

Comparing the Preparation of Youth Services Librarians to their on-the-ground
Experiences: a Grounded Theory Study Incorporating Criticism and Connoisseurship

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better understand the on-the-ground preparation of youth services librarians, in contrast to their professional training in Master's of Library Science (MLIS) programs. Classic Grounded Theory was the predominant methodology for this qualitative study, and elements of Criticism and Connoisseurship were also utilized. Document review, interviews, and journaling activities with ten participants were the primary methods of data collection. Key findings from this dissertation include a grounded theory explaining the current state of preparation for youth services librarianship, and multiple avenues for further study.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The work of youth services librarians has been undergoing a major shift over the past two decades. In addition to being master storytellers and expert catalogers, youth services librarians are now expected to be tech support, keeper of the Maker Space, Dungeons and Dragons experts, adept facilitators of complex STEM (Science, technology, engineering and math) topics, exhibit designers, and even childcare experts (Dusenbery, 2014; Gilbert et al., 2019; Holland, 2015; LaConte & Dusenbery, 2016). How are Masters of Library Information Science (MLIS) programs preparing youth services librarians for the complex and evolving requirements of their work? There is currently a dearth of research focused specifically on comparing curriculum for future youth services librarians to the work they do in the field. The literature that does exist focuses on how a handful of programs (such as STAR Net, LEAP into Science, Dr. Bear, and others) have identified very specific gaps in the training of these librarians around STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) content, facilitation of hands-on activities, and knowledge of cutting-edge technology (such as that in maker spaces.) There are a few studies similar in scope, but focused on investigating the training of data librarians in comparison their day-to-day work. The major finding of this work was that more hands-on and experiential training was needed in most areas of interest (Thomas and Urban, 2018). A list of recommendations for the general MLIS degree presented by the University of Maryland is also relevant, though broader than the scope of this research, and is discussed in Chapter 2.

This study goes beyond identifying gaps reactively based on the agendas of individual organizations (such as those described above) and instead seeks to proactively identify long-known gaps (like STEM facilitation) and emergent gaps due to changing technologies. This

classic grounded theory study is rooted in the Transformative Paradigm, which posits that the goal of research and evaluation is, and should be, to affect change for those most in need (Mertens, 2009). In recognition of my extensive background in this subject area, components of Criticism and Connoisseurship (Eisner, 1976) were utilized to judge the relevance of sources, analyze data, and to identify appropriate participants for this study. C&C was also utilized in support of theoretical sampling, to make sure data for all the relevant dimensions of youth services librarianship were fully saturated.

Background/General Statement

Surveys conducted by the STAR Library Network (Hakala & Keelin, 2016; Holland, 2015) show that while the percentage of librarians indicating comfort with STEM topics has increased steadily since 2009, most librarians still indicate they are uncomfortable with even basic facilitation techniques (regardless of whether STEM is involved). During the 2017 total solar eclipse, eclipse glasses and training were made available to public libraries at no cost. Hundreds of participating libraries indicated that this was the first time they had done *any* sort of public program in their library (Dusenbery et al., 2017). Many MLIS programs focus on methodology, cataloguing, and typical library tools of the trade. While there have been increases in courses specifically about technology for children's librarians, these courses focus on teaching children to use the web, conduct searches, or access literature-based games – they do not address the technological literacy of the librarian themselves, except on a very superficial level (Adkins & Esser, 2004). Frequently, these are also elective courses that may only be taught once during a students' graduate career. Adkins and Esser also report that in studying 30 years of job announcements from children's librarians, a shift has been seen from a predominant focus on knowledge and love of children's literature, to a focus on

knowledge and familiarity with computer technology. However, there was not an emphasis in facilitation, STEM or similar topics across this 30-year study. Instead, front-line children's and teens (the combination of which is referred to as "youth services" in this dissertation) librarians must teach themselves the very basics of running programs with children, while being expected to run 3D printers, trouble shoot tech toys, get families in contact with social workers and social services, and still do their regular jobs.

Libraries are often hiring non-MLIS staff to fill these gaps, further alienating trained librarians from these experiences and reinforcing ideas of inadequacy (as one study participant stated "you can't tell at my library who has an MLIS and who doesn't, and while that's great in some ways, I feel that the MLIS should make a difference in the types of tasks and the salary an individual receives...it helps us retain professionalism in the field...if we need these other skills, why aren't we taught them?") Are youth services librarians rising to the challenge as a group? Or are the trends towards hiring performers and off-duty schoolteachers signaling to youth services librarians (and MLIS programs) that STEM, facilitation techniques, and even simple customer services strategies do not need to be taught at the MLIS level? Grounded Theory research (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 82), which is used to move beyond detailed descriptions and actually formulate (or even discover) a theory for a process or action, has allowed me to "uncover" a better understanding of the gaps in the knowledge of youth services librarians, and how MLIS programs and librarian professional development programs can target those gaps.

Definition of Terms

These key terms will appear throughout this study and are defined below:

Master of Library Information Science/MLIS: An MLIS degree is the terminal degree for librarians. Library staff doing the work of librarians without having obtained the degree are sometimes called support librarians or paraprofessionals, but the standard is for the term “librarian” to be reserved only for those with the terminal degree. Many small and rural libraries do not have actual librarians on staff, and the public will refer to any staff member as a librarian. The MLIS term is most common currently, so is used throughout this manuscript in the place of MLS (Master of Library Science) or other similar degrees.

Youth Services Librarian: This encompasses both children’s and teen services librarians. The use of this term in this study is an indication that the experience of both groups is being studied and interpreted.

American Library Association (ALA): The American Library Association is the accrediting organization for MLIS programs, and is also lobbying, professional development, and membership network for libraries. ALA has many subgroups (such as ALSC, the Association of Library Services for Children) that serve various subgroups of librarians.

STEM/STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math or Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. This term refers to content that is explicitly rooted in any of these disciplines, with many library staff preferring STEAM, as the addition of art is a more accurate description of the programs that are done in a library setting (especially for children’s librarians).

Statement of Problem

In my 15 years of training librarians to do the work they were not trained to do during their MLIS degree, it has become apparent that there are multiple gaps in professional training. This “extra” work focuses on hands-on STEAM activities, facilitation, technology

skills, and dissemination of science content in an engaging fashion. This study seeks both to elaborate these deficits, and also to understand what other gaps may exist in the training of youth services librarians in order to suggest further study that can drive changes to MLIS curriculum to better match the reality of work in the field. If the niche areas I'm a "connoisseur" in have such wide-spread deficits, it's likely (and essential) to find out what other deficits exist and can be alleviated.

Theoretical Framework

In a Grounded Theory study, the relevant theoretical framework is often discovered during the study, or even created based on the results. Prior to data collection, there were three frameworks that had the potential to be relevant (though the initial data analysis was not done with these frameworks as a focus, in keeping with Grounded Theory methodology). These frameworks were revisited throughout the study, though eventually the first framework (while relevant) was found to be too broad to lend to actionable suggestions. That theoretical framing was the concept of Readiness, which has been applied across a variety of fields including task readiness, organizational readiness (for a variety of topics), entrepreneurial readiness, school readiness, workforce readiness for various initiatives, readiness to adopt internet technologies in developing nations, and even as broad as a cities readiness to become a "Smart City" (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Dada, 2006; Endicott-Popovsky et al., 2007; Gavin, 2014; Noori et al., 2020; O'Neil et al., 1997; Ruiz et al., 2016; Westjohn et al., 2009). This concept has also been used in relation to librarianship in a limited way, focused on how "ready" individual libraries are to implement STEM programming (Shtivelband et al., 2019). An unforeseen limitation with the library study was the inability to make broad recommendations based on results (which was also found when utilizing this framework for

this study). Most studied libraries were in fact “ready”, but interviews elaborated that this was because of the drive and interest of one or two particular librarians, or even the director. It was not an institutional readiness; it was readiness based on the expertise and drive of one individual. If that person left, so did the perceived readiness of the library to implement STEM programming. This result provided the research-based evidence that matched my practice-based evidence that (at least in the arena of programming), librarians (and specifically children’s and teen services librarians) were not receiving the training needed to do their work. They are teaching themselves, and often unable or not confident in their ability to share that knowledge with others. What other facets of youth services librarianship face the same issue? While readiness ended up not being the most relevant framework for this study, the wealth of existing studies and instruments on the general social process of Readiness could be very useful for future quantitative or mixed methods work on this subject.

The second framework was the “ecology of the classroom” (Eisner, 1992). Simply put, the ecology of the classroom uses known dynamics, relationships, and activities of the classroom in order to aid teachers in predicting and responding to both every day and rare classroom occurrences. Each classroom is unique, but certain dynamics can be predicted across many classrooms (especially when accounting for geography, socioeconomics of the area, and size of classroom). The same is true for certain subsets of libraries. Of course, each library (like each classroom) will have unique challenges and responses, but it’s possible that creating categories of interactions and expectations might aid in determining next steps for librarian preparation. For the purposes of this study, I found the specific focus on each individual participant’s experience did not provide enough information about their

“classroom” (library) to utilize this framework. Future work that includes perspectives from more staff or incorporates quantitative data may be well suited to utilizing this framework. The five “Conceptions of Curriculum” also provided a cognitive boost, helping me move from the data to the grounded theory (Eisner, 1974, pg. 3). These orientations to curriculum are: the development of cognitive process; curriculum as technology; self-actualization; social reconstruction-relevance; and academic rationalism. I initially did not think I could move data into a theory, all I saw from the core social process was more questions. Reading through these orientations to curriculum didn’t provide me an existing framework (as these all focused on curriculum development, not consumption), but they did provide related concepts that led to the final notion that “creating meaning” was happening *because* of the lack of meaning or real-world context providing during formal training. This is actually very much in line with Glaser and Strauss’s original thoughts on GT, which was that researchers would be steeped in knowledge of theory so they could borrow and reconstruct as needed, it was the minutia of the substantive area that was meant to be initially avoided, not these more theoretical concepts.

The framework that ended up being most relevant (though still not a perfect fit) was the “Instructional Arc”. Like the “Ecology of the Classroom”, this is a formal education oriented framework, but one that I have utilized in past observation and analysis at both the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and Denver Zoo. As this study looks at the formal education experience of youth services librarians, and the impact it has on their role as informal educators, it is an interesting framework to consider. Eisner said:

Teaching is an activity that requires artistry, schooling itself is a cultural artifact, and education is a process whose features may differ from individual to individual, context to context. Therefore, what I believe we need to do with respect to educational evaluation is not to seek recipes to

control and measure practice, but rather to enhance whatever artistry the teacher can achieve (Eisner, 1976, pg 140).

This description of educational evaluation is in line with my intentions in using the Transformative Paradigm as the overarching paradigm for this project. The intent is not to find the “correct” answer, but rather the set of answers that can help the most people transform their practice, and the most supporting institutions support this work.

The Instructional Arc includes the *Intended Curriculum*, the *Operational Curriculum*, and the *Received Curriculum* (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg 25). The Intended Curriculum looks at what the teacher (or in this case of this research, the MLIS instructor) wanted to happen, the Operational looks at reality, and the Received focuses on what students (MLIS students) got from the experience. While it is acceptable to only focus on certain dimensions of the Arc, I will quickly discuss all three. While the Intended Curriculum had to be inferred (based on the recollections of library staff, and review of curricula and syllabi) this did not have an effect on the analysis, as we have to generously assume instructors and professors intended their students to be ready for their careers after graduation. The Operational Curriculum was harder to define, but by the end of this research it became clear that the operational curriculum was a theoretical one that perhaps focused more on the needs of academic librarians than public librarians. The Received Curriculum then is what MLIS students actually got out of their coursework, and their perceptions on how it prepared them for their positions (in this case, how they did not feel prepared, but felt other specialties might have felt differently).

Again, this framework was not used to describe the full breadth of this study, but referring to some of these ideas while coding and sorting data was useful to consider other perspectives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover gaps in the required knowledge of youth services librarians, to identify needs that are not being addressed by current professional training programs, and to potentially suggest changes to MLIS curriculum to better match the lived experiences of those in the field. Classic Grounded Theory was utilized in developing and analyzing the study, which involved three different data collection methods. These include analysis of 2 week-long journal entries from five youth services librarians focused on their daily work, analysis of interviews conducted with five additional youth services librarians, and follow-up interview and email questions based on emergent questions, utilizing the concept of theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1992). Prior to the interview and notebook coding, a short literature and document review (in keeping with Grounded Theory procedure) was conducted. Post coding, an emergent document and literature review was conducted, to find additional information supporting or questioning the findings.

Importance of the Study

As libraries (and their staff), are being asked to do more with less, it is imperative that the training received in MLIS programs (which are required to be a librarian) is relevant and timely to the needs of the libraries these students will soon be working at. With the cost to attend an MLIS program fluctuating wildly across universities (Northeastern University has the cheapest tuition at \$4,267 per year, while the University of Southern California has the highest at \$74,520 per year) it has become increasingly important for potential MLIS students to weigh cost versus benefit of these programs. The cheapest programs may be attractive, but do they provide the skills needed to be a competitive candidate? Do they provide additional training that will allow youth services librarians to move into

management? Do online programs provide the same rigor as in-person programs? According to Zippia (2021), an employment information aggregator, more than half of MLIS students worked in another (often related) field prior to beginning a degree program. So not only are new MLIS students needing to be cognizant of cost and program prestige, but there is also the common issue of being unable to relocate for a degree program and needing to rely on the closest local program, or online programs that are offered at an increasing number of universities. How much choice does the typical MLIS student have when limited by these factors? With an average salary of approximately \$40,000 a year, youth services librarians should not be put in the situation to have to go into debt to attend required schooling, only to end up having to spend even more money to make up gaps in knowledge left by unmodernized MLIS programs. There is a clear need to update the accreditation requirements (as they relate to youth services, and even public librarianship generally) for these programs, ensuring that a consistent base level of evidence-based instruction can be expected across programs.

The results of this study will have immediate importance to current librarians, allowing them to highlight deficits in their training and advocate for paid training opportunities (many librarians, including those interviewed for this study reported attending professional development opportunities using vacation time and paying out of their own pockets). The results of this study (and future studies) will also be extremely relevant both for individual MLIS-degree granting programs, but also for the accreditor of those programs, the American Library Association (ALA). ALA is both a professional development and membership organization, and the accreditation agency for MLIS and school librarian degrees. ALA's mission statement is to "provide leadership for the development, promotion,

and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.” (American Library Association, 2022) There is great evidence that the public side of this mission statement is being met. According to the 2020 *State of America’s Libraries Report* published by ALA, libraries continue to be essential and safe spaces for minoritized populations, providing support to sign up for government services, fighting censorship (preserving access to gender affirming and educational books to trans, queer and questioning youth), providing free supports for early childhood reading, and even supporting census activities (ALA, 2020). According to the report, American’s average 10.5 visits to their public library a year. When considering young adults and affluent baby boomers who tend to not utilize library services, this means that many individuals are visiting their libraries not just weekly, but even multiple times a week in some instances. Why? Over 70% of American’s agree that libraries can provide access to important health information, 90% of libraries provide basic data literacy training to support the elderly and itinerant to gain skills necessary to survive in the 21st century, all public libraries provide computer and internet access to the 47% of low-income households who do not have a computer, and libraries are increasingly adding accessibility services for the deaf and blind that are becoming less reliable both in schools and the workforce (ALA, 2020). Patrons clearly are continuing to benefit from the ever-expanding services of the public library, with children’s and teens librarians running the majority of grant-funded programs in public libraries (IMLS, 2021).

But something is missing in the 32-page *State of America’s Libraries* report from ALA. There is a timely and important four page spread on censorship. Multiple pages are devoted to accessibility initiatives for patrons. Dozens of examples of how patrons are

impacted by library services are presented. The addition of Sustainability as a core value of librarianship is highlighted. But there is not a single mention of supporting librarians themselves. Programs that provide professional development to library staff are not highlighted, free resources to fill training gaps remain unmentioned. Children's and teen services librarian incomes are not keeping up with inflation (Zippia, 2022), yet they and their colleagues are expected to continue to learn more and stretch themselves ever thinner to support these exciting (and needed) changes. Large grant programs like the Kellogg Foundation fund ALA to develop public outreach campaigns to be adopted by member organizations, and small grant programs like STAR Net provide a small percentage of the nation's 17,000 public libraries with funds to support pilot programs. But grants support is not available for most libraries. If library staff are going to continue to be underpaid and overburdened, the least that ALA (and MLIS programs) can do is gain a better understanding of the requirements of on-the-ground librarianship and ensure that all accredited programs are preparing future library staff for the libraries they will be entering, not an antiquated version of librarianship. This work has the potential not only to inform training and coursework that will improve the lives of future youth services librarians, but also to address a larger systemic lack of focus on the sacrifice and dedication of public library staff.

As the *State of America's Libraries* report did not provide relevant information for this study, an in-depth analysis of the current accreditation standards is provided in the Chapter 2 Literature and Document Review.

Research Questions

The questions for this study reflect the emergent nature of grounded theory, allowing for iteration and adaptation as the study progresses. Questions become more detailed as the

nature of youth services librarianship is uncovered, or the experiences may be so vastly different (depending on library size, budget, etc.) that more segmentation is required for analysis. The initial research question is indicated with a bold “I” in the following table, while the emergent question that developed during coding and sorting is indicated with a bold “E”. A methodology question is also included, to meet the requirements of this program’s dissertations.

Table 1*Research Questions*

Research Questions	Variables	Data Sources	Data Collection
(I) How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiences of youth services librarians • relation of experience to professional training 	Interview, observation, document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document Review • Initial interviews with four youth services librarians
(E) What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work? (E.1) How is this meaning discovered? (E.2) What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emotional indicators (stress, contentment, etc.) • program attended • years in field • size of library • budget of library • daily tasks 	Interview, observation, document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial journaling exercise with four youth services librarians • Emergent interview and journaling exercise with additional participants (one for each method)
(Method Question) In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?	n/a	Data collection, sorting and coding processes	Data collection processes will be analyzed to answer this methodological question.

Overview of Research Design and Methods

As the requirements and realities of being a youth services librarian are themselves currently in flux, it seems logical to utilize an emergent methodology to investigate the lived experience of being a youth services librarian. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allows researchers to approach research questions without a preconceived notion of the results through inductive logic, allowing for discovery and surprise rather than confirmation. This exploratory study began with open-ended observation, interviews, and document review from eight total youth services librarians (described in more detail in the following section). Utilizing constant comparison, follow-up questioning of both participant types happened over email, and with two additional participants to obtain saturation with regards to emergent items that appeared in later interviews. The majority of document and literature review occurred *after* data collection, in keeping with Grounded Theory principles.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data was collected utilizing Classic Grounded Theory methods. Please see Table 2 on page 15 for a summary of this section. For the initial research question, two different sets of youth services librarians provided open-ended data for analysis. The first group of four librarians provided responses to open-ended interview questions, and also provided answers to some short descriptive questions prior to interviews. Four additional librarians also journaled their daily experiences for two weeks. The purpose of these descriptive questions, interviews, and journaling exercises was to gain a sense of “a day in the life” of children’s librarians, and to be sure to capture parts of their daily work that they may otherwise not share. Initial interviews and journal coding led to the development of additional emergent research questions. Some of the original librarians were contacted and asked to respond over email to these questions, or, if

they felt they had a lot to say, an additional interview was scheduled. Two additional librarians were also added as interview participants, to fully saturate these emergent areas. Elements of Criticism and Connoisseurship were utilized to identify the additional. Specifically, the “evaluation” component of D.I.E.T. was used to assure saturation has been achieved, through asking if there were other potential outcomes to common situations that have not been identified in the data (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg. 50). Both additional participants were seasoned library staff (not new to their field) who have worked extensively with trainees and approached me (after their colleagues were interviewed) saying they felt their experience with new professionals would be helpful.

Data Analysis Methods

See Table 3 on page 15 for a graphical summary of this section. The qualitative data were analyzed utilizing Classic Grounded Theory methods. The first step after coding was to analyze the themes and codes identified in the data, with a focus on gerunds, as per grounded theory tradition (Glaser, 1996, pg. 6). This required an emergent outlook, looking for data that was missing or incomplete, and conducting theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1992) to ensure the missing data can be found in a timely and efficient fashion. Some aspects of Criticism and Connoisseurship were also utilized during analysis, in particular DIET (description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics) was utilized to take advantage of my prior knowledge of this topic, with a goal of clearly highlighting my preconceived notions and attempting to keep them separate from the emergent data (Saxe & Uhrmacher, 2018).

Table 2*Data Collection Table*

Research Questions	Collection Methods	From Whom	When	Security/Confidentiality
(I) How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?	-Interviews -Journals -Document Review	4 youth services librarians conducted interviews; 4 youth services librarians completed journals	2/22/24 to 3/25/24	Interview and journal data and transcripts stored in a password protected file, separate from identifying information
(E) What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work? (E.1) How is this meaning discovered? (E.2) What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?	-Interviews -Journals -Document Review	8 initial participants plus 2 additional youth services librarians	3/15/24 to 4/2/24	Interview and journal data and transcripts stored in a password protected file, separate from identifying information
(Method Question) In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?	Review of research process	All study materials	Full study term	

Table 4*Data Analysis Table*

Research Questions	Variables	Analytic Processes	Analytic Products	Data Quality
(I) How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?	Experiences of youth services librarians, relation of experience to professional training, emotional indicators (stress, contentment, etc)	Classic grounded theory analysis, constant comparative analysis, use of criticism and connoisseurship DIET	Theory of the appropriateness of preparation of children’s librarians and/or next steps for research	Member checking and consensual qualitative analysis in initial interviews provided assurances of quality data and interpretation
(E) What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work? (E.1) How is this meaning discovered? (E.2) What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?	program attended, years in field, size of library, budget of library, daily tasks	Classic grounded theory analysis, constant comparative analysis, use of criticism and connoisseurship DIET	Theory of the appropriateness of preparation of children’s librarians and/or next steps for research	Member checking and consensual qualitative analysis in initial interviews provided assurances of quality data and interpretation
(Method Question) In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?	n/a	Review of data collection, sorting and coding procedures	n/a	n/a

Validation

Threats to validity in this study include the potential of my prior experience training library staff to color my perceptions of need or miss areas unrelated to my own work. By purposefully dialoguing with my own prior experience utilizing the tools of Criticism and Connoisseurship as well as memoing methods encouraged by both Classic Grounded Theory and C&C, I believe I was able to delve more deeply into the areas I had existing knowledge, while being open to identifying new areas beyond my own experiences. The emergent research questions speak to this, as these were areas that had initially not been part of this investigation. I also discussed my memos and thought processes with participants (member checking) updating my codes and notes as relevant.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations

The assumptions inherent to this study were arrived at through 12 years of work directly with youth services librarians, with specific regard to their need for professional development and additional training. These assumptions include the fact that many librarians (regardless of job title) are not comfortable with hands-on facilitation, facilitating certain topics (such as STEM, technology, or Maker activities), and that community type (rural, suburban, or urban) and library budget plays a large role in the expectations placed upon library staff.

Delimitations for this study included limiting the study participants to current youth services librarians who had recently graduated, excluding MLIS staff and faculty from the participant list, and the decision to limit this study to qualitative research only, though a clear framework for a larger mixed methods study was initially developed. The decision to limit participants to a small number of current practitioners was both a methodological and

practical one. This number of participants, and the amount of data gathered from them is in line with the requirements of grounded theory, and the time available with which to conduct the interviews and journaling activities. The decision to limit participants to recent MLIS graduates limited the amount of data that could be obtained, as well as limited perspectives. While certainly the perspectives of MLIS faculty, and of the volunteers creating the ALA Standards are necessary to understand the larger picture, this study chose to focus only on the lived experience of youth services librarians. Describing their experiences before including the experiences of other groups will lead to more thoughtful questioning and interrogation of assumptions in later planned studies.

The limitations for this study included time, monetary resources (to travel to participant locations and reimburse participants for time and other costs), and the relatively small number of participants due to the time and money constraints. Following the tenets of grounded theory, enough participants were included (or invited after the initial interviews) to reach saturation of all categories. Thoughts (especially around the experiences of young librarians) repeated themselves frequently across participants, regardless of the age or experiences of the participant themselves. The small number therefor did not limit the investigation of the social processes, but (as with all qualitative study) items that would have been more powerful with confirmation from larger numbers of participants had to be saved for future work.

Summary

This study sought to identify the dimensions of librarianship specific to youth services librarians that are currently not being addressed through professional preparation in the MLIS degree. The results of this study lay the groundwork for future studies, pilot

courses that can begin to address the gaps in professional training for the next generation of youth services librarians, and recommendations directly from practitioners for ALA to consider as they continue to update accreditation standards. It also supports current librarians in their efforts to gain professional development and extend staff knowledge beyond one key expert in each area.

Chapter two includes two parts. The first is the original basic literature review of the following areas: perceived key facets of youth services librarianship (mostly around children's librarianship), focused on the texts used in MLIS programs children librarianship courses; professional development opportunities for youth services librarians meant to close gaps in training; and a review of syllabi from youth services librarianship courses (including items meant for both children's and teen services). The second represents the more in-depth literature review conducted after initial data collection and coding, which focused on emergent codes and categories that appeared during interview and journal coding and helped to tie together the emergent grounded theory of the preparation of youth services librarians (discussed in Chapter 5). Chapter two includes some data from study participants, to better situate the documents and literature in the context of this study.

Chapter three addresses the specifics of the research design, as well as the ways different schools of thought on grounded theory were integrated into the research design, and how Criticism and Connoisseurship played a key role in identifying saturation. Chapter three will also elaborate more fully on sampling strategy and recruitment.

Chapter four highlights the data collected from each participant, and places it in context of their own experiences compared to those of other participants. The coding and sorting strategy is described in detail, and the core social process identified by this study is

introduced. Criticism and Connoisseurship is discussed as a key factor in moving the data and analysis beyond a collection of facts and stories into a grounded theory.

Chapter five shares the tentative grounded theory discovered in this data and related literature and document review, and posits next steps for the profession, and for the research agenda. Chapter five also includes a discussion on the relevance of the inclusion of criticism and connoisseurship in a grounded theory study.

Chapter Two: Literature and Document Analysis

The following literature review is presented in two parts. Part I is the initial literature review conducted prior to data collection and analysis. This review purposefully focused on items that were familiar to me (such as past work by STAR Net and other National Science Foundation funded programs), and items that were necessary to check some of my basic assumptions prior to spending time on interviews and journaling exercises (such as the basic review of three MLIS programs). Additional items (such as the ALA accreditation requirements) were flagged for future review after data collection to avoid pre-conceived notions being present in initial questions or conversations. Part II presents an in-depth view of additional literature (whose inclusion was possible because of emergent ideas that surfaced during interviews and journal reviews), ALA accreditation requirements, Association of Library Services for Children (ALSC) competencies, Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) competencies, and program requirements from a larger number of universities. State of the Art programming in libraries is also briefly discussed in the second section, highlighting areas of librarianship that are not currently taught in the majority of MLIS programs.

Literature Review in Grounded Theory and Criticism and Connoisseurship Studies

This literature review is not presented in the typical form, where big ideas are supported by dozens of corroborating citations, but rather in a fashion more appropriate both to Grounded Theory (GT), and to Criticism and Connoisseurship (C&C). As previously discussed, literature in GT is emergent and is not to be delved into too deeply to start to avoid preconceiving data. More important perhaps though that the worry about preconceiving data, is the fact that data gathering and coding is meant to be emergent. The potential to do a lot of

reading unrelated to the direction of the research is high. As Charmin describes literature review in Classic Grounded Theory, she recommends a systematic review of the literature once the study is completed, recognizing that typically brief overview of the literature is relevant to start the process (Charmaz, 2011). The literature presented in the review is itself data and meant to be viewed and interpreted within the emergent frameworks of each studies data collection. In C&C, the analysis method known as *D.I.E.T.* (discussed further in Chapter 3), interpretation of your data (including your literature!) takes description which "...can be thought of as giving an account *of*" (Eisner, 1991, pg. 95) and moving to interpretation which "can be regarded as an accounting *for*" (pg. 95). Evaluation of your data then, "concerns the making of value judgements about the quality of some object, situation, or process" (Eisner, 1991, pg. 80). In C&C it is not enough to list the facts as others have stated them, instead it is necessary to interrogate that data, interpret its meaning, and decide on its relevance to your own knowledge and collected data. In this sense G&C and C&C work together well in support of incorporating literature into your study. By first being a connoisseur of a substantive area (and then adding to your knowledge with your own data collection), you can more confidently postpone your deep review of the literature until you are ready to see if you have, in fact, reached saturation. The literature review should not provide wholesale new ideas. Rather, it should show glimpses of the topics and thematics you have begun to describe and provide further backing for those ideas (or identifying areas that need to be resampled). As part of this dissertation is investigating the potential dovetailing of GT and C&C, I believe it is worth noting here that I suffered a temporary crisis of conviction to the concept of delayed literature review while writing up the below summaries. I would find that others had "scooped" my research questions and wondered if I had anything new to say at all.

Of course, I quickly found either that the study participants were very different, the outcomes were irrelevant to this work, or (in the very best cases) that the research had developed a grounded theory (though never using that phrase) in a different field, or on a different topic. Studies that appeared to be about children's librarians were actually about school librarians, studies were in another country with vastly different views of librarianship, and studies with titles like "Re-envisioning the MLIS" (described later in this chapter), had a very different conception of the issues than my study and participants. Had I started by reading this literature, would I have asked the questions I asked and/or talked to the people I talked to? More likely, I would have changed my topic seeing that no corroborative evidence specifically about youth services librarians existed and be left with a very different study.

Keeping all the above in mind, my suggestion for reading this literature review is to consider reading it *after* reading about data collection and analysis. Learn more yourself about the librarians I spoke to, and their opinions on their field before diving into the historical and field-adjacent accounting of the literature. Instead of many citations of singular thoughts, this literature review takes a deep look at key pieces of literature that support the research questions. The information is not just presented as fact, but critiqued in the fashion of C&C, and most importantly, placed in the context of this studies own data collection. Seeing the words of the participants reflected in the literature (or sometimes, the words of the participants directly contradicting the literature) adds timeliness to the citations, and evokes a conversation with the data, rather than a dry retelling.

Part I

Literature was obtained through multiple searches (with the assistance of DU library staff) of DU accessible databases, recommendations from colleagues, and requests (in the

case of syllabi) to colleagues and professors at MLIS granting institutions. Initial search terms included “children’s librarianship OR children’s librarians OR youth librarians OR youth librarian training OR children’s librarian training OR children’s librarian job satisfaction.” While the initial number of results was promising, very few articles were even tangentially relevant (or were from people I knew and I already had access to), and the only books found were textbooks for courses (which will be discussed in Section 1 and II). Similar searches were done at the suggestion of the DU library staff for other types of library staff, including academic librarians, school librarians, and adult services librarians. There was quite a lot of available material for those groups, which confirmed that I was utilizing the right search terms and that I was correct in my assertions that there is a lack of literature in this area. In fact, a 2018 paper highlighted the dearth not only of literature related to youth services librarianship, but of public librarianship altogether (Adkins, 2019). The author of that article posited a disconnect between on-the-ground librarianship, and the academic librarian researchers holding the keys to academic journals. Public librarians can find non-peer-reviewed information easily through blog posts, various ALA publications, and other “feature”-based publications; however, evidence-based practices highlighted through peer-review are few and far between (pg. 229).

It should also be noted that in keeping with the tenants of grounded theory, literature and document review will be ongoing as the need to examine new facets of the research becomes apparent. A concern with a comprehensive literature review in grounded theory is that it has the potential to pre-form theoretical notions and could in fact make the researcher waste valuable time by going down rabbit holes of other researcher’s notions that may not be relevant to the study (Holton, 2007, pg. 272). The general nature of the topics above and a

focus on breadth rather than depth will alleviate this concern and fulfill the requirements of the dissertation at DU.

Also relevant are the ideals of Criticism and Connoisseurship, which give weight to my substantial existing knowledge and familiarity of this field. The review of the literature below is done with a critical eye, with a focus on quality and relevance for youth services librarians, and the important aspects of their work that I have spent the last 15 years learning and supporting. While one of the syllabi provided below is described as being from one of the Top 10 MLIS programs (according to the U.S. News and World Report), there was not an effort to obtain syllabi from “best” or “worst” programs, they were just obtained based on where participants had attended. Discussion of syllabi and program requirements should not be seen as a way to “rank” or belittle programs, but rather as a snapshot of the reality of folks moving into one very specific field (youth services librarianship). A program that shows lack in this area may prove to be the premier program in another. These distinctions are not the point of this research. Programs are not explicitly named; however, for previous students or connoisseurs of library programs, they may be easy to identify.

Syllabi review

MLIS Program 1 (Western US)

This programs on campus MLIS program offers one course in children’s librarianship. This course is titled “Children’s Materials and Services”. I was a student in this class in 2020, and therefore will be able to provide additional context to the course where it may have deviated or added to the syllabus. The syllabus lists two books that were used throughout the course: *Children’s Literature in Action: a Librarian’s Guide* (Vardell, 2019) and *Supporting Diversity and Inclusion with Story: Authentic folktales and discussion* (Ford & Norfolk,

2020). This course also included many opportunities for students to choose their own children's books for weekly reading assignments, culminating in an annotated bibliography of diverse children's stories. The overall goal for the course was to prepare librarians to work with children aged birth through 12, at both public and school libraries. The learning goals and objectives for the course are as follows:

1. Exhibit and understanding of the history, development and current trends in children's literature.
2. Illustrate instructional concepts and the collaborative process through children's literature.
3. Exhibit proficiency in children's literature through various methods, eg: book talks, dramatic readings, storytelling, and creative dramatics.
4. Develop reading strategies to improve students' reading based on reading levels, developmental abilities and interests.
5. Identify genres, elements of literary analysis, and criteria for literary award winners.
6. Identify and describe elements of discrimination in literature, eg: gender bias, stereotyping and propaganda.
7. Model and encourage the love of reading through literature appreciation and reader's advisory for students and teachers.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the external (societal) and internal (developmental) forces that influence children's choices in informational sources and materials.
9. Evaluate selection tools and use appropriate resources to develop a children's collection, including all appropriate formats.
10. Analyze the visual, aural, and literary elements of an information source for children, evaluating each using both objective and subjective criteria. (Sanger, 2020)
11. Design a one-year plan for children's programs that are research-based learning experiences.

The weekly breakdown of in-class and homework assignments walks students through a variety of children's literature genres, including picture books, historical fiction, contemporary fiction, folklore, science fiction, and others. Discussions in class focus on how the genres are differentiated, how to identify age-appropriate items for youth and their families, and what to do if books are questioned. It is, in general, a very discussion-based course with very little lecture and a focus on talking through the meaning and importance in

various works of children's literature. There is an opportunity for students to practice reading a story aloud to the rest of the class, but no opportunities for identifying hands-on activities, songs, or other experiential opportunities that may go along with the reading. The book display project gave a brief introduction to exhibit design in libraries, focused on using relevant books to highlight the desired theme. The final project consisted of creating a one-year plan for children's services in a school or public library. While this assignment provided much opportunity to incorporate other aspects of children's librarianship, the focus remained on literature. A note on my subjectivity: I spent quite a bit of time working with other students in the class to help them understand how to incorporate hands-on activities and experiments into their year-long plan. I also noted that the concept of the plans was a bit dated, as modern libraries have multiple programs for children every day, rather than being spread here and there over weeks and months. The year-long plans provided an unrealistic expectation of both the amount and types of work that are typical on a day-to-day basis for children's librarians.

MLIS Program 2 (East Coast)

This program's course information was provided by a student who took classes from both MLIS Program 1 and 2. The class discussed here is LIBS 6135: Materials for Children. Other than occasional special topics courses, this was the only course specifically for children's librarianship available at MLIS Program 2. Required texts for this course include *Children's Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide* (Vardell, 2014) and various children's literature books as chosen by students in the course. The objective of this course is to "select, acquire, develop and manage collections to meet the lifelong learning needs of diverse

groups in various formats and library settings.” In addition to this high-level objective the course also has the following objectives:

1. Identify and evaluate the various genres and formats of children’s and tween literature and media to support the K-8 curriculum and promote lifelong reading, listening, and viewing.
2. Develop a collection of resources in multiple formats and languages to support reading for information, pleasure, and lifelong learning for children in grades PK-2, 3-5, and 6-8.
3. Using review sources, professional resources to select, read, and create an annotated list of titles for older children (grades 3-5) and tweens (grades 6-8) of a variety of genres on selective awards for books as well as authors and publishers of youth titles.
4. Locate sources for keeping current in the field of children’s/tween materials, such as continuing education opportunities, professional associations, listservs, and web sites that focus on children’s/tween books, software, videos, and online materials.
5. Locate, examine, and select appropriate magazines for children and tweens.
6. Create a short activity/lesson plan based on a digital children’s book.

Assignments for this course included weekly readings of individual children’s books, synopsis of children’s book awards, Collaborative International Children’s Digital Library Activity Plan project, Children’s Book Selection and Reading Promotion assignment, and weekly participation in blog posts. According to the student who was enrolled in this course, the focus was quite similar to the MLIS Program 1 course, with a strong focus on themes and trends in children’s literature, and, in the words of this student, more “old school” preparation of library materials. This included the development of promotional bulletin boards, challenge-based reading activities, and a connection to school standards; library activities that hold value but may have been more common-place in decades past.

While the above is certainly relevant to current children’s librarians, the course was similar to Program 1 in having a dearth of preparation for facilitation, hands-on activities, promotion of STEAM activities and resources, and similar items. This course also lacked sufficient material development for the pre-k audience, who are the bread and butter of most children’s rooms in libraries.

MLIS Program 3 (upper mid-west)

This program is the program that was identified in the “Top 10” of MLIS programs, and the participant who attended this school said there was a specific course that they’ve heard other MLIS programs adapting. This course was LIS 567 A: *Public Library Service for Youth*. While I was not able to obtain a current syllabus, I was able to obtain a syllabus from 2014 that provides some of the reasoning for this claim. The listed goals of the course were as follows:

- Get a basic grasp on what a public youth librarian job is really like day to day and an introduction to many of the main skills you will need in the field. You will learn from me, each other, your own observations, and network with library professionals from around WA (not just Seattle).
- Learn about serving youth and their information behaviors, developmental stages, programming, outreach, community partners and aspects of being a youth advocate.
- Have some practical deliverables.

The course work ranges from work similar to the other two courses described above (choosing children’s literature and reading/looking for themes/etc.) to observation of real library programs, and a wide range of quite well-known library speakers. This course (again, in 2014) was also showcasing some very intersectional programs for youth at public libraries, including trans youth, prison populations, low vision, and immigrant patrons. It should also be noted that this course featured material from YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) and ALSC (Association for Library Services to Children), the professional organizations that serve librarians in this realm, providing a real-time connection to the field.

Because of the length of the course and the large amount of information included, there was not much time devoted to practicing hands-on skills and only small amounts of time allotted for developing activities and plans. However, the opportunities to observe and talk with children's librarians "in-action" was particularly valuable as a course goal, as the

instructor stated one purpose of the course was to provide a glimpse into "a life in the day of" children's librarianship.

In summary, the three courses I initially reviewed syllabi for shared some common themes (importance of children's literature and promoting healthy reading habits, among others) but also unfortunately lacked the needed hands-on practice and development that many federally funded projects (see the section later in this chapter titled, "Beyond the standards") have made it clear that current library staff are lacking. Part II of the literature review will delve more deeply into other programs, and walk through the ALA accreditation standards themselves, as well as a book chapter focused on public librarianship standards broadly. Originally, it was planned that this phase would include discussing syllabi with professors to gain a better understanding of what pressures (such as accreditation pressure from the American Library Association or other pressures I have not yet considered) limit so many institutions to only provide one or two courses to folks pursuing children's librarianship. Unfortunately, while professors were eager and willing to share their syllabi, 16 separate contacts felt they didn't know enough to speak on the issue. Future research will require more time and resources to speak with department heads and those interpreting the ALA requirements.

Key Facets of Youth Services Librarianship as Seen Through LIS Texts

The following major components or facets of youth services librarianship were Identified through the initial literature review. These include general information related to children's and youth services/programs through history; storytime and literature; and literature pertaining to new advances in children's librarianship. As mentioned previously,

this literature review will be built upon in Part II as more themes and areas of interest become apparent during the grounded theory observations and interviews.

Children's and youth services and programs through history

Before diving into more contemporary literature, I would like to highlight some threads found in older literature around children's librarianship. Some of these threads continue to be essential to librarianship today, while others have clearly become a thing of the past due to changes in expectations and technology. Recognizing the ever-changing nature of this field will be crucial in any future efforts to persuade MLIS programs to revamp courses based on current needs.

The oldest document I came across in my search was a pamphlet from the American Library Association, circa 1933, that was commissioned by the "Section for Library Work with Children", in which over 700 current children's librarians and their supervisors were surveyed to ascertain the preferred academic background for those in the field moving forward (American Library Association, 1933). As might be expected, the preponderance of responses indicated a course of study in topics such as English literature, English composition, American literature, history, and child psychology. A handful of respondents listed studies such as varying basic sciences, Hebrew, law, math, astronomy and even Scandinavian history. Respondents also indicated how useful they found their field of study to their current work and how it ranked (first, second, or least most important) relevant to their work, while their supervisors rated their competence in their work. This is perhaps the moment in history where the ideal model of the children's librarian is constructed, and where the relevance to this study becomes apparent. Unsurprisingly, it was the respondents who studied some form of literature who believed they were most prepared for their role as a

children's librarian, and who ranked their study as the number one relevant subject in their studies. Interestingly, even those with tangential degrees like law, zoology, math, astronomy and Greek rated their subject of study as at least the second most important subject to study to become a children's librarian. Only the handful of Scandinavian history majors ranked their study as the least important (but the majority still ranked it second!)

Respondents clearly believed having a college degree (and just as clearly, their own) was important, but only the group represented by English literature/composition majors believed their studies were the most important. Surprisingly, supervisors however noted more "lack" as a percentage for people in those fields (though the number was still low) and they were just as generous as their employees when categorizing the usefulness of their employees' study, rating every area of study as first or second most important the vast majority of the time. In the summary of these findings, the authors write "the study of the speech arts – public speaking, dramatics, oral English, helps to prepare for storytelling or book tales" (pg. 4). They also state that professors believe future librarians should take at least one science class (pg. 6), take as many foreign language courses as possible (pg. 6), focus on pre-k and adolescent books (pg. 8), and not shy away from controversial or modern narratives (pg. 8). The writers state that "no story-telling course (currently) has enough specific training in effective delivery" (pg. 9).

Beyond some arcane language, much of this 1933 pamphlet could have been written today. These are some of the same concerns and issues currently facing children's librarians. The association (ALA) that is meant to represent library staff and who accredits MLIS programs was saying almost 100 years ago that there was a lack of facilitation and other necessary training to do the work expected of children's librarians.

While ALA (and branches such as the Public Library Association, Young Adult Library Services Association, and others) has continued to publish an abundance of books about librarianship across all sectors, none is quite so pointed as the 1933 pamphlet. Many provide chapter length case studies of the successes of (often urban and well-funded) systems, with a page or two dedicated to more salient subjects (for example, Braverman, 1979, who highlighted many well-funded libraries and spent the last three pages of the book dedicated to the ideals of humanism to emphasize with patrons.) Others serve the perfunctory textbook role, providing clear and authoritative statements on what it means to be a children's librarian. *Fundamentals of Children's Services* (Sullivan, 2005 and 2013) does better than most, dedicating four chapters to who children's librarians are, and who it is they serve. However, scarce space is dedicated even in the 2013 version to the new norms of children's librarianship. Providing reference services in the "digital age" is touched upon (pg. 135), but the majority of the remaining sections (on collection development, selection, cataloging; library services; programming and management/administration/leadership) seems to reference libraries of days past. Much of what is shared here is duplicative of the work that is done in other MLIS courses. Children's librarians need items that are specific to their needs. Yes, there will be differences in weeding books for children's librarians, but are there differences in how you catalog? Budgeting? Finance? Again, Sullivan's book is better than most, but even then there is more filler than children's specific information. Another ALA publication, *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work* (Cerny et al., 2006) appears to be a lean mean guide to using some core competencies of children's librarianship to get the job done. Sadly, the book opens with the Webster definition of competency, and then alludes to another volume I was not able to procure or

find on the ALA or ALSC websites. Chapter 1 has the heading “knowledge of the client group.” The writers seem to lack knowledge of *their* client group (children’s librarians) who would not use that language and do not need dictionary definitions of words. This is a harsh synopsis, but so many of the publications not just by ALA, but from international publishers, independent publishers, etc. seem to realize they need more information for children’s librarians; but do not appear to have queried modern librarians to see what this information is.

Of course, there are exceptions in the book world. Harrod and Smallwood (2014) present a rich collection of 26 case studies related to library youth outreach. What makes this case study collection different from most others is that this isn’t a list of “who’s who” in the library world. Entries range from tiny one room rural libraries to large urban libraries with 100+ staff members. The focus is on replicability of outreach activities, and it does manage to incorporate some hands-on and project-based activities into the work (which is always difficult outside of the library).

The last few books I want to include in this category focus on how librarians in small libraries can learn the bare basics of children’s librarianship and do those functions on top of their other work. In the Youth Services section of *Introduction to Public Librarianship* (de la Pena McCook, 2004) time is spent on the history of children’s librarianship, the related associations, core competencies (with them actually listed!), censorship, awards, information literacy, and the “future of youth services” with a focus on outreach to underserved groups (pg. 233). Not a lot is said in the little space afforded, but this is to be expected in an intro book about public libraries writ large. More though than in a book called *Running a Small Library* (Moorman, 2015), which is clearly meant for folks who have to do it *all* themselves.

This book attempts to be everything to everyone, squeezing school, academic, public, college, and special libraries all into one 270-page book. The space dedicated to youth and teen services in public libraries is only 15 pages and focuses exclusively on readers advisory, collection development, challenges (to library materials), weeding, and finally, programming. The programming section is focused on storytime, partners such as Head Start, arts and crafts, author visits and emergent literacy. The lack of pictures or reference to successful hands-on programs in small libraries could certainly be seen as a deterrent to someone who does not have proper training or access to professional development. The last entry aimed at library generalists is *Bare Bones Children's Services* (Steele, 2001) which provided just that. Even though the info was short and lacking in areas, it was at least focused on children's programs and activities and didn't duplicate extraneous information. This book is from 2001 and contains some outdated information, but overall is probably the most relevant of the generalist books to what children's librarianship looks like today.

While this section may paint a bleak picture of the resources available to current and future children's librarians, the section below titled "beyond the standards" will highlight some of the more thought provoking and boundary pushing work currently being done by children's librarians that highlights the need for more academic literature to keep up with the times.

Storytime

When the average person thinks of children's librarians, they think of storytime, and they are right to do so. Children's librarians are often the first people to read to very young children and provide much-needed support to families who struggle with literacy or who speak English as a second language. While the focus of this study is identifying the areas

where children's librarians are not being properly trained, storytime is still relevant because even though it is a staple of children's librarianship, it is still something that many early career librarians are not comfortable with. Much work is spent during the MLIS identifying appropriate books and extensions, but not in the act (of acting!) itself.

In a 2020 survey (Cahill, Joo, Howard, Ingraham Dwyer, et al., 2020), library directors overall indicated that the major community benefits of hosting storytime included encouraging literacy and enjoyment of books, and attracting patrons who would use library services for their children, but maybe not come on their own (pg. 1000). One very interesting outcome of this survey (which was surprising to the State Library staff who conducted the study) was that overall directors and their staff found school readiness to be one of the least important aspects of storytime (pg. 1006). This was surprising, because there is quite a bit of literature showing that children who participate in storytime activities have increased readiness for the school environment (Cahill et al., 2022; Campana, 2020; Campana et al., 2016; Maclean, 2008). The authors saw this result as a dismissal of the importance of school readiness. Based on my conversations with library staff, I think instead it's an issue of self-esteem. Library staff consistently underrate their own abilities (see Part II of the literature review and later discussions of participant responses) and question their ability to effect change. It's a lot easier and less intimidating to say you're increasing a love of reading than to claim you're preparing children for their academic career. It's worth noting that an earlier study showed that parents bring their children to storytime more for the love of reading and interactions than they did for school readiness, which they also claimed was the least important reason (Cahill, Joo, Howard, & Walker, 2020).

Unfortunately, even though storytimes are common, well received, and well regarded in the research, the focus is still on the outcomes for children and parents, rather than the important first step of how to prepare librarians to conduct these programs. Storytimes range from monotone readings of classic Dr. Seuss complete with stereotypical shushes, all the way to library staff dressed as dragons rescuing small patrons from other more ferocious beasts. They can include math (Campana, 2020), hands-on science (Koester, 2014), art (Fischer, 2015), role play, exercise, and introductions to social issues with programs like drag-queen storytimes (Drag Story Hour, 2023). Librarians rely on their own past experiences when preparing these programs, and often borrow ideas from other library staff found on Pinterest and blog posts. I have yet to find a children's librarianship course description that includes practice facilitating active storytimes, let alone practice facilitating more complicated programs. This has led to a lack of standardization among library storytimes that goes far beyond the stories chosen and the activities conducted. With little to no funding available for professional training in facilitation (or similar tasks like acting or public speaking), often the most gregarious librarian is chosen for storytime, or, more often, staff is hired from outside the library world to handle these more public facing roles. This means that the researched benefits of storytime (such as school readiness, increased vocabulary, etc.) are being gained despite the people leading the program not having the theoretical training of those with an MLIS. There are surely programs in the US that combine the theories of early childhood learning with the practical knowledge of how to implement an engaging program that will attract and maintain patrons, but I haven't yet found them.

Beyond the Standards (Literature Relating to Emerging Areas in Children's Librarianship)

As discussed briefly in the prior section, key components of a children's librarians' job (i.e., storytime) are not a focus of MLIS programs or the research literature, and are in fact often outsourced to other professionals with more training or a specialized skill (such as bilingual speakers, ASL interpreters, museum actors, etc.) When programs are not providing the support for such a key aspect of children's librarianship, it is not surprising that newer expectations for all youth services librarians are also not given space in courses. Some of the current most popular programs or clubs for children's and teens include Lego Club, Coding Clubs, Makerspace activities, escape rooms, general arts and crafts, puppetry, musical instrument or science tool "petting zoos", and STEAM activities related to current events or pop culture (Dusenbery, 2014, pg. 16). Unfortunately, oftentimes these engaging programs are spearheaded by one or two library staff with prior interest or experience in the topic/activity, and if that member of the library team leaves or retires, the program leaves with them. In a survey investigating STEM Readiness in public libraries, participants overwhelmingly felt they needed more substantive area (content) knowledge for the programs they did, in addition to the facilitation skills identified in earlier studies (Shtivelband et al., 2019, pg. 857). In the 2018 book "Reconceptualizing Libraries" (Lee & Phillips, 2018), a series of essays from informal learning researchers speaks to the need and potential for libraries to serve their communities in new and unique ways, such as being hubs for Connected Communities (pg. 14), the potential of library makerspaces to actively promote civic engagement and build community (pg. 21-26), utilizing the results of participatory research to codevelop family STEAM programming (pg. 49), utilizing

mentorship models to support communities with 21st Century Skills (pg. 91), and many other salient areas for the future of public libraries. What this book and other research is missing is how libraries move from a “just in time” model of programming, providing programs for patrons based on library staff interests and individual community interest, and instead utilize the (currently sparse) research agenda in their planning. These grand ideas focus on the success of very well-funded programs like those at the Queens Library, the San Diego Public Library, the Denver Public Library, and other similar venues. But the US has over 17,000 individual public library outlets, and approximately 1/3 (50,000) of the nation’s MLIS holders work in these libraries (ALA, 2023). Only 23% of those 50,000 librarians are children’s librarians (11,500 total), and these are spread over both school and public libraries (Zippia, 2022). Many rural libraries have no specialists and are lucky to have an accredited librarian at all. How do the big ideas for libraries translate to the reality of the time and abilities of those working in smaller libraries? Not only are there not enough accredited staff to run evidence-based programs and activities, but those accredited staff that are available are still often receiving the same training as librarians 30 years ago for whom the world wide web was the big new idea.

This broad overview of current issues and trends in youth services librarianship is not a full picture, but it is the full picture of my current awareness of the topic, highlighting how being a connoisseur of a topic can in fact support grounded theory, as now I’m able to “put aside” what I know, and focus exclusively on what I don’t.

Part II

Part I of the literature review occurred prior to data collection and analysis and focused on what I already know as a connoisseur of youth services librarianship. Part II

consists of four areas: a review of the current required ALA accreditation standards, review of the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) competencies, themes identified in a field-wide critique of the ALA accreditation standards, review of additional MLIS program requirements and syllabi, and a handful of salient articles identified based on emergent topics.

Current ALA Accreditation Standards

The American Library Association (ALA) is the accreditation agency for MLIS and similar degree granting programs in the United States and Canada. ALA currently provides accreditation to 69 programs at 64 institutions in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico (ALA, 2024). Specifically, the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA) states: “Accreditation is a **voluntary system of evaluation** of higher education institutions and programs. It is a collegial process based on self-evaluation and peer-assessment for **improvement of academic quality** and **public accountability**. Accreditation assures that higher education institutions and their units, schools, or programs **meet appropriate standards of quality and integrity.**” (ALA, 2023) (emphasis provided in document)

The map below shows the current locations (as of 2021) of accredited programs:



Figure 1 Location of MLIS or similar programs. Credit: National Institutes of Statistics and Geography, 2021

It is not surprising that this map centers on major cities and US population centers, but it is worth viewing in the context of the earlier stated fact, that more than 50% of folks graduating with MLIS degrees began their degrees where they lived. This could certainly put people living in less populous states at a disadvantage to obtain in-person education.

According to the COA, there are five major standards that are utilized for accreditation. These are systematic planning; curriculum; faculty; students; and administration, finances, and resources (Snow, 2023). *Planning* consists of continuous review and revision of programs vision, mission, and goals; assessment of said items; improvements based on assessment data; and communication of planning activities and policies to program constituents (staff, administration, and students). *Curriculum* assessment looks at how curriculum is based on goals and objectives and evolves through ongoing systematic planning and regular revision. *Faculty* assesses the diversity, recruitment, and advancement of faculty. *Students* seeks to clarify that the program has processes in place to recruit, retain and support students, especially in regard to student diversity and qualifications. *Infrastructure* standard looks at the values, autonomy, and infrastructure of the program, as well as participation across faculty, staff, and students and levels of administrative support.

The accreditation standards were recently updated in 2023 (replacing the 2015 standards, which are still valid for programs who have not yet renewed their status). The major difference in the standards between 2015 and 2023 includes the addition of equity, diversity, and inclusion ideals, as well as revisions related to the concept of 21st century skills and knowledge. The accreditation standards themselves are only 9 pages long. A closer look at the “self-study” guide for programs seeking accreditation shows a sample set of goals for a

program. While obviously individual programs will have their own goals, it stands to reason that adherence to this template would yield satisfactory results on accreditation proceedings. The full accreditation guidelines and sample goals and objectives are available in Appendix A, but the most relevant Goals and Objectives from the self-study guide are duplicated below:

Goal 1: Master’s education for the library and information professions

To provide education for the library and information profession focusing on services and technologies for the creation, organization, management, access and use of knowledge and information resources in libraries and other information settings and environments.

Objective 1-2

By the end of their program, students will demonstrate the following competencies/learning outcomes:

1. an understanding of how diversity affects the library and information professions;
2. the basic concepts, terminology, literature, and issues related to the creation, organization, management, access and use of knowledge and information;
3. current information and communication technologies and related technological developments and their effects on resources and services in libraries, information centers, and other settings;
4. theories of library and information science and an ability to apply them to practical problems;
5. principles involved in organization and representation of information;
6. the nature of research, research methods, and research findings and an appreciation of the significant role of research in library and information science;
7. the values and service orientation of the library and information professions;
8. types of information professions and information provision settings and roles of library and information professionals;
9. ethical issues in library and information professions and settings;
10. selection and evaluation of information resources;
11. the planning, management, and evaluation of information services; and
12. partnerships and alliances and their role in information provision.

Objective 1-4

The School will recruit and retain faculty, both full-time and part-time, in sufficient numbers and with relevant expertise to support the achievement of the goals and objectives of the curriculum, including student achievement of learning outcomes.

Goal 5: Networked Digital Knowledge and Information in a Changing Society

Faculty and students develop evolving understanding of the creation, distribution, organization, management and use of digital networked knowledge and information resources and the professional, cultural, and societal issues arising in the changing technological and global environment.

Objective 5-2

The curriculum includes coverage of issues facing library and information professionals, diverse communities, and society as a whole in the emerging digital information environment.

Objective 5-3

Teaching, research and service encompass professional, cultural, and societal issues arising in the changing technological and global environment.

Objectives 1-2, 1-4, 5-2, and 5-3 are most relevant to the results of this studies data collection activities. As noted above, while these goals and objectives are just provided by ALA as a template for programs to insert their own goals and objectives into, it is implied by various documents and webinars on the accreditation site that these goals and objectives should serve as a model for appropriate response. Objective 1-2 serves the purpose of highlighting the minimum and expected diversity of programs in accredited programs. This list is in line with the overall core tenets and values of librarianship and provides a thorough theoretical framework through which to view and enact an MLIS program. Looking through the C&C lenses of interpretation and evaluation, it is also clear that while this list allows for differentiation to different types of librarianship (public, academic, research), it certainly does not provide a “push” towards evidence-based courses in very particular areas of public librarianship. This could be positive, allowing certain programs to cater to different audiences, but knowing that 50% of library students study in their current state of residence, it also can negatively impact their career plans, by forcing them through a program meant (for example) for academic librarians or school librarians rather than their chosen specialty. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4 with relation to interviews and journal entries, and in the next session in the context of optional guidelines (in the form of competencies) from the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA).

Objective 1-4 has also proven relevant in this work, as many respondents commented (both positively and negatively) on their faculty’s prior experience (or not) in the field of

public librarianship. Courses were sometimes chosen not based on the course itself, but on the experience of the professor. Objectives 5-3 and 5-4 are similar, in that many respondents reported positive experiences with relation to timeliness of topics, but were concerned that teaching around these areas (censorship, LGBTQIA+ issues, etc.) was limited to more theoretical conversations, and less practical and actionable suggestion.

Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC) Guidelines

ALSC is a membership organization located within the ALA structure. Like ALA, most guidelines, position papers, etc. are available online for no cost regardless of membership status. Membership provides access to monthly or quarterly journals, discounts at conferences, and discounts for bulk purchases through ALA certified vendors. In 2003, ALSC had 3,269 members with the height of ALSC membership peaking in 2018 at 4,320 members. For reference, total overall ALA membership in 2023 was 48,008 members. Please see Appendix B for the full ALSC Competencies document (ALSC, 2020). The high-level components of the ALSC competencies include: 1) commitment to client group; 2) reference and user services; 3) programming skills; 4) collection knowledge and management; 5) outreach and advocacy; 6) administrative and management skills; and 7) professionalism and professional development. Results from interviews and journal entries included themes relevant to all 7 areas, showing that these competencies are indeed a relevant framework for youth services librarianship. A short description of each area and relevance to study data follows.

Competency 1 (Commitment to Client Group) speaks to one of the dominant themes present in the data, which is a feeling of responsibility and care towards the unique needs of children and teens. This competency focuses on a theoretical understanding of diversity and

inclusion, systems of oppression, the effects of social factors on children and their caregivers, theories of child learning and development, educational practices related to literacy and inquiry, needs and preferences of caregivers and educators, and cultivating enjoyable library experiences for all (pg. 3). While these items are all in alignment with librarians' statements on their roles and responsibilities, it is also true that none of the 10 participants felt that their MLIS programs clearly included this info. Some of them never had access to a youth services class at all, so this isn't surprising. As one participant noted "we're expected to be experts in all these things, but we learn them on the job, or more often on our own time, I was expected to be an expert in child psychology when I was practically still a child myself. I could tell you exactly where to find the book, but it was expected I could do more."

Competency 2 (Reference and User Services) is in line with basic first year courses in MLIS programs, though the focus on children and teens may be neglected in many programs. This competency includes creating and curating physical and digital library environment, instruction on use of library tools, reference and readers advisory skills, digital media needs of children and caregivers, customer service, patrons' rights, knowledge of broader community programs, and frequent use of diverse materials across activities (pg. 4). Participants stated that these items were provided at a basic or general level during their MLIS program, with about half of participants reporting taking a course specifically on these items for children and/or teens.

Competency 3 (Programming Skills) is the area where it was anticipated there would be the most "lack" in MLIS training. This competency includes designing, promoting and presenting programs; effectively using physical space in programs; acknowledgement of the importance of caregivers in children's learning; appropriate integration of technology;

integration of literacy-development techniques; development of programs ranging from literacy to computational thinking, STEM and maker centered learning; identifying community partners for programing; conducting programs for caregivers; and conducting outreach to bring library programs to underserved and underrepresented populations (pg. 5). One issue with finding participants for this study from a diverse group of libraries was the fact that it was very difficult to get ahold of folks at small libraries, and even harder to find someone who had a degree. Most participants came from large urban or suburban systems. While they didn't necessarily all receive this sort of training in their MLIS degree, they did all state they had enough support and staff at their current place of employment to be able to meet these competencies. A participant who had previously worked at a very small and poorly funded library literally laughed at this set of competencies. Her words were "and when was I supposed to do that? Before or after hand-writing our new hours signs because our budget was cut?"

Competency 4 (Collection Knowledge and Management) focuses on collection development, weeding, and defense – with specific reference to diversity in collection, currency of collection, and responding to challenges appropriately (pg. 7). Most participants agreed that these topics were covered extensively in their MLIS, and incorporating the youth services framework didn't pose much additional hardship. A few participants did mention that smaller libraries would have trouble being so responsive, and especially with staying abreast of current trends or policies.

Competency 5 (Outreach and Advocacy) focuses on the role and scope of library services for children and families; promoting awareness of children's library and media needs; advocating on behalf of children and their families for high quality library services;

advocating for the elimination of barriers to service for those in underrepresented groups; ensuring all children have access; communicating and collaborating with partner agencies; communicating library policies to patrons of all ages; and competently communicating with children or adults, adjusting style and format as necessary (pg. 7). Participants were uncertain with this competency, feeling like the work was likely being done, but that they weren't the ones doing it. One participant specifically said, "well I think this is the work (name) does, but if they weren't here, we'd be starting over." Another said "(name) does this in her work with schools, but she's built those relationships over a decade, and that work is firmly hers. Libraries who don't have a (name), don't have this competency."

Competency 6 (Administrative and Management Skills) includes participation in all aspects of the library's planning process; setting long and short term goals; analyzing and budgeting for the costs of services and programs; writing effective grant applications; documenting and evaluating services using appropriate data; following federal, state, and local legislation related to library policies and procedures; demonstrating cultural awareness; delegating responsibility appropriately; participating in writing job descriptions and hiring processes; participating in developing organizational values; and advocating for diverse hiring, recruitment, and retention policies. Participants were similarly uncertain with this category. Some saw themselves in some of these items (such as writing grants, or delegating responsibilities in a large department) but no one felt that their current job included most of these items. The participant who had previously worked at a very small library commented that these items fell to them more at their smaller library, but it was out of a need to get things done, not necessarily to include the youth services perspective. One participant said "if public librarianship is the black sheep of library school, children's services is the black sheep

of public librarianship” insinuating that her opinion wouldn’t be valued in some of these organizational level items.

The last ALSC Competency (Professionalism and Professional Development) is the competency most in line with the original conception of this research, and simultaneously a testament to the gaps in professional training of youth services librarians. This competency includes acknowledgement of the legacy of children’s librarianship; staying informed of current trends and research in child development and literacy; self-evaluation and ongoing professional development and educational opportunities; understanding the value of diversity in the workplace and wider community; understanding of the effects of racism and other exclusionary practices within the profession and community; knowledge of ALA’s Code of Ethics; preservation of patron confidentiality; mentorship of MLIS students; participation in local, state and regional library networks; advocating for training and education to advance cultural awareness; and establishing professional relationships with school librarians within the library service area (pg. 9). As evidenced by this list, continued professional development is expected, and in fact is required in some states. For example, in Georgia every librarian needs 10 hours of continuing education credits every two years, Maryland librarians needs 6 hours every year, and Tennessee librarians just need one course per year. Other states may only require continuing education for directors (Alabama, West Virginia), and others need no continuing education (but must be certified initially with their MLIS degree) (Every Library Institute, 2019). With an average salary of \$40,000, and with library budgets remaining stagnant or decreasing there is a disconnect between the expectations of continued education, and the ability of individual librarians or their employer to pay for these opportunities. That said, all participants indicated that continued education brings them joy, and they seek it out

whenever possible. The biggest barrier was not interest, permission of supervisors, or perceived relevance of training, it was simply cost. Most participants indicated that they've recently paid for professional training out of their own pockets. If these expectations for professional development are so vital for youth services librarians, why do they not appear more specifically in ALA accreditation documents? Putting the onus of obtaining this knowledge on new librarians in often cash-strapped libraries appears to, according to one participant "take advantage of the generosity of spirit of those entering children's librarianship."

Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Competencies for Library Staff

The YALSA Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff one-page snapshot is included in Appendix C. Similar to ALSC, YALSA is a membership-based organization within the larger American Library Association framework. In 2023, YALSA had 3,135 members. The 10 competencies outlined by YALSA are a very good match with some core categories that emerged during coding of interviews and journal entries. Most competencies are in alignment with what all respondents indicated was one of the most (if not the most) important facets of their job – putting children and teens first and engaging with them authentically. The 10 competencies from YALSA are 1) knowing the typical patterns for teen growth and development; 2) relationships and interactions with teens; 3) creating a teen-led and inspired learning environment; 4) working directly with teens to create teen-led programs and opportunities; 5) engaging youth in leadership and similar activities (such as teen advisory groups); 6) encouraging the building of mutually beneficial relationships between teens and their community and family; 7) promote respect for cultural difference to create a

welcoming atmosphere; 8) ensuring equitable access to services and activities for all teens; 9) focusing on the impacts of library programs and utilizing evidence based data to adapt programs; and 10) ethical action with continuously learning and advocating for library practices in support of teens (ALA/YALSA, 2017). Participants (even those solely engaged in service to younger audiences) felt more connection with these competencies than those listed through ALSC. One participant noted during their interview that “all the training and professional development is great, but I’ve found listening to teens and being there for them is so much more important than taking the right training. They’ll tell you what they need.” Another respondent noted that she had these competencies pinned over her desk, but still felt very uncomfortable with competency 9 (outcomes and assessment). Similarly, another respondent (separate from viewing these competencies) noted that they know collecting data is important, but they don’t often know what to do with it, or how to make sure they’re getting good data to start. In line with everyone’s general joy at continuing education, she was thrilled to hear I could provide a free training on creating meaningful and actionable surveys for her branch. If only we could find the exact needs for all 17,000 of America’s public library locations!

“Re-Envisioning the MLS, Part A and B”

Advances in Librarianship journal published two special issues (Volume 44a and 44b) in 2018 focusing on “Perspectives on the Future of Library and Information Science Education.” (Percell et al, 2018 a&b) Interestingly, while there are many salient topics covered in these two special editions, multiple searches in various databases did not return these issues, and in fact I was only made aware of them when one of the authors reached out after hearing about my dissertation work on a webinar. It is also unfortunately true that none

of the participants I asked had heard of this journal. While these special editions stemmed from one library schools internal review process (Maryland iSchool's MLS program) the articles written from outside the school, and lessons learned across multiple venues are valuable across the profession. This points to a tangential but not unrelated issue, which is access to relevant information for people doing customer facing work in public libraries. If academics struggle to find this information (and the author who shared the work with me admitted being frustrated by the low number of citations of this work), how can the people doing the actual work hope to benefit? Publication happened near the beginning of the pandemic, which may have impacted the spread of information.

While both issues contained relevant and interesting commentary on the current state of the MLIS degree, this review will limit itself to a handful of chapters that directly relate to themes that appeared during data coding. Unfortunately, none of the studies are directly relevant to youth services librarians, or even public librarianship, but provide enough related context and commentary to be relevant to this dissertation. The key findings that the Maryland iSchool identified that led to the production of these volumes were: core values remaining essential, importance of competencies for future information professionals, the MLS may not be relevant or necessary all the time, access for all is paramount, social innovation and change are necessary; the importance of working with data and participating in assessment; knowing the community you're situated in; working with youth; and importance of digital assets (Percell, 2018, pg. 5). Some of these findings (especially community, working with youth, and the importance of the degree itself) are also present in this study. It should be noted that this collection of studies spans all areas of librarianship

(public, school, academic, etc.), and that the literature review focuses on general studies, or those specifically related to youth services librarianship.

Chapter 2 identified an issue four interview and journal participants named explicitly: imposter syndrome. According to authors McClurg and Jones (pg. 7-24), current and veteran librarians can often wrestle with these feelings, due to the “jack of all trades” nature of their work, but new librarians feel it more keenly, especially with the pressure to choose the “best” courses for their interests when they often don’t know what those are yet (pg. 31), were afraid to take courses in areas of deficit due to high GPA requirements (pg. 33), and even stereotypes they wish to squash but still see in academia (pg. 35). In this study, a participant who was a young graduate student at 21 years old indicated that the predominance (over half) of students in the program already working at libraries but just seeking extra credentialing made her feel inferior. Even once she graduated and immediately found employment, she stated “I felt like the kid from *Big*, being thrust into a real grown-up job without knowing what a real grown up looked like.” In my own work with STAR Net, professional development participants often start the conversation by saying “I’m not a science person” or “I’m not an engineering person”. They are keenly aware of their deficits (even if they’re just perceived deficits) and it’s not a stretch (as McClurg and Jones argue) to think that MLIS programs that provide little direction beyond 5 or 6 “core” courses and focus on theoretical rather than practical librarianship can contribute greatly to these feelings.

Chapter 4 of this special issue focused on the relevance of ALA accreditation. While presented as an opinion piece, it supports the observations made in the first section of Part II of this chapter, questioning both the lack of rigor of the rules, and the impasse they seem to provide (especially for online programs) to moving the field forward (Lee Eden, pg. 47,

2018). The author's specific experience was of a professional going back to school to fulfill requirements, an experience that is common in MLIS programs. Lee Eden also details their shock at realizing the disparity of salary levels between people with the MLIS, and people doing the same work. This is in line with professional development efforts supported by the STAR Library Education Network, where we purposefully use the phrase "library staff" rather than librarians, knowing many participants will be doing the work without the degree. An issue with this critique (and in fact the entire special issue) is that the focus is on academic librarianship, or general "librarianship". The author in fact makes the claim that accreditation in their institution is not worth pursuing, because information, rather than libraries, is the goal of their program. While this may be relevant for academic librarianship, removing the place (libraries) from online programs such as the iSchool provides an additional impediment to future public library staff (who remember, predominantly go to school where they live, or attend these online programs) being prepared for their on the ground work.

Chapter 5 will be very relevant to future research (especially research adding quantitative and survey components). This chapter highlights quantitative studies done with Canadian librarians post-graduation in the early 2000's and 2013/2014 (DeLong and Sorenson, pg. 75, 2018). In this study, there were no significant differences between three major demographic areas in the two studies (% of female staffers, % of minorities, and mean age of 34/35, pg. 76.) The % of female employees (81%) was much higher than the workforce average, while the 8% minority librarians were about half the 15% average for Canada. The protocol used in these studies looked at graduates' sentiments related to components of their degree. The results of the 2004 and 2014 surveys are in line with the

qualitative results of this study, with one interesting difference. The Canadian study showed that most graduates (69%) strongly agreed that their program provided them with high levels of generalist skills. Participants in this study were more likely to say that programs were too specific (and to areas that weren't relevant to them as youth services librarians). The Canadian study was focused on people planning to be an academic librarian, so this difference makes a lot of sense. When it came to leadership and management skills, participants in the Canadian study had low to mid-level scores similar to this study's qualitative participants. A modification of this survey's protocols is planned for future work.

Part B of the *Re-envisioning the MLS* special issue tackles broader social issues that may (or may not) be addressed by changes to the MLS curriculum. While Part A of the special issue emphasized academic librarianship, Part B certainly speaks more to my personal experience supporting staff at public libraries. Part A was deficit based (what did programs lack) while Part B focuses on assets (those assets being the folks who choose librarianship as a profession). The connector that is missing is how we can both prepare library staff for their increased roles as one of the few remaining third spaces in America, while also supporting and promoting public library staff as professionals with rigorous training and knowledge. The issues are deeper than librarianship. Social workers, childcare workers, and school paraprofessionals in the United States have some of the lowest pay scales of any salaried career. Asking library staff (who are also notoriously underpaid) to do this work along with their other tasks shouldn't be surprising, but it is disheartening.

Chapter 2 (Davies, pg. 32, 2018) paints an optimistic picture of library staff themselves, focusing on library staff as crusaders for intellectual freedom, equal access, and generally folks who are willing to do what their community needs, no matter what that ask is.

As mentioned in the prior paragraph, librarians do all these things and still suffer from the biases inherent to female dominated professions-low pay, low recognition, and the equation of professionalism with modesty (pg. 33). If librarians do not feel empowered to make the case for the importance of their work, who will? Most of this issue continues these threads. What additional work can be extricated from these overworked professionals? What else should they be doing? How can they help entrepreneurs? It's no wonder that so many of the librarians interviewed for this dissertation said they were burnt out, and interested in leaving the jobs they love.

Chapter 10 and 11 speak directly to an oft-debated topic in my own work. Are librarians educators? Facilitators? Some third thing? The first author (Douglas, 2018, pg. 221) describes the work of librarians as “the demands of teaching with another name.” Douglas refers mostly to academic librarians, who end of being college professors and lecturers much of the time, but I still find these sentiments relevant to youth services librarians. It is a common, though of course overly simplistic, refrain that university professors are not good educators. Being a successful scientist does not make you a good teacher. K-12 teachers spend many course hours on concepts such as developing lesson plans, literal crowd control, and differentiation. University professors publish papers. It's my hope that this dissertation (and follow-on studies) can highlight the need for *all* MLIS students to gain teaching pedagogy knowledge and hands-on experience, not just those that will end up in university classrooms. Douglas posits a promising thought for this idea stating, “teaching transcends space and title; the appropriate framework for teaching, I argue, is role-based, and librarians often assume the appropriate role (pg. 224)”. I would add “place-based” to this statement as well. We go to school to learn (or at least our parents hope we do), and

we go to libraries, museums and parks to play *and* learn. Perceived enjoyment shouldn't lessen the impact, it should elevate it.

In Chapter 11 Courtney Douglass (2018, pg. 215) presents the results of a study looking at job postings, course offerings, and interviews with practicing librarians across the field. This work showed very little opportunity for library staff to learn or practice teaching skills. As with other items mentioned in this special issue, this study is mostly focused on academic librarians, but it is helpful to view the issues of youth services librarians with a wider lens across the field. Why the focus on education for so many of these authors? As Douglas puts it "LIS professionals can better serve their users when they understand not only the users' specific needs, but also the theory and pedagogy of how best to address those needs" (pg. 217). By stating that folks who provide lifelong learning are not educators, or cannot "teach", do we just equate "lifelong learning" with "inferior" learning? When librarians, especially those in public libraries, are entrusted to support every age level and interest, surely knowing *how* to do that must be important for the field. Relating back to the prior chapter on imposter syndrome, Douglass asserts that in her study it was often true that when teaching courses were available (through other programs or cognates) LIS students would often avoid them, for fear they would be more complicated than courses in their own degree or specialty (pg. 222).

To summarize, this review of the special issues of *Advances in Librarianship* did not provide a lot of information or additional data specific to youth services librarianship, but rather highlighted issues and concerns that are present for many types of library staff, including academic and school librarians. Noting that these concerns (education instruction, hands-on facilitation, and management) are relevant across all forms of librarianship may

make it easier for change to be enacted. If it is not only youth services librarians who are not getting instruction in pedagogy, or how to manage teams, these are items that could be more easily folded into general librarianship courses, rather than youth services specific courses.

Review of curriculum from additional programs

To supplement the initial review of 3 MLIS programs curriculum related to youth services, an additional 7 programs (that were attended by study participants) were also reviewed, both to contextualize participant responses, and to identify any additional bright spots or causes for concern not identified with the original analysis of 3 programs.

MLIS program 4 (east coast)

This program (which was attended by 3 study participants) has 4 core courses, as well as a required research component. This program also has an “Advanced Certificate in Children and Youth Adult Services in the Public Library”, which is a 12-credit certificate. This certificate can serve as a specialization for folks in the MLIS program (and there are other similar specializations available) OR serve as a stand-alone certificate, often received by folks who have worked in libraries for an extended period of time, but not received an MLIS or similar degree. This dual situation is important, as the participants who mentioned feeling like they were “behind” or “not real adults” all came from this program. While providing the professional development to library staff seeking to professionalize is a benefit to the overall profession, it’s not necessarily helpful to folks who go straight to their MLIS from their undergraduate degree. Even with those feelings though, participants who attended this program spoke highly of it, including a participant who had initially enrolled in an online program and switched to this one.

MLIS program 5 (mid-west)

This program requires 6 core courses and 6 electives (with no option to specialize in a specific area). The required classes are Information and Society, Management in Information Organizations, Organization of Information, Information Seeking and Use, Fundamentals of Information Technology, and Research and Evaluation Methods. Electives were focused on social justice issues or special topics or specific types of literature, rather than specific types of librarianship. The participant from this program stated that training programs offered by their library and various networks (such as the State Library, STAR Net and others) “helped me tremendously compared to my graduate program.” No courses exist that are specific to youth services or include hands-on work (though some people do complete hands-on practicums to satisfy the research requirement). Relating back to the ALA accreditation standards, it’s important to note that this program isn’t doing anything wrong. This is 100% a valid interpretation of the ALA standards. But it doesn’t serve youth services librarians, or even those seeking work in public libraries. The participant from this program said that a heavier hand from ALA, or clear communication from the program about what type of librarian they aimed to develop would have benefited them.

MLIS program 6 (south)

This program consists of both an online and in-person variant, with students from both modalities participating together in certain course. The clear focus of the program is on obtaining certification as a school librarian, with 98% of students on this track. Most students also had already worked in a library setting. The participant who went through this program joined because of proximity to where they currently lived, and stated they didn’t know that

most students had prior experience and were planning to work in schools. She said that the focus on supporting teachers and state specific standards greatly impacted their ability to ease into their first job (at a public library in another state). They felt that they were essentially starting over.

MLIS program 7 (west coast)

This program has 13 required core courses, and 27 electives. This program had the most diversity of program offerings of all programs, with electives related to nearly every possible route to librarianship (including prison and military libraries). With the breadth of electives however, meant a scarcity of depth within any individual area. No specialties are available, and only 3 courses are available that are specifically relevant to youth services (Materials for Young Adults, Materials for Children, and an occasional seminar on youth services and intellectual freedom). The Materials for Children course has goals around appropriate and relevant tools and technology, but the assignments listed on the syllabus are focused on board books and picture books, easy readers, media, nonfiction books, and readers advisory. The most active component mentions describing how a book could be used in storytime (not demonstrating, describing). This program has one of the highest enrollments of any MLIS program in the country. I cannot speak to the rigor of preparation for other types of librarianship, but the descriptions of both main children's courses sound like a non-library person's idea of what a librarian is, and does not correspond to my experiences with youth services librarians in public libraries.

A handful of other programs were spot checked to make sure no additional information was missing, but most were a good match to the programs described above. Generally, this was two or three youth services specific courses focused on literature, and

very few opportunities (if any) to see what “a day in the life” of a youth services librarian entails. While this is appropriate for theoretical programs (astronomy, English literature, philosophy, etc), when the MLIS or certificate is a requirement to work in so many libraries or receive higher salaries, it is surprising that the required courses do not better reflect the job itself. This is especially surprising in the context of certificate programs. When asked if they thought their MLIS program (prior to attending) was job training versus a theoretical degree, most participants said they thought it would be job training, but upon completion felt it was more theoretical. It’s important to note with one exception all participants said this was ok, just surprising. They appreciated the theoretical background they received and felt lucky to have the support to participate in professional development opportunities to fill the gaps. There is certainly a bit of bias here, as all participants were from medium or large libraries, as folks from smaller libraries either didn’t have the time to participate or didn’t meet the requirements to participate (including having received an MLIS degree in the past eight years).

The following chapter describes the methods used in research study, including further insight on how this unconventional literature review is well suited to this specific study, and the chosen methodologies.

Chapter Three: Methods

The purpose of this study is to understand the current process through which youth services librarians are prepared for their work, and to develop a substantive theory illuminating ways that MLIS programs can better prepare these front-line library workers for the reality of their positions.

In the following section I discuss my chosen research methodologies of Grounded Theory and Criticism and Connoisseurship, the benefits of qualitative research more broadly, and how these methodologies shaped the research questions. Following this general discussion of methodology will be a detailed description of types of data, steps for data collection and analysis, how participants were chosen, my positionality in this work, limitations, and plans for disseminating this study.

Development of Research Questions

The construction of research questions in Grounded Theory research requires researchers to remain open to theories emerging, rather than pre-conceiving what the developing theory *could* be (Holton, 2007, pg. 265). This theory should go beyond answering simple questions or verifying existing theories. According to Glaser and Strauss, “verifying as much as possible with as accurate evidence as possible is requisite while one discovers and generates his theory-but NOT to the point where verification becomes so paramount as to curb generation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 28). This is relevant to the development of research questions because one must also not be too constrained by the initial questions. If a more germane theme or question presents itself, researchers must be prepared to modify our original thought process to follow the thread of the emerging theory.

According to Glaser (in his book refuting Strauss's later work in Grounded Theory)¹, he states that it is best to use the concept of Theoretical Sensitivity to ask formal (not preconceived) questions in your study: "What is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem; and what category or what property of what category does this incident indicate?" (Glaser, 1992, pg 4). The deeper and more specific ideas will emerge during the work, and he stresses that one cannot force a theory based on your assumptions about your research question.

Keeping the above ideas in mind, within the constraints of university work that requires pre-formation of research questions, the tentative Central Question (CQ) for this study was initially:

(CQ): How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?

While this remained the central idea of the study throughout the work, emergent questions more focused on participants development of meaning in their careers, and how that meaning was developed became crucial for developing the grounded theory for this work. The Table of Research Questions (included initial, emergent, and methodological question) can be referenced on page 11.

¹ According to Glaser, Strauss (with co-researcher Corbin) attempted to modify GT into a "forcing" endeavor in their 1988 methods text "Basics of Qualitative Analysis". Strauss never responded publicly to these concerns, however later editions of the text walk back many of the 1988 changes. Unfortunately, the methods described in the 1988 version remain the most commonly cited after Class GT, and Charmaz's constructivist GT. Further details are available on page 65.

Utilization of Grounded Theory in this Study

According to Creswell and Poth, qualitative methodologies are most relevant when we wish to empower those telling their stories, hear those voices as individuals, create relationships that minimize the power differential between researcher and participant, and tell the stories of our participants in literary ways that evoke new ways of understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 45). Rather than subsume the stories and experiences of participants into averages and models (which is often important to do!), qualitative methodology allows those stories to stand as testament to emerging theory.

That said, the need to defend a qualitative methodology versus a quantitative one is, I believe, overstated. According to Glaser and Strauss:

“there is no fundamental clash between the purposes and capacities of qualitative and quantitative methods or data. What clash there is concerns the primacy of emphasis on verification or generation of theory-to which heated discussion on qualitative *versus* quantitative data have been linked historically.” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg. 17)

With the importance of story in mind (both for relaying research results, and for the very field being studied here) this section focuses on the use of Grounded Theory in this study, while the section after highlights how Criticism and Connoisseurship provided the necessary flexibility for my positionality in this study.

Barney G. Glaser (a quantitatively focused sociologist) and Anselm L. Strauss (a qualitatively focused sociologist) wrote a series of papers and books in the late 1960's that led to the development of Grounded Theory as a research methodology. Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg. 31), was initially described as presenting as “either a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties”, with the authors preferring the latter method. Grounded

Theory has been utilized extensively by sociologists, in the nursing profession, and has even become popular in information systems analysis (Urquhart, 2007, pg. 339).

The topic area of the preparation of children's librarians is well suited to be examined using Grounded Theory methodology. The field of librarianship represents a large number of diverse subjects who, regardless of where they obtain their degree, have mostly similar experiences in their MLIS programs, and as new youth services librarians.

The purpose of Grounded Theory is to generate a "unified theoretical explanation" for observed process and actions (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, pg. 107). The processes of conducting a Grounded Theory study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 84) include:

- 1) Focusing on process or action that occurs over time;
- 2) seeking to develop a theory of this process;
- 3) Memoing throughout the process to begin to formulate ideas, and discover categories that may not have yet emerged;
- 4) conducting data and analysis simultaneously and iteratively;
- 5) identifying if you're using a more structured method à la Strauss and Corbin, or a more open method as advocated by Charmaz.

When beginning a study, grounded theorists may ask themselves if there are existing theories to describe the phenomena, are those existing theories sufficient, or do they perhaps exist but for a different population? If the answers to these questions are unsatisfying, it's likely that a new theory grounded in data may be needed to properly explain how a population(s) is experiencing the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 87).

Evolution of the Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded Theory has evolved since Glaser and Strauss first published “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” in 1967. Glaser and Strauss, who practiced both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in their work, introduced Grounded Theory to provide a methodology that “rendered the process and procedures of qualitative investigation visible, comprehensible, and replicable” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, pg. 33). They aimed to show that the predominantly statistical research of the time was not the only way to collect and analyze meaningful data. Bryant and Charmaz claim that “mimicry” of quantitative methodology that Grounded Theory represented was its strength in bolstering confidence, but also its weakness, in the way it positioned Grounded Theory as both a positivist and objectivist methodology (pg. 33).

Glaser and Strauss split in their understanding and framing of the model a decade after the publication of the 1967 book. Specifically, their split focused on what Glaser termed the difference between emergence and forcing of the data. He said “Grounded Theory looks for what is, not what might be” (Glaser, 1992, pg. 67), criticizing Strauss and Corbin for “betraying the common cause of Grounded Theory” by applying concepts of axial coding and coding paradigms which would inevitably “force” the data (Kelle, 2007, pg. 198). Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) created the concepts of axial coding and coding paradigms, while describing the process of Grounded Theory in a very formal step by step method, almost like a cookbook (Kelle, 2007, pg. 201). Glaser had similarly added more formality to the method in his book *Theoretical Sensitivity* (B. G. Glaser, 1978), adding the concepts of coding families, which provided groups of codes to aid researchers who were having trouble identifying codes that went beyond descriptive statements (Kelle, 2007, pg.

199). This study utilizes neither axial coding *or* coding families, as they immediately led me to look for those codes in the data, rather than let the data tell me what it meant. The coding families also were generally speaking not relevant to this particular phenomenon.

The role of literature has also diverged between Classic (Glaser) and Constructivist (Charmin) Grounded Theory. A key tenant of Classic Grounded Theory is the idea of theoretical sensitivity, which is the researchers ability to recognize essential elements of the data that are related to emerging concepts (O'Connor et al., 2018, pg. 95). O'Connor et al state that Classic Grounded Theory requires avoiding the literature on theories related to the topic area, so that researchers aren't swayed by the ways others have classified the phenomenon, while Constructivist Grounded Theory encourages a familiarizing with the topic and theories prior to undertaking research (O'Connor et al., 2018, pg. 95).

The major difference then that represents the core division between the two methods surrounds the issue of coding, and how theoretical frameworks and the literature are incorporated into the research and coding process. Glaser's method requires the researcher to have a pre-existing vast knowledge of theoretical framings (so they do not resort to going to the literature and contaminating their open-ness) while Corbin and Strauss encourage researchers to begin with their theoretical framework, and code from there, thereby (according to Glaser) pre-figuring the work (Kelle, 2007, pg. 204).

Key Features of Classical Grounded Theory and Constructivist Grounded Theory

The following section provides brief definitions and descriptions of key terms and across Grounded Theory methodology.

Constant Comparative Method

Grounded theory use of the comparative method focuses on using it to generate theory, not to debunk or disprove competing theories, theory generation should be outside those concerns (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg. 22). Not only do focusing on the theories of others distract from the emergent process of developing a grounded theory, this focus distracts from the value of the comparative analysis:

“If each debunker thought about the potential value of comparative analysis, instead of satisfying his urge to “put down” a colleague, he would realize that he has merely posed another comparative datum for generating another theoretical property or category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg. 22).

The constant comparative method has four stages: 1) the comparison of incidents relevant to each coding category; 2) the integration of categories and their properties; 3) determining the boundaries of the theory; and 4) writing the theory (B. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant nature of the method means that these stages can be considered more of a loop than a straight line. The researcher “continually sorts through the data collection, analyzes and codes the information, and reinforces theory generation through the process of theoretical sampling” (Kolb, 2012, pg. 83).

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical Sampling was initially introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), as a way to target additional cases to be sampled to gain new insights, as well as expanding upon and saturating concepts that have already been uncovered (Kolb, 2012, pg. 83). In contrast, Strauss and Corbin (1990), use the concept of theoretical sampling in service of their three levels of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involves assigning code labels to pieces of observation or interview data in order to identify the

potential categories of the research, while axial coding happens simultaneously, looking for possible connections between categories to start developing an explanation of the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2015 pg. 344). Selective coding takes the results of these processes to integrate and refine the theory that is beginning to emerge from the data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pg. 344).

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical Saturation refers to knowing when it is safe to cease data collection, because all the categories of the research have been exhausted and no new data is being collected (Glaser, 1992, pg. 61). This doesn't just mean a few observations yielded no new data, but rather that the researcher should be actively looking for other participants and observations to ensure there is no new data to be collected. This active process, known as theoretical sensitivity, of trying to achieve saturation requires the maximizing of differences across observation groups, as homogenous groups might not provide all of the relevant data (Glaser, 1992, pg. 62).

Coding Summary

When coding in Grounded Theory, it's imperative that the typical descriptive codes of qualitative research are taken one step further from descriptive codes to conceptual codes (Holton, 2007, pg. 272). The "result of Grounded Theory is not the reporting of facts but the generation of probability statements about the relationships between concepts; a set of conceptual hypotheses developed from empirical data" (Holt summarizing Glaser, 1998, pg. 22). Glaser says that:

"In Grounded Theory the analyst humbly allows the data to control him as much as humanly possible, by writing a theory for only what emerges through his skilled induction. The integration of his substantive theory as it emerges through coding and sorting is his verification that the

hypotheses and concepts fit and work and are relevant enough to suggest. They are not proven; they are theory” (Glaser, 1992, pg. 87).

Use of Grounded Theory in this Study

The above section describes the various differences and similarities in Grounded Theory methodology. What I have found interesting in the literature is the tendency to pit the differences in grounded theory methodologies as Classic Grounded Theory versus Charmaz’s Constructivist Grounded Theory. Glaser and Strauss are said to be objectivist, while Charmaz is seen as the constructivist futurist of the movement. I contend that the intermediary work of Strauss and Corbin is in fact the methodology that differs the most from the methods of Glaser, and the methods of Charmaz. Strauss (and his co-author Corbin) began to view Grounded Theory as verificational, a clear departure from its roots of discovery (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 11). While Corbin in later editions walked back some of the departures, the methods in earlier editions remain the standard by which many researchers conduct their Grounded Theory work (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 12). The zeal with which Glaser defended the original methods, and the silence of Strauss, have served to lessen the impact of Glaser’s protestations. Charmaz believes in a Constructivist Grounded Theory, in which researchers must acknowledge their subjectivity, and their role in the construction and interpretation of data (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 14). The argument that Glaser didn’t share similar views may in fact be overstated, or at least, the two differing views are not as contradictory as one may believe. This leads me to be confident in the choice to utilize classic grounded theory, with a transformative lens. The intent of this research is to uncover, not to verify, for the end goal of contributing to and suggesting change in the field of librarianship.

Criticism and Connoisseurship

Elements of Criticism and Connoisseurship (specifically methods for data analysis and identification of relevant data, as well as attitude during literature review) were utilized in this study. According to Saxe and Uhrmacher “The overall aim in educational criticism and connoisseurship is to seek improvement in the real world”, which is well aligned with a transformative paradigm (Saxe & Uhrmacher, 2018, pg 1). Students at the University of Denver coined the acronym DIET (Description, Interpretation, Evaluation, and Thematics) to describe the major features of the method. While this method was originally developed for use in schools to better construct and understand curriculum choices, it is now being used in a variety of fields and situations. Due to my knowledge of the library field, and my work training children’s librarians in STEM facilitation, certain components of Criticism and Connoisseurship will benefit this study and future work. I’m especially fond of Eisner’s description of the method, which allows room for the meshing of different ideas and methodologies, “I believe it is far more liberating to live in a world with many different paradigms and procedures than in one with a single official version of the truth or how to find it” (Eisner, 1991, pg 48).

The DIET method, labeled as such by students at the University of Denver (described below) was utilized as appropriate throughout this study:

Description and Interpretation

According to Uhrmacher, the “aim of description is to help readers see and hear what the critic has experienced” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg 37), while “Interpretation explores the meanings of what the critic has described” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg 37). Much of Chapter 2 was interpreted in this vein, as my interpretation of the existing studies and documents is

needed to better understand the resultant interview and journal questions that were developed.

Thematics and Evaluation

Evaluation “focuses on appraisal of the educational experience in relationship to a set of criteria in a particular context” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg 49), whereas thematics is “a process of sense making through identifying and describing ‘pervasive qualities’” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg 49). Eisner said of evaluation “If we don’t know what we have, there is no way of knowing what direction we ought to take. If we can’t tell if we are moving ahead or backward, we are without both a rudder and a compass. In short, we are paralyzed” (Eisner, 1991, pg 100). He also says “there can be no evaluation without value judgements” (Eisner, 1991, pg 100). Eisner borrows a term referring to themes being applied to other situations as “naturalistic generalization” (Eisner, 1991, pg 103). The concepts of thematics and evaluation show the value of subjectivity in qualitative research. You can count the number of times “x” happens in a classroom, but what does it *mean*? Qualitative research, and criticism and connoisseurship in particular, provides an avenue for uncovering that meaning. Evaluation particularly was key in the review of the ALA, YALSA, and ALSC standards, as well as the syllabi from various MLIS programs. As a connoisseur of the “real world” of youth services librarianship, it is appropriate to evaluate (with the support of the data) if typical programs are addressing the needs of this population.

Grounded Theory and Criticism and Connoisseurship

At first glance, these methodologies seem antithetical to one another. The whole point of grounded theory is to let the theory come to you, irrespective of your prior knowledge. While Criticism and Connoisseurship (C&C) embraces and privileges that prior knowledge

(but only as long as you are able to critique it as well). I found it interesting to embrace that prior knowledge during a grounded theory data collection, using it to help me from going too far afield, but also using it as a warning light when I was approaching going too far into pre-figured territory.

Glaser himself stresses the importance of “anecdotal comparison” in identifying participants, saying that:

“through his own experiences, general knowledge or reading, and the stories of others, the sociologist can gain data on the groups that offer useful comparisons. This kind of data can be trusted if the experience was ‘lived’. Anecdotal comparisons are especially useful in starting research and developing core categories. The researcher can ask himself where else has he learned about the category and make quick comparisons to start to develop it and sensitize himself to its relevancies” (Glaser, 1992, pg. 67).

Due to my concerns that my prior knowledge of the field would distract me from possibilities outside of my hypothesis, I determined it would be beneficial to this study (as well as perhaps to the field) to experiment with combining aspects of Grounded Theory with Criticism and Connoisseurship. I cannot forget the things I know about the library field, but I can remain aware of that knowledge and utilize it in a way that goes beyond bracketing and celebrates and benefits (and time savings) inherent to that knowledge.

Methods

A qualitative analysis of the work of ten youth services librarians was conducted in this study, along with literature and document review and emergent theoretical sampling to saturate areas of interest. Four of these librarians were interviewed with open-ended questions, and responded to email follow-up as new and emergent questions arose during conversation with other library staff. Four additional librarians kept a journal describing their work, and also responded to follow up email questions regarding their entries. In Grounded

Theory research, the recommendation is to conduct 25 to 30 observations or interviews. These can be conducted with a smaller group of individuals (providing that saturation is reached). In this case, about 30 interview equivalents were conducted with the initial group, but two additional participants were included in further questioning to ensure saturation in some areas that were not fully covered by the original group (one interview, and one journal participant), bringing the total number of participants to ten.

Objectives, Aims, and Goals

The purpose of this research is to identify gaps in the training of youth services librarians, including recommending a close look at the curriculum of MLIS programs (specifically for students planning on being children's or teen services librarians). The target audience of this research and recommendations is administrators and instructors of MLIS programs who can make changes to required courses, the American Library Association who accredits these programs, and MLIS graduates who can use the recommendations to pursue relevant professional development (armed with reasoning that this training is needed). This study initially included a total of eight current children's librarians. These librarians have been in their profession for at least one year, and no longer than eight years (to ensure their educational experiences are still relevant to this study). There are an additional two participants who had been in their field longer, but asked to participate because they had strong opinions and frequent experiences with new MLIS graduates at their venues. Elucidating a theory of training deficits with clear suggestions for change (based on the real-world expectations placed on youth services librarians) allows this study to make positive contributions across the library field, all while testing a research framework that could be used for other types of library professionals (such as adult services librarians, academic

librarians, etc.) Based on the potential to make changes to the training of future and current library staff, this study is firmly rooted in the Transformative Paradigm, aiming to ease the burden on library staff, allowing them to spend more time making a difference in the lives of their patrons, instead of spending time doing “just in time” training to prepare them for things they could have learned in graduate school. While there may be no one right answer to what it is a youth services librarian should do (believing there is would imply a post-positivist, rather than transformative, framing), it is certainly possible to strive to better understand the expectations of these librarians across the country, and adequately prepare them. The purpose of this work is not to determine the one right way to be a youth services librarian, but rather to respond to employer, community, and MLIS graduate expectations proactively.

Discussion of Research Problem and Question

This study aimed to begin to develop a Grounded Theory that both identifies deficits in the training of youth services librarians, and proposed solutions to this deficit. It “begins” to do this, because it is clear that further study will be needed to fully answer the research questions (including more focus on professors who are designing curriculum, quantitative surveys of a larger sample, and interviews with ALA accreditation volunteers). The overarching question for this research is “How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?”

Research Design Overview

This investigation focused on interviews and follow up questions for four youth services librarians, a journaling activity for an additional four participants, and further interviews and emails with two additional participants based on emergent questions and topics. This interview and journal-based protocol allowed for the largest group of

participants, while keeping in mind the travel and monetary challenges of in-person observation. Grounded theory coding techniques were utilized on notes, manuscripts and other documents produced as part of these observations. As noted previously, the less structured coding paradigm used by Glaser and adapted by Charmaz was utilized over the more stringent coding practice advocated by Strauss and Corbin (each of these methods is described in further detail later in this chapter). The chart below shows a simplified description of the order of the research process:

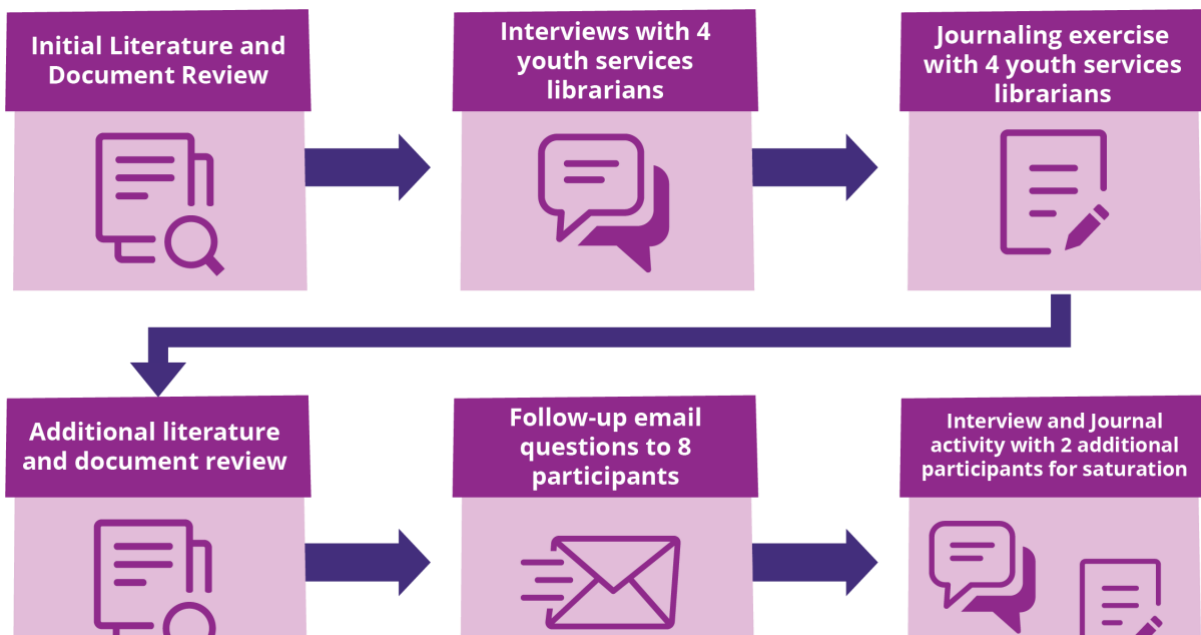


Figure 2: Pictorial depiction of research process, created by Amy Briones, Space Science Institute

Researcher Positionality

This study is unique, in that on one hand Grounded Theory stresses that I should enter the research with as little knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of the topic as possible, while Criticism and Connoisseurship says the prior knowledge of the researcher is an asset (though Eisner notes this knowledge can also be a liability, as, if not appropriately questioned, prior knowledge can just produce prior stock answers (Eisner, 1991, pg. 67)). I have attempted to work in a middle ground, where I did not dig too deeply into the

theoretical nature of past literature, but also recognized that my 15 years' experience working with and training library staff as manager of the STAR Library Education Network has inevitably influenced my views. That said, I think it is important to remember that Glaser said it was important to avoid delving deeply into *theoretical* knowledge on the topic, not to completely eschew learning about the situation the researcher will find themselves in. There is a dearth of information available on the theoretical underpinnings of the training of youth services librarians, so I chose to see my prior experience working with librarians as a head start in theoretical sampling, rather than something to be buried or pushed aside. This methodological question may allow for new insights in the qualitative research field. It is also worth noting that while I casually know some of the participants due to my work in the library field, librarians that I have a close relationship with were not considered, though they did provide early feedback on questions and research directions.

Participants

Participants include ten total youth services librarians purposely chosen to represent diversity of location, MLIS program attended, socioeconomic factors of library patrons, size of library, and other emergent characteristics. Four librarians were interviewed, while the other four provided journals and other documentation (including syllabi from their prior coursework, and other professional development materials they've gathered since). An additional two librarians were sampled to answer emerging questions or areas. While I was able to gather opinions from individuals from a diversity of ages and experience level prior to joining their MLIS program, and location, I was not able to find available participants from very small rural libraries, or other libraries with a small staff size. This was due to several factors. The first being that many of the smaller libraries I approached either did not have a

librarian with an MLIS degree on staff, or the one staff member had graduated outside the required date range. It was also just genuinely more difficult to contact these individuals, as these libraries tended to have shorter open hours, staff that fulfilled all roles in the library, and staff who had other jobs outside of their library work. With every four out of ten libraries classified as rural (IMLS, 2020), and over 80% belong to either the rural or small designation (IMLS, 2013), these voices need to be heard and counted, and future studies should provide real remuneration to ensure their participation. That said, with only 1/3 of full-time rural library staff possessing MLIS or similar degrees, the question also arises as to whether a focus on folks with the degree is even beneficial to the patrons of these rural libraries? In addition to difficulty including rural librarians in the sample, it is also worth noting that nine of the ten participants are female, and the remaining participant is non-binary. This is reasonable, as according to ALA 83% of librarians are female (and even higher in children's services) but I had hoped to include male librarians who are more likely to appear in teen services (especially in libraries with tech areas such as makerspaces). Unfortunately, everyone who fit this description did not actually possess an MLIS. This is a notable area of interest for future study, especially as 73% of academic library directors are men (Harris, 2015), and the number of male public library directors has been increasing steadily as well, from 35% in 1999 to 43% in 2022 (ALA, 1999; Molaro & Hammond, 2022).

Data Sources and Recruitment

Sources of data for this study included standards from ALA, ALSC, and YALSA; syllabi and specialization requirements from ten MLIS programs, initial interviews with four participants, journaling exercise with four participants; follow-up email conversations with all eight participants; additional emergent document review; and additional emergent

interview and journal participant data. More information on each data source, as well as recruitment and exclusion criteria is included below, along with a simple chart depicting data sources. Looking at these various types (or “slices”) of data, allowed the greatest possibility for saturation of categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 65).

1. Standards from ALA, ALSC, and YALSA – These published standards were discussed at length in Chapter 2, but to summarize these documents provide the professional standards for those in the library profession. The ALSC and YALSA standards are very in-depth, and show a close relationship to the reality of work as youth services librarians. The majority of MLIS programs do not utilize these standards, these are rather items for post-degree professional development. The overarching ALA standards are the standards by which MLIS programs are accredited (by the ALA). Chapter 2 provided an evaluation of the relevance of the ALA standards for youth services librarians, and the degree to which (based on study participants) MLIS programs used these standards as the base courses for their programs without additions from the more specific ALSC and YALSA standards. For the purposes of participant data, all three standards were utilized in creating the open-ended questions for the

Data Sources
Professional Organization Standards
MLIS Program Syllabi
MLIS Program Specialization Requirements
Initial Interview Participants
Initial Journal Participants
Emergent Document Review
Emergent Interview and Journal Participants

*Figure 3: Data Sources.
Created by Amy Briones, SSI*

- interviews, and the prompts for the journal participants. Participants who were familiar with the YALSA and ALSC standards were also asked follow-up questions based on these standards.
2. Syllabi and Specialization Requirements from nine MLIS programs – Syllabi from youth services related courses and children’s, teen’s or youth services specialization requirements (when applicable) were obtained from the alma mater of each interview and journal participant, as well as from some other larger programs. These were collected either through open online availability, or requests sent to the departments (including a description of what the information would be used for). Every request was fulfilled, and professors were eager to hear the results of this study, and participate in future work.
 3. Initial Interviews with four participants – A request for participation in either interview or journaling exercises was sent through multiple professional networks, including the STAR Library Education Network Facebook page (approximately 400 active members), STAR Library Education Network Online Community (approximately 2000 active members), two State Library listservs (these were sent only to folks they knew were children’s librarians who had recently graduated, approximately 40 for state 1, and 25 for state 2, states are not identified to keep MLIS program syllabi and requirements as non-specific as possible), and through two MLIS program graduate listservs (again, sent only to eligible participants, approximately 15 at the first program, and 35 at the second). Potential participants were informed of the basic purpose of the study, the anticipated time commitment, and the availability of incentives for those participating. It was estimated that interview participants would

need to dedicate one to two hours to in-person or virtual recorded (audio only, through otter.ai) interviews, and approximately one additional hour (spread over time) for email follow-up. Journal participants were estimated to spend two to four hours on their journals, and an additional hour on email follow-up (but were more flexible because an interview didn't need to be scheduled). To be eligible, participants needed to have recently graduated from an ALA accredited MLIS program (within the past 8 years) and currently work as a youth services librarian (or in a similar role in a public library). There were no restrictions based on time in the library field (as many folks work in the field before obtaining their MLIS). Theoretical sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 85) was used to identify the diverse participants needed, though it should be noted that library size was not a characteristic of participants that was able to be diversified. A few folks who were excluded because of the length of time since their graduation specifically reached out to be included, due to their role in working with trainees (folks who are working on their MLIS degree) or generally supporting new staff who have recently graduated. Two of these individuals were included, one was assigned to the interview group and the other was assigned the journal group. In addition to providing additional context, these participants were also from different regions of the country, and themselves attended different MLIS programs than other participants. This added additional opportunity for saturation, and additional perspectives I anticipated not receiving in this research. As mentioned previously, I was not able to find rural participants, due to their hectic schedules, and the fact that most folks working at (or working as director's) in rural libraries do not themselves possess an MLIS degree. I was able to obtain a participant with prior experience at a

rural library. No responses from males were received, and when I reached out to my own contacts, and ask for help from state library staff, none of us found anyone who met the inclusion requirements, and it wasn't appropriate to add folks outside of the time constraint, because the folks we found did not interact with recent or current students. Having male participants outside of the timeframe didn't serve a great enough benefit to warrant inclusion based on sex alone.

The interview questions for these participants are presented in Appendix D. Questions were open-ended, focusing on current experiences working in youth services at a public library, opinions on the relevance of their MLIS degree, and usefulness of professional development obtained after graduation. Interviews were not constrained to the questions in the interview guide, and each participant was presented with different follow-up questions based on their experiences, responses, and interests. Interview questions were purposefully open-ended to allow participants to move towards areas of their own interest and knowledge, while follow-up questions were constructed (in the moment) to allow participants the opportunity to share their connoisseurship of their own field, focusing on follow-ups that encouraged evaluation and interpretation over general description.

Participants were given the option of choosing a few books for themselves, a few book for their library, some combination of personal and library books, or a professional development session in exchange for their time and effort.

4. Journaling exercise with four participants – Journal participants were recruited and chosen following the same process listed above for interview participants. The interview prompts can be found in Appendix E. These prompts were more focused

than those for the interviews, as participants had time to consider the prompts through their workday, and were encouraged to use bullet points, voice memos, or other strategies to gather their thoughts, or even as the entries themselves. Participants were encouraged to spend the first few days of their 2-week journaling commitment focusing on documenting their daily tasks. The following few days were recommended to be spent in reflection of their daily tasks versus expectations presented during their training. A list of possible topics to jump start journaling was also provided, including thinking about task differentiation between MLIS degreed employees and non-degreed employees, predictions for the field, additional training opportunities that have been beneficial, and general thoughts on the field of youth services librarianship. Participants were also encouraged to journal in a way that was comfortable for them, being reminded frequently that the prompts were meant for if they got stuck, and were not required.

5. Follow-up email conversations with all eight initial participants – After initial coding and sorting of data from journal entries and interview transcripts, a set of emergent questions arose that were presented to the entire group. The full list of emergent follow-up questions are presented in Appendix F. These questions included their familiarity with ALSC and YALSA guidelines; the simple question of “why did you want to be a children’s librarian” sparked by a few participants sharing this information; why participants chose their particular MLIS program (sparked by a comment from one participant that they had read most MLIS students go to school in the state they currently live); and more pointed questions about professional

- development (only later interview participants had this in their initial interviews, early participants did not initially receive this question).
6. Additional emergent document review – Initial data from interviews and journals, as well as from follow up participant emails was analyzed, and resulted in the need for some additional document review, and the inclusion of a few more participants to ensure certain categories were truly saturated (the latter is detailed in the next section). Emergent document review included past versions of the ALA, YALSA, and ALSC guidelines and competencies, presentations on the YALSA and ALSC competencies from the most recent ALA Annual Conference, demographic data related to MLIS program attendance and specialization choice. The results from the emergent document review are presented and discussed in Chapter 2.
 7. Additional emergent interview and journal participant data – Due to some categories of data not feeling fully saturated after the initial coding, document and literature review, two additional participants were added, one as a long interview (combining the original interview protocol with the email follow-up questions) and one as a shortened journal experience (only one week of targeted journaling, removing the pieces related to daily activities). No new significant categories of data emerged during this additional coding, though anecdotes and phrasing to describe existing phenomena were helpful to round out the analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through otter.ai transcriptions, notes and immediate voice memos after each session, and through participant journals. Participants were also asked to share their reactions to a work situation over voice memo after interviews or journal analysis, after

initial coding, and/or when additional questions arise based on other participant observations. Theoretical sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 85) was used to identify the diverse participants. Additional participants were chosen based on their ability to provide answers to specific holes in the data (for example, a long-time librarian who supervises library trainees and new librarians was enlisted to answer questions related preparation of new professionals). On average (as reported by subjects), each interview only participant spent 1.5 hours of time on this study, and each journal participant spent closer to 4 hours.

After the participants were identified, and initial questions drafted, interviews began with a focus on conducting an open coding strategy, where categories of interest begin to emerge from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 85). This process allowed for the creation of categories and properties relevant to the issue at hand, with categories being a conceptual element of the emerging theory, and properties being elements of one (or more) categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 36). During data collection, it is paramount that researchers in the field follow a constant comparative strategy, continuously taking new data and comparing it to the emerging categories, rather than just doing this analysis at the end (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 85), allowing for a deeper understanding of the categories as they emerge and helps the researcher to resist the urge to categorize things based on existing set categories, rather than creating new ones. Forcing data to apply to categories or properties, rather than being open to generating new ones, is a sure way to either miss important information in your study, or for colleagues and readers to doubt the validity of your study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 37). When categories have been fully generated (i.e., no new categories are emerging) and no new properties are being assigned to categories, you can be fairly certain that (for the participants you have spoken to) that category is saturated,

meaning there is no new or relevant data to add (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 39). However, if only a few people have been observed, expanding observation to a different or diverse group of individuals to either discover new categorizations or confirm that your data is indeed saturated may be required. It is not enough to look at the data from initial participants and determine saturation has been reached, one must actively look for additional participants and information to stretch the data, making sure all the diverse possibilities (to maximize difference) are covered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 61).

Grounded Theory procedure as recommended by Charmaz and quoted in Creswell and Poth (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 87-88) was followed in this study. This clearly delineated procedure works well with classic GT, and is flexible enough to include the desired elements of C&C. The below steps outline how this procedure was adapted to this particular subject:

Step 1: “Determine if grounded theory is best suited to study the research problem.”

Through an extensive literature review (both pre and post data collection) it was clear that there are not any current theories or recommendations to improve the training and retention of children’s librarians (beyond one-off training programs that reach a fraction of librarians) who find themselves in front-line positions in public libraries. Training is dedicated to general library service, or knowledge of children’s literature, and discussions of new coursework and training focus on technology use and tutoring, not on more high-level concepts currently being required of children’s librarians (such as running a maker space or conducting coding programs.) Similar exploratory work has been done around other types of librarianship (especially academic librarianship) and was helpful to identify cross-over gaps, but even this work would benefit from a re-analysis considering

the effects of the ALA standards, and the role of MLIS programs in training job-ready librarians.

Step 2: “Focus the interview questions on understanding how individuals experience the process and identify the steps in the process.”

This idea was critical for this research, and for the chosen participants. With this sample size, it was very likely that new ideas, theories or concerns would pop up in later interviews (or interviews from folks with a different background or stage in their career), and all of the initial interviewees were asked follow-up questions to make sure new categories were saturated, and all the potential properties of the categories were uncovered. In fact, two additional participants were contacted to make sure no gaps were remaining.

Step 3: “Theory-building emerges through the simultaneous and iterative data collection, analysis, and memoing processes.”

This is a core tenant of Grounded Theory research. It is critically important to begin to formulate ideas through memoing at the onset of data collection. Things will be missed and forgotten if this step doesn't happen until late in the process. It is important to note that the researcher should remain open to discovering new theories, not just trying to prove existing models, or an early theory that was generated in the research. According to Glaser and Strauss, “When the main emphasis is on verifying theory, there is no provision for discovering novelty, and potentially illuminating perspectives that will change and help develop his theory. When generation of theory is the aim, however, one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives that will change and help develop the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 40). It is not enough to just look for emergent themes, one

has to constantly fight the desire to “settle” on a theory before exhausting other options. At the beginning of research, there will obviously be more of a focus on collecting data and coding, and the balance will shift towards identifying theory as you get further in the process, but it should nevertheless be iterative, with all the steps happening simultaneously when possible (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 72). For this study, it was questions left unanswered in early memos that eventually led to the core categories, as they weren’t discovered in the sorting of data on the first attempt. Memos also provided the internal validation I needed that I had truly thought through many different areas and ventured down many divergent paths in thinking through the data and categories. When I worried that my final “theory” (that is not yet a theory) must have meant more analysis was needed, revisiting memos and re-thinking my thought experiments let me feel confident that the correct answer was honesty about the remaining gaps, rather than forcing a “theory”.

Step 4: “Structure the various analysis procedures as open, axial, and selective coding and follow traditions.”

Purposeful sampling in Grounded Theory research requires the researcher to conduct theoretical sampling, which means picking participants who are in a position to contribute to the open and axial coding process, while providing a significant breadth of experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 157). This is why (as discussed earlier in this section) I interviewed MLIS graduates at various points in their careers, from differing geographic locations, and who attended a variety of MLIS programs. Once open coding of the interviews and data collected from these individuals is beginning to reach a saturation point, axial coding will allow us to identify central phenomena that crosses the

data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 203). The intersections identified in the data become the theory (and the process to arrive at it is called selective coding) (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg 84).

Step 5: “In axial coding, the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding.”

For this study, this was especially interesting as it led to recognizing the need to include folks outside of the original constraints (time since degree attainment). Will the supports identified be the same? Will multiple theories by necessity emerge from this data? Is it perhaps even true that librarians feel it is “too late” to better their facilitation skills once they’re entrenched in their field? The idea of re-arranging the data and constantly comparing it to itself is called the Constant Comparative Method, in this method the important steps are “ 1) Compare incidents applicable to each category; 2) integrating categories and their properties; 3) delimiting the theory; and 4) writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pg 105).

Step 6: “In selective coding, the researcher may write a ‘story line’ that connects the categories.”

For this study of library staff and their support structures, it seems only obvious to introduce a narrative thread to the writing. Initially I expected these threads to diverge based on geography, age or other characteristics, but it turned out that even folks who were lucky enough to have felt very prepared by their schooling recognized similar gaps and concerns to other participants. This idea of writing a connective and continuously weaving story also factored into my decision to include elements of evaluation and interpretation in the literature and document review, as discussing the literature and

documents separate from the data would just be a perfunctory exercise in showing I had read the necessary documents. Weaving the literature with the data instead shows that the data and literature are in constant conversation with each other.

Step 7: “Articulate a substantive-level theory for communication purposes.”

Originally, the goal of this research was to create and use a substantive level theory to craft interventions at both the MLIS and current professional level to help library staff feel more comfortable with the changing expectations of their job functions. As it turns out the theory itself instead asks a new question, central to the identity of MLIS programs (see Chapter IV).

Data Collection and Data Analysis Tables

The tables presented on the next pages summarize both the collection and analysis process for this study. The initial research question is indicated with a bold **(I)**, while the emergent question is indicated with a bold **(E)**.

Table 3
Data Collection Table

Research Questions	Collection Methods	From Whom	When	Security/Confidentiality
(I) How do children’s librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?	-Interviews -Journals -Document Review	4 youth services librarians conducted interviews; 4 youth services librarians completed journals	2/22/24 to 3/25/24	Interview and journal data and transcripts stored in a password protected file, separate from identifying information
(E) What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work? (E.1) How is this meaning discovered? (E.2) What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?	-Interviews -Journals -Document Review	8 initial participants plus 2 additional youth services librarians	3/15/24 to 4/2/24	Interview and journal data and transcripts stored in a password protected file, separate from identifying information
(Method Question) In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?	Review of research process	All study materials	Full study term	n/a

Table 4
Data Analysis Table

Research Questions	Variables	Analytic Processes	Analytic Products	Data Quality
(I) How do children’s librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?	Experiences of youth services librarians, relation of experience to professional training, emotional indicators (stress, contentment, etc)	Classic grounded theory analysis, constant comparative analysis, use of criticism and connoisseurship DIET	Theory of the appropriateness of preparation of children’s librarians and/or next steps for research	Member checking and consensual qualitative analysis in initial interviews provided assurances of quality data and interpretation
(E) What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work? (E.1) How is this meaning discovered? (E.2) What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?	program attended, years in field, size of library, budget of library, daily tasks	Classic grounded theory analysis, constant comparative analysis, use of criticism and connoisseurship DIET	Theory of the appropriateness of preparation of children’s librarians and/or next steps for research	Member checking and consensual qualitative analysis in initial interviews provided assurances of quality data and interpretation
(Method Question) In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?	n/a	Review of data collection, sorting and coding procedures	n/a	n/a

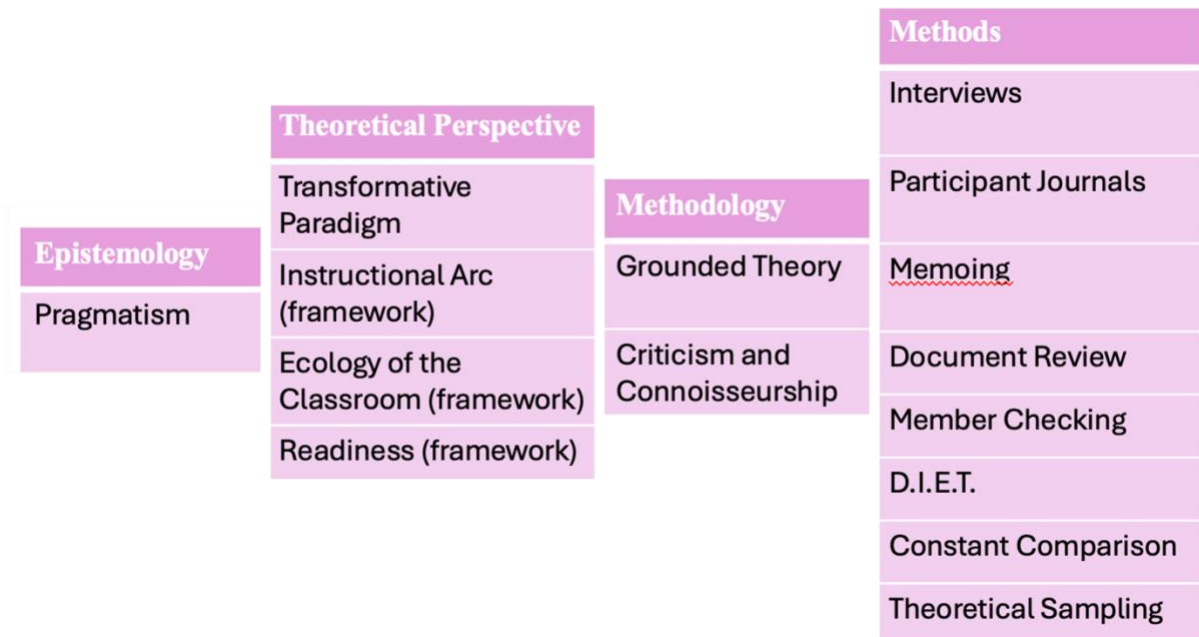
Chapter Summary and Additional Dissemination Opportunities

In this chapter, I've described the Classic Grounded Theory strategy for this proposal, and how Criticism and Connoisseurship played an important role in data analysis and development of interview and journal protocols. The plans for recruiting and utilizing participants were also discussed, as well as limitations.

In addition to my dissertation, the results of this study will be disseminated in multiple papers (in both qualitative research journals, as well as library specific journals). I have no concerns with being “scooped” as it were, as it is much more important to me that the recommendations developed by this study are utilized than it is that all my findings are presented in one coherent narrative. As part of my work, I will also be able to disseminate findings at various conferences, such as the American Library Association, Association of Rural and Small Libraries, and the American Education Research Association. I'm especially excited to share this study (and recommendations from future work) with libraries in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Marianas Islands who face a lot of the same struggles as mainland US libraries, but with additional constraints due to their geography and funding structures.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter summarizes the results of this study, describing data from interviews, journals, and email correspondence. Items from the literature and document review (described in Chapter 2) will be referenced as necessary and relevant. The table below is a quick summary of the various epistemology and theoretical framings, methodologies and methods that are constantly in conversation and reflecting back to each other both in data analysis and all aspects of this research (idea borrowed from Crotty, 1998).



Participant Description

The table below provides a summary of all participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym (or chose one for themselves). Their specialty (children’s services or teen services) is also included, and in the case of people who do more than one job at the library, I have indicated the role they most identify with (as listing more specific titles would make participants less anonymous). The method of data collection for each participant is also listed, along with their graduation year, if they attained a certificate in children’s or teen’s

services, their career path (whether they began their MLIS directly after their undergrad- indicated by “Traditional” or spent time in the workforce first- indicated by “workforce”), and if they had experience in the library field prior to obtaining their MLIS degree. The names of their MLIS institutions are not included, as the purpose of this study is not to “name and shame” (or commend) specific programs or courses, but rather to elaborate on commonalities across the field (both good and bad). While readers very familiar with individual programs may guess at individual participant graduate programs, I urge readers to bracket or set aside that information and focus instead on the codes and themes that connect each participant, as these best describe what it currently means to be a youth services librarian. Similarly, recommendations presented in Chapter 5 for next steps in the field are meant for the field as a whole, not for any particular institution.

Participant Pseudonum	Data Collection Method	Grad Year	Specialized Certificate?	Prior Library Work	Path to MLIS	Experience prior to MLIS
Sara (Teen)	Interview	2021	Yes	No	Traditional	None
Santi (Children’s)	Interview	2020	No	Yes	Workforce	Yes (12 yrs)
Dawn (Children’s)	Interview	1998	No	Yes	Workforce	Yes
Jamie (Teen)	Interview	2020	Yes	No	Workforce	None
Amy (Children’s)	Interview	2009	No	Yes	Workforce	Yes
Linda (Teen)	Journal	2023	No	Yes	Workforce	Yes (5 yrs)
Katie (Children’s)	Journal	2021	No	No	Workforce	Yes
Stephanie (Teen)	Journal	2023	No	Yes	Workforce	Yes
Carla (Teen)	Journal	2018	Yes	Yes	Workforce	No
Ashley (Children’s)	Journal	2019	Yes	Yes	Workforce	Yes (14 yrs)

A summary of participant interviews and journals follows, which will help put the coding and sorting conversations to follow in context. Providing these summaries also allows more opportunity for the “I” (interpretation) and “T” (thematics) in C&Cs DIET.

Interview Participant Data Summaries

Sara

Sara works at a large, well-funded library in an ethnically homogenous area on the east coast that has more than 10 people on their youth services staff. Sara is one of the few participants who followed a “traditional” path to their MLIS, going to graduate school immediately after undergrad, and completing her master’s degree in two years. Sara knew she wanted to be a youth services librarian and took the necessary courses to receive a certificate in children’s and young adult services, which required six elective courses specific to youth services. When asked if her experience in her library position matched what grad school led her to believe it would be Sara laughed loudly (joking that a patron was going to shush her) and said,

“it was very different...in my classes when it came to children’s programming they were all about ‘what is the teaching point here in this program or storytime? What is your budget, what are your supplies?’ and they had forms we would fill out for programming that they said were standard and we used those to fill out and create our programs in class. We don’t do that here. We don’t write lesson plans, that’s for school. We have learning opportunities, but we do it for the fun.”

I wondered if perhaps it was because her program had a lot of future school librarians, who would need to do more of this sort of work, but she clarified that they had to take separate

education classes, so were not in the same programming and storytime classes. She did however note the professors were the same people across the two programs.

Sara works in the libraries teen room and is very proud that she does programs “actually based on what the teens want.” They have a teen advisory board and ask pointed questions before, during and after programs. Her description of this process sounded a lot like formative evaluation. This term wasn’t familiar to her, but when I explained it she mentioned a class on how to evaluate programs would have been very helpful. Because of the size of the staff at this library, Sara’s job is narrower in scope than many of the other participants. She said it was hard for her to say if courses like cataloging or other general library tasks were good preparation, because it is not work she is called upon to do. That said, as someone who deals almost exclusively with the public (Sara’s desk is out on the floor in the teen room) she was able to say with conviction that there are some very important things that were not covered during her MLIS. She wanted to be clear that she understands courses can’t prepare you for everything, but she said that in hindsight, while considering one very particular topic, she realizes they weren’t even warned to be prepared. That topic is the simple fact that librarians deal with the public. A lot. Sara said it didn’t dawn on her that parents would blame her for being late to sign up for programs. Being yelled at in a way that unfortunately most folks who’ve worked in customer service are familiar with was not something she saw in her future. Even worse, Sara had never had a regular job before the library. She didn’t even know that yelling was something customer service folks had to deal with! She laughed again at the privilege inherent in not knowing this from prior experience, but this interview (which was the first interview for this study) led me to start thinking about the differences between folks like Sara who went straight

through undergraduate to grad school, and those (like most of the study participants) who had prior careers, or at least other job experiences. Do MLIS programs consider customer service and dealing with the public as soft skills that should be learned outside the program? Are these expectations in line with the background of folks that join MLIS programs?

More specific to working with teens, something Sara also said she wasn't prepared for (but feels honored now that it happens) was the fact that teens see the teen room as a safe space where they can share their pronouns, ask tough questions, and have a confidant. She said many teens have signed up for programs with names their parents didn't use, and confided in her that they were "testing them out" because they felt comfortable doing so in that space. While Sara is glad the teens have an adult they can trust, she also said that sometimes it's scary, "I feel like a child pretending to be an adult and they're trusting me with all these really important things."

The other course specific item Sara shared was related to professors in her MLIS program. She said she was surprised that there were some who had never been librarians and noted that people tended to prefer the courses taught by people (adjuncts) who were currently in the field. She was especially surprised to know how many students her thesis advisor oversaw, saying he had to read over 100 theses the term she graduated. She said that it honestly meant she and others didn't try as hard because they knew they weren't being read, let alone with a critical eye.

During this interview, multiple teens popped in to say hi to Sara, multiple staff came by to ask quick questions, and a few times she hopped up to fix something she saw askance in the room. It was clear that Sara felt real ownership over her space in the library and was well respected by both the teens and her colleagues. Knowing how unique Sara's position is

(being on such a large team and having a very specific role) allowed me to start thinking of how to better frame certain interview questions for folks who had to do it all (or with very little help). Sara worried her responses were not thorough enough or relevant, but in combination with my existing knowledge of the field, they really helped me pivot some questions and be better prepared with examples or reframes for when people didn't know how to answer.

Santi

Santi is different from Sara in a lot of ways. Santi also works in a large library, but funding is harder to come by, the patronage (and staff) are extremely diverse, and Santi didn't obtain her MLIS until she'd held a few jobs (including working as a clerk at her current library for 12 years!) Santi sounds a bit frenetic, and we chuckle a bit about our ADHD, and how telling it was that the sentence that blurted out of Santi's mouth when I asked her how she starts her day was "coffee! And then more coffee to make sure the first coffee took." She has a lot of flexibility due to the number of staff at her library, but she shares she has a hard time saying no if she sees a community need, so she's often working extremely quickly on many projects. Even so, she says the freedom and flexibility is "why I haven't left to the county system...with this municipal system I have the freedom to do whatever I want...and I know for certain I won't be able to get it anywhere else." She also stresses that while she feels constantly busy, she appreciates that her director will take no for an answer. She said she was told she should be working between 45 to 60 hours per week as a salaried employee, and she politely said "no, I won't be doing that" and that was the end of the conversation.

While Santi's focus is children's programming, which takes up a lot of her time, she's also in charge of outreach, bilingual storytime, and a virtual English Café to teach English for adults. These bilingual programs were started by Santi in response to patron needs and were added to her list of tasks rather than being distributed among other staff (or her current tasks being redistributed). Even though it's extra work, Santi is happy to do it, saying "people see the need and I am like, of course, I love my life, I love sharing, I love my language." When I express surprise at how much she does, she agrees, but shares how she handles it saying, "like you said, I'm doing two jobs, but doing my crafts, it's kind of the therapeutic part of my work that I didn't know I was going to end up doing as part of this job, but I love it."

Santi completed her MLIS during the COVID 19 pandemic, and the friendships she gained during the online program are what led her to children's services. She had initially planned on working with adults, but folks in her program recommending a storytelling course, so she took it. Then a diversity in youth literature course was offered and she loved it as well. Santi was a clerk for 12 years at her library before starting her MLIS, which she said helped her feel comfortable taking more elective courses because there were so many parts of librarianship she was already familiar with. Unfortunately, she noted younger students who hadn't already had a career were less likely to take these electives that ended up focusing on practice more than theory. Even in those practice focused courses though, she said that: "it was not performing or how we should do it, it was more of the content." Because she didn't get hands-on practice through school, she has since sought out professional development opportunities. The Supercharged Storytime Workshop was one of her favorites, and she also says she leans heavily on professional development opportunities

at the American Library Association Annual Conference, and her state association annual conference. The first time she attended her local state association conference, she oversaw a booth and didn't bring any materials. She had learned in school that outreach meant talking, and she said the woman next to her was like "oh no dear, you have a table for a reason, where are your flyers, bookmarks, stickers?" Santi makes it clear that networking and professional development post degree has had the biggest impact on her skills (though adding the degree had the biggest impact on her paycheck!)

Another place Santi sometimes struggles is dealing with budgets. Making the actual budget isn't difficult, but responding to questions that don't connect with her views of what a library is and does is very difficult. "They ask for each purchase for the ROI, or return on investment. We're a library, our investment is the kids learning, not the item."

Overall Santi is happy with her current position, feels like she benefited from her MLIS (mostly because she had prior experience), and shows a tremendous amount of initiative to figure out the needs of her patrons, and actualize those needs.

Dawn

Dawn works at the same large east coast library as our first interviewee, Sara. Dawn has been working at this library for more than 20 years and received her MLIS 21 years ago. Dawn did not meet the criteria to participate in this study (as she hasn't recently received her MLIS) however, after talking to Sara, she told me "I insist you interview me too, I work with all the library trainees and can tell you a lot of my concerns about their education." Library trainees are folks currently completing their MLIS (typically online) who get low paying internships at large libraries. Many of these internships serve as an extended interview, with trainees often getting their first job post MLIS at their trainee location, or a

branch of the same system. It should be noted that the folks at this library said a few times “it’s so wonderful that all libraries have this trainee system”, however, this is the first time I’d heard of the program! I asked colleagues at ALA about how common these opportunities are and was told they are predominantly in well-funded urban and suburban libraries, and their guess was no more than 10% of libraries (and likely less post pandemic).

For Dawn, librarianship was her second career, and what gave her the idea to be a librarian was volunteering at her daughter’s school library, and the joy she got out of helping kids with their questions. Dawn works predominantly in the children’s room, with a focus on pre-school children. She said that one of the things she’s noticed has changed in recent years is the number of manipulatives on display, and the fact that they are out all of the time, “we’ve never had this many manipulatives, all the puzzles and toys. Now we have puzzles and games and Legos and building blocks and all of that out for the general population to use all of the time, instead of saving those types of things. A lot of the things that are out now would in the past be kept separate for special occasions or storytimes.”

While she is excited about more opportunities for the youngest patrons, she also notes that elementary and pre-teen children don’t come with school questions as frequently, and when folks do have questions, it’s focused on picking the right reading level book, rather than on interest, which she says, “is a sure way to make sure those kids see reading as a chore.” She hopes that recent changes for the younger patrons may impact how elementary aged children use the library in years to come, and wonders if the changes she’s noticed are related to kids who spent two years in virtual classrooms during the COVID19 pandemic. She remains optimistic, “I feel very lucky because hopefully there will always be children that want to sit on their parent’s lap and be read to.” Dawn’s commitment to keeping abreast of new

theories in children's librarianship have contributed to her hope. She reads the school library journal frequently, attends digital professional development, attends the Public Library Association Annual Conference, and gets to use this knowledge to impact the views of trainees when it comes to librarianship.

One thing that worries Dawn (and that she says new librarians don't seem to see as a problem as much) is parents on screens constantly, and kids on screen constantly. She recognizes there is benefit to these devices, but she's had to save children who've wandered into the parking lot while they're parents were on the phone or had to end storytimes because parents wouldn't help with their children. She said "I know I just sound old, but we're in a room with all these opportunities and when a child cries they're handed a phone. Why even be in this space?"

Dawn also discussed one reason why she thinks youth services librarians in particular may receive less specific and useful training than their counterparts. "There's an underlying prejudice against youth services, that we're not real librarians. Could that be because the curricula at the universities don't put very much merit on youth services? If courses like storytime are electives, even with a youth services certificate, what does that say about perceived value?" At the same time Dawn says "I love what I do, and I think that most people in youth services love what they do, how great is that?" She says while everyone joining youth services has a real love and interest, it's still very true that new staff with no prior job experience struggle with the human aspects of the job. "This is a customer service job, and some of these kids have never worked with a customer. Even if they had training there were rules about interaction, so they didn't get that."

There's a lot of value in Dawn's interview, one might even say she's a connoisseur of children's librarianship! I'm also very glad I conducted this interview even though it was outside my planned group. The emergent nature of grounded theory, and the confidence from C&C to recognize a good opportunity when it's presented were very beneficial here.

Jamie

Jamie works at a different large east coast library, and received her MLIS degree in 2020 with a concentration in children's services just as the pandemic hit, and says she was lucky to be a trainee at her current library as she was finishing her degree, otherwise she worries she wouldn't have found a job (like many who graduated alongside her) and would have had to leave the field before she got started. Even so, she had to temporarily move to a smaller, less funded library in another district when her district completely closed their doors during the pandemic and couldn't continue paying staff. As an older student (after an initial career in television marketing) Jamie felt she had a leg up in surviving as a new graduate at the start of the pandemic. She also felt she had a leg up on some of her coursework, and the ability to be a little more creative in her course decisions. "I took an optional Media Design course, and everyone panicked a little when they handed us laptops loaded up with GarageBand, iMovie and a bunch of other programs, but I was like YES! This was a fun course for me, and others were stressing on if they took the hard elective and should drop out". She added, "I know a lot of kids left this course thinking 'I never wanted this, I don't need this', but in today's world this was probably the most prescient course with regards to the random expectations of librarians.

Jamie agreed with other participants saying "the one thing we really should have gotten out of our degree was that we're entering a customer service field, but the courses

assumed we were going into academia instead. I don't think that's an accurate breakdown of statistics or whatever of who's in library school." Jamie also said when she started working at the library she was shocked to learn they had a social worker, or that there were resources for patrons wanting to learn English. "It kind of felt like the library in my head during school was the library of my youth, and that was awhile ago! Definitely not the library of today."

Amy

The last interviewee was Amy, who works at a mid-sized library in Texas. Amy has participated in STAR Net programs for a few years, and insisted I start her description by saying STAR Net and other professional development programs have been a lifesaver for her and her colleagues, especially with regards to community building. Andrea was very clear that she thought her MLIS program was very theoretical, rather than practical. Where she was less certain though was if she felt it should change. "MLIS degrees aren't vocational training, but because they're a minimum requirement for an entry-level librarian job, folks expect them to be. Maybe we need two different tracks that are more clearly laid out? The overlap between future children's librarians and future academic librarians coursework is really large." In addition to (erroneously or not) viewing MLIS degrees as job training, she also muses that "a lot of people are attracted to librarianship for various reasons, like a love of books, or an idea in their head, I don't think many of those people consider people skills as a reason to consider the job."

Amy also speaks to how the importance of flexibility in planning and implementing programming was not stressed during her MLIS, but became immediately apparent as critical to her in her role. "If you spend days developing a point-by-point lesson plan, are

you able to adapt when completely different audiences show up? We know of course it's best practice to let folks know what to expect, but sometimes we just look at the kids and go 'there's no way we're doing this today, this isn't the right lesson for them today'." Amy also mentioned flexibility in terms of seeing patrons as assets. She said she was initially shocked at seeing homeless folks utilizing the library, even wondering how they could be removed. Now they're seen as an asset, and as a great resource to identify needs in the community that the library and their partners might be able to serve.

When asked about her most useful course during her degree, Amy agreed with a lot of the other participants and said it was her children's literature course because of the depth and breadth of content (including being introduced to literature from diverse authors). She did say it wasn't until we started talking that she realized it was odd that they didn't actually do a program related to those books, or ever do a practice storytime in any of her courses, again pointing to the more theoretical nature of the programs. She said that working recently with practicum students, conducting storytimes is the number one item they request to get an opportunity to do. We wondered together if this is because they were being encouraged to do more of this hands-on work by professors, or if these were folks who wanted to be librarians for this type of work and were finally getting an opportunity to try it. Likely it's a combination.

When asked about her least useful course, the answer is a few minutes of laughter, followed by the answer of, "Map Librarianship. I mean, that's the last time I've really looked at a map. And I loved the class, it was really fascinating, but wow, so specific to a job I don't have." After some more giggling about such a specific course, Amy sat up straight and said "you know what though, this is good, because now I'm thinking of what I

could have done that would have been useful instead of that. Maybe we could have traded for research techniques? Especially in writing queries that people actually ask. In reference query, you're talking to the person and they're telling you what they want, but you have to figure out it's really slightly adjacent to that. Do some questioning and proving. Why didn't we do that? Where are the actionable things we should have learned?"

Journal Participant Data Summaries

Due to the nature of how they were providing information, journal participants shared more specific and descriptive information about their various roles and had the opportunity to take notes on prompt topics throughout the day and compose thoughtful detailed responses. A short description of each participant follows, though much information has been left out to preserve anonymity, so instead blocks of their own writing are shared to highlight their views.

Linda

Linda is a very recent MLIS graduate. Her program did not have a children's specialty, and in fact did not have any courses specifically meant for youth services at all. Linda works at a relatively small library in the same state she graduated, with very little staffing. Cutting to the chase when answering a prompt related to job descriptions, Linda says:

There's a great deal of strange things that technically fall under "other duties as required". Helping families when one of their children has a bathroom incident, or cleaning up other bodily fluids, both of those have been an issue in my career that I never considered when deciding to work in libraries. Blood, urine, feces, etc. If there's a bathroom issue, it falls to the librarians to deal with it because custodial crews come at night or before opening.

She also wasn't prepared for the unexpected conflicts, saying "I'm not great with conflict of any kind, so having those conversations is particularly difficult for me." Linda however did not shy away from bold statements when asked about her coursework, saying:

I can say with great confidence that I have used very little of my education working in public libraries since I graduated. I've worked in public libraries since 2016 and did so while I attended my program. From my experience, there was very little overlap between what I'd experienced in those early years of my career and the content in the coursework.

When asked what she would change if she could create her own MLIS program, Linda says,

Working in a public library, there are certain concerns that aren't really discussed at length in the classroom, such as working with patrons experiencing homelessness, interacting with the public (or, in my case, their children), and serving marginalized communities. If I were to create my own MLIS program, it definitely wouldn't be a one-size-fits-all approach. There would be areas of specialization for public libraries, archives, and academic libraries, which at (program) are all lumped together. There would be specific courses on providing superior customer service, services available to marginalized communities, and knowing what to do when faced with issues surrounding patron privacy protections. I think a lot of libraries and librarians get lucky in that there's a generally positive perception of libraries in most of the country, but this is quickly changing as political polarization and nationalism start to rear their ugly heads on the national stage. If faced with the genuine problem of giving patron information (especially when talking about children), I think a lot of us would be unprepared for the situation and violations of patron privacy could be an issue.

Linda also praised her library, stating most of her training has been on the job:

My library has provided a lot of training opportunities for various aspects of the job, and we're encouraged to explore the entire training collection library when we have time. That's where you get a lot of information that is helpful for the job, as opposed to the MLIS program. Trainings are available for handling difficult customers, trauma-informed librarianship, working with the unhoused, etc. I've taken several to improve my customer service skills and to give me confidence when handling difficult situations. They've helped me tremendously compared to my graduate program.

From a researcher perspective, it was interesting to see how similar questions were answered quite differently depending on if they were asked during an interview or during solo journaling activities. The interview participants also received questions ahead of time, so that aspect was controlled for. In Linda's case especially, it seemed that being able to leave and come back to her thoughts (since her journal was typed) allowed her to think a little more deeply. It's also likely that not being in a face-to-face situation lent a little more feeling of anonymity, and she granted the ability to be more blunt.

Katie

Similarly to Linda, *Katie*, provided a lot of descriptive information about her day-to-day activities, providing entries in 15-minute intervals throughout the day as relevant. The number of different items over the course of a day was staggering (and tiring). Because Katie mostly provided this sort of information without her additional thoughts, I did email her some follow up questions. These focused on professional development, and her thoughts on her MLIS program. Related to professional development, she shared the view of several other participants who have been very complimentary of professional training provided by state libraries or state library organizations, "I loved attending the (state) library association training, it was great to see how other libraries are creating and implementing programming opportunities for the youth in their community. We also recently attended a (State) Autism Network training and learned how to accommodate and make our library friendly for children with sensory needs or those who may have additional challenges that keep them from attending programming." The benefits of learning from others in the profession in these professional development activities is clear, but it's important to remember that for many

library staff (especially in smaller and rural libraries) it's very hard to attend these in-person opportunities.

I had also sent the ALA, YALSA, and ALSC competencies to all participants, and Katie was the only participant who had experience with them, in fact stating that "I had to develop a portfolio of my work directly aligning it to the ALSC competencies and present it to my portfolio review board to graduate. Because of this, I have been able to apply my presentation skills to working with caregivers on programs designed to assist them in building literacy and stronger bonds with their children." This is a great use of the competencies, and the only direct use by an MLIS program I encountered in my research. This is a question that will be included on future quantitative work around this topic, to better understand how universities are directly addressing the competencies.

She spoke further about her program, and specifically her opinions on virtual MLIS degrees:

I think being online can sometimes hinder the impact of learning new or having direct experience. Digital tools and learning how to utilize newer technology with children was one area that I would have loved to learn more about and have hands on experience with others in a lab like setting. I don't particularly agree with the ALA (standards). I think having stronger tracks for the various roles would have been nicer if our school offered it. We had a great school librarian track and archivist track, but I think I could've greatly benefited from more children's focused coursework. I also believe that most of us are already in libraries before we graduate or are completing it alongside. It does truly feel strictly like a theoretical framework, which is great if your goal is to be in research or a professor, but like I mentioned I would have loved more hands-on opportunities. I realize that because of the goal of being online to make it more accessible that wasn't as possible, but I do know they recently started a study abroad program. (I am super jealous that I missed that).

To sum it up, I had a wonderful experience in my MLIS program. There are things that were done well as I mentioned above, but plenty that were more idealistic and theoretical. It is great for a foundational knowledge, but I do think everyone should do some sort of work in libraries before they just get handed a degreed position that has a higher pay. There should

be some sort of grade-based system. It is different if they have the experience plus an MLIS, then they do deserve the additional pay. After all, we have to pay for those student loans, am I right?

This was an interesting perspective that built upon some ideas that other participants had shared. It's not that anyone feels like they learned nothing from their degree, or that they were meaningless, the question is simply if the degrees are providing what employers are expecting them to (and if those expectations should exist at all).

Stephanie

Stephanie is also a brand-new graduate but had worked in libraries prior to receiving her MLIS. Stephanie had more packed into her recorded days than seems possible, especially given the breadth of the activities. Jumping back and forth between departments, making flyers, chairing committees, running programs, shelving items and ordering supplies all before lunch. While I expected the "jack of all trades" mentality to be the first thing she talked about, she instead shared her thoughts on her biggest surprise in working at a library (compared to the tasks listed in her job description).

I think one of the most unexpected things is working with kids and patrons are who regularly experiencing trauma. This is not something covered in any classes I took. I've had a few trainings here and there but it's not something that counts as part of the job description. It's incredibly emotionally draining, especially when some kids may rely on you for a small amount of stability. Because of the amount of kids we serve everyday I need to have something for the kids to do almost every day afterschool. And even though I have been told it's not required, there are definitely expectations for me to do so.

Stephanie also felt comfortable enough in this journal format to share some very personal information. She said, "I'm also autistic and since I have only just recently been diagnosed, I'm afraid asking for accommodations could result in losing my position because I might no longer be able to reach unspoken expectations." Dealing with too large of a workload

(effectively) with an incredible amount of autonomy should render this an unfounded fear, but she still says, “I think the workload in general is way more than one person could handle even if they weren’t autistic. As it is, I’m so tired at the end of each workday I’m considering switching to a collection development role and stepping away from working with the public.”

With regards to her training in her MLIS, Stephanie says she wishes she had “a class that helped me learn how to know when to say no...I don’t think formal education prepares you enough to take care of yourself.” This thought was repeated across most participants. It’s interesting to note library folks moving from the phrase “jack of all trades” as a proud descriptor, to starting to see it as systems not properly valuing their contributions and expecting too much of them.

Stephanie shared a lot of personally identifiable information both about herself and her library. Because of this, her section here is short, but she had a similar amount of data included in the coding and analysis activities as other participants.

Carla

Carla received her MLIS six years ago with a specialization in youth services along with her degree. Carla is new to her current library and was hired to initiate more teen programming and materials. Her daily tasks look similar to Stephanie’s, but she appears to have a bit more time to get her work done, and to focus on her actual tasks (teen services). She says about her role,

There hasn’t been a teen librarian at my library prior to me. There was about 6 years ago someone who covered both Tween and Teen but they really just focused on Tween. When I came into this collection we had several books in it that were really for 9-12 year olds and parents had a habit of telling their children that when they turned 10, they could graduate to the teen collection. This collection should be for 12-19 year olds. Sadly, this means that a lot of budget dollars in the past were spent on non-teen books. No one has been in the teen role for about 6 years so

staff who aren't focused on or interested in YA have been buying random and sporadically for teens in that time. At one point, they full stopped because they physically ran out of space and no one had time to weed or rearrange the collection. So when I came in, there was a huge rearrangement of the collection and a relocation so we now have space to accommodate our growing collection. You can imagine, this is a ton of work! As my supervisor told me when I started, this is a problem that took years to create - it is going to take years to correct as well.

She also spent some space talking about things that are key components of teen services, but that folks might not realize often get pushed into that area. She detailed being in charge of maker items including sewing machines, 3D printers, Apple Pens and other "surprise" projects that were deemed to fit in teen services. One of these surprises was dealing with the aftermath of BookTok recommendations.

BookTok keeps recommending teens to books that are written for adults vs teens and that has caused some issues when younger teens come in with a parent who realizes their young teen (12 years old) is asking for adult romance books. Another complicating factor is that some of these books are being reprinted with covers that are more appealing to teens. The book this teen was asking about for example was originally published with a cover featuring a bare-chested man and his super muscles... the new cover looks more similar to several other YA books out now like Emma Lord's *The Getaway List* or even *Red White and Royal Blue* which is an adult book but has a cover that can easily fit in with YA covers. Just to be clear here, I'm not censoring anyone's reading choices. I'm only mentioning this issue because it has come up a few times in my community where parents come in with their young teens who are asking for books they found on BooTtok. They all thought they were usual YA books and were all surprised to find out they are adult titles.

When it came to discussing the impact her MLIS degree had on her current work (and her retrospective feelings having worked in a library without a degree, she shared the following:

At my current place of work, it is hard to know who has an MLIS and who doesn't. I know we have at least one librarian who does not have an MLIS... and that at least one of our public service facing department heads does not have an MLIS. In those cases, these individuals have no task differences between their counterparts with an MLS/MIS. Our other staff

without an MLIS are all part time so they aren't benefitted. Taskwise, they are never asked to complete tasks involving collection development, and many of them do not program at all (in fact most work the circulation desk, answer phones, or they shelve materials).

In my former workplace, there was some resentment from non-MLIS staff about the difference in tasks assigned and salary for a person with an MLIS and one without. They weren't assigned bad tasks, but they had more desk shifts and less program time than folks with an MLIS. When morale was really low in that library this caused a lot of arguments between staff and management.

I feel that the MLIS should make a difference in the types of tasks and the salary an individual receives. I think, among other things, it helps us retain professionalism in the field. I know that going to graduate school is difficult and can be preventative - that doesn't mean the problem is with the degree - it means that the problem is with the organization of the education system that makes it preventative - especially if the reason it is preventative lies in systematic racism.

Other participants also had expressed how confusing the differentiation between those with and without the degree was, and how different it may be between different libraries, or different states. Some states certify librarians based on total professional development hours, some require continuing education, and some have no requirements. Some public libraries require an MLIS for an entry level job in youth services, others don't have anyone on staff with a terminal degree. The difference based on location and library size is another area to be investigated further with broader quantitative work. In some libraries participants have worked out programming is handled entirely by volunteers, because the paid staff don't have the time. This is in stark contrast to the large east coast library, who almost exclusively has outside paid presenters, and would never allow a volunteer (or most staff) to conduct programs.

Ashley

Ashley has worked in a library for 14 years, but only recently got her MLIS. Ashley works at a small but very busy library in the south. The hectic nature of her day is evident in the quips she makes in her journal: “Interviews for someone to help me manage this place and write grants so I can do programming and fundraising.” Ashley doesn’t have the resources of some of our participants from larger east coast libraries. Even so, her journal details supporting homeless patrons, a program with a therapy dog, conducting staff interviews, fundraising, and (unfortunately) maintenance issues that fall to her. She also must deal with things that thankfully many participants have likely never considered, such as finding a gun in a STEAM backpack at one of the branch locations. She also has issues with getting volunteers who are interested in doing the work the library actually needs, and in the scheduled times that work for the library. At one point she notes in her journal she’s already worked 49 hours that week, and it’s still not near time to go home. When it is time to go home, she says she “packs half her office” knowing she’ll have to work the majority of her scheduled time off.

When asked about her opinion on the value of her MLIS, especially after having worked for so long in libraries prior to obtaining it, Ashley provided some very good insight, in line with previous participants responses. Please note there was a lot of identifying information in the below excerpt, and any clumsiness in the writing is due to removing those items:

The MLIS prepared me to review books for purchase, how to make websites and marketing, a little on Strategic Planning (mainly other library websites to go see what they did), some policy creation, resume writing, types of library jobs, MARC records, Meta Data, censorship, history of libraries and types of business models. They also prepared me for the history of children’s literature and taught me how to critically review books for magazines and the like. Had I not had 14 years as a Teacher/Librarian spanning two library sites and 800+ kids, plus time at a

public library system, I would have failed at this director job as the MLIS program was not enough focus on any one thing but a mashup of wide topics.

Since I had been a Library Assistant for 4 years and worked as the school librarian and classroom teacher for 11 years prior to going back for my MLIS, I was already familiar with 85% of the items discussed and a lot of items that were never discussed in the classes but should have been. However, upon going into being a Director one year after graduating— I was woefully underprepared for accounting basics, much less advanced accounting, budgeting, public speaking, dealing with the politics of funding agencies and politicians, how to fix plumbing, electrical, leaks, drug overdoses in the bathroom, needles in the teen area, homeless issues, psychiatric issues, stalkers, perverts, Special Education needs and ADA, handling staff, paperwork, government red tape, large grants, donation seeking, need I go on...

The upside was that I had a good base of experience, being trained on the job (at the prior public library position) and figuring out how to run two school libraries with over 800 kids by myself while still teaching. While I may not have been prepared for everything, or even things that I should have been (accounting basics), I knew where to get help and how to network to find resources.

I feel I would not have been able to be successful in the Children's department at the library I took over as Director (among all the other hats I wear here) with only the knowledge from my MLIS program. The only reason I have not run screaming is that I was prepared with on-the-job training and on-the-job trial and error for so many years prior. I was also able to network those years and build up a reliable base of help and resources.

Since taking over as Director, I have changed my outlook on needing an MLIS. When I started in libraries in 1999, the MLIS was needed and required to go above Library Assistant. It was also required to be a school librarian. Getting the school librarian job when we moved only happened without my MLIS because I was willing to complete an alternate route for State Teacher Licensing to become certified and teach in a classroom and run the two libraries, all at the same time. I learned everything I had to learn on my own to make those libraries the best the school had ever had. For a director position, I feel there is a need for an MLIS requirement simply because it weeds out all the people who think they can run a library because they used to visit the library when they were little. It also weeds out people who cannot handle all the items required for a director, including budgeting, legal issues, etc. However, my Children's Manager does not have any degree. She was hired before I got here and is in the top

3 children's librarians I have ever seen or worked with (and all of them had multiple degrees). She is phenomenal, and even though she is young, her work ethic is better than most people I have dealt with who have MLIS degrees. I also have several clerks who I task with doing things they would never be able to do in large systems due to the lack of degrees. But again, they are better than many people I have worked with who have degrees. All of this is to say that I am not sure MLIS degrees should be a requirement anymore except for top administration. Experience, drive, and common sense are the dividing marks between a good library staff person and a bad or just mediocre staff person.

I would say the biggest help to me post-degree and as I started this director position has been networking: Asking people I know or meet for their opinions, ideas, and help... Working with other librarians and paraprofessionals is honestly the best way I have found for me to learn and grow. Experience is the best teacher and leaning on others and their experience has helped me more than any classes I have ever taken. I always try to return the favor and help anyone who asks me anything. Libraries are too underfunded and short to try to do everything independently. I feel it is our duty as professionals to help each other and thus help our communities.

I feel really strongly about this MLIS degree now that I am in the thick of running a public library system. Experience should be the most critical item on a resume for working in a library unless you are doing upper administration... I will say that I felt really bad for the people in the MLIS program who did not have any library experience and were trying to navigate these classes. I cannot imagine having to do that work without a background of knowledge and experience to which I can relate. Perhaps MLIS programs need to look at taking on students with some real-world experience instead of straight out of their 4-year degrees. I realize the program is based on giving a wide variety of topics/job theories, but I feel if the first year of the program was focused on putting the students in the real world as much as possible combined with classes, then they would have a much better understanding of what they might want to focus on in the profession and the ability to relate theories to real-world applications.

Clearly Ashley is in agreement with other participants when it comes to recognizing the theoretical value of the MLIS degree and worrying about students who don't have any life experience outside of college stepping right into very autonomous professional roles. She also stressed the value of her professional community, and how library staff learn from each other frequently.

Looking at interview and journal data, I'm glad I chose to include both means of data collection, even though it necessitated more complicated coding activities. While the interviews provided more of a holistic view into the individual librarians work, the nature of the journals led to some of the more salient points in this study, specifically relating to the nature of the degree itself. The journals also provided an avenue for participants to think deeply on questions before responding. Having both off the cuff and well-planned answers was useful in identifying possible exaggeration or omission.

The next section moves away from participants as individuals and starts the process of coding and sorting. It is the intention that this summary of each participant can breathe some life and a sense of reality into the data being discussed.

Line by Line Coding, Open Coding, and Initial Sorting

After interviews were transcribed and journals were typed out, line by line coding was completed for each item. In keeping with GT methods, “gerund” coding was used to prioritize the actions and feelings of participants. In gerund coding, an effort is made to use verbs (ending in “ing”) to identify the experience rather than components of an experience, which can be revisited later in coding if necessary (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017). For example, rather than categorizing info about the librarians relationships in the library as “sense of belonging”, gerund coding includes the action contributing to the code. In this case, the librarians were “*creating*” that sense of belonging, as they were actively trying to make sense of their roles. The intent for early coding is not to identify final codes or themes, but rather to make sure every idea has a category. If it doesn't, a new category is created which may later be subsumed by another more high-level action. As the line-by-line data was being coded, common or intriguing codes began to emerge, leading to resorting and labeling of

codes as a better fit was discovered. By the last two documents no new codes were being generated, indicating it was time to do the final preliminary sort, prior to memo-ing about the newly discovered codes to see if new areas or gaps emerge. In this first round of coding and sorting, the codes listed below emerged. In keeping with classic GT, these codes come from the data, rather than from a list of pre-existing codes, as recommended by Strauss and Corbin. Codes are listed in order of frequency, although in GT the number of occurrences aren't necessarily as important as the depth and meaning attached to those occurrences. For example, typically when a particular category is saturated, one stops coding that area and only looks for new ideas. In this study, I found it useful to continue to code all items, as I anticipate using the data for future projects as well.

- Being a youth services librarian (a day in the life)
- Privileging the needs of children
- Creating a sense of belonging in the community
- Lacking appropriate preparation in their MLIS
- Learning from professional development opportunities outside of degree
- Creating personal meaning in library work
- Supporting folks left out of other community activities
- Giving back to the community
- Focusing on community interest
- Appreciation of professional preparation in their MLIS
- Recognizing privilege at own institution
- Predicting the future of the field
- Participating as community members
- Feelings of fear or concern
- Feeling inadequate
- Creating understanding the meaning of librarianship
- Maintaining library relevance

Descriptive Code: “Being a Youth Services Librarian”
Original code name: “librarian-ing”

By far the most common code (and the hardest to label) was “Being a Youth Services Librarian.” At first, I didn’t code the data that belonged in this category, because it didn’t appear to be an action, but rather a list of tasks. But surely those tasks are of utmost importance to the on-the-ground experiences of these library staff. I actually reached back out to one of the participants and shared this problem, and wondered if they had any insight (as she had indicated a passing familiarity with GT). Our initial tongue in cheek code was “librarian-ing”, which may seem like a poor attempt at creating action, but this is actually exactly what Glaser suggests! By creating a silly code you’re able to move on to other intellectual pursuits until the right name (in this case, an action) fits. Keeping this clumsy code was important to capture the breadth of the work of children’s librarians, so while it is more of a descriptive code, it’s very important to the interpretation of the other items.

The following is a representative list of the items within this code, in no particular order (duplicates are not included for brevity): writing new lyrics for a storytime song, test cooking items for a cooking class, helping patrons access the food pantry, updating online calendars, prepping and swapping monthly themes (black history, women’s history, etc), facilitating open STEM kit time, prepping arts and crafts for programs, answering patron questions, encouraging teens and tweens into programs, working on committee items, managing program with therapy dog, providing statistics on programs, purchasing program items, planning for summer reading, sorting out IT issues, creating signage around zero tolerance (bullying) policies, updating bulletin board, sending emails for teen volunteer hours, repairing items with hot glue, pulling and sorting holds, manning the desk, running online librarian chat, creating flyers, checking emails, supporting school groups, conducting

readers advisory, creating Cricut patterns, giving tours of maker lab, running the 3D printer, creating scavenger hunts, taking pictures for marketing, creating multicultural programs/signs, learning Silhouette program for 3D printer, prepping for storytime, shelf reading, cleaning (yes including the toilets), running sensory storytime, monthly meeting with supervisor (only meeting with supervisor), running pre-k STEM day, dealing with unsupervised children, volunteer recruiting and management, marketing items, sorting easy reader collection, testing sewing patterns for program, playing with children, talking to parents, readers advisory, shelving, running social media, budgeting, answering calls about eclipse glasses, ordering books, general customer service, curating collections, maintaining technology for patrons, creating graphics, and writing grants.

This list clearly shows the breadth of work being done at public libraries by youth services staff and provides a good, generalized background of the work being done. Unfortunately, it doesn't provide much information relevant to developing a theory of improvement in youth services librarianship. The remainder of the less descriptive codes are discussed after a brief discussion of memoing and resorting, as these concepts were much more necessary components of the coding of the remaining categories.

Memoing

Memos were written at every stage of this study. After each interview, after each email, and when I woke up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night with a new idea. According to Glaser (2014, pg. 3), "memos are the written records of the researcher's thinking, both conscious and preconscious realizations, as the research and the researcher grow." It was also freeing to know that in GT, memos are meant to be a personal exercise, and not to be published. I conceived them as a jousting match between my existing

knowledge and experience of the field, and the new data that didn't fit into that knowledge. Memoing is where the potential inherent in combining GT and C&C became even clearer to me. Being confident in what I knew as a connoisseur of the field of librarianship also allowed me to be open to emergent ideas and theories when encountered with data, stories, and feelings that existed outside of my knowledge. These new ideas were not just data points to fit into my theory (which didn't exist yet), they were breadcrumbs leading me to other potentially more salient ideas. Sometimes of course they were dead ends. And sometimes reading back over a memo, it was embarrassing to recognize attempts to "force" data. But by working through those attempts outside of writing the theory, I feel much more confident in the result. But first, more sorting was needed. Eisner (1991) also recommended a memo-like approach to coding, recommending that field notes are annotated rather than coded. Knowing that both methodologies put stock in personal writing (memos in GT to think through ideas and have thought experiments) and annotation in C&C to encourage iterative data analysis rather than a code set in place and time allowed me to think more deeply on the data I had collected and feel comfortable changing or modifying something when the need arose. Even during my defense, the internal dialogue around the data continued, allowing me to come up with a few new insights (such as the Instructional Arc as a framework).

Resorting

Grounded Theory is not an attempt to answer every question of a broad category, but rather to home in on one very particular facet of a phenomena. Many initial categories are uncovered, but it is important to find a few to elevate to core categories. The first step to doing that is resorting the initial codes to condense, remove, or wholesale re-do the coding

scheme. The chart below shows how the large initial list of gerund codes was condensed to a more manageable set. Note that items are re-ordered for ease of reading.

Resorting indicated the need to remove one category completely (recognizing privilege at own institution) as the individual pieces of data in that category were better utilized in other categories (including preparation, professional development, and creating personal meaning). As evidenced in the chart below, the descriptive code (“being a youth services librarian”) remained a stand-alone category, while every other category (with one exception) was condensed. The other category that remained stand alone was “privileging the needs of children”. This was an interesting category because it was the only one where the stand-alone pieces of data didn’t necessarily reveal the profession of the speaker. These pieces of data could have come from a teacher, a parent, a psychologist, really anyone. This category, while of utmost importance to the job of a youth services librarian, appeared to be a core tenant of the participants personality and beliefs, rather than a component of their work.

The remaining resorted categories are discussed more in depth in the next section.

These final categories are:

- Focusing on Community
- Meaning of Preparation
- Creating Personal Meaning
- Understanding the Meaning of Librarianship
- Feelings of Doubt

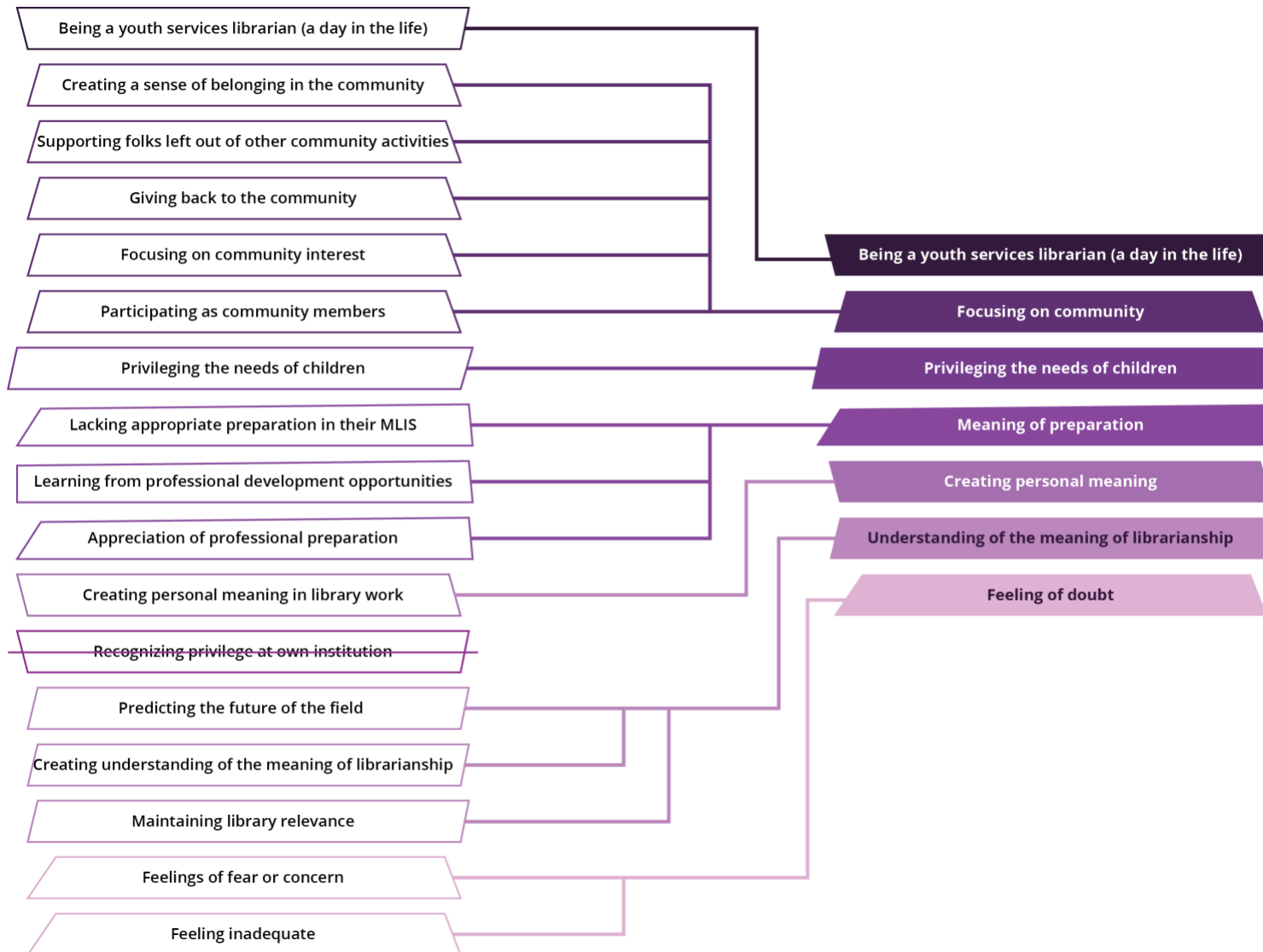


Figure 4: Initial categories and condensed categories. Created by Amy Briones, Space Science Institute

The condensed codes emerge an underlying theme of creating or building meaning across a variety of categories. Going back to the words of the participants, this makes a lot of sense. They are librarians because of love of the work, and because of their own experiences. Assigning both intrinsic (personal) and extrinsic (community) meaning to that work is likely what has allowed them to continue despite low wages, cuts to funding, and an overall landscape that threatens their profession daily. It was tempting at this point to declare “meaning building” the core category and continue on, but it is necessary to further interrogate these categories to see if they lead to a more specific or meaningful category, or a need to shuffle and try again.

Core Categories and Identifying Themes

As discussed above, when viewing the “Day in the Life” category as a necessary descriptive category but not a potential core category, the remaining categories can be summarized in terms of discussing meaning in the role of youth services librarians – finding it, creating it, and sharing it.

Focusing on Community

In this category I noted in many of my memos that when discussing these items, participants were more thoughtful with their word choice, spent a longer time in their response, and (for interviews where I could interpret tone) exuded a sense of pride or commitment. They all identified as active members of their community, “we live in our community, that’s important,” not just as individuals, but in their role at the library. Sometimes the responses were about humanizing members of the community: encouraging kids helping with the food pantry to think about what people both need AND want, rather than dictating what type of food they deserved; recognizing homeless patrons as assets to the

library; and even seeking out “problem” recipients of other organizations to see if the library could provide additional support. Other responses focused on a sense of community pride. These responses included: celebrating each and every graduating senior; remembering kids when they come back years later; telling current students about past students’ successes; finding ways to make sure everyone who needs volunteer hours is able to provide them in their own community; and making sure that people see themselves and feel celebrated in the collection. Another interesting aspect of the community category was the conscious and calculated efforts at community and partnership building. One participant quoted the saying “collaboration moves at the speed of trust”, and pointed out that while libraries may be the most trusted government office, there’s still work to be done. Some of that work participants listed included basic items such as making sure storytime was actually relevant to the people, needs, and customs of the community; taking the time to talk with “regulars” about what keeps them coming (or why their friends may have stopped); finding unique ways like board game nights to “gather intel” on community preferences; and often resorting to “detective work” to find ways to support specific patrons and families. Many participants also spoke to their perceived responsibility or duty to their community. This included pushing back against book banning or similar efforts; feeling “called” to help people other organizations ignore; recognizing the seriousness of children looking to library staff for a sense of stability; and even creating a club (Gender Alliance Club) that the librarian didn’t even necessarily understand, but she saw a need from the patrons. Participants also talked about libraries as “equalizers”, the “university of the people”, safe spaces in the community, the place to learn about hot topics like STEM, and as integral partners for public schools who are increasingly losing access to libraries and librarians.

Privileging the Needs of Children

As briefly discussed in the last section, this category stood out not because of its content, but because of the vigor with which the librarians stated their ideas as more of a life-long commitment than a component of their work. Please note that this category also includes tweens and teens in this study. This was especially true in tween and teen spaces in the library, with multiple participants stressing the importance of “kicking out the adults” because “it’s not a place for them.” Even though public libraries may have more freedom than schools or other organizations to celebrate the unique identities of patrons, tweens and teens are often afraid to show their true selves with their parents around, because they might not yet be “out” to them yet. One participant stressed that showing *anyone* could be themselves in the space, whether “gay, straight, geek, jock, them, him, or witchy” not only fostered a sense of belonging and inclusion for kids in those categories, but let all kids know they were safe to be themselves, whatever that looked like. She added that “kids who had been the ignorant bully in the past are all of a sudden decorating for pride month and checking pronouns, we don’t give them enough credit.” In addition to big moments such as these, participants also shared their pride in the fact that kids feel they can just *be* in the space they’ve curated. Practicing dance routines, trying out new pronouns, flopping into giant bean bags, shouting homework questions to each other over the sound of video games, and providing honest feedback to programs. One participant said “I gave up on surveys or trying to make perfect programs. I just ask them ‘was that dumb?’ and they tell me, and I do better. It’s for them anyway, I should be asking.” For some participants, teens are also integral parts of library planning. Half the participants have a teen advisory group at their library, and said they don’t just answer questions or try out programs, they also recruit other teens into the

library. “They’ll drag a new kid in, sometimes literally kicking and screaming that they’re not a ‘nerd’, and by the next week that kid is up in my face requesting books and programs. They’re empowered by the simple act of us listening to them.” One participant noted that including teens was very new in their library. When she was hired, she immediately planned a teen space, and started recruiting for programs, but just like building community partnerships, building trust with teens takes time. It’s not all inspiring on the teen front of course, one librarian who works exclusively in the children’s room said “teens scare me, I don’t know how to talk to them, I don’t know what they need. We got an introduction to children’s psychology, I feel like I would have needed multiple courses on teen psychology to feel comfortable in that space.” Moving into the children’s space, the focus was less on identity and building relationships as it was for teens, and more on maintaining engagement and fun. One of the two participants who has been in the field a long time shared that recent changes towards making hands-on manipulatives available all the time (instead of just for special programs) seemed very positive to her, and she noted she reads a lot on pedagogy and children’s psychology in her free time (though she did a little snort laugh when saying that) and that this type of interaction is very in line with current research. She stated that “lesson plans are a mood killer”, and another participant agreed, saying they entered the field because they enjoyed working with children, but not in the strict and structured fashion of a school. She said she was initially discouraged, because courses focused on doing things the “right” way and having very clear plans but was thrilled to join her library and realize that while people kept “right” in the back of their mind, the focus was really on fun and engagement. The “importance of play” must be a librarian mantra because every participant mentioned it. Participants who worked predominantly in the children’s area differed in one major way

from the teen librarians, which was how they viewed the roles of parents. While teen librarians recognized that they needed a confidant and a sympathetic ear, children's librarians emphasized the importance of involving parents in library activities. They saw it as a modeling activity. Librarians model learning being fun, but if parents don't participate, are disruptive (having side conversations during the program) or buried in their phone, "they signal to their kids that this is a chore, not something they care about or find important." Beyond not supporting programs, two participants also noted safety issues related to parents lack of attention. Both had stories of children wandering the parking lot while their parents were engrossed in a computer or on their cell phone. A very recent graduate said, "I'm more comfortable with the teens because we're so close in age, the folks in the children's room end up being babysitters, or dealing with health and safety issues, and I don't feel prepared for that at all."

Meaning of Preparation

So many statements started or ended with "I don't feel prepared" or conversely "I prepared myself" that this category ended up being the second largest (after the descriptive "day in the life" category) after combining the earlier categories focused on lack of preparation, appreciation of preparation, and professional development activities. As evidenced in the journal entries provided in the last section, participants in this study were willing and eager to share their experiences, and to think deeply on topics rather than providing knee-jerk overall reactions to their preparation. As one participant said "I've chosen to make a life out of story and facts, so I'm going to think this through slowly so I feel confident when the fact checkers read about it!"

This category included thoughts on professors in MLIS programs ranging from praise for folks currently working in the field, to distrust over the relevance of people who have never worked in a public library. Participants also discussed the courses they took and which ones were and weren't useful as expected. What was unexpected in this area was the depth of discussion about *other* folks who had gone through MLIS programs. There was a tangible sense of concern or worry for young adults who go straight through their undergrad to the MLIS and don't experience "real life" before a library hires them into a very autonomous role. A specific concern was folks interested in rural librarianship, who one participant said "are more likely to go work at a big suburban library where they know they'll have a very specific job, because they're afraid of what they don't know. MLIS graduates going to rural libraries have been in the field for a long time and are wielding their diploma as their right to go and make a difference in a small library. Everyone should have that chance." Participants also talked about how professional development opportunities such as state or regional library conferences, STAR Net, WebJunction and many others have helped to fill gaps, or in many cases, illuminate that there was a gap to begin with. "You get on these webinars and people are showing off a stop motion animation 2nd graders made with no help and you think, oh gosh I didn't know I could let kids that young do these things! We see others do it and do it successfully and learn so much from each other. But someone has to create the opportunity for this learning." Another common item in this category was the role of customer service in librarianship, and how for every participant, this wasn't even mentioned during their studies. Participants who had already worked in a library, or who had an internship were able to share this information with other students, but some of them noted that it was a lot harder to "gossip" about things like this when courses were remote (either due to the pandemic or

being enrolled in an online only program). With the predominance of virtual only MLIS programs, participants were really concerned (and have seen it happen) that new graduates don't really know that libraries aren't quiet empty rooms like on television.

Feelings of Doubt

This category shared a lot of entries with the preparation category, including those fears for new MLIS graduates, but also about patrons, and the world in general. Some participants felt constantly concerned about the welfare of children who are left to wander as their parents talk on the phone or watch a movie, others stated they had been afraid for their own physical safety when confronted by patrons who had “strong feelings” about certain books or programs (predominantly surrounding LGBTQI+ issues), and two participants really focused on their own feelings of burnout (and wondering if they were correlated to their recent mental health diagnoses). While all of these are “heavy topics” as one participant described them, they also made sure to share their more mundane or everyday fears, like being forced to use tools they thought weren't appropriate for their area (large television monitors) or dealing with parents and teachers who were strict about kids using the right leveled reading books. This category could have easily been renamed “compassion for patrons and self”, but I framed it more negatively because the voices of participants and the tone of their text conveyed or implied helplessness or frustration, not a more upbeat appraisal of the situation as happened in other categories.

Creating Personal Meaning

The last category is not the least important, or the least common, but is presented last because the other categories help to tell the story behind these short codes and sentence fragments. “You don't do this for the money, you do it for the relationships” popped up in

some form across most of the participants. Many of them talked about feeling guilty for any of the negative things they told me because they didn't want me to think they didn't love their job. They reiterated this constantly. Many of them described feeling like a mom, aunty or grandma watching kids move from storytime to middle school, right on through to graduation. One participant said "I don't know how people do the same thing every day at real jobs. We do something new or have some new excitement every day." Participants also spoke fondly about creating their own version of librarianship, utilizing professional development opportunities (and the flexibility of their management) to mold their role into one that was personally meaningful to them. Similar to teachers putting in long hard days because they love the kids they work with, librarians put in long hard days because of their strong belief they are making a difference in their community.

Theoretical Coding – Identification of Core Social Process

The core social process that has risen to the top after coding, sorting, analyzing, and resorting data is the process of "creating meaning". This isn't a surprise, as examinations of many fields lead to this desire to create meaning, be it personal, community-based, or field based, in one's work. This process is at work in all of the coding categories, including the more descriptive category focused on daily tasks. Identifying this core process however isn't enough to elucidate a grounded theory on the training of youth services librarians. In re-reading and re-examining the original data (transcriptions and journal entries), re-reading and re-sorting memos, and careful considering not just my own interpretation of the data, but the interpretations and evaluative statements the participants shared with me through their data, it is clear the core social process needs to be viewed through a particular lens or filter to move to the next step. The central question of this research sought to create change, so the

grounded theory must attempt (even if it's just a beginning) to do that, as this is not meant to be only explanatory work (though the explanatory components can surely be utilized in future research across a variety of related topics). The review of the data and writing continuously brought a specific question to mind. This question was asked directly by participants, implied through elements of the literature, and was even the answer to some thought processes participants worked through with me during the interview process. The question is simple: Is the MLIS degree a job preparation program, or a theoretical foundation?

To utilize this question in creating a theory of the training of youth services librarians, it is necessary to interrogate *why* this question so often arose (directly and indirectly) as participants were discussing meaning making in their careers. The answer may well be that the MLIS degree does not *support or encourage* librarians to investigate and create their own personal meaning as members of the youth services profession, active members of their community, and across the field as a whole. Regardless of if the degree is practical or theoretical (a question that of course should be answered), meaning making is relevant, and according to participants in this study, foundational to their roles.

Methodological Insights

As this dissertation is a requirement of a methods program, I thought it relevant to include some insights, false starts, and other information that might be helpful to folks considering GT or C&C (or both) in the future. Chapter 5 also includes more information on merging the two methodologies. The first note is that this study was originally conceived as a mixed methods study. The proposal and proposal defense still featured a mixed methods study. The reality was that doing all three studies, examining the relationships between GT

and C&C, all while working full time and having a family wasn't possible. However, I would still encourage future dissertation students to dream big early, because the work I did to prepare for a mixed methods study helped me learn more about methods and theoretical underpinnings to research, and about the substantive area itself. I am also now well positioned to complete the quantitative portion of this study, and combine the results, as much of the work of writing the instrument is complete. As a learning experience it was worth it to plan for a mixed methods study, but I personally could not dedicate the time to complete that particular study. I also finally believed (though it had been told to me many times before) that it is really possible to pivot your ideas long after you feel like you have a "good one." Saturation is important, so important. Even during my defense I was coming up with new recommendations and new audiences for this work. It's not over until you defend, and even then it's not over until you no longer find joy in pursuing the topic. The last item I wanted to share here is the importance of member checking. I misunderstood or misrepresented a few things from interviews and journals. Thankfully I had most participants look through what I had written, and they "signed off" on their sections, and some even made comments to omit some things from other participants sections as they thought it might reveal who the participant was. Everyone was much more cautious about other participants anonymity than their own. Ask your participants if you are on the right track. And don't forget your friends and colleagues. This dissertation was improved tremendously from the support and help of my colleagues. Your dissertation does not need to be a secret. As Dr. Uhrmacher is fond of saying "this won't be the last book you write."

The next and final chapter discusses the grounded theory that emerged from this study in the context of the literature, participant data, and potential areas for further research.

The next chapter also addresses this study's methodological question, the integration of Classic Grounded Theory and Criticism and Connoisseurship.

Chapter Five: Discussion

As briefly stated in the last chapter, the core process identified in interview and journal data, as well as document review was the concept of creating meaning in the field of youth services librarianship. This chapter will provide answers to both the initial and emergent grounded theory research questions, and provide an analysis on the appropriateness of utilizing elements of C&C along with GT.

Initial Research Question

The initial research question for this study was: *How do youth services librarians experience their day-to-day work in relation to their professional training?* The short answer to this question (at least for the ten study participants) was that while their professional training was enjoyable and built their theoretical knowledge of the field, it did not prepare them for their on-the-ground job expectations. This was even more true for participants who had experience at smaller or less well-funded libraries, and participants who did not have major work experiences prior to graduating. Generally, participants “saw” themselves more in the YALSA and ALSC competencies, which represented them both as public library staff and youth services librarians. These competencies were also viewed by participants as skills that you receive on the job, not through your MLIS degree program. All participants felt that while the ALA accreditation standards represented an overarching and generalized view of the whole field of librarianship, they could not “see” themselves in the accreditation standards, though they could see members of their cohorts who became academic or research librarians. Most participants felt their programs were structured around these accreditation standards, and that if ALA provided more (optional) standards that dug deeper into specialization areas, coursework would become more differentiated as a result. Similar

feelings were shared in literature by researchers looking at the training of data librarians (Thomas and Urban, 2018).

One participant wondered if there a need for different types of library school, rather than optional certifications and concentrations. What is the overlap in needed skills between academic librarian and children's librarian? It certainly exists, almost assuredly in the form of the ALA accreditation standards, which are meant to be all encompassing. But the same is true for electrical and chemical engineers, and they certainly have their own full programs, at least at the graduate level. Medical and nursing programs attempt to alleviate experience gaps like the ones discussed by participants in this study by requiring rigorous internships and residency programs, but librarians do not have the salary potential of these other fields, so extended required training creates inequities. Many study participants discussed the issues inherent with folks attending courses as continuing education alongside young new graduate students, and how a room filled with more experienced professionals can elevate the conversations beyond the grasp of new learners quickly. Perhaps this is where differentiation should be sought? There are not many fields where initial trainees take courses alongside 20-year veterans. This question of job training versus theoretical (and finding the middle ground that benefits all students) is relevant in many fields. Do people getting a Master's degree in teaching have similar concerns? Or does the existence of Master's degrees in education theory separate students wanting job training versus a theoretical background for future study? Again, this is not an indictment against MLIS programs or the ALA, but living in a society where librarians, teachers, and similar (mostly female) professionals with advanced degrees can often not afford to live on their salaries alone, expectations need to adapt to match the current reality of the folks receiving these degrees.

Emergent Research Question

The emergent questions that formed during data collection are: *What do youth services librarians feel is the meaning of their work?* Along with the sub questions: *How is this meaning discovered?* And, *What role does professional preparation play in this meaning creation?* The answers to these questions (and the formation of the questions themselves) came mostly from later questions about professional development. While the topic of professional development was on my mind (and in the interview and journal protocols) from the start, the focus on community-building within their own professional networks was intriguing and spoke to a different kind of professional learning. Every participant had at least one positive comment about things they had learned from another library professional without being prompted. For example, I asked Jamie to talk a bit more about library trainees (as I had not heard the term before) and she immediately turned my technical question around into an opportunity to compliment a coworker and highlight how eager they were to share their passions:

So when I was the trainee here, there was another wonderful librarian who was very adventurous and knew the 3d printer, and I happened to hear about prosthetics being done on a 3d printer. And her eyes like turned into saucers and she's like, do you want to make a hand? And I'm like, yes. Can we because I didn't know about budget, you know, can we use their time use their people, use their materials.

Jamie also talked a lot about the customer-service approach to librarianship, but again, her framing was interesting to me, because she couched everything in terms of how she would share this information with trainees, because she knew they were not getting it during their coursework. To her (and most of the other participants) it felt like they had assigned themselves the task to provide professional development to newer staff members, but unlike some of their “other duties as assigned”, this was one they enjoyed and nurtured. They of

course still laughed or made jokes about not learning these things in their programs, but they were not upset or frustrated that they needed to support this particular gap. They felt that addressing these gaps was a way for new staff to really understand the meaning behind what they do as librarians, as opposed to just the list of job duties on a job announcement. As one participant stated: “you don’t do this job for the money!” Making meaning for themselves and new members of the profession is crucial to creating the reason people do stay.

Amy (who was one of the two participants who graduated earlier than the original cutoff date for inclusion) also had a lot to say about professional development, though she focused more on the organized offerings than peer to peer sharing. She shared that training from STAR Net had been a “game-changer” when it came to community building, that training from her state library gave her a sense of duty to participate in things like this dissertation study, and that she has read “literally everything” and taken 6-week courses from Betsy Diamant-Cohen’s *Mother Goose on the Loose* series.

The emergent research question does not have as clean of an answer as the initial question, as it does not appear that professional training in the MLIS or professional development has necessarily altered their perception of what it is to be a youth services librarian. Rather, it seems that part of being a youth services librarian is being open to available learning opportunities, seeking out support for skills you do not feel you have strength in, and perhaps most importantly, being open to sharing your own strengths and passions with your professional community. This is well aligned with the ALSC competency concerning professional development and additional training. However, as mentioned previously, a heavy reliance on professional development puts an additional burden on librarians in rural or poorly funded libraries, who cannot afford to pay for trainings or even

spare the time necessary to complete free trainings. Further quantitative inquiry could clarify if librarians at larger and more well-funded institutions feel they have more “meaning” around their work, or if in fact folks without these additional opportunities have to work harder to create meaning, thereby putting more stock into it. It is clear that meaning making is important, and that these ten participants felt that service to their physical community (specifically children and teens) and their professional community (new professionals) were key components of their role. Would changes in MLIS programs help create meaning, or at least a more common starting ground? Based on the words and stories from these participants, it’s worth finding out.

Grounded Theory on the Preparation of Youth Services Librarians

The core social process identified through data analysis was “creating meaning”. This included *understanding the meaning of librarianship, meaning of preparation, creating personal meaning*, and the importance around meaning-making for *focusing on community, privileging the needs of children*, and understanding the meaning behind participants *feelings of doubt*. Even though I have a long history working with youth services librarians, this drive to attach or create meaning was surprising to me. I might have suspected a core social process around “gaining knowledge” or “providing needed services” based on my prior interactions. The process of “building community” was tempting to list as the core social process when it initially emerged (as discussed in Chapter 4), but there were enough data points left unsorted, and memos left un-assigned that it was necessary to dig a little deeper. Every participant discussed community building, many of the trainings I provide to public libraries focus on activating or cultivating community relationships, but that process as described still seemed too much like an item on a job description than it did an item that

conveyed the passion (and sometimes despair) that participants talked about their daily work. Layering meaning-making over these other areas is more in-line with the phrases and actions of participants. When sharing this core process with participants, they all went through a similar thought process, initially focusing on *what* they did, but then realizing *why* they did it was more relevant. It is important to note that the *why* was different across participants. One participant was desperate to create meaning because they could not fathom being so emotionally tired by something that was just a job, it needed meaning. Others needed meaning to explain (to themselves, partners, or friends) why they stayed in a relatively low-paying job when they had the education necessary to “move up”. They did not see leaving the profession as moving up, they saw it as abandoning the community they had built. Participants also felt the need to create meaning because their programs (and by proxy the ALA accreditation standards) did not do it for them. One participant noted “if public librarianship is the black sheep of library school, children’s services is the black sheep of public librarianship.” What it means to do this job cannot possibly be conveyed in programs with only one children’s or teen’s services course, so they have no choice but to *create meaning*.

With this in mind, the grounded theory on the preparation of youth services librarians compared to their on the ground experiences is as follows: *Youth services librarians strive to create meaning in their work through all facets of their daily duties. They do this through community-building, the support of their peers, professional development opportunities, and interactions with other library professionals. Most are not able to begin creating their own meaning until after completing their professional training, as the general nature of courses does not lend them to “seeing” themselves in the profession prior to officially joining it.*

Accreditation standards may currently be adhered to too closely, and seen as rules rather than bare minimum guidelines. Additional standards for differentiated specialties are recommended so that youth services librarians (and other specialties) are more prepared for their on-the-ground job experiences. Public libraries should also remember that current MLIS programs are theoretical degrees, not job training, and employees should have an appropriate amount of training and supervision early in their career.

Based on the above grounded theory of the preparation of youth services librarians, the following recommendations are provided for various entities associated with the preparation and employment of youth services librarians (and broadly speaking, any public librarians).

Recommendations for prospective MLIS students: Based on both the reviews of MLIS program curricula, and statements from research participants, it is clear that courses related to youth services librarianship (and public librarianship writ large) are not created equally across MLIS programs. Knowing it is not always possible to move to attend a specific in-person program, or even to afford the program that might be preferred, I recommend that new MLIS students interested in youth services librarianship take a very proactive approach to their educational curricula. If a children or teen services course is offered, take it immediately, especially if it is not frequently offered. The sooner you get a base level course, the sooner your class projects, practicum, etc. can be focused on youth services work. When special topics courses relevant to your interest come up, make sure you take these as well, even if it means delaying a core course (so long as that course will be easy to take in a later term). Many participants said that their classmates avoided “hard” courses related to their interests because they were afraid of hurting their grades. You are only hurting yourself if

you skip these courses. Take the technology courses, the philosophical courses, you will not be the only person struggling, and you will be fine. Another recommendation from research participants was to take a child or teen psychology course from outside of your department. This was an area every participant said they wished they had taken a course, even the ones who had very in-depth specialized children or teen services courses. Lastly, use Independent Study and Practicum/Internship courses to your advantage. Work with a current children's or teen services librarian (or even contact me) to create your own course of study to hit the areas you are missing in your coursework. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are some very good practical books, and many more informal documents related to practice in youth services. These courses are also good opportunities to practice your facilitation and story-telling. If you can't do it at a library, get on zoom with your young family members. Practice and exposure is key to comfort.

Recommendations for MLIS programs looking to better support future youth services

librarians: The biggest recommendation is for advisors to be honest about the opportunities currently offered in their program and highlight opportunities for independent study or collaborative learning where students can focus on skills that may be missing in the standard coursework. I recognize it's hard to get a whole specialization added, or even a few classes, but there is enough flexibility in most MLIS programs to support students in using their Independent Study, Practicum, and similar requirements to really focus on youth services, and more generally public librarianship topics. I would also encourage professors of courses that have projects or group work to make sure there are clear options relevant to youth services and public librarianship. Based on participants descriptions of courses that were required but had no bearing on public librarianship, I would also recommend more flexibility

in substituting appropriate courses (including those from education, psychology, or other similar departments) for students who have indicated their intent to move into youth services or public librarianship. The final recommendation for MLIS programs is to consider a special topics or similar course focused on the ALSC and YALSA competencies. These items are a very accurate reflection of the duties, ideals, and even future of children's and teen services, and would be a simple framework to build either a structured course, or an Independent Study around.

Recommendations for ALA: As many of the MLIS program curricula I looked at appeared to follow the example accreditation checklist set forth by ALA, my strongest recommendation is to include sample accreditation checklists for programs with specializations in youth services, or even two or three entries in the checklist related to the basics of public librarianship. These items are good steppingstones for programs to continue to build their offerings, and to provide students with the necessary scaffolds to create their own program of study relevant to their desired outcomes. Using the competencies created by ALSC and YALSA would be an easy starting point, and one already associated with ALA. Broadly speaking, ALA has been instrumental to moving the field forward, and supporting public libraries as they deal with censorship, book bans, funding issues, and many other items. The proactive nature ALA demonstrates in all other areas of their work must be translated to the accreditation standards, so that future public library staff (specifically in youth services) are actually prepared for the broad expectations of public library staff ALA has helped to create.

Recommendations for public libraries hiring new MLIS graduates: The most consistent item I heard from participants was that either they themselves were overwhelmed and under-supported when starting their new positions, or that they had seen many other new librarians

being overwhelmed and under supported. This was not described as typical new job jitters, or a learning curve. The two participants with no prior job experience before their first library job described it as absolutely terrifying, and these participants were at large libraries with many additional staff members. Even then they reported only having one monthly meeting with a supervisor, and being expected to learn on the job. While this is fine for items like acclimating to shelving standards, or even understanding group norms around storytime, participants described (especially in the teen room) being faced with hard questions and realities that had much more significance and impact on their teen patrons than they were comfortable dealing with without proper training. One participant took it upon herself to take a "crisis informed care" course on her own dime, after hearing teens she saw on a weekly basis dealing with very grown-up issues with no supportive adults who knew what they were doing. The participant that loves their profession but is trying to leave anyway challenged library leadership to consider the mental and physical health of employees over the "martyr syndrome" in place in many public libraries. They recognize it is a well-meaning martyrdom, doing everything possible for communities who are struggling with the aftermath of COVID, changes in healthcare rights, gun violence, and so many other things. But doing everything for the community and refusing to say no like it is a badge of honor is hurting library staff. Currently, most libraries may not have the time to make sure new staff are not completely on their own from day 1. Some library staff think that sacrificing the availability of certain programs and resources is worth it to keep engaged and educated people in the field. This is an issue for each library to decide on their own, with their staff. Perhaps easier is a suggestion at the very least to make sure training activities are paid (either the library paying for registration and travel or allowing folks to do virtual professional development on the

clock). The ways to do this obviously depend on the library budget. If you are a well-funded library hiring outside speakers and performers, cut back on those items and invest more time and resources in your own staff. If you are a tiny library with little to no budget, close for a few hours in the middle of the least busy day to allow your (potentially part time and singular) staff member(s) to read or attend a webinar. There is not one right answer, but the overarching request from all participants (even those who are directors themselves) is to normalize saying no, provide opportunities for on-the-clock professional development, and believe staff when they say they need extra supports.

Methodology Question: GT and C&C

The method question for this dissertation was: *In what ways do the methods of Criticism and Connoisseurship complement and enhance the process of a Classic Grounded Theory study, specifically when the researcher is already a connoisseur of the topic?* I chose to pursue this combination of methods for a variety of reasons, but the main reason was a simple one. As this was the first full classic grounded theory study I was completing, it was important for me to find a way to “bracket out” my prior knowledge when necessary while still being able to lean into it for items like protocol design and literature review.

Incorporating additional strategies from C&C (such as D.I.E.T.) allowed me to better interrogate the information or opinions I already had. While of course you do not need the amount of prior knowledge I have of this topic to utilize C&C (in fact, you can start with none) I felt like a lot of the first C in C&C was already done for me, and I was able to move on to the second C, criticism. According to Eisner, “criticism is the disclosure of what we learn through our connoisseurship” (Eisner, 1991, pg. 2). According to anthropologist Horace Miner, the point of anthropology is to “make the strange familiar and the familiar strange.”

C&C focuses on making the familiar strange (Eisner, 1991, pg. 76). Without this refrain in mind (in fact, I have it written over my desk), I would have ended this dissertation with a list of STEM and facilitation related training and curricular pieces that should be included in MLIS programs. This would have been beneficial, and it would have been accurate. But by critiquing my own narratives of the library world and “making them strange”, I was able to see the causes and realities of why these topics are neglected, and recognize they are not the only ones. The recommendations provided are less specific but provide more context and more opportunities for further discussion among folks with their own versions of connoisseurship around this topic. Along this same line, Eisner also stressed that antecedent knowledge could be a liability rather than an asset (pg. 78), and recognizing this helped me to resort or recategorize items that were binned out of convenience, rather than adherence to the intention of the participants. Simply put, the human mind likes containers, especially containers of its own devising. So my brain initially contributed all the woes of youth services librarianship to a lack of training around facilitation and public speaking, because those are the areas I’ve spent my career supporting library staff. Eisner stated that “language affects perception” and I was certainly a victim. Every participant from their first interview to their last was speaking of meaning making, and their purpose, and I did not see it. My first full dissertation draft did not have “making meaning” as the core social process. In fact it did not appear at all. It was not until showing the manuscript to participants, and to colleagues that I began to finally “hear” what was being said outside of the bins created by my own experiences. I banked on the emergent nature of grounded theory without remembering that my own experiences made emergence more difficult. Re-reading Eisner’s stance on

antecedent knowledge is what led me to an actionable grounded theory, rather than a list of expected suggestions and questions.

Three of the key aspects of classic grounded theory are the *constant comparative method*, *theoretical sampling*, and *theoretical saturation*. Note that concepts like open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and coding families are not included, as those are components of Straussian GT and constructivist GT. In the constant comparative method coding, memoing, theory developing, and writing are happening simultaneously, allowing for fluid transitions between all components, and major rethinking to happen at any stage (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling is used in classic GT to target additional participants, or re-question existing participants to saturate emergent topics (Kolb, 2012, pg. 83). Theoretical sampling is also where open, axial and selective coding would occur if using a different GT approach. Theoretical saturation simply means that it is safe to end data collection, as no new data is being collected on the relevant themes or in the relevant categories (Glaser, 1992, pg. 61).

The elements of criticism and connoisseurship utilized in this study were the data analysis methods of description, interpretation, thematics, and evaluation (D.I.E.T.) Description allows readers to “see and hear what the critic has experienced” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, pg. 37). Interpretation provides meaning to those descriptions (pg. 37). Evaluation is an “appraisal of the educational experience in relationship to a set of criteria for a particular context” (pg. 49). And thematics involves identifying and describing “pervasive qualities” (pg. 49) of the data.

Chapter 2 is where the combination of the two methods was first readily apparent, as literature was presented in a GT style (a minimal initial literature review, followed by a post-

data collection in-depth review), but utilized both description and interpretation to share the critic's (myself) knowledge of the topic. Providing the C&C interpretations enhanced the GT concept of the constant comparative method, by truly allowing the literature and documents to function as data in conversation with participant data. The inclusion of Evaluation and Thematics was also relevant when discussing the ALA accreditation standards, and the YALSA and ALSC competencies. These items could easily be presented on their own merit, but with the added context of my own work (training librarians in the areas they did not get during their schooling) and the voices of the study participants providing additional meaning and context to the standards and competencies. It became easier to understand both where these documents came from, and how their utilization is impacting youth services librarians.

Keeping the more interrogative nature of C&C in mind while conducting interviews and knowing when there was a need for additional theoretical sampling was another area that combining the two methods was successful. As an example, it was not until a few interviews in that I directly questioned participants about their professional development activities. I had been attempting not to "lead the witness" so much that a key component of the research was not even being discussed. This is partially due to my inexperience, but without the confidence from C&C, that inexperience would have likely led me to keep the question out, because I would have been afraid to lead the data astray and wouldn't have trusted that my own experiences (that most librarians participate in frequent professional development) were valid reasons to modify the protocol. I want to stress here that I both ignored my prior knowledge at the wrong time and banked on it at the wrong time. Without C&C principles along with GT principles, I would not have known.

D.I.E.T. was also invaluable during actual coding and sorting. I conducted four full sorts of the data and memos (this means items were shuffled and resorted into different categories, or across multiple categories, with the placement being recorded each time). The concepts of both Description and Interpretation allowed me to play around more with various meanings for what the participants said and wrote, and even different interpretations of my own memo thoughts. For items that could not be moved much around categories but were still proving to be a puzzle in terms of the not fitting in the existing categories, but also not presenting a new one, Interpretation techniques allowed for rewriting or recasting of the coding or even the categories to better fit the data as it was presented (not as I had originally conceived it).

I do not see myself conducting future GT research without also utilizing the interrogative methods of C&C and encourage all qualitative researchers to familiarize themselves with the concepts, even if not using the method directly. Quantitative researchers as well would benefit from “making the familiar strange” when making sure they aren’t just seeing the relationships that make sense, but the ones that don’t as well. Specifically, the utilization of D.I.E.T. seems to be the most portable tool in any researchers toolchest, and having multiple ways to look at and interrogate data can only benefit the final theory.

Suggestions for Future Research

The joy of being a connoisseur of the field of librarianship is that I do not leave this research feeling like there is work left undone. Of course there is much more to do, but now there is a very good direction for myself and other researchers to move forward. First and foremost, a quantitative study developed based on this qualitative analysis would help to convey the importance of this topic to ALA and MLIS program leadership. This is not to say

quantitative work will be seen as more valid, only that the library world has both qualitative and quantitative focused members, and providing the information from multiple avenues will aid in discussion. Specific items that could be explored further with simple survey methodology include: comparing the timing of degree attainment (a direct path after undergrad versus a second career) with perceptions of readiness; influence of library program type (in-person versus online) on readiness; prevalence of internship or other on-the-ground opportunities during MLIS work; and relationships between library staff size and confidence. Another key piece for future research would involve speaking directly with ALA accreditation committee volunteers, as well as program heads at MLIS programs. Ideally conversations between the two groups could be observed to better understand how each group views their relationship to each other and to the design of MLIS program courses. Research that veers away from the grounded theory that emerged during this study but is still relevant could include a deeper dive into professional development opportunities (especially with regards to how they are accessed depending on library size, budget and location); a study focusing on the experiences of neurodiverse library programming staff; or an open ended investigation into the role of “library trainee” of who is afforded the opportunity to participate in that role.

Conclusion

To summarize, youth services librarians are not currently receiving training in their programs in line with their on the ground experiences. Other librarian specialties are likely in the same situation. In most circumstances, the MLIS degree is a theory-based degree most appropriate for future academic librarians. Participants in this study however did not necessarily advocate for MLIS degrees to become more vocational, as they have in most

circumstances filled those gaps through professional development and peer to peer sharing. They did worry about their counterparts in rural and small libraries who do not have those opportunities. ALA providing optional accreditation standard templates for specializations to MLIS programs would appear to be a good middle ground for the time being. Without further study and conversation with the ALA accreditation board volunteers, MLIS faculty, and MLIS administrators, a full picture cannot be painted of the solution to this issue. However, a grounded theory on the preparation of youth services librarians compared to their on the ground experiences is possible, and follows:

Youth services librarians strive to create meaning in their work through all facets of their daily duties. They do this through community-building, the support of their peers, professional development opportunities, and interactions with other library professionals. Most are not able to begin creating their own meaning until after completing their professional training, as the general nature of courses does not lend them to “seeing” themselves in the profession prior to officially joining it. Accreditation standards may currently be adhered to too closely, seen as rules rather than bare minimum guidelines. Additional standards for differentiated specialties are recommended so that youth services librarians (and other specialties) are more prepared for their on-the-ground job experiences. Public libraries should also remember that current MLIS programs are theoretical degrees, not job training, and employees should have an appropriate amount of training and supervision early in their career.

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Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies

**Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association (the Council), November 30,
2023, by request of the Committee on Accreditation**

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation in higher education is defined as “a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize institutions and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement.”¹

Accreditation serves to ensure educational quality, judged in terms of demonstrated results in supporting the educational development of students.

Authority and Responsibilities of the ALA Committee on Accreditation

The Council of the American Library Association (ALA) has designated the Committee on Accreditation “to be responsible for the execution of the accreditation program of ALA, and to develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies for the approval of council.”² The American Library Association Committee on Accreditation has been recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the accrediting agency for “master’s programs in library and information studies offered under the degree-granting authority of institutions in the United States, its territories, possessions, and protectorates; in Canada by agreement with the Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB); and in the United Kingdom (2019).”³

The Committee on Accreditation endeavors through standards to protect the public interest and provides guidance for educators. Prospective students, employers recruiting professional staff, and the general public concerned about the quality of library and information services have the right to know whether a given program of education is of good standing. By identifying those programs meeting recognized standards, the Committee offers a means of quality control in the professional staffing of library and information services.

The Committee on Accreditation examines the evidence presented for each of the standards; however, its final judgment is concerned with the totality of the accomplishment and the environment for learning. The decision regarding accreditation is approached from an evaluation of this totality rather than from a consideration of isolated particulars. Thus, failure to meet any particular component of a standard may not result in failure to meet that standard. Similarly, failure to meet a single standard may not result in failure to achieve accredited status for a program. Any standard on which a program has follow-up reporting (following a comprehensive



review or interim reporting review) is made public by the Office for Accreditation in the Directory of ALA-Accredited Programs.

Scope of Standards

These Standards are limited in their application to the assessment of graduate programs of library and information studies that lead to a master's degree. As a prerequisite to accreditation, the institution in which a program resides must be accredited by its appropriate accrediting agency.

The phrase “library and information studies” is understood to be concerned with information resources and the services and technologies to facilitate their management and use. Library and information studies encompasses information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation and curation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, use and users, and management of human and information resources. Given the growing and changing complexity of our global society, library and information studies also is concerned with equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice with regards to information and its use. This definition incorporates a field of professional practice and associated areas of study and research, regardless of a degree's name.

The mission of a unit in which a program resides is relevant to master's program review; when the unit offers other educational programs, the contribution of those programs is also relevant. A unit may seek accreditation for more than one graduate program of education in library and information studies leading to a master's degree; when that is done, the goals, objectives, and learning outcomes of each program and their interrelationships are to be presented.

Terminology within the Standards

The academic unit that provides graduate education in library and information studies may be organized as an autonomous college within its university, as a department in a college, or otherwise, as appropriate within the institution. Within the Standards, the term “program” refers to an organization of people and educational experiences that comprise the degree.

The term “research” as used in the Standards is understood to be (1) broad in its inclusiveness of scholarly activities of a wide variety; and (2) inclusive of communication of results through appropriate means.

Program goals are broad statements of what the program intends to achieve or accomplish. A program's objectives specify how the program will achieve its goals within a specified timeframe.

Program-level learning outcomes specify what students know and are able to do by the time of graduation.

When the term “faculty” is used, the Standard applies to the faculty as a whole, including both full-time faculty members (tenured/tenure-track and non-tenure-track) and part-time faculty



members. Reference to a subset of the faculty is designated by referring specifically to “full-time” or “part-time” faculty members, or to “each” or “individual” faculty members.

Systematic planning is an ongoing, active, broad-based approach to (1) continuous review and revision of a program’s vision, mission, goals, objectives, and learning outcomes; (2) assessment of attainment of goals, objectives, and learning outcomes; (3) realignment and redesign of core activities in response to the results of assessment; and (4) communication of planning policies and processes, assessment activities, and results of assessment to program constituents. Effective broad-based, systematic planning requires engagement of the program’s constituents and thorough and open documentation of those activities that constitute planning.

Definitions of equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice are included in the Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS) Glossary of Terms
<https://www.ala.org/aboutala/odlos-glossary-terms>.

A glossary of accreditation terminology is available at the ALA-Office for Accreditation website, <http://www.ala.org/accreditedprograms/standards/glossary>.

Nature of the Standards

These Standards identify the indispensable components of library and information studies programs while recognizing programs’ rights and obligations regarding initiative, experimentation, innovation, and individual programmatic differences. The Standards are indicative, not prescriptive, with the intent to foster excellence through a program’s development of criteria for evaluating effectiveness, developing and applying qualitative and quantitative measures of these criteria, analyzing data from measurements, and applying analysis to program improvement.

The Standards stress innovation and encourage programs to take an active role in and concern for future developments and growth in the field.

The values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice are referenced throughout the Standards because of their importance when framing goals and objectives, designing curricula, selecting and retaining faculty and students, and allocating resources.

The requirements of these Standards apply regardless of forms or locations of delivery of a program.

Philosophy of Program Review

The Committee on Accreditation determines the eligibility of a program for accredited status on the basis of evidence presented by a program and by the report of a visiting external review panel. The evidence supplied by the program in support of the *Standards* is evaluated against the statement of the unit’s mission and the program’s goals and objectives. A program’s evidence is evaluated by trained, experienced, and capable evaluators.



Program goals and objectives are fundamental to all aspects of master's degree programs and form the basis on which educational programs are to be developed and upon which they are evaluated. Program goals and objectives are required to reflect and support program-level learning outcomes and the achievement of these outcomes.

The *Accreditation Process, Policies and Procedures (AP3)* document guides the accreditation process. Section II "Guidelines for the Self-Study and comprehensive review" includes Section II.7.4 "Examples of evidence that might be used to indicate compliance with the Standards for Accreditation." Both the *Standards* and *AP3* are available online from the Office for Accreditation website, <http://www.ala.org/offices/accreditation>.

Assistance in obtaining materials used by the Committee on Accreditation is provided by the Office for Accreditation. These materials consist of documents used in the accreditation process, as well as educational policy statements developed by relevant professional organizations that can be used to inform the design and evaluation of a master's degree program.

Endnotes

1. *CHEA Recognition of Accrediting Organizations, Policy and Procedures* (1998, revised September 24, 2018); Background, p. 2. Retrieved October 24, 2023, <https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Recognition-Polic-FINAL-Dec-2018.pdf>
2. Committee on Accreditation. Retrieved October 24, 2023, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/committees/ala/ala-coa>
3. Council for Higher Education Accreditation. American Library Association, Committee on Accreditation. Retrieved October 24, 2023, <https://www.chea.org/american-library-association-committee-accreditation>

Scope Statements for Top-level Standards

Standard I – Systematic Planning

The program implements an ongoing, broad-based, systematic planning process that involves the constituencies the program seeks to serve, includes members of traditionally underrepresented and historically underserved groups, and results in improvements to and innovations in the program.

Standard II – Program-Level Learning Outcomes and Curriculum

Program-level learning outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. The curriculum provides descriptions of different courses of study, specializations, or other variations of study. The evaluation includes attainment of outcomes across the program.

Standard III - Faculty

The faculty are diverse in representation and have the necessary qualifications, achievements, and resources to support the program. Faculty performance is regularly evaluated by criteria relevant to the program.



Standard IV – Students

The program has processes and systems to recruit, retain, and support students and prospective students, including the evaluation and continuous improvement of those processes and systems.

Standard V - Infrastructure

Programs have the administrative, financial, physical, and technological resources and services to support student learning and enable program-level learning outcomes to be achieved.

Programs evaluate these resources and services for continuous improvement.

Each Standard begins with a statement of scope. In each of the remaining numbered sections, the Self-Study will provide evidence demonstrating achievement of that standard.

ALA Standards for Accreditation of Master’s Programs in Library and Information Studies

Standard I – Systematic Planning

The program’s implementation of an ongoing, broad-based, systematic planning process involves the constituencies that the program seeks to serve, including members of traditionally underrepresented and historically underserved groups, and results in improvements to and innovations in the program.

I.1 Mission and Goals. The mission and goals of the unit and the educational program foster quality education and incorporate values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The program’s goals and objectives align with the needs of the LIS profession, demonstrate continuous improvement over time, and are informed by the mission of the parent institution.

I.2 Process. The program employs an on-going systematic planning process that involves the constituents the program seeks to serve, including traditionally underrepresented and historically underserved groups. Those constituents include, but are not limited to, the parent institution, employers, alumni, and students. Elements of systematic planning include:

I.2.1 Continuous review of the program’s vision, mission, goals and objectives;

I.2.2 Assessment of attainment of program goals and objectives;

I.2.3 Improvements to the program based on analysis of assessment data from all relevant constituents.

I.3 Plan. The program’s systematic plan includes a written strategic or long-range plan that includes vision, mission, and direction for the future; this plan is publicly available and regularly reviewed. The plan also identifies needs and resources for achieving its mission and goals to ensure sustainability of the program.

Standard II – Program-Level Learning Outcomes and Curriculum



Program-level learning outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. The curriculum provides descriptions of different courses of study, specializations, or other variations of study. The evaluation includes attainment of outcomes collectively across the program.

II.1 Ethics and Values. Program-level learning outcomes and curriculum are designed to incorporate the philosophy, principles, and ethics of the field, including the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and relevant professional codes of ethics.

II.2 Program-Level Learning Outcomes. Program-level learning outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. The outcomes are informed by the most recent statement of **ALA Core Competences, ALA Core Values** and include a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. For areas of specialization, outcomes are informed by knowledge and competency statements developed by relevant professional organizations. Programs regularly evaluate the attainment of program-level learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are consistent regardless of mode of delivery.

II.3 Curriculum. The program provides a curriculum that enables students to achieve the identified program-level learning outcomes. The curriculum addresses information users, resources, services, and technologies to facilitate information management and use, across diverse contexts and communities. Beyond the required curriculum, programs shall offer additional courses to provide both greater depth and breadth of material. Programs have the option of grouping courses together to create areas of specialization. The curriculum is revised regularly to keep it current.

II.4 Program Completion. Program course offerings and support systems allow students to construct coherent and timely plans of study that address their career goals. Course offerings, scheduling, and delivery methods are consistent with public information and are matched to student needs.

II.5 Evaluation. The curriculum is continually evaluated with input not only from faculty, but also stakeholders: students, employers, alumni, and other constituents, including members of traditionally underrepresented and historically underserved groups. The program's design, delivery, and continuous improvement are based on data provided by systematic evaluation of students' achievement of program-level learning outcomes within the context of the overall mission and goals of the unit offering the program and distinct needs and goals for separate specializations.

Standard III - Faculty

The faculty are diverse in representation and have the necessary qualifications, achievements, and resources to support the program. Faculty performance is regularly evaluated by criteria relevant to the program.

III.1 Faculty Diversity. The recruitment, retention, development, and advancement of all faculty, especially underrepresented faculty, reflect the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.



III.2 Program Faculty. There are sufficient full-time program faculty (tenured/tenure-track and non-tenure-track) to carry out the major share of the teaching, research, and service activities required for the program, wherever or however delivered. The teaching, research, and service responsibilities are equitably distributed among the full-time faculty. Teaching involves curriculum development and innovation, instruction, direction of student research, and academic advising. Full-time program faculty collectively provide a range of specialties that support the goals and objectives of the program. Part-time faculty, when appointed, balance, enrich, and complement the competencies of the full-time program faculty.

III.3 Faculty Qualifications. All faculty possess appropriate academic and subject-matter qualifications to teach in their area of instruction at the graduate level and contribute meaningfully to program design and evaluation. Full-time faculty demonstrate skill in academic planning and assessment, have a sustained research and scholarly agenda that contributes to the knowledge base of the field and is disseminated regularly. Faculty regularly update and enhance their knowledge and skills, including skills in equity and social justice; interact with faculty of other disciplines; and maintain close and continuing liaison to relevant areas of professional practice.

III.4 Faculty Workload. Faculty assignments relate to the needs of the program and specializations, and to the competencies of the individual faculty members. Faculty workload assignments are equitable, support the quality of instruction throughout all academic sessions and all modes of delivery, and take into account time needed for teaching, academic advising, research, professional development, and institutional and professional service.

III.5 Faculty Support. Compensation for program faculty is equitable and is sufficient to attract, support, and retain personnel needed to attain unit, program, and LIS professional goals and objectives. Institutional funds for research projects, professional development, travel, and leaves are available on the same basis as in comparable units of the institution. Faculty have access to resources and accommodations for disabilities. Faculty from underrepresented groups have access to support and resources specific to documented challenges and oppression in academic settings.

III.6. Faculty Evaluation and Development. The unit provides policies and resources that support and enhance the retention and professional development of full- and part-time faculty. All faculty have the opportunity for professional development activities. Systematic evaluation of faculty considers accomplishments and innovation in the areas of teaching, research, and service, and that evaluation provides data for continuous improvement of instruction and other program goals and objectives. Documented mechanisms for addressing the unique challenges of faculty from underrepresented groups in development and evaluation exist. Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, and others are involved in the evaluation process.

Standard IV – Students

The program has processes and systems to recruit, retain, and support students and prospective students, as well as the evaluation and continuous improvement of those processes and systems.



IV.1 Student Diversity. Student recruitment, retention, and support systems address student needs in a global and diverse society, explicitly advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion.

IV.2 Public Information. Current, accurate, and easily accessible information about the program is available for prospective and current students and other program constituents. This includes statements of program-level learning outcomes, program requirements, data on retention, time to degree completion, graduation rates, percentage of graduates holding program-relevant positions after graduation, and other relevant metrics. Public information is available on curricula, faculty, admission requirements, costs and availability of financial aid, and criteria for evaluating student performance.

IV.3 Student Qualifications. The program formulates recruitment and admission policies for students that are consistent with the unit's mission and the program's goals and objectives. These policies include the needs and values of the constituencies served by the program. Standards for admission are applied consistently and equitably. Within the framework of institutional policy and programs, the admission policy for the program ensures that applicants possess sufficient interest, aptitude, and qualifications to enable successful completion of the program and subsequent contribution to the field. Students admitted to the program have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. The policies and procedures for waiving any admission standard or academic prerequisite are stated clearly and applied consistently. Assessment of an application is based on a combined evaluation of academic, intellectual, and other qualifications as they relate to the constituencies served by the program, the program's goals and objectives, and the career objectives of the individual.

IV.4 Student Advising, Services, and Support. The program provides students with the support and services that promote health and safety, learning, timely completion of their program of study, and socialization into the field. The program provides students with competent academic advising, progress appraisal, and career guidance. Students have access to university services, including personal counseling resources, and accommodations for disabilities. The program supports students by providing them with financial aid opportunities.

IV.5 Student Engagement. The program fosters student participation in the determination of the total learning experience. Students are provided with opportunities to: participate in the formulation, modification, and implementation of policies affecting academic and student affairs; participate in research; form student organizations; and participate in professional organizations. Students have multiple avenues for input, including opportunities to express concerns and have them addressed.

IV.6 Evaluation. Processes and systems supporting students are systematically evaluated and the results applied to continuous improvement in the context of the unit's mission and the program's goals and objectives.

Standard V - Infrastructure

Programs have the administrative, financial, physical, and technological resources and services to support student learning and enable program-level learning outcomes to be achieved. Programs evaluate these resources and services for continuous improvement.



V.1 Values Underlying Infrastructure. Programs show documented efforts to use resources and services in ways that reflect equity, diversity, and inclusion. Resources and services are distributed, implemented, and used by the program equitably and with aims toward diversity and inclusion.

V.2 Autonomy and Administrative Infrastructure. The program is integral yet distinctive within the institution. Its autonomy is sufficient, within the general guidelines of the institution, to determine the intellectual content of its program, the selection and promotion of its faculty, the selection and support of its students, and the support of the academic program. It has the administrative infrastructure, financial support, and resources to ensure that its goals and objectives can be accomplished. The parent institution provides both administrative support and the resources needed for the attainment of mission and goals. The administrative head(s) of the program has authority to ensure that students are supported in their plan of study, has leadership skills and experience relevant to the program, and understanding of developments in LIS. The administrative head(s) demonstrates ongoing development of administrative abilities and skills in equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

V.3 Participation. The program's faculty, staff, and students have the same opportunities for representation on the institution's advisory or policy-making bodies as do those of comparable units throughout the institution. Administrative relationships with other academic units enhance the intellectual environment and support interdisciplinary interaction.

V.4 Administrative Support. Program or unit support staff are sufficient in number and expertise to support faculty and students. Staff have appropriate resources and support, compensation, professional development, and systematic evaluation that provides for accomplishment of program and unit goals. Program or unit staff are selected, employed, and offered development opportunities in accordance with LIS professional values, including equity, diversity, and inclusion.

V.5 Physical, Technological, and Information Resources. The program and the unit have access to resources that allow them to accomplish their goals of teaching, research, and service. Physical facilities, online services, and associated technologies provide a functional and accessible working, learning, and teaching environment for students, faculty, and staff. These resources enhance the opportunities for research, teaching, service, and communication. Library resources and university services support the program's curriculum and faculty and student research. These resources promote efficient, effective, and equitable administration of the program.

V.6 Evaluation. Resources and services are sufficient and appropriate to meet the needs of the program. Resources, services, and their use, including efforts to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion, are systematically evaluated and the results applied to continuous improvement in the context of the unit's mission and the program's goals and objectives.

End of Standards





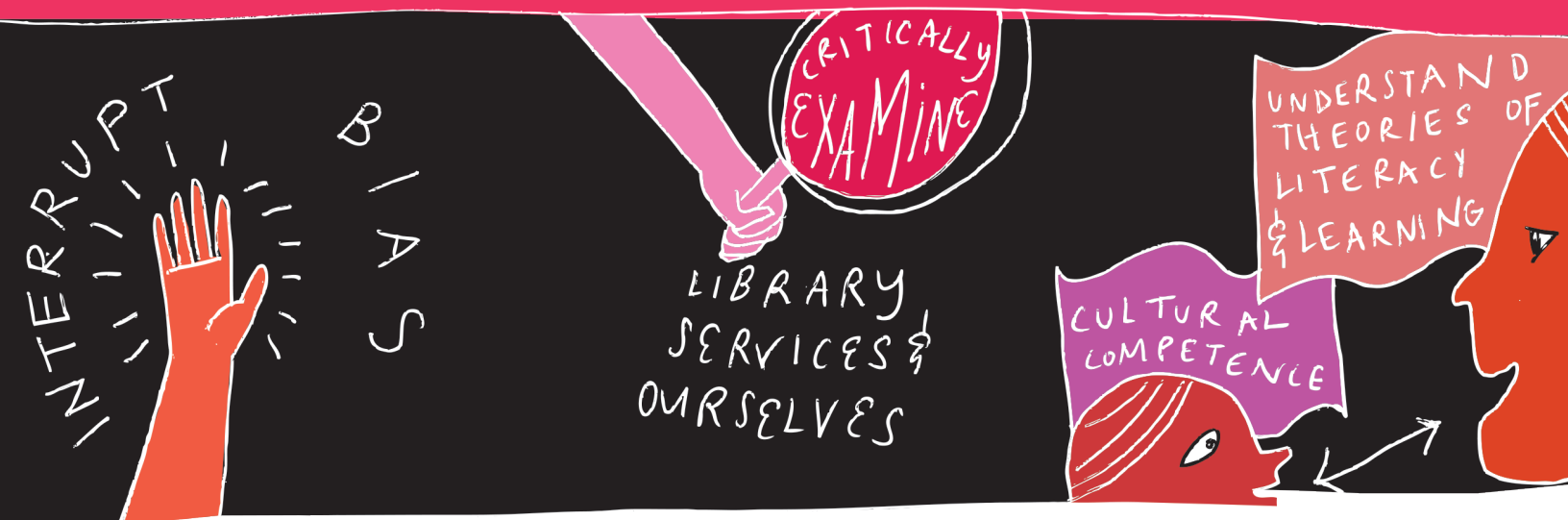
Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Libraries

Libraries are vital to all children, caregivers, and the communities that support them. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), believes that all children and their caregivers need and deserve the very best opportunities, which is why ALSC members are leaders in the field of children's library service, particularly in areas of access, advocacy, outreach, inclusion, diversity, family literacy, and lifelong learning.

To achieve this excellence, ALSC recommends the following competencies to all children's librarians and other library staff whose primary duties include delivering library service to and advocating library service for children ages 0 to 14 and their caregivers. ALSC strongly recommends a master's degree in Library and Information Science from an ALA-accredited graduate school as the appropriate professional degree for the librarian serving children in the library, and because children deserve the highest-quality service, ALSC expects the same standards to guide service provided by paraprofessional staff; these staff should be supported in their professional development required to provide this work and be compensated in parity.

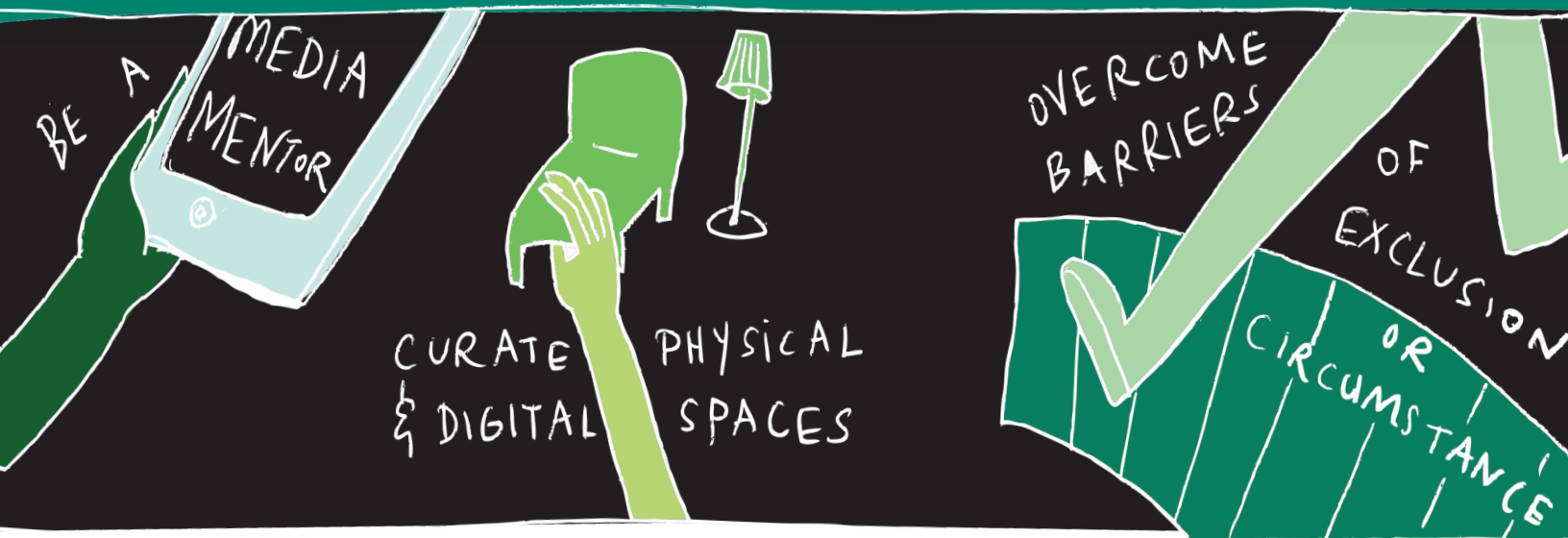
Through specialized coursework in undergraduate and graduate study, on-the-job training, and continuing education opportunities, librarians and paraprofessionals serving children and their caregivers should achieve and maintain the following skills, orientations, and understandings to ensure children receive the highest quality of library service as defined in the ALA's Library Bill of Rights, ALA's Code of Ethics, and in the ALA and Association of American Publishers' joint Freedom to Read Statement. Library service to children and their caregivers, as envisioned by ALSC, is best accomplished when all competencies are developed and achieved by all staff.

I. Commitment to Client Group



- 1 Demonstrates respect for diversity and inclusion of cultural values, and continually develops cultural awareness and works to address implicit bias in order to provide inclusive and equitable service to diverse populations.
- 2 Recognizes systems of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion in the community and its institutions, including the library, and interrupts and/or counteracts them by way of culturally aware services.
- 3 Recognizes the effects of societal factors, new knowledge and tools, income inequality, health, and food insecurity, etc., on the needs of children and their caregivers.
- 4 Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning, literacy development and brain development, and their implications for library service.
- 5 Understands current educational practices, especially those related to literacy and inquiry.
- 6 Assesses and responds on a regular and systematic basis to the needs and preferences of children, their caregivers, educators, and other adults who use the resources of the children's department, including those unserved and underserved by the library.
- 7 Cultivates an environment for enjoyable and convenient use of library resources, specifically removing barriers to access presented by socioeconomic circumstances, race, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, religion, immigration status, and commercialism, and other diversities.

II. Reference and User Services



- 1 Creates and maintains a physical and digital library environment that provides the best possible access to materials and resources for all children and their caregivers.
- 2 Instructs and supports children in the physical and digital use of library tools and resources, information gathering, and research skills, and empowers all children, families, and their caregivers to choose materials and services on their own.
- 3 Conducts reference and readers' advisory interviews to assist children and their caregivers with the identification and selection of materials and services, regardless of format and according to their interests and abilities.
- 4 Identifies the digital media needs of children and their caregivers through formal and informal customer-service interactions and applies strategies to support those needs.
- 5 Models customer service with children, families, and their caregivers that is culturally respectful and developmentally appropriate, and works to overcome systems of oppression, discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism.
- 6 Respects the patron's right to browse regardless of age and provides nonjudgmental answers to patron questions.
- 7 Demonstrates knowledge of information services available in the community and broader society and makes appropriate referrals for all library constituencies.
- 8 Models and encourages use of culturally and ability diverse materials and services through bibliographies, booktalks, displays, electronic documents, social media, and other tools.

III. Programming Skills



- 1 Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of diverse programs for children, with consideration of equity, diversity, and inclusion; principles of child development; and the needs, interests, and goals of all children, their caregivers, and educators in the community.
- 2 Acknowledges the importance of physical space to engage and foster learning and establishes appropriate environments for programs that respond to developmental needs and abilities of children and families.
- 3 Acknowledges the importance of the caregiver-child bond to early learning and establishes appropriate and effective environments for programs that respond to the social and emotional needs of children and create opportunities for families to engage in programming together.
- 4 Integrates technology in program design and delivery appropriate for children and families.
- 5 Integrates literacy-development techniques in program design and delivery, engaging and empowering caregivers in a culturally aware way.
- 6 Designs programs that foster a variety of literacies and learning methods including but not limited to pre-literacy, early literacy, family literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, computational thinking, STEM, and maker-centered learning.
- 7 Identifies, engages, and supports colleagues, coworkers, and community members from diverse backgrounds to contribute ideas and skills for programs and presentations.
- 8 Establishes programs and services for caregivers, childcare providers, educators, and other community professionals who work with children, families, and caregivers.
- 9 Delivers programs outside and inside the library, as well as digitally, to meet users where they are, addressing community and educational needs, including those of unserved and underserved populations.

IV. Collection Knowledge and Management



- 1 Demonstrates knowledge, management, use, and appreciation of children's literature, multimodal materials, digital media, and other materials that contribute to a diverse, current, and relevant children's collection.
- 2 Maintains a diverse collection that is inclusive of the needs of all children and their caregivers in the community and recognizes children's needs to see and learn about people like and unlike themselves in the materials they access.
- 3 Advocates for and purchases materials by and about underrepresented communities, addressing the need for more representation of marginalized groups.
- 4 Maintains collections in different languages and formats, as appropriate, to remove linguistic barriers to access.
- 5 Understands and applies criteria for evaluating the content, artistic merit, and cultural authenticity of children's materials in all genres and formats.
- 6 Keeps current by consulting a wide variety of print and digital review sources (including blogs and online scholarship) and publishers' promotions (including those of independent presses), by attending professional meetings, by considering patron suggestions and popular demand, and by reading, viewing, and listening.
- 7 Keeps up to date on teen and adult digital and print reference sources that may serve the needs of children, families, and caregivers.
- 8 Understands and implements the library's comprehensive collection development policy, and develops, assesses, and revises the policy as necessary. Works to ensure that collection policy is consistent with the library's mission, the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, and other relevant standards.
- 9 Responds to community challenges to materials according to the library's materials-review policy, collection development policy, the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations, and other relevant standards.
- 10 Demonstrates a knowledge of cataloging, classification, indexing procedures, and practices to support access to children's materials.

V. Outreach and Advocacy



- 1 Defines and communicates the role and scope of library service for children and their families to administrators, other library staff, and members of the larger community.
- 2 Utilizes effective public-relations techniques to promote an awareness of and support for meeting children's library and information needs through all media.
- 3 Advocates on behalf of children and their families for the highest-quality library services.
- 4 Advocates for eliminating barriers to library service for children based on socioeconomic circumstances, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, and other diversities, and for overcoming systems of oppression, discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism.
- 5 Ensures that all children and their families have full access to library materials, resources, and services as prescribed by the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations.
- 6 Communicates and collaborates in partnership with other agencies, institutions, and organizations serving children in the community to achieve common goals and overcome barriers created by socioeconomic circumstances, race, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, religion, immigration status, commercialism, and other diversities.
- 7 Successfully communicates library policies and procedures to patrons of all ages, promoting library use and eliminating communication barriers based on cultural, racial, linguistic, and other diversities.
- 8 Communicates effectively when addressing groups of children and/or adults, writes proficiently and adjusts content, style, and delivery format to accommodate diverse functions and audiences, and possesses technology skills and cultural competencies that enhance communication.

VI. Administrative and Management Skills



- 1 Actively participates in all aspects of the library's planning process to represent and support service to children, their families and caregivers, and educators.
- 2 Sets long- and short-range goals, objectives, strategic plans, and priorities.
- 3 Analyzes the costs of library services to children and their families in order to develop, justify, administer, manage, and evaluate a budget.
- 4 Identifies and evaluates outside sources of funding and writes effective grant applications.
- 5 Documents and evaluates services and needs assessments through appropriate research methods.
- 6 Follows federal, state, and local legislation in the development and enactment of library policies and procedures.
- 7 Demonstrates cultural awareness, critical-thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, mediating, and cultural competency skills.
- 8 Delegates responsibility appropriately, supervises staff constructively, and cultivates collaboration effectively.
- 9 Participates in writing job descriptions, recruiting, interviewing, training, evaluating, and encouraging continuing education for staff who work with children, their caregivers and families, and educators.
- 10 Develops and supports organizational values dedicated to fostering culturally aware services.
- 11 Advocates for recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts to increase diversity in the workplace.

VII. Professionalism and Professional Development



- 1 Acknowledges the legacy of children's librarianship, its place in the context of librarianship as a whole, and past contributions to the profession.
- 2 Stays informed of current trends, emerging technologies, issues, and research in librarianship, child development, early and family literacy, education, and allied fields.
- 3 Practices self-evaluation and pursues professional development and continuing education opportunities on an ongoing basis.
- 4 Develops an understanding of personal and cultural values, beliefs, and sociocultural identities, including racial, class, and gender identities, in appreciating the importance of culturally diverse identities in the workplace and wider community.
- 5 Develops an understanding of the effects of racism, ethnocentrism, classism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, and other systems of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion within the profession, and of techniques for disrupting them and promoting cultural awareness.
- 6 Knows and practices the ALA's Code of Ethics.
- 7 Preserves patron confidentiality.
- 8 Mentors library-school students, paraprofessionals, and new librarians.
- 9 Participates in local, state, and national professional organizations to strengthen skills, interacts with fellow professionals, promotes professional association scholarships, and contributes to the library profession.
- 10 Advocates for, participates in, and provides educational and training programs that help advance cultural awareness within the profession.
- 11 Establishes professional relationships with school librarians in their service areas.



**ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN**

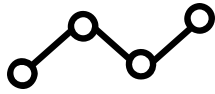
TEEN SERVICES COMPETENCIES

FOR LIBRARY STAFF

A SNAPSHOT



1) Teen Growth & Development



Knows the typical benchmarks for growth and development and uses this knowledge to plan, provide and evaluate library resources, programs, and services that meet the multiple needs of teens

2) Interactions with Teens



Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the development and implementation of quality teen library services, and implements techniques and strategies to support teens individually

3) Learning Environments



Cultivates high-quality, developmentally appropriate, flexible learning environments that support teens individually and in group experiences as they engage in formal and informal learning activities

4) Learning Experiences



Works with teens, volunteers, community partners and others to plan, implement and evaluate high-quality, developmentally appropriate formal and informal learning activities that support teens' personal and academic interests

5) Youth Engagement & Leadership



Responds to all teens' interests and needs, and acts in partnership with teens to create and implement teen activities and to foster teen leadership

6) Community & Family Engagement



Builds respectful, reciprocal relationships with community organizations and families to promote optimal development for teens and to enhance the quality of library services

7) Cultural Competency & Responsiveness



Actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful library atmosphere that embraces diversity

8) Equity of Access



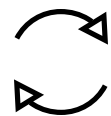
Ensures access to a wide variety of library resources, services, and activities for and with all teens, especially those facing challenges to access

9) Outcomes & Assessment



Focuses on the impact of library programs for and with teens and uses data to inform service development, implementation, and continuous improvement

10) Continuous Learning



Acts ethically, is committed to continuous learning, and advocates for best library practices and policies for teen services

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Dissertation Interview Guide

- Introduce self and provide consent form for review and signature (form will be sent prior to interview for review as well). Answer any questions.
- Provide brief context of study, without unnecessarily biasing responses:
The purpose of this study is to compare the training of children's and youth services librarians (in their MLIS or similar programs) to their on the ground experiences in the first few years of their career. Training can include coursework, thesis work, required internships, or other requirements of your program. Please consider your program holistically when speaking to those experiences. Your current work includes those things listed on your job description, as well as things you've been surprised to find out are on your to-do list, items you've added based on personal interest, or tasks that you may share with others.
- Confirm if audio/video recording is ok
- Question 1:
Please describe a typical day for you at your library. Don't worry about order of items.
Prompts if they get stuck:
 - What do you need to get done before the doors open?
 - What tasks do you have after closing time?
 - Who do you work with most often?
 - Do you spend more time interacting with patrons than on your own?
- Question 2:
What are the "tools" of your trade? What "stuff" do you use in your work?
Prompts if they get stuck:
 - Do you think you spend a lot of time on your computer?
 - Do you have favorite story-time props? (Or least favorite?)
 - What "stuff" makes you cringe when you know you're going to need to use it?
 - What tools did you not think would be part of your job?
- Question 3:
What part of being a children's/youth services librarian has been most surprising for you?
Prompts if they get stuck:
 - Think about patron reactions to programs, the type of programs you Conduct, the people who visit the library
- Question 4:
What courses during your MLIS most prepared you for your work? Least?

- Question 4.1:
What PD opportunities have you had that filled these gaps?

- Question 5:
Knowing what you know now, what would you like to have seen taught during your MLIS program that wasn't?
Prompts:
Programs? Reading theory? STEM? Health?
What do your patrons ask you that you say in your head "Why didn't they teach me this in library school?!?"

- Question 6:
Did your MLIS program offer differentiated coursework depending on specialty? How was this done? What courses were specifically on children's or youth services librarianship?

- Question 7:
Is there any other info you'd like to share either about your current work or your schooling?

Dissertation Journal Guide

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare the training of children's and youth services librarians (in their MLIS or similar programs) to their on the ground experiences in the first few years of their career. Training can include coursework, thesis work, required internships, or other requirements of your program. Please consider your program holistically when speaking to those experiences. Your current work includes those things listed on your job description, as well as things you've been surprised to find out are on your to-do list, items you've added based on personal interest, or tasks that you may share with others.

Consent

Please read carefully, sign, and return the provided consent form prior to beginning your journal

Journal Instructions

Please write in your journal (typing or audio recording is fine too!) on each workday for the next 2 weeks. If you need to skip a day, that's fine. For each entry, focus first on your daily tasks, no matter how mundane and expected they might be. If this is difficult for you, consider keeping a bulleted list during the day that you can add to your journal! (And bullets are fine in the journal, no grading for punctuation!)

Consider using these additional prompts as well:

- *Each day, briefly describe all your duties during the day. Don't assume I know what is "typical" (because we all know there's no such thing!). Did you shelve, do a puppet story-time, plunge toilets, clean up puke, help someone apply for WIC? Even if it has nothing to do with your official job description, I want to hear about it.*
- *After you've done the above for a few days, I'd like you to talk a little bit about how the work you do every day compares to your job description, and what your expectations were before you got the job.*
- *By the end of the first week, I'd love an entry focused on how your formal education prepared you (or didn't) for this work. What class do you use the most, what class the least? If you could invent your own MLIS program, what core courses would you include? These thoughts can be revisited throughout the second week.*
- *Other things you can talk about if they're relevant to you:*
 - *Your thoughts on the differentiation of tasks between folks with and without MLIS degrees*
 - *Your thoughts on how library school prepares different types of library staff*
 - *Predictions you have for the field moving forward*
 - *The parts of the job you love versus those you wish you didn't have to do*
 - *Additional trainings your library has provided you, or that you've sought out yourself to better do your job*
 - *Anything else you want to share!*

I'll also need the following very basic demographic information (which will not be shared in relation to your responses, this is just for comparative purposes)

Name:

Title:

Undergraduate school(s) and degree(s):

Graduate school(s) and degree(s), including any specializations:

Race (very optional)

Gender (even more optional)

Years since completing MLIS degree

After I review your journal, I may have follow up questions to ask via email or zoom interview, those can be scheduled at your leisure.

Thank you for your participation!

Emergent Interview and Journal Questions (emailed to participants)

1. Why did you want to be a librarian?
2. Why did you choose your MLIS program?
3. What professional development or training opportunities post degree have been beneficial for you?
4. Please provide your opinions on the ALSC and YALSA competencies (whichever is most appropriate, or both) as they relate to your everyday work, and your MLIS program.