Chapter 13

Developing a Juvenile Literature Collection in an Academic Library

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ABSTRACT

Maintaining a juvenile collection in a university setting requires a careful consideration of both the juvenile materials market and the academic uses of juvenile materials. Because juvenile materials can range from pre-reader items to young adult literature and may exist in different locations and under different authorities within the academy, juvenile collection management can be a complex task. The purpose of this chapter is to serve as a guide to collection managers charged with developing and maintaining a juvenile collection for use by professional programs in education and librarianship. Discussions on the nature and uses of juvenile materials in the academy, collection policies, and evaluation strategies for juvenile collections, selection tools, and resources available to librarians, and emerging issues in juvenile collection management are included.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, both K-12 educators and school librarians are expected to be well acquainted with juvenile literature, including its interpretation and effective use in teaching and reading for personal enjoyment. While juvenile literature and materials are usually associated with public and school libraries, professional programs in the university often include courses that require students to evaluate and incorporate juvenile literature into their projects and assignments. In professional programs for school librarianship where entire courses are built around juvenile literature and media, the need for the university to provide a comprehensive juvenile collection

is even greater. Librarians charged with developing juvenile collections must consider not only the professional programs, which may require use of the materials, but also the tools and vendors needed to successfully maintain a relevant juvenile collection. The charge of managing a juvenile collection can appear to be a daunting task for academic librarians who may not have taken children's literature courses in expectation of collecting juvenile materials for their college or university. However, given the right tools and a good amount of determination, academic librarians may develop their knowledge and skills to become quite successful as juvenile literature librarians (Hirsch, 2006).

This chapter provides a brief review of: the need for juvenile literature collections in academic libraries, the nature of juvenile collections and their role in the academy, the establishment of collection development policies to meet the needs of educators and librarians, workable collection evaluation measures, selection tools and resources available to juvenile collection managers, and current issues in juvenile materials. After reading this chapter, academic librarians charged with developing and maintaining juvenile collections will be able to advocate for these collections and effectively manage them.

BACKGROUND

Why Juvenile Literature Collections in Academic Libraries?

As children represent a significant portion of patrons in public and school libraries, few people would question the need to maintain a juvenile collection at these locations. However, the justification for collecting juvenile literature at an academic library may not be readily apparent. For that reason, it is important to answer questions as to why an academic library would collect children's books and other juvenile materials.

The primary reason for collecting juvenile literature in the academy is to support academic programs in the field of education. For most teacher education programs, students are encouraged to gain a general knowledge of the history and development of children's literature as well as a basic understanding of child development and how children typically respond to what they read based on their level of maturity. As a result of these studies, teacher education students often come to the library to check out books to complete assignments and prepare lesson plans using resources that meet specific pedagogical criteria. Juvenile collections support not only the students, but they also support the faculty who teach courses on children's literature and conduct related research (Bay, 2001). Therefore, it is important for academic libraries that support programs in education to build and maintain an up-to-date juvenile collection in order to adequately serve their students and faculty.

Another academic program which requires the study of juvenile literature is school librarianship. In the same manner as those enrolled in teacher education programs, students in school librarianship programs must become familiar with the general corpus of children's literature so that as library professionals they may develop collections to support the curricula and personal reading interests for patrons at the schools where they will work. These university students will likely refer to items in a juvenile collection as they learn about evaluating collections, assessing needs, identifying selection criteria, avoiding bias and censorship, promoting literacy, and using information resources to support classroom instruction.

The use of children's literature for academic study may also extend beyond the fields of education and library science. Crosetto and Horan (2007) write that researchers in other academic fields, especially in the social sciences, may choose to study juvenile literature. They add that "Academics are conducting research about children's literature. Statistics document this activity and

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