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Supervisor: Dr Chern Li Liew

ENROLLED: Trimester 3/1 year 2008/2009

SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ADMINISTRATION

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Fiction readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries: An investigation into how personal reading habits and other factors affect the confidence of library staff who answer adult or young adult fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

by

Angela Catherine Bain

Submitted to the School of Information Management,
Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Library and Information Studies

June 2009

Abstract

Fiction readers' advisory is the act of assisting a library borrower to find their next piece of fiction to read for leisure purposes. This is a significant part of public library work for staff members who work face-to-face with library borrowers. The confidence of library staff members who provide these services is therefore an important issue. It was hypothesised that a number of factors would influence the confidence of staff who answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries, including the amount and kind of pleasure reading undertaken, library size, years of library experience, and training. An online questionnaire was used to survey a sample of frontline public library staff members in New Zealand to gather data about readers' advisory services in public libraries in this country, as very little research has been undertaken here in this area. There was an excellent response to the survey invitation, and 130 completed questionnaires were received. Survey respondents' confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries was positively correlated with several factors, including amount and breadth of personal reading, length of public library service, kind of training received, and number of readers' advisory tools available. Negative correlations were suggested between library qualifications and confidence, and library size and confidence. Other factors which may influence confidence were also identified, such as library staff morale, having sufficient time for answering enquiries properly, and time for pleasure reading.

Keywords

- Readers' advisory services
- Public librarians
- Reading habits
- Confidence
- New Zealand

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Preface

Coming from a largely academic library employment background and moving into a public library working environment, I was struck by the public librarian's role as a recreational reading "guru" – in the eyes of library borrowers at least. The public librarian is expected to have read every book in the library (borrowers often express surprise if you confess that you have not read the book they are holding in their hand!) and so be able to provide a personal recommendation about a particular book.

Having been given virtually no training in what I came to discover had an actual name ("readers' advisory"), I soon learned that: One, I did not read enough; two, I did not read *widely* enough; and three, there is a wonderful variety of tools and resources available to help answer enquiries about genres and authors about which I personally knew next to nothing. I also found that I felt quite nervous whenever I was asked "Can you recommend me a good read?", or "Who else writes like Nora Roberts?", or "What's a good Romance novel?" It does seem daunting trying to suggest books for people you do not know, as reading is such an intensely personal experience, and everyone views a book differently and takes different things out of it. My confidence in this area of work has grown over time as I have undertaken various forms of training, learned about "appeal factors", talked with colleagues, and began to consciously think about the fiction I read in my own time as a vital part of my job. I began to wonder if other New Zealand public library staff had the same confidence issues when faced with readers' advisory questions and what factors influenced their confidence. I was particularly interested in whether personal reading habits influenced confidence in this area as I knew some library staff

read very little for pleasure, while others were voracious readers. This was the seed for the research project presented here.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Background

"Can you recommend me a good book to read, please?" This is a question often heard in public libraries and one which can strike fear into an unprepared library staff member's heart. How a librarian goes about connecting the borrower with their next book is known as "readers' advisory". This research project set out to examine the state of fiction readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries. It focused on examining the factors which affect the confidence of library staff who answer fiction readers' advisory questions, with particular reference to the recreational reading habits of those staff members.

Providing access to fiction for recreational or pleasure reading is one of the core functions of a public library, meaning how libraries and individual library staff members provide readers' advisory services is an important issue. In a paper on the art of being a librarian, Peter Briscoe states, "The most important thing a librarian does is help people find good books to read" (2001, p.20). This is the core reason for providing readers' advisory services in a public library, and the most important reason why such services are valuable.

As will be seen in Chapter Three, there are numerous articles and books about "how to do" readers' advisory but there is not yet a comprehensive research base driving the development of the field. Moreover, there is almost no literature discussing readers' advisory in New Zealand public libraries, meaning there is a significant knowledge gap which requires exploring.

Chapter 2: Introduction to the research

A. Rationale, significance, need for the study

While there has been some scientific research into readers' advisory services in public libraries in other countries, there is a significant lack of such research in New Zealand. As will be seen in later sections, only one such study has been conducted in this country to date. No one has specifically studied the library staff members who deal with fiction readers' advisory enquiries on a daily basis in New Zealand. May argues that "many librarians still regard the readers' advisory interchange as a daunting undertaking" (2001, p.124). May's covert research revealed that library staff reactions to a request for reading guidance "ranged from delight to trepidation to bafflement to downright dismissal" (2001, p.135). Prescott believes that "Australian library staff have lost confidence in giving people advice about books" (2007, p.5). These articles provided good reasons to investigate the attitude of New Zealand public library staff towards fiction readers' advisory services. This study sought their opinions on how confident they felt about answering fiction readers' advisory questions, and what factors affected their confidence in providing such services.

As will be seen in later sections, fiction readers' advisory is a vital service in public libraries as fiction reading is such a major leisure activity in society. Public libraries spend a large amount of money each year on developing their fiction collections, meaning their goal should be promoting these collections so that library borrowers get the maximum amount of value from them. The vast numbers of books housed in a public library can make the task of selecting just one book seem quite overwhelming, and this is

where readers' advisory services, tools and resources – both direct and indirect – play their part. Conlon, Forsyth and Jamieson argue that

> Good reader advisory work should help the library collection work harder, with a greater range of materials being borrowed regularly, as people experiment more in their fiction and nonfiction reading (Conlon, Forsyth & Jamieson, 2005, p.111).

This is part of the reason why fiction readers' advisory is so important and is, therefore, a worthy topic for research.

There has also been little research, either internationally or locally, into the pleasure reading habits of public librarians and how these might affect the readers' advisory services they provide. This study examined the importance of library staff members being well-read in order to be confident enough to provide a quality readers' advisory service to their borrowers.

Research elsewhere has shown that readers' advisory transactions are often not carried out in accordance with best practice, implying that there is much room for improvement in this area of public library service. Once the factors which enable staff members to confidently answer readers' advisory questions are identified, the standard of service might potentially be improved by changing methods of training, or staff recruitment, for example.

B. Theoretical framework

There is little formal theory regarding readers' advisory services, as much of the relevant literature discusses "best practice" provision of readers' advisory services (for example, Conlon, Forsyth & Jamieson, 2005; Nottingham, 2002; Saricks, 2001 & 2005).

Frameworks for readers' advisory are borrowed from several different fields, including reference services and reading theories, particularly those to do with fiction reading and reading for pleasure. There is a close affiliation between readers' advisory and the provision of reference services, indeed much of the literature treats readers' advisory as an extension of the reference service (Beard & Thi-Beard, 2008, p.332; Cassell & Hiremath, 2006). Reference theories such as Kuhlthau's theories on the information search process are sometimes applied to readers' advisory (Cassell & Hiremath, 2006, p.254). McCook's 2003 article examines theories about reading and how they apply to readers' advisory. Reading research covers a number of disciplines, including psychology, education, philosophy, sociology, English, and of course, library science. McCook argues that the theory that "reading, of and by itself, has intrinsic value" is fundamental to readers' advisory (2003, p.7).

Williamson's theory of "incidental information acquisition" is cited by at least two readers' advisory researchers as being of importance to research into reading for pleasure, and, ultimately, readers' advisory research. Moyer studied the educational and recreational outcomes of leisure reading of adult public library borrowers and found that recreational reading can result in the subconscious absorption of information which at

some point becomes of use to the reader (2008, p.23). Ross's research (1999) also used the theory of incidental information acquisition and has implications for readers' advisory as it discusses how readers select books to read for pleasure.

McCook cites Victor Nell's work on the psychology of reading, and more specifically the theory of "ludic reading", as important to readers' advisory services (2003, p.10). McCook argues that readers' advisors should embrace this theory as it provides concrete justification for the provision of readers' advisory services (2003, p.11).

Nell's ludic reading theory will be used as the theoretical basis for this research as its basic tenets are fundamentally entwined with why readers' advisory is important. Nell defines ludic reading (which comes from the Latin word *ludo*, meaning "I play") as "spontaneous pleasure reading" (1988b, p.6, 7). Nell likens the experience of ludic reading to being "lost in a book, in absorption or entrancement" (1988b, p.8). It is an activity which changes the participant's consciousness (1988a, p.xiii). Nell argues that ludic reading is important as it is a vital aim of reading instruction, and it

> offers rewards that are powerful enough to sustain reading for long periods and to support a large publishing industry (Nell, 1988b, p.6).

While Nell does not spell it out explicitly, ludic reading must also partly sustain the world's public library fiction collections, as without ludic reading and ludic readers, there would likely be significantly less demand for books for leisure purposes. Nell carried out five studies over six years and established the necessary preconditions for, and the consequences of, ludic reading. The basic findings of Nell's research are illustrated in the flowchart in Figure 1.
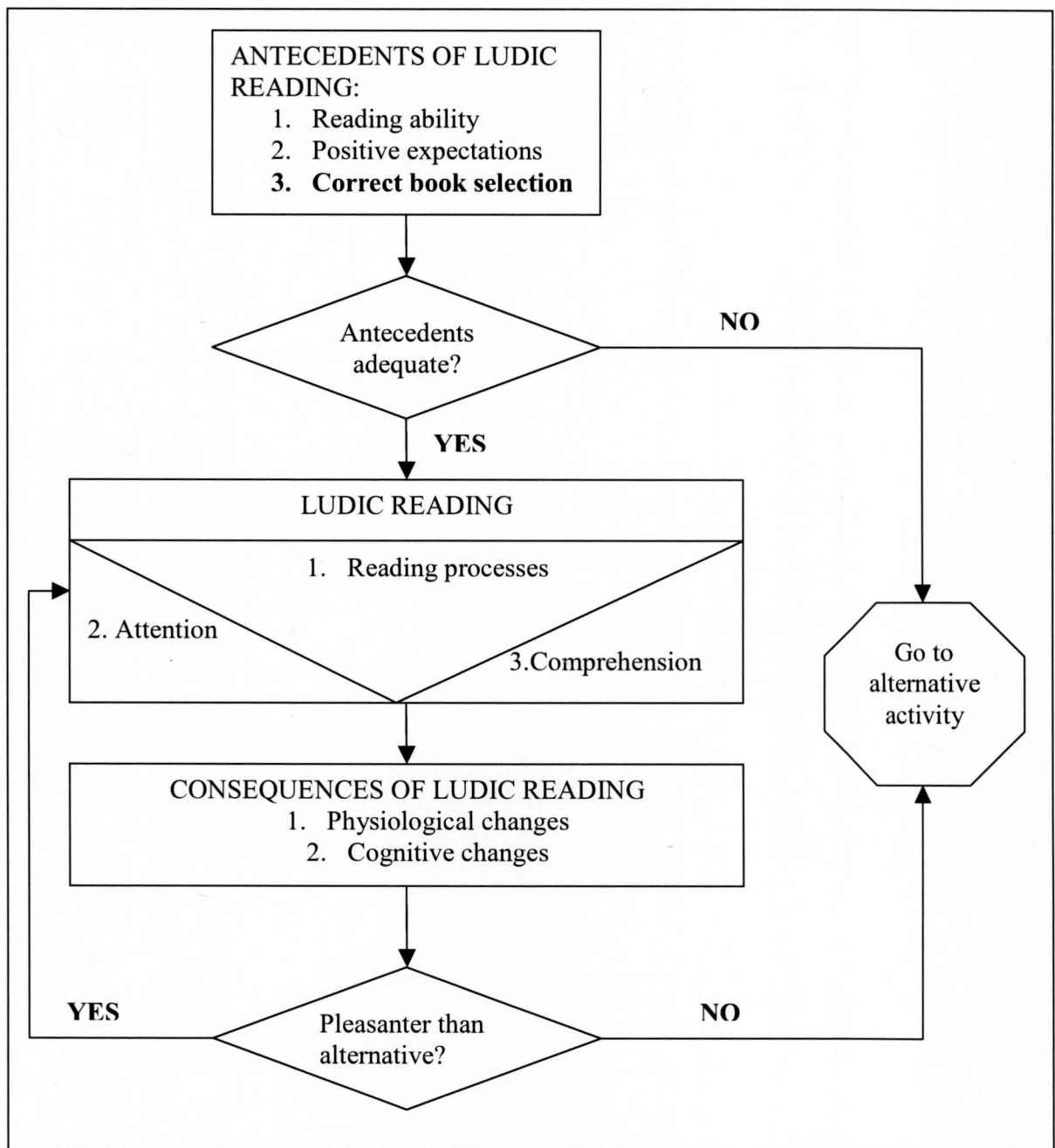
Figure 1. Flow chart of the antecedents and consequences of ludic reading. Adapted from Nell, 1988b, p.8.

While reading of any kind can lead to ludic reading, Nell argues that most ludic reading

is achieved when reading fiction (1988b, p.8). Note that in Figure 1 the third antecedent

necessary for the attainment of ludic reading is *correct book selection*. This is where library staff can play a vital role by providing effective readers' advisory services, and connecting a reader with the right book at the right time. This, combined with Nell's other two antecedents, may allow ludic reading to occur for the library borrower. Nell describes this phenomenon as:

> Using a book selected for the purpose from among countless others, the ludic reader achieves the most startling changes of mood and consciousness – gloom explodes into delight, fear dissolves into power, and agitation becomes easy tranquillity (Nell, 1988a, p.267).

C. Statement of the research problem

The problem is that not enough is known about fiction readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries and how the confidence of frontline library staff providing these services is affected by their own pleasure reading and other factors.

D. Objectives, research questions and hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to provide some insight into how New Zealand public libraries currently provide readers' advisory services, how confident their staff feel about answering fiction readers' advisory questions, and what factors affect their confidence, with particular reference to the personal pleasure reading habits of these staff.

Objectives
- To discover what tools and/or resources frontline New Zealand public library staff use to provide readers' advisory services.
- To investigate how confident New Zealand public library staff feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

- To explore if there is a correlation between how much fiction a library staff member reads and how confident they feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

- To investigate what other factors may affect a library staff member's confidence in answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

Research questions

1. What tools and/or resources do frontline New Zealand public library staff use to provide readers' advisory services?

2. How confident are frontline New Zealand public library staff about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

3. What, if any, is the correlation between how much fiction a library staff member reads and how confident they feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

4. What other factors affect a library staff member's confidence in answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries? Training in readers' advisory skills? Whether they are a ludic reader? Length of library experience? Hours worked on the desk? Availability of readers' advisory tools and resources in their library? Library size?

Hypotheses

1. That there is a significant relationship between the amount of pleasure fiction reading a library staff member does and how confident they feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

2. That frontline New Zealand public library staff will be more confident about their ability to answer fiction readers' advisory questions if they:

a. Read widely across fiction genres for pleasure themselves

   b. Are ludic readers (as defined by Nell)

   c. Have received training in readers' advisory services

   d. Have a significant amount of library experience

   e. Work regularly at an enquiries desk

   f. Have fiction readers' advisory resources and tools available in their library

3. That frontline New Zealand public library staff who read less fiction for pleasure use a wider range of readers' advisory tools and resources than their colleagues who read more fiction.

4. That qualified library staff do not feel more confident about their ability to answer readers' advisory enquiries than unqualified staff.

E. Definitions and concepts

Readers' advisory: "A patron-centred library service for adult leisure readers" (Saricks, 2005, p.1).

Joyce Saricks is an acknowledged authority on readers' advisory services, and her definition will be used here. The main aim of readers' advisory is to connect readers with their next piece of recreational fiction.

"Readers' advisory" has been defined in different ways over the years and has been the subject of some debate in library literature. Despite this, many research articles on the topic fail to define what they mean by "readers' advisory". There is also some

discrepancy between countries, as the United Kingdom and some states of Australia tend to use the term "reader development" to convey a similar concept. Quinn provides a useful discussion of the different ways in which the terms are used (2008, p.46-47). Quillen states that readers' advisory is the "process by which a librarian assists a patron in finding a book to read" (2001, p.23). In the New Zealand context, Darling equates "reader development" with "readers advisory" and argues that the service entails providing the public with "advice and ideas on what to read for their pleasure" (2008, p.66). Darling also quotes from the *East Midlands regional reader development strategy 2003-2006* and says it is "the way to 'give people the chance to get more out of their reading.'" (2008, p.66). Crowley defines the term as

> an organized program promoting both fiction and nonfiction discretionary reading for the dual purposes of satisfying reader needs and advancing a culture's goal of a literate population. (Crowley, 2005, p.37)

Like Darling's definition, this is more akin to the United Kingdom's understanding of "reader development" as it tends to take a slightly more educational view of advising readers. For the purposes of this study, the more simplistic "helping a reader to find their next piece of pleasure reading" view of "readers' advisory" was taken, and no attempt was made to investigate any deeper meaning of the term.

Confidence: Belief in oneself and one's abilities.

Pleasure/recreational reading: Any reading done purely for leisure purposes.

Frontline library staff: Library employees who work in a public area of the library and encounter enquiries directly from library users. For example, staff working on Enquiries or Circulation desks, or working in the public stacks.

Chapter 3: Literature review

A. Historical overview of the literature

Baker argues that identifiable readers' advisory services in public libraries first emerged in 1923 in the United States, when the Chicago Public Library created a "reading guidance" department which was separate from its reference department. Such separate departments were phased out in American libraries during the 1940s and 1950s. A resurgence of readers' advisory activities in public libraries began during the mid-1980s (Baker, 1993, p.13). The momentum of growing interest in readers' advisory services continued throughout the 1990s and there is now unprecedented interest amongst librarians and in the library literature. In fact, there is now so much interest in the topic that the idea of a specific readers' advisory journal has recently been mooted on the Fiction_L listserv (used extensively by readers' advisors), and is gaining support (Chelton, 2009).

This review concentrates on library science literature (with occasional forays into other disciplines dealing with reading research), and includes scholarly periodical articles, monographs, and Master's research papers which examine theories, practices and debates in fiction readers' advisory services. The reviewed literature comes mainly from the last decade but several seminal pieces of research from the early 1990s are included as this was the renaissance period for the modern readers' advisory service. The literature has a geographical bias with items from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australasia dominating, and only items written in English were included.

B. Literature specific to the topic: themes and critique

A major theme in the literature is that there is not enough scientific research being conducted into readers' advisory services. Partly as a result of this, readers' advisory continues to be viewed by many librarians (and library administrators) as the "poor cousin" to reference services, which have a solid backbone of scholarly research. Luminaries of the field have long been calling for more research in this area, starting with Baker in 1992. Almost every item published about readers' advisory laments the lack of previous quality research to build on (see May, 2001; Moyer, 2008; Saricks & Trott, 2008; Shearer & Bracy, 1994). However, there is enough research available to identify a number of other major themes.

The importance of fiction readers

Ross's (1991) influential and detailed qualitative study of fiction readers draws on sociologist Mann's survey of public library users in the English Midlands which found that nearly sixty-four percent stated that they were using the library for "general recreation or leisure". Almost sixty percent of books circulated during this study were adult fiction. Fiction also accounts for around two-thirds of books issued by public libraries in the United States (Saricks, 2005, p.3). Darling cites a 2003 report which found that purchasing books was first on the list of New Zealanders' cultural activities and spending (forty-one percent), followed by visiting libraries (thirty-nine percent) (2008, p.66). This demonstrates the importance of reading to the people of New Zealand, and subsequently, the importance of having an effective readers' advisory service to assist readers select their books.

Most library users select their fiction books by browsing. This is borne out by research in Australia and the United States (Moyer, 2008, p.203; Prescott, 2007, p.6), and it is likely the same can be said for New Zealand's library users. Yu and O'Brien (1999) argue that public librarians' lack of understanding about fiction readers – their main group of customers – has held them back from creating effective fiction services.

Training of readers' advisors

Who provides readers' advisory services and the training of these staff members is another major theme of the literature. Research by Shearer and Bracy (1994), May (2001), and Saricks (2005) has concluded that professionally qualified library staff do not necessarily provide a better readers' advisory service than unqualified staff. In 1994, Shearer and Bracy reported some preliminary results of their study of the basic mechanics of readers' advisory, which involved library science students going "undercover" and asking public library staff to recommend a book like the one they had just read and enjoyed. They found that some of the worst responses came from unqualified staff, but at the same time unqualified staff often produced answers equal to that of professionally qualified staff. Using Shearer's research as a springboard, May and colleagues also conducted incognito forays into public libraries and reported – with much greater detail about the research methodology used – that readers' advisory was not performed any better by qualified staff versus unqualified staff (May, 2001, p.135). Saricks states that the findings in these research studies confirm her own personal experience that readers' advisors do not necessarily have to have professional library degrees to provide an effective advisory service (Saricks, 2005, p.9).

Readers' advisory training is a key theme in much of the literature. Conlon, Forsyth and Jamieson claim that Australian readers' advisory is lagging behind the United States and the United Kingdom, and staff training, such as the Rewarding Reading train the trainer program is the key to reversing this trend (2005, p.106). Quinn (2008) concurs, and Darling's New Zealand research suggests that libraries here also need to implement more staff training in this area (2008, p.74).

Nature of the readers' advisory transaction and tools used

How public libraries undertake readers' advisory services is the crux of several studies. Darling's recent survey of New Zealand public library managers provides some knowledge about readers' advisory services in public libraries here (2008). However, the survey response rate was relatively low: only twenty-eight surveys were returned, which accounts for less than forty percent of New Zealand's public library authorities. Darling's focus was readers' advisory policy so her survey target was generally library managers rather than staff who perform readers' advisory every day. Darling does, however, report on the types of readers' advisory activities which are performed in New Zealand's libraries, and the resources which are available to assist users and staff in readers' advisory. However, no effort is made to discover which resources staff use in their daily readers' advisory transactions, so there is scope for further research here. Darling also reports on the perceived barriers to implementing "reader development" in the libraries which responded to the survey. One of the barriers identified as an issue by some libraries was "staff knowledge and confidence in reader development" (Darling,

2008, p.73). This is significant for this research project as it reinforces that investigating staff confidence about readers' advisory is a valid topic for study.

Two complementary Master's research projects (by May and Griffin) follow in the footsteps of Shearer's ground-breaking research into readers' advisory services. Like Shearer, May and colleagues went undercover posing as a member of the public at public libraries in the Nassau County area (near New York), and recorded how library staff responded to the question "Can you help me find a good book?" (May, Olesh, Miltenberg & Lackner, 2000). May found that the majority of library personnel did not follow model readers' advisory practice and "a nonmethodical, informal and serendipitous response was the norm" (2001, p.146). Library staff depended too heavily on their own personal reading tastes and less than forty-six percent used readers' advisory resources in response to the enquiries. This research project aims to investigate if New Zealand librarians display the same reluctance to use readers' advisory tools.

Griffin's 2007 Master's research paper is also very relevant to this research project. Griffin surveyed a sample of North Carolina's public library staff about what tools they used most frequently when faced with readers' advisory questions. Griffin found that these staff relied most heavily on readers' advisory databases (a departure from May's findings, although different methodologies were employed and seven years had elapsed). However, staff still relied on their own reading experience to answer readers' advisory enquiries, which is contrary to model readers' advisory. Griffin emailed an online questionnaire, consisting of thirteen questions, to a "systematic sample" of North

Carolina's public library directors. 197 invitations were extended, and a response rate of 52.3% was achieved. This was an important lesson for distributing a similar questionnaire in New Zealand. It seemed likely that it would be better to also distribute the invitation to a library email discussion list (such as the Pub-SIG listserv) as a better response rate could be anticipated, and more responses might be received from general library staff who actually perform readers' advisory, rather than only library managers.

Reading habits of librarians

As well as knowing how to conduct a readers' advisory "interview", and use readers' advisory tools and resources, a significant knowledge and awareness of general fiction and genre fiction is vital to being able to provide a quality readers' advisory service. Wyatt argues that while no librarian can read everything, it is difficult to provide effective readers' advisory services without "reading methodically in a way that provides both depth and breadth" (2008, p.31). Moyer also states that "to be a good advisor one must be well read in a variety of genres of popular fiction" (2008, p.22). Baker argues that library administrators must "staff their public service desks with librarians who are … widely read" in order to provide effective readers' advisory services, and should also establish training programmes which "encourage staff members to read broadly" (1993, p.15). Some of the literature put forward concerns about today's emphasis on electronic resources in the library, at the expense of books. Briscoe, for example, believes that all librarians should *read*; they should not just know how to find information, but also have what Briscoe calls the "bookish habit" (2001, p.23).

There have been a number of research studies carried out which seek to discover what professional reading librarians do (for example, Weaver, 2002). However, scant attention has been paid to what librarians read in their spare time for leisure purposes, and how this might affect the services they provide. This is despite reading being one of the most important ways in which a library staff member can prepare him or herself for providing effective readers' advisory services.

The most important scientific research in this area is reported in Dilevko and Gottlieb's 2004 monograph. They seek to demonstrate that librarians should acquire broad-ranging general knowledge and subject expertise through "concerted and extensive reading of newspapers, magazines, and works of nonfiction and fiction", which will help them provide excellent reference services (2004, p.1). This, they contend, is just as important as learning to use reference tools. Dilevko and Gottlieb received over 950 responses to their survey of academic and public library reference librarians in the United States and Canada. Their main findings were that reference librarians are "fervent and committed readers" and their reading "is crucially important for them in all aspects of their work" (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2004, p.2). Moreover, it was not only "professional" reading which assisted reference librarians in their work, but also general-interest reading of magazines, newspapers, popular fiction and non-fiction (p.220). While this is an interesting and valuable book, little attention is paid to fiction readers' advisory work, even in the section dealing with public libraries. Surprisingly, while Dilevko and Gottlieb go into great discussion about what fiction academic librarians read, they do not do the same for public

librarians, and asked the public librarians only what magazines and newspapers they read. This is disappointing in terms of this research as the book could have provided some useful statistics for international comparison purposes.

The only published item relating to what fiction New Zealand librarians read which was located during the literature review appeared briefly in the November 2004 issue of Dunedin Public Libraries' newsletter, *The Word*. Sinclair reports on the findings of a quick survey of library colleagues as to what they read in their spare time. Almost sixty percent of staff read popular fiction, fifty-one percent read non-fiction, and twenty-seven percent read literary fiction. This may provide a rough estimate for comparison with the readers' advisory survey results.

C. Contribution the study will make to the literature

As has been seen, many possibilities exist for future research into readers' advisory-related topics. In New Zealand, only one such study has been conducted and more research needs to be undertaken to uncover the true state of readers' advisory services here. Research has been performed on how well library staff conduct readers' advisory transactions, although this has mainly been in the United States. Investigating how confident New Zealand public library staff feel about answering readers' advisory enquiries will contribute to understanding and, ultimately, improving the provision of readers' advisory services in this part of the world. This research will add to the slowly-growing amount of research-based literature relating to readers' advisory worldwide, and help to balance out the current bias towards American reports.

Chapter 4: Methods of investigation

A. Research methodology

Paradigm

Guba defines a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (quoted in Pickard, 2007, p.6). These beliefs inform the methodology of the scholarly research being conducted and how the results are presented. Pickard contends that there are three main paradigms used by researchers in the information sector: positivism, postpositivism, and interpretivism (2007, p.6). The postpostivist paradigm was the best fit for this research.

The positivist paradigm, sometimes known as functionalist, posits the ability of scientific research to reveal the truth about phenomena. Positivists believe that facts can be defined and the results of research are able to be measured, and the researcher is viewed as an "objective instrument" (Burke, 2007, p.480). This paradigm was not suitable for this research as it does not make allowance for human emotions and thoughts which cannot always be quantified. Brophy also describes the problems of applying a positivist paradigm to library research. Libraries exist in the real world and it is not possible to control all the variables in order to perform a valid experiment in such an environment (2007, p.152).

Postpostivism appeared to offer the best paradigm for this research. Led by Karl Popper, postpositivism emerged in the 1960s in response to the perceived failings of the positivist paradigm (Pickard, 2007, p.10). Brophy argues that postpositivism is now the most common paradigm used in information research (2007, p.152). This paradigm accepts that it is impossible to attain knowledge for certain; a hypothesis can only ever be

supported or rejected through research results, never proven beyond doubt because of the nature of human nature (Pickard, 2007, p.10). Postpositivists are critical realists who believe that all measurement is fallible. Therefore, this research will not be able to definitively determine the state of readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries and library staff's feelings about providing them, but it should be indicative of the current situation.

Methodology

A mainly quantitative research methodology was used in this project, with occasional uses of more qualitative approaches, for example in the selection of a sample for survey purposes (see section B of this chapter). Pickard calls this "methodological dualism" and says it is usual of researchers using the postpositivist paradigm (2007, p.13).

Quantitative methodologies are most useful where variables can be measured (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p.59). This research examined the relationship between measured variables with the aim of explaining those relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.94). While the idea of "confidence" may essentially be a qualitative concept, it was approached in a quantitative way in order to investigate its relationship with other variables, such as amount of pleasure fiction reading. Questionnaire respondents were asked to quantify their confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries by choosing a number on a rating scale from one to ten (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.185). This allowed statistical analyses to be carried out on the data, and this was then able to be compared with data about other variables to investigate possible correlations.

Survey research was carried out to gain an understanding of staff confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries in New Zealand public libraries. Survey research seeks to provide a description and interpretation of a situation, without manipulating that situation by changing the variables (as occurs in experimental research) (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p.83). The cross-sectional design of a survey enables data collected about quantifiable variables to be investigated for patterns of association (Bryman, 2008, p.46).

Survey research is sometimes not regarded as being as rigorous as experimental research as it cannot reveal causal relationships between variables (Bryman, 2008, p.46). However, it is often more practical if the population to be studied is large and/or geographically dispersed, as was the case here (Powell & Connaway, 2007, p.84). Powell and Connaway also argue that survey research is frequently used in library research and has been found to be effective in determining the "state-of-the-art" (2007, p.92).

Method

The research method refers to the data collection tool which is used as part of the research methodology. In this case the questionnaire was used. Along with interviews and observation, questionnaires are the most commonly used tool of survey research (Powell & Connaway, 2007, p.106).

The questionnaire is a useful data gathering technique. It is generally acknowledged to be a relatively fast way to reach large numbers of people who are geographically

dispersed, for relatively little cost. The anonymous format encourages honest replies, meaning the questionnaire can be a good way of determining people's attitudes. Questions can also be constructed in a way which enables relatively easy data analysis (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p.125). There are also potential disadvantages to using surveys, such as misinterpretation of questions and low response rates, which were taken into account before deciding upon this method (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p.126).

The questionnaire was available in two formats (online and paper) which both used the same questions. The URL hyperlink to the online version of the survey was embedded in an email message (see section E of this chapter), and it was made clear that paper copies of the questionnaire would happily be posted out upon request. This meant that the research instrument could potentially have been administered by two different modes. However, Bryman argues that research has shown that the mode of administration of a survey does not make a significant difference to the findings (2008, p.647). As will be discussed in later sections, no survey respondents asked for the survey in paper form, and consequently all were completed electronically. This eliminated any potential differences to results which could be attributed to the mode of survey delivery.

Several advantages to administering an online questionnaire as opposed to a purely paper-based one were identified as important in this instance. Postage and stationery costs could be kept to a minimum as only those who wanted to complete the questionnaire would be sent a hard copy, thus limiting wastage. Response times would be likely to be faster as postal systems would not be involved. The format of a web

survey can often appear more attractive than a paper-based one as colour and effective layouts can be used easily and cheaply. There was less chance of unanswered questions in an online questionnaire as vital questions could be made compulsory, whereas respondents could easily skip a question if filling in a paper questionnaire (Bryman, 2008, p.653). It was also anticipated that time would be saved on data processing as responses would already be in electronic format, coded and ready for analysis.

SurveyGizmo (online survey software available at http://www.surveygizmo.com/) was selected to be used to create and administer the web questionnaire. It was chosen as it offered many options for designing the questionnaire, and allowed raw data to be easily exported for analysis elsewhere. These features were available for no cost, although advanced features not necessary for this project could be accessed for a monthly fee. Survey respondents could be offered confidentiality and anonymity as the only possible identifying record kept by SurveyGizmo was the respondent's computer's IP address. This feature could be disabled if the full version of the software was purchased, but this was not deemed necessary here as the researcher had no way of tracing the IP address back to the individual who completed the questionnaire, nor would any attempt be made to do this. The software also guaranteed that survey data would be stored for as long as the owner of the survey wanted, and would only be accessible by the survey owner as it was password protected.

B. Research population and sample

The research population for this research was every public library staff member in New Zealand who encountered adult or young adult fiction readers' advisory enquiries. This included qualified librarians and unqualified library assistants, as – in the researcher's own experience – all frequently dealt with readers' advisory questions. Unfortunately there was no sampling frame for this population as there was no easily-obtainable list of all such individuals in the country. While there were statistics available for the number of staff employed in New Zealand public libraries, there was no way of knowing which of these staff worked in publicly accessible areas and therefore would be appropriate subjects for this study. This made it impossible to contact all appropriate staff members directly, meaning a census was not appropriate in this circumstance. Therefore, a sample had to be selected. Without a sampling frame, probability sampling was not an option. In this case, using a form of non-probability sampling was the only feasible approach.

Purposive (or purposeful) sampling, more often used in qualitative research but still acceptable in quantitative and mixed methods research, was used to gather a sample of information-rich cases of the research population (Kemper, Stringfield & Teddlie, 2003, p.280). A form of stratified purposive sampling was used as each library contacted was asked to select at least one qualified librarian and one unqualified library assistant who worked in a public area to fill in the questionnaire. Frontline public library staff were targeted as these were the staff thought to be most likely to encounter fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Whilst this sample cannot be said to be truly statistically representative of the population, it was anticipated that it would still provide respondents

with a wide variety of experiences in the readers' advisory field. The sample was non-random, but ensured that all of the responses received would be relevant and help answer the research questions.

As the population total was not known, it was difficult to calculate the optimal sample size which would be needed. There are seventy-three local authorities in New Zealand which provide public library services (LIANZA, 2006, p.7). Contact was made directly with all of these services wherever they had an easily obtainable email address. Ideally, at least two responses from each library were hoped to be received, meaning some insight into readers' advisory services across the whole of New Zealand could be gained. 100 completed questionnaires was the target as it was deemed that would provide enough raw data to meaningfully analyse and draw conclusions from, although if completed questionnaires in excess of this were received, they would also be used.

C. Instrumentation

See Appendix C for the full survey instrument (the questionnaire) which was used to gather data for this research. The self-completion questionnaire used a mixture of fixed response, closed, and open questions, as well as Likert scale questions to help quantify staff confidence levels and feelings about answering readers' advisory enquiries.

The twenty-two questions were broken up into three main sections: personal information (such as age, qualifications and job level), pleasure reading habits (such as what and how much respondents read for pleasure), and readers' advisory-specific questions (such as

confidence level, tools and resources available and used, and what factors respondents felt would increase confidence).

The questions created were an amalgamation of ideas gleaned from examining other relevant surveys which had been conducted (such as Darling's 2008 New Zealand survey, and Griffin's 2007 survey in the United States) and original thought from the researcher, as no questionnaire of this exact kind had been identified through the literature review.

All questions were made compulsory (using the survey software options), with the exception of the final freetext question in which respondents were invited to comment on the survey or any other aspect of readers' advisory services. This ensured that all of the completed questionnaires had responses to all questions, making analyses such as cross-tabulations easier, with greater validity.

In most cases an "Other" option was provided for respondents who felt that they did not fit any of the fixed response options provided for a particular question. Selecting the "Other" option enabled the respondent to type their preferred response into a freetext field, and these responses often provided useful data, as they were sometimes possibilities not anticipated when the questionnaire was constructed. These, along with the freetext question at the end of the questionnaire, provided data which enriched the study by providing an opportunity for respondents to comment on their answers and give examples in their own words. As well as emphasising the importance of some issues, the freetext comments added colour and interest to what was otherwise a purely quantitative study.

D. Pilot study

Once the research proposal was accepted, and Human Ethics Committee (HEC) approval granted, the draft questionnaire was pre-tested on a small number of subjects to ensure that the layout of the questionnaire was easy to follow and the questions were comprehendible, and that the questionnaire produced the kind of raw data required to answer the research questions. A convenience sample was drawn from the researcher's work colleagues who work in the Adult Lending section of a public library and were known to encounter fiction readers' advisory enquiries. The online version of the questionnaire was tested and feedback about the experience of completing the questionnaire was sought from respondents. Nine completed pilot questionnaires were received and valuable feedback from the respondents was provided. As a result, a small number of minor wording changes were made to aid the clarity of some questions. The responses received during the pilot study were retained and used in the final results as no major changes were made before the final questionnaire was launched, meaning the pilot responses could be easily integrated into the main survey responses.

E. Specific procedures

Human Ethics Committee (HEC) approval for this research project was applied for and granted in mid-March 2009. On 25 March 2009, invitations to complete an anonymous questionnaire were emailed to every New Zealand public library service which listed an email address in the online version of the *Directory of New Zealand Libraries*, available at http://directory.natlib.govt.nz/library-symbols-web/. Not every library service had a

contact email address listed, but it was anticipated that at least some members of staff at these few libraries would be reached through the listserv invitation instead. Wherever a generic library email address could be identified (for example, library@domain.govt.nz), this was used. Failing this, the email address of the library manager was used. According to the email system used to send out the messages, the email failed to be delivered to three of the seventy-two email addresses used. Attempts were made to find alternative email addresses for these libraries, but none could be found.

The email introduced the researcher and the research topic and requested that at least one qualified and one unqualified staff member who worked in a public area complete the questionnaire at that library. See Appendix A for the full text of the email.

To reach the largest possible number of survey participants, an invitation was also emailed to the Pub-SIG listserv on 30 March 2009. This is the electronic discussion forum of the Public Library Special Interest Group (PubSIG) of the Library & Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA). This listserv is free to join and library staff at all levels can sign up and participate in discussions about various issues relevant to New Zealand public libraries. This meant that it was the most appropriate method of contacting as many public library employees as possible. See Appendix B for the full text of the email. This was also a form of double-check in case the emails sent directly to the public libraries were not passed on to the correct staff members, or were accidentally deleted, or filtered out by junk email filters.

F. Data collection

No requests were received from respondents for paper copies of the questionnaire, so all questionnaires were completed electronically via the SurveyGizmo website. The online questionnaire was launched on 25 March 2009 and remained open for several weeks. It was closed on 19 April 2009, as explained in the invitation emails sent to library services and the Pub-SIG listserv.

Unfortunately, the first URL emailed to the individual library services was quickly discovered to have a glitch, despite vigorous pre-testing of the survey in both Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox web browsers before it was launched. One respondent using Internet Explorer reported difficulties completing the survey (although those using Firefox appeared unaffected and managed to complete the questionnaire), so the survey was taken down and the problem fixed. The corrected survey was quickly relaunched and no further problems were reported. Twenty respondents completed the questionnaire in the following four days.

On 30 March 2009, an email invitation was extended to the Pub-SIG listserv and responses to the questionnaire increased significantly. Forty-seven were received on 30 March, seventeen the following day, and fifteen on 1 April. Over the remaining days in which the questionnaire was open, responses were received on most days, with another small peak on 8 April when eight questionnaires were completed. 121 online questionnaires were completed which were added to the nine completed during the pilot

study, providing a total of 130 completed questionnaires. This significantly exceeded expectations so was a pleasing result.

As an open invitation was extended for any New Zealand public library staff member who had regular contact with borrowers to complete the survey, there was no way to determine the response rate for the questionnaire. There was also no way to determine if two staff members from every library service in the country filled out a questionnaire as was hoped.

Combining results for the pilot survey with the final survey, SurveyGizmo reported that 130 surveys were completed. Eighty were "abandoned" which SurveyGizmo defined as "visitor[s] to your survey who left without answering any questions or pressing any buttons. They looked, then left." There was no way of telling if these visitors later returned and completed the survey. Twenty-nine surveys were partially completed. This meant that a visitor to the survey began answering the questionnaire but, for whatever reason, did not complete all of the questions. Again, there was no way of knowing if these visitors returned and completed the survey later. Data from the partially completed questionnaires were not analysed or reported on as they would have skewed the results for the questions answered and missing values would have made some analyses difficult or invalid. For example, a partially completed questionnaire may have included data on the number of books read for pleasure but been abandoned before the confidence question was answered, making an investigation into the correlation between that respondent's confidence and the number of books read impossible.

Data from the 130 questionnaires completed online was collected electronically by the SurveyGizmo software, exported into Excel spreadsheet format, then imported into the SPSS Statistics software package (version 17.0) for analysis. Any data collected from paper questionnaires returned by post was to be coded and also entered into SPSS for analysis, although this process was not necessary in the end as no questionnaires were completed on paper.

G. Limitations and delimitations of the study

Delimitations

Fiction readers' advisory was the focus of the research, although there is a growing amount of literature and research dealing with non-fiction readers' advisory (Alpert, 2006; Burgin, 2004).

Only frontline staff of public libraries were studied in the research. Readers' advisory also occurs in other libraries, for example academic libraries, but the focus here was solely public library staff members. This was in order to compare like with like and to increase the validity of the study by limiting any potential interference by other factors which may exist in other kinds of libraries.

Children's readers' advisory is an important service for public libraries, but in the interests of narrowing the focus of this study, only adult or young adult readers' advisory services and staff were investigated. While it is noted that there are differences in the way readers' advisory services are provided to adults and young adults, for the purposes

of this study they were combined as many library staff provide these services to both sets of the population.

The research was also limited geographically to New Zealand to enable a more tightly-focused approach to be taken.

Limitations

One limitation of this research was that a form of purposive sampling was used to obtain the research sample. This meant that inferential statistics could not be used to extend the results of the questionnaire to the whole population of frontline public library staff in New Zealand. This is because the sample used may not be representative of all New Zealand public library staff.

It is acknowledged that using a questionnaire only provides a respondent's opinion or perception about a topic, and this may not accurately reflect the true state of affairs. For example, a respondent may indicate that their library does not provide access to Books and Authors database, when in reality it does, but the staff member is unaware of it. Or a respondent may say that they feel that they do not answer readers' advisory enquiries well, but library borrowers may be entirely satisfied with the response they received from that staff member. Or a respondent may claim to use seven different readers' advisory tools or resources but in fact only use two or three but are aware of the others, so ticked them so as not to appear ignorant. Only observational or experimental research would provide wholly accurate data about such things, but the scope of this research did not warrant or allow this.

In an ideal situation, data gathered via the questionnaire would have been triangulated with in-depth interviews with relevant library staff and observation of real-life readers' advisory transactions. Observation was not used in this research project, although it can be a powerful research tool as it shows research participants in their natural environment. It was deemed too intrusive to closely observe what happens between a library staff member and a reader during a readers' advisory transaction as it can be a very personal conversation. Time constraints for this project meant interviews were not carried out. Another method which was rejected for this study was covert research by posing as a member of the public with a readers' advisory question in order to record library staff responses. This method has been used by readers' advisory researchers in the United States (May, 2001; Shearer & Bracy, 1994). However, Van Fleet queries this sort of research, arguing that coached student responses to library staff questions may be very different to impromptu public responses, making the whole transaction less than authentic (2008, p.226). It would also not have been a suitable method for this research due to travel costs and time restraints.

H. Treatment of the data

The SPSS Statistics software package was used to process and analyse the raw data once the survey period had ended. The raw data were downloaded from SurveyGizmo into an Excel spreadsheet, then imported into SPSS and cleaned up and coded as appropriate. Some variables were recoded as necessary and some new variables, for example the total number of genres read for pleasure, were created.

41

As the questionnaire consisted of fixed response, open, closed, and Likert scale questions, which produced different kinds of raw data, including nominal, ordinal, and interval scale data, a number of different techniques were used to analyse the data once they had been gathered. Descriptive statistical techniques were first applied to the data to show the general distribution of the measures used. Univariate analysis (using frequency tables, charts and graphs) illustrated distributions for each variable and is presented in Chapter 5. Measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), and measures of variability (range and standard deviation) were also used when appropriate.

Bivariate analysis techniques were used to explore whether two variables, such as a large amount of fiction pleasure reading and a high level of confidence about answering readers' advisory enquiries, were related. Contingency tables, Pearson's r, Spearman's rho, Phi, and Cramér's V can be used for this purpose, depending upon the kind of variables being analysed (Bryman, 2008, pp.326-329). Descriptive statistics such as these can suggest correlations between the variables, but cannot demonstrate causal relationships (Powell & Connaway, 2004, pp.231-237). This also relates back to the use of the postpositivist paradigm which does not expect a theory to be proven, only supported or rejected.

As a non-probability sample of the population was used, inferential statistical techniques could not be used to apply findings about the sample to the whole population. Findings were only valid for the respondents who completed the questionnaire, but as there was a

good response to the questionnaire, with 130 completed, the research should have a

reasonably strong internal validity.

Chapter 5: Findings

A. Demographic profile of respondents

The 130 respondents who completed the online questionnaire appeared to be a cross-section of the library community. For example, they came from a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, lengths of public library experience, and undertook varied amounts and kinds of pleasure reading in their spare time.

118 of the 130 respondents were female; only 12 were male. The age of respondents was spread across the age group options, with the largest number of respondents in the forty-six to fifty-five years age bracket (see Figure 2). The number of years of public library experience was also evenly split between the options, but just over fifty percent of respondents had worked in public libraries for between two and ten years (see Figure 3).
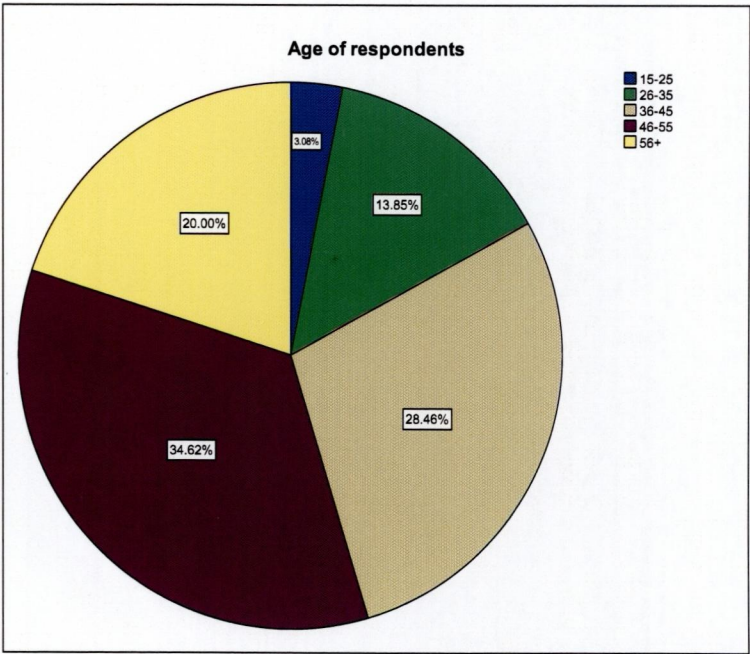
Figure 2. Age of respondents.
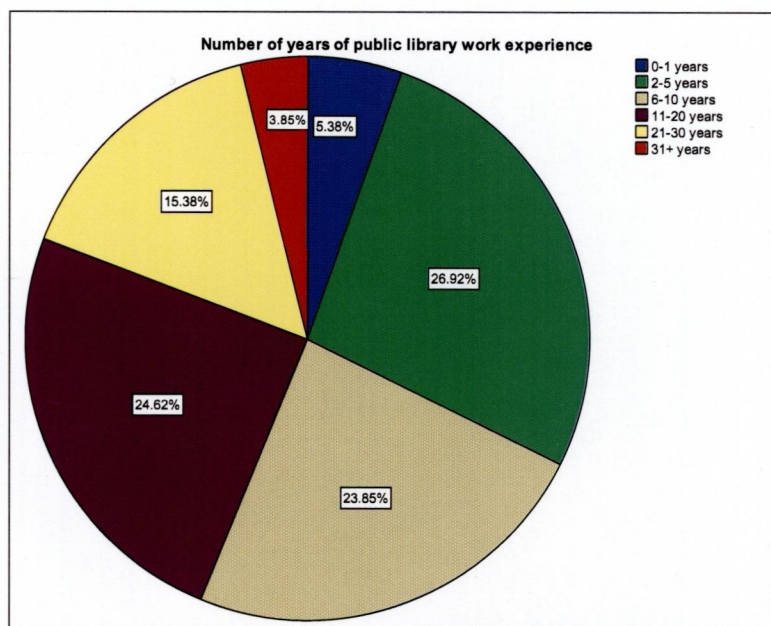
Figure 3. Number of years of public library work experience.

While 9.2% of respondents answered that they held no formal post-secondary school qualifications, a large percentage (61.54%) held or were studying towards a library qualification of some kind. The remaining 29.23% of respondents held or were currently completing a non-library-specific post-secondary school qualification. See Figure 4 for a breakdown of qualifications held by respondents. Around eighty percent of the respondents with post-secondary school qualifications had completed their stated qualification, while around twenty percent were currently studying.

Two-thirds of respondents answered that they held positions within their library which required a professional library qualification; one-third were employed in unqualified library assistant positions. This showed that the use of a form of stratified purposive sample was only partially successful. The email sent out to every public library service invited one library-qualified and one unqualified library staff member from each service

to complete the questionnaire. This was an attempt to ensure that an even mix of qualified and unqualified library employees completed the survey. However, there ended up being a 2:1 ratio of qualified to unqualified staff. This was probably due to the invitation also being sent to the Pub-SIG listserv, which may be used most frequently by qualified library staff.
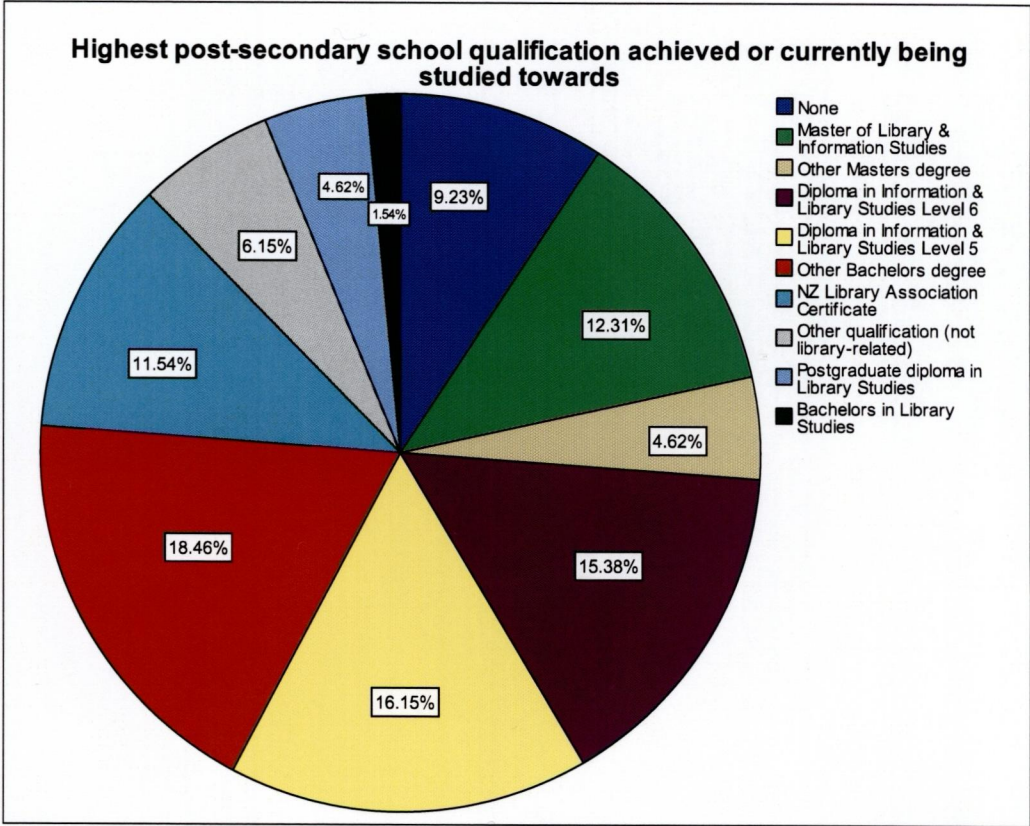
Figure 4. Highest post-secondary school qualification achieved or currently being studied towards.

Just over three-quarters of respondents worked between thirty and forty hours per week at their library, qualifying them as full-time workers under the Statistics New Zealand definition of "full time employee" (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). 12.31% of respondents worked between twenty-one and thirty hours per week, 8.46% worked between eleven and twenty hours per week, and only 2.31% worked ten hours or less per

week. Of the hours worked each week, respondents spent a varying amount of time working in public areas of the library where they could be readily approached by members of the public with enquiries (see Figure 5). Roughly one-third spent ten hours or less in the public eye, one-third spent between eleven and twenty hours in public areas, and one-third were easily accessible to the public for between twenty-one and forty hours per week.

Number of hours worked in public area of library per week

- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- 31-40 hours

6.92%
11.54%
16.15%
27.69%
37.69%
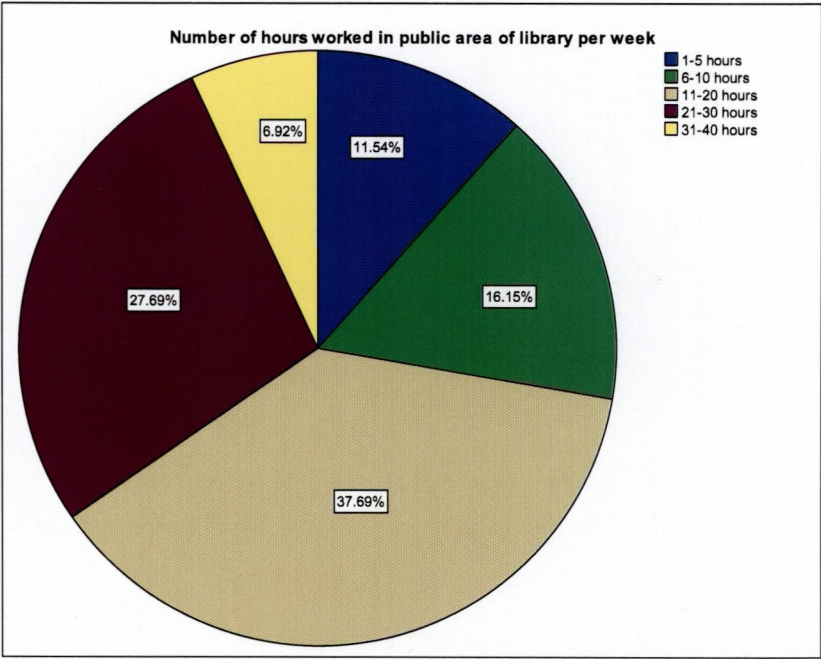
Figure 5. Number of hours worked in public area of library per week.

Respondents from a wide variety of different sized public libraries answered the questionnaire (see Figure 6). Respondents were asked to state the number of staff employed at their library. If they worked at a branch library, they were asked to include only the number of staff employed at the branch they worked at most often. This was in order to ascertain the level of colleague support they may be expected to enjoy and to gain an understanding of the size of the library each respondent actually worked in, rather

than the size of the library network to which they belonged. Thirty-three respondents (one quarter), including two who were sole-charge librarians, worked in libraries or branches with five or fewer staff. Another twenty-two respondents worked in libraries with between six and ten staff, and twenty-five in libraries with eleven to twenty employees. Eighteen respondents worked in libraries employing twenty-one to thirty staff, and thirty-two worked in larger libraries or branches with over thirty staff members (roughly twenty-five percent).
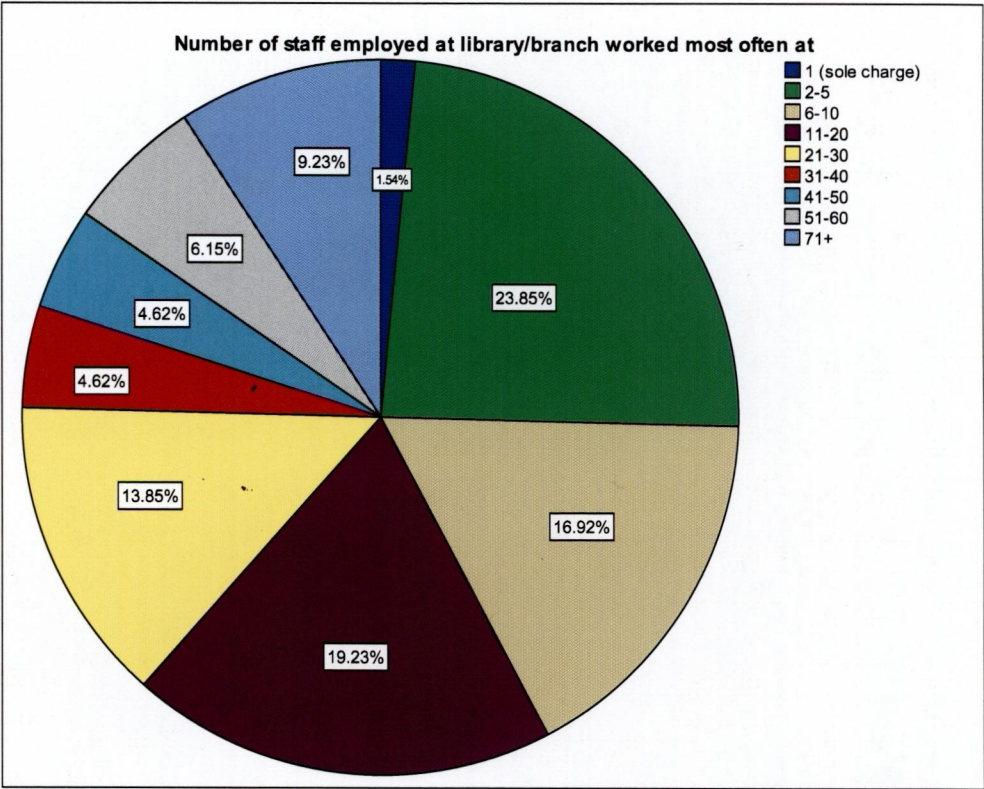
Figure 6. Number of staff employed at library/branch worked most often at.

B. Pleasure reading habits of respondents

Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate which kinds of reading material they read for pleasure (see Figure 7). Fiction books (adult and/or young adult) were the most

popular form of pleasure reading, with 128 out of 130 choosing this option. Adult non-fiction was the next most popular form of pleasure reading, followed by magazines, newspapers, and children's books. In comparison, Sinclair's 2004 survey of Dunedin Public Library staff found that fifty-nine percent read popular fiction, twenty-seven percent read literary fiction, and fifty-one percent read non-fiction. In this research, only thirty-six percent of respondents selected electronic resources (such as websites or blogs) as one of their chosen pleasure reading materials. However, this was significantly higher than the percentage who rated the Internet as a favourite type of reading material (eleven percent) in Sinclair's survey (2004, p.4).
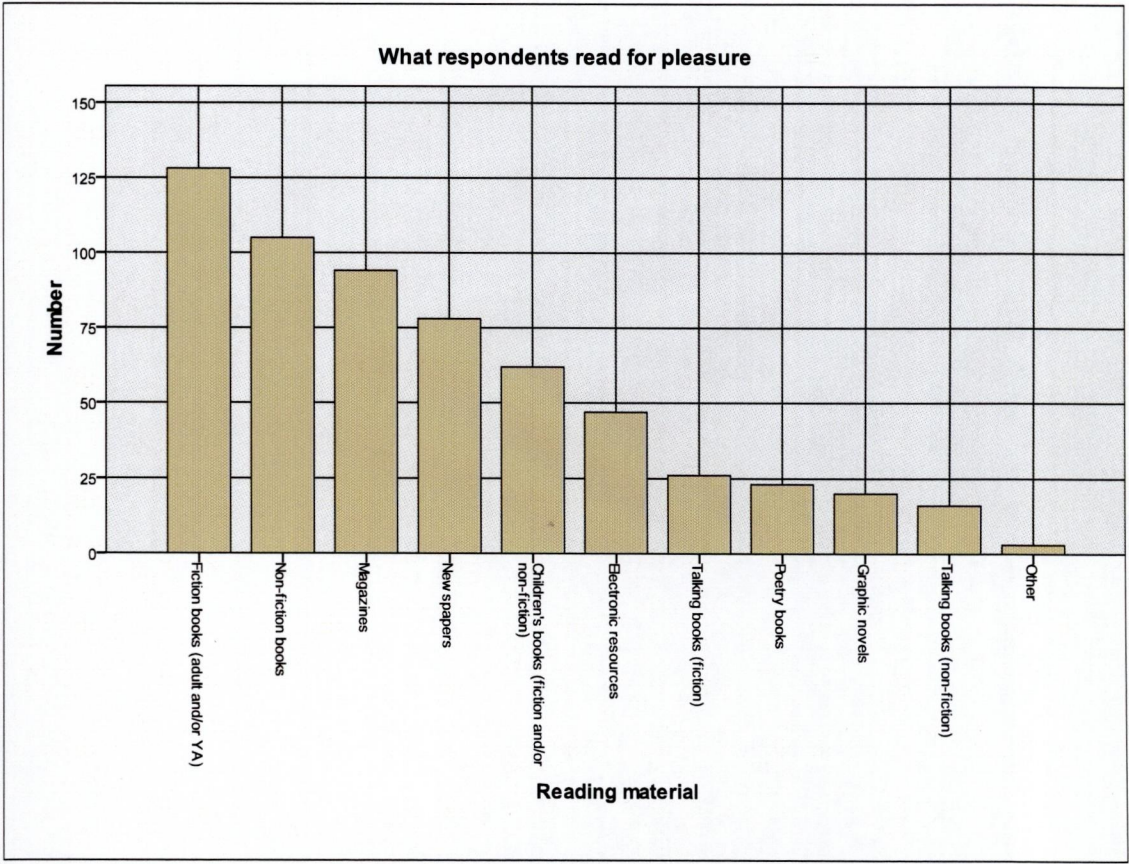
Figure 7. What respondents read for pleasure.

Figure 3. Total number of bound YA books read per month.

adult or young adult fiction, there were again a wide variety of responses, although

majority (ninety-nine respondents) stated that fiction made up at least half of their pleasure reading per month (see Figure 9).

Proportion of books read per month which are fiction

Legend:
- None
- About one quarter
- About half
- About three quarters
- All
- Other

4.62%
3.08%
16.15%
16.92%
21.54%
37.69%
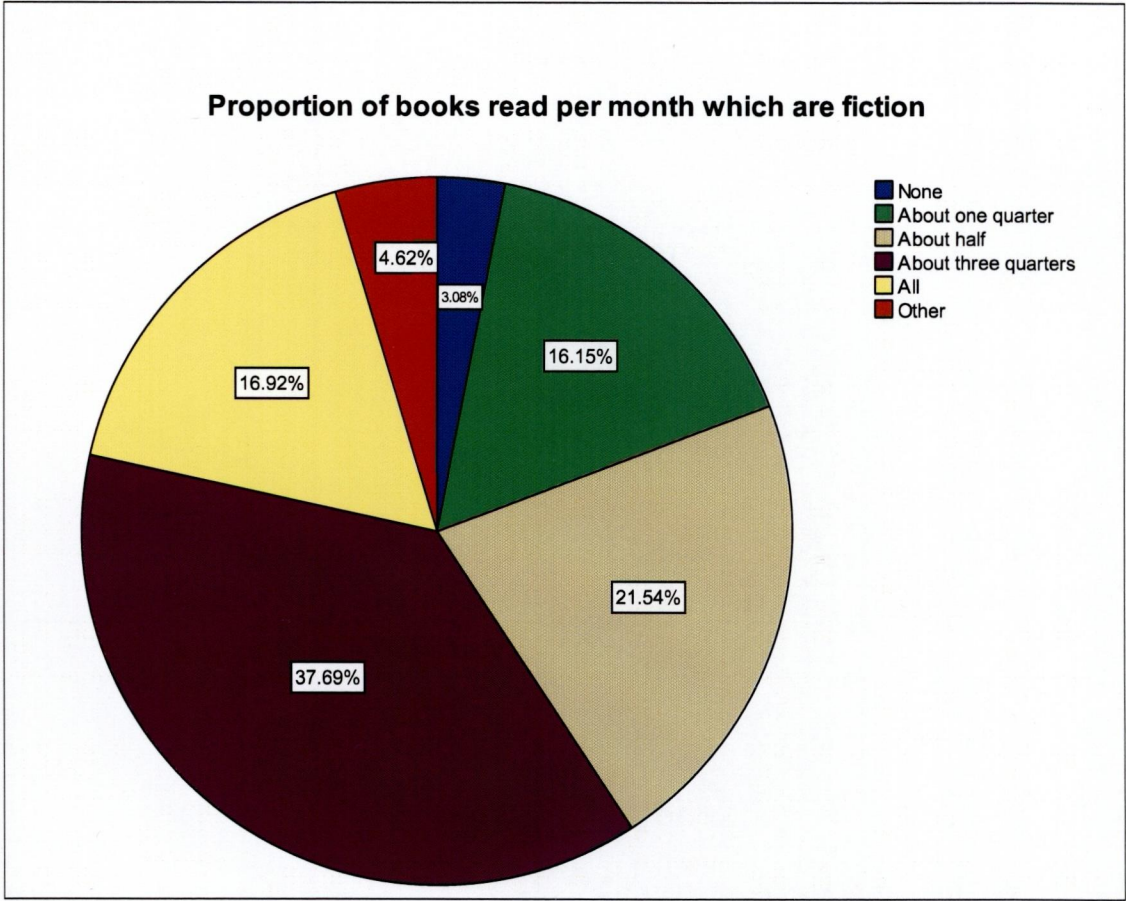
Figure 9. Proportion of books read per month which are fiction.

Respondents were then asked to select which fiction genres they read for pleasure. This was an important question as Trott contends that

> One of the most challenging aspects of readers' advisory service is maintaining and building knowledge of genres (Trott, 2009, p.133).

Three respondents answered that they did not read any kind of fiction genre. The most popular type of fiction read was general/literary fiction (read by 103 of the 130 respondents), followed by suspense crime, and historical fiction; westerns were the least read genre (see Figure 10).
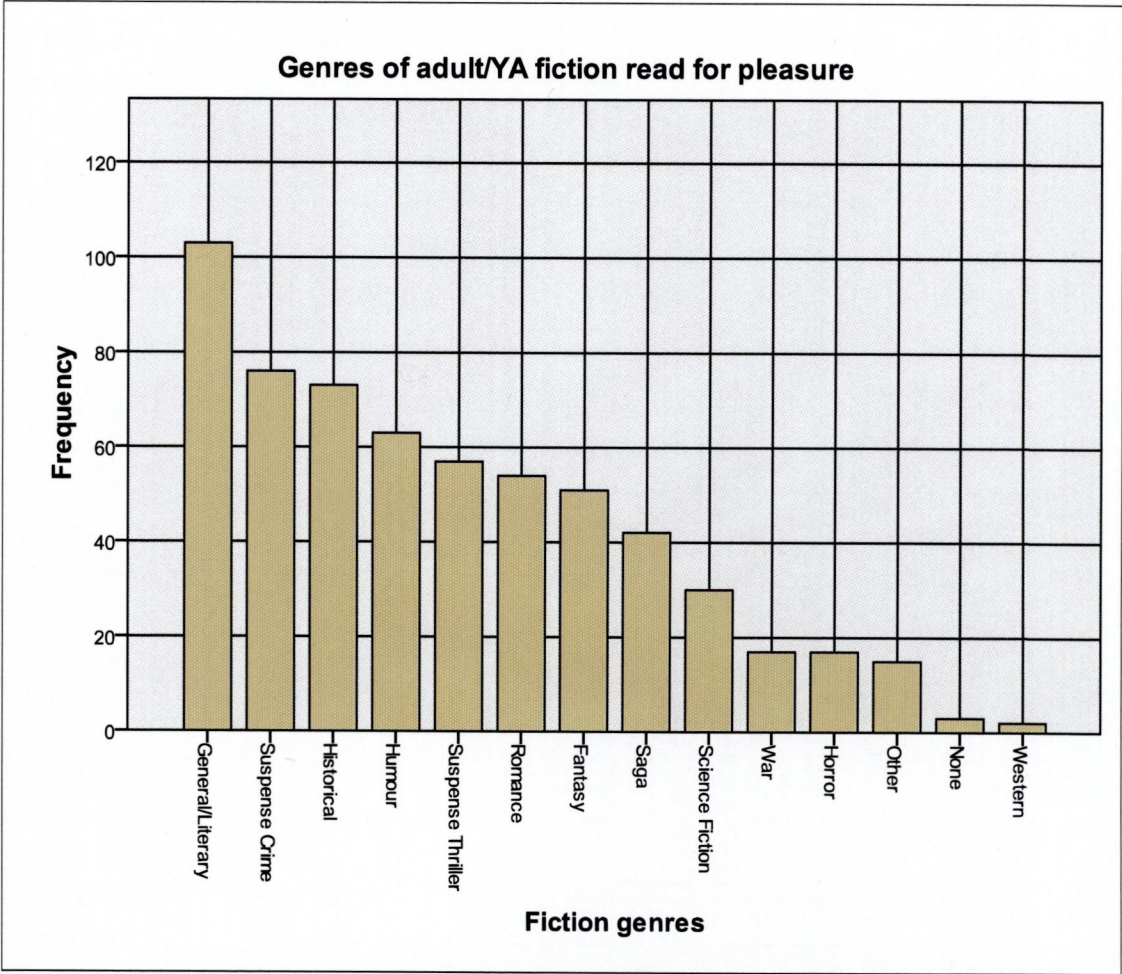
Figure 10. Genres of adult/YA fiction read for pleasure.

The number of fiction genres each respondent read ranged from zero to ten, with the median being five genres and the mode being four genres. The mean was 4.78 and the standard deviation was 2.172. See Figure 11 for a full breakdown of the number of fiction genres read.
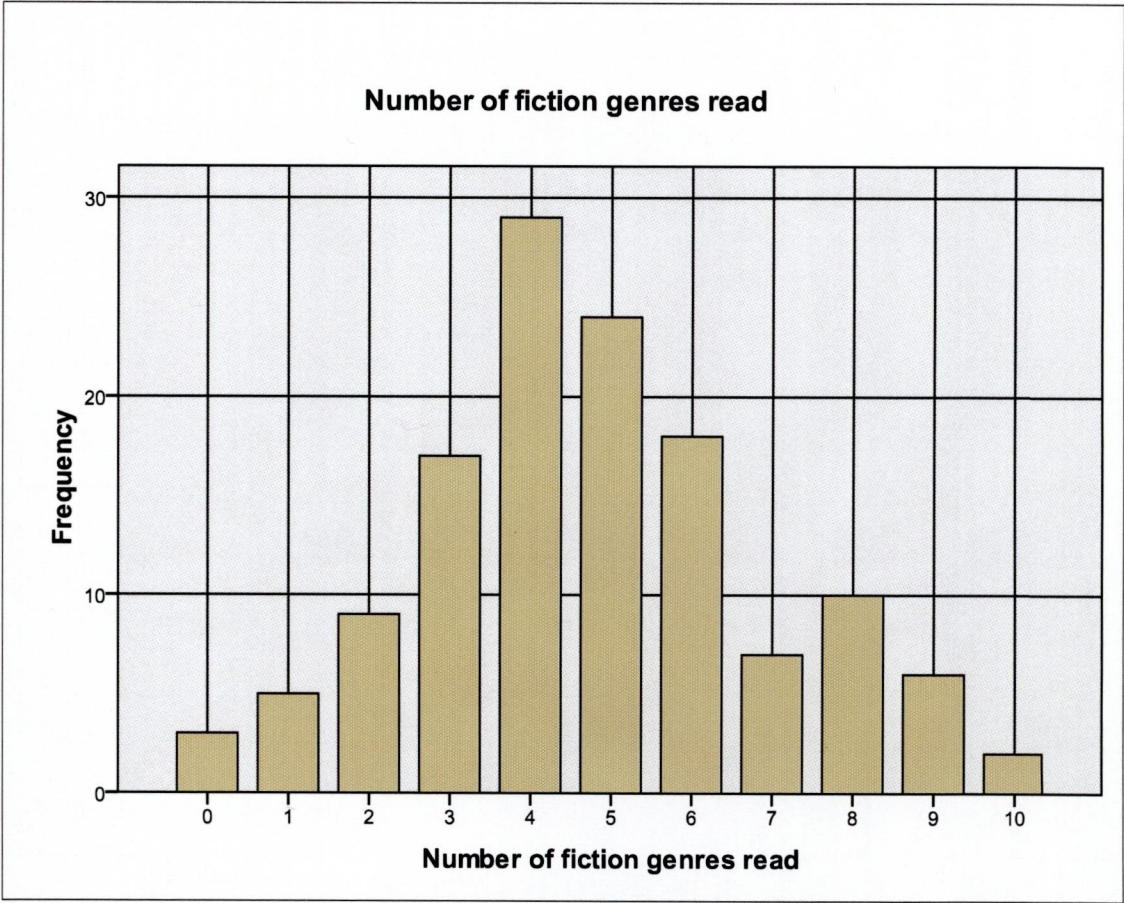
Figure 11. Number of fiction genres read.

C. Fiction readers' advisory experiences of respondents

Questionnaire respondents reported a wide range of frequencies of encountering fiction readers' advisory enquiries from library borrowers, ranging from never (two respondents) to once an hour or more (twenty-seven respondents) (see Figure 12). 118 of the 130 respondents encountered fiction readers' advisory enquiries at least once a week, with once a day being the most common response.
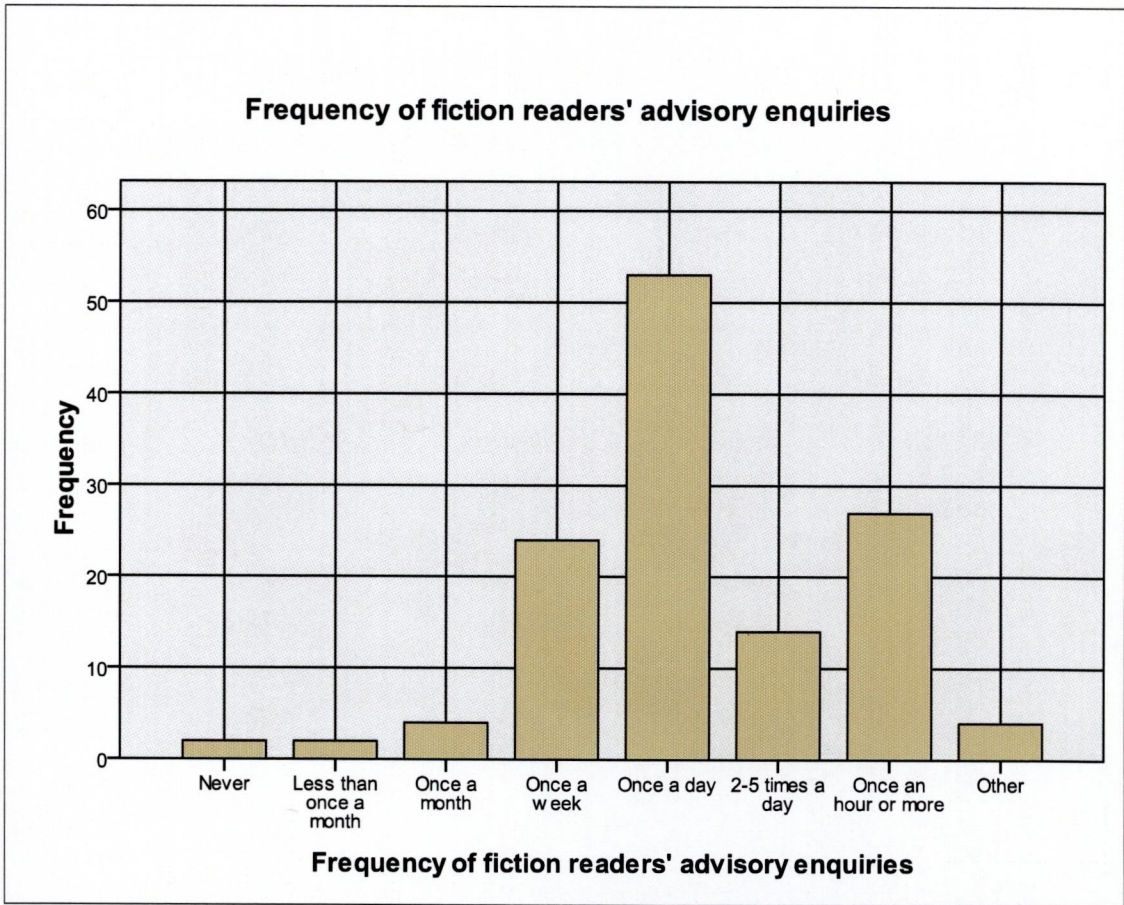
Figure 12. Frequency of fiction readers' advisory enquiries encountered.

A significant number of respondents (twenty-seven) had received no form of fiction readers' advisory training. Informal in-house training, such as regular meetings with other staff members in which they discuss books they have read ("booktalking"), was the most frequently received form of training, followed by formal in-house training, such as direct training from another member of staff. Over one third of respondents had received formal external readers' advisory training, and a similar number had attended a conference session or seminar dealing with the topic. See Figure 13 for full details.
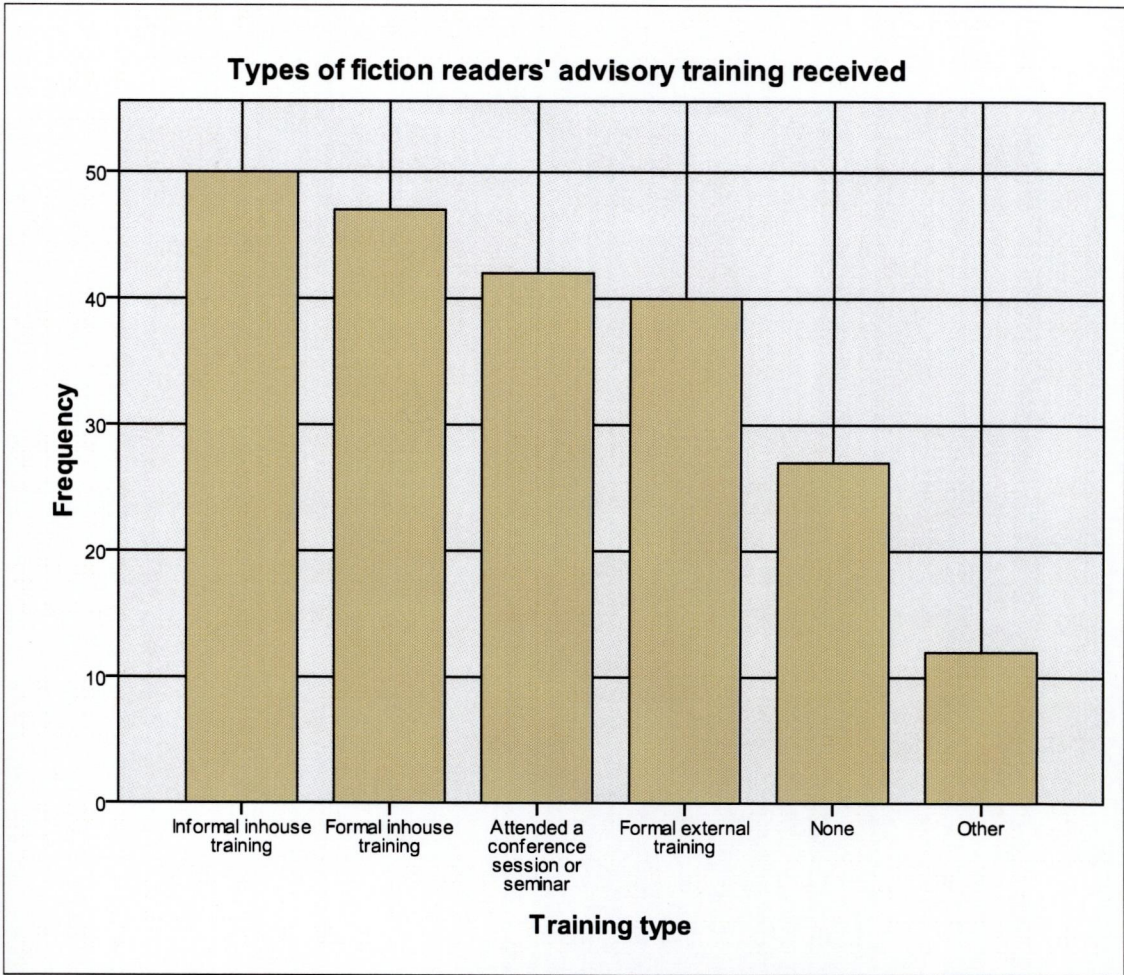
Figure 13. Types of fiction readers' advisory training.

Responses to the training question were then recoded into four categories to show how many respondents had received no readers' advisory training, formal training (either in-house or external, including conferences or seminars), informal training (such as staff book reviews presented in meeting times), and how many had received both formal and informal training. This gave the following results:

	Frequency	Percentage
No training	29	22.3%
Formal training only	51	39.2%
Informal training only	11	8.5%
Both formal and informal training	39	30%
Total	130	100%

Table 1. Frequency of training type.

It is interesting to compare these findings with those of Darling, who asked public library managers about the types of reader development training provided by New Zealand public library services. While Darling's raw data were not provided in the journal article, and the exact questions asked were not given, some comparisons could be drawn. Table 2 illustrates some similarities between the two sets of findings, such as informal training being the most frequent form of training in this area. On the whole, however, significantly higher proportions of respondents in this research reported receiving training of some kind in readers' advisory services than in Darling's research. This difference may simply be due to the small sample size of Darling's survey (twenty-eight), compared with 130 respondents in this project, or may be because Darling's survey target was library managers rather than library staff who provide readers' advisory services on a day-to-day basis.

	Darling's findings	This research's findings
Informal training	28.6%	38.5%
In-house training	14.3%	36.2%
External training e.g. Rewarding Reading workshop	25%	30.8%
Conferences, seminars	10.7%	32.3%

Table 2. Training types compared with Darling's findings (Darling, 2008, p.74).

The public libraries which questionnaire respondents worked at provided many forms of readers' advisory services for their borrowers, including many passive forms of readers' advisory (see Figure 14). Passive readers' advisory resources are aids such as displays and "readalike" brochures which help borrowers select their own books without having to approach a staff member. These are very important resources to have available as not all borrowers feel comfortable or want to ask for help in what is a very personal decision (Moyer, 2005, p.222). Displays of new books and the use of spine labels to indicate different genres were the most common forms of readers' advisory provided in respondents' libraries. Darling's survey also found that book displays were the most common form of "reader development" activity in New Zealand public libraries, used by twenty-five of the twenty-eight responding library services (2008, p.68).

Forms of readers' advisory provided by respondents' workplaces
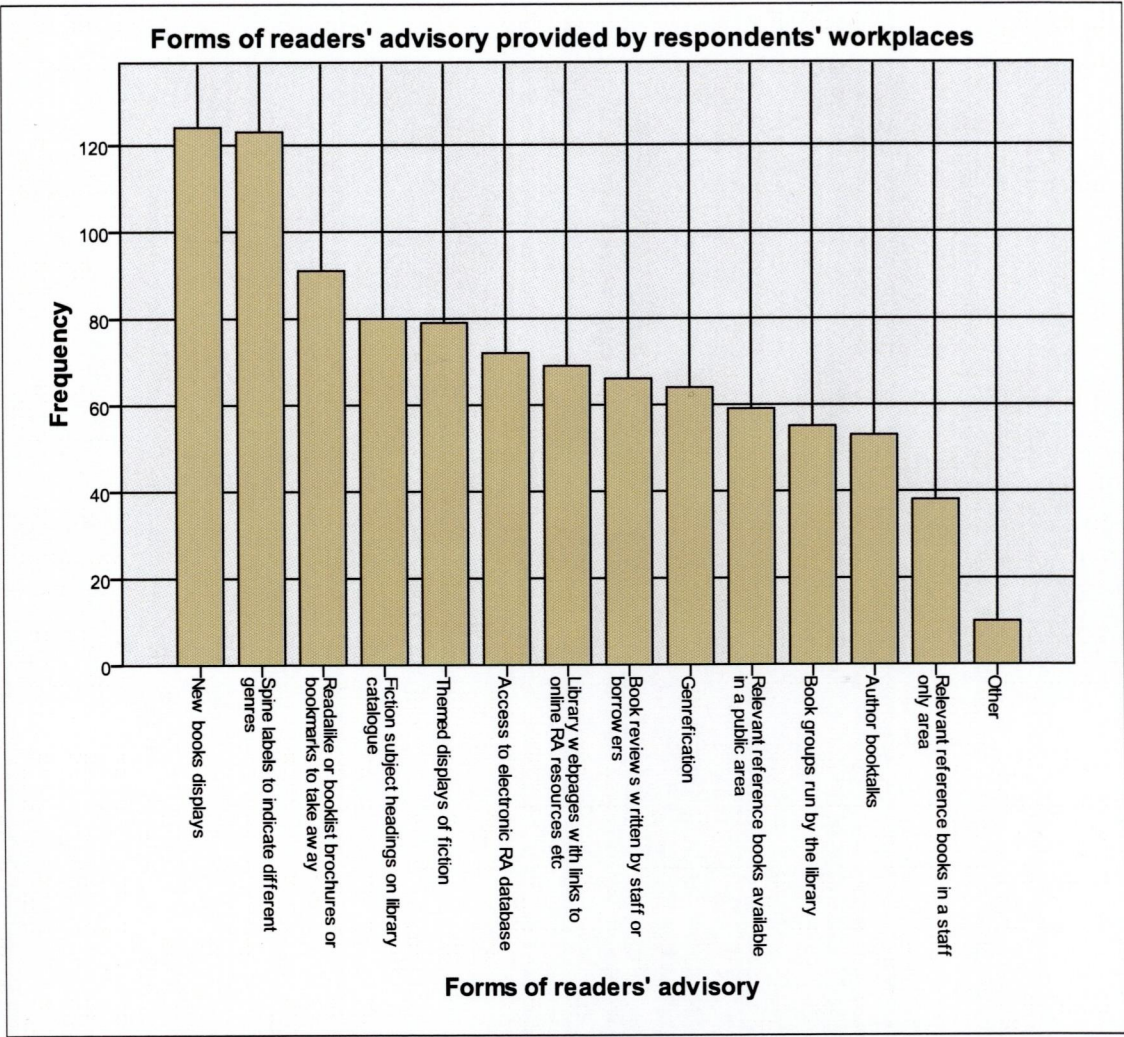
Figure 14. Forms of readers' advisory provided by respondents' workplaces.

When asked which tools and resources they used to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries from adults or young adults, respondents selected a wide range of answers (see Figure 15). 123 of the 130 respondents stated that they used their own reading knowledge and experience to answer readers' advisory enquiries. The next most often used tools were: colleagues' reading knowledge and experience, the respondent's own library's catalogue, brochures and other resources produced by the respondent's library, and fiction websites such as Fantastic Fiction (http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk).

Tools/resources used to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries
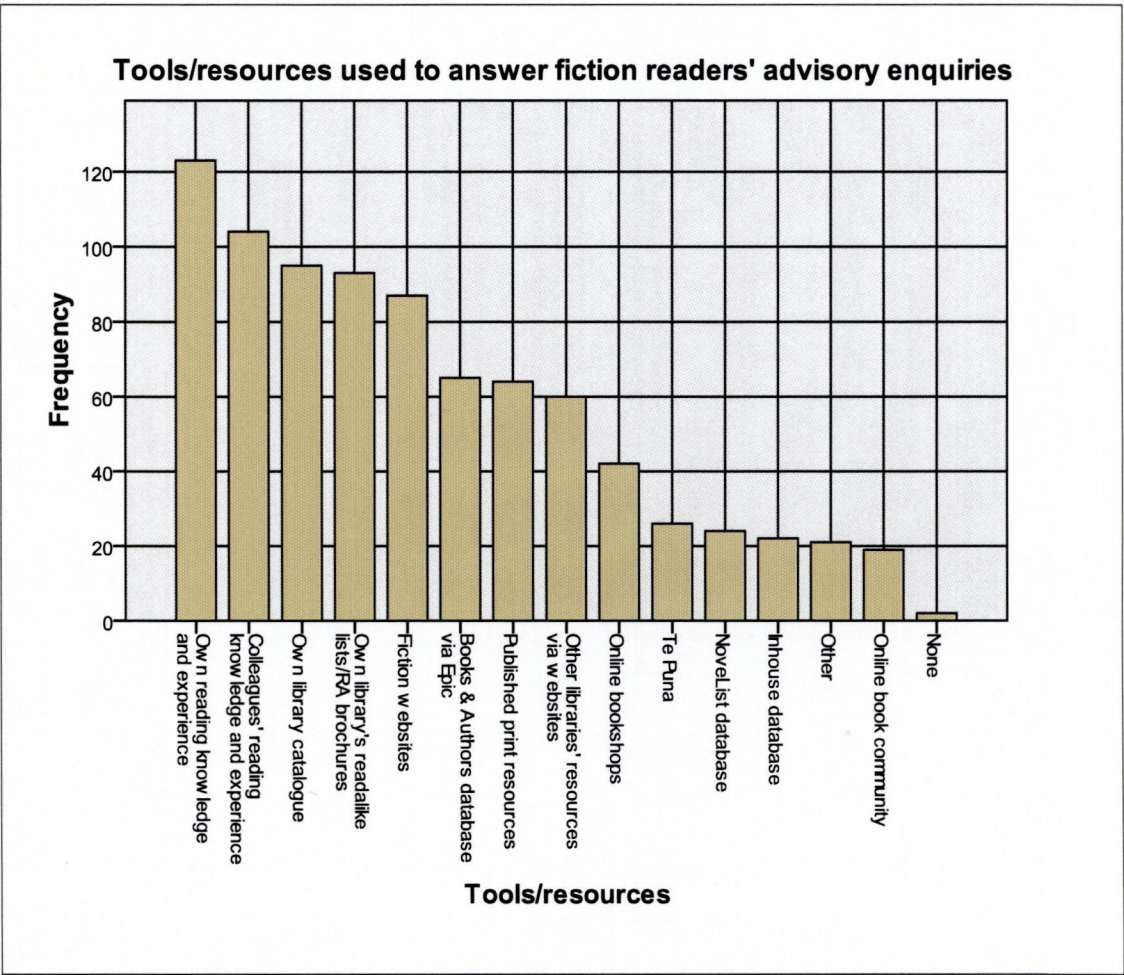
Figure 15. Tools/resources used to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

Respondents reported using between one and twelve fiction readers' advisory tools and resources to answer enquiries (see Figure 16). The median and mode was six tools used per person. The mean was 6.51, with a standard deviation of 2.367.

Number of RA tools/resources used
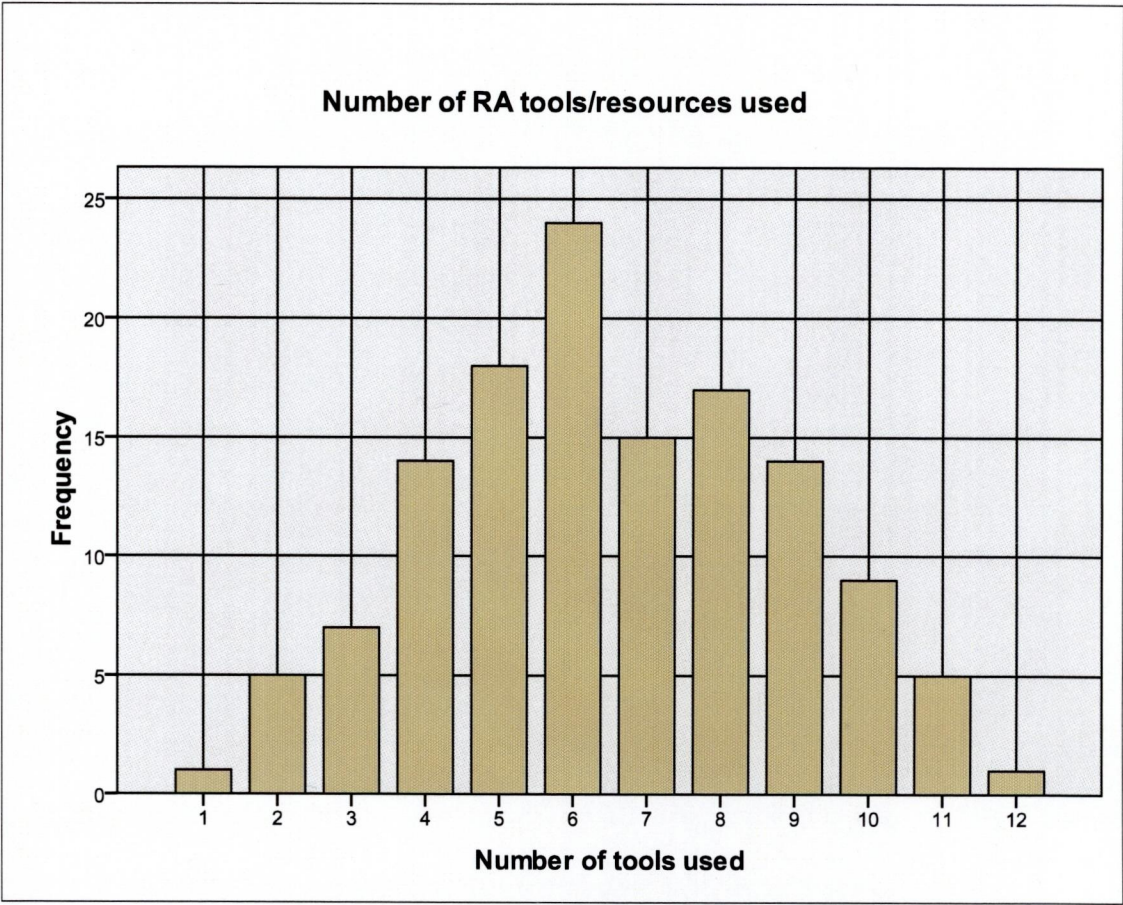
Figure 16. Number of readers' advisory tools/resources used.

Respondents were then asked to select the one tool or resource which they used the *most often* to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Eighty-four respondents (64.62%) relied most often on their own reading knowledge and experience. The other respondents selected their library's own resources such as readalike brochures, their own library catalogue, fiction websites, and published print resources (see Figure 17).

Readers' advisory tool/resource used most often

The chart shows a bar graph titled "Readers' advisory tool/resource used most often" with the y-axis labeled "Frequency" (0 to 100) and the x-axis labeled "Readers' advisory tool/resource used most often" with categories:

- Own reading knowledge/experience
- Library's own readalike lists/brochures
- Own library catalogue
- Fiction websites
- Published print resources
- Colleagues' reading knowledge/experience
- Other
- Other libraries' resources
- Books & Authors database

Figure 17. Readers' advisory tool/resource used most often.

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of one to ten how confident they felt about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries (one being completely unconfident, ten being completely confident). Responses ranged between two and ten, with seven being the median and the mode, and the mean being 7.04 (see Figure 18). The standard deviation was 1.951. 20.8% of respondents rated their confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries as a five or less out of ten.
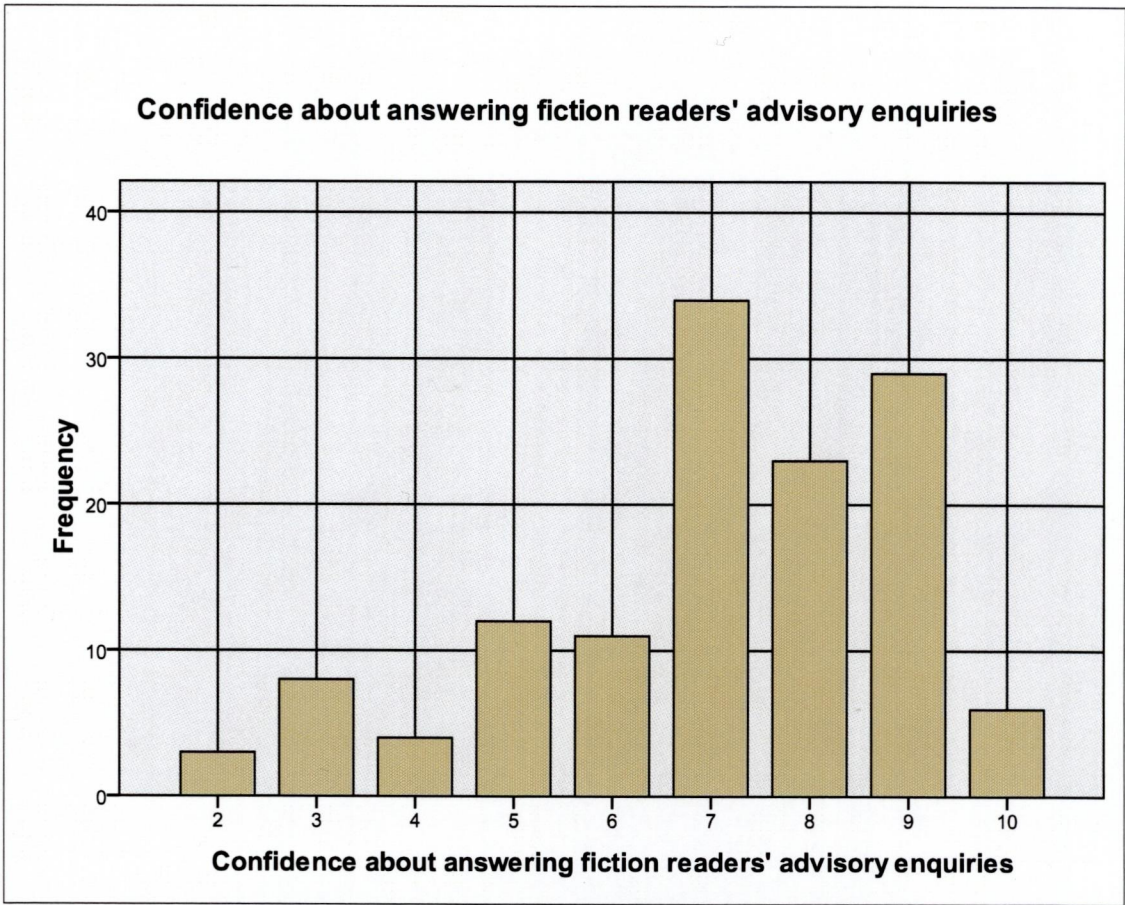
Figure 18. Confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

Respondents were given a set of eleven statements about providing readers' advisory services and were asked to indicate the level to which they agreed or not with each statement, using a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	2.3%	10.9%	13.1%	46.9%	26.9%
I feel apprehensive about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	35.4%	34.6%	13.1%	13.8%	3.1%
I enjoy answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries	.8%	3.8%	8.5%	50.0%	36.9%
I am passionate about reading fiction for pleasure	.8%	3.8%	7.7%	26.9%	60.8%
My own fiction reading helps me answer readers' advisory enquiries	1.5%	3.1%	7.7%	40.0%	47.7%
The amount of fiction I read affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	1.5%	10.0%	12.3%	36.9%	39.2%
The amount of readers' advisory training I have had affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	6.9%	10.0%	26.2%	38.5%	18.5%
It is too busy when I'm at the desk to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries as well as I'd like	15.4%	29.2%	23.1%	28.5%	3.8%
I feel I answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries well	.8%	6.9%	23.8%	51.5%	16.9%
I feel readers' advisory services are an important function of a public library	.8%	0	.8%	23.1%	75.4%
I feel that the library I work at does not value readers' advisory services highly enough	25.4%	37.7%	16.9%	15.4%	4.6%

Table 3. Likert scale responses.

Respondents were then asked to select which factors they felt would help to increase their confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries (see Figure 19). Ninety-four respondents (72.31%) believed that reading more widely across fiction genres would

help increase their confidence. The second most important factors were seen as becoming more familiar with readers' advisory tools and resources, followed by more readers' advisory training, and reading more fiction.

Factors which would increase confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries
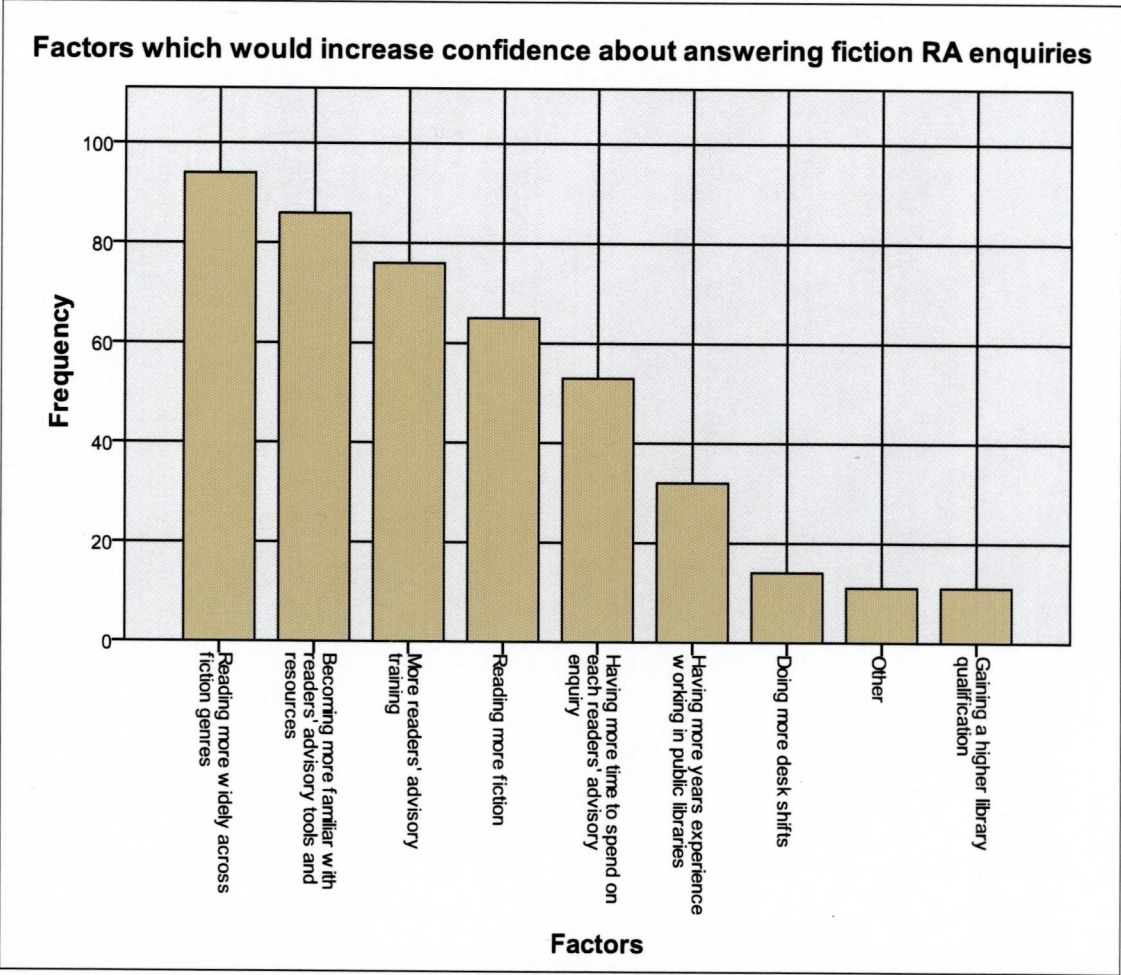
Figure 19. Factors which would increase confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

Fifty-four of the 130 respondents (41.5%) provided an answer to the final question which asked if they had any further comments about how they and/or their library provided fiction readers' advisory services, or how they felt about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. The freetext comments were broadly coded into recurring themes and the results are presented in Table 4.

Theme	Number of respondents mentioning
Training: importance/non importance of	18
Conscious: tries to improve RA themselves by reading widely, self-training etc	15
Importance: of RA in libraries	11
Confidence: in providing RA	11
Library size: as a factor in providing RA	10
Passive: Passive RA tools mentioned	9
Staff: kind of staff employed & influence on RA	9
Passion: for reading	8
Enjoy: providing RA	8
Tools: for RA	7
Want to improve: RA services, skills	7
Widely read: across genres important	6
Collegiality: relying on supportive colleagues	6
Survey: comment on survey itself	6
Experience: importance of library staff's experience in the job	5
Borrower feedback: importance of	5
Time: to read, to spend on each enquiry	3
Lack of reading: by library staff	3
YA: importance of RA to	2
Poor management: or lack of management support influencing RA	2
Over 65s: importance of RA to	1

Table 4. Major themes of freetext comments.

Chapter 6: Discussion and analysis

A. Research Question 1

What tools and/or resources do frontline New Zealand public library staff use to provide readers' advisory services?

> *Related Hypothesis: Hypothesis 3*
> *That frontline New Zealand public library staff who read less fiction for pleasure use a wider range of readers' advisory tools and resources than their colleagues who read more fiction.*

As a non-probability sample was used to select the participants for the questionnaire, there was no way to apply results of the survey to the entire public library frontline staff population. However, it was clear from the responses from the 130 library staff who completed the online questionnaire that the kind and number of tools and resources used to provide readers' advisory services varied widely amongst New Zealand public library staff.

The resource overwhelmingly used most often by respondents was their own reading knowledge and experience. While this can be a very useful starting point for answering enquiries about fiction areas with which a library staff member is familiar, enquiries are often made about genres a staff member has no personal experience of. This is why best practice readers' advisory experts assert that it is not usually sufficient for library staff to rely on their own reading knowledge when assisting library users to select their next book (Chelton, 2003, p.38; May, 2001, p.136; Saricks, 2005, p.15).

May et al's Nassau County, New York, research found that only forty-six percent of the librarians approached used any kind of tool to help answer the readers' advisory question

posed by the researchers, mostly relying on their own knowledge (2001, p.143). Griffin's 2007 Master's research project surveyed a sample of public library staff in North Carolina about the three resources they used most often to provide readers' services. Griffin found that readers' advisory databases were the most often used tool in face-to-face readers' advisory transactions (used by 18.68% of respondents), followed by personal reading experience (17.58%), and the library catalogue (13.19%). While a slightly different question was used in this research, the results can still be compared to some extent, and were clearly different. In the New Zealand survey, 94.6% of respondents used their own reading knowledge and experience in readers' advisory transactions, followed by their colleagues' reading knowledge and experience (80.0%), and the library catalogue (73.1%). Exactly fifty percent used the Books & Authors database (available as part of the EPIC suite of electronic resources), and 18.5% used the NoveList database, but these were ranked well down the list of resources used. When asked which one resource they relied most on, New Zealand respondents chose their own reading knowledge and experience (64.6%), then their library's readalike lists and brochures (6.9%), followed by fiction websites and their library catalogue (both on 6.2%). Only one respondent (0.8%) used a readers' advisory database most often. Based on this, there appears to be a marked difference between the tools and resources that American and New Zealand library staff who responded to the surveys used most often during readers' advisory transactions. There may be many reasons for this but further research would be needed to investigate these.

Quillen's Master's research paper, which evaluated four readers' advisory resources, concluded that

> Using a combination of sources and being able to identify which source is the best for use in a particular query is the best way to handle readers' advisory questions (Quillen, 2001, p.40).

Survey respondents here demonstrated that they tended to use a wide variety of resources (see Figures 15 and 16), with the median and mode being six resources or tools, and the mean being 6.5, with a standard deviation of 2.367. Ninety percent of respondents said they used four or more tools or resources to assist them in providing readers' advisory services; 11.5% claimed to use ten or more. Although there was no way to ascertain from this study whether the tools were being used successfully or appropriately, the variety being used would probably be viewed as positive by Quillen.

There was a positive correlation between library size and the number of readers' advisory services and resources provided by that library for staff and borrowers to use (r=.403). As the library size increased, generally so too did the number of fiction readers' advisory resources available.

Using the Spearman correlation, results indicated that respondents who read more fiction than anything else used fewer readers' advisory tools (r=-.013), thus supporting Hypothesis 3 that those who read less fiction would use more tools to help them answer enquiries. Calculating a rough estimate of the number of fiction books read by each respondent per month (as for this question respondents were asked to select a range of

numbers of books read per month rather than state an exact figure), and cross-tabulating

it with the number of tools used, also supported this hypothesis.

B. Research Question 2

**How confident are frontline New Zealand public library staff about answering
fiction readers' advisory enquiries?**

> *Related Hypothesis: Hypothesis 4*
> *That qualified library staff do not feel more confident about their ability to
> answer readers' advisory enquiries than unqualified staff.*

Again, the results of the questionnaire cannot be extended to the whole population, but it

was clear that there was a wide range of feelings of confidence amongst the 130 library

staff who completed the questionnaire. See Figure 18 for the frequency of responses to

Question 19: "On a scale of 1-10, (1 being completely unconfident, 10 being completely

confident) how confident do you feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

Please select the number which you feel corresponds best." Only six respondents felt

fully confident when faced with fiction readers' advisory questions. Conversely, three

respondents rated their confidence as only two out of ten.

When asked to respond to the statement "I feel confident about fiction readers' advisory

enquiries", ninety-five agreed or strongly agreed, seventeen felt neutral, and seventeen

disagreed or strongly disagreed. Twenty-two respondents agreed or strongly agreed with

the statement "I feel apprehensive about fiction readers' advisory enquiries" (seventeen

felt neutral, and the remaining respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed). Despite this,

the majority of respondents (113) said they enjoyed answering fiction readers' advisory

enquiries; eleven felt neutral, and only six respondents said they did not enjoy such enquiries.

Respondents overwhelmingly felt strongly that readers' advisory services were important in public libraries, with 128 respondents (ninety-eight percent) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "I feel readers' advisory services are an important function of a public library". Unfortunately, twenty-six also felt that the library service they worked in did not value readers' advisory services highly enough. One respondent made the point that they felt that this was the only area in which their love of books and reading was valued in their job:

> I think that readers' advisory is important in that it at last recognises the value of a librarian's knowledge about books. I have always felt that my interest and knowledge of books is an incidental part of my job, valued by colleagues, but not especially noted as part of my employment.

A number of other freetext comments reinforced the idea that readers' advisory services were seen as vital in public library services:

> We have a high demographic for over 65s who are becoming our reader base for fiction. Readers advisory services are their greatest need.

> This service is the most important we can offer … this is a core function of our library.

One respondent described their feelings about providing readers' advisory as follows

> I can sometimes get a small following of 2-3 people as I talk about what I like and make recommendations to one person. People LOVE having books recommended to them – they are hungry for it – and I love the act of recommending.

An investigation into Hypothesis 4 (that qualified library staff do not feel more confident about their ability to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries than non-qualified staff)

required a cross-tabulation of the qualification and confidence variables. This suggested that there was very little difference in confidence between staff with a library qualification and staff who did not hold such a qualification, although on average those with no library qualification were fractionally more confident. A chi-square test also supported this by indicating that the null hypothesis could not be rejected (x^2=4.444, df=4, p<.349).

		Confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Library qualification held?	No	2	1	1	6	4	14	9	14	0	51	7.1
	Yes	1	7	3	6	7	20	14	15	6	79	7.0
Total		3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of qualification and confidence.

Cross-tabulation of the confidence variable with the job level variable also suggested that there was very little difference in confidence between library staff employed in qualified Librarian positions and those working as unqualified Library Assistants.

		Confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Job level	Librarian	2	6	2	7	7	22	16	21	5	88	7.1
	Library Assistant	1	2	2	5	4	12	7	8	1	42	6.8
Total		3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of job level and confidence.

Some of the freetext comments appeared not to support the hypothesis as they presented a perception that qualified staff would likely be more able to provide readers' advisory services than unqualified staff. For example:

> In smaller branches like ours, where qualified staff can be harder to find, giving staff the encouragement to take the time to answer RA enquiries fully (and to pass on queries to other staff if unsure) is very important.

> Being in a rural network of libraries it is very rare to employ anyone with a library qualification. So sometimes it's hard to impress upon staff how important this aspect of their work is.

> I have observed many staff struggle with these types of queries … management decisions in employing staff who contribute other skills and who, more often than not, have no library background, have contributed to this situation.

Despite these comments, the questionnaire responses tended to support the hypothesis that qualified library staff do not feel more confident about their ability to answer readers' advisory enquiries than unqualified staff. In fact, only eleven respondents (8.5%) felt that gaining a higher library qualification would be a factor in increasing their confidence. Of these eleven respondents, only five did not hold or were not studying towards a library qualification. This may suggest that respondents felt that the skills necessary for providing a quality readers' advisory service were not necessarily those which would - or could - be taught in a formal library course. These findings supported Saricks' assessment that qualifications do not necessarily improve staff members' execution of readers' advisory transactions, and "paraprofessionals can be excellent readers' advisors" (Saricks, 2005, p.9). Shearer and Bracy (1994) and May (2001) also found that holding a formal library qualification did not ensure that a "textbook" answer to a readers' advisory enquiry would be given.

C. Research Question 3

What, if any, is the correlation between how much fiction a library staff member reads and how confident they feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

> *Related Hypothesis: Hypothesis 1*
> *That there is a significant relationship between the amount of pleasure fiction reading a library staff member does and how confident they feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.*

The relevant literature argues that reading is one of the most important ways in which a library staff member can prepare for successfully providing readers' advisory services. The online questionnaire asked respondents to quantify how much they read as well as their confidence level about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. This was in order to investigate if there was a correlation between the amount of pleasure reading a staff member did and how confident they felt about answering readers' advisory enquiries.

A number of survey respondents expressed concern that some of their library colleagues did not read in their spare time:

> I find that I probably talk more and learn more from the patrons when talking about fiction than I do when talking with staff members, an alarming number of which don't do any reading.

> I have observed many staff struggle with these types of queries and have realised that in the Public Library system I work in, it is because they are not readers.

Indeed, a significant number of questionnaire respondents admitted that they did not read large numbers of books for pleasure. Seventeen respondents stated that they read no books, or only one or two books per month. Darling's survey also identified lack of reading and book knowledge in some staff as a barrier to some New Zealand libraries implementing "reader development" (2008, p.73).

A cross-tabulation of the confidence variable and the amount of book reading for pleasure variable illustrated a mixed story (see Table 7). While those who rated themselves as completely confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries (six respondents) read more than five books per month, two of the three who rated their confidence only two out of ten (the lowest rating chosen by any respondent) also read more than five books per month. The two respondents who claimed to read on average no books per month rated their confidence six and seven out of ten. Overall, however, the trend appeared to be that the mean confidence level increased as the number of books read increased.

| | | Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries | | | | | | | | | | |
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Total number of adult/YA books read per month	None	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	6.5
	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	5	7.2
	2	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	10	6.6
	3	1	1	0	2	0	5	1	3	0	13	6.5
	4	0	3	2	5	4	7	1	3	0	25	6
	5-10	1	1	2	2	5	8	9	10	4	42	7.4
	11-15	0	0	0	0	1	5	6	6	1	19	8.1
	16+	1	0	0	2	0	4	3	3	1	14	7.2
	Total	3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	7

Table 7. Cross-tabulation of total number of books read per month and confidence.

A positive linear relationship was found between the total number of adult and/or young adult books read per month and confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory questions ($r=.242$). However, after merging cells to ensure that less than twenty percent

of cells had an expected count of less than five, a chi-square test suggested that the relationship between the two variables was not significant (x^2=.879, df=2, p<.644), as the null hypothesis that there was not a significant relationship between the two variables could not be rejected.

When the proportion of fiction read per month (as a total of the books read) was cross-tabulated with the confidence variable, a marginally negative correlation was found (r=-.015). A chi-square test showed that the null hypothesis could also not be rejected (x^2=2.033, df=4, p<.730), meaning that there was not necessarily a significant relationship between the proportion of fiction a staff member read and how confident they felt about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries.

A cross-tabulation of the confidence variable and the number of different genres read also illustrated mixed results. Some of the respondents who read a small number of genres rated their confidence level very highly, while a few of those who read more widely across genres selected a low confidence level. On the whole, however, Table 8 shows that the more fiction genres which were read, the less likely the respondent was to select a low confidence rating. Respondents who read between zero and three genres had a mean confidence level of 6.97. Those who read across four to six genres had a mean confidence score of 7.07. Respondents who read very widely, across seven to ten genres, on average rated their confidence 7.6. A scatterplot (Figure 20) also suggested that there was a loose correlation between the number of genres read and the confidence variable.

		Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Number of genres read	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	7.3
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	5	8.2
	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	9	6.3
	3	1	1	2	2	0	8	2	1	0	17	6.1
	4	2	2	0	2	3	9	6	3	2	29	6.8
	5	0	3	1	2	2	7	2	5	2	24	6.9
	6	0	1	0	2	2	3	2	7	1	18	7.5
	7	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	7	8.1
	8	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	4	0	10	8
	9	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	6	7.3
	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	7
Total		3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 8. Cross-tabulation of number of genres read and confidence.
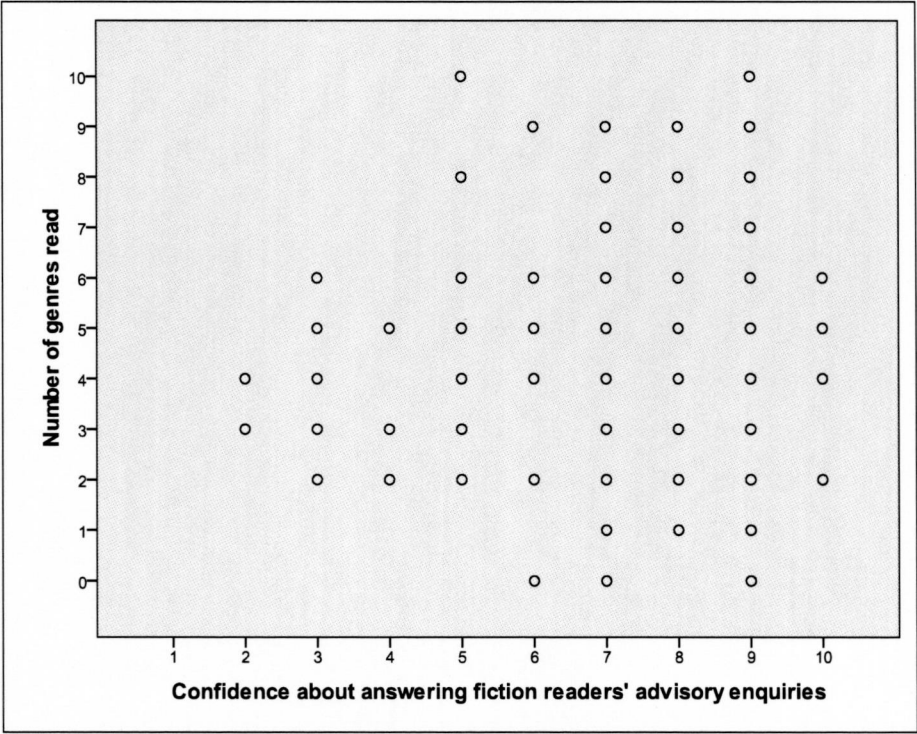
Figure 20. Scatterplot of number of genres read versus confidence.

Seventy-nine respondents stated that they strongly agreed with the statement "I am passionate about reading fiction for pleasure", and thirty-five agreed. Ten felt neutral, and six disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of those who completed the survey (114 out of 130) responded positively to the statement "My own fiction reading helps me answer readers' advisory enquiries", and ninety-nine agreed that "The amount of fiction I read affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries".

Some responses to the freetext final question in the online questionnaire may suggest why reading a lot of fiction does not necessarily make a library staff member confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries, and staff can have high confidence without reading broadly or extensively for pleasure. A number of respondents noted that they were aware that they did not read much fiction for pleasure themselves, so they made a conscious effort to learn about different genres and authors in other ways, such as "compiling author of the month posters, and genre posters", "reading more reviews and other book blogs", "if someone returns several fantasy books … I make a point of chatting with them to identify favourites, new finds etc", "all the staff have to do staffpicks each month which has widened our knowledge with genres we don't read".

One respondent stated

> I feel the feedback I get from borrowers about fiction books, my wide interest in non-fiction, discussions with colleagues about fiction books, viewing of other mediums such as television and DVDs and the use of readers' advisory tools and resources compensates for my lack of fiction reading when helping with fiction readers' advisory.

Others felt overwhelmed by readers' advisory questions, despite being well-read: for example:

I have tried reading more widely but I just find it difficult to recommend a book –
it feels such a big responsibility.

Overall, there was some evidence to support Hypothesis 1 and some evidence which did
not support it, meaning no firm conclusion could be reached on the basis of this research
alone. As will be seen in the next section, numerous other factors appeared to influence
respondents' confidence levels about providing fiction readers' advisory services.

D. Research Question 4

**What other factors affect a library staff member's confidence in answering fiction
readers' advisory enquiries? Training in readers' advisory skills? Whether they
are a ludic reader? Length of library experience? Hours worked on the desk?
Availability of readers' advisory tools and resources in their library? Library size?**

> *Relevant Hypothesis: Hypothesis 2*
> *That frontline New Zealand public library staff will be more confident about
> their ability to answer fiction readers' advisory questions if they:*
> > *a. Read widely across fiction genres for pleasure themselves*
> > *b. Are ludic readers (as defined by Nell)*
> > *c. Have received training in readers' advisory services*
> > *d. Have a significant amount of library experience*
> > *e. Work regularly at an enquiries desk*
> > *f. Have fiction readers' advisory resources and tools available in their
> > library*

Training

Judging by the responses to the online questionnaire, the impact of training on library
staff confidence in providing fiction readers' advisory services appeared to be a
somewhat contentious issue. Examining a cross-tabulation of the kind of readers'
advisory training received and the confidence variable (see Table 9), it appeared that
respondents who received both formal and informal training in this area were more
confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries than any other respondents.
This supported Hypothesis 2c that staff would be more confident if they had received
readers' advisory training. 58.5% of respondents believed that having more readers'

advisory training would increase their confidence. However, this still left 41.5% of respondents who felt that training was not an influencing factor in how confident they felt about fiction readers' advisory transactions.

| | | Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries | | | | | | | | | | |
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
RA training received	None	1	3	1	0	4	5	7	6	2	29	7.03
	Informal	1	0	1	1	0	5	1	1	1	11	6.64
	Formal	1	5	1	9	5	12	6	12	0	51	7.29
	Both	0	0	1	2	2	12	9	10	3	39	7.74
	Total	3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of readers' advisory training received and confidence.

Freetext comments from survey respondents indicated mixed feelings about the role of training in the confidence level of staff providing readers' advisory services. Some felt that training was important and had helped increase their confidence levels:

> One of our staff has been on a "Rewarding Reading" course and she plans to on-train the rest of us in what she has learned – she felt this course has increased her confidence to do readers' advisory work immeasurably!

> The course I attended has increased my confidence and I feel I am helping people more.

> I enjoy it because I received some training and have continued to enhance that training by myself. This has given me confidence.

One respondent felt that training was particularly important for staff members "who are not avid readers". Another expressed a desire to have received some readers' advisory training before embarking on Help Desk duties, but tempered that by saying "there is no

equal to on-the-job experience and networking with other staff." Others felt that training

was not the main issue:

> Differences in service levels depends upon staff aptitude, in my experience. All
> the training in the world is no substitute for a love of reading and a willingness to
> explore what it is that the customer finds most appealing about a particular book
> or genre.

> I am familiar with using a wide range of readers' advisory tools but often I find
> that customers want a personal recommendation. At the end of the day, all the
> training in the world can only take you so far. I believe that reading widely is
> perhaps the best strategy for answering reader [sic] advisory questions.

One respondent felt that more training would be useful but could be problematic as "it

takes us out of the library and staffing is such an issue (library cover/shortages etc)."

Ludic reading

This relates to Research Question 3 and also to the theoretical framework for this

research. See previous sections for a full discussion of the impact of reading in general

on the confidence variable for survey respondents. Nell defined ludic readers as those

who read "at least a book a week for pleasure and relaxation" (1988b, p.7). For this

reason, respondents were asked to state if they read between one and three books per

month in order to distinguish those who Nell would not class as ludic readers from those

who would qualify as ludic readers. These responses were then cross-tabulated with the

confidence levels nominated by the respondents (see Table 10). This suggests that, on

average, the confidence of respondents who were ludic readers was higher than that of

respondents who were not classed as ludic readers. Pearson's R=.105 was calculated

which also suggests a slight positive linear correlation between the two variables. This

supports Hypothesis 2b. However, a chi-square test suggested that the relationship

between the two variables was not significant (x^2=.879, df=2, p<.644), as the null

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hypothesis that there was not a significant relationship between the two variables could not be rejected.

		Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries									
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Type of reader	Non-Ludic	1	4	0	3	1	10	4	7	0	30	6.67
	Ludic	2	4	4	9	10	24	19	22	6	100	7.15
	Total	3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 10. Cross-tabulation of type of reader and confidence.

Length of library service

A Spearman correlation calculation suggested that there was a positive linear correlation between a survey respondent's length of public library service and their confidence about providing readers' advisory services (r=.361). A cross-tabulation of these two variables also demonstrated this (see Table 11). The mean confidence increased significantly as the number of years of public library work experience increased. Respondents with over twenty years of public library experience felt the most confident, and those with under one year's experience, perhaps unsurprisingly, felt the least confident. This suggested that experience was an important factor in how confident library staff felt about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. This supports Hypothesis 2d.

		Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Years of public library work experience	0-1	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	7	5.86
	2-5	2	3	2	5	4	9	5	4	1	35	6.26
	6-10	1	3	0	2	3	11	3	6	2	31	6.90
	11-20	0	0	1	3	3	9	6	9	1	32	7.47
	21-30	0	0	0	1	0	4	7	7	1	20	8.1
	31+	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	5	8
	Total	3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 11. Cross-tabulation of years of public library work experience and confidence.

Hours worked on the desk

It was expected that library staff who worked most frequently in a "public" area of the library (such as at an enquiry or circulation desk) would encounter fiction readers' advisory enquiries more frequently and thus be more comfortable and confident dealing with them. A calculation of Pearson's R (r=.100) suggested that there was indeed a positive correlation between the number of hours worked in public areas and the number of enquiries encountered. There was also a slight positive correlation (r=.025) between the number of hours worked in a public area and a respondent's nominated confidence level. This supports Hypothesis 2e. However, only fourteen respondents (10.8%) identified spending more time on desk shifts (and thus exposed to relevant enquiries more frequently) as being a factor which might increase their confidence.

Availability of readers' advisory tools and resources

A wide range of readers' advisory tools and resources available in a library may suggest that it takes its readers' advisory duties seriously. This, in turn, may help the staff at that

library feel more confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. The questionnaire asked respondents about which tools and resources they used to answer fiction readers' advisory tools and also to indicate which readers' advisory services were available in their library.

Cross-tabulation of the two variables illustrated, again, a mixed picture. There was, however, a slight positive linear correlation between the number of readers' advisory services offered by a library and the confidence level of the staff member who completed the questionnaire (Pearson's $r=.007$).

Library size

The question of whether library size was a factor in how confident library staff were about providing fiction readers' advisory services was an interesting one. It could conceivably be argued that smaller libraries would be less likely to have a wide range of relevant tools and resources available to their staff, which, according to the previous section, may indicate that staff would be less confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Training opportunities may also be less readily available for staff in smaller libraries. On the other hand, staff in smaller libraries often have greater opportunities to get to know their borrowers' reading preferences than staff in larger libraries. This may lead to small library staff feeling better able to answer those "Can you suggest me a good book to read?" questions as they can more easily tailor their response to their borrower's known likes and dislikes. A number of freetext responses to the questionnaire supported this idea:

We are a small public library and do not have specialist staff to provide readers' advisory services or resources. However, we know our customers well and this helps us to make recommendations for further reading.

…I make a point of chatting to them to identify favourites, new finds etc. This is relatively easy in a smallish public library.

I work in a very small library and we are able to offer a highly personalised service, which is one of the more enjoyable aspects of the job.

I find that in a small library, I get a real feel for the type of books each reader likes, and can also trust their judgement which can lead to recommending titles to other readers.

We are a very small library with an intimate knowledge of our readers' tastes. I (and my staff) enjoy extending their reading genres.

Cross-tabulation of the library size variable with the confidence variable showed a mixed picture but average respondent confidence appeared somewhat higher in smaller libraries (see Table 12). The highest mean confidence was amongst respondents who worked in libraries or branches with between six and ten employees, and lowest amongst those who worked in libraries with thirty-one to forty employees. A Spearman correlation calculation also suggested a negative linear correlation between library size and respondent confidence (r=-.018).

		Confidence about answering fiction RA enquiries										
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean confidence
Number of staff at library/branch	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	7.5
	2-5	0	3	1	3	2	10	7	4	1	31	6.84
	6-10	0	1	0	0	2	5	7	7	0	22	7.68
	11-20	1	1	0	4	2	7	2	7	1	25	7
	21-30	1	1	1	0	3	4	3	3	2	18	7
	31-40	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	6	6.5
	41-50	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	1	0	6	7.17
	51-60	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	8	6.75
	61-70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	71+	1	0	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	12	7
	Total	3	8	4	12	11	34	23	29	6	130	

Table 12. Cross-tabulation of number of staff and confidence.

Other factors

The questionnaire responses identified a number of other factors which may also influence the confidence of frontline public library staff who answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Besides the factors discussed in previous sections, respondents also selected "Becoming more familiar with readers' advisory tools and resources" and "Having more time to spend on each readers' advisory enquiry" as factors which may help to increase their confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Only two respondents did not believe that any factor could increase their confidence, stating "A lifetime of reading and loving literature is enough!" and "N/A Feel totally confident".

Time appeared to be an important factor for some respondents: time to read, and time to spend on each readers' advisory enquiry. One respondent cited "Having more time to read myself", and another "Investing time and energy in the task" as factors which would increase their confidence. "I wish I had more time to read" was the desire of one respondent. Another felt that speed reading would be a useful skill to learn in order to create time to read a wider variety of books. Sinclair's survey of Dunedin Public Library staff also found that many library staff members felt that "they lacked the time to read as much as they would like" (2004, p.4).

One respondent mentioned the importance of encouraging staff to "take the time to answer RA enquiries fully". Almost one third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "It is too busy when I'm at the desk to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries as well as I'd like". This suggested that for a significant portion of respondents, lack of time was a hindrance to providing what they believed to be a good readers' advisory service to library borrowers. This supported Darling's findings that a lack of staff time hindered implementing "reader development" in some New Zealand public libraries (2004, p.73).

Other issues which were drawn out by the questionnaire responses were the importance of collegiality, working within a good team culture, and feeling that they had management support for providing readers' advisory services. For example, one respondent felt that the library's culture had an impact on readers' advisory services:

> I feel things would be much better … if staff moral[e] was higher. Somedays staff (due to feeling so frustrated) give the impression of not being interested in

answering public enquiries … I have noticed staff be very unhelpful at times to customers, and this gives a very negative feel to the place. This is a flow on effect from poor management in certain areas of the library.

Others felt much more positive about their working environment:

We do the best we can with the tools at hand and the training we each have is gladly shared.

Other staff members are a great help if I am in a fix.

That is where having a good working team culture is a huge advantage (I am lucky that we have that).

Collegiality was obviously very important for many survey respondents, 104 of whom use the reading knowledge and experience of their colleagues to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries; six respondents even said that this was the resource they used the most often.

One respondent identified a number of other factors which influenced their confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries, with which many other library staff members would no doubt also identify:

My confidence in answering questions very much depends on my mood and the nature of the question as in what genre. I also suffer from selective stagefright – in that I can recall all sorts of books when I am not confronted with a patron who asks "What can I read" but the mind goes completely blank when the question is posed. I find I can tune into some patrons and their reading likes/dislikes far more easily than others.

Another factor which may have had an influence on respondent confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries, but which would require a larger sample size to be certain, was sex. The mean confidence of female respondents was 7.1, whereas the mean confidence of male respondents was only 6.5. However, only twelve of the 130

respondents were male, so this was probably not a large enough sample to make the difference significant.

As has been seen, frontline library staff confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries is a very complex phenomenon. It is made up of many different factors, often different for each person, and no one factor stands out as the single most important.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this study was to provide some insight into how New Zealand public libraries provided readers' advisory services, how confident their staff felt about answering fiction readers' advisory questions, and what factors affected their confidence, with particular reference to the personal pleasure reading habits of these staff.

As has been seen, fiction readers' advisory – assisting borrowers to find their next piece of recreational reading – is a vital service provided by public libraries in New Zealand. It is a service which the library staff who completed the questionnaire generally enjoyed providing, and felt positive about providing. However, confidence levels about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries varied wildly, from those who felt very unconfident, to those who felt entirely confident with the whole process. Twenty percent of respondents rated their confidence as less than five out of ten. This in itself shows that this research was important and worthwhile. With 118 of the 130 survey respondents encountering fiction readers' advisory enquiries at least once a week, it is clear that this is an important part of public library work. Libraries which employ staff who are unconfident about such an important part of public library work ought to be working towards addressing this issue.

The pleasing response to the online questionnaire (130 completed) shows that there is great interest in this topic amongst New Zealand's public library community. A number of positive comments about the survey were received, which also reinforced this:

This is something that I am quite passionate about and would be interested if at all possible to see your findings.

Good luck with the research. Will be interested to see the results.

Delighted to see that there is more research being undertaken in this area!!!!

Very timely survey.

This research has demonstrated that the confidence of library staff answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries is a complex issue. The questionnaire results show that confidence can be made up of many factors, which are often unique to each individual, making generalisations difficult. There was often conflicting evidence about whether a particular factor was significant or not. The effect and value of readers' advisory training was one such contentious issue. Other factors, such as the number of genres read for pleasure, the number of books read for pleasure, whether the respondent was classed as a ludic reader, the length of time a respondent had worked in the public library service, and the number of hours spent working in public areas of the library appeared to have a positive correlation with how confident the respondent felt about fiction readers' advisory enquiries. Negative correlations were suggested between library size and confidence, and the amount of fiction read and the number of readers' advisory tools and resources used. Some factors seemed to make very little impact on the confidence of respondents, including whether or not a library qualification was held, and whether the respondent was employed in a qualified Librarian position or was a Library Assistant.

The findings of the questionnaire show that the staff members who completed the survey use a wide variety of tools and resources to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries,

but that too many of them rely too heavily on their own personal reading knowledge and experience. This is contrary to best practice readers' advisory in which library staff use a combination of many different tools and resources to provide the borrower with the correct book for their needs, rather than simply recommending a book they read last week, whether or not it may be suitable.

However, these findings still support many of the tenets laid down by best practice readers' advisory texts. The research supports the idea that library staff should be encouraged to read broadly and deeply as this will not only result in a better quality of readers' advisory service, but will increase staff members' confidence in providing these services.

This research will hopefully provide a springboard for future research in this area in New Zealand. Being confident about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries is not the same thing as answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries well. Equally, respondents who rated their confidence as low may in reality provide excellent answers to fiction readers' advisory enquiries. More research is needed in this area to investigate how well New Zealand library staff conduct readers' advisory transactions. While the questionnaire gathered evidence about how confident library staff feel about providing fiction readers' advisory services, there has been no research into how well library borrowers feel their readers' advisory needs are being met by New Zealand public libraries. Further research, either experimental or observational, may identify other areas in which New Zealand public libraries can improve their provision of fiction readers' advisory services.

Appendices

Appendix A. Email to public library services

Subject: Readers' Advisory questionnaire from MLIS student
From: Angela Bain

Sent: Wednesday, 25 March 2009 3:59 p.m.

> alexlibrary@codc.govt.nz; library_membership@aucklandcity.govt.nz;
> library@adc.govt.nz; info@waitakerelibs.govt.nz; info@hurunuilibrary.govt.nz;
> clutha.library@cluthadc.govt.nz; glenn.webster@marlborough.govt.nz;
> library@cdc.govt.nz; library@ccc.govt.nz; library@kaipara.govt.nz;
> library@dcc.govt.nz; libraries@fndc.govt.nz; library@mdc.govt.nz;
> penny.ftp@swdc.govt.nz; information@bookinopolis.co.nz;
> gorelib@goredc.govt.nz; info@gpl.govt.nz; greylib@greydc.govt.nz;
> greytown@swdc.govt.nz; reference1@hdc.govt.nz; libraries@hauraki-dc.govt.nz;
> waipawa.library@chbdc.govt.nz; library@westlib.co.nz; lending@hcc.govt.nz;
> haweralibrary@stdc.govt.nz; library@kaweraudc.govt.nz;
> paraparaumu.library@kapiticoast.govt.nz; kdclib@xtra.co.nz; lep@library.org.nz;
> hutt.libraries@huttcity.govt.nz; martlib@rangitikei.govt.nz;
> libstaff@mackcollege.school.nz; library@manukau.govt.nz;
> library@library.mstn.govt.nz; anne.mtp@swdc.govt.nz; library@napier.govt.nz;

Bcc: library.info@ncc.govt.nz; library@npdc.govt.nz;
> webmaster@shorelibraries.govt.nz; oamlibrary@waitaki.govt.nz;
> library@odc.govt.nz; otolib@xtra.co.nz; info@papakuralibrary.govt.nz;
> circulations@pcc.govt.nz; pncl@pncc.govt.nz; queenstown.library@qldc.govt.nz;
> orewalib@rodney.govt.nz; library@rdc.govt.nz; library@wmk.govt.nz;
> darfield.library@selwyn.govt.nz; library@stratford.govt.nz; library@tdc.govt.nz;
> library@tauranga.govt.nz; library@waitomo.govt.nz;
> kkoffice@westernbay.govt.nz; shaneh@ruapehudc.govt.nz;
> thames.library@xtra.co.nz; library.info@southwaikato.govt.nz;
> library@timdc.govt.nz; twilib@twizel.school.nz; library@uhcc.govt.nz;
> taupo.library@taupo.govt.nz; biblio@waidc.govt.nz;
> waipalibraries@waipadc.govt.nz; info@library.queenspark.org.nz;
> library@bdc.govt.nz; whglibrary@wdc.govt.nz;
> winton.library@southlanddc.govt.nz; library@whakatane.govt.nz;
> library@waimatedc.govt.nz; enquiries@wcl.govt.nz; wrpstaff@xtra.co.nz

Hello there,

I am a Master of Library and Information Studies student at Victoria University of Wellington. For my compulsory research project, I am looking at the factors which affect the confidence of public library staff in New Zealand who answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries, with particular reference to the personal reading habits of these staff.

I am gathering data via a questionnaire and would very much like your library service to participate. I would be very grateful if this message could be passed on to at least two staff

members in your library who are in regular contact with adult and/or young adult fiction collection users (e.g. on a circulation desk or enquiry desk). Ideally, I would like responses from at least one qualified librarian and at least one unqualified library assistant from your library service. Please feel free to pass this request on to any branch libraries also.

Please click on the link below to complete the questionnaire online, or email me if you would prefer a paper copy of the survey and I will happily post one out along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The survey will be open until 19 April 2009:

http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/116425/readers-advisory-nz

Full information about the research project, including contact details for myself and my supervisor, is provided at the link above.

Thank you very much for your time, your participation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Bain

MLIS student

Appendix B. Email to Pub-SIG listserv

Subject: Readers' Advisory questionnaire from MLIS student
From: <u>Angela Bain</u>

Sent: Monday, 30 March 2009 9:39 p.m.
To: <u>PUBSIG-L@LISTSERV.CCC.GOVT.NZ</u>

Apologies for cross-posting

Hello there,

I am a Master of Library and Information Studies student at Victoria University of Wellington. For my compulsory research project, I am looking at the factors which affect the confidence of public library staff in New Zealand who answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries, with particular reference to the personal reading habits of these staff.

I am gathering data via a questionnaire which is open to any member of staff working in a New Zealand public library who is in regular contact with adult and/or young adult fiction collection users (e.g. on a circulation desk or enquiry desk). I am looking for responses from staff with a wide range of experience levels, qualifications, personal reading habits etc.

Please click on the link below if you would like to complete the questionnaire online, or email me if you would prefer a paper copy of the survey and I will happily post one out along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The survey will be open until 19 April 2009:

<u>http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/117378/fiction-ra-survey</u>

Full information about the research project, including contact details for myself and my supervisor, is provided at the link above.

Thank you very much for your time, your participation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Bain

MLIS student
Victoria University of Wellington

Appendix C. Cover letter and questionnaire

Fiction readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries

Dear questionnaire respondent,

Thank you for choosing to complete this questionnaire. I am a Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) student at the Victoria University of Wellington. This questionnaire is being used to gather data for an INFO 580 Research Project, which is a compulsory component of the MLIS degree.

The title of the research project is "Fiction readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries: An investigation into how personal reading habits and other factors affect the confidence of library staff who answer adult or young adult fiction readers' advisory enquiries." To date, there has been very little research done into readers' advisory services in New Zealand public libraries or into what affects the confidence of the staff who provide these services. I am particularly interested in how the personal fiction reading a library staff member does affects their confidence when faced with fiction readers' advisory questions.

Please read the questions carefully and answer as accurately and honestly as you can. The questionnaire should not take more than about twenty minutes to complete. Your responses will be collated with other responses and the resulting statistics will be analysed using SPSS statistics software.

Your answers to this questionnaire will be anonymous as there is no way to trace a completed questionnaire back to the person who completed it. Questionnaires completed on paper have no identifying marks on them and as the return envelope will be destroyed upon receipt, there will be no way to know where they came from. The online survey software for questionnaires completed online retains only the IP address of the computer used to fill it in, and no attempt will be made to trace this back to an individual. Data collected via this questionnaire will be securely stored for one year (in electronic and paper format) to allow for academic verification of results, then destroyed. Completing this survey indicates your consent to participate in this survey.

This study has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington's School of Information Management Ethics committee. This is required before research such as this is undertaken.

A copy of the completed research project will be deposited in the Victoria University of Wellington Library and may also be included in the Library's institutional repository.

A summary of the research findings will be available in approximately July 2009, upon request. Please contact me if you would like a copy of the summary.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the research project, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor Dr Chern Li Liew. Contact details are given below:

Student researcher:
Angela Bain
24 Holywood Lane   Phone (03) 218 6683 (Home)
Gladstone   (03) 211 1773 (Work)
INVERCARGILL 9810   Email   bainange@myvuw.ac.nz

Research supervisor:
Dr Chern Li Liew
Senior Lecturer   Phone (04) 463 5213 (Work)
School of Information Management   Email   chernli.liew@vuw.ac.nz
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
WELLINGTON

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Yours faithfully,

Angela Bain

1. What is your gender? *

  ○   Female

  ○   Male

2. Which age group are you in? *

  ○   15-25 years

  ○   26-35 years

  ○   36-45 years

  ○   46-55 years

  ○   56+ years

3.
What is the highest post-secondary school academic qualification you hold or are currently studying towards? Please choose only ONE answer.
*

  ○   PhD

  ○   Master of Library & Information Studies (MLIS)

  ○   Diploma in Information & Library Studies Level 6

  ○   Diploma in Information & Library Studies Level 5

  ○   None

  ○   Other Masters degree - please specify

  ○   Other – please specify

  ○   Bachelors degree - please specify

4. For the qualification selected in Question 3, please choose the category which you fall into: *

○   I am currently studying towards this qualification

○   I have completed this qualification

○   Not applicable

5. What is your current job level? *

○   Qualified librarian (Your job description requires you to hold a formal library qualification, whether you have one or not)

○   Unqualified library assistant (Your job description does not require you to hold a formal library qualification, whether you have one or not)

6. How many hours do you work at your library per **week**? *

○   1-10 hours

○   11-20 hours

○   21-30 hours

○   31-40 hours

7. How many years' experience do you have as a public library staff member (include experience at all job levels)? *

○   0-1 years

○   2-5 years

○   6-10 years

○   11-20 years

○   21-30 years

○   31+ years

8. How many library staff are employed at your library? (If you work at a branch library, please only include the number employed at the branch you work most often at) *

○   1 (sole charge)

○   2-5

○   6-10

○   11-20

○   21-30

○   31-40

○   41-50

○   51-60

○   61-70

○   71+

9. How many hours per week do you spend working in a public area of the library where library users can readily approach you with questions? Include hours working on a public enquiry/circulation desk as well as shelving etc. ✱

○   1-5 hours

○   6-10 hours

○   11-20 hours

○   21-30 hours

○   31-40 hours

"Readers' advisory" is the act of helping a library borrower find his or her next book to read for recreational purposes. It often takes the form of answering an enquiry such as "Can you suggest me a good book to read?" or "I really liked *The memory keeper's daughter*, can you recommend me something similar to read?" or "I've read all of Lesley Pearse's books, who else writes like her?". For the purposes of this questionnaire, readers' advisory services refer only to Adults or Young Adults (YA).

"Reading for pleasure" is any reading done purely for recreational purposes and enjoyment i.e. not specifically for work or study.

10. Which answer best fits how often you encounter adult or young adult fiction readers' advisory enquiries? (See above for definition of readers' advisory). ✱

○   Once an hour or more

○   Once a day

○   Once a week

○   Once a month

○   Less than once a month

○   Never

○   Other - please specify[   ]

11. What do you read for pleasure? Please select all which apply. (See above for definition of reading for pleasure)✱

☐   Children's books (Fiction and/or Nonfiction)

☐   Electronic resources (Websites, blogs etc)

☐   Fiction books (Adult and/or YA)

☐   Graphic novels

☐   Magazines

☐   Nonfiction books

☐ Newspapers

☐ Poetry books

☐ Talking books (Fiction)

☐ Talking books (Nonfiction)

☐ None

☐
Other – please specify

12. On average, how many adult/YA books (include **ALL KINDS** of books) do you read for pleasure per **MONTH**?∗

☐ None

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16+

13. On average, what proportion of the number you gave in Question 12 are adult/YA **FICTION** books? ∗

○ None

○ About one quarter

○ About one half

○ About three quarters

○ All

○ Other - please specify

14. Which types of **adult/YA FICTION** do you read? Please select all which apply∗

☐ Christian / Inspirational

☐ Fantasy

☐ General / Literary

☐ Historical

☐ Horror

☐ Humour

☐ Romance

☐ Saga

☐ Science Fiction

☐ Suspense Thrillers

☐ Suspense Crime

☐ War

☐ Western

☐ None

☐

Other (please specify)

15. Have you had any training in answering fiction readers' advisory questions? (Please select all which apply.) *
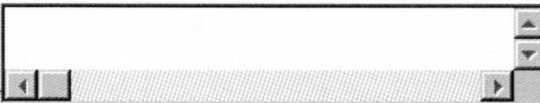
☐ Formal external training (e.g. Rewarding Reading, Opening the Book)

☐ Formal inhouse training (e.g. from another member of staff)

☐ Informal inhouse training (e.g. regular booktalking meetings with other staff members)

☐ Attended a conference session or seminar dealing with readers' advisory

☐ None

☐

Other – please specify

16. Which tools/resources do you use to answer adult/YA fiction readers' advisory questions? (Please select all which apply) *

☐ Your own reading knowledge and experience

☐ The reading knowledge and experience of your colleagues

☐ Published print resources such as the Genreflecting series

☐ Your own library's readalike lists and readers' advisory brochures

☐ NoveList database

☐ Books & Authors (or What do I read next?) database via Epic

☐ Inhouse database (created and maintained by your own library)

☐ Other libraries' booklists or readalikes available on their websites

☐ Amazon.com or other online bookshop

☐   Fiction websites (e.g. Fantastic Fiction, Stop You're Killing Me)

☐   Library Thing or other online book community

☐   Your own library catalogue

☐   Te Puna

☐   None - I always refer these types of questions to other staff members

☐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
     │   ▲│
     │   ▼│
     Other - please specify └◄─┘   ►┘

17. Out of all the answers you gave for Question 16, which do you use **MOST OFTEN**? Please select **ONE** only.✱

○   Your own reading knowledge and experience

○   The reading knowledge and experience of your colleagues

○   Published print resources such as the Genreflecting series

○   Your own library's readalike lists and readers' advisory brochures

○   NoveList database

○   Books & Authors (or What do I read next?) database via Epic

○   Inhouse database (created and maintained by your own library)

○   Other libraries' booklists or readalikes available on their websites
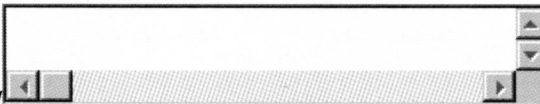
○   Amazon.com or other online bookshop

○   Fiction websites (e.g. Fantastic Fiction, Stop You're Killing Me)

○   Library Thing or other online book community

○   Your own library catalogue

○   Te Puna

○   None - I always refer these types of questions to other staff members

○   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
     │   ▲│
     │   ▼│
     Other - please specify └◄─┘   ►┘

18. What forms of readers' advisory does your library provide? Please select all which apply. ✱

☐   Genrefication (i.e. your library's fiction is shelved in different areas depending on the genre e.g. Romance, SciFi, Suspense)

☐   Book reviews written by staff or library borrowers

☐   Spine labels to indicate different genres (e.g. a loveheart for Romance)

☐   Readalike or booklist brochures or bookmarks to take away

☐ Relevant reference books available in a public area e.g. Genreflecting series

☐ Relevant reference books in a staff only area e.g. Genreflecting series

☐ Themed displays of fiction

☐ New books displays

☐ Book groups run by the library

☐ Author booktalks

☐ Library webpages with links to online readers' advisory resources etc

☐ Electronic databases (such as NoveList, Books & Authors)

☐ Fiction subject headings on library catalogue

☐

Other – please specify

19. On a scale of 1-10, (1 being completely unconfident, 10 being completely confident) how confident do you feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries? Please select the number which you feel corresponds best. *

1 - Completely unconfident	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Completely confident
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

20. Please select the answer which best fits your feelings about the following statements. Please be as honest as possible. *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	○	○	○	○	○
I feel apprehensive about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries	○	○	○	○	○
I am passionate about reading fiction for pleasure	○	○	○	○	○
My own fiction reading helps me answer readers' advisory	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
enquiries					
The amount of fiction I read affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	○	○	○	○	○
The amount of readers' advisory training I have had affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	○	○	○	○	○
It is too busy when I'm at the desk to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries as well as I'd like	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries well	○	○	○	○	○
I feel readers' advisory services are an important function of a public library	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the library I work at does not value readers' advisory services highly enough	○	○	○	○	○

21. Which factors do you feel would help increase your confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries? Please select all which apply. *

☐ More readers' advisory training

☐ Reading more fiction

☐ Reading more widely across fiction genres

☐ Gaining a higher library qualification

☐ Having more time to spend on each readers' advisory enquiry

☐ Doing more desk shifts

☐ Having more years experience working in public libraries

☐ Becoming more familiar with readers' advisory tools and resources

Other – please specify

22. Do you have any further comments about how you and/or your library provide fiction readers' advisory services, or how you feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

Appendix D. Questionnaire response frequencies

NB: Freetext responses are reported verbatim; no corrections to spelling, grammar, or typing errors have been made.

1. What is your gender?

Female	118
Male	12
Total	**130**

2. Which age group are you in?

15-25 years	4
26-35 years	18
36-45 years	37
46-55 years	45
56+ years	26
Total	**130**

3. What is the highest post-secondary school academic qualification you hold or are currently studying towards? Please choose only ONE answer.

PhD	0
Master in Library & Information Studies	16
Other Masters degree	6
Bachelor in Library Studies	2
Other Bachelors degree	24
Diploma in Information & Library Studies Level 6	20
Diploma in Information & Library Studies Level 5	21
NZ Library Association Certificate	15
Postgraduate Diploma in Library Studies	6
Other qualification (not library-related)	8
None	12
Total	**130**

4. For the qualification selected in Question 3, please choose the category which you fall into.

I am currently studying towards this qualification	25
I have completed this qualification	87
Not applicable	18
Total	**130**

5. What is your current job level?

Qualified librarian	88
Unqualified library assistant	42
Total	**130**

6. How many hours do you work at your library per week?

1-10 hours	3
11-20 hours	11
21-30 hours	16
31-40 hours	100
Total	**130**

7. How many years' experience do you have as a public library staff member (include experience at all job levels)?

0-1 years	7
2-5 years	35
6-10 years	31
11-20 years	32
21-30 years	20
31+ years	5
Total	**130**

8. How many library staff are employed at your library? (If you work at a branch library, please only include the number employed at the branch you work most often at).

1 (sole charge)	2
2-5	31
6-10	22
11-20	25
21-30	18
31-40	6
41-50	6
51-60	8
61-70	0
71+	12
Total	**130**

9. How many hours per week do you spend working in a public area of the library where library users can readily approach you with questions? Include hours working on a public enquiry/circulation desk as well as shelving etc.

1-5 hours	15
6-10 hours	21
11-20 hours	49
21-30 hours	36
31-40 hours	9
Total	**130**

10. Which answer best fits how often you encounter adult or young adult fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

Once an hour or more	27
Once a day	53
Once a week	24
Once a month	4
Less than once a month	2
Never	2
Other	18
Total	**130**

"Other" freetext responses:

4 to 5 times a day
Several times a day
Don't work on desks
A few times a day
At least once per enquiries slot
Can vary from once a day to one-two hours a day
2- 3 times a day
Several times a day but not as much as every hour
2-3 times a day
twice a week
4 or 5 times per day
3x week
two or three times a day
3 or 4 a day

11. What do you read for pleasure? Please select all which apply.

Children's books (Fiction and/or Nonfiction)	62
Electronic resources (Websites, blogs etc)	47
Fiction books (Adult and/or YA)	128
Graphic novels	20
Magazines	94
Nonfiction books	105
Newspapers	78

Poetry books	23
Talking books (Fiction)	26
Talking books (Nonfiction)	16
None	0
Other – please specify	3

"Other" freetext responses:

DVDs
Teenage fiction
Young adult novels
Fiction-hist.

12. On average, how many adult/YA books (include ALL KINDS of books) do you read for pleasure per MONTH?

None	2
1	5
2	10
3	13
4	25
5-10	42
11-15	19
16+	14
Total	**130**

13. On average, what proportion of the number you gave in Question 12 are adult/YA FICTION books?

None	4
About one quarter	21
About one half	28
About three quarters	49
All	22
Other-please specify	6
Total	**130**

"Other" freetext responses:

ten percent
1 would read 2 fiction books a year
10%
About 90%
I read childrens fiction occasionally

90%

14. Which types of adult/YA FICTION do you read? Please select all which apply.

Christian/Inspirational	21
Fantasy	51
General/Literary	103
Historical	73
Horror	17
Humour	63
Romance	54
Saga	42
Science Fiction	30
Suspense Thrillers	76
Suspense Crime	57
War	17
Western	2
None	3
Other – please specify	15

"Other" freetext responses:

We have separate shelving for gen & Literary fiction, and the bulk of what I read is literary
Paranormal or Urban/Fantasy
Paranormal romance/Vampire tiction
Adventure
Chick Lit
vampire romance
psychological; quirky; family;
lesbian fiction
Chick lit, War in the sense of YA but not the shoot em up adult variety, Award winners/finalists, Recommended school reading
Adventure
Faction - Fiction based on fact
Biography, real life crime
mysteries, you haven't included this. Suspense crime and suspense thrillers could both be put into a single category of suspense
Vampire/Paranormal
animal stories

15. Have you had any training in answering fiction readers' advisory questions? Please select all which apply.

Formal external training	40
Formal in-house training	47
Informal in-house training	50

Attended a conference session or seminar dealing with RA	42
None	27
Other – please specify	12

"Other" freetext responses:

Undertook Reader Development survey for NZ public libraries in 2007 for the 2009 AUSLIB conference, arranged RD video conference session by Rachel van Reil at the LAINZA Weekend School 2007, reviewed Racheal van Reil et al latest book "Reader Friendly Library service" for Austraian library publication.
(teaching background/ radio work-for some time did reviews of teen/adult books for radio
Occasional inhouse updates as part of staff meetings
However we are getting formal inhouse training later in the year.
Self teaching - reading professional literature
if this literacy, then there will be a seminar in July which all the staff will attend.
Training the trainer in Readers Advisory
informal discussions with other librarians; reading and research for Diploma
Assisted with preparing an in-house staff training session on RA - very educational!
Have done some reading on subject
Doing some training next month. 3 sessions of 2 hours.
i run a Young Adult book group once a month, which helps to find out what is hot and what is not.

16. Which tools/resources do you use to answer adult/YA fiction readers' advisory questions? Please select all which apply.

Your own reading knowledge and experience	123
The reading knowledge and experience of your colleagues	104
Published print resources such as the Genrefelecting series	64
Your own library's readalike lists and readers' advisory brochures	93
NoveList database	24
Books & Authors database	65
In-house database (created and maintained by your own library)	22
Other libraries' booklists or readalikes available on their websites	60
Amazon.com or other online bookshop	42
Fiction websites	87
Library Thing or other online book community	19
Your own library catalogue	95
Te Puna	26
None	2
Other – please specify	21

"Other" freetext responses:

Just finished brilliant RA workshop and about to launch a lot of unticked boxes!
Other borrowers comments about different fiction books.
I read very widely and read book reviews.
have never been asked the question
I have been the Libray's Fiction selector for many years, so am very aware of genres, hot authors etc.

I regularly use the "Who else writes like" books and recommend them to customers	
I should note that prior to this year I did work on desks...	
YA-focussed blog	
magazines, Book reviews	
"Who else writes like?" published guide to fiction authors (UK)	
who writes like - book	
WHo else writes like...reference book	
Browse in bookshops	
actually almost no readers approach you with "readers' advisory question" (once you work in a public library you will realise this too). In most cases, the reads' question is "do you have this book" -- they heard about this (newly published) book in a morning radio programme or from his/her friend(s).	
The book "Who Else Writes Like?"	
Fiction_L	
google books, the book list inside the covers of books, recomendations by the author of a book.	
Good reviewing on-line resources ie Guardian Newspaper reviews adults, childrens etc	
Who Else Writes Like...	
Look at NZ bestsellers lists plus inhouse bookshops/libraries promotional picks/reviews	
Good reading magazine/Book notes/radio reviews/ pullitzer /booker mann long/short lists	

17. Out of all the answers you gave for Question 16, which do you use MOST OFTEN? Please select ONE only.

Your own reading knowledge and experience	84
The reading knowledge and experience of your colleagues	6
Published print resources such as the Genrefelecting series	7
Your own library's readalike lists and readers' advisory brochures	9
NoveList database	0
Books & Authors database	1
In-house database (created and maintained by your own library)	0
Other libraries' booklists or readalikes available on their websites	3
Amazon.com or other online bookshop	0
Fiction websites	8
Library Thing or other online book community	0
Your own library catalogue	8
Te Puna	0
None	0
Other – please specify	4
Total	**130**

"Other" freetext responses:

have never been asked the question
My general knowledge of the reading interests of library customers, developed from 20+ years' experience of working directly with these customers in public libraries. I also have done fiction book selection for 20+ years and the feedback I receive from customers (and observe in customers' borrowing choices) is invaluable for making reading recommendations.
Who writes like
google books, the book list inside the covers of books, recomendations by the author of a book.
Who Else Writes Like... if not in "my" areas

18. What forms of readers' advisory does your library provide? Please select all which apply.

Genrefication	64
Book reviews written by staff or library borrowers	66
Spine labels to indicate different genres	123
Readalike or booklist brochures or bookmarks to take away	91
Relevant reference books available in a public area	59
Relevant reference books in a staff only area	38
Themed displays of fiction	79
New books display	124
Book groups run by the library	55
Author booktalks	53
Library webpages with links to online readers' advisory resources etc	69
Access to RA electronic databases	72
Fiction subject headings on library catalogue	80
Other – please specify	10

"Other" freetext responses:

Articles in the local newspaper, local radio Regular newsletters to staff
Tried author talks but these were unsuccessful in our branch. Fiction displays are only occasional.
YA-focussed blog
Display shelf with recently returned new fiction
Library blog with book reviews and recommendations
Who else writes like.. a readers guide to fiction authors edited by Roy & Jeanne Huse
Coffe mornings, kids clubs, other clubs etc (they are not so much book groups as events held at the library on a regular basis with books on display that are new or we recomend).
Recommended reading display
some in-house resources are in need of up dating
Library blog written by staff, reviewing/discussing books.

19. On a scale of 1-10, (1 being completely unconfident, 10 being completely confident) how confident do you feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries? Please select the number which you feel corresponds best.

1	0
2	3
3	8
4	4
5	12
6	11
7	34
8	23
9	29
10	6

Total	130

20. Please select the answer which best fits your feelings about the following statements. Please be as honest as possible.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	3	14	17	61	35
I feel apprehensive about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	46	45	17	18	4
I enjoy answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries	1	5	11	65	48
I am passionate about reading fiction for pleasure	1	5	10	35	79
My own fiction reading helps me answer readers' advisory enquiries	2	4	10	52	62
The amount of fiction I read affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	2	13	16	48	51
The amount of readers' advisory training I have had affects my confidence about fiction readers' advisory enquiries	9	13	34	50	24
It is too busy when I'm at the desk to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries as well as I'd like	20	38	30	37	5
I feel I answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries well	1	9	31	67	22
I feel readers' advisory services are an important function of a public library	1	0	1	30	98
I feel that the library I work at does not value readers' advisory services highly enough	33	49	22	20	6

21. Which factors do you feel would help increase your confidence about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries? Please select all which apply.

More readers' advisory training	76
Reading more fiction	65
Reading more widely across fiction genres	94
Gaining a higher library qualification	11
Having more time to spend on each readers' advisory enquiry	53
Doing more desk shifts	14
Having more years experience working in public libraries	32
Becoming more familiar with readers' advisory tools and resources	86
Other – please specify	11

"Other" freetext responses:

I've spent 10 years in bookshops which has been invaluable even if not formalised training
A lifetime of reading and loving literature is enough!
N/A Feel totally confident
Reviews of recent fiction more available in digestible form for staff not just via reviewing journals on a routing list.
Completing our current inhouse readers' advisory training Completing our branch libraries current focus on using databases for reading advice
having more time to read myself
Not so much more readers advisory training as refresher notes/tips/sessions from time to time.
Investing time and energy in the task
as you can see I don't read huge amounts so I believe a big part of RA is your own level confidence and confidence then in the RA interview - which is a good listening ear and open questions combined with listening to your colleagues and adding those books to your own knowledge base.
Not just reading but using skills such as speed reading and book annotations to cover more material.
we have not as yet had readers advisory training but this is in the pipeline.
reading more widely across genres would be helpful, but I don't feel it is necessary. And not much fun either to read books I don't like.

22. Do you have any further comments about how you and/or your library provide fiction readers' advisory services, or how you feel about answering fiction readers' advisory enquiries?

Yes	54
No	76
Total	**130**

Freetext responses:

The best thing we have is the enjoy Joe Blogs try these authors. People like to have a list to then try a few different authors, collegues who have worked in the Library for twenty plus years usually have better knowledge about waht is in the collection.
I feel Dunedin Public Libraries put a great deal of professional effort to ensuring a high level of reader advisory - or in other words we take it very seriously. A number of us have taken part formal reader advisory training (outside providers). We also have an in-house training programme. I would like to say that providing a reader advisory service for YA is different than for adults - you are not comparing apples with apples. Along with genres, and "authors who write

like..." we also have to take into account - chronilogical age, reading age/ability, social and emotional age and appropriateness, and personal ethics. It's alot more involved. I am the YA Librarian, but have also worked with adults as well. We have developed a really good list for NCEA reading that is on our website - teens use it for recreational reading as well, so some of our advisory is passive.

A passion for reading and sharing books, a genuine interest in people and a variety of RA resources are the keys to good RA in libraries. In smaller branches like ours, where qualified staff can be harder to find, giving staff the encouragement to take the time to answer RA enquiries fully (and to pass on queries to other staff if unsure) is very important.

I feel the feedback I get from borrowers about fiction books, my wide interest in non-fiction, discussions with colleagues about fiction books, viewing of other mediums such as television and DVDs and the use of readers' advisory tools and resources compensates for my lack of fiction reading when helping with fiction readers' advisory. As I have been filling in this questionnaire a borrower asked about books by H.E. Bates. Now I watched the Darling Buds of May on television and when the books came out after the TV series I shelved them and read the blurbs as I went, so I used the knowledge I gained then to help with the enquiry. I also see interviews with authors and book reviews on television. This helps my advisory skills. Although I prefer to read non-fiction due to being very busy I do try to read 2 or 3 fiction a year that are popular with the borrowers to broaden my knowledge of the fiction collection. I usually enjoy reading them.

We are a very small library with an intimate knowledge of our readers' tastes. I (and my staff) enjoy extending their reading genres.

I improve my confidence and broaden my knowledge of authors from difference genres by compiling author of the month posters, and genre posters - this helps me learn about different authors, and is a useful promotional/educational tool when accompanied by books of the same author in a display. Each staff member in our library also compiles a bookmark with their current favourite reads for customers to take away. We also leave Staff Picks and Readers Choice bookmarks in books recommended by or to us.

I am the Teenage Services Librarian at my library and i am very passionate about reading for pleasure. Over the last few years i have built up a great raport with our customers and take great pleasure in seeing my teens grow into readers who love books and coming to the library. I love to talk about ficiton books and always take time to make sure i do this properly and with passion. Or libray has sent people on readers' advisory courses and are commited to providing readers' advisory.

This is something in our library plan to develop the skills in our staff to deliver improved readers advisory services. We have a high demographic for over 65s who are becoming our reader base for fiction. Readers advisory services are their greatest need.

A personal knowledge of the reader can help, often they don't/can't/won't offer many leads as to likes, dislikes or preferred authors. Perhaps this is a sign of the times; a combination of lack of personal time and wanting to have a decision/selection made for them (Service).

 A general comment: This survey may provide a little more useful info if you obtained the role of each respondent.

I feel things would be much better in the library I work in if staff moral was higher. Somedays staff (due to feeling so frustrated) give the impression of not being intering in answering public enquiries. In general I am not refering to myself, but the library that I work in. I have noticed staff be very unhelpful at times to customers, and this gives a very negative feel to the place. This is a flow on effect from poor management in certain areas of the library.

I think we do it very well. Differences in service levels depends upon staff aptitude, in my experience. All the training in the world is no substitute for a love of reading and a willingness to explore what it is that the customer finds most appealing about a particular book or genre. The matching of book to reader is a task requiring imagination and a high degree of empathy.

We should have brochures and bookmarks for customers to take away

Although I am still upskilling in this area, I feel that the library is helpful in this.

Our most successful fiction promotion tool is slips with 'Reccommended by (staff name)" for staff to just slip into books and put into a small display area. Our library system doesn't allow us

to create inhouse 'genre lists' though it was clear from staff training that most staff would find these a helpful starting point. The book Who else writes like... would be our most used tool after personal knowledge.

A lot of my discussions with customers about what to read next are serendipitous: they happen as I move about the library. I can sometimes get a small following of 2-3 people as I talk about what I like and make recommendations to one person. People LOVE having books recommended to them - they are hungry for it - and I love the act of recommending. Also: knowing the author and being able to recommend them, does not necessarily mean having to read them. For example, the gritty English saga writer is fairly consistent: Audrey Howard, Cookson, Cox, all write "alike".

Currently pushing to have more face-out shelving within shelves - book cover a promotion / selection aid that is largely wasted. Enjoy RA and think it is really valuable, but hard to quantify success. Far too many borrowers "don't feel they can ask" - hopefully good experiences encourage.

After attending a recent training seminar we have decided to train all staff in Readers Advisory and are in the process of writing a short course.

Being in a rural network of libraries it is very rare to employ anyone with a library qualification. So sometimes it's hard to impress upon staff how important this aspect of their work is.

I feel this is an ongoing process. I am confident in my abilities to answer questions about genres I am familiar with, but am planning to read outside my "square" to become more familiar with other genres. This is something that I am quite passionate about and would be interested if at all possible to see your findings. Louise Rae louise.rae@waipadc.govt.nz

My confidence in answering questions very much depends on my mood and the nature of the question as in what genre. I also suffer from selective stagefright - in that I can recall all sorts of books when I am not confronted with a patron who asks "What can I read" but the mind goes completely blank when the question is posed. I find I can tune into some patrons and their reading likes/dislikes far more easily than others (I select for our housebound patrons and while I get it spot on with some, I can't quite nail others. Also out in the shelves, some of us have people that ask specifically for our recommendations while other staff can't tune in). That is where having a good working team culture is a huge advantage (I am lucky that we have that). We recently had inhouse reader's advisory training and I think refresher notes from our reference/training team would be good. The problem with formal training sessinos is that it takes us out of the library and staffing is such an issue (library cover/shortages, etc). I am much more trying to read across the genres so that I am familiar with lots of different types of reading. I am also reading more reviews and other book blogs (which helps me in writing our Library blog as well) to increase my awareness of trends. Good luck with the research. Will be interested to see the results.

We are a small public library and do not have specialist staff to provide readers' advisory services or resources. However, we know our customers well and this helps us to make recommendations for further reading. One of our staff has been on a "Rewarding Reading" course and she plans to on-train the rest of us in what she learned - she felt this course has increased her confidence to do readers' advisory work immeasurably!

I find my own reading helps with reading advisory and i wish i had more time to read. the course i attended has increased my confidence and I feel I am helping people more.

My observations from many year's personal experience in the library field point to successful Readers Advisory services being a mix of desire to read and passion for reading, not restricting your own reading options (ie : being prepared to read items that fall outside your usual comfort zone), being able to carry out a successful Reference Interview with your customers, listening AND hearing what your customer really wants and being prepared to take time with your customer and showing that you care about their reading habits. Anyone can pay lip service to Reader's Advisory services through displays, etc but genuine service comes from being a real reader who likes to share great books with others.

One area not covered by the questionairre which I find very helpful is the feedback from customers. Probably one of the most useful tools for identifying "who writes like" has been noting the patterns of borrowing and returns - If someone returns several fantasy books for

example, I make a point of chatting with them to identify favourites, new finds etc. This is relatively easy in a smallish public library.

I know they shouldn't, but RA questions always make me feel inadequate. I have tried reading more widely, but I just find it difficult to recommend a book - it feels such a big responsibility

While I always think I have a reasonable knowledge of books, I usually find when confronted with a RA inquiry that the books I'm familiar with aren't the ones that patron's are interested in. Also I find that I probably talk more and learn more from the patrons when talking about fiction than I do when talking with staff members, an alarming number of which don't do any reading.

I have observed many staff struggle with these types of queries and have realised that in the Public Library system I work in, it is because they are not readers. Management decisions in employing staff who contribute other skills and who, more often than not, have no library background, have contributed to this situation.

The library in which I work does very little on Readers Advisory at present but I have been appointed to the position of Fiction Librarian. A large component of this job is to set up an advisory service, so this will change soon! This indicates that the management is supportive of initiatives in this area, hence sending me on Rewarding Reading course

I work in a very small library and we are able to offer a highly personalised service, which is one of the more enjoyable aspects of the job.

We do the best that we can with the tools at hand and the training we each have is gladly shared

have a "new Books" folder

gt feedback on our librarians reviews on the shelf - used alot. Bookmarks highlighting authors of a genre very popular too.

I find that I can read just a little of a book/series/author and get a feel for the style. I tend to shy away from those I don't enjoy - e.g. Fantasy, Horror and those are the genres I would struggle with most if a borrower asks. General/Saga/Christian Inspirational would be my strongest genres. Classics e.g. Bryce Courtnay, John Grisham etc are great standbys! Mystery/Romance/Adventure - I have a reasonable grasp of, but mostly from reader's comments. I find that in a small library, I get a real feel for the type of books each reader likes, and can also trust their judgement which can lead to recommending titles to other readers. Other staff members are a great help if I am in a fix.

Our Library needs more static tools to help readers with their choices. We also need more RA training for staff who are not avid readers.

Library catalogue, staff chosen books, purchase order.

I work in a small Public Library (3 staff) which has more 'pleasure reading' customers than 'research type' of customer so this service is the most important we can offer. I have been involved with chosing and delivering to housebound customers for the past 20 or so years. I was previously a volunter at the Library and started the Housebound service then as there was a need for it. I love this part of my job and even though I am only here for 20 hours a week this is a large part of my job and the customers seek me out. My boss agrees with this also and she is also behind any 'Readers Advisory" requirements as she feels this is a core function of our Library at present.

While there is a huge breadth of knowledge amongst library staff, customers can only tap into the knowledge of the staff member they have in front of them at the time.

I enjoy it because I received some training and have continued to enhance that training by myself. This has given me confidence. I think the best thing I have learned is that it is better to be an enthusiastic learner and beginner rather than an 'expert'. That the conversation and journey together between the advisor and the reader is really important. Every time I have an RA transaction I learn something that feeds into the next conversation. The learning never stops. Learning not to get anxious about failing has made a huge difference to my effectivenss in RA and in reference. I have just written a report on RA training for the library and how we might improve our RA effectiveness, which is very exciting.

For the multi choice : It is too busy when I'm at the desk to answer fiction readers' advisory enquiries as well as I'd like, I try to make sure ive helped teh customer as much as i possably can.

The "added value" of a library is often the knowledge and attitude of its staff toward assisting people to find the book they want to read. Our recommended reading display (recommended by staff, by other customers, by review etc.) is incredible popular. We spend some time in making sure what is on offer is varied and interesting and we get complaints if it is not "topped up".

I think the readers advisory is important in that it at last recognises the value of a librarian's knowledge about books. I have always felt that my interest and knowledge of books is an incidental part of my job, valued by coleagues, but not especially noted as part of my employment.

Confidence etc answering reader development questions varies re genres / sections. e.g. YA is an area i am fairly unfamiliar with the range of material and there are not (as far as i am aware) well developed online resources for providing assistance to staff. in genres in which i read, i am very confident, in other areas i really on other staff and resources. Also have you considered the debate reagarding use of the terms RA (US based) and RD (UK / Australian prefered). Alan Bundy in his preface to Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services(APLIS)' 21(2) June 2008. My survey was also reported there. Delighted to see that there is more research being undertaken in this area!!!!

I am familiar with using a wide range of readers' advisory tools but often I find that customers want a personal recommendation. At the end of the day, all the training in the world can only take you so far. I believe that reading widely is perhaps the best strategy for answering reader advisory questions.

Very timely survey, two staff have just attended a Readers Advisory course and we are embarking on seriously improving our service in this regard. Plan to implement very soon: links on Website, Reference tools, Readalike resources, book groups and themde displays.

I work in a small public library so select, purchase and process material before it goes out to community. I also read a variety of genres which I think gives me the confidence to discuss material with customers. We're also lucky that all the staff have to do staffpicks each month which has widened our knowledge with genres we don't read.

For most of my life, I have read an eclectic mix- if I don't know an author, I will try to read at least one of their books. Over the years, I have built up a rapport with our customers who recommend books, so it helps me too. This applies to nonfiction too. (Yes, I do read a lot- I hardly watch tv!)

The overall library service is a bit hit and miss. I was given basic skills but have really trained myself on how to provide this service proficiently. This is an area that we could build up but the current emphasis is on stock handling. The library is looking at getting RFID so we can reduce book handling and increase customer contact. (Although in the current economic environment, would this lead to staff reductions instead? We don't know) Readers Advisory is a pleasurable part of the job and I enjoy helping.

In areas where I have read widely, or in popular genres that are asked for frquently - e.g who writes like Danielle Steel; nice fiction set in World War 2 - I feel confident I will lead the borrower to a book they will enjoy. When faced with a genre like suspense or horror, I really don't know, even when using tools. I tend to suggest as many leads as possible, in the hope they will enjoy something! Possibly more experience (and more feedback from borrowers) will eventually help this.

As a 'passionate' reader, I enjoy the feedback from patrons, who often make recommendations to me, as much as the 'buzz' I get from connecting them with an appropriate book.

I THINK WE ALL DO VERY WELL IN OUR LIBRARY WITH READERS ADVISORY

It was a pleasure to fill this survey. Thank you.

Readers' advisory is something that is learned and absorbed over time and with experience as well as through formal training sessions. I believe it is an important on-going process that is often overlooked in staff development. It is the exchange of information about literature between people that is not just one-way and needs to be given more prominence (on a weekly basis) in public library staff development.

I would like to have had some formal "Readers' Advisory" training before starting rostered "help desk shifts". It is such a key area of the position. Having said that, there is no equal to on-the-job experience and networking with other staff.

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Word count

Excludes Appendices, References and Bibliography.

Word count: 19 104.