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# Academic Libraries and Extracurricular Reading Promotion

## Julie Elliott, Guest Columnist

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It is clear to anyone in the library profession, and certainly to readers of this column, that readers' advisory (RA) services have become an important part of libraries. While librarians have worked to connect readers and books throughout the history of libraries, the past eighteen years since the publication of Joyce Saricks's *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* (ALA, 1989, 1997, 2005) have seen a blossoming of RA tools for thoughtful discussion of techniques for working with readers, and, most recently, an expansion of RA to look at nonfiction reading. As Saricks's title suggests though, this renaissance has been primarily centered in the public library. In this column, Julie Elliott considers the role of RA services in the academic library. She looks at the history of the role of extracurricular reading at colleges and universities. Elliott examines current practices in academic libraries, and outlines the issues that have kept readers' services from taking a prominent role in academic libraries. Her article concludes with a call for academic libraries to revitalize their approach to readers' services.

Elliott organizes the One Book, One Campus events at Indiana University–South Bend as well as the library's speaker series. Elliott is an active participant in the promotion of RA services, and she serves on the Reference and User Services Association Collection Development and Evaluation Section (RUSA CODES) Readers' Advisory Committee as well as the Library Instruction Round Table's (LIRT) Conference Program Committee; she is also incoming secretary for the Library Administration and Management's (LAMA) Public Relations and Marketing Section.—*Editor*

**I**nformation literacy, becoming tech savvy with Library 2.0, and marketing one's library are common topics of professional library conversation. However, another aspect of college libraries not being discussed is extracurricular reading promotion. Indiana University–South Bend (IUSB) has a One Book, One Campus program, and there are some ongoing recreational reading programs in colleges across the United States, but it was unclear how many were out there. It was also unclear what academic librarians were doing in addition to reading programs to promote extracurricular reading, and if they weren't promoting extracurricular reading, why not?

To that end, I created a survey and corresponded with academic librarians across the United States to determine what academic libraries are doing to promote extracurricular reading, what barriers are keeping them from promoting it more, and why some of them do not actively promote reading.

To get a better idea of why recreational reading promotion is so scarce in academic libraries, I examined the history of

reading promotion in academic librarianship. What I found was that it was not only elitism among past librarians that hampered the concept (or that could impede its future) but rather the same three culprits that hamper just about every project in our profession: budget, staff time, and space.

That is not to say that the idea of reading promotion in academic libraries is a nonstarter. Rather, I discovered that there are many librarians dedicated to the idea who have found creative methods of getting past the barriers of budget, time, and space to create programs and collections of value for their students, faculty, and staff. I also learned that nearly everyone I interviewed wants to continue the conversation and to begin collaborating with our public library colleagues to learn from their experience how to create better recreational reading resources for our students. Please visit appendix A for links to collections and activities by librarians interviewed in this article. I'd like to suggest that anyone interested in continuing the conversation via a wiki, discussion list, or other method to please e-mail me at: [jmfelli@iusb.edu](mailto:jmfelli@iusb.edu).

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## HISTORY OF EXTRACURRICULAR READING PROMOTION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Encouraging extracurricular reading used to be a component of an academic library's mission. In "Recreational Reading in Academic Browsing Rooms," Janelle Zauha wrote that in the 1920s and 1930s, the "promotion of reading was considered one of the important functions of the college librarian."<sup>1</sup> Zauha noted that university libraries were quick to add reading rooms into their buildings—"For example, by 1939, there were no less than four recreational reading collections located throughout the University of Iowa campus in 'browsing' libraries . . . these were described in the library handbook, which vigorously promoted enjoyment of reading as 'the king of sports.'"<sup>2</sup>

In 1926, Rollins College named Edwin Osgood Grover, the director of their library, the first "Professor of Books."<sup>3</sup> Grover, who taught a course in recreational reading, was very popular with students, who appreciated his open-minded approach to literature. He was also responsible for creating the only bookstore in town, the Bookery.<sup>4</sup> Academic libraries also encouraged recreational reading by offering prizes for the students with the best personal book collections, the idea being that if a student owned a good collection of books, he or she would be more likely to read them.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, there were a number of studies done to determine the amount of time college students spent in recreational reading. The definitions of recreational reading varied—some studies included newspapers and magazines, some did not; the key definition tended to be that it was reading not connected to coursework. In 1948, a study of students at the University of Illinois found that the average student spent approximately four hours a week in recreational reading (including magazines and newspapers) and that "two thirds of the students read one or less books a month outside of class assignments."<sup>6</sup> A 1951 study by Willard Abraham

found that college students were spending between two to eight hours a week on extracurricular reading, with seniors reading more than freshman.<sup>7</sup>

Although by the 1960s extracurricular reading in academic libraries was starting to decline, Morgan State College (now University) began in the 1961–1962 school year what could be considered the first One Book, One Campus or Campus Community Read program ever. The Book-of-the-Month Reading Program was started by college president Martin Jenkins, who provided all faculty and students with copies of the same books on a bimonthly basis, scheduled discussions, and showed related films.<sup>8</sup> Librarians such as Virginia Richardson were involved in the implementation committee for the program and created displays of materials related to the selected books. The program was very successful, with Jenkins noting that "this innovation has brought a new intellectual vigor to our campus."<sup>9</sup>

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## THE DECLINE

A number of college theses in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s examined the rate of student extracurricular reading of materials from the college libraries. By the 1950s, the results were indicating that students were not making use of the material, and that faculty did not always expect the students to use their library for such purposes. In her 1957 dissertation, Patricia Knapp quotes a faculty member as saying, "Not too much recreational reading is expected here. Mostly they're shunted to the public library for that."<sup>10</sup> Knapp concludes that:

The negligible amount of use of the library for non-course purposes suggests that resources, in financial support and staff time and effort, should be devoted primarily to support of the curricular program . . . It should be remembered that the college population is basically different from the self-selected clientele of the public library. The kinds of promotional activities which attracts [sic] perhaps 10 percent of the community to use the public library reach an even smaller proportion of the college population since even most of the "natural readers" among college students get at least their normal quota of reading in connection with course work.<sup>11</sup>

Part of what may have led to the decline in students' extracurricular reading is an attitude of elitism and even hints of censorship in the name of selection on the part of the librarians recommending the books. Several academic librarians writing articles on reading promotion from the 1920s through the 1950s made regrettable predictions on whose works would last the test of time and whose would not. "How can the groping reader confide in those who hailed the tangled web of William Faulkner's *Fable* as if it were the fifth Gospel?" complains one academic librarian in the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> An author writing of the reading habits of students of Wellesley College

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in the 1920s notes with pride that while the students may have been fooled into enjoying one Fitzgerald novel, they knew better than to pick up a second: "If an occasional *This Side of Paradise* finds an eager audience, it is because for the moment she thinks she sees her contemporaries as they really are. She is not slow to discover her mistake, and when *The Beautiful and the Damned* comes along . . . it is unnoticed."<sup>13</sup> A history of this kind of attitude has dissuaded some current academic librarians from ever considering RA as part of their job.

Perhaps the largest issue in the decline is something academic librarians of today can also relate to—ever-increasing demands on one's professional time and library resources. As Arthur P. Sweet wrote in 1960, "In large research libraries . . . the volume of business, the variety of materials, and the number of services to patrons increase year by year in greater ratio than the increase in staff."<sup>14</sup>

In addition to increased responsibilities, fewer staff, and changing technologies such as television, academic librarians in the late 1950s were trying to brace themselves for the first wave of Baby Boomers, who they referred to as the rising tide. In addition to the effect of expanding services for students on the promotion of recreational reading, space in the library was also becoming an issue. Clifton Brock wrote, "In the past, libraries have struggled to find places to put their books. In the future they will also have to find space to put their students."<sup>15</sup>

In his 1957 report, "College and Research Libraries in a Decade of Decision," Paul C. Reinert, S.J., then president of St. Louis University and a member of President Eisenhower's Committee on Education Beyond the High School, noted that academic librarians needed to "accelerate the flight from cheap TV programs and other forms of entertainment" enjoyed by college students and steer them toward reading, especially to encourage the students to become active public library users after their graduation.<sup>16</sup> Reinert concludes that with budget pressures, his theory of "education for leisure" will be difficult to make a reality: "with the press of numbers, with the inevitable tendency to give in to a passive, 'filling station' type of education with too much emphasis on television and mass consumption—the importance of books may be more and more difficult to promote."<sup>17</sup>

Others argued that by the 1970s, library schools' tendency to downplay RA led to a decline in reading promotion not just in academic libraries, but in all libraries. "A primary reason for the decline in readers' advisory service (and this is true not just in public, but in academic, school, and special libraries as well), is that in a very few years the book has become de-emphasized . . . Reading is just not fashionable in the library world anymore."<sup>18</sup> Taking its place, authors such as Money noted, was the focus on new technologies.

Not all the news about college libraries and extracurricular reading in the past fifty years has been negative. Paul Wiener, in his 1982 article, "Recreational Reading Services in Academic Libraries: An Overview," noted that in a survey sent to 110 academic library directors, he found that "the major-

ity of academic libraries are providing services to meet the recreational, or leisure, reading interests of their patrons."<sup>19</sup> The most common method he found by which college libraries were meeting this need was through the browsing room, but the usual suspects—"lack of money, lack of staff, space, or interest on campus"—were the reasons why some libraries did not provide any recreational reading service.<sup>20</sup> Wiener also noted that providing RA service in academic libraries was not just for students' benefit, but should be considered for faculty and staff as well.<sup>21</sup> The author concluded by noting that, "Rather than treat recreational reading as an altogether superfluous function of the academic library, as it has been treated historically, it must be considered a necessary and inevitable element of service, if the academic library is to fulfill its role of satisfying the educational needs of its users."<sup>22</sup>

In 1993, Zauha argued that browsing rooms that were the main source of extracurricular reading promotion were being neglected by academic libraries, and were in danger of disappearing:

Today, browsing rooms perform this service with far less institutional support than they once had, and with much less professional publicity. As a consequence, browsing rooms are endangered. Unless their function in the university and their value to the student are reasserted and promoted, browsing rooms will go the way of all "additional services" in times of scarce money.<sup>23</sup>

She also noted that during the heyday of the browsing room, these areas were staffed by librarians at an RA desk, and that this had slowly changed to the rooms being staffed by "paraprofessionals and/or students, or they are not staffed at all."<sup>24</sup> Calling browsing rooms "the remains of a more text-centered era," she argued that they still could serve a very important public relations function as well as an intellectual one:

Increased need for external funding means the academic library must be more interested now than ever before in selling itself to alumni and friends groups. The browsing room, with its congenial atmosphere and its potential as a showcase for the newest jewels of the collection, is the perfect location for programs which serve the double function of promoting the library while assisting with book collection and reader guidance.<sup>25</sup>

As the decades progressed through the 1980s and into the new millennium, the demands on librarians' time and library resources expanded. In addition to dealing with growing numbers of students, now librarians had to address the technology boom. This shift led to a need for academic librarians to instruct students on how best to manage their information choices. "The role of helping people access content has grown so much, we didn't mean to push out readers' advisory," said Barbara MacAdam, director of the Graduate Library at the

University of Michigan. “[I]t is just that the accessing content part of the job has expanded so greatly . . . Readers’ advisory in academic libraries has changed in that with all [the] technology that has changed, our role has changed. Technology has changed how we work and think.”<sup>26</sup>

In her 1995 article, “Sustaining the Culture of the Book: The Role of Enrichment Reading and Critical Thinking in the Undergraduate Curriculum,” MacAdam cites numerous scholars who lament the fact that students are reading less, given how this affects their critical thinking skills.<sup>27</sup> She cites the common problems of “greater and more varied demands on libraries, and increasing demands on both material and staff resources at the same time that budgets are static and declining” as factors in the decline of reading promotion, but also notes that students and faculty

clearly hold differing views on reading. Faculty, including librarians, have chosen to serve a discipline and the literature while college students generally expect that the discipline and the literature must serve them . . . College students seek the assurance that the material they are asked to read (and the time thus spent) will contribute directly to learning, academic success, and graduation.<sup>28</sup>

MacAdam lists three ways that academic libraries were attempting to encourage recreational reading: popular reading collections and browsing rooms, programming, and compilation of reading lists.<sup>29</sup> MacAdam concludes that while the book is far from dead, academic librarians should be open to the new technologies that students use to engage in the printed word: “Sustaining the culture of the book may mean preserving our stories and fostering the student’s engagement with those stories regardless of the format used to record them.”<sup>30</sup>

The following survey and interview excerpts explore how promotion of RA has been kept alive in some academic libraries, on the cheap, on the fly, and in collaboration with their faculty and communities. It also explores reasons why it is not promoted more often.

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## THE SURVEY

A survey of sixteen questions was created on SurveyMonkey and sent to Fiction\_L, Collib\_L, Colldev\_L, and various state discussion lists across the United States. An e-mail request to participate in the survey was also sent to the directors of the 111 academic libraries belonging to the Association of Research Libraries. The survey was answered by 270 people, but not all answered every question. The survey was confidential, but if participants agreed to be contacted for further questions, they consented to be quoted. The full results of the survey can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=159103999076](http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=159103999076). The text of the survey and study information sheet can be found in appendix B.

There are some potential flaws with this survey. By sending the survey request to Fiction\_L, a group devoted to reading, I may have skewed my survey toward a group with a positive bias on the subject. Furthermore, in my requests sent to library directors, I received some replies stating that since their library did no such programming or promotion, they had chosen to not participate. Their decision to opt out could again skew the survey toward those who already have a favorable bias toward reading. These two issues could especially skew the results of question sixteen, where the participants were asked about their own reading habits and personal attitudes toward promoting extracurricular reading. While I did ask participants to state whether they were from a commuter or residential college, because the survey was anonymous, there is no way to analyze the difference in answers between the answers of the two groups. These issues will be addressed in future research.

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## WHAT ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS ARE DOING NOW TO PROMOTE EXTRACURRICULAR READING

Displays and browsing areas are common methods for promoting extracurricular reading. Slightly more than 70 percent (71.4) of those surveyed noted that their library had a browsing area, with 66.2 percent of those who answered “yes” stating that it was kept in a separate room. “We have a cozy seating area just inside the front door surrounded by new books, ‘the browsing collection’—popular books, many of them chosen by a subcommittee of the student senate—and newspapers and popular magazines, all meant to make the library inviting and promote reading,” wrote Barbara Fister of Gustavus Adolphus College Library.<sup>31</sup> Librarians at Eastern Illinois University create displays featuring books owned in popular genres such as romance, science fiction, and fantasy as well as bookmarks, wrote librarian Sarah Johnson.<sup>32</sup> “Staff favorites” displays are also another way of promoting reading, noted Sara Ranger of the University of Houston Library.<sup>33</sup> Librarians at Gwynedd-Mercy College have created a rotating display called “What College Students Are Reading!” The librarians choose the titles from the monthly survey in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. “We insert slips that say things such as ‘Pick me! Pick me!’ and ‘Curl up with me tonight—Take me home today!’” wrote Lianne Hartman.<sup>34</sup>

Paperback collections, whether permanent or informal book exchange programs, are another way that academic libraries can promote popular reading on a shoestring. The Archbishop Alter Library at the College of Mount St. Joseph has had a paperback exchange program for the past eight to ten years, which evolved after the closing of a McNaughton program (a book rental program that allows libraries to rent popular titles with the option to own) that they could no longer afford. The exchange, which has not been that popular with students, has been a low-cost hit with faculty and staff, notes Paul O. Jenkins, director of the library.<sup>35</sup> In addition to receiving book donations from library staff to begin their

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recreational reading collection, the Union University library has been able to maintain the collection with a few purchases and free copies donated from publishers (the titles are then reviewed on the library's blog), noted Melissa Moore.<sup>36</sup>

Blogging titles in the popular reading collection have played a role in increased circulation at their library, noted Moore. "It's common to have people ask for books that have been reviewed on the blog . . . I do believe that the Web site, and the staff's commitment to reading and blogging, and the time and dollars invested in the small collection, all played a part in getting those [circulation] numbers turned around."<sup>37</sup>

Collaborating with the local public library to bring a new twist to the traditional paperback exchange is something Sweet Briar College Library has been doing since 1987. "The 'paperback swap' is thanks to the Amherst County Public Library who gives us their popular romance and detective paperbacks when their shelf life has ended," wrote Lisa Johnston, librarian. "Students, faculty, and staff leave their pre-read paperbacks and take new titles for pleasure reading."<sup>38</sup> Other academic librarians are exploring the idea of collaborating with their local public library. Traci Moritz of Ohio Northern University noted that she also has been in contact with her local public library about possibly collaborating on a community reads type of program.<sup>39</sup>

Some college libraries are lucky to have had a long tradition of recreational reading that has been supported by the students throughout the decades. Sweet Briar College's Cochran Library's Browsing Room was established by students in 1930 and the "collection was and remains, all recreational reading, with emphasis on mysteries, fantasy, historical fiction, and science fiction," wrote Johnston. "It is the most popular room in the library."<sup>40</sup>

The University of Michigan undergraduate library has had a popular reading collection since 1975. The collection is heavy on general fiction, science fiction, and mysteries. The collection originated as a rent-a-collection and then evolved into an "approve-a-plan" with the original Borders, said MacAdam.<sup>41</sup> The Borders program stopped six years ago, but the popular reading collection is still going strong. MacAdam notes, "It is very heavily used by students and library staff."<sup>42</sup>

Eastern Illinois University's Booth Library has two recreational reading collections—a bestseller area featuring hardcovers, and an R&R (read and relax) paperback collection.<sup>43</sup> In a circulation study of the fifty-four different types of collections in their library, the R&R collection ranked eighth and the bestsellers third.<sup>44</sup> Circulation figures are also very high for the popular reading materials at Butler University Library, noted Renee Reed. "[T]he circulation figures are much, much, higher than for any other area of the library collection except maybe the children's books and music CD's."<sup>45</sup>

Book lists are another economical way to promote reading on campus, although more than half (55.7 percent) of those surveyed do not use them. "I also frequently distribute various 'best of' reading lists to faculty, students, and staff," wrote

Jenkins of the College of Mount St. Joseph.<sup>46</sup> The annual book list at the University of Michigan began in 1983 when the *Ann Arbor News* approached MacAdam and the undergraduate library for a list of books. The admissions office saw the article and asked the undergraduate librarians to continue doing the list each year for incoming students. "Parents and kids love it," said MacAdam. "Some use it as a poster for their room."<sup>47</sup> The titles for the book list are chosen by the undergraduate librarians, and the selections are varied. "There's a book for everybody," said MacAdam. "[W]hether the student is a big reader or not. We try to be inclusive, including sciences, social sciences, titles are accessible and also 'great reads'—each book has been read by someone on the staff who loves it."<sup>48</sup>

Some libraries have added popular book collections after receiving requests from students. "We added the McNaughton program after an article in the student newspaper about where to find extracurricular reading," wrote Emily Bergman, librarian at the Mary Norton Clapp Library at Occidental University. "This prompted us to look into a way to provide materials to fill this now expressed need."<sup>49</sup> Susan Lee from the University of Great Falls Library also noted that the popular book collection that the library is in the process of putting together came about in part because of a focus group on campus housing needs that reported a need for more popular reading materials, such as science fiction, in the library.<sup>50</sup> Butler University's library added a browsing collection "after repeated requests from students for popular reading material," noted Reed.<sup>51</sup> Wendy Bousfield of Syracuse University libraries noted that the results of their LibQual surveys showed that their students wanted the library to provide popular fiction and nonfiction.<sup>52</sup>

New book areas are popular not only with students, but also with faculty who wish to read outside of their area, noted MacAdam. Faculty visiting the Science Library at the University of Michigan will often come in daily to check out the new titles, she noted.<sup>53</sup>

Sweet Briar College Library has revived an extracurricular reading promotion from the past, with their Basbanes Book Collecting Contest (the URL for the contest is in appendix A). The contest was suggested to the library by author Nicholas Basbanes, whose daughter graduated from the college in 2004. The contest began in 2002, and usually has about four to five entries per year, wrote Lisa Johnston, librarian. "The participants tend to be great readers, and the contest inspires them to seek out more books to read and possess."<sup>54</sup>

Sometimes collections purchased to support the curriculum end up becoming semi-recreational, such as Eastern Illinois University's graphic novels collection, which, in addition to supporting coursework in the topic, has become a popular recreational resource, notes Johnson.<sup>55</sup>

Creating a One Book, One Campus type of program, similar to Nancy Pearl's community reading programs, is another way academic libraries have attracted extracurricular readers. While not common among college libraries surveyed (10.8 percent noted their library has one), it is effective. When Jessica Moyer was a librarian at Richland Community College in

Decatur, Illinois, she led Richland Reads, a campus book club that met twice each semester. Moyer tied the first two titles to an ALA film series that was being shown at the college.<sup>56</sup> The Ashland Community and Technical College System Libraries offer several book clubs throughout the year—including a popular banned books club and specialized book discussions for technical students in the culinary arts and automotive technology, wrote Sara Brown.<sup>57</sup> The Gwynedd-Mercy College sponsors “GMC Reads,” an annual program featuring discussions on a fiction title (past works include *The Secret Life of Bees*, *The Kite Runner*, and *Snow Falling on Cedars*) as well as sponsoring films and other events on campus related to the themes in the featured book.<sup>58</sup> Fister has compiled a Web site listing college libraries across the United States with such programs.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to creating on-campus reading programs, some academic libraries also are active participants in preexisting reading programs on their campus. Nearly 20 percent (19.7) of those surveyed noted that they participate in similar campus or community programs. “We do try to participate in and promote the common reading program that is based in student affairs,” wrote Fister.<sup>60</sup> Participation in One Book, One Community programs is another method of promoting extracurricular reading. The Mary Norton Clapp Library at Occidental University has held book discussions surrounding Los Angeles’s One Book program in the past.<sup>61</sup> Syracuse University has had a strong leadership role in the Central New York Reads program, with a librarian leading the program in 2005, and three librarians currently serving as members of the regional reading program’s consortium.<sup>62</sup> Recently, Syracuse University reference librarian Natasha Cooper was named director of the New York Center for the Book, which is headquartered at the university.<sup>63</sup>

## PROBLEMS AND BARRIERS TO PROMOTING EXTRACURRICULAR READING

Two common barriers cited by many of the librarians interviewed for this article are the same reasons that led to a decline in reading promotion beginning in the 1950s: a lack of both staffing and budget for the activity. “Given the limited funds and time of the library as well, we are working just to keep up with the reference, instruction, and materials [students] need for class and research,” wrote Bergman.<sup>64</sup> “People are concerned about it being perceived that money being spent on nonacademic pursuits could leave the library open to budget cuts,” wrote Moritz.<sup>65</sup> Space is also a concern, even when the popular reading materials are donated. “We’ve got a lot of priorities and very little staff and funding to do everything. The black hol[e] known as the serials budget takes up huge amounts of funding, so do the electronic resources . . . Our popular collection won’t cost much since most of it is donated materials, but we did have to find shelving and space for it,” wrote Lee.<sup>66</sup> In many libraries, where the stacks are overcrowded, adding materials with a limited shelf life is a worry. “Space and money may be considerations,” wrote

Bousfield. “The [Syracuse University] library is running out of space in the general stacks. I welcome the purchase of pop[ular] fiction and nonfiction, but worry that titles that may not interest anyone five years from now take up space in the crowded stacks.”<sup>67</sup>

Deference to other university faculty is another reason cited. “[A]cademic librarians tend to defer to faculty in the disciplines for academic matters, and are loath to promote anything that involves making a judgment that might be considered outside their purview,” noted Fister.<sup>68</sup>

Another argument for why academic librarians do not promote extracurricular reading is that it might detract from the image of the librarian as information specialist and might ally academic librarians too closely to their public library counterparts. “[W]e tend to privilege finding information over reading and, perhaps, worry that promoting mere reading is what low-brow public libraries do (or, even worse, what Oprah does),” wrote Fister.<sup>69</sup> “It’s seen as a public library service,” noted Moore. “Why do we think John Grisham, Agatha Christie, and Ted Dekker only belong in a public library?”<sup>70</sup>

Anecdotal, several of the librarians interviewed for this story (and myself as well) who were enthusiastic about promoting recreational reading had prior experience as public librarians. Perhaps there is a connection between this public library experience and the belief that recreational reading is important. It was also expressed by some of the librarians interviewed that making connections between public and academic librarians on this issue would be beneficial. “Last summer my husband and I visited the San Jose State Library, which, as I’m sure you know, occupies the same building as the San Jose Public Library,” wrote Bousfield. “Within one building patrons can meet research and recreational needs. That model might not be practical for all academic institutions, but greater communication and cooperation between public and academic libraries would help both to better serve patrons’ needs.”<sup>71</sup>

Fister commented upon the OCLC Perceptions market research report that noted that libraries are still mostly associated with books.<sup>72</sup> Fister wrote,

The authors of the study didn’t seem to allow for the idea that this was a good thing, except that perhaps we could convert those warm, fuzzy feelings into a more correct understanding that libraries are about information in many formats. All of which gave me the feeling that, in fact, many librarians have contempt for books and reading. And ordinary readers. I do think we need to help people understand what riches we have available, but it seems as if we’re embarrassed about the number of books we have and would prefer to be in some other “business” rather than books. Most likely competing with Google to be the authoritative mass aggregator of information.<sup>73</sup>

Hartman wrote,

I think [academic] librarians work very hard to maintain and develop a collection that supports the

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curriculum and the way that many libraries organize this process makes it difficult to coordinate purchasing for extra-curricular reading, be it fiction or nonfiction. Perhaps there is a fear that adding *The Devil Wears Prada* somehow takes away from the “academic weight” of the collection.<sup>74</sup>

Another barrier is getting the students to participate. “[A]ll the programs have been much more successful with staff and faculty than with students,” wrote Jenkins. “I guess with how busy their schedules are I shouldn’t be surprised.”<sup>75</sup> Bergman noted that when Occidental University’s library held book discussions for One Book, One Community, there were no student participants. “I assume the students are too busy with their schoolwork to have much time for extracurricular reading,” she wrote.<sup>76</sup> “At my campus there are added demands of work and family on most of the students,” noted Christine Dehoff of Erie Community College.<sup>77</sup> “Resources are limited, and with a plethora of activities and events already competing for students’ and staffs’ extra time, it is easy to assume that there is no time for extracurricular reading,” wrote Reed.<sup>78</sup> Hartman feels that the number of students at an event is not always the best measure of a reading program’s success: “Student participation in events varies a great deal. Students will tell me that they have enjoyed the novel, but that does not mean that they want to talk about it in public. If they pick up next year’s read because they enjoyed this year’s, then I feel the program is worthwhile, whether they choose to attend the associated activities or not.”<sup>79</sup>

A lack of RA training for academic librarians is another reason. “I also don’t think academic librarians are trained to do readers’ advisory. It’s a skill, like all other library skills, but I never learned to do it,” wrote Bergman. “It was not included as part of the academic library track when I was in library school . . . and I have never gone to a workshop.”<sup>80</sup>

The belief that many college librarians do not read recreationally themselves was also suggested. The survey responses do not support this idea, but this could be due to the survey flaws previously mentioned. Forty-three percent of those surveyed noted that they read a book for fun at least once a week. Six percent stated that they rarely read for fun. “Many librarians do not have any reader’s advisor skills, and unfortunately, some of us do not read recreationally,” wrote Johnston. “I cannot recall where I heard this comment—I think in a movie—a child says to another, ‘librarians are not allowed to read books, only book reviews.’”<sup>81</sup>

Finally, as already noted, several college libraries started their popular reading collections because they learned there was a student or faculty demand. “It is also difficult to take on an initiative when there is no one clamoring for it,” wrote Hartman. “Departments demand resources and services, our students demand new technologies, and unless someone (Students? Librarians? Faculty? Library committee[s]?) demands extracurricular reading materials, that will not become a priority.”<sup>82</sup>

## PERSEVERANCE IN PROMOTING EXTRACURRICULAR READING

A conviction of its importance in the overall education of college students, and a sense of personal fulfillment is why many of the librarians interviewed continue to promote extracurricular reading. “I always loved the Readers’ Advisory part of librarianship,” wrote Jenkins. “I just wanted to promote extracurricular reading on campus. I managed my time well enough that I was able to do lots of extracurricular reading when I was an undergrad, so I guess I wanted to give other[s] a similar opportunity.”<sup>83</sup>

Having a supportive director and colleagues is key to the success of academic library reading promotion. “Fortunately, I have a boss who also shares the vision to foster reading for the sake of reading,” notes Brown.<sup>84</sup> “I spent the first eighteen years of my career in public libraries,” noted Moritz. “My ideas of public service, including extracurricular reading, were very different than those of the other librarians . . . [b]ut they were willing to listen.”<sup>85</sup> Moore cites support from her director and another key administrative figure: “It also helps that our university president is an avid reader and a big library supporter.”<sup>86</sup>

Even librarians who do not go out of their way to practice RA do admit that it does happen organically. “Readers’ advisory happens in an implicit way—a display in the lobby . . . but not saying read this,” said Burnett. “Exposure is where we can do something and what we do—that’s what a university is, making things available, exposing people to different viewpoints.”<sup>87</sup>

Even librarians who believe that promoting extracurricular reading should not be a priority for academic libraries seem to believe in this exposure theory. “I would not promote the extracurricular reading, but I want to make the books available,” wrote Bergman.<sup>88</sup>

Related to the idea of making the books available is that in some college towns, students do not have easy access to the area’s public library. It was noted in some responses that sometimes the public libraries are far away or do not provide cards for college students. “The bottom line is that students are going to use what is convenient for them and if we’re not providing the service, they will do other things (go watch TV) or go elsewhere (Barnes and Noble),” noted Hartman.<sup>89</sup>

The possibility of bringing the extracurricular reading to the students where they congregate has also been considered. “I’m beginning to think more about bringing the library to students, especially the extracurricular offerings. Library staff members have taken popular books and DVDs to the dining hall with a laptop and scanner to check them out to students. It would be cool to have a library page on MySpace for students to post what they are currently reading,” wrote Hartman.<sup>90</sup>

Aside from the altruistic reasons for promoting recreational reading among students, there is also a public relations benefit to be considered. “I think promotion of extra-

curricular reading can go a long way toward creating good relations between the library and the students,” wrote Sarah Johnson.<sup>91</sup> “It serves as a hook to get students, faculty, and staff into the building,” wrote Renee Hopkins, librarian at Chipola College Library.<sup>92</sup>

Probably the best reason to keep finding ways to promote recreational reading in the college library is to be able to witness those moments when the students connect with their reading. “You should see my small-but-faithful group of pharmacy co-eds who devour bodice rippers because these books are often funny and sexy and totally remove them from the classroom!” wrote Moritz.<sup>93</sup>

“I also know for a fact that in an age of tight budgets and ever-increasing journal subscriptions, it can be tough to defend spending money on paperbacks that aren’t shelf hardy and don’t contribute directly to course content,” wrote Moore. “But if that student sitting in the third row is more articulate and can think more clearly because of extracurricular reading, isn’t it worth it?”<sup>94</sup>

“I want my education majors to read the new David McCullough bestseller,” wrote Hartman. “They may not be conducting in-depth research on the Revolutionary War, but something they read will stick and, somewhere down the line, a connection will be made.”<sup>95</sup> As MacAdam suggested eleven years ago, “[t]here is a future in the making . . . how we design our facilities, what we define [as] our ‘collections.’”<sup>96</sup>

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## APPENDIX A

### URLs Academic Library Programs and Collections Noted in this Article (when available)

- Indiana University South Bend Libraries One Book, One Campus: [www.iusb.edu/~libg/onebook](http://www.iusb.edu/~libg/onebook) (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- University of Michigan Shapiro Undergraduate Library. Wagman Browsing Area: [www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/general/wagman.html](http://www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/general/wagman.html) (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- Gwynedd-Mercy College. Lourdes Library GMC Reads: [www.gmc.edu/library/snowfalling.htm](http://www.gmc.edu/library/snowfalling.htm) (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- College of Mount St. Joseph Archbishop Alter Library. Literacy and Leisure: <http://inside.msj.edu/departments/library/libserve/literacy> (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- Union University. Emma Waters Summar Library RA Blog: [www.uu.edu/library/blogs/blog.cfm?ID=3](http://www.uu.edu/library/blogs/blog.cfm?ID=3) (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- Sweet Briar College Libraries. Nicole Basbanes Student Book Collecting Contest: [www.cochran.sbc.edu/friends/contest.html](http://www.cochran.sbc.edu/friends/contest.html) (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
- Syracuse University. Research Guide for the Kite Runner (CNY Reads title): <http://library.syr.edu/instruction/class/sharreadKite> (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)
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- One Book, One College: Common Reading Programs (Compiled by Barbara Fister): <http://homepages.gac.edu/~fister/onebook.html> (accessed Nov. 6, 2006)

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## APPENDIX B

### IRB Study Form and Survey Questions

#### INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND

#### Readers' Advisory and Extracurricular Reading in College Libraries

You are invited to participate in a research study involving the state of readers' advisory (RA) services in college libraries.

#### INFORMATION

You will be one of approximately 150–300 subjects who will be participating in this research. You will be asked to answer fifteen questions regarding RA services at your library and your own attitudes toward RA and reading. The survey will take approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

#### BENEFITS

While there is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, I hope to raise the awareness of the benefits of extracurricular reading programs and RA in academic libraries.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected are completely anonymous unless you are willing to be interviewed further. If you wish to be interviewed

further, please provide your contact information at the end of the survey. If you agree to be interviewed, your survey will no longer be anonymous, and if quoted in the article, your name will be used.

#### CONTACT

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Julie Elliott at Library 109, Indiana University-South Bend, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend, IN 46634, (574) 520-4410, [jmfelli@iusb.edu](mailto:jmfelli@iusb.edu).

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this project, you may contact the Indiana University-South Bend Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., A247, South Bend, IN 46634, 574-520-4181, [sbirb@iusb.edu](mailto:sbirb@iusb.edu).

#### PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Once your survey has been submitted to me, it cannot be returned since the surveys are anonymous. **You must be 18 years of age to participate in this study.**

**General Questions:**

1. Does your university library have an RA service? (Readers' Advisory: where a librarian or staff member helps readers choose what books to read, provides suggestions for recreational reading, etc.)  
 Yes       No
2. Does your university library have a browsing area? If no, skip to #7.  
 Yes       No
3. If yes to #2, is it a separate collection?  
 Yes       No
4. If yes to #3, is it a separate room? If no, please skip to #6.  
 Yes       No
5. If yes to #4, is it staffed by  
 Librarian?    Staff member?    Student?  
 Not staffed?
6. What kinds of books are in the browsing collection?  
 Popular fiction and nonfiction  
 Fiction only                       Nonfiction only  
 Academic materials only
7. Does your library lead a "One Book, One Campus" program?  
 Yes       No
8. Does your library lead a "summer reading program," extracurricular reading groups, or a readers' Web log?  
 Yes       No
9. If your library does not lead such programs, does your library participate in similar campus programs?  
 Yes       No
10. Does your library have book lists in either paper or Web format?  
 Yes, Web and print       Yes, Web only  
 Yes, print only       No
11. Have there been any changes in the last five years to your RA service? For example, you provided services five years ago, but do not now?  
 Yes       No
12. If yes to number 11, what changes did you make?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

13. Your university is primarily:  
 commuter       residential
14. The highest degree your university grants is:  
 Doctorate    Master's    Bachelor's  
 Associate's

**Attitudes toward reading/RA:**

Please circle the abbreviation which best matches your opinion:  
 SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; D=Disagree;  
 SD=Strongly Disagree; and No Opinion

15. RA should be a priority for academic libraries  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
16. RA is a public library issue  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
17. Extracurricular reading is important for college students  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
18. Encouraging reading is an academic librarian's role  
 SA   A      N      D      SD
19. I would do more to promote RA if it were written into my job description  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
20. I read books for fun often (more than one per week)  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
21. I read books for fun sometimes (approx. one per month)  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion
22. I rarely read books for fun (less than one per month)  
 SA   A      D      SD      No Opinion

If you would be willing to be interviewed for this study, please provide your contact information below:

Name and Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (please specify work or home): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to be contacted by:    phone       e-mail