a week or once a month, either between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Thursday was the most cited day of the week that would be convenient for homeschoolers.

Part 2: The Collection

The second section of the questionnaire asked homeschool educators to assess the availability of materials that deal with their chosen curriculum. Homeschoolers were asked about the availability of materials within the Mebane Public Library, as well as throughout the library system as a whole and via Interlibrary Loan (ILL). In addition, respondents were asked about the availability of materials dealing with certain broad subject areas. All answers were given on a scale consisting of three possible answers: most of the time, sometimes, and rarely.

The first question in part two asked if homeschooling parents have trouble finding the materials they need in the Mebane Public Library. Just over half (55.3%) of respondents said that they sometimes have trouble, 36.8% said that they rarely have trouble, and 7.9% did not answer the question. The next question asked about the availability of items in the library system as a whole (when items were not available in the Mebane Public Library). In this case, 76.3% said that they could request items from other libraries most of the time, 13.2% said that they could request items sometimes, 5.3% said that they could rarely find materials they need in the system, and 5.3% of respondents did not answer the question. Finally, homeschoolers were asked about the availability of materials through Interlibrary Loan. Twenty-two respondents (57.9%) said that they can get items through ILL most of the time, six (15.8%) said that they could sometimes find materials through ILL, and five respondents (13.2%) either said that they could rarely find materials through ILL or did not answer the question.

The next section of part two asked homeschooling parents if they have trouble finding materials concerning certain broad subject areas. In terms of materials that deal

with the arts, 52.6% said that they rarely have trouble, 23.7% said that they sometimes have trouble, 7.9% said that they have trouble most of the time, and 15.8% did not answer the question.

Respondents were also asked if they have trouble finding materials in the Mebane Public Library that deal with science-related subjects. In this case, 52.6% said that they rarely have trouble, 31.6% said that they sometimes have trouble finding materials, and 7.9% of respondents said that they have trouble finding materials most of the time. Three respondents (7.9%) did not answer the question.

The next question asked homeschoolers if they have trouble finding math materials in the Mebane Public Library. Twenty-three (60.5%) said that they rarely have trouble, ten (26.3%) said that they sometimes have trouble, and two respondents (5.3%) said that they have trouble finding math materials most of the time. Three respondents (7.9%) did not answer this question.

Homeschooling parents were also asked if they have trouble finding fiction materials that go along with their curriculum. Approximately forty-two percent (42.1%) of respondents said that they rarely have trouble finding fiction materials, 34.2% said that they sometimes have trouble, 13.2% said that they have trouble most of the time, and 10.5% of respondents did not answer the question.

Finally, homeschoolers were asked if they have trouble finding materials on how to homeschool their children. Sixteen respondents (42.1%) said that they rarely have trouble, ten respondents (26.3%) said that they sometimes have trouble, and eight respondents (21.1%) said that they have trouble finding materials on how to homeschool most of the time. Four respondents (10.5%) did not answer this question.

A surprising number of respondents chose not to answer any or some of the questions in this section (as high as 15.8% for materials on the arts and as low as 7.9% for materials on history and science). Some respondents made notes in the margin saying that they had never looked for materials in some of these areas. This may indicate that homeschoolers' awareness of some parts of the library's collection is not as high as it is in other areas. It may also indicate that homeschoolers felt they had sufficient materials in these areas to teach their children. Either case may account for the lack of response from others who left questions unanswered. Respondents who did not answer some questions may also not want to say negative things about the library's collection. (*See Table 4 for a summary of the collection.*)

Table 4:
**Do Homeschooling Parents Have Trouble
Finding Materials?**

Subject	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time
Arts	52.6%	23.7%	7.9%
Science	52.6%	31.6%	7.9%
History	60.5%	26.3%	5.3%
Math	50%	26.3%	10.5%
Fiction	42.1%	34.2%	13.2%
Homeschool	42.1%	26.3%	21.1%

* Missing values not included

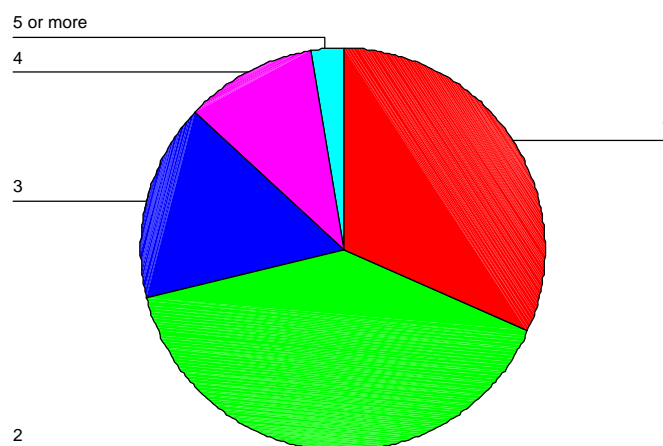
In general, homeschooling parents are able to find the materials that they need either in the Mebane Public Library, in the library system, or through Interlibrary Loan. Based on responses, the collection in the Mebane Public Library is strongest in the areas of history and the arts and weakest in the areas of curriculum-related fiction and materials dealing with how to homeschool.

Part 3: Demographics/Basic Library Use

Part three of the questionnaire asked questions dealing with basic demographics as well as basic library use. First, respondents were asked how many students they

currently teach at home. Of the number of households surveyed, the majority of homeschoolers responding to the survey said that they teach two students (39.5%), 31.6% of homeschooling parents teach one student, 15.8% teach three students, 10.5% teach four students, and one respondent (2.6%) teaches five or more students. (*See Graph 3*)

Graph 3:
Number of Students Homeschooled Per Household



In addition to the number of students currently being homeschooled, respondents were asked about the ages of their students. (Respondents chose more than one response when applicable.) Two respondents (5.3%) have students that are less than five years old, sixteen respondents (42.1%) teach children between the ages of five and eight, twenty-six respondents (68.4%) teach students between the ages of nine and thirteen, and fifteen (39.5%) teach students either fourteen or older.

Next, respondents were asked how often they have used the library related to homeschooling in the past twelve months. The largest number of homeschooling parents (28.9%) used the library once a month, 23.7% used the library four or more times a

month, 18.4% used the library either less than once a month or two to three times a month, 7.9% of respondents said that they never used the library for homeschooling reasons, and 2.6% of respondents did not know how often they used the library.

Homeschoolers were also asked how often their children used the library related to homeschooling needs in the past twelve months. In this case, the largest number of respondents (28.9%) said that their children used the library less than once a month. Ten respondents (26.3%) said that their children used the library once a month, eight respondents (21.1%) selected two to three times a month, seven (18.4%) chose four or more times a month, and 2.6% said that their children either never used the library or they did not know.

Homeschool educators were next asked about the kinds of materials (related to their homeschooling needs) that they used at the library. (Respondents were allowed to choose as many as applied to their situation.) Nonfiction materials were used by 76.3% of educators while 68.4% of respondents said that they used fiction materials. In addition, 47.4% used videos, 28.9% used magazines, and 26.3% used audiocassettes from the library to teach their children. Only 13.2% of homeschooling parents used the personal computer at the library, and only 7.9% used the Internet at the library. Of the 21.1% of respondents that selected “other,” three respondents said that they did not use the library at all, one mentioned reference books, one mentioned classical CD’s, and one listed the photocopier.

Homeschool educators were also asked what their children used the library for (related to homeschooling). According to respondents, fiction materials were more heavily used by students (81.6%) than nonfiction materials (73.7%). In addition, 42.1%

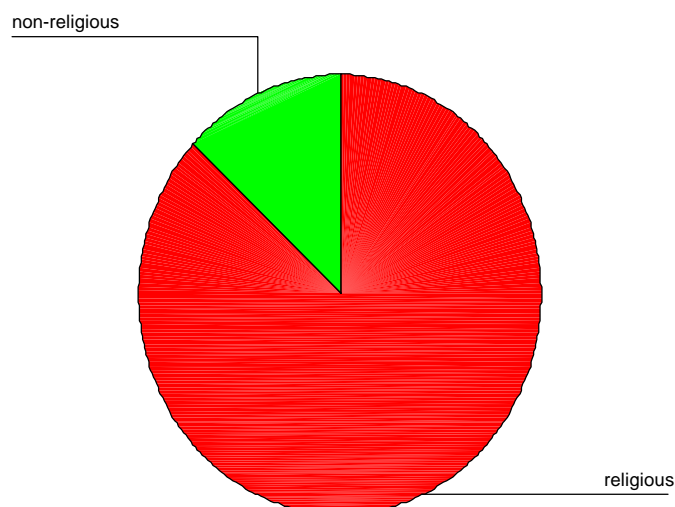
of students used videos and 39.5% of students used audiocassettes. Only 13.2% of students used magazines. In addition, only 5.3% of homeschooled students used the library's personal computer, and only 10.5% of students used the library's Internet computers. Two students used "other materials" (5.3%). Of those two respondents, one said their student(s) used the library for research purposes and the other stated science/history projects as their reason for using the library.

In general, the most heavily used portions of the collection were the library's fiction and nonfiction books as well as videos. These are the most-used areas for both homeschool educators and their children.

Respondents were asked about the kind of curriculum that they used to teach their children. The majority of respondents (52.6%) listed other choices than were available on the questionnaire. Of the remaining choices, 36.8% of respondents said that they used a curriculum of their own creation, 7.9% used the same curriculum plan as the public schools, and one respondent (2.6%) said that they used no curriculum. Of the 52.6% of respondents selecting "other," ABEKA (10 respondents), Son Light (4 respondents), and Bob Jones University (3 respondents) were the most cited homeschool packages used. Other responses included textbooks from various publishers, Worldly Wise, Covenant home curriculum, etc. Close to ninety percent (86.8%) of homeschool parents in this area categorized their school as a religious school while 13.2% list their school as non-religious. (*See Graph 4 on page 30*)

Respondents were also asked how often they and their students used the library unrelated to homeschooling. For the parents, 34.2% used the library less than once a month, 23.7% say that they came to the library either once a month or two to three times

Graph 4:
Types of Homeschools



a month, 15.8% used the library four or more times a month, and one respondent (2.6%) never used the library for reasons unrelated to homeschooling. For the students, 28.9% used the library unrelated to homeschooling less than once a month, 26.3% used the library either once a month or two to three times a month, 15.8% used the library four or more times a month, and 2.6% of students did not use the library.

Finally, respondents were asked to write any additional comments they had about the library's collection and programming as they related to their homeschooling needs. The majority of those responding to this question mentioned the general helpfulness and friendliness of staff members at the Mebane Public Library. A few of the suggestions are provided below:

"I would like a homeschool magazine in the library. Also, books that would help me teach my children. Curriculum based books or text books with teacher's additions."

“I would like to see availability of tutoring (group or individual). Math is especially boring and challenging and I would like to broaden my child’s education with outside interest.”

“Send out flyers to homeschoolers with choices and keep them updated on dates and times of events. I would like to see classes offered for my upcoming high schooler. There are so many topics others can offer to instruct.”

“A library is a very important part of our homeschool. The more offered the better. The library may want to join some homeschool groups just so the library can send important events in the monthly letters.”

“Finding updated materials on homeschooling is really hard for families who are just beginning. I have been homeschooling for 6 years and am familiar with the process, however, it would be nice to have a contact at the library for those who are not knowledgeable.”

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to determine whether the collection and program offerings of public libraries, and in this case at the Mebane Public Library, were meeting the curriculum needs of homeschooling parents. The study looked at the levels of awareness, use, and adequacy of the Mebane Public Library's collection and programming offerings as they related to the local homeschool community.

In terms of awareness, many homeschooling parents were not aware of some of the library's programs. In particular, the library's Summer Reading Program and Jaycees' Storytime were the programs that homeschoolers seemed to be the least aware of. In terms of the collection, the presence of missing responses in several of the subject categories indicated that some homeschoolers were not aware of the library's collection in those areas. Some subjects may also feel they need no other materials for those subject areas. This could be the case if those educators do not seek materials in those subject areas. Unanswered questions could also indicate an attempt to avoid providing a negative response about the library.

Library use varied between programming options. None of the homeschoolers responding to the survey attended either the Jaycees' Storytime or the library's Toddler Storytime. This related to the programs' inappropriateness in that they were not applicable to the general age range of homeschooled students (the largest group was the nine to thirteen age range). In addition, while homeschoolers heavily used the library's

fiction and nonfiction books as well as videos, they made less significant use of audiocassettes, magazines, and computer-related resources. Raising awareness of these resources through workshops on how to use the library as well as the Internet (as selected by homeschoolers in the programming portion of the questionnaire) might lead to increased usage in these areas.

The library's collection did seem to be adequate, in general, for the homeschool population in and around Mebane. Most patrons were able to obtain materials through other libraries in the system and/or Interlibrary Loan when they were not available at the Mebane Public Library branch. Continuing to provide a well-rounded collection in all subject areas and formats will enable homeschooling parents to continue teaching their children. Finding information on how to homeschool and finding fiction materials that go along with the chosen curriculum were the weakest areas according to homeschoolers.

Although more homeschoolers felt that the library did provide enough programming (as opposed to those who did not), they were also interested in several of the choices for possible programs. In particular, homeschool administrators were interested in programs that would bring in guests from the community as well as workshops on how to use the library and the Internet. The most convenient time for homeschoolers was Thursday afternoons between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

In general, the homeschool population that used the Mebane Public Library was satisfied with the kinds of programming and materials that were available to them. They also had several suggestions for areas of improvement. Many of the programming ideas chosen by homeschoolers would benefit the general library community, as would the continued development of a well-rounded collection.

Community analysis is not a new phenomenon. However, the practice of regularly questioning the community seems to be pushed aside as other library issues arise. By surveying the homeschool population that used the Mebane Public Library, this study demonstrated how one small library can make the needed inquiries into its homeschool community's library needs in order to make beneficial changes. The next step will be the incorporation of the results of this study into future library goals and objectives. This study may serve as an example to other public libraries that are just beginning to see a significant homeschool community in their area. Librarians who have had significant experience with homeschoolers will also find this study useful because it may shed new light on areas of collection development and programming that may have been overlooked. It is the opinion of this researcher that this kind of study can and should be done in every library that has such a special population, whether it is a public library, a special library, or an academic library.

APPENDIX A

The questions contained in this questionnaire will ask you about the Mebane Public Library's programs as well as their collection (books, audios, videos, and other materials). As you answer the questions, please think about how the library helps you teach your children. Please be as honest as possible. **EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY HOMESCHOOLING OR HAVE NOT USED THE LIBRARY IN A WHILE, YOUR THOUGHTS ARE STILL VALUED.** If you are not currently homeschooling, please answer the following questions based on your past experience with the library as a homeschool educator.

Part 1. This section will ask you questions about the Mebane Public Library's programming.

1. Did you attend the Summer Reading Program (Summer 1999)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered no, why not?

☐ Time not convenient ☐ Children were too old ☐ Children attended SRP at another library
☐ Not aware of the program
☐ Other (please explain)_____

2. Have you attended the Jaycees' Storytime in the PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered no, why not?

☐ Time not convenient ☐ Children are too old
☐ Not aware of the program
☐ Other (please explain)_____

3. Have you attended Toddler Storytime in the PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered no, why not?

☐ Time not convenient ☐ Children are too old
☐ Children attend toddler storytime at another library
☐ Not aware of the program
☐ Other (please explain)_____

4. Have you attended Preschool Storytime in the PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered no, why not?

- ☐ Time not convenient ☐ Children are too old
☐ Children attend preschool storytime at another library
☐ Not aware of the program
☐ Other (please explain)_____

Continue onto next page

5. Do you feel that the Mebane Public Library offers enough programming to meet your homeschooling needs?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. What kinds of programming would YOU AND/OR YOUR STUDENT(S) attend? (check all that apply)
- ☐ A program similar to the Summer Reading Program that continues throughout the year
☐ Instructional workshops about how to use the Internet
☐ Instructional workshops about how to use the library
☐ A reading discussion group
☐ Educational programs that bring in guests from the community
☐ A homeschool support/feedback group
☐ None
☐ Other_____
7. If the library offered one or more of the programs listed in Question 6, what time of day would be convenient for you? (you may pick more than one)
- ☐ Between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. ☐ Between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
☐ No time is convenient ☐ Don't Know
☐ Other_____
8. If the library offered one or more of the programs listed in Question 6, what day of the week would be convenient for you? (you may pick more than one)
- ☐ Monday ☐ Thursday
☐ Tuesday ☐ Friday
☐ Wednesday ☐ Saturday
☐ Don't Know
9. If the library offered one or more of the programs listed in Question 6, how frequently would you estimate that YOU AND/OR YOUR STUDENT(S) would attend?
- ☐ Never ☐ Once a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less than once a month
10. If the library offered one or more of the programs listed in Question 6, would YOU AND/OR YOUR STUDENT(S) volunteer your time to help library staff prepare for the programs?
- ☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No

Part 2. This section will ask you questions about the materials (i.e., books, magazines, audios, videos, and other items you might use) located within the Mebane Public Library.

This section will assess the availability of materials as they relate to your homeschool curriculum. Unless otherwise specified, please evaluate the materials found ONLY in the Mebane Public Library.

For the following questions (Questions 11-19), please check the box that best applies to your situation. These questions will ask you about your experience finding materials (for you and your student(s)) that deal with your curriculum or are related to homeschooling.

Continue onto next page

	1= Most of the time	2= Sometimes	3= Rarely
	1	2	3
11. I have trouble finding the materials I need in the Mebane Public Library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. If I can't find the materials I need in the Mebane Public Library, I can request them from another library in the system (i.e., Graham, May Memorial, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. If I can't find the materials in the library system, I can get them through Inter-Library Loan (outside of our library system)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I have trouble finding materials that deal with the arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have trouble finding materials that deal with science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have trouble finding materials that deal with history	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I have trouble finding materials that deal with math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I have trouble finding fiction materials that go along with my curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I have trouble finding information about how to homeschool my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3. Finally, this section will gather information about you and your student(s).

20. How many students do you teach at this time? *(If you do not currently homeschool your children, skip to Question 28)*

☐ I don't currently homeschool ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 or more

21. What are their ages? *(check all that apply)*

☐ Less than 5 years old ☐ 5-8 years old ☐ 9-13 years old ☐ 14 and older

22. On average, how often have YOU used the library RELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING in the PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS?

☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once a month ☐ 2-3 times a month
☐ 4 or more times a month ☐ Don't Know

23. On average, how often have YOUR STUDENT(S) used the library RELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING in the PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS?

☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once a month ☐ 2-3 times a month
☐ 4 or more times a month ☐ Don't Know

Continue onto next page

24. Generally, what do YOU use the library for RELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING? (Check all that apply)

☐ Fiction books ☐ Non-fiction books
☐ Magazines
☐ Audios (books on tape)
☐ Videos
☐ Use of the personal computer (for typing, games)
☐ Use of the Internet
☐ Other _____

25. Generally, what do YOUR STUDENT(S) use the library for RELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING? (Check all that apply)

☐ Fiction books ☐ Non-fiction books
☐ Magazines
☐ Audios (books on tape)
☐ Videos
☐ Use of the personal computer (for typing, games)
☐ Use of the Internet
☐ Other _____

26. What kind of curriculum do you use?

☐ An informal curriculum in which the children decide what their interests are
☐ The same curriculum plan used by the public schools
☐ A curriculum of my own creation
☐ None
☐ Other _____

27. How would you categorize your school?

☐ Religious ☐ Non-Religious

28. On average, how often do YOU use the library UNRELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING NEEDS?

☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once a month
☐ 2-3 times a month ☐ 4 or more times a month

29. On average, how often do YOUR STUDENT(S) use the library UNRELATED TO HOMESCHOOLING NEEDS?

- ☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once a month
☐ 2-3 times a month ☐ 4 or more times a month

If there is something that I have not asked that deals with your homeschooling needs as they relate to the library's collection or programming, please feel free to write your comments here.

Thank you very much for your time. Please return the survey by JANUARY 31, 2000 in the stamped envelope provided.

APPENDIX B



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT
CHAPEL HILL

School of Information and Library Science
Hill
Phone# (919) 962-8366
Fax# (919) 962-8071

The University of North Carolina at Chapel
CB# 3360, 100 Manning Hall
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3360

January 15, 2000

Dear Homeschooling Parent/Teacher:

I am writing to ask you to participate in a study that will help the **Mebane Public Library**, and other public libraries, evaluate its current collection of materials and programs. I am an employee of the Mebane Public Library, but I am also a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This study will be used to collect data for my master's paper, and the results (without identifying individuals) will be available at the library upon completion. **Your willingness to share your opinions will be of value not only to my research, but may lead to the possible enhancement of the Mebane Public Library's collection, programs and/or services that will help you use the library to teach your students.**

I would like to ask you to fill out the attached questionnaire, which will require only about **ten (10) minutes** of your time to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question that appears on the questionnaire. Any information you provide will remain completely confidential. I am asking you to look over the attached questionnaire, and, if you choose to do so, complete the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope I have provided. Your participation is completely voluntary; there is no penalty for not responding. Your return of this questionnaire will be taken as indication of your consent to participate. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. All information gathered from this questionnaire will be kept in strictest confidence. The data will be presented in summary form only in my master's paper, with no identifying information linked to responses for any question. Upon my receipt of your completed survey, your name and any other identifying information will be removed.

For questions regarding this questionnaire or the confidentiality thereof, please do not hesitate to contact me at (919) 563-6761 or by e-mail at bretc@ils.unc.edu. You may also address concerns to my advisor, Dr. Claudia J. Gollop, at 204 Manning Hall, Campus Box #3360, UNC Chapel Hill, 27599-3360; telephone (919) 962-8362; e-mail address: gollop@ils.unc.edu. In addition, your questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject may be answered by:

David A. Eckerman, Chair
Academic Affairs - Institutional Review Board
CB#4100, 201 Bynum Hall
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-4100
(919) 962-7761 e-mail: aa-irb@unc.edu

Thank you in advance for your time. I know that your time is very valuable. Your thoughts are very important to me and the staff of the Mebane Public Library and will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Christine R. Bretz

****PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED
SURVEY IN THE SELF-ADDRESSED
STAMPED ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY
JANUARY 31, 2000****

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