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Library Selection: The Role of Newbery Winning Titles in Today's Libraries

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LIBRARY SELECTION: THE ROLE OF NEWBERY WINNING TITLES IN TODAY'S LIBRARIES

By

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Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research project was to determine if the role of Newbery winning titles in today's libraries is changing, or if those titles are still held above other titles because they won the prestigious Newbery Award. To answer this question, preliminary research was compiled and a survey was sent to librarians in the state of Illinois. The finding of the research showed that, while many librarians still considered Newbery award winning titles to be a worthwhile contribution to their libraries, there were some who were beginning to question the award and the titles that were chosen. One of the main reasons the award was questioned was because the winners were chosen by adults, rather than young adults, who were the intended audience. The more recent winning titles were also not popular with the readers, so they were not being checked out of the libraries.

The results of the survey showed that, while librarians may be less likely to weed a Newbery award winning title than another title, their main desire was to fill the library with titles that the patrons would use, even if those were not the Newbery titles. The participants were split almost fifty-fifty over whether they would weed a Newbery award winning title, which shows that the award still carries the prestige for many of the librarians. In the future, it would be interesting to see if these statistics change or remain the same.

Keywords: Newbery Award, Library Selection, Library, Education, Illinois Libraries

INTRODUCTION

The Newbery Award was created in 1921 and named in honor of the English bookseller John Newbery, and is awarded to the most distinguished children's book in America published during the previous year (American, 2011). Those books not chosen to win the award can be noted as honor books, and are cited as worthy of attention by the selection committee (American). Those titles that are selected must meet the terms and criteria set by the committee of adults who select said books. The Newbery Medal is "awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published by an American publisher in the United States in English during the preceding year" (American, paragraph 1). The Newbery award can only be awarded to authors who are citizens of the United States, and the committee can only discuss those books that are considered eligible for the award (American).

The Newbery Award, as previously stated, is an award selected by a committee of adults for young adult books, or books for children roughly between the ages of 12 and 18, with that being a very loose age range (American, 2011). While this award is known as a very prestigious award, the opinion of the award has begun to shift, according to Silvey (2008). Silvey says that some librarians are choosing not to purchase these books because of lack of interest in those books by both the librarians themselves, as well as their patrons (p. 38). If this is true that Newbery Award winners are not being read by the library patrons, should libraries continue to purchase these books for their school and public libraries? Are current Newbery books from the last decade as timeless

as those from previous years? What role do Newbery winning titles have in today's libraries?

The goal of this project was to determine if current librarians feel similar to Silvey, that a book should not be bought and encouraged for young readers simply because it was noted as a Newbery Award or Newbery Honor Award winning title. Both public and school librarians across the state of Illinois were surveyed about their thoughts and actions related to Newbery Award titles. Any librarian was accepted as a participant in the survey, regardless of where their library was located in the state of Illinois and regardless of what kind of library in which they worked. Before the survey results were reviewed, it was predicted that the most commonly bought Newbery Award titles were those from before 1990, that the more recent winning titles were not as likely to be bought by a librarian and checked out by a reader, and that librarians would still respect and keep a title because it had won the award, even if it was not a reader favorite.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Library Selection

The main goal of the librarian is to provide the patrons with books that they will not only read, but also love to read. Finding books that readers will enjoy is the key to building a good library. Both school and public librarians need to be able to fill their libraries with books that their patrons want to check out (Jacobs & Tunnell, 1993).

One of the most important aspects of helping students enjoy reading is in helping them find the right book. Finding books they will like can get students interested in reading, which could jumpstart a lifetime of reading for pleasure. One of the most common ways to help students find a book they will enjoy is to learn what they are interested in or enjoy doing (Jacobs & Tunnell, 1993). For example, if students enjoy learning about historical people, setting them up with a romance book would not be a logical choice. They could end up enjoying that book and opening up a whole new level of interest in their life, or they could absolutely hate it and be turned off from reading altogether. Another way to find books for students is to recommend books that the librarian enjoys reading, since that will likely motivate them to try the book. Those books that are recommended personally are often better books that students are able to connect better with, and enthusiasm for a particular book is usually contagious. Authentic enthusiasm for a work of literature can encourage others to be interested in books as well, setting the stage for an enjoyable read (Jacobs & Tunnell).

Another reason why students need to read often is for the values that they can learn from the written text. All books contain themes, morals, and lessons to be learned.

Some examples of these include cooperation, courage, friendship and love of animals, friendship and love of people, humaneness, ingenuity, loyalty, maturing, responsibility, and self-respect (Field & Weiss, 1987). Though values can be learned in all areas of life, literature is one way students can engage with values. Books give students a chance to connect with characters and situations that are similar to who they are and what they are going through. Books can also give readers the opportunity to escape from reality and just enjoy a good story. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) determined seven reasons why children benefit personally from literature. Those reasons were enjoyment, imagination and inspiration, vicarious experience, understanding and empathy, heritage, moral reasoning, and literary and artistic preferences. With all of the reasons why reading books is important for students of all ages, there is no reason for anyone to discourage students from reading.

In 2009, Bird interpreted Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science. These laws created the foundation of library science, showing what is expected of librarians and the libraries they control. Even though libraries were originally designed for adults, and still cater to adults often today, child patrons are just as important, if not more so, than adult patrons. The ways to get children to read are different also. The first law says that "Librarians serve the reading interests and information needs of all children, directly and through services to parents and other adults who are involved in the lives of children" (Bird, p. 15). The second states that librarians should help children find the right books or information that they need at that time. Thirdly, librarians should advocate for children to allow them the opportunity to have books, information, information

technology, and ideas. The fourth law states that they should promote children's literacy in every media, and the fifth and final law says that librarians should honor their traditions and help create the future of the library (Bird). These laws adapted from Ranganathan are the foundation for what libraries and librarians need to be, in order to create an environment that is most beneficial to their users. One way they can do this is to make sure they have good books in their library, including many award winning books.

When selecting the books to purchase for a library, there are a number of considerations, including genres, award winners, book reviews, requests from patrons, and budget.

In regards to genres, the list is never-ending. Many genres can be broken down into smaller genres. Some of the more popular genres include poetry, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and informational books (Vardell, 2008). A few other genres include romance, horror, graphic novels, non-fiction, mystery, science fiction, and westerns (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). This list does not cover all possible genres, but does include many of the most popular ones, which are likely to be included in a library.

Another aspect to consider when selecting books for a library is award winning books, as they are often recognizable, even to the average person. These books often sell well and gain prominent placement in bookstores and libraries due to their award winning status (Vardell, 2008). The Newbery Award winner and Caldecott Award winner for the year are also featured on the "Today Show" every January, making the books

well known to even those who do not usually read (Vardell). This aspect of children's literature will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Book reviews are another way to determine what good books are out there that are worth spending precious money on. There are many books and websites that offer excellent advice on books, although websites can offer more up-to-date information for newer releases. Journals like the *School Library Journal* also provide valuable advice in regards to book reviews (Vardell, 2008). Book reviews are useful to read when considering books, but should not be taken as complete truth. Each reviewer has his or her own opinion about what they like to read, and people's opinions can vary, especially among books (Vardell). In spite of that, book reviews can still be a helpful tool when determining which books to purchase.

Requests from patrons must also be included in a library. Whether the library is a public library or a school library, students and adults like to have a say in which books are purchased for a library, especially if there are certain books or genres in which the patron is specifically interested (Fiske, 1959). Many librarians consider one of their greatest jobs is to meet the public's needs, which means that librarians do not ultimately determine everything that goes into their library, but that their patrons have some input (Fiske).

The final aspect of library selection is the budget. In this area, school libraries and public libraries differ. For school libraries, the amount of money that the school allots to the library is their budget. Across the state, budget amounts for school libraries vary from nothing to full funding. The general rule is that "the school library material

budget should be at least 5% of the per student expenditure for the school system (IFLA, 2000, para. 15). Items to be included in the budgeted amount includes money for new resources, administrative materials, promotional events, and the cost of technological equipment (IFLA, para. 14).

When it comes to public libraries, all libraries are a little different. Each public library varies when it comes to finances. Each receives money from different taxes, fines, and contributions, and each chooses the best way to spend that money for their specific library. How the library spends the money it receives varies, but the majority of the money does not go towards purchasing new books. One specific example is the Kalamazoo Public Library in Kalamazoo, Michigan. This library receives its money from property taxes, state grants, charges for services, district court penal fines, and some other various revenue (Kalamazoo, 2011, para. 1). Most of the money received is spent on salaries and benefits for those who work in the library, with only about one fifth of the revenue going towards materials and supplies. While most of the money comes from taxes, only a small portion of the money goes towards the purchase of new books each year, so all of the books purchased each year must battle against other books in order to be selected at all (Kalamazoo).

Newbery Award

One of the most well-known book awards for young adult literature is the Newbery Medal. This award is given out every year by the American Library Association (ALA) for the best American children's book published from the previous year, first established in 1922 (American, 2011). Books eligible for this award are meant to be

targeted to students roughly between the ages of 12 and 18. This category is otherwise known as young adult literature. The Newbery Award is named for the eighteenth-century English bookseller John Newbery. After its creation, the Newbery Award became the first children's book award in the world, making it also the most known and discussed children's book award, especially in the United States. In addition to naming a winner every year, runners-up have also been named, with the name for those books changing from "runners-up" to "honor books" in 1971(American).

In order for a book to receive the honor of being named a Newbery Award winner or honor book, the books must first be nominated and then reviewed by the Newbery committee of librarians and other literary figures, all of whom are adults. The main criteria is that the award goes to the author of the "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published by an American publisher in the United States in English during the preceding year" (American, 2011, para. 1). This means that the text from books of all writing be considered for the award, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. The work must be original, though, which leaves out reprints, compilations, and abridgements from the running. The books should be written with children as the main audience and must have been published in the year prior to being considered for the award (American).

Criticism about the Newbery Award

The Newbery Award has been criticized ever since it was established in 1922. However, several articles in recent years have focused on the topic of the Newbery Award and whether or not the winning books compare to titles from earlier years. The

more recent winners are not as well-known as winners from the 1990's, with many of those winning books from the 90's still being used in middle schools today. Silvey (2008) discussed how a number of librarians that she talked to do not get excited about the announcement of new Newbery Award winners, and instead consider many of the more recent selections to be unreadable and unappealing to their children. In recent years, the winning titles have been popular with parents, educators, and other adults, but not enjoyed by students, which is what the award should really be focused on, since the books are for students. Too many winners from the last five or so years have been books that are not popular with the young patrons. Instead, one reviewer who talked to Silvey claimed that "they appear to be hunting for a special book-one with only a few readers, rather than a universal book" (Silvey, p. 39). Unlike earlier generations, these Newbery Award winners are not best sellers or the most popular book from the past year. Of all the years that the Newbery Award has been in existence, some of the most well known and remembered titles have not been the winners, but rather the honor books. Those that span the generations of readers are usually the more popular selections, rather than the most distinguished. In spite of this, the committees for the Newbery Award have managed to find and award some good books, but lately more people have been looking for good books elsewhere (Silvey).

Strauss (2000b) has even stated that Newbery winners are the "new not-to-read list," (para. 1). Strauss said that recent Newbery winning books are too complicated for most children, making them dislike reading and be turned off to it. The book topics have been tough ones, with the topics ranging from death, absence of parents, mental

challenges, and tough social issues. While these problems are faced by students on an unfortunately regular basis, many students, especially struggling readers, usually do not enjoy reading books with topics like these. While the committee claims that literary quality is the main focus of the award and that popularity is not criteria, many believe that the award should consider popularity when choosing its winner. With this award being so well-known, the Newbery Award has the ability to influence many young readers, which is another key reason why many believe that the books chosen in recent years are not up to the standard that they should be (Strauss, 2008b). Strauss also said that the books are too challenging for young readers, with many students not enjoying the topics discussed in the books, or the fact that the material is hard to work through, rather than being an enjoyable read (Strauss, 2008a). Many readers feel the same way as the students mentioned in the articles, making librarians, teachers, critics, and parents alike reconsider whether or not to buy and read Newbery winning books.

Reviews like those listed above about the controversies surrounding the Newbery Award and the recent winning selections led to the topic of this paper, as well as the idea behind the survey and what is hoped to be discovered with the results.

METHODS

Participants

Since this project requires human participants, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was first completed for the approval to survey human subjects. The process began with an IRB training, followed by an application stating every way the participants could be harmed by the project. A consent paragraph was included in the first page of the electronic survey, which all participants had to agree to before continuing with the survey. By taking the survey, the participants gave consent for their results to be used in this project for educational purposes. The IRB application was submitted on November 8, 2012, and permission was granted by the IRB in the form of an expedited review on November 10, 2012.

Once permission was received, the survey was created through the website www.surveymonkey.com. After it was completed, it was published on the Illinois School Library Media Association's website <http://www.islma.org/listserv.htm>. The reason behind choosing this site was because the visitors of the site are librarians from across the state of Illinois. This site allows surveys to be uploaded and completed by librarians, the intended audience. The survey was uploaded by my mentor, Dr. Forgrave. Some acquaintances of Dr. Forgrave were also sent the link to the survey via email. Confidentiality was kept in that the participants were never told to take the survey, only asked, and their names did not appear on the survey results.

The number of participants was remarkable. Since the survey was put onto a website, it was impossible to tell how many librarians would take the survey. The survey

was posted in November, and it was left available for librarians to take until the end of January. One hundred and one librarians began the survey, with 96 of the participants finishing the survey. To help encourage participants to complete the survey, the option was always available to skip a question if they felt they could not answer the question, if they did not understand the question, or if the question did not apply to them. The 96 participants were more participants than hoped for, and a 95 percent completion was incredible. This proved that the topic was something that interested the participants enough to not only start the survey, but to complete all 12 survey questions.

Materials and Procedure

When the survey was sent out to librarians, whether through email or the website, the participants had to click on a link that took them to the survey on www.surveymonkey.com. The first page of the survey was the consent page. It stated the purpose of the survey, how the results would be used, and whom to contact if they had any questions. As the participants worked their way through the survey, they answered one question on each page, for a total of thirteen pages and twelve questions. The consent page and survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

To analyze the data collected, the website www.surveymonkey.com helped enter the data into tables, charts, and Excel sheets. The information could be viewed in a variety of ways, which was helpful in analyzing the results. It also calculated how many participants chose each response on a particular question and what percentage of participants chose each response. The results could be analyzed by question or by the

participant. The former method was more beneficial for this project, though it was interesting to look at the results by participant to follow trends.

Since the websites and links were not given out by the researcher, the personal information of the participants is not known, which insures confidentiality. Though it was impossible to thank individual participants or send them a gift, they were thanked at the beginning of the survey for their assistance, and the email address was provided if any of the participants wanted to know more about the project or the results.

RESULTS

Demographics

There were a total of 101 participants to begin the survey, with 96 completing the entire survey. The first three questions were used to determine demographics like location of the library in the state of Illinois, what kind of library it was, and, if it was located in a school, what kind of school it was. These questions and charts can be found in Appendix B.

General

After the basic demographic questions, more questions were asked about the particular libraries and the librarians themselves, as well as their book collections. All of the questions and charts can be found in Appendix C. Of the 101 participants, 83 of the participants said that their current library had been in existence for over 20 years, with 41 of those responses over 50 years. The next two questions dealt with the individual librarians. Over half of the librarians claimed to have been a librarian for less than 10 years, with half of them claiming to have been a librarian at their current library for less than five years.

The rest of the questions focused specifically on the Newbery award winning titles in the libraries. The seventh question asked if the libraries the participants were currently working at owned all of the Newbery award winning titles, with the options of yes, I think so but I'm not sure, most of the recent titles (1980 on), most of the older titles (before 1990), only select titles, no, or other. Those that selected the "other" option were always asked to specify. Thirty percent of the participants said they owned

most of the more recent titles, from 1980 on, twenty-one percent said they owned all of the Newbery award winning titles, and nineteen percent claimed to only have selected titles.

If the participants had selected one of the options other than yes in question seven, they were asked if the Newbery award winning titles were left out deliberately. The majority of the participants said no, the titles were not left out deliberately, with only thirty-one percent saying that those titles were left out on purpose. Those who had selected yes for question seven were able to skip this question, as it did not apply to them.

For the select few, thirty-one percent, who claimed to deliberately leave out Newbery titles, question nine asked why those titles were left out. The option was available for the participants to check all that applied. The main reason why librarians claimed to not have Newbery titles in their libraries was that those titles were weeded because they were not being used. The second and third most common responses were that the titles were discarded because they were damaged and the librarians chose not to replace them, and the librarians chose not to include those titles because they felt the titles were written for an audience that did not include their students.

The next question was used to determine the librarians' thoughts about the importance of the Newbery award winning titles in their library. When asked if they would weed a Newbery award winner, forty-eight percent of the librarians said they would if the titles were not being used, forty-seven percent said they would always keep a Newbery award book in the collection, and four percent said they were not sure.

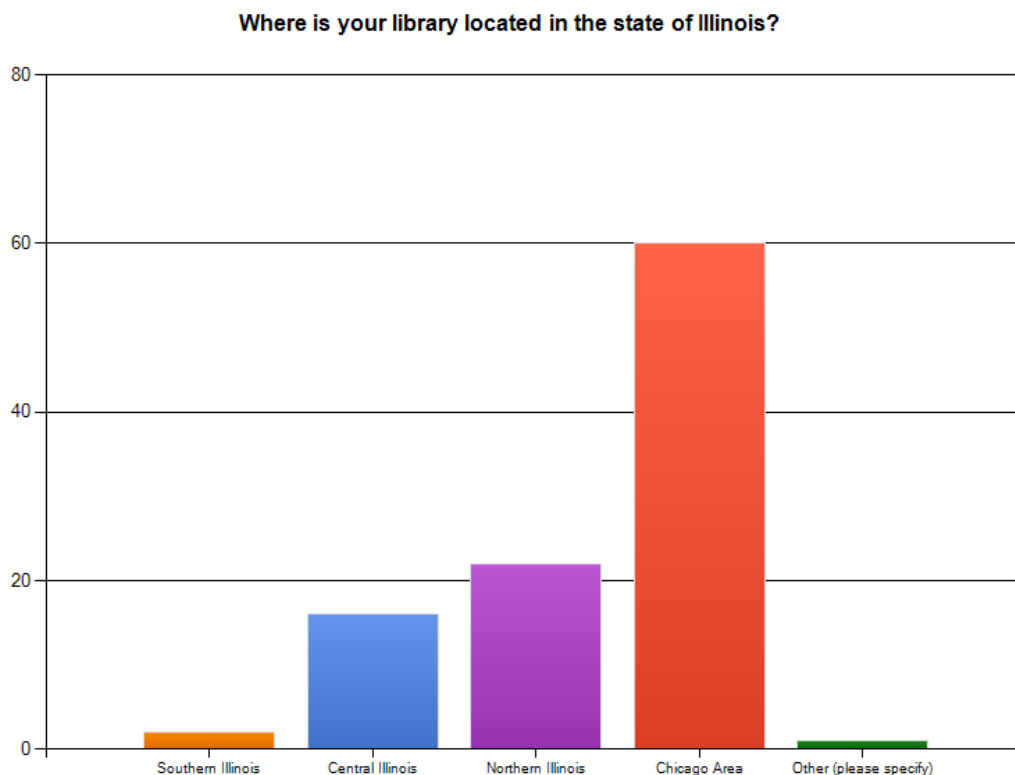
The final two questions dealt with the marketing of Newbery award winning titles by the librarians. When asked how the Newbery award winners are marked in your library, with a gold sticker and with a spine label were the two most common responses. The third most common response was that the winning titles had no special designation at all.

The final question, question twelve, asked the librarians if their library has had any of the following special events, programs, or displays concerning the Newbery Award. The options were a poster, display, announcement to classes when the winner is chosen, there is a special presentation on Newbery award winners, no special marketing, and other. The participants could check all that applied to their libraries. Most of the librarians said that they had a poster, a display, or nothing.

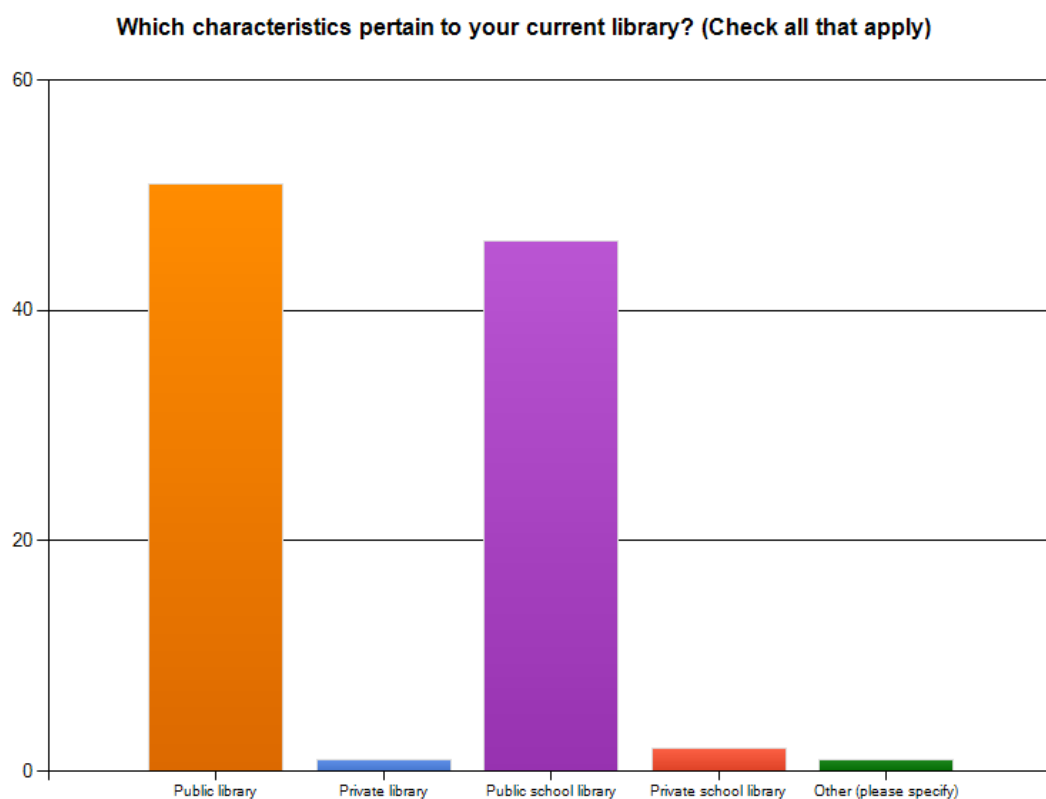
DISCUSSION

Demographics

While 101 participants is a large amount of participants for an undergraduate research project, it is still a just a small amount of the librarians across the state of Illinois. Almost 60% of the librarians who responded to the survey were from the Chicago area, 22% from northern Illinois, 16% from central Illinois, and only two percent from southern Illinois. With that in mind, the views and opinions gathered from this survey most likely reflect the views of the northern part of Illinois and Chicago area the most.

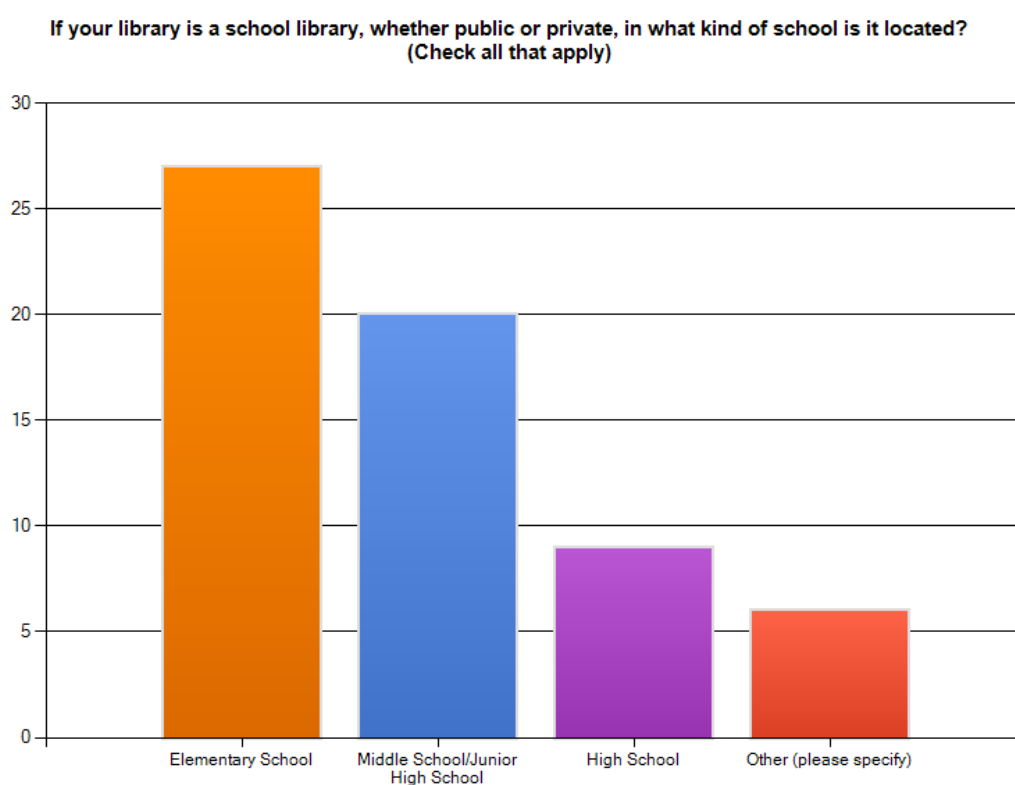


The second demographic question asked what kind of library the librarians worked at, with the option to check all that applied. Of the 101 librarians, 97 of the librarians worked at either a public library or public school library. While the majority of the librarians in the state are public libraries, this survey does not necessarily reflect those views of the private librarians, since they made up only three of the participants.



The final demographic question applied only to school libraries. It asked what kind of school the library was located, whether it was a public or private school. Only 50 participants answered this question, since it applied to them, while 51 of the participants skipped the question because they did not work in a school library. Of those

who responded, 27 of the participants said they worked at an elementary school, 20 at a middle school/junior high school, and 9 at a high school. There were 6 who selected the other option and said they worked at different combinations of grades and schools, which did not allow them to select one of the first three options. Since the books that win the Newbery Award are intended for young adults, elementary schools and middle schools/junior high schools are the school libraries that would reach such an audience.

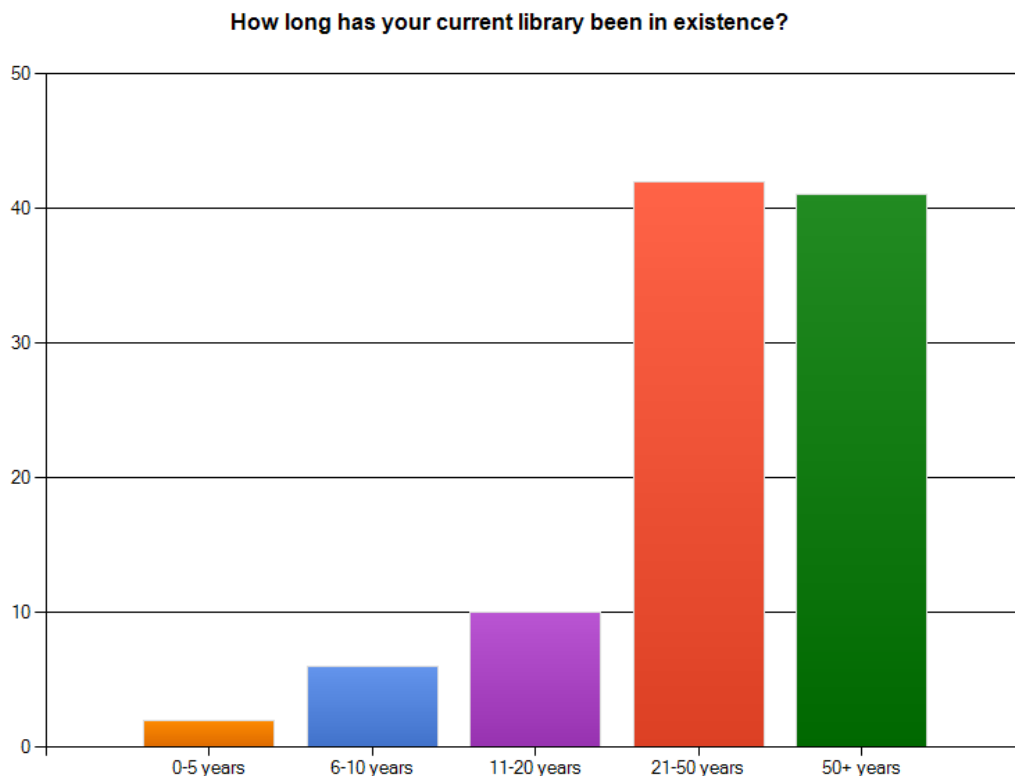


General

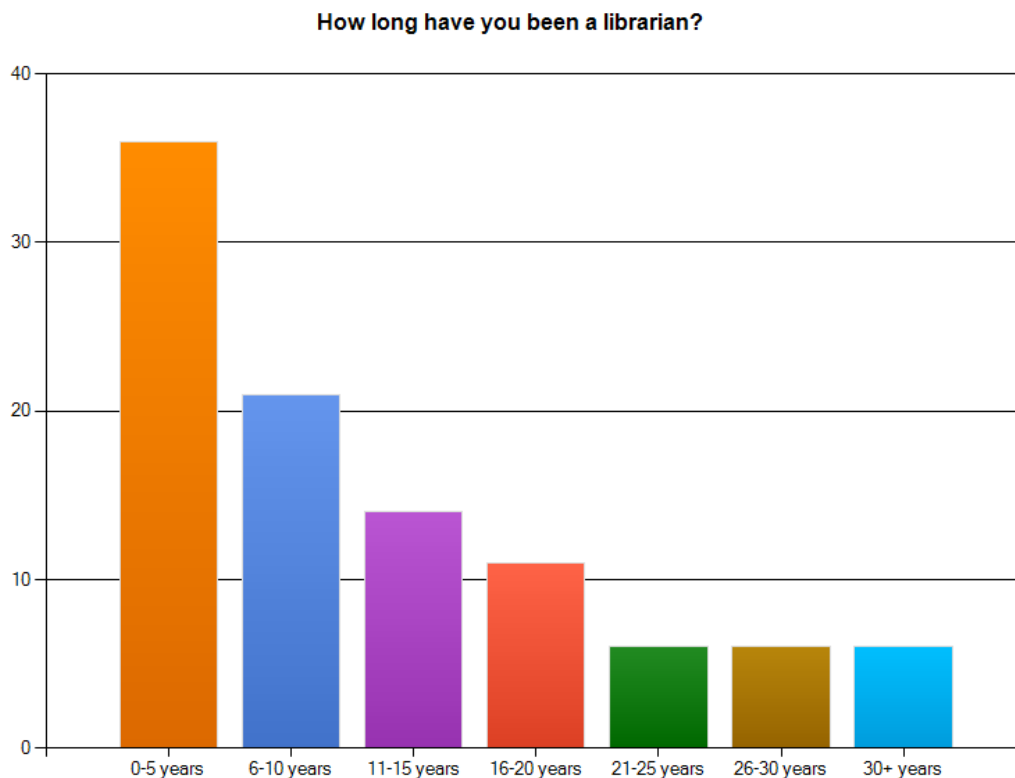
The remainder of the survey questions included more questions about the library, the librarian, how they feel about the Newbery award winning titles, and how

those titles are displayed in the library. Question four asked the librarians how long the library they currently work at has been in existence. Of the participants who responded, 41 of the participants said that their library was over 50 years old and 42 of the participants chose the option that said their library was between the ages of 21 and 50. Those two selections accounted for 83 of the librarians surveyed, showing that the majority of the libraries had been in existence for at least 21 years, with many of them over 50 years.

Of the 18 librarians remaining, 10 of the librarians said their library was between the ages of 11 and 20, 6 said their library was between six and ten years old, and 2 librarians worked at libraries that were less than five years old. These responses seem to reflect the libraries across the state. Many of the school and public libraries across Illinois have been in existence for well over 20 years, with only newer schools and libraries fitting into the zero to 20 year range. This response could be reflective of the remainder of the libraries across the state.

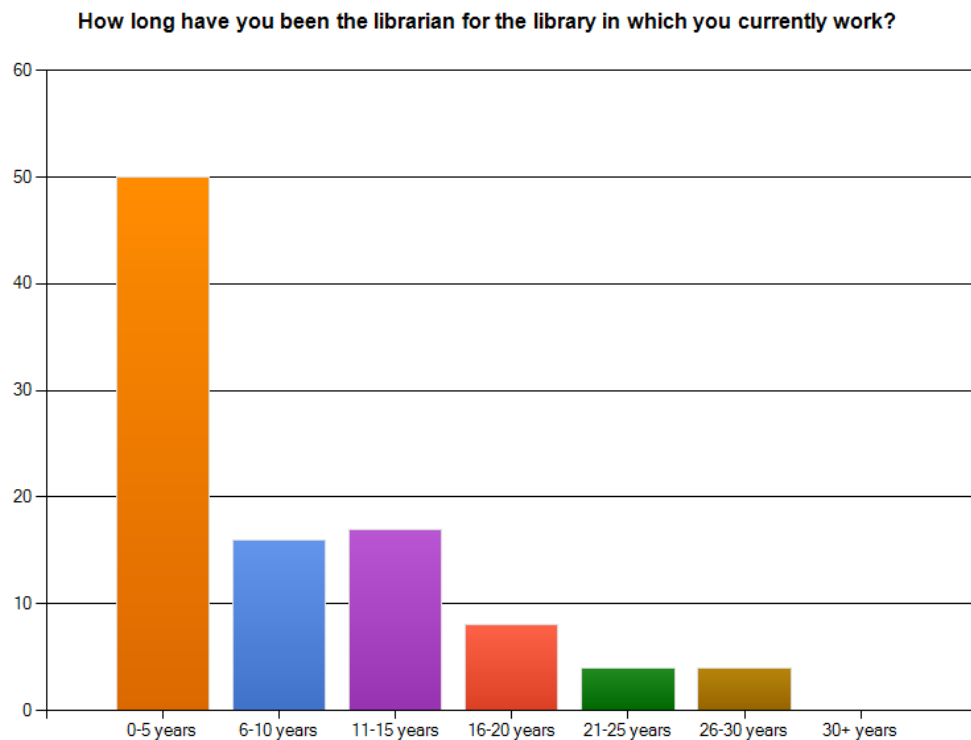


From here, the questions moved on to focus on the librarians themselves, instead of the library they work in. Question five asked the librarians how long they had been a librarian. The majority of the librarians, 57 of the 101, had been librarians for less than 10 years. There were 25 librarians that said they had been librarians for between 10 and 20 years, and 18 that had been a librarian for over 20 years. These responses were interesting in that many of the librarians did not have a lot of experience in their field. It could be because they switched careers, were not very old, or had volunteered to take on this role after a family change. It is impossible to know why with the questions asked in this survey.



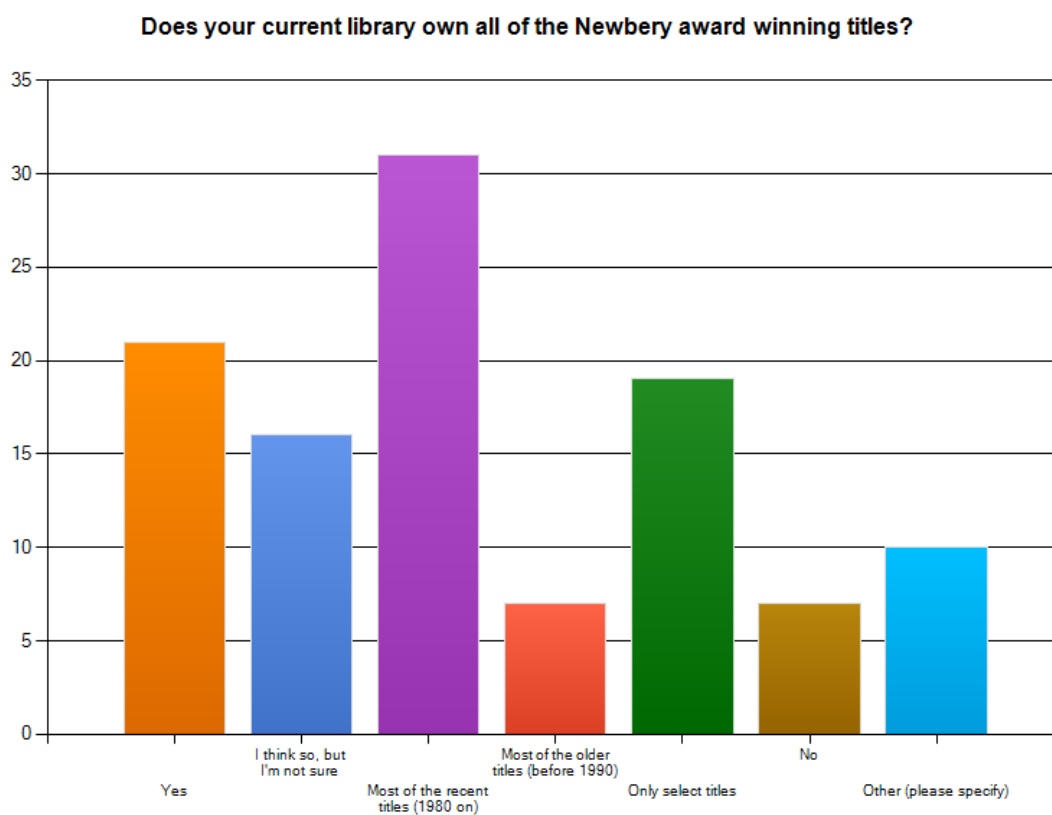
The next question built off of the previous question, asking how long the librarians had been the librarian for the library in which they currently work. Of the 99 who responded to this question, 50 of the librarians surveyed had been working at their current library for less than five years. There were 16 librarians who had worked in their current library between six and 10 years, 17 between 11 and 15 years, and the remaining 16 between 16 and 30 years in their current library. While most of the librarians had less than 10 years of experience at their current library, they had experience working at other libraries. This experience at other libraries shows that, even though the time has been short at the current library, the librarians surveyed did have

experience in their field and should have known almost everything about libraries in general and about their current libraries.



Question seven asked the librarians if their current library owned all of the Newbery award winning titles. There were 31 librarians who thought that their library owned most of the more recent titles, from 1980 on, 21 thought that their library owned all of the Newbery award winning titles, and 19 said they owned only select titles. There were also 16 librarians who thought their library owned all of the titles, but they were not sure. There were 7 librarians that said they owned most of the older titles, from before 1990, and another 7 who said they did not own all of the Newbery award winning titles. The “other” category was chosen by 10 librarians. Those that

chose “other” said that the titles they were missing were usually because the older titles were out of print or too expensive to buy, some titles were weeded because of their condition and not replaced, or they were not age appropriate for their library’s audience.



These reasons are understandable, especially in regards to the oldest titles, since those would be more expensive to purchase now and funds are tight almost everywhere. Buying older books that may or may not be checked out is just not a priority. It also does not make sense to include novels in the library that do not relate to the students in the school. If the books are too complicated for their students, those

books could turn the students off from reading, instead of leading them towards a lifelong love of reading (Strauss). Some of the winning titles are not appropriate for elementary school students, so it fits that those titles would be left out of an elementary school library.

The next question only applied if the librarian said that their library did not own all of the Newbery award winning titles. If they did not own all of the Newbery award winning titles, were those titles deliberately left out? Of the 79 participants who responded to this question, 54 of participants said that those titles were not deliberately left out of the collection, while 25 librarians said the titles were deliberately left out.

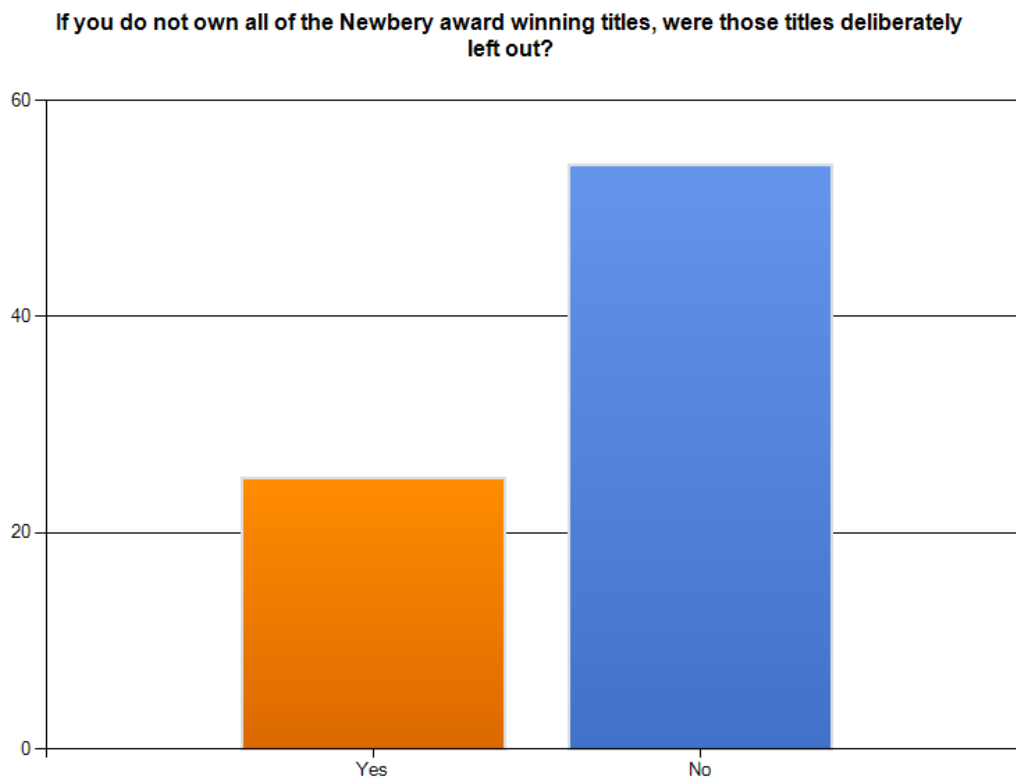
The most common comments provided by the participants in regards to this question were that the books were weeded because they did not circulate, that the books were out of print and too expensive to buy or replace, that the older books were discarded because of condition and not replaced, the books were not age appropriate, and a lack of a book buying budget.

A few of the comments were especially interesting to read and ponder. One librarian commented that they do not and will not purchase a book simply because it won an award. The books they purchase for their library are based on what the readers want, not necessarily which books the award claim to be the best. This connects back to the original research which discusses the idea that librarians need to be able to fill their libraries with books that their patrons want to check out (Jacobs & Tunnell, 1993). One of the greatest jobs of a librarian is to meet the public's needs, which means that

librarians do not ultimately determine everything that goes into their library, but that their patrons ultimately have the final say (Fiske). Popular books are the ones that are gravitated towards the most. One of the other librarians stated that they buy books that are appropriate for the school and the population instead of buying books because they are a Newbery winner.

Another librarian commented that the most recent Newbery award winning titles were rejected before the voting even took place due to their content. These works were read by the librarian and possibly others, and they determined those works to be either inappropriate for the library's age group of patrons or not good works in general. That was interesting to learn that some practicing librarians are not concerned with awards and following the crowd, but also take the time to read the titles before buying them for their library and recommending them to their patrons.

One of the final librarians made any interesting point. They said that some of the librarians are untrained in the profession. Those who are untrained could know nothing about awards in general, or specifically the Newbery Award, which would lead those librarians to not be looking for the Newbery award winning titles. If those untrained librarians or paraprofessionals do not know about the different awards for young adult fiction, they would not be searching for those titles and making a point to include them in the library.



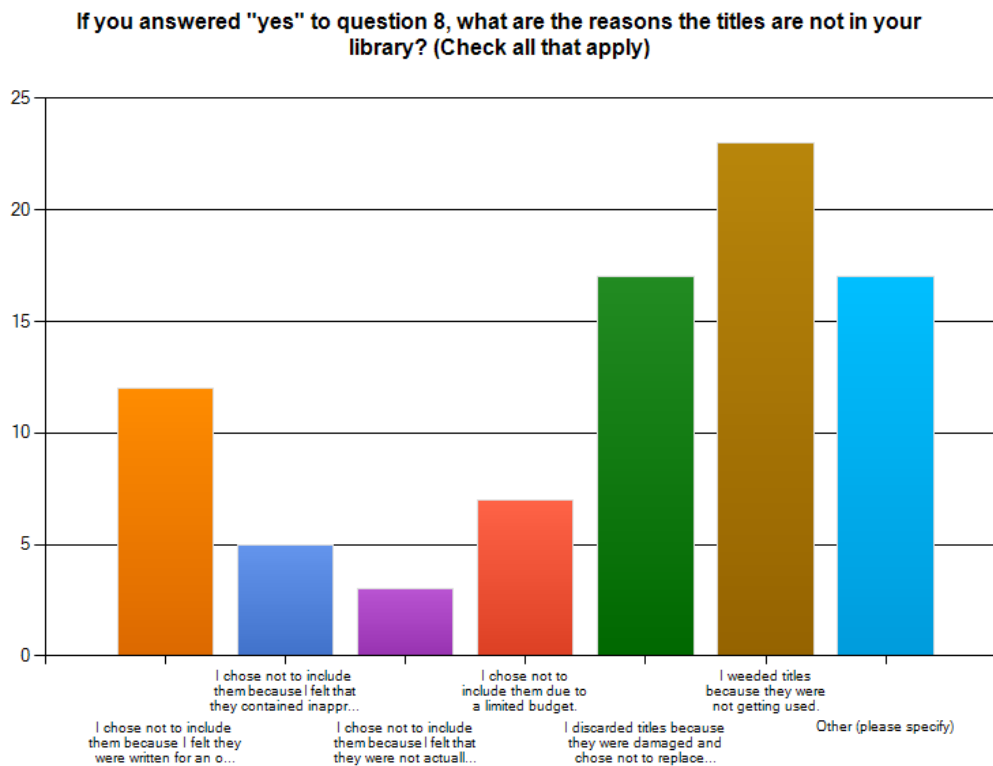
The next question, question nine, related to what many of the librarians commented about in the previous question. It asked those who answered yes to the previous question for the reasons those titles were not included in their library. The options were: I chose not to include them because I felt they were written for an older audience than our students, I chose not to include them because I felt that they contained inappropriate subject matter and/or language, I chose not to include them because I felt that they were not actually high quality titles, I chose not to include them due to a limited budget, I discarded titles because they were damaged and chose not to replace them, I weeded titles because they were not getting used, and other.

Since many of the participants selected “no” to the previous question, only 44 librarians answered this question. Of those 44, 23 librarians claimed that one of the reasons those books were not in their library was that the titles were weeded because they were not getting used. Another 17 librarians said that the titles were discarded because they were damaged and the choice was made not to replace them, and 17 also chose the other category, which will be explained in the next paragraph. There were 12 librarians who responded that the titles were not included because they were written for an older audience than their students, 7 who said it was due to a limited budget, and 5 librarians said the works contained inappropriate subject matter and/or language. Only 3 librarians marked that the titles were not included because they were not believed to be high quality titles.

In the other category, some of the explanations were that the books were not used by the patrons, that the books were out of print, and that the books were not high interest books. One librarian also said that the titles were not asked for by the patrons, so they were not purchased. This goes back to the idea that the job of a library is to supply readers with the works they want to read. If the readers do not want to read a book, why have it in your library? After all, the main job of a librarian is to “serve the reading interests and information needs of all children, directly and through services to parents and other adults who are involved in the lives of children” (Bird, p. 15). Another librarian said that the Newbery books were not always bought by the previous director, which was why those works were missing from the collection.

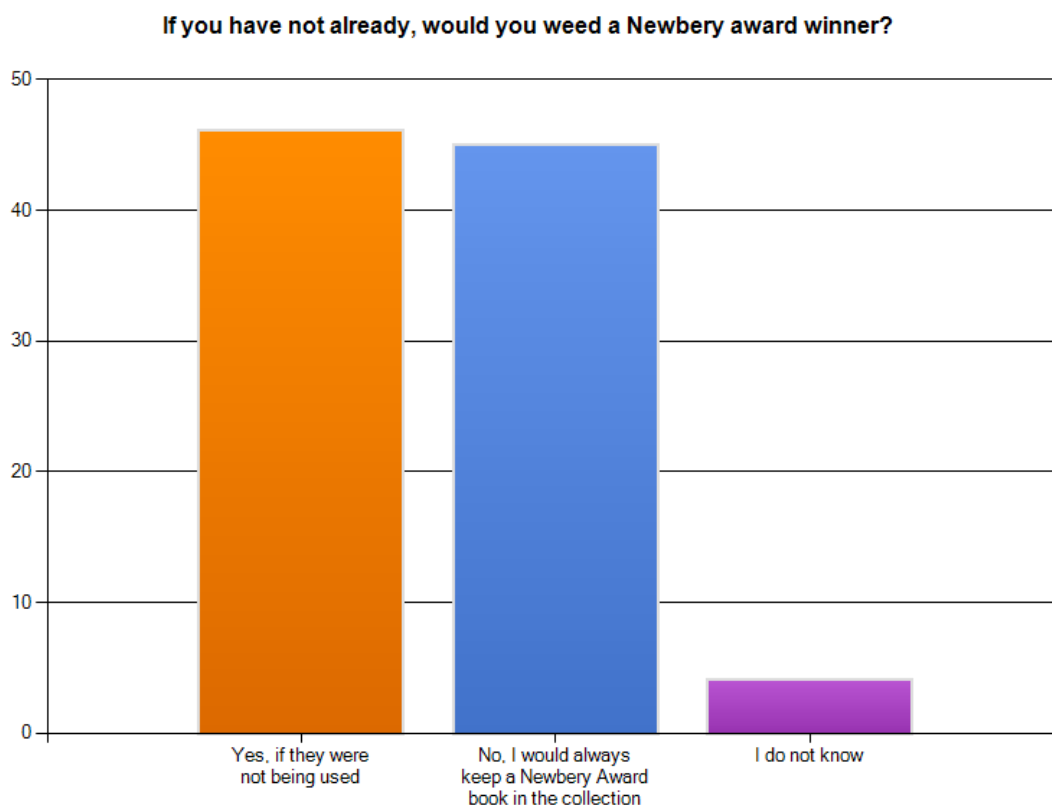
The last two responses to this question relate back to the idea behind this project. Should titles be considered simply because they won the Newbery Award, or is the opinion of the Newbery Award shifting? One librarian responded that the reason they do not have all of the Newbery titles is because those titles are not automatically purchased each year. That shows that the librarians actually take the time to read the novels and decide if those would be good works of literature to have in their library for their patrons.

Another librarian even went so far as to say that many times these are books adults think children should read, but students are not interested in them. This connects back to the way Newbery books are chosen. The winning titles are selected by a panel of librarians and other literary figures, all adults, who choose the “most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published by an American publisher in the United States in English during the preceding year” (American, para. 1). This idea that adults, not students, are interested in these novels is one that seems to be spreading, which would be fascinating to research again in ten years to see if it continues to be a growing trend or if it dies out.



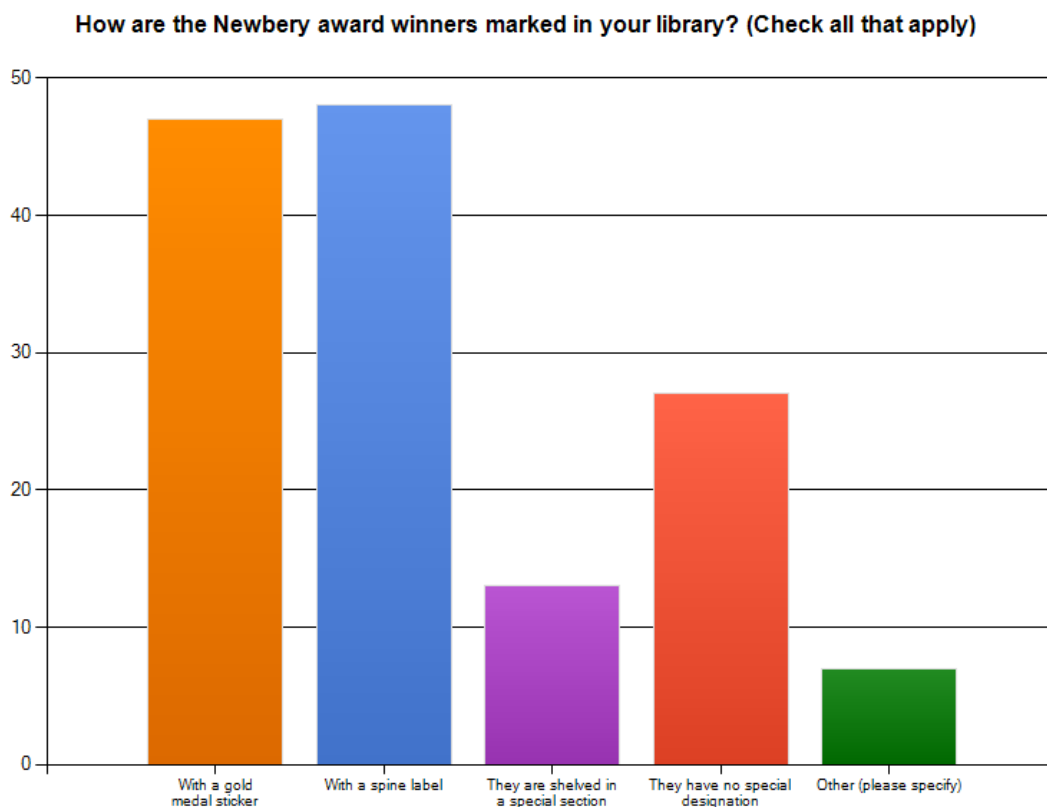
Question ten was a very basic question, with only three choices. It asked if the librarian had not already, would they weed a Newbery award winner. The first two options each received almost half of the responses. Of the 95 librarians who participated in this question, 46 of participants responded that they would weed a Newbery award winner if it was not being used, while 45 librarians said they would always keep a Newbery Award book in the collection. There were 4 librarians who responded that they did not know. This question shows that, of those who responded to the survey, almost half of them would weed a Newbery winner if it was not being used, even though it had won the Newbery Award. Today, money and space are so precious and limited, which probably helps influence this decision. This question shows that

librarians do not always consider a book better than others just because it won an award. In fact, it appears that many of the librarians surveyed tend to agree with Silvey when she claimed that “they appear to be hunting for a special book – one with only a few readers, rather than a universal book” (Silvey, p. 39). If the Newbery books are not popular with the students, they are not automatically winning a place on the bookshelf, even though the titles won the prestigious award. Books that are being used by their patrons are more important to have than books that sit and collect dust.



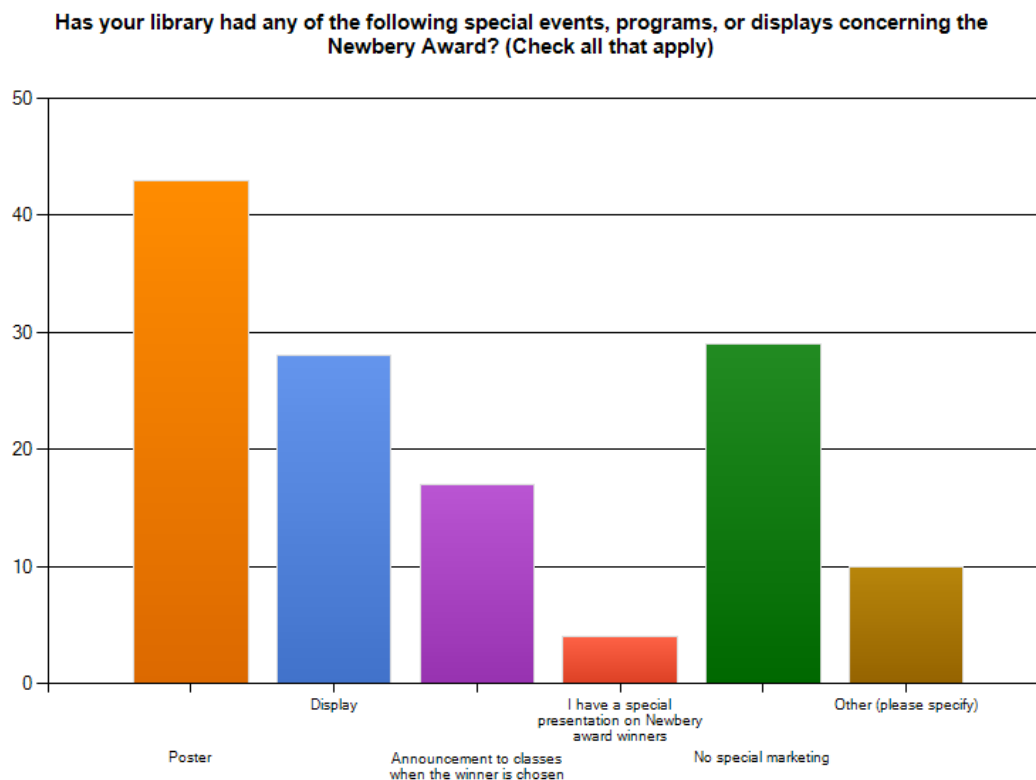
The eleventh question shifted to a focus on how the libraries market the Newbery award winners, if at all. It asked how the Newbery award winners are marked

in their libraries, allowing them to select all that applied. Of the responses, the most popular ways the winners were marked was with a gold medal sticker and with a spine label. Some librarians said that the books were shelved in a special section, but many librarians also said that there is no special designation. A few commented to say that, unless the book comes with a sticker or label already on it, they do not add anything to the book. How the winning novels are marketed has a lot to do with the librarian's personal opinion about the books and the award. Those who do not hold the award very highly are less likely to go to the trouble of marketing those books. Those who hold the award very highly are more likely to advertise the books and point them out to patrons.



The final question asked the librarians if their library had any of the following special events, programs, or displays concerning the Newbery Award. They had the option to check all that applied to their library. The librarians could choose a poster, display, announcement to classes when the winner was chosen, that there was a special presentation on the Newbery award winners, there was no special marketing, or other.

The most common option was the poster, with 43 librarians selecting that they had a poster of the winning titles. There were 29 librarians who selected the no special marketing option, followed closely by 28 selections for the display. The announcement to classes when the winner was chosen received 17 selections, 10 selected the other option, and four librarians said they have a presentation on the winners. Most of the librarians did not do anything drastic with the winning titles, with many just putting out a poster, a display, or doing absolutely nothing. This connects back to the original article by Silvey (2008), which discussed how librarians she had talked to did not get excited about the announcement of new Newbery Award winners, but instead consider the recent selections to be unreadable and unappealing to their students. The lack of effort taken to market these titles shows that marketing the Newbery Award and the winning titles is not a main priority for the librarians that were surveyed.



The main goal of these survey questions was to determine if librarians believed as Silvey (2008) did when she said that some librarians are choosing not to purchase these books because of lack of interest in those books by both the librarians themselves, as well as their patrons. Through these survey questions, it would appear that those librarians surveyed would agree with Silvey. Even those librarians who said they would always keep a Newbery Award book seemed to lean towards the direction that those books are not beneficial if they sit on a shelf and collect dust instead of being read by a patron. Half of the librarians surveyed agreed that a Newbery could be weeded if it was not being used. This is a shift from previous thinking that a book should be held higher

simply because it won an award, regardless of what award it was. Some of the surveyed librarians have even taken it to the next step and not bought some of the more recent titles because they did not find them appropriate or worthwhile purchases.

With limited budgets and limited space, this is a conversation that could continue well into the future as librarians struggle to balance what patrons want to read with what we are told by the awards committees we should read. If the patrons are not reading Newbery award winning titles, why should the libraries continue to buy those books, using the valuable budget and space that could be used on titles the patrons are asking for. While many of the titles from the 1980s and 1990s are continuing to be read by patrons, many of the most recent winning titles are being questioned, which could eventually lead to either a change in the Newbery Award or a change in what titles the librarians buy for their libraries.

Future research could be given to how opinions change over the next ten or twenty years, and if there is a change in how the Newbery Award is viewed compared to today's mixed opinion. It would also be interesting to research specific titles from the last twenty years and examine librarians views regarding those particular works, rather than the broader views obtained through this project. Since many of the survey respondents were from the northern part of Illinois, more participants would help ensure that the opinions expressed represented the state of Illinois more evenly and wholly. Specific libraries from across the state could also be interviewed about their literary collections and how they make the tough choice of which books to buy. This is a

topic that is interesting to many who work with young adults and books, and it would be wonderful to work with a similar topic more in the future.

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Appendix A - Informed Consent and Survey

Purpose of Survey:

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Erin Kennell under the supervision of Dr. Roxanne Forgrave through Olivet Nazarene University. By completing this survey, you are consenting to be a participant. All information will be confidential and only the results of the survey will be presented. Names and personal information will not be given out. The purpose of this survey is to determine, with the help of librarians, the role of Newbery winning titles in today's libraries. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to email Erin Kennell at ekennell@olivet.edu. If you consent to be a participant in this research project, please complete the following survey. Thank you in advance for completing our survey and helping with the research process!

Erin Kennell

ekennell@olivet.edu

Elementary Education Student

Honors Program Research Project

Olivet Nazarene University

Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Survey Questions:

1. Where is your library located in the state of Illinois?
 - ____ Southern Illinois
 - ____ Central Illinois
 - ____ Northern Illinois
 - ____ Chicago Area

2. Which characteristics pertain to your library? (Check all that apply)
 - ____ Public library
 - ____ Private library
 - ____ Public school library
 - ____ Private school library

3. If your library is a school library, whether public or private, in what kind of school is it located? (Check all that apply)
 - ____ Elementary School
 - ____ Middle School/Junior High School
 - ____ High School

4. How long has your current library been in existence?
 - ____ 0-5 years
 - ____ 6-10 years
 - ____ 11-20 years
 - ____ 21-50 years
 - ____ 50+ years

5. How long have you been a librarian?

- ____ 0-5 years
- ____ 6-10 years
- ____ 11-15 years
- ____ 16-20 years
- ____ 21-25 years
- ____ 26-30 years
- ____ 30+ years

6. How long have you been the librarian for the library in which you currently work?

- ____ 0-5 years
- ____ 6-10 years
- ____ 11-15 years
- ____ 16-20 years
- ____ 21-25 years
- ____ 26-30 years
- ____ 30+ years

7. Does your current library own all of the Newbery award winning titles?

- ____ Yes
- ____ I think so, but I'm not sure
- ____ Most of the recent titles (1980 on)
- ____ Most of the older titles (before 1990)

- ____ Only select titles
- ____ No

Comments:

8. If you do not own all of the Newbery award winning titles, were those titles deliberately left out?

- ____ Yes
- ____ No

Comments:

9. If you answered “yes” to question 8, what are the reasons the titles are not in your library? (Check all that apply)

- ____ I chose not to include them because I felt they were written for an older audience than our students.
- ____ I chose not to include them because I felt that they contained inappropriate subject matter and/or language.
- ____ I chose not to include them because I felt that they were not actually high quality titles.
- ____ I chose not to include them due to a limited budget
- ____ I discarded titles because they were damaged and chose not to replace them.

- ____ I weeded titles because they were not getting used
- ____ Other (please explain):
 - o _____

Comments:

10. If you have not already, would you weed a Newbery award winner?

- ____ Yes, if they were not being used
- ____ No, I would always keep a Newbery Award book in the collection
- ____ I do not know

Comments:

11. How are the Newbery award winners marked in your library? (Check all that apply)

- ____ With a gold medal sticker
- ____ With a spine label
- ____ They are shelved in a special section
- ____ They have no special designation
- ____ Other (please explain):
 - o _____

Comments:

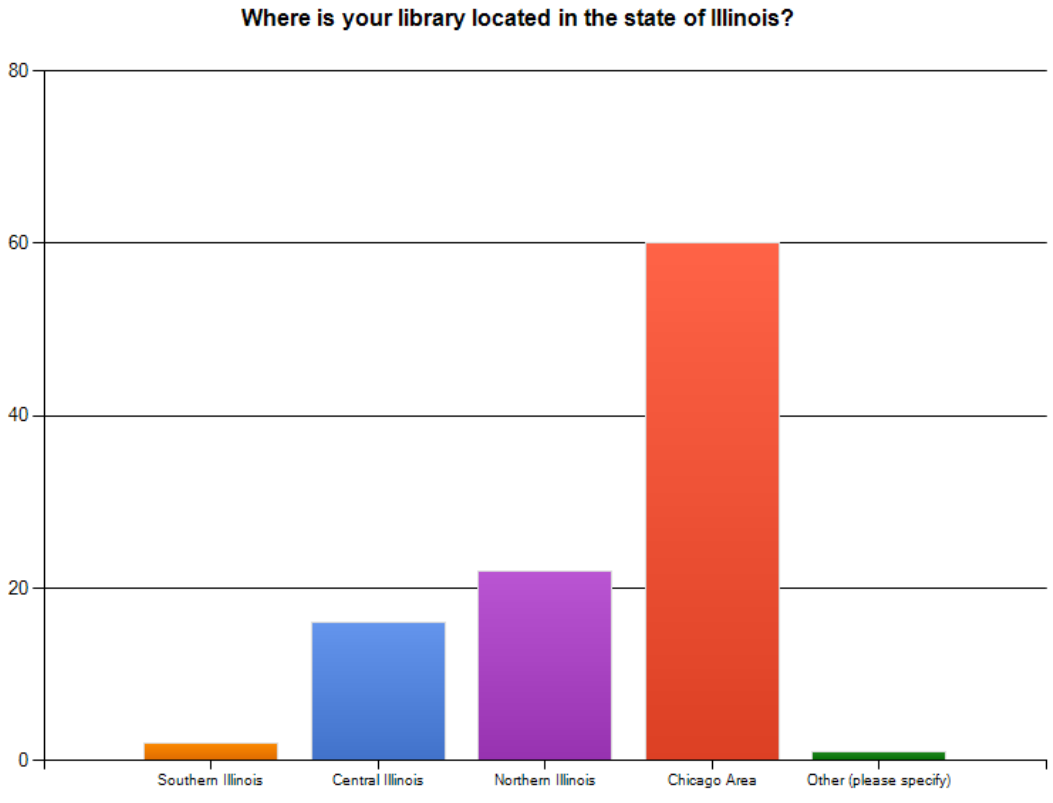
12. Has your library done any of the following special events, programs, or displays concerning the Newbery Award? (Check all that apply)

- ____ Poster
- ____ Display
- ____ Announcement to classes when the winner is chosen
- ____ I have a special presentation on Newbery award winners
- ____ No special marketing
- ____ Other (please explain):
 - _____

Comments:

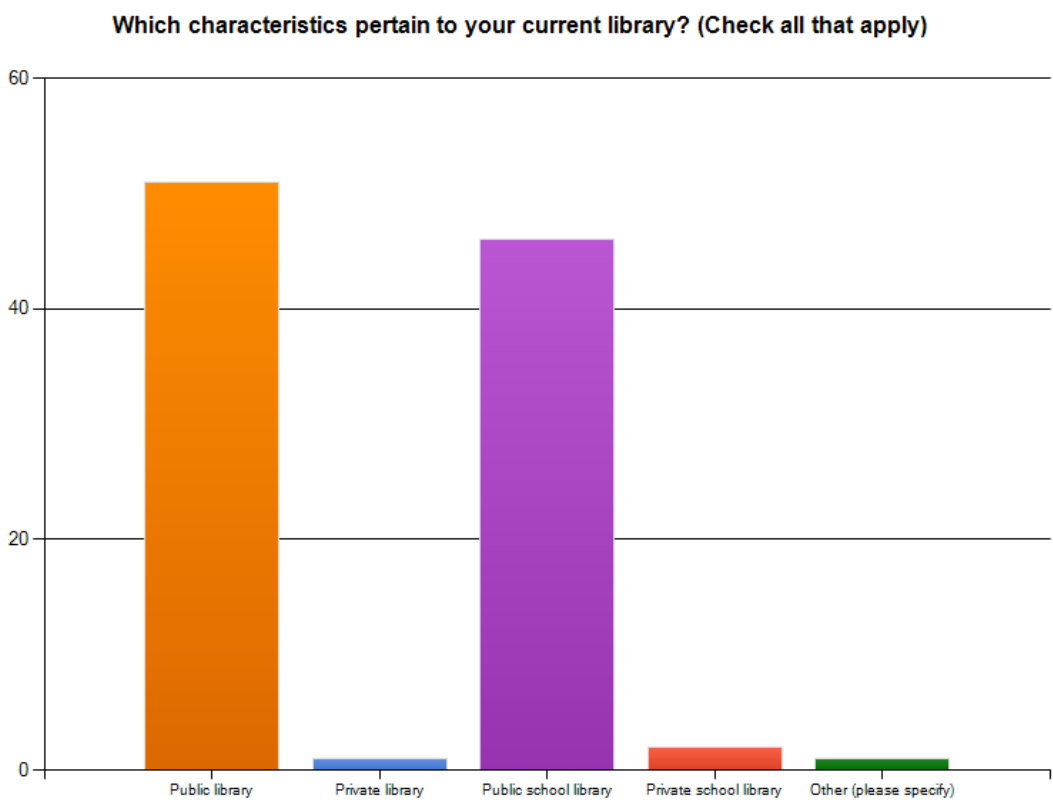
Appendix B – Demographic Results

Where is your library located in the state of Illinois?



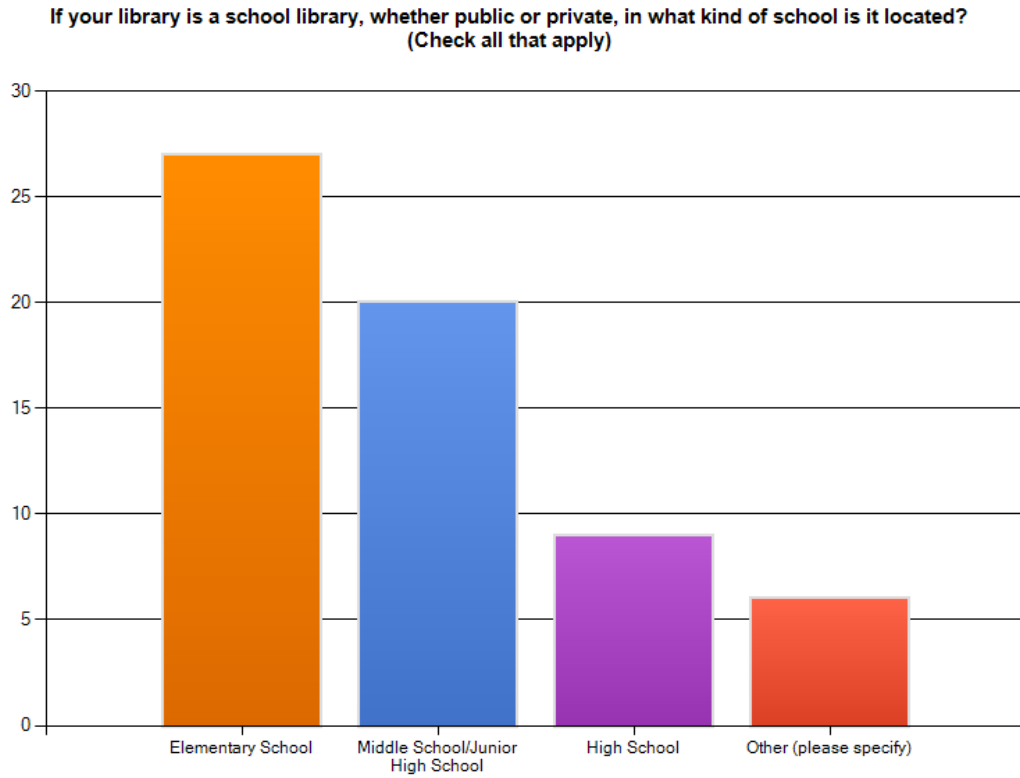
Other: East Central Illinois

Which characteristics pertain to your current library? (Check all that apply)



Other: University Library

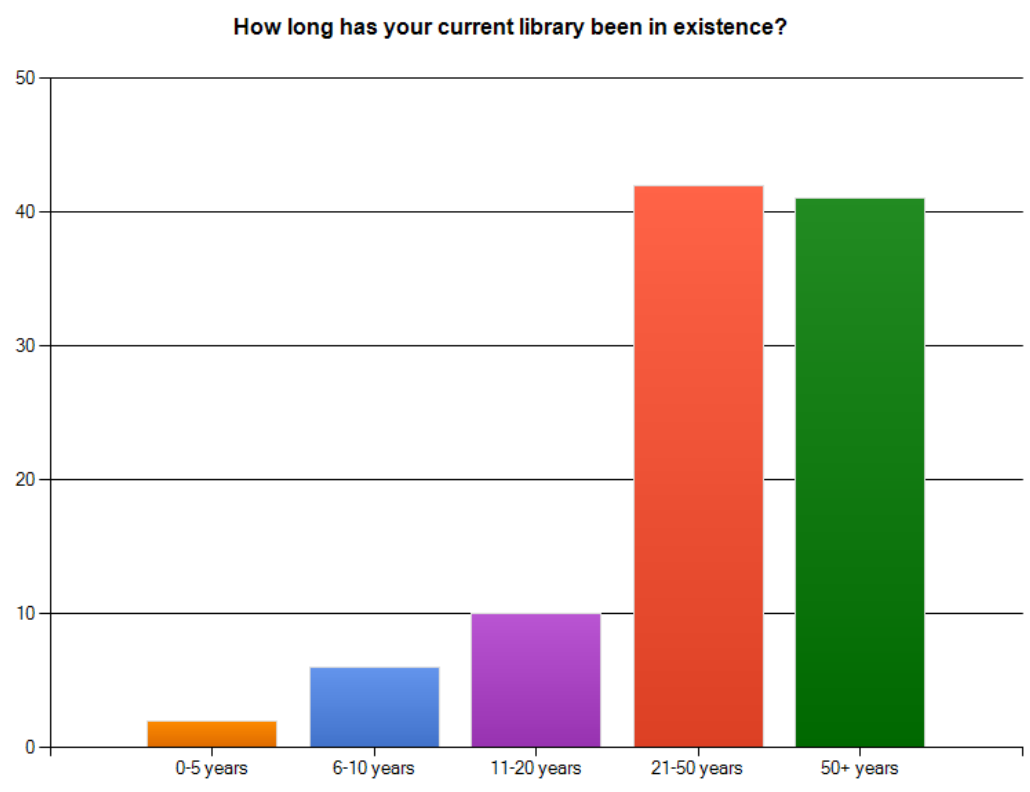
If your library is a school library, whether public or private, in what kind of school is it located? (Check all that apply)



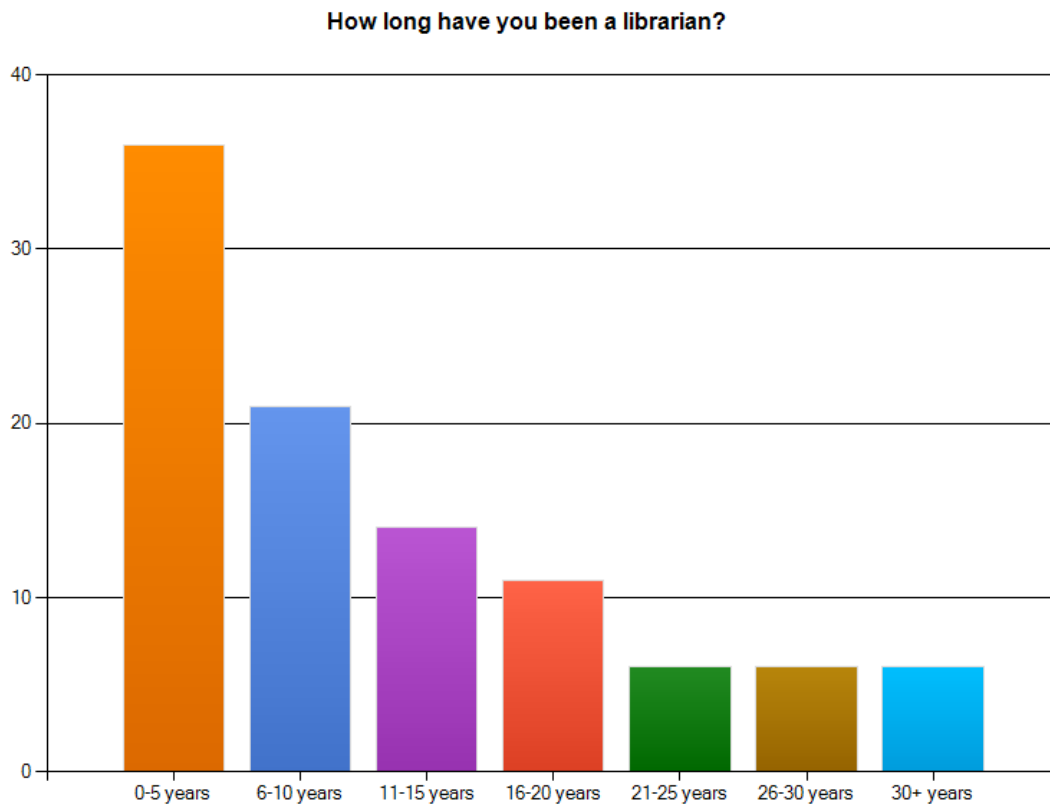
Other: District library, Grades 2-8, College library, Grades K-6

Appendix C - Survey Results

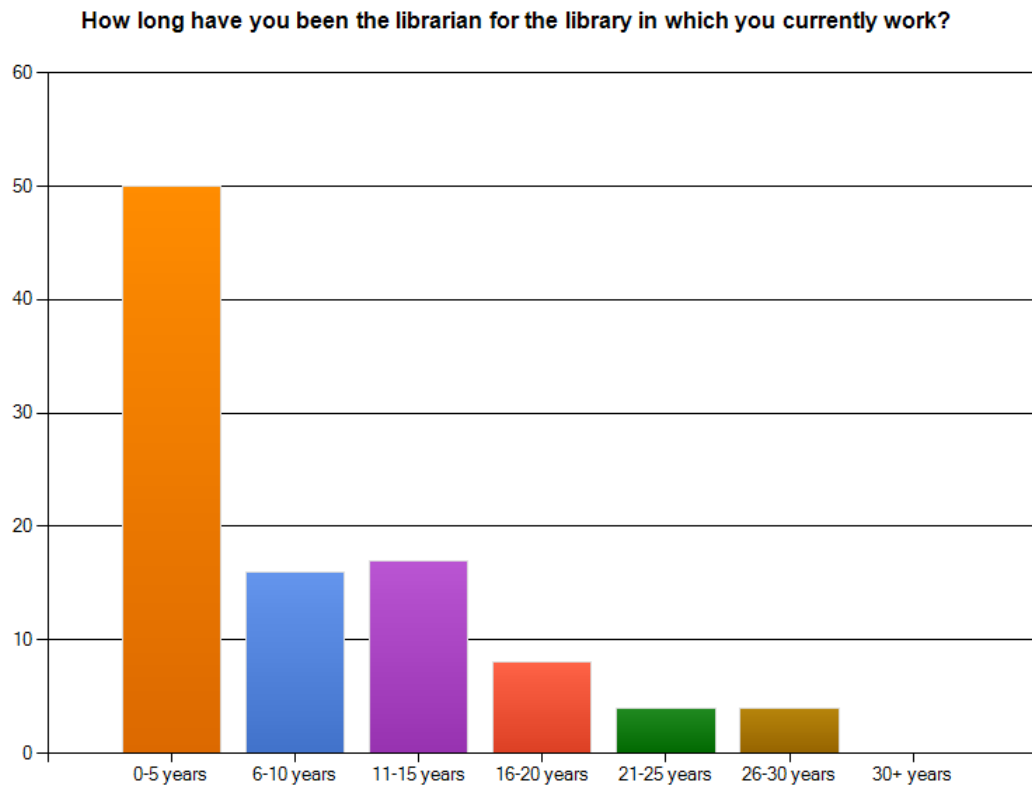
How long has your current library been in existence?



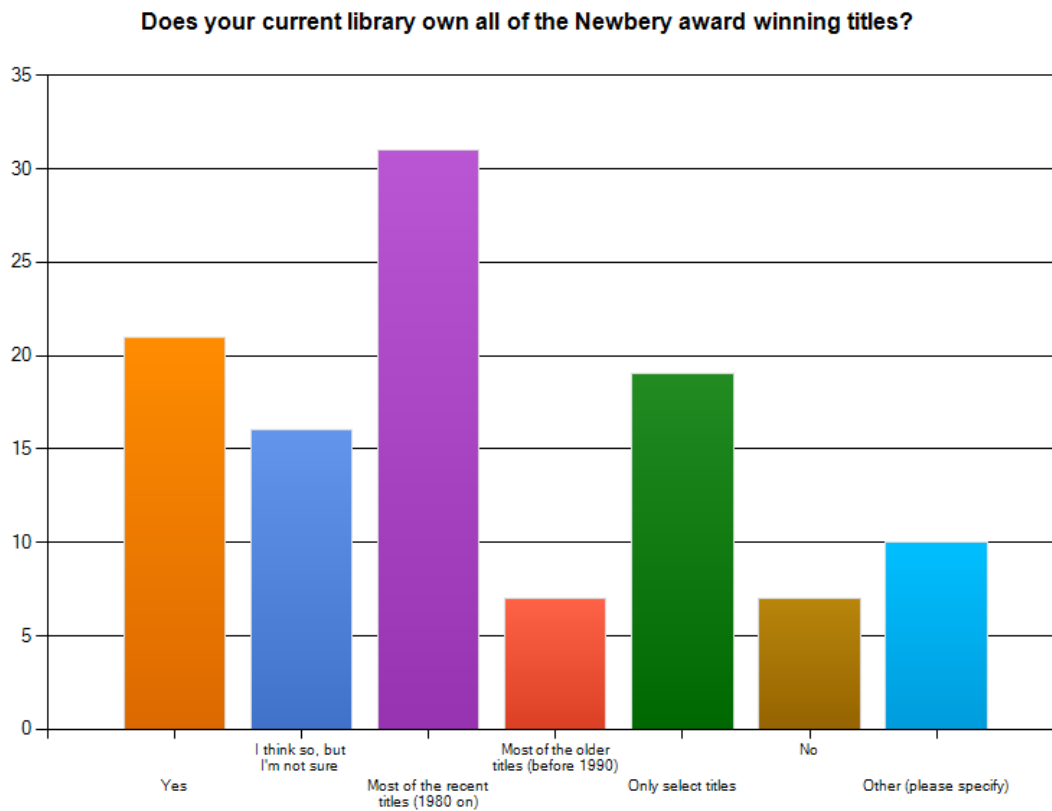
How long have you been a librarian?



How long have you been the librarian for the library in which you currently work?

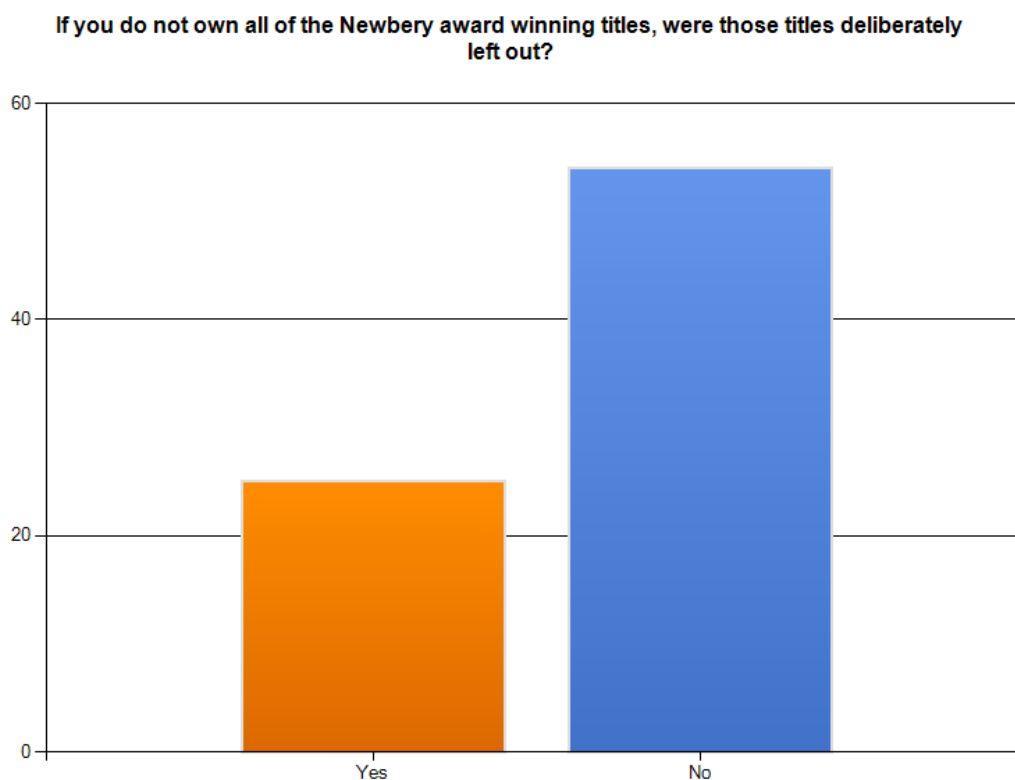


Does your current library own all of the Newbery award winning titles?



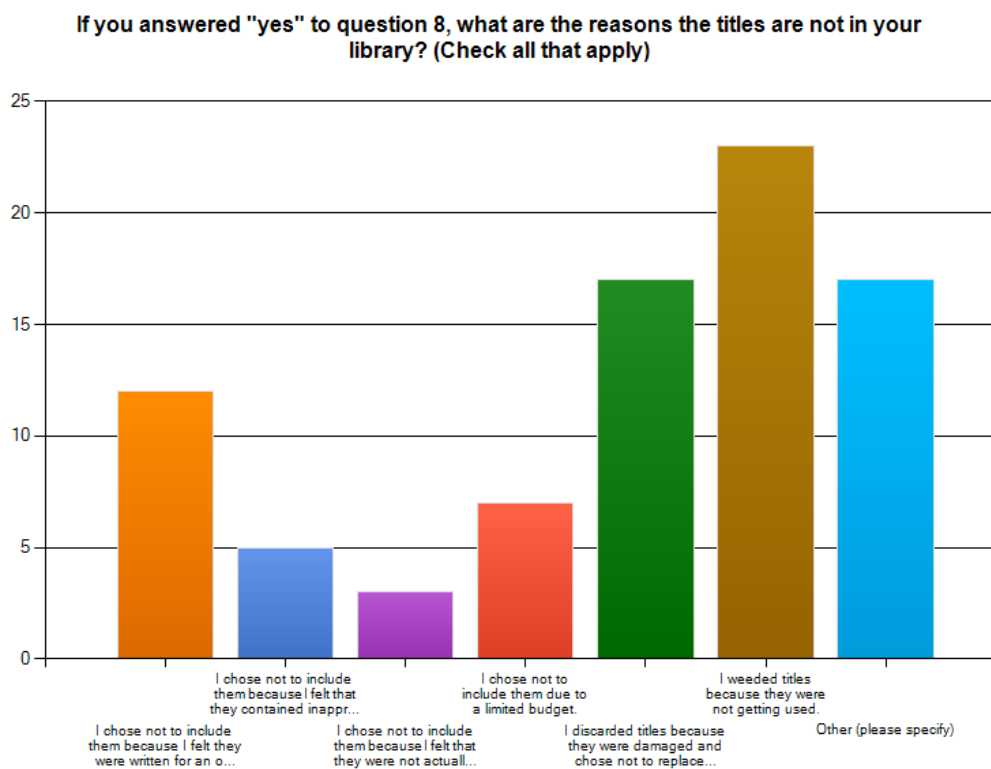
Other: Most of the titles, May be gaps due to weeding for condition, Missing some of the very early winners, Have almost all titles expect those not appropriate for 5th grade and under, Own those that pertain to the library's age group, Have never searched the library for Newbery titles

If you do not own all of the Newbery award winning titles, were those titles deliberately left out?



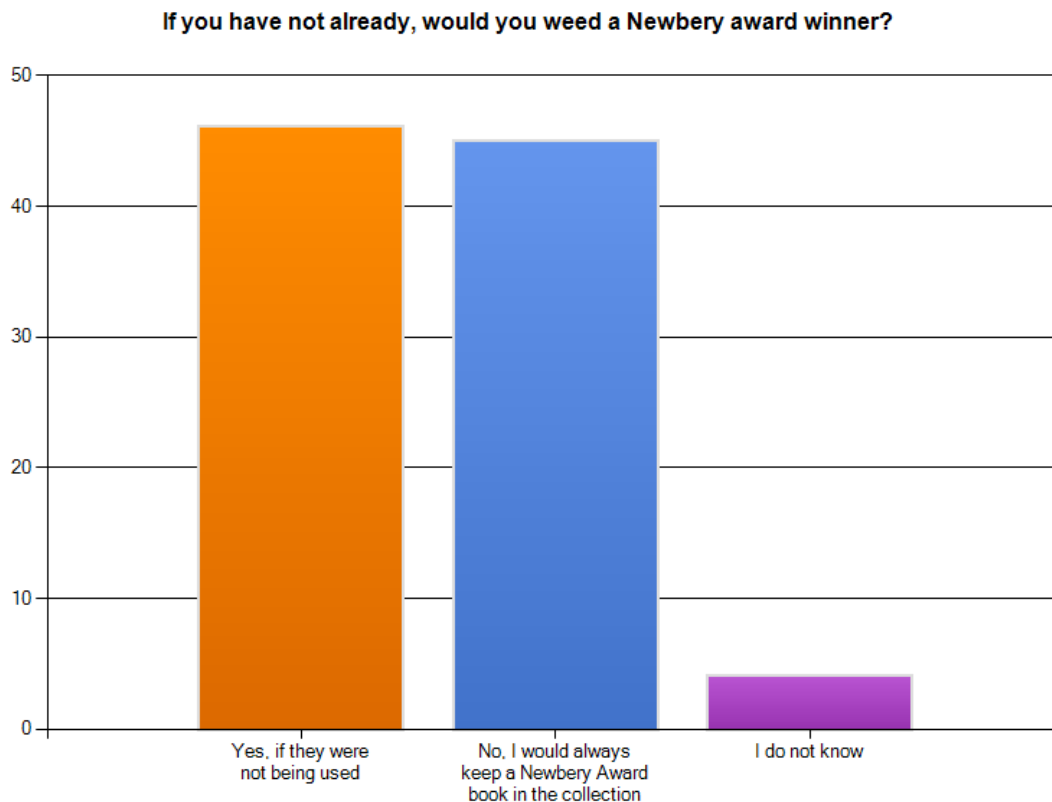
Comments: Weeded because they did not circulate, Titles are out of print and too expensive, Older titles were discarded for condition or lost and not replaced, Older works were left out, Will not purchase a book simply because it won an award, Older titles were just sitting on the shelf, Most recent titles rejected before voting even took place due to content, Not age appropriate, Untrained librarians who were not looking for the Newbery award winning titles, Book selected that are appropriate for the school and population instead of because they are a Newbery winner, Lack of a book buying budget, Content deemed more appropriate for an older audience

If you answered “yes” to question 8, what are the reasons the titles are not in your library? (Check all that apply)



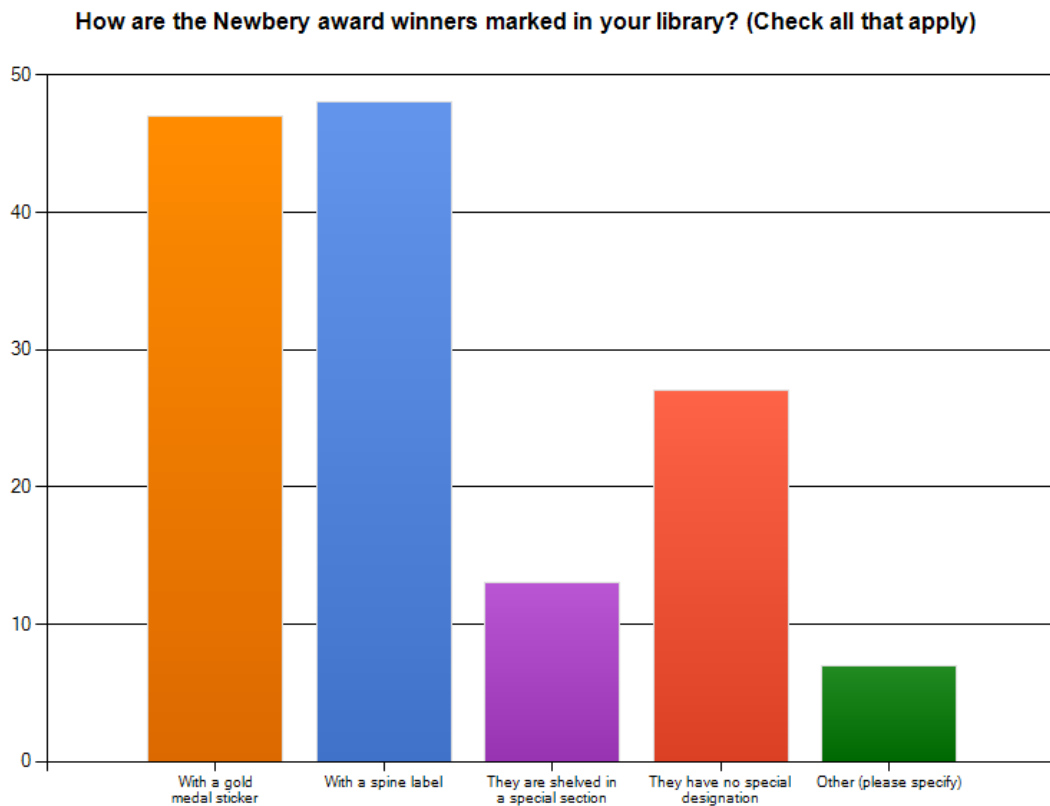
Other: Newbery books were not always bought by previous director, The books would not be used, Out of print, Titles were not asked for by the patrons, Newbery titles are not automatically purchased each year, Many times these are books adults think children should read but students are not interested in them, Not high interest titles

If you have not already, would you weed a Newbery award winner?



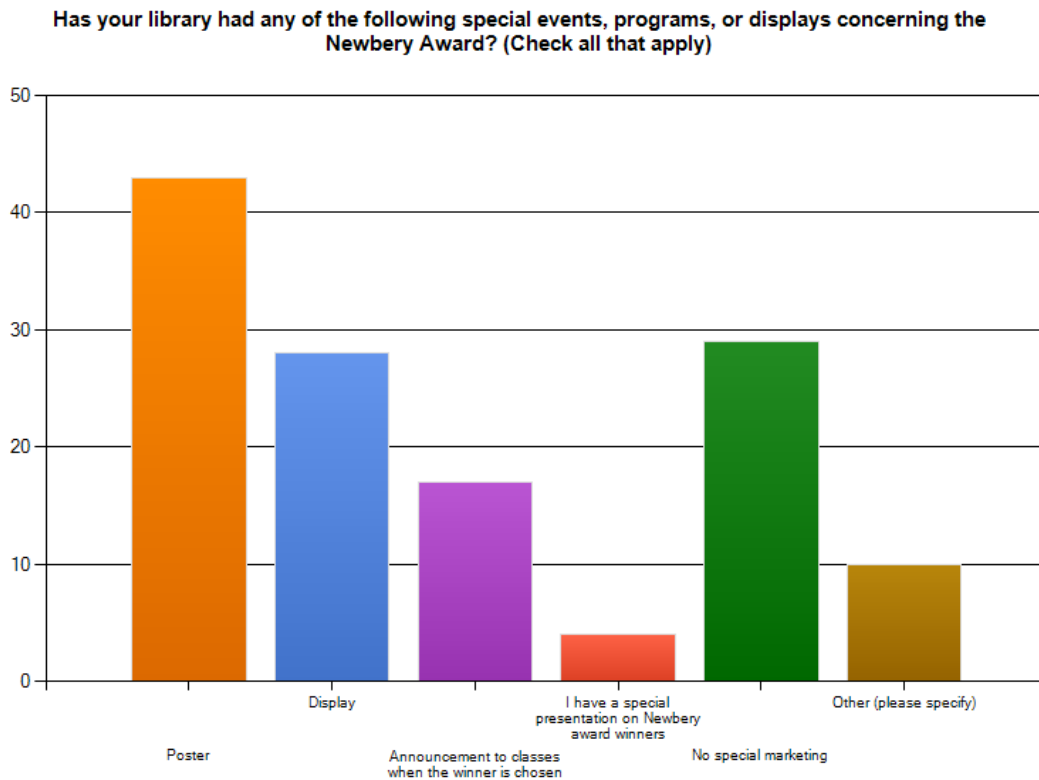
Comments: Titles were not checked out, Would weed one that was falling apart but replace with a new copy, Would keep some of the older titles rather than some of the new ones if they were not being checked out, Would weed if it was an older title that is now politically incorrect, Limited shelf space, Shelf space must be for books students/staff will use, Limited space requires book that are not circulating to be weeded, A balanced collection requires all award winning books,

How are the Newbery award winners marked in your library? (Check all that apply)



Other: Not currently marked but will be in the future, Only physical markings are those made by the publishers, Older Newbery titles are shelved with the classics, A poster with the winning titles is posted, Award notation inside the book and in catalog

Has your library had any of the following special events, programs, or displays concerning the Newbery Award? (Check all that apply)



Other: Brochure, Book talks, Conduct a Mock Newbery and then announce the actual winner, Bookmarks, Presentation by a librarian to local schools, PowerPoint including all children’s book award winners