

Doctoral Dissertations Recently Completed or in Progress [murphy] 1995

Catherine Murphy

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Catherine Murphy is Assistant Professor at the, School of Library and Information Science, University of North Texas, Denton, TX. She recently published "Online Subject Access: Meeting the Needs of Young People," in *Ways of Knowing: Literature and the Intellectual Life of Young People* (Scarecrow Press, 1994).

The scope of this review is dissertation research currently in progress or completed between late 1992 and the end of 1994. Normally, the review covers the current year, in this case 1994, but several completed dissertations were not previously reported in the annuals published in 1992 and 1993 and are therefore included here. All the research is relevant to the school library media field. Degree granting programs in the United States were surveyed by mail to identify the studies. Thirteen dissertations are completed while eight are in progress.

The topics of the 21 dissertations are quite diverse. The major number of studies are concerned with literature, and other categories with more than one study include information retrieval, media production, international school librarianship, and use of the library. Single studies are concerned with intellectual freedom and literacy.

Eight studies are concerned with children's literature:

- portrayal of the dragon in picture books (Shastri),
- portrayal of Chinese values in Chinese folk literature, and the recognition of these values by fifth-grade students (Chen),
- involvement of elementary school librarians in promoting cultural awareness through ethnic literature collections and activities (Petty),
- coverage in U.S. professional library journals of Canadian juvenile book reviews (Watson),
- children's response to humor in fiction (Shannon),
- cognitive analysis of picture books (Snyder),
- parody in fairy tales for children (Greever), and
- acceptance of whole language (Hughes).

Information retrieval is the focus of five dissertations:

- children's naming of subject categories, and developmental differences in category labelling (Brown),
- the effect of children's prior experience and knowledge on searching an

- automated catalog (Hirsh),
- the effectiveness of affective language in CD-ROM point-of-use instruction (Nahl-Jakobovits),
- an interactive multimedia information system for classmates of young cancer patients (Flynn), and
- factors related to the use of the ERIC database by secondary school faculty (Hitchings).

Two studies are concerned with media production:

- media production as a method for learning media literacy and other skills (Raber), and
- media production as a vehicle for building self-esteem and improving reading achievement (Dandy).

Two dissertations explore international school librarianship:

- development of a framework to assess school libraries internationally (Singh), and
- the place of the International Association of School Librarians within the history of school librarianship (Knuth).

Use of the library is investigated in two studies:

- scheduling patterns in elementary library media centers (Fedora), and
- factors influencing the use of the high school library (Burks).

One investigation is historical:

- intellectual freedom for young people (Jenkins).

Emergent literacy is the focus of one study:

- the impact of storymobile services on family literacy (Jenkins).

Recently Completed Dissertations

Author: Mary Esther Brown

Title: “Children’s Naming of Subject Categories: Developmental Differences in the Invariant Properties of Category Labelling (Search Failure)”

Chair: Dr. Jaqueline C. Mancall, Drexel University

Purpose: Raises the question: Why does an increase in cognitive development not produce an increase in concept-based retrieval success? Explores: 1) the concept “search term,” 2) the characteristics of words used as search terms, and 3) the effect of changes in those characteristics as new words are selected to function as the search term.

Population: A cross-sectional study with students in elementary school, middle school, high school, and college.

Methodology: Students read descriptions of complex categories (titles and brief abstracts of books) and named a first and second term that they would use to find a book containing the same information. In two experiments, students read 1) single book

descriptions and 2) descriptions of groups of three books that share a common subject-heading.

Findings: The students' grade level was found to significantly affect search term concreteness and to marginally affect search term complexity, while grade level was not found to significantly affect the syndetic (connective) relations between sequential subject-labels. An unsuccessful search term was improved by changing affordance values from compound to simple and from abstract to concrete. The single best predictor of a successful search term was complexity of subject-label (simple versus compound). In a prototypicality study, the existing subject-heading was among the most frequently named subject-labels in 80 percent of the experimental items. That statistic notwithstanding, the previously found match-failure rates of 60-70 percent were confirmed at all age levels. Subject match-failure appears to be attributable, in part, to observed developmental trends in category labelling; such trends work against match-success. The presence of subject headings in category descriptions appears to contribute to match-success. Intervention techniques are suggested, which would begin at the elementary grades.

Author: Freda Anne Ellis Burks

Title: "Nature and Extent of School Library Use in Selected High Schools in the Greater Dallas, Fort Worth, Texas Area"

Chair: Dr. James L. Thomas Texas Woman's University

Purpose: To determine the nature and extent of use made of the high school library in selected schools in north Texas in 1991, and to describe the characteristics of users and non-users of the library.

Population: Data were obtained during a typical week from 3,515 students and 186 teachers in three high schools in the Dallas, Fort Worth metropolitan area.

Methodology: This descriptive survey used several instruments to solicit data from librarians, principals, students, teachers, and classes. The literature was examined for past studies of school libraries and for use studies in school libraries specifically. Data from questionnaires completed by students and teachers were compiled and entered into a computerized database and analyzed, using SPELL OUT HERE (BMPD). Further data were collected from daily use forms, principal and librarian surveys, and informal interviews and conversations with students and teachers.

Findings: Analysis of the data showed that: 1) Assignments are the single most important influence on use and non-use of the high school library by students. The most common use made of the library is to study or work on assignments. Students attribute non-use or infrequent use to a) being able to do assignments without the library and b) never being assigned to go to the library. 2) Only a small percentage of students make regular visits to the school library. The most common time for students to use the library is during class. Further, only 15.7 percent use the library during a typical week, 32.3 percent use it during a typical month, and 67.8 percent never or rarely use it during a typical year. 3) The highest frequency of school library use, in general, is by above-average students and by boys. 4) Of those students who use only the public library or the school library a) to obtain recreational reading materials or b) to obtain materials for school assignments, more use the public library than use the school library. It was concluded that teachers play an important role in influencing students to use

library facilities and resources, that many teachers are unaware of the value of library materials for their subject teaching areas, that librarians and teachers must strengthen their lines of communication, and that librarians must do a better job of promoting awareness of the value of the library to the educational program of the school.

Author: Hai-Hon Chen

Title: "Values in Children's Books: From Chinese, Chinese American, and American Authors' and Children's Points of View"

Chair: Dr. John Stewig University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Purpose: This research examined traditional and contemporary Chinese values in Chinese folk literature, and investigated how those values in sample stories were recognized by fifth-graders.

Population: Fifth-grade students, 197>80 Chinese, 74 Chinese American, and 77 American fifth-graders.

Methodology: Quantitative and qualitative content analyses of stories, supplemented by clarification interviews and value questionnaires.

Findings: Results indicated that each story had at least one of thirteen traditional Chinese values, and most also contained contemporary values. In a sample of 12 stories, at least 70 percent of all children could recognize and name the values embedded in characters' actions. There were cultural differences between the three groups of children. Authors use the actions of their characters to transmit values that teach children how to behave in society. This method of value analysis could be used to help children know tell right from wrong and become more aware of moral thinking and decision making.

Author: Cora Dandy

Title: "The Design and Implementation of a Media Production Program to Build Self-Esteem and Improve Reading Achievement in At-Risk Sixth Grade Students: An Experimental Study"

Chair: Dr. Thomas L. Hart Florida State University

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to design and implement a media production program to determine its effectiveness in building self-esteem and improving academic behavior and reading achievement in at-risk sixth-grade students.

Population: The sample population attend a middle school in Dougherty County and was randomly selected from students considered to be at-risk based on reading criteria established by the school. The students were between eleven and fourteen years of age. Fifty-nine at-risk sixth-grade students participated.

Methodology: Four instruments were used to determine the success of the enhancement program on self-esteem, academic behavior, and reading achievement. The Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventories, 2 measured self-esteem, the Teacher's Report Form determined changes in behavior, and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills measured the reading skills of the students. The final instrument, teacher-made tests, was used to determine any changes in reading scores. A pretest-posttest control group design was used in this investigation, a 12-week study that began in January 1993 and was completed in April 1993.

Thirty-one students formed the experimental group and twenty-eight comprised the control group.

Findings: An independent t-test was run to determine if a significant difference existed between pre- and posttests for both groups for four variables: reading skills, academic self-esteem, school behavior, and reading scores from teacher-made tests. There was no significant difference in reading skills, self-esteem, or reading scores for either group. A significant difference was indicated on the pretest in academic behavior. The experimental group averaged 45.39 compared to 38.43 for the control group. This difference was significant at less than the 1 percent probability of level of error. A significant difference was also observed on the posttest in academic behavior. The experimental group averaged 41.32 compared to 46.32 for the control group. This difference between the two groups on the posttest was significant at less than a 1 percent probability of error. A correlated t-test was employed to determine the changes taking place in self-esteem, academic behavior, and on teacher-made tests for the experimental and control group between pre- and posttest. Neither group changed significantly in academic behavior, while the control group changed significantly in the opposite direction.

Author: Arabelle Fedora

Title: “An Exploration of the Scheduling Patterns of Two Exemplary Elementary School Media Centers”

Chair: Dr. Evelyn H. Daniel University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Purpose: To explore both flexible and fixed elementary school library media center scheduling in order to investigate the variety of factors that may contribute to the choice of schedule and to the implementation of the instructional consultant role of the media specialist.

Population: Two exemplary elementary school media centers (grades Kindergarten, 5), one using a traditional, fixed schedule and the other a flexible schedule one.

Methodology: Qualitative methodology, including triangulation of data: observations, interviews, and analysis of documents from each site.

Findings: Major differences were found in the two programs. In the flexibly scheduled media center, students have more frequent access individually and in small groups. The media specialist participates more often in planning with teachers and as an instructional consultant. Some teachers schedule activities to a much greater extent than others. Teachers express a degree of fit between the media program’s goals and the school’s philosophy. Many teachers and students seem to be developing a sense of ownership of the media center. Teachers and their assistants frequently accompany their students for nonscheduled activities. Lack of clerical assistance is a significant barrier to greater program development. The traditionally scheduled media center ensures regular access and the same instruction for all students. Although encouraged, nonscheduled student use is rare, except for circulation for groups in grades 3, 5. The media specialist integrates his or her activities using a timeline of teachers’ units, but planning with teachers is minimal. The full, fixed schedule and released time policy are barriers to program development.

Author: Ida Flynn

Title: “Design, Development and Testing of an Interactive Multimedia Information System for Classmates of Young Cancer Patients: A Case Study”

Chair: Dr. Margaret M. Kimmel University of Pittsburgh

Purpose: This research proposes that providing information about childhood cancer to teachers and classmates of returning cancer patients may help them prepare for the physical changes and problems resulting from the child's cancer treatments and may help classmates them facilitate his/ or her re-entry process. The purpose of this study is to develop, test, text and evaluate an interactive information retrieval system with the following objectives in mind: 1) to facilitate acquisition of knowledge about childhood cancer and 2) to explore if this acquired knowledge helps eliminate misconceptions about childhood cancer.

Population: Elementary teachers and students.

Methodology: Evaluation research/case study.

Findings: There were few statistically significant results in this case study. Based on one class of 22 children, the participants had only a limited amount of time to navigate the system and to assimilate the information presented. However, the results of this study suggest that the database provided useful information about cancer, and that the information retrieval system was easy to use. An important aspect of this study was the exploration of children's information-seeking strategies. Three categories or users were defined, browsers, explorers, and investigators. Each group exhibited particular characteristics related to the breadth and depth of search, amount of interest in information retrieved, and interaction with the system.

Author: Diane Nahl-Jakobovits

Title: "CD-ROM Point-of-Use Instructions for Novice Searchers: A Comparison of User-Centered Affectively Elaborated and System Centered Unelaborated Text"

Chair: Dr. Carol Tenopir

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Purpose: To examine the effectiveness of affective language in documentation.

Methodology: Factorial design.

Findings: Affectively elaborated instructions were more helpful. Students were more satisfied with their results, although search success was not satisfied, more efficient, and less frustrated. Affective elaboration is helpful to novice searchers.

Author: Jenny B. Petty

Title: "Promoting Cultural Awareness: An Analysis of the Involvement of Arkansas Elementary School Librarians"

Chair: Dr. Adeline Wilkes Texas Woman's University

Purpose: To assess the involvement of Arkansas elementary school librarians in the promotion of cultural awareness. To ascertain if they were indeed doing what they said they were, or if they were just offering lip service to the inclusion of ethnic children's literature and activities to promote it in their library activities or in cooperation with other teachers.

Population: All 601 Arkansas elementary school librarians.

Methodology: Questionnaire/survey and analysis.

Findings: A larger percentage of the 400 respondents than expected are using a variety of innovative activities (alone and in cooperation with classroom teachers) to promote understanding and appreciation of ethnic differences of the four major ethnic groups:

African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American. There was no significant difference in the level of activity between white librarians and those from one of the ethnic groups. In the comparison of the level of activity between librarians who served in schools with the Multicultural Reading and Thinking (MCRAT) reading program and other librarians, no difference was recognized.

Author: Donna M. Shannon

Title: “Children’s Responses to Humor in Fiction”

Chair: Dr. Susan Steinfirst University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Purpose: To 1) To discover what children find humorous in books they read or in books that are read to them, 2) to discover how children respond to humorous books, and 3) to understand the implications these responses have for children’s their comprehension and appreciation of humor and for their reading interests and preferences.

Population: Children in one grade 4/5 classroom.

Methodology: Qualitative methodology. Data were collected by means of participant observation, interviews, discussion sessions, and analysis of documents. Responses were collected over a period of five and one-half months period.

Findings: Categories for *what* children found humorous and for *how* they responded were constructed based on their responses. Participants appreciated humor related to superiority or sense of accomplishment, physical events and appearances, the scatological and gross, and language and wordplay. Children most often responded to books by retelling or summarizing, reading aloud from the text, or offering subjective evaluations. Children’s responses revealed that they lacked the background knowledge to understand and appreciate potentially humorous material in some of the books they read. Children’s Their responses revealed that reading interest and choice of reading material are based on an interrelated set of factors.

Author: Hope Shastri

Title: “The Picture Book Dragon”

Chair: Dr. Keith Swigger Texas Woman’s University

Purpose: In the twentieth century, dragons emerge in children’s literature in such a way that where, some critics say, they lose much of their mythic power and become stereotyped, denatured, and domesticated. Others say that feel these changes are necessary to make the subject of dragons safe for children. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the portrayal of dragons in children’s picture books published in the United States between 1950 and 1992 corresponds to the critics’ perceptions of dragons in children’s literature.

Population: One hundred fifty-one picture books that met stated criteria and were being published in the United States between 1950 and 1992.

Methodology: Content analysis.

Findings: With the exception of fire breathing fire, the dragon rarely follows the conventions of dragon lore. It is no longer vanquished in heroic combat. It does not wreak havoc, guard treasure, eat virgins, or seek revenge. It is a remnant of a disappearing species that is frightened, lonely, and desirous of acceptance by humans. The friendlier the dragon is portrayed, the more subordinate it becomes. The wildwood dragon remains in nature but shows a trend to embrace dragon societies modeled upon

human societies ones. The household dragon is leaving nature to seek acceptance in human societies. The imaginary dragon is becoming a companion to lonely children or is developing problems that are often found in lonely children often have. This denatured, domesticated dragon is, in fact, has come very similar close to the dragon perceived perceptions by its critics in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Author: Diljit Singh

Title: “An International Comparative Study of School Libraries”

Chair: F. William Summers Florida State University

Purpose: The aims of this study were to establish a framework for the comparison of school libraries, and then to use the framework to assess the current state of school libraries internationally. The relationships between selected socio-economic variables and school library variables were also examined, as well as factors that had encouraged and hindered the growth of school libraries.

Population: International school libraries from 64 countries.

Methodology: The framework for comparison, which consisted of a series of indicators and variables, was established by surveying a panel of 30 experts on school librarianship in 29 countries. The five highest ranked indicators were the existence and extent of school libraries, personnel, facilities, materials, and equipment, and the role of the school library and the teacher-librarian. The indicators were then used as a basis to survey the current state of school libraries internationally.

Findings: The indicators were then used as a basis to survey the current state of school libraries internationally. Sixty-four countries responded to the survey. Among the major findings were that, although centralized school libraries existed in most of the responding countries, the library was seen as either a supplementary or a non-essential service. In more than 75 percent of the responding countries, the typical school library had a person in charge, but he or she was often without a defined role or had a basic role of making the resources available. The typical library contained printed, audio, and visual materials; computers and communication equipment were present in less than 25 percent of the libraries them. Two strong relationships were observed: 1) the presence of libraries in primary schools had a strong positive correlation with the gross national product per capita of the country, and 2) the presence of libraries in primary schools in a country but had a strong negative correlation with children the percentage of the population in a country under the age of 15. The most frequently mentioned factors encouraging growth of school libraries were the availability of funds, the role of a central organization, and the education/training of teacher-librarians, whereas the most frequently mentioned factors hindering growth were the inadequacy or total absence of funds, the lack of trained personnel, and problems related to physical facilities.

Author: Nancy K. Snyder

Title: “A Cognitive Analysis of Picture Books”

Chair: Dr. Susan Steinfurst University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Purpose: To determine some of the characteristics of children’s concept books (an informational type of picture book).

Population: A sample of 197 children’s concept books (an informational type of picture book).

Methodology: Content analysis. The choice of characteristics that were analyzed was drawn primarily from research in the areas of children's literature, concept development, and expository text structure. The theoretical framework for the study was schema theory.

Findings: The majority of concept books did not meet a standard criteria for well-structured expository text, that of structural cohesiveness. Information included in almost three-quarters of the sample was as loosely connected as most shopping lists. Topic choice seemed to be dominated by "traditional" perceptual topics that may reflect outmoded ideas about how children develop concepts (for example, there was a dearth of mental states topics in concept books). Concept books showed some strengths in presenting concepts in age-appropriate ways by using realistic illustrations that contributed to the organization and explanation of the text, by using regular text/illustration layout patterns, and generally by using methods of presenting hierarchical relationships that are understandable by young children.

Author: Kathryn Dana Watson

Title: "The Reviewing of Canadian Juvenile Trade Books as Listed in *Canadiana* 1988 Through 1990 in Four Selected American Journals, 1988 Through 1992"

Chair: Dr. Joan L. Atkinson
University of Alabama

Purpose: The purposes of this study were to examine selected U.S. professional children's book review journals from January 1988 through December 1992 to determine the extent of coverage given to English-language Canadian juvenile trade books as listed in the juvenile section of *Canadiana* in the years 1988, 1989, and 1990, and to identify conditions related to this level of coverage.

Population: This study examined 728 English-language trade books as listed in the juvenile sections of the 1988, 1989, and 1990 issues of *Canadiana* which were published by commercial publishers.

Methodology: This descriptive study was comprised of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative data documented the extent of review coverage given to the titles under investigation. These data were organized and analyzed to identify patterns and trends in a constant comparison process, and then categorized. Editors of the four selected journals and publishers of Canadian children's books were interviewed; this additional data was integrated into the conceptual categories to form a basis for understanding the level of review coverage the selected titles received.

Findings: Canadian juvenile trade books are among those titles reviewed in the four selected journals. All four journals reviewed Canadian titles in varying degrees, and each journal published unique reviews. Reviews were sometimes duplicated among the journals. *Booklist* and *School Library Journal* reviewed substantially more titles than *The Horn Book Magazine* or *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and also published more unique reviews. Most of the reviewed titles in this study were published by both a Canadian and a U.S. publisher. Books handled by U.S. distributors also received reviews, as did those from publishers who ensured that journals received review copies.

Dissertations in Progress

Author: Ellen Greever

Title: "Fractured Fairy Tales: Parody in Literary Fairy Tales"

Chair: Dr. Susan Steinfirst University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Methodology: Content Analysis

Author: Sandra Goldstein Hirsh

Title: "The Effects of Computer Experience and Domain Knowledge on Elementary School Children's Searching on an Automated Catalog"

Chair: Dr. Christine Borgman University of California, Los Angeles

Purpose: To analyze how children use an automated catalog to find books on science and technology topics.

Population: Forty children, ranging in age from nine to eleven.

Methodology: A correlation research study, correlating prior knowledge of computers and science with children's search behavior and performance in an experimental design.

Author: Patricia Hitchings

Title: "Development of a Communication Structure for School/University

Collaboration: The Coar Model"

Chair: Dr. Blanche Woolls University of Pittsburgh

Purpose: A CD-ROM network (CDNET) has been implemented at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania to provide area secondary school faculty with on-site access to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) educational database. The ultimate goal of this network is to promote the improvement of education in northwestern Pennsylvania. The purpose of this study is to identify factors related to the use of the ERIC database on CDNET by secondary school faculty members. The following factors will be considered: subject taught, age, gender, teaching experience, level of study, recentness of study, level of computer activity, and previous level of library use.

Population: Secondary school faculty members.

Methodology: Survey.

Author: Sandra M. Hughes

Title: "The Acceptance of Whole Language by School Librarians, Teachers, and Administrators"

Chair: Dr. Susan Steinfirst University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Author: Christine Jenkins

Title: "Youth Service Librarians, the American Library Association and Intellectual Freedom for Young People, 1940, 1973: A Historical Perspective"

Chair: Dr. Dianne Hopkins University of Wisconsin at Madison

Purpose: To determine the nature and character of the factors involved in the shift of American Library Association (ALA) youth services librarians (both school and public) from a position of child protection to a position of child advocacy in relation to controversial library materials.

Population: Public and school librarians active in ALA's youth services divisions (Children's Library Association, Association of Young People's Librarians, American

Association of School Librarians).

Methodology: A historical approach, using content analysis of data from published and unpublished primary source material (journals, books, reports, minutes, correspondence, etc.) available at the ALA Archives and the library of the School of Library and Information Studies, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Author: Molly S. Kinney

Title: “A Naturalistic Inquiry into the Effect of Emergent Literacy Behavior on Families in Public Housing Communities”

Chair: Dr. Margaret M. Kimmel University of Pittsburgh

Purpose: Previous research examining illiteracy has determined that children who are raised in families where adult caregivers are illiterate or have a low literacy level also tend toward becoming nonreaders, and so do their children. The cycle of illiteracy is passed from generation to generation. Early intervention may provide the key for interrupting this pattern. While various institutions are providing adult literacy programs, libraries and librarians are targeting special populations through outreach service. One such service is the Beginning with Books Storymobile. This outreach project provides materials and training to decrease the number of lower literate families in public housing projects. The purpose of this study is to determine if the storymobile services enhances the emergent literacy behavior of children and adults who use this service. Designed using naturalistic inquiry methodology, incorporating observation, audiotaping, and in-depth interviews, this research will examine to what extent a program that provides reading materials and services to children and parents changes the family’s literacy climate. Additionally, the study will examine the role of the community outreach assistants (paraprofessional librarians) in providing materials and services to lower literate families with lower literacy levels.

Population: Families in public housing projects.

Methodology: Naturalistic inquiry.

Author: Rebecca Knuth

Title: “The International Association of School Librarianship and the Worldwide Promotion of School Libraries”

Chair: Dr. Daniel Callison Indiana University

Purpose: To examine the place of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) within the history of school librarianship, world librarianship, and literacy efforts.

Population: Officers and founders of IASL, and new, long-term, and lapsed members of IASL.

Methodology: Historical methods, supplemented by direct observation, content analysis, questionnaires, and systematic interviewing.

Author: Candy Keller Raber

Title: “Media Literacy Skills, Factors Influencing Successful Student Mastery”

Chair: Dr. Thomas L. Hart Florida State University

Purpose: Media literacy skills are important for students of today and citizens of tomorrow. Most people get most of their information from television and other visual technologies, and they need the new information skills involved in media literacy.

Student media productions are a valuable method for students to learn media literacy skills. In Florida, the Jim Harbin Award Student Media Festival provides this forum for students in kindergarten through college.

Population: This investigation was conducted using case study research at four schools that represented the four level divisions of the competition: K, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th, 12th. These sites had won the most awards in their division for the five-year span 1988, 1993. Media literacy skills taught by the school library media specialist, classroom teachers, and others were identified.

Methodology: Case studies of four Florida schools.