## The Information Seeking Behavior of Preschoolers

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**Problem**: This study will investigate the way young children use the public library. In particular, how preschoolers (ages 3-5) interact with their caregivers, librarians, and staff to find the information they seek. To clarify, this is an examination of *how* preschoolers get the information they seek and not *what* or *why* they seek. This student's experience as a children's librarian in the public library suggests that it is a worthwhile skill set for LIS professionals to acquire. This investigation will endeavor to establish that children of this age group are well adept at using various resources to seek the information they desire. The implications from the findings of this study are well suited for future LIS curriculums intent on creating professionals with the inclusive skills to better serve young patrons. Among the theories assisting this research, include but are not limited to, Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* and De Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*. Child development theories will be examined, as well as, Bruner's process of *scaffolding*. Moreover, this study furthers the work of Dr. Lynne McKechnie, Professor of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. Very little has been published on this topic in LIS literature. This lack of research is either due to the assumption that preschoolers are not information seeking capable, either due to lack of communication skills, or that caregivers often choose materials for them. This project is important because the public library is devoted to lifelong education for all of its patrons. Examining ways in which the library interacts with preschoolers could give new insights in how to best serve these young patrons. Collecting information from preschoolers themselves can help create a more user-centric experience for them, thereby supporting their development, education, and enjoyment.

**Progress**: By the time of the ISIC Doctoral Workshop, this dissertation proposal will have already been defended or will be very close to being defended. The workshop's design of feedback and guidance will be invaluable. The student looks forward to participating in the workshop because of its collaborative nature and contributing to a supportive community of scholars is one of her primary goals in attending the conference.

**Work plan**: Conversations with the student's doctoral committee have greatly informed the process. The work plan will involve collecting data from twenty children and their caregivers

at three different library sites in order to improve rigor and to reach the most diverse population. Sites being considered are public libraries in Champaign, Illinois, Bloomington, Indiana, and Indianapolis, Indiana. Indianapolis is a large urban area and Bloomington and Champaign are both university towns with significantly smaller populations.

Recruiting families will take a considerable amount of time. Attaining Internal Review Board (IRB) approval may be challenging considering the work with very young children. IRB approval, recruitment, data collection and analysis will take about six months and another six months will be taken to finalize details and writing the dissertation. A defense of the dissertation is planned for fall of 2017.

A rigorous qualitative approach is of utmost importance, both in collecting and reporting findings. This case study approach will be completed using reflexive journaling by the researcher, field notes on observations, surveys, and interviews of children, caregivers, and librarians. Data verification will be attempted after each observation and interview to further rigor. Finally, counterexamples will be discussed, as they appear, to further the triangulation of data.

**Summary of research problems for discussion**:

1.What is the best way to attract families to this research project? How can retention of these families be encouraged?

2. What are the best ways to ensure a rigorous research process? What experiences have others had to support rigor, throughout the whole process, but in a particular in data collection and reporting the findings?

3. How can the data instruments be designed so that they get the most useful information from children? This study is quite child-focused and making sure the researcher is approachable and understood is essential to getting the best results.

4. What are ways that others have organized large amounts of data, particularly observation notes, so that analysis can be most efficient?

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EDUCATION
- Indiana University, Bloomington; Bachelor of Arts diploma; Psychology.
- University of Washington, Seattle; Master of Library and Information Science.
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library and Information Science; Doctor of Philosophy; Information Science; *In progress*.

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS
- Graduate Assistantship, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of

Library and Information Science:
>
> 2015-present; Research assistant on The Comic Book Readership Archive with Dr. Carol Tilley, Dr. Katherine LaBarre, and Dr. John Walsh.
>
> 2014-2015; Project Manager for Closing the App Gap research project with Dr. Kate McDowell and Dr. Deborah Stevenson.
>
> 2013-2014; Research assistant to Dr. Christine Jenkins.

- Adjunct Lecturer, 2008-2015; University of Washington, School of Library and Information Science.
- Managing/Children's Librarian, 1997-2013; Seattle Public Library.

HONORS, RECOGNITIONS, AND OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS
- ALA Library History Round Table Travel grant, 2015.
- ALISE University of Washington Information School Youth Services Graduate Student Travel Award, 2015.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND PRESENTATIONS
- African American Digital and Print Culture Conference: *Charlemae Rollins and Her Quest for Equity* presentation, Madison WI (September 2014).
- Library Research Seminar VI, 2014: *Closing the App Gap: From Plan to Project I* poster. Champaign, IL (October 2014).
- ASIS&T Conference: *Closing the App Gap: From Plan to Project I* poster. Seattle, WA (October 2014).
- ALISE Conference: *Closing the App Gap: From Plan to Project I* poster. Chicago, IL (January 2015).
- Library History Seminar XIII: *Charlemae Rollins, Children's Programming at the Hall Branch Library, and the Chicago Black Renaissance* paper. Boston, MA (July 2015).
- ALISE Conference: *The We Need Diverse Books Campaign and Critical Race Theory* poster. Boston, MA (January 2016).
- iConfernce: *The We Need Diverse Books Campaign and Critical Race Theory: A Call to Action for Library and Information Professionals* poster. Philadelphia, PA (March 2016).

PUBLICATION
- Chapter in Hirsh, S. (Ed.). (2015). *Managing Personnel* in Information Services Today: An introduction. Roman & Littlefield.
- Mabbott, Cass and Kate McDowell "Connecting Across the App Gap: Summer Reading and Apps" submitted to Children & Libraries, May 2015

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
- American Library Association: PLA, ALSC, YALSA, LRRT, EMIERT.
- SHARP
- ALISE: Youth Services SIG, History SIG, Doctoral SIG