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Browsing has been shown to be the main way that most public library patrons locate new reading materials. A genre fiction classification scheme can to aid readers in their search for materials as well as preventing them from feeling overwhelmed when dealing with the entire fiction collection at once. This study investigates attitudes toward genre fiction classification by public library patrons in the Main Branch of the Durham County Public Library system in North Carolina. The survey was conducted, along with a comparison of circulation statistics, to determine the success of genre fiction classification several years after implementation. Respondents generally indicated satisfaction with the system. Fiction circulation continued to increase steadily.

Headings:

Browsing

Fiction - classification

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GENRE FICTION CLASSIFICATION: A CONTINUATION STUDY OF ITS
RECEPTION BY PATRONS IN THE DURHAM COUNTY (NC) PUBLIC LIBRARY

by
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INTRODUCTION

A public library's adult fiction collection is seemingly organized for the convenience of the librarian and therefore, it has been assumed for the convenience of the patron (Sear 109). However, when taking a closer look at this arrangement, it seems that the fiction collection has been overlooked by librarians until recently. Take for example; the great care the Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal System has for all non-fiction works and works of literature, including new updated editions of their classification systems as their older ones become ever so slightly outdated (102). All this time the fiction collection remains neglected sitting in one huge section arranged alphabetically by author. It's possible that some libraries would have overlooked fiction altogether if it came in the form of paperback or they might have used this more disposable form as a means for early experimentation with categorization (111). Part of the reasoning behind this comes from the general disdain, says Dutta, that the library profession has held for fiction and for fiction readers through the last century (Dutta 197, Sear 101). The professional librarian saw fiction as "being unreal or nonfactual" and not "worthy of serious study" (Dutta 197). Librarians were educated to try to convert fiction readers with the "uplift theory" by using the reader's light fiction reading as a step in the way to turning them onto reading "classics" or non-fiction, otherwise "appropriate" literature. Some librarians, such as William Borden, recognized that the "average library patron thinks of books by types, not by authors" and attempted early experiments with genre

categorization as far back as 1909, but was never successful in having it standardized for all fiction (Harrell 150).

The research question that I am proposing is: Does genre shelving in public libraries, instead of general fiction shelving, increase patrons' satisfaction in browsing and success in finding books? The purpose of my master's paper will be an examination of the classification of genre fiction in a public library setting. An assumption is made that circulation and patron satisfaction will increase after the implementation of this classification system. This will be observed through the literature, survey research and circulation data analysis.

When patrons enter a library, they often face the problem that they have already read everything by their favorite author, or they are seeking something new by that author, counting on the library to have bought it, and hoping that no one else has checked it out. Ross summarizes a number of studies that show that patrons select books based on their knowledge of the author and the genre (14). When a patron has exhausted all of his or her favorite authors he/she has to rely on other sources such as recommendations, familiar book titles, or browsing. The traditional alphabetical-by-author classification system is not set up to facilitate browsing. It is only set up to find specific authors that one may be searching for. However, in a classification system arranged by genre, one would have a subject in mind while browsing through the section and therefore not have to be as concerned over whether they liked this "type" of book or not. This can be immensely time saving for genre readers, as well as those readers who need advice beyond a certain author. There are those patrons who use a genre classification scheme to begin and read through an entire section. Studies have shown that because these sections

are much smaller and easier to manage there is less risk of “information overload” while browsing, therefore one can assume that patron satisfaction will increase along with circulation (Baker 366). Most public librarians can attest to the fact that the new fiction section or returned book cart has a higher circulation rate than the books in the stacks; some may argue that it is because of the smaller range of choices thus making it is a more manageable amount of information for patrons to browse through (Sear 107).

For patrons as browsers, to successfully navigate the fiction collection, it should be presented to them in manageable amounts of information to peruse. The Main Branch of the Durham County Library (DCL) reorganized its fiction collection into a genre separated collection in January of 1999 (Richards 3). The fiction collection is housed on the third floor of the main branch, separate from other parts of the collection and slightly off the beaten path. The divisions within the fiction collection include adventure, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance, science fiction, and western fiction sections. There are also formatting divisions for the large print books and short story collections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In *Patterns of Genre Fiction Readers: A Survey of Durham County Library Patrons*, Gundlach approaches genre fiction through readers' advisory services offered by the public library. The author focuses on the appeal of genre fiction to patrons who frequent the adult fiction section of the library. The author's study is directed towards patterns of reading interests and finding similar vocabulary between patrons and librarians when dealing with fiction genres (10). Through Gundlach's surveys in Durham's libraries, one is able to see the genres in which patrons of various age groups have the most interest. She has narrowed it down to eight different genres by using Saricks' *The Reader's Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction* and examining the reading interests and crossover patterns in genre fiction (Gundlach 11). Saricks' text proves to be a useful guide for defining the specific genres possible for classification of fiction. She has fifteen chapters all dealing with a specific genre, from "Adventure" to "Women's Lives and Relationships" (15, 370). Saricks does address the fact that some readers prefer to have series their author wrote or books that are similar kept separately from other materials, she says "some genres are easier to separate than others" (225). Saricks is not afraid to address some of the issues that arise when discussing genre categorization, "we place authors in genres where we think the readers are most likely to discover them, but the blurring of the borders of the genres is becoming more frequent" (178).

Amy Richard's paper *Genre Fiction Classification: a Study of the Durham County Library* involves a deeper look at genre fiction classification but also treats the aspect of browsing as a means of finding books. Through her literature review she addresses browsing in several different ways, since browsing is a somewhat vague, but

apparently very effective way for patrons to find materials. Richard's study focuses on "the impact that the separation of the fiction collection into genre categories has on its library fiction users at the DCL Main Branch" (13). Since the current study does intend to focus on both genre fiction classification and also on browsing, Richard's work is one of the most useful sources for this research question. This study attempts to build on the earlier study longitudinally by looking at circulation records at a later point in time and comparing the results to what Richard found in 1999.

Another broad survey that emphasizes the importance of browsing is discussed in the chapter on "Organizing Fiction for Use" by Sear and Jennings, in *Managing Fiction in Libraries*. This survey examines the ease of the patron's ability to locate fiction titles (105). The authors address categorization of genre fiction, as well as other options, such as spine labeling, that do not involve physical separation (108-110). Thus potential compromise classifications between the general fiction shelving and genre fiction classification can emerge. Sear and Jennings recognize the importance of browsing, "Clearly, browsing, not reading reviews, or looking at catalogues and lists is the way readers discover new authors" (105). Browsing creates a vital link for readers; to go from an author for whom they have read all of the works to a newly discovered author, possibly in a new style of writing.

Shoham's *Library Classification and Browsing* provides a thorough discussion on the history of browsing and its importance to readers. Browsing was first linked to reading in 1890 and later described as giving us "information in glimpses" (91, 92). Since browsing is one of the most regular ways that patrons locate books, it is suggested that the patron "does not allocate his search effort at random; instead he goes to that section of

the library that he estimates has the highest probability of containing a book or books that his immediate interests would make him want to borrow” (92-93). It states that there are certain factors that lead people to browse and one is if “a library’s classification system invites browsing” (95). Also some people browse when they are not certain what they are looking for or are interested in, and are willing to try something different (94). There are several types of browsing that may occur here. General browsing, which is “purposeless browsing for pleasure” or “looking at a row [...] out of interest (or need) to see what they are about”, chance discoveries, such as finding a book beside a book you were seeking, or directed browsing, which occurs when a person is seeking a particular item but doesn’t know how to find it, and undirected browsing, the more common browsing often called “killing time” or hoping to stumble across something of interest (96, 97). Shoham also briefly discusses the various classification schemes in use. The example used is Detroit Public Library’s “Reader Interest Classification” scheme which is separated into 14 categories and various subheadings. This classification was developed to support browsing and subject interests, “for those aware of their interest in a certain field who can associate it with definite subjects but not with related interests” (54).

Den Reader follows the account of the Hertfordshire Library system focusing on user needs in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reader discusses the Hoddesdon branch as already having some degree of genre fiction classification with “separate shelves for romances, thrillers, science-fiction, westerns,” however they decided to add more categories such as historical, general, classics, and adventure/action/war, to “attract more male readers into the fiction area and it worked, especially as all non-fiction world war books were shelved on the same floor” (37). The library made continued changes as they

were needed to comply with the users needs. After a year of service the library conducted a public opinion survey. Reader reveals that the genre fiction brought out the strongest feelings; he states, “some members of staff had come to dislike it quite strongly, feeling that they had to show readers two or three places to find a particular author” (39). Yet the survey showed that 79% of patrons liked categorization, 13% “did not mind it, and only 8% positively disliked it” (40). This supports the efforts made for genre fiction classification.

A thorough review of prior research has been done by Baker and Shepherd in “Fiction Classification Schemes: The Principles behind Them and Their Success.” The article focuses on past studies of genre classification and the patron satisfaction rates that were associated with them. While not all were scientifically performed, some were and others can still provide background information as well as insight into this topic. Since “patron satisfaction” tends to be a grey area of research, the Baker and Shepherd article is helpful in its comparisons and analysis. The authors address some of the questions and issues that arise as well as some of the benefits, “At its best, fiction classification should and can expose readers to lesser-known authors within a particular genre, therefore performing a valuable and cost-effective method of readers’ guidance” (245). Also by Baker, “Will Fiction Classification Schemes Increase Use?” is a study of North Carolina public libraries which either have some version of fiction genre classification or are interested in introducing one. This article continues with some of Baker’s questions from the conclusion of her previously discussed article. The data analysis here arises from the hypothesis that the authors came up with to prove that (at least in these libraries), “when experimental books were labeled and physically separated from the general fiction

collection [...] their circulation increased” also, “the size of the circulation increase of the classed titles was directly related to the library’s size” (369). This study is based on the premise that browsers can easily experience “information overload,” a theory that has been mentioned in other literature but not in as much depth. The study is informative and the authors were able to find support for their hypothesis (Baker 366).

In *Guiding the Reader to the Next Book*, Shearer brings together discussions on many different aspects of genre classification. Sharon Baker reappears with a cumulative essay in which she explains that patrons often say that “the books they want are not on the shelves, that there are fewer current materials that they would like, and that they have run out of authors that they like [...] browsers find the *act* of browsing difficult in and of itself, since they don’t know *what* to look for” (129). When browsers simply cannot find anything to satisfy their current reading cravings, they often feel overwhelming frustration, partly at not knowing what they want and partly because they are not able to articulate their desires. Gail Harrell presents the findings of her studies in “Use of Fiction Categories in Major American Public Libraries.” Along with the major types of genres classified, another major factor of significance was the actual format of the collection; the majority of the libraries surveyed maintained some degree of separation between the hardback and the paperback books in the collection (Harrell 152). Of the different methods used in fiction collections (catalog note, physical separation, or spine labels) Harrell’s studies found that 69% used a combination of all three methods while 11% only used spine labels (153).

Catherine Sheldrick Ross performed 194 interviews with avid readers and reports on these in “Making Choices: What Readers Say About Choosing Books to Read for

Pleasure.” The majority of the readers interviewed felt confident in their ability to select “enjoyable” books, less than ten percent were dissatisfied (9). Ross builds on Baker’s theory of “information overload” with the concept that the children’s section is limited and “protected,” and it is after that readers feel that the “process of choosing books becomes far more difficult and risky as the number of possible choices expands exponentially” (11). Her interviews with readers provide insight into patron preferences. Though Ross puts more emphasis on authors than genres, a reader says “I think first of authors and then, when I have exhausted those possibilities, I’ll think of types. If a library has books divided into genres, then that makes it easier for me” (14). Though this study concentrates more on heavy readers, it still is relevant and can provide great insight into the library’s users.

These studies also have new implications for the field of Reader’s Advisory. If genre fiction classification were put into place, then a new approach to advising readers would have to be taken as well, “the role of the library is to acquire a variety of books for every reading taste and mood and then help readers in the tricky process of finding those books that match their own preferences” (Ross 20). Instead of librarians struggling to keep up with new authors coming into the field, they would have a better understanding of which category or genre the author has been shelved under after the library has acquired that work, adding another layer of proficiency for the library. Categorization does not alleviate all problems in this area of reader’s advisory, but if a reader prefers a particular author or genre this would be an added benefit, especially for libraries that do not already have specialized readers advisory services available (Harrell 156).

METHODOLOGY

This study of the library will involve two approaches. An internal approach through the library is taken to rate “patron satisfaction” on a circulation basis. By examining the circulation records prior to the reclassifying of the collection, and afterward, one may establish whether this new method of classification increased the circulation of this portion of the collection as an indicator of increased patron satisfaction. Since Durham County Library the selected site to carryout the project, consideration has be given to other studies that have examined this topic on this setting. Since Richard’s paper was written immediately after the reclassification of the fiction section and also involved examining the circulation records; this paper examines changes in the years since then and hopefully discover new patterns in the circulation records.

Another approach to investigate “patron satisfaction” involves surveying the patrons themselves. These would be adult fiction readers who have a valid library card from the public library. The survey will provide for greater feedback and insight into reading and browsing habits. The survey and consent was submitted to the Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) and passed approval after a revision was requested by the IRB. Surveys were handed out in the library on four different occasions in hopes to obtain a large and diverse sampling of patrons. The surveys included questions on whether patrons have gone to other libraries that were arranged differently; if so, which did they prefer or which was easier to use, whether the patron came with the intent to check out a particular book or just to browse, then, did they find that book, or in browsing were you able to find reading material that was enjoyable? Other questions that will get to the issue of patron satisfaction will deal with questions on preference on the library’s

classification of genre (only attempt to do so in terminology that is familiar to all), and the patron's preference for certain genres by genre title. By keeping the surveys short and simple, they can be filled out and received back the same day in the library which will reduce the waiting period.

The survey was intended to allow the patron to voice his perspective of what he/she was seeking when they come to the library and their satisfaction with their experiences there. For the question "how do you select the books you read," the choices come from the literary consensus that patrons read according to author or genre, then by title, recommendations, covers, and displays (Ross 12, 14). The selection of answers for "what type of books do you read," was taken from Joyce Saricks' *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction* and the ARRT Genre Fiction List. Though Durham County Library's range of categories is more restrictive than those listed on the survey, some of the genres, such as Women's lives, Chick Lit, or Inspirational Fiction, have increased in popularity in recent years and could always serve as suggestions for this or another library if the survey results showed that they were as popular as the bestseller status.

The surveys were handed out in the fiction section of the Main Branch of the Durham County Library over the course of four days. The surveys were handed out:

Friday, March 3, 2006 from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 4, 2006 from 3:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.

Sunday, March 5, 2006 from 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

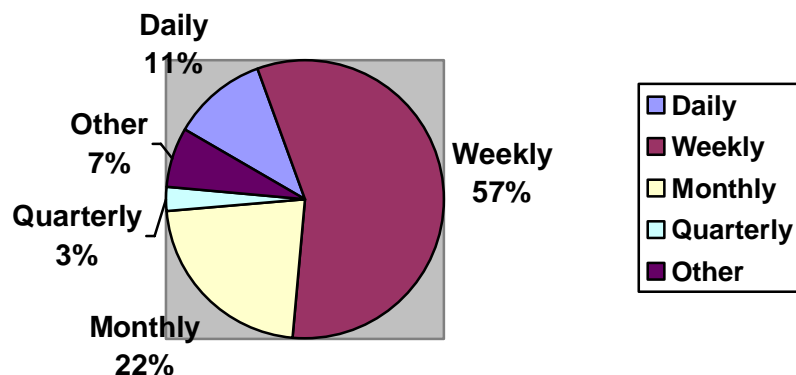
Tuesday, March 7, 2006 from 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

A total of 149 patrons were asked to participate in the study. Approximately 77 people declined to participate in the study, the majority gave no reason at all (31), the rest varied with reasons from one having "no complaints," to having "no time" (20). One patron

stated, it “wouldn’t do any good” because they had already complained to the library about its cutting back on westerns and adventure books. At least twelve of the respondents who declined to participate in the study indicated that they were using the library for reasons other than fiction reading, in this case, meetings. Other reasons patrons declined participation included that he/she was only looking for someone (4), there were people waiting on them or children with them (4), one indicated that they don’t come to the library that often, one had “no opinion” about fiction, and one was just “not into” fiction. Seventy-two surveys were returned for use in this study.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Figure 1 - Frequency of Visits to the Library



Of those who responded to the survey, a substantial majority visit the library on a weekly basis (56.9%). When approaching the study I assumed that most of the fiction readers surveyed would be younger, well-educated, women as the literature seemed to support this assumption; “Previous studies conducted in Canada and the United States have found that heavy readers are more likely to be female than male; to be younger rather than older; and to have achieved a higher educational level than the population at large” (Ross 7). At DCL, females made up a larger group of the participants 48 (66.7%) and only 23 (31.9%) of males responding. Of those who responded to the question of age, the study shows that the majority of participants were between the ages of 46-60 (43.1%). Most of those who participated in the study were employed (58.3% employed and 40.3% not employed).

Library fiction collections were originally arranged alphabetically according to the author’s last name. Though DCL does not arrange its collection in such a manner, one question on the survey asked if the patron had come to the library seeking works by particular authors. Of those responding, 43.1% said yes, 44.4% chose sometimes, and

only 9.7% answered no. This finding supports other research that shows that the most significant selection factor for patrons are known authors and titles (Ross 14, Sear 102). Yet the physical separation of the genres should not hinder this since it only breaks the collection into smaller, more manageable sections that are still arranged alphabetically by author.

Table 1
Fiction Readers who Come to the Library to Browse for Materials

	Number (n=72)	Percentage
Browse	26	36.1%
Do Not Browse	24	33.3%
Sometimes Browse	22	30.6%

Table 1 shows that just over a third (36.1%) of the patrons regularly browse while another third (30.6%) occasionally browse, and a third (33.3%) do not browse at all. This finding agrees with the literature that patrons not only find material while browsing but either intentionally or subconsciously browse while searching for materials (Shoham 96, Richards 20, Baker 366).

Table 2
Physical Separation into Genres Aiding Browsing

	Number	Percentage
Help	44	61.1%
Hinder	7	9.7%
No Difference	20	27.8%

The majority of patrons' surveyed reported that the separation of the collection into genres either helped them or had no effect, as seen in Table 2. With only seven responses checking hindrance and 20 neutral and 44 positives, the patron satisfaction rate with the genre separation is high (over 61%). The negative responses might be accounted for because of other factors about the collection, not necessarily the genre separation. This finding agrees with the literature (Reader 40). For example, Sear and Jennings link browsing to readers discovering new authors and different styles (105). Baker also finds fiction classification conducive to browsers to deter from "information overload" and help patrons from becoming too overwhelmed and confused (366).

Table 3

Patron's Method of Selection

	Number	Percent
Author	24	33.3%
Bestsellers	8	11.1%
Blurb	5	7%
Browsing	29	40.3%
Cover	3	4.2%
Displays	11	15.3%
Genres	32	44.5%
Recommendations	36	50%
Reviews	28	38.9%
Title	5	6.9%

Other	6	8.3%
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*Because patrons were asked to select three of the listed choices for the survey, the number is greater than 72, and the percentage sum greater than 100.

A reader's ability to choose a book is something that evolves over time and changes with every reading experience. Whether the choice is successful or unsuccessful it may have a direct effect on whether the reader chooses to read again (Ross 9). Patrons often incorporate various methods of selection when choosing their reading material. In this survey they were asked to choose their top three methods of selecting books to read. Ross describes some of the previous knowledge a reader carries with them into a library, such as their preferences for authors and covers, their familiarity with publishers or advertisers and reviews and recommendations from trusted friends (11). Survey participants used recommendations most (50%), followed by genre (44.5%), 40.3% browsing, and 33.3% by authors. The results are somewhat surprising considering much of the literature emphasizes the importance of the author approach, followed by other factors such as the genre, and the title (Ross 14, Sear 102, Richards 21). Ross does discuss the significance of recommendations; "recommendations are important, but only from a trusted source with tastes known to be compatible, such as certain reviewers, family members and 'friends that know my taste'" (12).

Table 4

Patron's Preferred Genres

	Number	Percentage
Adventure	15	20.9%
Chick-Lit	5	7%

Fantasy	11	15.3%
General Fiction	42	58.3%
Horror	6	8.4%
Inspirational	19	26.5%
Mysteries	37	51.4%
Romance	15	20.8%
Science Fiction	17	23.6%
Thrillers	12	16.7%
Westerns	1	1.4%
Women's Lives	10	13.8%

*Because patrons were asked to select three of the listed choices for the survey, the number is greater than 72, and the percentage sum greater than 100.

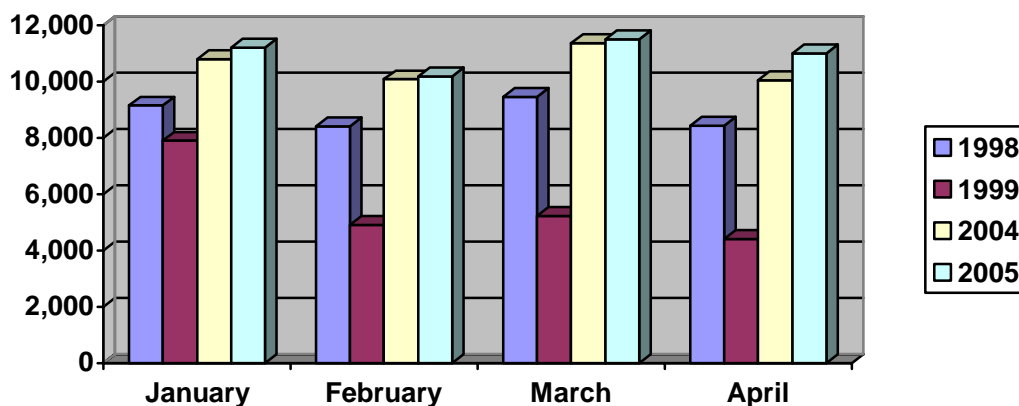
The results of the survey show that the most popular genres from the patron's perspective (excluding the general fiction collection) are mysteries, inspirational, science fiction, romance, and adventure. When comparing this to the DCL's annual circulation statistics it reinforces the fact that mystery fiction is the most widely circulated (with 67,691), followed by romance (33,077), fantasy (10,048), science fiction (8,892), and adventure (7,178). There could be some discrepancies here due to the data from the circulation statistics coming from all branches of Durham County Libraries while the survey results were polled only at the Main Branch.

Richard's study *Genre Fiction Classification: a Study of the Durham County Library* was done in the Main Branch of the DCL right after the reorganization of the fiction collection. In her study she shows that after the implementation of the new system

in January of 1999, the circulation of the fiction collection drastically declined (27). This is unusual in the fact that in most cases of reorganization, there is “novelty factor” that occurs directly after the implementation of a new system that causes statistics to be slightly skewed in favor of the system (Reader 39). The expectation of the current study was this system is more user-friendly and therefore would show increased circulation and enough time has passed to show stability in circulation. Using this assumption and the circulation statistics from Richard’s study in 1999 and the current data of DCL in DCL, comparison data is presented below.

Figure 2

Fiction Circulation Statistics - Comparing 1998-1999 to 2004-2005



	January	February	March	April
1998	9,150	8,411	9,464	8,434
1999	7,900	4,902	5,228	4,412
2004	10,802	10,086	11,366	10,059
2005	11,217	10,179	11,509	11,009

A possible explanation for the drop shortly after the implementation of the new system was that it took a few months for patrons to get accustomed to the reorganization of the collection and that the circulation picked up in later months, not shown in Richards' study. The circulation statistics for four and five years after the study show a strong increase in circulation. This could partly be due to a larger collection, as the collection has increased. However it also demonstrates that the physical separation has proved more user friendly and easier for patrons to browse. As circulation increases a connection is made that fiction classification is easier to use for patrons, and such "ease of use is a prime factor affecting circulation figures" (Sear 109).

Patrons were given the opportunity to comment freely on any issue concerning the library's fiction collection at the end of the survey. Many chose not to however some participants did have things to say. One patron felt that "three to five separation is enough, not too many separation in fiction, please." One patron must have felt his/her books were overlooked at times, since this person wrote that the "library is by definition underfunded so usually overstocked with lowest common denominator 'popular' books." Even though the layout is designed to aid patrons in finding books and save time, one patron emphasized they were not satisfied with the layout, "Thanks for asking for the input, I sometimes spend so much time in fiction just to find the book I'm looking for." Another patron wrote, "I think the current fiction layout at the main library is right." Others wrote in that they had "mixed feelings" and that it depended on the author. Several people wrote in to say that the layout makes it easier for family members, whether for elderly parents, or spouses who prefer certain genres, to find what they want at the library. Some patrons had suggestions or requests for the library for new sections:

young adult, graphic novels, historical fiction, and memoirs were mentioned specifically.

Overall, the comments made throughout the surveying process were positive and encouraging for a genre fiction classification system.

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS

For libraries that do not want the hassle of entirely reorganizing their collection but are attracted to the appeal of a genre fiction classification scheme, a compromise may be effected with spine label classification. Fiction books that fall into certain subjects or genres can have spine labels placed on them with symbols or color coordinated with pre-approved subjects and left on the shelf in their alphabetical sequence. This can enable patrons to identify easily which books fall into the categories they like to read, and may also encourage them to read authors that they are not familiar with. This method is inexpensive and easier for the library because of not having to deal with the reorganization of materials, only the labeling. It also has the added benefits, of increased circulation that the physical separation of the collection does implying that it also would increase patron satisfaction. However, according to Sear and Jennings, this compromise fails to benefit the patron, “It cannot give the reader an idea of the range of books available in the categories chosen, nor does it save the reader’s time in searching the shelves through the whole stock collection” (110).

One of the questions that librarians have to address is how many sections to have. Clearly too many can overwhelm patrons and cause confusion but too few can make the system a waste of time. This is a question that could be addressed on a patron survey as well as which genres would be most beneficial to their usage. Once sections are agreed upon, often librarians suffer from a hesitation over where to put the books. This is why there remains a large “general fiction” section in most of the libraries that have adopted genre fiction classification. Some of this hesitation comes from not wanting to split up an author’s works, or works in a series, into different sections because often the patron will

assume that the library just doesn't own the other works if they only find part in a section. Another potential weakness could be if the materials are not labeled in the catalog. If the catalog label remains as it was before the fiction reorganization, it could cause confusion on the part of the librarians and the patrons. As long as the cataloger works together with the librarian at the time of reorganization, then as new materials get processed, this problem can be avoided.

Though it seems that genre fiction classification benefits browsers above all, the question still arises can genre labeling (of any kind) deter potential readers? A hesitation that may occur over separating the entire collection by genres is that it may "decrease cross-category browsing" (Baker 141). For instance if a romance reader stumbles across a book or author because it is beside a favorite author, and not knowing it is science fiction and begins to read it and enjoy it, that is something that would never happen if that book had been on a sci-fi shelf or had a sticker so labeled. Saricks calls this the "genre-denial syndrome" that affects strict genre readers, romance readers especially (221). It often occurs when exploring authors outside the known and trusted few, and liking what is found, but not recognizing that those may fall in a genre that the reader had hitherto refused to sample (222). Baker goes on to suggest that since the number of patrons who are attracted to the genre approach is so high, that it would be better to at least provide some sort of genre centered displays than to eliminate the idea completely (141).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study, as with most, stayed somewhat vague when it came to what browsers actually found, “sometimes” finding something or even saying they did find something while browsing, doesn’t always mean they found something interesting or that it was a satisfactory experience. A British study found that 92 percent of browsers checked something out but 52 percent had been unsuccessful in finding what they initially set out for (Baker 1996, 128). A more targeted study of browsers could be done to focus on their needs.

A study could be done completely from the librarian’s perspective. This could include the steps to take in initiating a reorganization of the collection and addressing how the patrons accepted the move. This could address many of the questions that arose when looking at a study such as this, how does a library determine which genre categories to use? How many genre categories are helpful? How many are too many? Are subdivisions necessary? Though different libraries will follow different approaches, a complete read-through of the process in a public library would be informative. Some sources approached this but often left the patron out of the process; “While no scientific study was done to determine which categories would be best received by the public, the library staff felt familiar and comfortable enough with their patrons’ reading habits to make the decision. Key readers’ advisory references were consulted” (Cannell 161).

A study such as this could also be done from a cataloging approach, since the reorganization of the collection must be relabeled in the catalog as well as on the book; a more technical look at what it takes to make the process work could be done.

If the genre fiction classification scheme became widespread, there should be discussion in the library world about some standardization about the genres offered. There have been some studies done about how many are too many or too few or which ones are preferred, but more extensive studies could be done to see if there could be agreement across the board or if the decisions made should be left up to each individual library's discretion. Future research could also be done about the long term consistency of genres. Most genres have been around for the course of fiction but in recent decades, for example, we have seen the popularity of westerns start to fade and the rise of new genres such as "chick-lit" for the young women readers or the "techno-thriller" that blends technology, science-fiction, and the thriller into a novel. These are just a few of the considerations for future research that could be done while considering a standardization of the genre fiction classification.

Works Cited

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APPENDIX A.

Statement Requesting Participation and Consent

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about what patrons use and need in libraries. The purpose of this study is to learn about fiction subject classification in public libraries and how it would most benefit patrons. If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 100 people. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

This questionnaire addresses your satisfaction with the genre fiction classification in this library and your reading preferences. *The survey should take no longer than five minutes of your time to complete.* You are free to skip any particular question and you have no obligation to complete answering the survey once you begin.

Your participation is anonymous. Please do not put any identifying information on the questionnaire. All data obtained in this study will be reported as group data. No individual can be identified.

There are no risks anticipated should you participate in this study or any anticipated benefits. However, there will be professional benefit from this study, as the information we obtain will be communicated to the profession through publication in the literature.

You may contact me, Kerri Huff, with any questions at (540) 320-4229 or by email at (khuff@email.unc.edu), or my advisor, Evelyn Daniel, at (919) 962-8062 or by email at (daniel@ils.unc.edu). All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Returning your completed questionnaire connotes your consent to be a participant in this study.

Thank you,

Kerri Huff

APPENDIX B.

Survey Questions

1. How often do you visit the library?
 daily weekly monthly quarterly yearly
 other: _____

2. Have you ever used this library or other libraries that did **not** separate fiction by genre (type or content of book; e.g., romance, mystery)?
 Yes (this library) Yes (another library) No (skip to #4)

3. If you answered “yes” to question #2, do you prefer the fiction separated by genres/ categories?
 Yes No No preference

4. On most trips to the library, are you seeking a certain title you intend to check out?
 Yes No Sometimes

5. Do you usually have success in finding specific titles?
 Yes No Sometimes

6. On most trips to the library, do you come seeking works by certain authors?
 Yes No Sometimes

7. Do you ever come to the library with only the intention of browsing?
 Yes No Sometimes

8. Does the fiction collection being separated by genres help or hinder your browsing?
 Help No difference Hinder

9. How do you select the books you read? (circle up to three choices)
 - a. Only read certain authors
 - b. Only read certain genres/ subjects

- c. Reading book reviews
- d. Recommendations
- e. Displays
- f. Bestseller status
- g. Browsing
- h. Blurb
- i. Title
- j. Book Cover
- k. Other: _____

10. What type of books do you like to read? (rank your top three choices)

- Adventure
- Chick Lit
- Fantasy
- General fiction
- Horror
- Inspirational
- Mysteries
- Romance
- Science fiction
- Thrillers
- Westerns
- Women's Lives

11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your library's collection layout and selection?

Very Satisfied Somewhat satisfied Indifferent Not satisfied

12. Age:

- 18-30 31-45 46-60 60+

13. Sex:

- Male Female

14. Are you employed?

- Yes No

15. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. Some high school
- b. High school or GED
- c. Two-year college or Associate degree
- d. Four-year college or Bachelor degree
- e. Master's degree
- f. Ph.D.

16. Any additional comments?