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Genrifying the school library's fiction collection

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Abstract
Genrification, or the act of organizing a library or section of a library by genres or topics, has been a trend in recent years in both school and public libraries. Little to no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of this transition from the Dewey Decimal System in fiction and or nonfiction collections. The purpose of this research is to explore the usefulness of a genrified fiction collection in a school library by examining how students interact with the collection along with teachers' perceptions of genrifying. This study focused on student browsing behavior in a genrified fiction collection and how frequently students browsed and borrowed books from across genre sections in the fiction collection. It also focused on how the genrification affected classroom teachers. The researcher observed one sixth grade class with sixteen students during four library visits and conducted follow-up interviews with eight students (four females and four males) to provide insight into the student's' library experiences. Collection statistics before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection were also used to determine changes in circulation. Based on these data sources, it was clear that students were checking out more books across genres, preferred browsing genres to find books of interest to checkout, and had at least one genre they preferred. An online survey with eight literacy teachers showed teacher support for the library genrification. All teachers felt genrification had helped students find books with ease.

GENRIFYING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY'S FICTION COLLECTION

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ABSTRACT

Genrification, or the act of organizing a library or section of a library by genres or topics, has been a trend in recent years in both school and public libraries. Little to no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of this transition from the Dewey Decimal System in fiction and or nonfiction collections. The purpose of this research is to explore the usefulness of a genrified fiction collection in a school library by examining how students interact with the collection along with teachers' perceptions of genrifying. This study focused on student browsing behavior in a genrified fiction collection and how frequently students browsed and borrowed books from across genre sections in the fiction collection. It also focused on how the genrification affected classroom teachers. The researcher observed one sixth grade class with sixteen students during four library visits and conducted follow-up interviews with eight students (four females and four males) to provide insight into the student's' library experiences. Collection statistics before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection were also used to determine changes in circulation. Based on these data sources, it was clear that students were checking out more books across genres, preferred browsing genres to find books of interest to checkout, and had at least one genre they preferred. An online survey with eight literacy teachers showed teacher support for the library genrification. All teachers felt genrification had helped students find books with ease.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sally struggled to find a chapter book that interested her when she visited the library each week with her class. She wandered the rows of shelves randomly picking up a book, flipping through a couple pages before putting it back and moving on. When the teacher librarian asked Sally what kind of book she would like, she eventually said she wanted to read a chapter book with animals in it. After thinking about popular animal chapter books, the teacher librarian walked to a place in the fiction collection and pulled two books by the same author for Sally. As the teacher librarian described why Sally might like each of these books, Sally looked at the books and said these weren't of interest. The teacher librarian and Sally continued through the fiction collection looking at books by several authors before Sally settled on a particular book.

During this time, the rest of the class was left on their own to find books to check out. After the teacher librarian genrified the fiction collection, that is, organized it by genre, Sally had a different experience in the library. She found it much easier to find books that matched her interests. This caused the teacher librarian to wonder whether arranging the library's fiction section by genre might enhance students' ability to browse, freeing up more time for the teacher librarian to assist a greater number of students through reader's advisory.

Problem Statement

The fiction collection in many libraries is organized alphabetically by author's last name, yet many students browse the library for a specific series or type of book

rather than for a specific author. If students are looking for a particular type of book (i.e. a scary book) in a library utilizing standard classification schemes, they must often look in multiple places in the collection before finding a book that interests them. For a student who struggles to enjoy reading, it can become frustrating to find a book. Many librarians across the country have also found themselves frustrated with the traditional organization of either the fiction or nonfiction collection, prompting a panel about the topic at the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition (November 14-17, 2013) and an entire issue of the American Library Association's (ALA's) journal *Knowledge Quest* (Featheringham, 2013) devoted to exploring the different aspects of the topic. For example, the Kansas Association of School Librarians sent the following concern to the American Association of School Librarians:

> Many school librarians are questioning the method of arranging their library collections. The move away from Dewey classification to genres has resulted in confusion, unanswered questions, and a variety of attempts. We are seeking guidance from AASL to provide answers and guidance in this popular trend. Is it a viable way of arranging library materials; and if so, please help in setting standards and appropriate genres for different age levels. (Jameson, 2013, p. 11) Genrification is often tied to specific genres taught in the classroom, such as historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and realistic fiction.
> Little research has been conducted investigating the effectiveness of a genrified

library and its impact on students and teachers. This research will help teacher librarians, school administrators, and classroom teachers understand the possible implications of genrifying the fiction collection in the school library.

Summary of Problem Statement

The value of genrifying a school library collection and how it may benefit students is still unclear to teacher librarians across the country. Yet, many librarians, based on anecdotal evidence, are rearranging their library's collections or considering doing so.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to explore the usefulness of a genrified fiction collection in a school library setting. The research will focus on how students interact with a genrified fiction collection and its impact on teachers and classrooms.

Research Questions

1. How frequently do students browse across genres in a genrified fiction collection?

2. Are students purposeful in browsing in a genrified fiction collection?

3. How frequently do students check out books across genres in a genrified fiction collection?

4. How has the change in the organization of the library's fiction collection affected classroom teachers?

Assumptions and Limitations

One assumption in this study is that most students prefer to browse and look for books based on type or genre. One limitation of this study is it is only concerned with the organization of the fiction collection. Also, it only examines one librarian's organization of that fiction collection in one school library at an intermediate school in the Midwestern United States.

Data had not been collected around the research questions before the fiction collections were converted to a genrified collection. Therefore, the research will focus

only on how students and teachers interact with a genrified fiction collection, not the

development of the genre categories.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of genrifying the fiction

collection in a school library through researcher observation of students' browsing

behaviors and follow-up interviews with select students. The study will also explore

whether teachers perceive this genrification as beneficial to students' classroom reading.

The research will also focus on how students are able to navigate a genrified fiction

collection and its connection to a school reading culture. In order to gain background on

these topics, previous research has been reviewed on student reading preferences, student

information seeking behavior, and reading culture in schools.

Student Preferences In Book Selection

Students have specific preferences for the topics and genres they like to read for

pleasure. Mohr (2006) observed 190 first grade students to see how they chose books and

then interviewed them to gain insight into the students' thought processes. Each student

was observed selecting a book from nine choices. Additionally, 122 students were asked

10 questions in an interview with the researcher. Half of the questions were about the

book itself and why the student chose it, and the other questions were about the student's

book selection and thinking processes in general. The first graders in Mohr's study

preferred animal stories, but notably were unable to distinguish between fiction and

informational stories when interviewed, often blending characteristics when attempting to

identify a book's genre. This is illustrated through comments such as one student's

response, "It's fantasy and it's real" (p. 99). Mohr suggests that future studies examine

young children's abilities to identify genres before and after explicit instruction on genre characteristics.

Gallo and Ness (2013) also examined how children selected books when given choices. The researchers provided third grade students with fiction and informational texts. The participants reported preferring fiction over nonfiction. They often picked books based on topics about which they wanted to learn more. The researchers wondered if a lack of exposure to informational text could have attributed to students' preference for fiction.

Merisuo-Storm (2006) also utilized a list of questions to interview fourth grade students about reading preferences and motivations. Merisuo-Storm interviewed 145 students (67 boys and 78 girls) in a Finnish comprehensive school and had students answer questions about reading and writing using a 4-point scale. The researcher analyzed the data for general attitudes about reading as well as any differences between boys and girls. While almost all students showed a positive attitude toward reading and visiting the library, girls read more than boys. When given the choice, boys stated preferences for comics, humor, and adventure books in that order. Girls stated preferences in the opposite order of adventure, humor, and comics. The researchers noted that boys preferred books in a series, which they saw as a safer choice since they already knew their topic.

Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) interviewed 91 fourth grade students about reading preferences. After analysis of the students' answers, the researchers concluded that students picked books based on their own personal interests and preferred to read books they were allowed to choose. Students reported liking funny or scary books as well

as wanting to learn new information as reasons to read a book. The researchers stressed the importance of the school library program as students acquired most of their books from the library. Edmunds and Bauserman recommended that teachers provide students an opportunity to sort books into categories in order to learn more about student interests and suggested   organizing books in their classroom libraries using these categories.

In the interest of learning more about how readers choose books, Ross (1999) interviewed 194 adult readers who identified themselves as people who enjoyed reading frequently. Interviews were done either by the researcher or by graduate students under the researcher's supervision. Participants were asked three main questions, with follow-up. Questions focused on how readers chose books, books that made a difference in their lives, and their opinions/experiences with rereading books. Ross found that readers use one of five selection strategies to choose a book: their current mood, sources for recommendations/browsing, elements from the book (characters, setting, condition, and size of the book), details from the cover and book (genre, title, author, sample page, and publisher), and time, money, and effort required to read the book. In her discussion, Ross emphasized the importance of the reader's role in selecting a book and making meaning in connection to their own lives.

Information Seeking Behavior

Students often categorize and seek information in different ways than adults. Cooper (2004) observed how elementary students categorized information through five hands-on sessions designed to compare how student categories matched traditional Dewey Decimal System categories. The first session focused on students brainstorming what topics they liked to see represented in the library's collection. The topics were used

in later sessions in which students sorted terms into student-created categories. Students

were encouraged to think of the terms as books on a shelf. The final session focused

specifically on animal topics. During the analysis of the results, Cooper compared

categories and sorts across grade levels to determine any patterns. While the categories

devised by students in early primary grades were farther away from the Dewey Decimal

System categories, the fourth grade students sorted topics into more traditional

fiction/nonfiction categories. Cooper deemed this as reflecting the older students' years

of experience in a school library. In her recommendations for school libraries, Cooper

encouraged inclusion of student-created categories within a library's physical layout.

This would allow students' cognitive needs to be met while still working within the

Dewey Decimal System.

In order to better understand how and when students succeed or fail in finding

specific material in a library, Hahn and Zitron (2011) observed first year college students

as they searched for two books and one DVD in an undergraduate library. By observing

16 students' search behaviors and then asking them to talk about their thought processes,

the researchers were able to determine common obstacles that caused students to be

unsuccessful in the search process. Hahn and Zitron (2011) identified the library

classification system and the physical arrangement of the library as the two most

common reasons students were unsuccessful. The researchers noted that students often

used signs throughout the library to help them navigate, but struggled to understand the

connection between the topic and the numbers assigned by the library classification

system. Some students tried to navigate the library in the same way they would a

bookstore but with less success. After analysis of the results, the researchers

recommended that libraries have clear and consistent signs that are inviting and help students understand the organizational system is use.

Organizational systems are a key influence in how students seek information. Additionally, students use multiple other factors to find and choose resources. Connaway, Dickey, and Radford (2011) created a multi-year study to analyze how and why people chose to use specific resources over others and what factors contributed to that decision. The researchers collected information from 307 randomly selected subjects in the Midwest through an online survey and a telephone interview. Focus group interviews were conducted with 78 participants, and 15 participants completed a follow-up interview. During the interviews, participants expressed their preferences for online searches, specifically Google, because of their perceived simplicity. Researchers identified convenience as the main reason participants chose to use one resource over another. Participants would often sacrifice quality of content in favor of convenience to complete their task. The researchers recommended that librarians adapt their catalog systems to replicate the web environment with which users are comfortable and to offer services in multiple modes to meet the needs of a variety of users. Connaway, Dickey, and Radford recommended future studies to investigate how library users find different information in a variety of situations.

Reading Culture Within Schools

A positive reading culture in schools or classrooms can help promote student reading through conversations and various literacy activities with both adults and students. In order to learn more about outcomes of a school-wide reading culture, Daniels

and Steres (2011) studied the success of one middle school principal's efforts to make reading a priority over a five year span. The research was conducted in one middle school in urban southern California, with a population of 1,356 students, with all students living below the poverty line and/or English Language Learners. The principal created a building-wide expectation for everyone (adults and students) to read 15 minutes a day in school. He also required that all classrooms have their own libraries. Daniels and Steres analyzed the success of the school reading culture through class discussions with 90 students, individual student interviews with 19 students from the class discussion group, and focus group discussions with administrators and two teachers from each grade level. The researchers found that a reading culture was created by "(a) making reading a top priority, (b) adults in the school modeling and supporting the reading, and (c) the creation of motivating learning environments" (p. 6). Students saw themselves as readers and read frequently because reading was at the forefront of conversations with staff and because they were provided time for reading.

In contrast, De Naeghel, Van Keer, & Vanderlinde (2014) learned about reading culture in the classroom by analyzing how three teachers promoted reading in their primary school classrooms in Flemish, Belgium. The three fifth-grade teachers were selected through teacher and student questionnaires, which identified the teachers as successfully promoting reading in their classrooms. The researchers investigated the teachers' practices through two classroom observations, semi-structured teacher interviews on reading motivation, semi-structured interviews with school leaders, and two questionnaires exploring reading motivation given to students and teachers.

After evaluating the results, De Naeghel, Van Keer, & Vanderlinde identified one teacher, referred to as "Mr. T", as having the highest level of reading autonomy in his classroom because of opportunities provided for students to make choices and connect with their own interests. His students had the highest level of recreational and academic reading among the three teachers. Another teacher's classroom, Mrs. K's, was identified as the least supportive of reading autonomy. Her room offered fewer choices in book selection and she assigned book review assignments even though she did not think they were highly motivating. The researchers recommend more research devoted to the topic of how teachers and librarians can structure their classrooms and libraries to best support student reading.

Keskin and Bastug (2014) explored the connections among participation in reading environments and reading frequency with 550 eighth graders (261 female and 289 male) in Konya, Turkey. A reading environment was defined as participation in literacy activities, whether at home or at school. The researchers collected data through two surveys: one focused on reading attitudes and one about adolescent reading attitudes. After analyzing the data, Keskin and Bastug noted a strong correlation between student participation in a reading environment and academic reading attitude, concluding, "Those children who enjoy participating in reading environments and doing exercises are more likely to have a more positive academic and recreational reading attitude" (p. 566).

Summary

Many students struggle to find books in the library to read for enjoyment. They are confounded by a system organized by author's last name that they struggle to navigate (Hahn, J., & Zitron, L., 2011). Students know what they like to read and have

strong preferences for fiction genres (Gallo, G., & Ness, M. K., 2013). Students for whom reading is an unsavory or laborious task are often turned off all together by the complexities and accompanying frustrations of navigating a library's shelves (Connaway, L., Dickey, T. J., & Radford, M. L., 2011). Many librarians are at an early yet critical point in re-considering a library's organization. While little research currently exists in the literature about alternative classification methods, recent studies show students have strong preferences in what types of books they do and do not like to read (Edmunds, K. M., & Bauserman, K. L., 2006). The literature also shows the value of promoting a school wide reading culture where both students and adults participate in literacy activities. This suggests that libraries should consider whether their current structures present barriers to students' enjoyment of the library, and whether an alternative method such as genrification would make navigation easier and the overall experience more enjoyable for teachers and students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to explore the usefulness genrifying a fiction collection in a school library setting. The research focused on how students interact with a genrified fiction collection and its impact on teachers and classrooms. The research explored students' experiences with a genrified fiction collection, including the frequency of browsing and checkout across genres, as well as whether or not teachers perceive the genrified fiction collection as beneficial to their classrooms in terms of students' reading behaviors.

Research Design

This study employed a case study methodology in its close examination of a single library site in a single school district. It was exploratory in nature as genrification of a library's fiction collection is a fairly new but expanding practice and therefore a phenomenon worthy of further investigation.. Wildemuth (2009) explains, "Case studies are often used in exploratory studies to define phenomena worth studying further" (p. 52). This case study utilized a mixed-methods approach in its combination of data sources. These will be explained below. A limitation of case studies is the lack of generalizability of the findings. This case study was limited to one librarian's organization of a single fiction collection housed within a single school. Though its reliance on library circulation data and teacher self-reporting limits the scope of its results, this study will provide useful information for decision making related to the

organization of libraries. The researcher assumes that most students prefer to browse for books based on their genre.

Procedure

The researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data was collected through administration of a survey to teachers, observations of students during library check out and post-interviews with students. Analysis of existing documents provided quantitative data. Dillman stated that survey research allows the researcher to statistically "estimate the distribution of characteristics in a population, based on a sample that is only a fraction of that population" (as cited in Wildemuth, 2009, p. 256). This method was an effective way to estimate teachers' and students' opinions of and interests in the use of the genrified fiction collection, and to generalize those estimates to the larger population.

Data Sources

The population that participated in this study were students and teachers at a fifth and sixth grade intermediate school in a suburban Midwestern school district. The researcher acquired approval from the University's Institutional Review Board. After gaining approval, researcher received parental permission to observe and video record students during checkout and to conduct follow-up interviews with select students to gain insight in what genre of books students were seeking and if their search was successful. This was done as part of the standard procedures and permissions through the university institutional research board. The parent permission form granted the researcher permission to observe only, observe and interview, or deny permission for the researcher to include a student in the study and to be video recorded.

Student Browsing and Checkout Frequency

Circulation statistics were used to compare overall checkout totals from before the library was reorganized into fiction genres and after it was genrified. Analysis of existing documents allowed this researcher to compare library circulation rates during a specific month before and the same month after the fiction collection was genrified. This also aided in identifying the three most-highly circulated genres. Additionally, it helped determine which genres were the focus of the student observations. Hodder stated, "This type of data could be a more accurate representation of the phenomenon of interest than data collected through self report as through an interview or questionnaire" (Hodder 2009, p. 158). This process provided quantifiable data to situate and clarify the statements provided by survey respondents. Video recordings during student checkout focused on one of the three most-highly circulated genres each time, with a total of three recordings. Eight students were randomly selected to be interviewed from the larger participant pool of sixteen students whose parents granted permission for them to be observed and interviewed using a random name generating tool. All sixteen students were observed during library checkout. Personal identifying information was kept anonymous by using numeric codes during data collection and analysis. Pseudonyms were used in the subsequent reporting of findings and interview data. Observation and interview data was recorded by hand as well as by video (see Appendix A). A portion of the observation data captured whether students looked for books with a peer, as Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found many students referred to peers as heavily influencing their final book selection. Permission to conduct this research at the school site was obtained from the building principal.

A follow-up interview was conducted with eight students to gain insight into whether they came to the library with a book in mind, how they choose books they want to read, and how the genrified organization of the library affects their ease of locating books. The researcher was able to interview students who appeared to have varying levels of success in finding books.

Teacher Perceptions of a Genrified Fiction Collection

An electronic survey form was sent to teachers at the school site to gain their consent to participate in the study, with the purpose of gauging their perception of the value of library genrification in terms of making the library search experience easier for their students. Teacher participation was voluntary and no compensation was provided.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized qualitative content analysis to examine the data collected in this study. Qualitative content analysis "allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner" (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 308). The analysis focused on student behavior when using a genrified fiction collection, such as whether students come to select a particular book, any book in a particular genre, or whether they simply browse genres at random before settling on a book. It also sought to determine which genre has the highest circulation, students' perceptions of the genre sections, teachers' perceptions of the genre sections, and teachers' connections between the genre sections and their classroom instruction on genres, as well as whether genrification of the school library has affected the organization of teachers' own classroom libraries,.

The researcher located patterns in the observation and interview data for how students located books, whether having the collection organized by genre made finding a

desired book easier or harder, and how successful students felt in their efforts to locate a book.

Student Browsing and Checkout Frequency

To measure how frequently students are checking out books across the three most-highly circulated fiction genres, circulation statistics the entire fiction collection for the previous 30 days from the beginning of the study were analyzed to determine which three genres have the highest circulation numbers. These numbers were compared to circulation of the same genres of books before the collection was genrified to see if organizing by genre has led to an increase in circulation for that part of the collection. After collecting the data, the researcher identified themes within the data and determined codes for each theme. Weber (1990) states, "the best content/analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations" (as cited in Wildemuth, 2009, p. 309). Six students were randomly selected based on convenience from one teacher's classroom roster. Those six students were directly observed during library checkout on which genres they visit and were interviewed immediately after the observation about their book selection behaviors. Additionally, four genre sections were observed by the researcher (one genre per each of the four observational periods), with tallies indicating how many students browsed that genre section during the observational period. This showed frequency rates for student browsing by genre. Triangulation of the data was used to identify common themes and compare data. Analyzing combined data from circulation records, observations, and interviews is in line with existing methodology.

Student Purpose in Browsing a Genrified Fiction Collection

Observations, video recordings, and interview data was examined to look for possible connections between students' goals upon entering the library, their browsing behavior in the library, and how they feel about their experience upon exiting the library. Sixteen students with parent permission to be video recorded and observed during their class library checkout. Eight of these students (four males and four females) with permission to be video recorded, observed, and interviewed were asked to explain whether they entered the library with a certain book in mind (and if not, how they decided which section of the library to visit). If certain behaviors such as wandering between genres was observed, students were asked to explain their thinking during such behavior and if they felt the behavior helped them in locating a book. They also were asked whether they felt successful in their efforts overall (e.g. did they find and checkout a book they believed they would enjoy reading), and how they made their selection (e.g. recommended by a friend or part of a series they already enjoy).

Teacher Perceptions of Genrified Fiction Collections

Teacher perceptions of the value in organizing a school library's fiction collection by genres were collected by electronic surveys (see Appendix A). The main goals of this survey were to determine whether teachers feel this organization is beneficial to students, and whether it has affected how they organize their own classroom libraries (e.g. if teachers previously organized their classroom libraries in a non-genrified way, did they change to genrification to match the school library's organization).

To better understand teacher perceptions of genrification's benefit to students, follow up teacher interview questions about whether teachers feel genrification has made it easier or harder for students to find books that interest them and that they enjoy reading

were included. It also asked teachers whether they prefer a library in general to be

organized by genres or by another method such as the Dewey Decimal System.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Most fiction collections in libraries are arranged by author's last name, but several libraries have started or considered organizing their collection by genre. The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits and drawbacks of genrifying a school library's fiction collection by observing student browsing behaviors in a genrified library, recording student preferences in browsing for books, and ascertaining teacher perceptions of a genrificd library.

The population of this study consisted of sixteen grade six students and eight literacy teachers from one intermediate school in a large Midwestern school district. Permission was obtained from the building principal, literacy teachers who taught at the intermediate school, students' parents and the teacher in one literacy class, and through students' assent to observe and interview. Students were observed during four library visits; the researcher focused on one of four highly-circulated genres each time. The four genres were realistic fiction, graphic novels, fantasy, and humor. These genres were identified using circulation statistics to determine the most frequently circulated genres. Two students were interviewed after each observation (eight students total; four male and four female) to gain insight into how students found books during their visit to the library. Eight of the 20 literacy teachers in the school (a response rate of 40%) completed an online survey about their perceptions of how the library genrification has affected their students' knowledge of genre characteristics and whether teachers had reorganized their classroom libraries to match the school library's genrified organization scheme.

Data from observations, follow-up interviews with selected students, and surveys completed by teachers were used to answer the four research questions for this study: 1) How frequently do students browse across genres in a genrified fiction collection; 2) Are students purposeful in browsing in a genrified fiction collection; 3) How frequently do students check out books across genres in a genrified fiction collection; 4) How has the change in the organization of the library's fiction collection affected classroom teachers? The first question used individual interviews with selected students to determine how they browsed for and selected books, and how (or if) they moved across genres when making their book selection.

Frequency of Student Browsing Across Genres

Individual interviews with eight students (four males and four females) after the library checkout observation provided insight into student perceptions and thought processes during library checkout. These students were randomly selected (with equal balance between genders) from the pool of participants who had parent permission and gave their assent to be interviewed. Questions posed to students in the short interviews focused on how students browsed for books and how often they browsed across genres. in response most of the eight students interviewed explained they perceived genrification as beneficial to their browsing behavior by making it easier to locate a specific genre of book, which students reported as the most common way they approached browsing (versus looking for a specific title or author). Many students also browsed for books while still reading a previously checked out book. Students stated this gave them ideas for future books, though they usually did not check out a book if they were still in the process of reading one.

Three of the eight students interviewed said they checked out a book during the class library checkout time during which the researcher had observed them. Joseph (all names are pseudonyms) wanted to find another book by Mike Lupica similar to *Million Dollar Throw* that he had just finished reading. However, the other two students who each checked out a book during the same period approached browsing much more haphazardly. Elizabeth came to the library believing she would check out a work of realistic fiction, but she did not find any in that genre that interested her. She went next to the animal fiction collection, where she also did not find any books she found interesting. She returned to the realistic fiction section and picked *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech. Elizabeth stated she chose this book because she struggled to find any interesting books, and the Creech book was one she had partially read in fifth grade and decided to re-read in hopes of finishing it. Ben reported that he also struggled to find an interesting book, "looking randomly" at horror/scary and humor sections before choosing a book from horror/scary, though he could not recall its title.

The need to find interesting books was common among students interviewed. All eight students were able to identify at least one genre that interested them, and six of eight had two preferred genres. Seven students said their default technique for locating books was to browse shelves in their preferred genre. Jenny liked to ask peers for recommendations about books they had found interesting. Chloe also used peer recommendations, saying, "I look in different genres I like. If I can't find books, I ask friends for ideas." Chloe stated that if shelf browsing was not productive, she would use Destiny Quest, part of the online library catalog, to determine which books were most frequently checked out, and find one that matched her interests. Only one student, Ben,

did not check out a book because he could not find one that appeared interesting. Indeed, five of the eight students did not check out a book during the period they were observed because they had a book they were currently reading. In these instances, each student discussed how they had selected that book. If students did not need to check out a book, they were expected to read quietly in the library until class checkout was completed.

In addition to peer recommendations, adults at home and school were frequent sources that influenced students' book choices. Two students listed their teacher or family members as reliable sources for recommendations. Five students preferred asking their friends for titles, making friends the most preferred source. This was followed by random browsing of a preferred genre, which was listed by four students as their favorite way to find a good book. Elizabeth explained, "People recommend books sometimes. Then I read a couple of pages to see if I like it. Other times I scan the shelves, and sometimes look at the cover (of a book)."

Just as students differed in how they became interested in certain books, they held different opinions about the ease with which they navigated the genrified fiction collection and succeeded in finding books. Five of the eight students felt navigating among genres was easy, one found it hard, one had no preference, and one felt it was both easy and hard. This student, Ann, said it was easy because she could quickly locate a certain genre of book she was in the mood to read, but it could become hard if the book she wanted was checked out or if she could not find a book in that genre that piqued her interest. Elizabeth felt that there were "lots of not interesting books mixed in with interesting books" in her preferred genre. Ben preferred genres for a similar reason, saying the way this library was organized helped him know what type of book he was

seeing. Only one student, Joseph, stated a preference for the standard method of organizing by author's last name, which he felt made it easier to find books he liked. Jenny said she had no preference on organizing by genre or by author, though she felt genrification made it easier to find books on a favorite topic.

It appears that students engaged in productive browsing behaviors frequently and that they usually come to the library with a specific book or genre in mind. Students have techniques for locating books ranging from browsing for interesting covers, to using the catalog, to consulting a peer or adult for recommendations. Friends and trusted adults were frequent resources for assistance with browsing and recommendations. The next question on how frequently students browsed across genres examined whether organization by genres allowed students to be more purposeful in their browsing in terms of finding books they felt were interesting and wanted to check out.

Student Browsing Behavior Across Genres

Sixteen students were observed during their weekly class library checkout to determine browsing behavior across genres in the library's fiction collection. One of the four most highly circulated genres (realistic fiction, graphic novels, horror/spooky, and humor) was observed each time. Table 1 lists the data collected during the four observations.

Table 1

Genre Observation Data From Student Browsing

Number students observed = 16	Realistic Fiction	Graphic Novels	Horror/Spooky	Humor
Number of Students	7	9	4	3

Browsing the section				
Came alone to section	2	4	2	3
Came with adult	0	0	0	0
Came with peer	5	5	2	0
Looks at one book	2	5	2	2
Looks at several books	5	4	2	1
Talking with peer	5	6	0	0
Talking with adult	0	0	0	0
Leaves with book	2	1	0	0
Leaves without book	5	8	4	3

Each genre section was observed while 16 students actively browsed them during class library checkout time. The Graphic novels section had the highest number of students actively browsing (9), followed by realistic fiction (7), horror/spooky (4), and humor (3). Most students engaged in browsing alongside at least one peer. Those who browsed with a peer were likely to look at several books, often taking them off the shelf to look at the cover or synopsis and discussed them. These students were more likely to leave with a book compared to those who came alone. Solitary students were more likely to look at just one book before moving on. No student came to any of the genre sections with an adult, though one student said in a later interview that the library paraprofessional

assisted in providing a book recommendation. In half of the focus genres (horror/spooky and humor), each student observed browsing left the area without picking up a book. Each of the four genre sections observed had students actively browsing, which makes sense considering the genres were chosen due to their consistently high circulation numbers. No students were observed with an adult, rather their browsing behavior reflected their answers to Question 1 regarding how they find interesting books: randomly walking shelves of a favorite genre or taking a peer along.

The next question used a set of circulation statistics to determine the range of students' book checkout across multiple fiction genres.

Frequency of Student Checkout Across Genres

The school library online catalog offers tools to identify circulation statistics for a given time period. Reports were run to determine circulation statistics for October 2012, which was before genrifying the school library's fiction collection had taken place. The same report was run for October 2015, which was after the school library's fiction collection was genrified. October 2015 was selected because it was a month prior to when observations began. October 2012 was selected to be a corresponding month and year. Table 2 shows the breakdown of circulation by genre before and after genrifying. Equivalent comparisons were possible because the online library catalog applied genrified labels to the collection retroactively (e.g. reports from 2012 were displayed as if the collection were genrified at that time, even though it was not so until 2013-2014). The breakdown of circulation statistics by genre before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection allowed the researcher to see positive changes in circulation overall and across genres.

Table 2

Library Collection Circulation Statistics

Genre	October 2012 (Before Genrifying)	October 2015 (After Genrifying)	Change between years
Adventure	137	181	+44
Animal Fiction	121	173	+52
Classics	19	5	-14
Fantasy	233*	209	-24
Historical Fiction	177	174	-3
Horror/Spooky	237*	250 *	+13
Humor	157	333*	+176
Mystery	190	113	-77
Realistic Fiction	572*	485*	-87
Science Fiction	143	197	+54
Sports	236	260	+24
Graphic Novels (Includes all 700's from nonfiction)	435*	720*	+285
Total Fiction Circulation	2,657	3,098	+441
Total Library Circulation	3,663	4,171	+508

* Denotes the four most highly-circulated genres.

When comparing genre circulations from 2012 and 2015, seven genres increased circulation (adventure, animal fiction, horror/spooky, humor, science fiction, sports, and graphic novels (includes all books circulated in the 700s in nonfiction). Four genres decreased circulation from 2012 to 2015 (classics, fantasy, historical fiction, and realistic

fiction). Total library circulation and fiction circulation increased after the genrification of the fiction collection. The largest circulation came in graphic novels, then humor, while mystery and realistic fiction saw the largest decreases. It is theorized that growth in the number of graphic novels and humorous books available in the library collection between 2012 and 2015 played some role in their circulation increases.

Classics remained the lowest-circulated genre before and after genrifying the library's fiction collection. The highest-circulated genre changed from realistic fiction to graphic novels (including all books circulated in the 700s in nonfiction) after genrifying the library's fiction collection. The four most highly-circulated genres before genrifying were realistic fiction, graphic novels (including all books 700s from nonfiction), horror/spooky, and fantasy. The four most highly-circulated genres after genrifying were graphic novels (including all 700s in nonfiction), realistic fiction, horror/spooky, and humor. Three of the four most highly-circulated genres (realistic fiction, graphic novels (including all books circulated in the 700s in nonfiction), and horror/spooky remained the same before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection while the order changed. Fantasy was replaced by humor in the four most highly-circulated genres after genrifying the school library's fiction collection.

Based on the circulation data before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection, it can be inferred that genrification had a positive effect on student checkout of books in the fiction collection. It was also noted that students are checking out a greater variety of genres as evidenced by the increase in circulation in seven genres. This is evidenced through the fact that though the circulation rates of some genres decreased, there was an overall increase in circulation, and an increase in circulation of genres that

previously had lower rates of circulation. Examination of library circulation statistics showed total circulation increased between the years 2012 and 2015, as did circulation specifically for the fiction collection, with seven of its 11 fiction genres (63%) seeing an increase across the same years.

The final question in this study focused on teachers' attitudes toward the library's genrification. It explored how teachers perceived the restructuring of the library and whether they believed it to have helped or hurt students' reading behaviors.

Teacher Perceptions About Genrification

An online survey completed by eight literacy teachers provided insight into teacher perceptions about genrification and how they felt genrification affected them as classroom teachers. Answers from the online teacher survey showed overwhelming support for the genrification of the school library's fiction collection. Table 3 shows results from questions from the teacher survey about how the genrification has helped or hurt their students in different aspects of library visits.

Table 3: *Teacher Perceptions Survey Answers*

Question	Answers		
Do you prefer books organized by genre or last name?	Organized by Genre: 8	Organized by Last name: 0	
Do you feel genrification has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books that interest them?	Helped: 8	Hurt: 0	
Do you feel genrification has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books similar to other books they previously enjoyed?	Helped: 8	Hurt: 0	

Do you feel genrification has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books that are at an appropriate reading level for them?	Helped: 0	Hurt: 2	Not important/ No impact: 6
Has genrification of the school fiction collection impacted the way you organize your personal classroom library (if applicable)?	Yes: 7	No: 0	Interested: 1

All eight teachers who responded prefered genrification to more traditional organizational schemes and felt it has helped students find books that are interesting to them and are similar to books they have previously enjoyed. Two teachers stated that genrification has hurt their students' ability to find books at their appropriate reading level while six teachers felt it has not impacted their students' ability to find books at their reading level or that doing so was not as important as students' ability to find books in which they are interested. Seven teachers either changed their classroom library to match the school library's organization or had previously organized by genre. One teacher had not organized his classroom library by genre, but was interested in making the change.

The wealth of information derived from the teacher survey came in the comments explaining why genrification has helped or hurt students. Two themes that appeared in teachers' comments were that genrification matched how students browsed for books naturally, and that genrification made it easier for students to find new books based on previous books they had read. Amanda (all names are pseudonyms) commented,

> It has helped students find series they otherwise would not have found. I've also observed more students helping each other find books because those students

share common interests, something that is more difficult to do spontaneously when browsing books organized by author.

Jack stated,

> Helping students to go outside their comfort zone by reading across genres is key to developing a strong reader. I think some students have found books that they would not normally notice without the genrification. I have found several myself!

Through detailed comments, teachers explained how they felt the library genrification had helped students easily find new books, matched how they naturally find books, and introduced them to new books based on topics/genres they were interested in.

When asked how genrification has impacted their students' ability to find books at an appropriate reading level, several teachers stated doing so was not as important as having students find books they were interested in. Teachers also acknowledged that genrification did not seem to help or harm students in finding books at certain reading levels. Kristen explained,

> I spend little time talking with my students about their reading levels. I'd rather find books that they enjoy. I've noticed more students having their interest in a book trump their ability to read the words in that book more often since our library switched to genrification.

Courtney commented that the library catalog has not helped students find books based on reading levels, specifically that it lacks updated Lexile numbers. This teacher noted concern that students tended to stick with a genre they enjoyed, "regardless of whether it's challenging them enough."

Another theme arose from teachers' comments about connections from the library genrification to classroom literacy standards. Debbie said, "The Common Core does expect students to read across genres along with making comparison within and across genres." Kristen noted: "Genrification has made 'genres' a more concrete idea for my students. In past years, students struggled with characteristics of genres, one of our standards." These comments appear to indicate that teachers view genrification as making

an abstract idea more concrete, and more likely to be understood by students in a way that helps them achieve the standards set by the Common Core.

Based on the survey results, it appears that teachers immensely support the genrification of the school library's fiction collection and how it has supported their students' reading. Teachers have observed that genrification matches how students naturally browse for books and helps students find new books based on topics they are interested in. In addition, teachers have seen a positive impact in their classroom related to the concept of genres. In the next section, results from all four research questions will be summarized.

Summary of Findings

Data collected from circulation statistics, observation of students during library checkout, post-interviews with selected students, and an online teacher survey all show how genrification of the school library's fiction collection has had a positive effect on both students and teachers. The number of fiction books as a percentage of the total collection has remained steady (74.1% in 2012; 75% in 2015), but circulation statistics show that the fiction collection saw an increase in circulation after the fiction books were organized by genres. Students are checking out more books in most genres after genrificiation.

Student observations and interviews supplemented the circulation statistics in showing how frequently students browse for books and ultimately checkout books that represent a range of genres. The data also provided insight into students' purposes while browsing the school library's fiction collection. When visiting the library, the majority of students stated they went to genres they liked and looked for books that were interesting to them. Observations showed students who came to genre sections with peers were more likely to look at several books and to leave with a book in hand.

All teachers who completed the online survey believed that the genrification of the school library's fiction collection has helped their students find books. Teachers felt that the genres in the library helped students with their independent reading. Most teachers' classroom libraries matched the school library's organization by genres for ease of access. Genrification also supported the teaching of reading standards related to reading a variety of genres.

The next chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based on the findings described above. The possibilities for future research in this area are also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Genrification, or the act of organizing a library or section of a library by genres or topics, has been a trend in recent years in both school and public libraries. Little to no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of this transition from the Dewey Decimal System for fiction and / or nonfiction collections. The purpose of this research is to explore the usefulness of a genrified fiction collection in a school library by examining how students interact with the collection and teachers' perceptions of genrifying. This study focused on student browsing behavior in a genrified fiction collection and how frequently students browsed and checked out books from across genres in the fiction collection. It also focused on how the genrification affected classroom teachers. The researcher observed one sixth grade class with sixteen students during four library visits and conducted follow-up interviews with eight students (four females and four males) to provide insight into the student's' library experiences. Collection statistics before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection were also used to determine changes in circulation. Based on these data sources, it was clear that students were checking out more books across genres, preferred browsing genres to find books of interest to checkout, and had at least one genre they preferred. An online survey with eight literacy teachers showed teacher support for the library's genrification. All teachers felt that genrification helped students find books with ease.

Conclusions

Based on student interviews, it can be concluded that most students are browsing across genres in the genrified fiction collection. When students were unable to locate a book of interest within a genre, students browsed a second genre and asked peers for recommendations. While the student observation only focused on browsing behavior in one genre, it can be speculated that students are browsing multiple genres frequently because students were observed entering and exiting genre areas multiple times.

Student observations and interviews show that students are purposeful when browsing the genrified fiction collection. Each student interviewed stated a preferred genre section that they often visited to look for books of interest. The purposefulness of student browsing behavior diminished if students were unable to find books of interest. If students were unable to find books that were interesting to them on their own or from peer recommendations that were interesting to them, students sometimes left the library without checking out a book.

Analysis of the circulation statistics before and after genrifying the school library's fiction collection showed an increase in circulation in seven of the eleven genres represented in it with the percentage of fiction circulation to overall circulation remaining stable. Student interviews supplemented this finding as five of eight students identified at least two genres they frequently browsed and from which they borrowed books. Genrification seems to help students find books of interest more effectively by narrowing down selections to a seemingly more manageable domain.

The genrification of the school library's fiction collection has had a positive effect on students as well as their teachers. Results from eight online teacher surveys showed

all eight teachers felt genrification made it easier for students to find books for independent reading book that are of interest to them. Most teachers felt it was more important for students to find books with a topic they enjoyed then find books that were at their appropriate reading level. Many teachers also genrified their classroom libraries. This shows that the genrification aligned with teachers' philosophies regarding independent reading. In addition to these benefits, two teachers highlighted curricular connections to genrification. Both teachers felt genrification helped them to teach about genres and students to understand genres in ways that related to Common Core standards. This connection could be an important selling point for the benefits of genrification to both teachers, librarians and administrators considering a genrified re-organization of a school library's fiction collection.

Recommendations for Future Study

While this study has shown how the genrification of one school library's fiction collection had a positive effect on students' browsing and borrowing behaviors in the library and on the teaching and organization of book collections within classrooms, it would be beneficial to conduct future studies to provide more insight into the long-term effects of this organizational trend. This study was limited to one school site and a convenience sample using one literacy teacher's roster. It would be beneficial to conduct this study with a larger population including younger and older students to see how student browsing and borrowing behaviors t across genres change by age. Another way to build upon this study would be to expand on the student observations during library checkout. Instead of focusing on just one genre per library visit, it could be helpful to observe students as they browse throughout library checkout time to determine how

students browse across genres and how many genre sections they visit during a typical library period. These observations could also note what students do when they are unable to find a book on their own. These additions would help answer the questions about students browsing and borrowing of books t across genres in more depth than what was possible in this study. Student and teacher responses to survey and interview questions also sparked possible additions to future studies. A future study could focus on how the size of a genre (the physical number of books in that genre or the physical size/design of its shelf space) affects students' success in finding books of interest. Another study could focus on the different ways the online library catalog could be revised to make searching by genre easier or promoted to help students and teachers find books based on interest, reading level, or books similar to ones they previously enjoyed.

Genrification of a school library's fiction collection is a new but promising trend for school librarians, teachers, administrators, and parents to consider. Students appear readily adaptable to this type of organization and may feel it is helpful to finding books they enjoy. Genrification makes the concept of genres concrete to students and leads to success in choosing books that match their interest or purpose for reading. In this way, genrification helps meet goals for independent reading for adults and children alike.

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APPENDIX A

LIBRARY OBSERVATION FORM

Library Fiction Genrification – Observation Record #1

Observer: Andrea White Hora
Dates: _____
Time Period: _____ to _____

Library Observation from video recording (Use tally marks)

Categories	Genre:	Genre:	Genre:	Genre:
Number of Students Browsing the section				
Came alone to section				
Came with adult				
Came with peer				
Looks at one book				
Looks at several books				
Talking with peer				
Talking with adult				
Leaves with book				
Leaves without book				

Notes:

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Library Fiction Genrification – Post-Observation Interview Side 1

Observer: Andrea White Hora

Date: _____

Time Period: _____ to _____

Student Code: _____

1. Did you have a specific book in mind when you came to the library today?

1a. If yes, were you able to find it? How?

1b. If no, what did you do instead? Why?

2. Did you check out any books today?

3a. If so, what books were they?

3b. From what genres or sections did you choose the books?

4. How do you usually find books in this library?

Library Fiction Genrification – Observation Interview Side 2

Observer: Andrea White Hora

Date: _____

Time Period: _____ **to** _____

Student Code: _____

4.Do you have certain types of books that you like to read the most?

3a. Why or why not?

 How easy is it to find books you like in this library?

5. Is there anything you would change about how it is organized?

6. How do you learn about books you might like to read in the future (e.g. library display, peer recommendation, teacher recommendation, book order, catalog search)?

7. Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SURVEY

Library Fiction Genrification – Teacher Survey

1. Do you PREFER when books in the library are organized by genre or by author's last name?

2. Give at least one reason for your answer to Question 1.

3. Do you feel genrification (library organized by genre) has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books that interest them? Explain how or why.

4. Do you feel genrification has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books similar to other books they previously enjoyed? Explain how or why.

5. Do you feel genrification has helped or hurt your students' ability to find books that are at an appropriate reading level for them? Explain how or why.

6. Has genrification of the school fiction collection impacted the way you organize your personal classroom library (if applicable)? Explain how or why.

7. Is there anything else you want to say about the organization of the library's fiction collection?

8. May I follow-up with you on any of your answers? If so, please provide your email.