

## **A Bibliography for Issues and Trends in Reference Services to Children**

The scope of this bibliography is issues and trends in reference services for children in both school and public libraries. The most pressing issues and trends facing librarians who provide reference services to children are qualitatively different than the ones facing young adult librarians. Therefore, young adult reference services are not within the scope of this bibliography. School librarians serve children's reference needs somewhat differently from those serving children at public libraries. Services at both types of facilities are included in the scope for two reasons. First, understanding the role cognitive development plays in children's information seeking behavior is important in both settings. Also, it is hoped that improved reference services to children might be facilitated by cooperation between the schools (and their libraries) and the public libraries. This author discovered divergences in reference practices and included resources that embed both library types as well as resources that, perused in conjunction with the whole of this bibliography, indicate problems and opportunities for improved cooperation. The resources in this bibliography are intended for the professional development of librarians serving the reference and information needs of children up to age twelve. These resources are not reference materials for children, such as subject bibliographies of interest to that age group.

The resources in this bibliography were extracted from a literature search of the article databases provided by the University of California, Los Angeles Library, MELVYL, and EBSCO. The university library catalog was also searched for print resources. A thesaural hierarchy was consulted on databases under 'reference'. Keyword searches with Boolean operators were constructed using *child\** AND *reference* and '*school library*'\* AND *reference*. Additional resources were gleaned from references cited in the most relevant works.

### **1. Bishop, Kay and Anthony Salveggi. "Responding to Developmental Stages in**

**Reference Service to Children." *Public Libraries* 40, no.6 (December 2001): 354-358.**

The authors review the literature on characteristics of developmental stages that can influence reference services, and they discuss data collected from nineteen two-hour observations and interviews with five children's librarians (two hold master's degrees; three are paraprofessionals). The Piagetian preoperational stage occurs between the ages of three and seven and is marked by egocentricity and absence of logic; implications for

the reference interview include the fact that a child in this stage is insensible to the need for communicating a question in a way that a librarian (or anyone!) can understand. Reference work with a concrete-operational child, ages seven through eleven, can make use of the child's early logic which allows him to classify, categorize, and proceed from general to more specific information. Practical techniques are given for reference work with patrons in these stages and compared and contrasted to the observed practices and interviewee responses. Kay Bishop is an Associate Professor at the School of Library and Information Science, University of South Florida; Anthony Salveggi is a graduate of the same institution.

2. Cianciolo, Patricia J. "Informational Picture Books: Definitions, Selection Criteria, and Trends." In *Informational Picture Books for Children*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2000.

In this introductory chapter to Cianciolo's annotated bibliography, informational picture books are defined as those designed with intent to impart information via text and illustrations. The criteria used in choosing books for the bibliography are discussed: accuracy and currency; 'starter' books, not 'stopper' books (provides vivid outline of the subject's range for readers who want to study further); scope appealing to wide age range; topics of interest to both broad and narrow groups of readers; fact, theory, and opinion differentiated; and clear patterns of organization. Cianciolo also provides insight into the current trends in informational picture books. For example, the current prolific use of sidebars is a trend which provides additional material for those who are interested; however, sidebars also break the flow of reading. This introduction is an excellent resource for professionals seeking to hone selection techniques for their library's informational books collection, and Cianciolo's discussion will prove helpful when steering a young learner to the best books. Also, because the chapter is embedded in a bibliography following these selection criteria, the entire work is a powerful reference tool. Cianciola is Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University.

3. Gross, Melissa. "The Imposed Query and Information Services for Children." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 13, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 10-17.

The imposed query model maintains that people do not only seek information based on their own questions. Children's librarians see this reality in queries for homework assistance: children carry their own questions and the imposed questions of teachers, parents, and other students into reference interviews. Librarians are skilled at regressing a question back to its origins, but when the question does not originate from the child, her lack of mental context for it can impede discovery of the question's starting point. Children's librarians often conduct three-party reference interviews – a child, a parent, and a librarian; Gross cites works about negotiating those transactions. Discovery of the real question is further complicated by a child's limited vocabulary and inexperience with public interaction. Gross cites authors who write of the tension between helping children find the desired information versus the expectation that children should quickly gain

independent library skills. The author is an Assistant Professor in the Florida State University School of Information Studies.

4. Jacobson, Frances F. and Ellen D. Sutton. "Reference Services for Specific Populations." In *Reference and information services: an introduction*, ed. Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith, 279-306. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2001.

Although the topic of children's reference services is covered in only a portion of a chapter within this book about the broader field of reference work, this discussion provides a nice framework for the key reference issues facing children's librarians. The authors discuss the importance of understanding developmental stages and the reference services appropriate to those stages. For example, categorization is cognitively possible for children around third grade, and collocation of a genre or topic on a shelf is something they can understand. A child's ability to make abstractions, however, comes later; thus the succession from a bibliographic representation to an actual item on the shelf should be guided by a librarian.

Information services, the authors purport, are central to children's librarianship, and they should not be overlooked in favor of collection development and programming. Subject cataloging is often inadequate for answering children's reference questions; the authors advocate using bibliographies of informational picture books. Rounding out this overview, the authors briefly write about ethics, confidentiality, reference interviews, readers' advisory, and library use instruction as they pertain to children's reference services. Jacobson is Librarian at the University Laboratory High School, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Sutton is Associate Dean, College of DuPage Library.

5. Kuhlthau, Carol C. "Rethinking Libraries for the Information Age School: Vital Roles in Inquiry Learning." *School Libraries in Canada* 20, no.4 (2003): 3-5.

(Keynote paper at the International Association of School Libraries conference held in Auckland, New Zealand 9-12 July 2001).

Kuhlthau draws a parallel between the pre-technology age textbook - with its predigested and logically sequenced information - and the school library's pre-technology days when it was a contained collection of carefully selected and organized material. The parallel is extended to 2001 when the network of information available, unlike a textbook, is not digested, selected, or organized, and the school library should act as an agent in the learning process where teachers and librarians guide students in locating, selecting, understanding, and using information. She calls for reform in the school libraries that begins with answering the question, "What abilities do students need to be successful in the information age?" Inquiry based learning is advocated, and templates are given for evaluating, implementing, and teaching this approach. Kuhlthau, a professor of Information Studies at Rutgers in New Brunswick, has won many awards for her research in the area of information literacy and the information search process.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ . *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003. 248 pages. ISBN 1591580943.

Using learning theory from John Dewey, George Kelly, and Jerome Bruner, Kuhlthau proposes a model for information searching that reflects a focus on process rather than sources. Similarly, she seeks to raise librarians above the role of source-locators; she means to see them educating their patrons about information searching. Her Search Process model is described in the following order: task initiation, topic selection, pre-focus exploration, focus formulation, information collection, and search closure. Methodology and findings of two longitudinal studies that validate the model are included. In the final three chapters of the book, the author recounts her most recent work which has focused on K-12 schools and school libraries. She discusses case studies which pertain to teacher-librarians' opportunities to educate students about the search process. Kuhlthau is a respected scholar in the area of information searching, and this work is touted as a must-have for beginning reference librarians.

7. Lukenbill, Bernard W. "Community Information in Schools: An Operational Approach and Model." In *Information and referral in reference services*, ed. Marcia Stucklen Middleton and Bill Katz, 173-188. New York: The Haworth Press, 1988.

Based on the premise that children need to gain the ability to read, generate, evaluate, and apply information in order to function fully as individuals and participate in society, the author purports that access to community information is one of the most important aspects of children's librarianship. Lukenbill, outlining a field study and program model conducted by the British Library, defines community information as resources which exist in the local environment and which can help young people manage everyday life. An understanding of both the information needs of children and the community resources that can supply information of relevance to children are requisite for children's librarians. Additionally, he addresses the need to determine what information literacy skills must be acquired before a child leaves school. Some community resource information pertains to personal and emotion-charged issues, such as abuse in the family; therefore, librarians need to be attuned to the sensitive nature of a patron's information needs. In a field overwhelmingly pervaded with technology, here is another example of the need for a person-centered role in librarianship. At the time of printing, the author was an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, The University of Texas.

8. Symons, Ann K. "The Smart Web Primer, Part 2: Sizing up Sites; How to Judge What You Find on the Web." *School Library Journal* 43 (April 1997): 22-25.

This article is a clarion call for librarians to evaluate Web sites designed for children. Symons asserts that you "would never select more than one percent of what's on the Web for your print collection." She proposes evaluating Web sites, similar to the way a book is evaluated, rather than assigning to the site a rating (stars, grades, numerical scores). Readers are guided to reputable Web site evaluation resources (on the Web!); the one most lauded by Symons is from the Department of Library and Information Studies at Victoria University, England. Eighteen criteria are provided and described, including Content, Depth/Breadth, Purpose, Searchability, and Uniqueness. Reference work requires that librarians organize and select information, and the evaluative criteria discussed in this article provide for children's service librarians a tool for that task.

9. Walter, Virginia. "Emerging Trends in Library Services for Children." In *Children and Libraries: Getting it Right*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2001.

While this is not dedicated solely to reference services, the following trends, with implications for reference work with children, are discussed: Internet access, training young patrons in the use of the Internet, homework assistance, and service to homeschoolers. The reader is apprised of research regarding the searching behaviors of children, and models are recommended for teaching children effective digitized information-seeking skills. Much of homework assistance involves tutoring, but the needs for reference services have also increased. Nationwide studies and program models regarding public library involvement in homework assistance are mentioned. Library resources and reference services are uniquely able to provide information on one topic at several reading levels to homeschooling families – educational settings where students of various grade levels are working on the same project. Walter touches on a background of homeschooling philosophies and also provides suggestions for further reading. Virginia Walter is Professor of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles and writes extensively on many issues in children's library services.

10. White, Marilyn Domas. "The Readability of Children's Reference Materials." *Library Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 1990): 300-319.

Addressing the problem of information literacy, White assesses readability of children's reference works across ten separate texts based on fourteen topics commonly sought by children. A measurement of the idea density level is obtained using two techniques: linguistic analysis, the Flesch-Kincaid method, and propositional analysis, the Bovair-Kieras method. The sample of reference works was chosen from the reputable Peterson's *Reference Books for Children*, Wynar's *Guide to Reference Books for School Media Centers*, and *School Library Journal*. Study findings indicate that the articles in encyclopedias written for children more closely resembled resources intended for adults

in idea density per sentence and reading level. Twenty-five percent of the encyclopedia articles studied were written at reading levels for grades five through eight, and none of the articles were written at reading levels below fifth grade. This article is informative for children's librarians and school librarians making acquisition decisions for their library's reference collection. In addition to the obvious awareness of the problem White presents, a brief sample of propositional analysis provides a tool to use in reviewing reference works for readability. At the time of publication, White was an Associate Professor at the College of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland.