

# "Why On Earth Would We Not Genrefy the Books?": A Study of Reader-Interest Classification In School Libraries

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**Abstract:** Through their work as instructors in a master of library science program, the authors observed a sharp increase in students' desire to adopt the reader-interest classification approach of genrefication for their school libraries' fiction collections. In order to better understand this trend, the researchers interviewed seven school librarians regarding their motivations for genrefying their libraries' fiction collections; the challenges they encountered during or after the genrefication process; and any benefits they perceived as having resulted in the implementation of genrefication. The data suggest that the librarians' interests in genrefication stem mostly from the lack of time they have to help individual students find materials, and the lack of time students are given out of the instructional day to explore the libraries' fiction collections. The participants felt that reclassifying the library's fiction collection by genre gave students more ownership of the fiction collection and allowed them to find materials that genuinely interested them. The significant challenges the librarians faced in the reorganization process speak to challenges regarding the ways in which librarians attempt to provide access to diverse materials for all patrons.



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## 1.0 Introduction

While the majority of library collections follow an established classification system, school librarians are taking a different approach to organizing their physical material collections with the hope that in doing so, they create a collection that is easier and more welcoming for students to use. Genrefication is a specific approach to library collection organization, which departs from the traditional approach of classifying library materials by their *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC) numbers into what Martinez-Ávila (2016, 234) called, "reader-interest classification."

The process of genrefication is one in which the school librarian organizes the collection by subject rather than dis-

cipline, which Melvil Dewey used to develop his numerical organization system in 1876. The Follett Corporation (2019), a major school library materials and organization services distributor, noted that genrefication "is an increasingly popular way to support literacy efforts and engage school library readers."

Librarians may choose to genrefy their entire collections, but many opt to focus solely on their fiction collections, as fiction is the least specifically organized in terms of the DDC. Historically, however, there have also been movements toward reader interest classification (RIC) of non-fiction collections (Martinez-Ávila 2017). The genres by which material are classified are sometimes identified by vendor guides or by using other systems of classification,

such as Metis or the Book Industry Standards and Communications (BISAC) Subject Headings List. Most often, genres are identified by the school librarian, sometimes with assistance from school community stakeholders, and are ideally reflective of the needs of the patron community. For example, librarians might use students' terminologies to develop specific genres, such as "scary" instead of "horror," or "love" instead of "romance." They may also ask teachers to identify a popular assignment which require students to find a specific type of book in the library, and that assignment name will become a genre label. Organizing the fiction collection in the traditional Dewey or Library of Congress *Classification* styles requires students looking for books to understand and use a "language" of pre-determined subject headings in order to search a database to find books they might be interested in reading. As Snipes (2015, 29) noted, "The use of a numbering system leaves little room for questions whereas a qualitative system of topic names is much more concrete in coverage." In short, genrefying the fiction collection allows students to go directly to a section of materials that may interest them, but the question remains, how effective is this organizational approach for school libraries?

## 2.0 Literature review

Historically, RIC systems were seen as having developed as part of the user-orientation movement in library and information science and reflected the profession's shift in focus on the accommodation of the patrons as opposed to the standards of librarianship (Martinez-Ávila and San Segundo 2013). As with any other type of patron, students and teachers in public schools often lack the "language" required of adept users of traditional classification systems, such as the *DDC*. Of such systems, Betts (1982, 63) wrote,

in creating a logical set of relationships between "subjects," [systems] fail to take account of the (changing) interests with lead people to approach those subjects. Interests cross logical boundaries (as do books themselves at times) with the consequence that books which readers would wish to access by interest are often widely and inconveniently separated on shelves and in some instances one or other sequence may never be found. Conversely, books appear together on the shelves which have no relationship other than a formal academic one, to the benefit of no one in particular. The positive corollary of all this is that books should be grouped to reflect the actual or potential interest relationship between them, even if this means fragmenting the traditional classification sequence.

Truly, genrefication seeks to fragment the traditional *DDC* sequence and, arguably, fragment the traditional relationship of the patron with the collection. Martinez-Ávila (2017, 234) described RIC as "a more suitable arrangement for the reader because it ... is more intuitive to use." Martinez-Ávila, writing alone (2017) and with San Segundo (2013), further discussed how RIC systems became popular in the 1980s because of the perceived usefulness for the end user-the patron, and that the physical arrangement of the fiction collection was more important than classification, in that related aspects such as signage were imperative to the success of the re-organization.

Perhaps in response to the popularity of RIC in the 1980s, Sharon Baker's research at this time focused, in part, on the use of RIC approached for fiction collection organization. Baker and Shepherd (1987) surveyed historical literature regarding RIC and fiction collections and found that five essential principles developed to drive RIC for fiction. These included: 1) the notion that classification should make finding materials of interest easy for users; 2) that any subdivisions that might help users find material of interest should be utilized in classification; 3) the notion that classification itself should help expose users to authors' works that might otherwise be overlooked; 4) fiction classification approaches should maintain an interfiled collection, rather than separating the collection into smaller subsections; and, 5) fiction classification approaches should not separate the works written by the same author. The latter two principles have been disputed amongst practitioners in the library community. Baker and Shepherd also analyzed five historical works that examined the extent to which readers found classified collections that utilized these principles to be helpful in finding reading material. While the studies reported that the classifications system were successful, Baker and Shepherd stressed the importance of further research about RIC for fiction collections.

Writing on her own, Baker (1988) further reported on her own examination of RIC for fiction collection in public libraries, in which she specifically sought to determine the extent to which fiction classification is helpful for readers to find books they're seeking out, as well as authors they might have otherwise overlooked; and whether the size of a library's collection and the method of fiction classification has an impact on the perceived success of the classification system. Using data from three public libraries, Baker found that fiction classification did help readers find books they wanted and introduced them to new authors. She also found that fiction classification is significantly more helpful to patrons when titles are physically grouped together, rather than simply labeled according to genre, and that only collections identified as "too large" need to institute "extra selection guidance" in the form of fiction classification (374).

Indeed, other institutions have benefited from this type of fiction classification. The seemingly simplistic nature of finding books and authors of interest by genre is a notion that has been adopted by the retail bookstore, where customers browse the shelves, looking for books by the topic under which they have been filed (Martínez-Ávila 2017). While some may consider this a positive aspect of genrefication, Pendergrass (2015) argued that retail bookstores sort their books by genre in order to force customers to browse to find the book they need so that they may find and purchase additional materials in the process. She suggested that the time it takes students to find the resource they need is valuable, and that students don't have the luxury to peruse the collection to find what they need. Pendergrass also identified a common argument against genrefication: where there is a lack of consistent, uniform classification, patrons can become confused when trying to find material in other libraries. In addition to maintaining consistency, Pendergrass argued that school librarians should continue to classify their collections using the *DDC*, because the fluid nature of student populations requires regular reconsideration of established genres in the collection. Additionally, she noted that changes in school library staffing could create confusion and further need for reorganization. In other words, one librarian's interpretation of how a book fits into a genre could very well be different than the next librarian's interpretation. Pendergrass (2015) and Snipes (2015) also discussed how the intense time commitment required of school librarians to reorganize a collection takes away from pressing obligations such as student instruction and collaboration. While genrefication seems to be a simple way of connecting patrons to their reading interests, it may also be limiting for those materials that have a more complex story structure. For example, the novel series "Twilight" could be genrefied as horror, romance, suspense, gothic, coming-of-age or several other topics. Genrefication allows this novel to be classified by just one of these genres. This classification approach relies on potential readers being open to exploring multiple genres to find titles that might interest them. If readers commit to exploring only one or two genre sections, they might miss titles that cross genres and are difficult to classify.

Alternately, LaGarde (2015) argued that the idea that libraries need to follow the same method for collection organization is an outdated idea that needs to be replaced with the recognition that school libraries should be responsive to their students' needs. She also noted that genrefication uses the terminology of patrons, not of library professionals, and that children are the ones who are using the library, not library professionals. Snipes (2015) reported that school librarians who support genrefication do so because they feel they process results in a collection that is student-centered, easier to browse, provides a closer arrangement of fiction

and nonfiction, addresses and supports changes in the curriculum, exposes students to new authors, and enables the school librarian to become more familiar with the collection.

While benefits and drawbacks of genrefication have been written about by many practitioners (for example, see Jameson 2013; Kaplan et al. 2013; Miller 2013; Rodgers 2018), there is a dearth of contemporary empirical evidence that examines the effectiveness of genrefication for library patrons. In our practice as professors who have taught a master of library science (MLS) action research course, we continually noted the absence of research about genrefication. The topic of genrefication was a popular research topic for students who studied school librarianship, because action research requires the researcher to identify a problem of practice, develop an intervention by which to address the problem, and determine the extent to which the implementation was successful. Many of our students felt that enabling students to better find reading material of interest was a problem worthy of focus. With very little empirical research to inform their study, students were left to rely on the "best practices" of other librarians to design their own course of action and determine how well it worked for their libraries' patrons. The purpose of this particular study is to examine how these practicing librarians approached genrefying their libraries' fiction collections, and how they perceived the impacts of this process for their school stakeholders. Specifically, we wanted to know: 1) what are school librarians' motivations for genrefying their libraries' fiction collections; 2) what challenges did they encounter during or after the genrefication process; and, 3) what benefits do they perceive have resulted in the implementation of genrefication? The reason for classifying library materials is to provide patrons with a sort of standardized map, which allows them to systematically locate materials of interest. With genrefication seeming to be an increasingly prevalent organizational approach to fiction collections in school libraries, it is important to empirically examine the extent to which this approach is a successful method of systematic, methodical organization.

### 3.0 Methodology

As we had initially noticed an increase in the trend toward fiction genrefication amongst our graduate students, we asked a sample of those individuals who had conducted action research on genrefying their school libraries' fiction collections, and who had graduated from our MLS program, to serve as our participants. Seven former students agreed to participate: two elementary school librarians (serving students ages five through eleven); three middle school librarians (serving students ages eleven through fourteen); and two high school librarians (serving students ages fourteen through eighteen). Of these seven participants, three had

been practicing for two years, three had practiced for two and a half years, and one had served as a practicing librarian for four years. In preparation to gather data for their initial action research projects that they implemented in their final semester of their graduate MLS program, the librarians were required to first reorganize their fiction collections according to genre. Each librarian developed her own reorganization strategy and schedule, as well as her own set of genres, and determined the extent to which she would organize only parts of the fiction collection or the fiction collection as a whole. Once the reorganization was complete, the librarians gathered data to answer each of their own individual research questions related to the genrefication of their libraries' fiction collections. At the point at which we engaged the librarians as research participants, they had each completed their genrefication process and had at least four months of implementation to reflect on the process and determine the extent to which they found their genrefication-related efforts successful. Each participant genrefied only their fiction collection. Additionally, each of the participants chose to continue classifying their collection according to DDC but arranged materials by genre.

We conducted semi-structured individual interviews with each participant in order to better understand her motivations for experimenting with genrefying the fiction collection and to understand the extent to which she found the experiments to be "successful." After transcribing the interviews, each researcher approached data analysis looking for themes that emerged from the data set. After developing their own sets of codes, the researchers came together to discuss their results. Differences between the codes identified by each researcher were discussed and resolved so that agreement was reached regarding the significant themes that emerged from the participant data. One example of a disagreement was the question of the extent to which librarians were able to offer more in-depth reader's advisory services to students because of the revised organization of the library. One researcher concluded that librarians expressed that they felt they had more time for reader's advisory, whereas the other researcher failed to see this in her analysis. Returning to the data, it became evident to both researchers that a desire for more time for reader's advisory was, indeed, a relevant finding.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Reasons for genrefying the fiction collection and input into approach

Overwhelmingly, the participants said that their primary reason for genrefying their fiction collections was to help students make quick connections to books they might find enjoyable. This focus on the time it took for students to

choose a book stemmed from the feeling the librarians expressed regarding the tight schedules imposed by teachers. One participant described teachers' approaches to exploring library fiction collections by saying, "We want them to go in and accomplish our task and then get out." For the participants, this perceived lack of time for browsing or for purposefully navigating the collection using an online catalog resulted in students choosing books that they may not ultimately enjoy. One participant described how she sees this played out in her high school library. She described how a teacher told her students:

"Class, you have 10 minutes to pick out a book." And we have over 16,000 books in our collection and it just seemed like a hopeless cause, watching these kids walk through the shelves just randomly pulling something out, looking at the cover and deciding based on *just* the cover what they wanted, knowing nothing else about it .... With high school, they have so little time in that library and I just thought there has to be a better way.

Another concern regarding the minimal time students had to explore the library's fiction collection was the lack of time the participants had to provide students with reader's advisory services. One librarian noted, "I quickly realized that a lot of the students would ask for the sports books, and where are the scary books, where are the animal books, and *Dewey Decimal* really lent itself to answer some of those questions, but when we got to the fiction section, I could suggest authors, like Matt Christopher, but I couldn't point them in necessarily the direction of the sports books."

Similarly, the participants mentioned their own focus on trying to help students develop and maintain an interest in pleasure reading. One librarian noted that she was, "trying to keep the kids reading. Trying to keep that interest in reading. The harder it is to find a book, the less likely they're going to want to read it." Many of the participants noted how their students are transitioning from searching for reading material by level, as dictated by the use of commercial reading programs, such as Accelerated Reader (AR). The participants observed that without the use of levels, students seemed to be struggling to find reading material. One librarian said:

They come into the library now, it shocks them ... I cannot tell you how many [students] I have had say, "you know, this library is so different from the middle school." And I'll say, "what is different about it?" And they'll start talking about AR and how in AR they could only look at certain shelves and here they can look at all the shelves and they'll even ask me, "can I go to any of the books over there?" So its



amazing to watch them cuz it's like such a privilege to them.

Several participants indicated that another reason for genrefying their fiction collection was the pressure or suggestions they received from their school's administrators or teachers to do so. One participant described:

I will say that administration and teachers had mentioned [genrefying the fiction collection] and thought that it was one way to help students .... A lot of [teachers] have classroom libraries and they had set theirs up like how they do at the bookstores and I think they spoke to administration and so ... they have had a lot of success with getting more students interested in reading with having it set up like that in their classroom.

Another participant described how a particular assignment given by a specific teacher helped encourage her to genrefy her fiction collection. She explained:

Our sixth grade teacher does the 40 book challenge [an assignment that challenges students to read 40 books throughout the school year], and does it by genre, so it was going to be helpful to them, so there were kind of a number of reasons that I thought this was the best direction to go.

Many of the librarians also approached the decision to genrefy their fiction collection with the sense that doing so would help empower students to be able to select materials in a way that made sense to them. One participant described:

The kids would come, asking, where's a good mystery, I want realistic fiction, you know, they were sort of asking for it. So it seemed to make the most sense—if the students are asking for ... they don't really realize that they're asking for it, but that's what they're asking for, to set the library up such that they can find them a lot easier.

Another librarian said, "Students tell me they're used to genres, like in their music cloud, social media groups, and gaming online choices. Even Netflix movies are genrefied." Another participant put it succinctly, "everything else in these kids' lives is genrefied. Why on earth would we not genrefy the books?"

When asked what sources of information informed their approach to genrefication, the participants overwhelmingly identified advice sought from professional peers and librarian blogs to have been the most helpful. Input from school stakeholders was also considered to be

important information to consider when deciding how they would genrefy. The librarians indicated that they would have conversations with teachers about their thoughts regarding genres their students were interested in reading. Additionally, several participants sought the help of students in deciding which genres they would implement for their fiction collections.

## 4.2 Benefits of genrefying the fiction collection

Most participants indicated that a benefit of genrefication was the decreased time it took for students to locate a book of interest to them. One librarian said, "Students make comments about how much easier it is to locate books and have really enjoyed new favorite sections based on the labeling." The participants also indicated that students are learning about, discussing, and engaging genres that they hadn't previously. One participant noted, "I think [genrefication] opens students' eyes up to the fact that there's more out there than AR." Additionally, the librarians observed that students were engaging in reading more as a social activity by talking to each other about what they were reading. One participant noted, "I think that [genrefying the fiction collection] makes the library more of a community hub." Another said:

There's a lot more conversation between students about books because, you know, they'll say, you like mystery books? Well there's a good one over here I've read. So getting students involved in reading the books is the biggest positive.

The participants also acknowledged that the reorganization of the fiction collection imbued students with a sense of empowerment. One librarian explained:

I think [students] feel a little bit like their voice is heard a little bit more. Like they can see there are things over here that I like. Like, I know I like mystery books and I can see visually now that there are mystery books here for me.

In reference to choosing books, another participant said:

Now if they can do that without having to come to me. Like if they're nervous or shy or uncomfortable doing that, they've got a place they can go that they could find without having to do that if they're not quite comfortable.

Another participant made a similar observation in saying, "This gives them independence...they can wander, just kind of peruse, you know, and look for something."

Nearly all of the librarians discussed the visual nature of genrefication and how those visuals have helped students locate books with greater ease. One participant described:

It's more visual I think to them. Like, those books were always there, but maybe they didn't realize how many there were. We do have a pretty big section of horror and suspense or sports or whatever. It maybe used to get lost a little bit—they'd get all mixed up in everything and so there's some things over there, they've always been there that speak to them, but now they can see them a little bit better .... They're not hidden, all mixed in together.

Another participant said, "Students need very little direction from me once they become familiar with the layout to find the books they are interested in." One librarian described how the visual nature of genre labels had been combined with the traditional Dewey author classification approach to provide a more effective location system:

Before we just have fiction and like A-De or what not. While they are still organized by last name in the genre section, there is less to dig through and it's less overwhelming. I think they are using the call number initials now even more than before. We always taught it but they would come in months later and still not know. I have not had anyone ask lately how to find the name or what it means.

The participants also saw benefits of genrefication for themselves. Most indicated that they held a desire for more quality time to engage students through in-depth reader's advisory services, and that reorganizing the fiction collection in such a way that gave students more ownership, allowed them time to do just that. One librarian explained:

When asked, "how's it working?" I really enjoy it ... it's really opened up my time as the librarian to help those reluctant readers find books because the kids that know what they like to read immediately know where to go and don't need my help so I can spend my time with the kids that don't love to read and I have to really dig in and find a book for them.

Another noted, "I'm able to have more conversations with kids about the books because we're able have more of an idea of what they like." One participant described how, when the fiction collection was organized by *Dewey Decimal Classification*, she would have to send a student to look for books by a particular author, with the hope that the student would find a title by that author that would appeal to

them. With a genrefied fiction collection, she said the difference is, "I don't have to sell an author to them. I can sell a book to them." The vast majority of the participants also noted that the process of genrefication allowed them to develop a much more broad and deep understanding of their fiction collection, which allowed them to identify gaps in their fiction collection as well as materials that needed to be deselected. These participants considered this outcome to be a significant benefit to the genrefication process. Interestingly, one participant in particular viewed the process of creating and maintaining a genrefied fiction collection through the lens of marketing. She noted, "I have a communications major and I knew that marketing matters and I knew that nothing was being marketed so I wanted to address the marketing issue .... We don't market to try to bring readers in at all."

### 4.3 Challenges associated with genrefying the fiction collection

Those challenges the participants identified as being associated with genrefying the fiction collection mostly referred to library administrative tasks. Specifically, the significant amount of time involved in the actual reorganization of the fiction collection was overwhelmingly identified by the librarians as the biggest challenge. Other administrative challenges the participants identified were changing item locations in the cataloguing and circulation system, defining and deciding which genres to use in the fiction collection, budgeting for processing materials, and classifying each item into a genre. With regard to deciding how to assign a genre to a book, one participant explained:

I had to figure out where to go to find those answers, because sometimes you could read the back of the book and make that decision but other times you're left guessing so I used a lot of Goodreads and Amazon reviews and tried to make my best judgment. I ended up moving books after I had genrefied them because I realized they were in the wrong spot.

Another participant noted, "our books are all over the place." A few participants noted that they started using too many genres, which proved to be overwhelming to the librarians.

Participants were also challenged with questions regarding appropriate genres for their patron population. One librarian explained:

We considered doing an urban section, or, like, do we do an LGBTQ section but then do you really want to call those groups out and separate them. They're just part of the regular section. I didn't want

to, like, ostracize that so. You know, I have had some African American students look for some, like, the [unintelligible] novels, and ... I think, god, should we have done it but then I don't know.

Similarly, another participant described how she struggled with genre-defining decisions:

I've heard different things. Like, with the multicultural ... a lot of times the kids didn't go to that section to read. They would have read those books, they would have been more likely to pick those books if they had been in Realistic [genre section] than pulled out separately.

A different participant cited a gender-specific example; "One of the librarians in the past had done, like a boy genre and a girl genre—don't recommend that. There are no books for just boys and no books for just girls so stay away from that kind of stuff." Another challenge for participants was deciding what should be genrefied. All but one of the participants genrefied their fiction collections, but many wondered if they should be turning their attention next to their libraries' non-fiction collections and how their approach to genrefying that collection might look.

One challenge particular to students that emerged from the data was their disuse of the library catalog. Participants noted that, with the increased age of computers, and the time it took students to learn how to use the catalog, it became easier to eschew the use of the catalog altogether and rely solely on genre location. One librarian explained, "I had a teacher in here yesterday that said, 'Nobody on Destiny [catalog interface]. We don't have time. Just go find a book.'" Students' inability to use the catalog prevented them from searching for a particular title, in the instance that they had ideas as to specific books they might want to read. This proved to be a challenge for the librarians as well, who took the time and care to properly maintain the catalog, ensuring that it would accurately reflect their libraries' holdings. They had also carved out instructional time to teach students how to use the catalog. These efforts to maintain and teach students how to use a valuable tool to locate materials in the library seemed to go to waste, as students were instructed to only browse the fiction collection.

## 5.0 Discussion

The decision to adopt and implement a new classification system for one's school library fiction collection is significant, as it has impact on not just the library staff and space, but also the entire school community and how they learn about general library organization. Due to the weight of

this decision and the dearth of research about genrefication, we specifically wanted to understand from this study: 1) what are school librarians' motivations for genrefying their libraries' fiction collections; 2) what challenges did they encounter during or after the genrefication process; and, 3) what benefits do they perceive have resulted in the implementation of genrefication? The data present a picture of genrefication as a dynamic process constantly evolving to meet the needs of a fluid school community.

The participants' motivations reflected those represented in the user orientation resurgence of the 1980s, which was to empower the patron with regard to their own information needs (Martinez-Ávila and San Segundo 2013). The participants' responses, however, suggested a new facet of the RIC approach, in that time was the primary factor for their decision to reorganize their fiction collections. In other words, by physically arranging the fiction collection into concepts and genres with which students were familiar, librarians were empowering students to find books of potential interest more easily than they were able to do with the fiction collection being organized by *DDC*. Through their own observations and interactions with other school stakeholders, the participants identified that, in using *DDC*, students did not have the ability to explore the fiction collection and/or find reading material that interested them. These observations and interactions suggest that classroom teachers feel pressured for instructional time and do not feel they can prioritize students browsing the library fiction collection for reading material. While school librarians also participate in that instructional time, they have the additional charge of helping students develop an appreciation of lifelong learning, of which finding enjoyment in reading is a part. Thus, a tension existed between ensuring that instructional time was maximized for student learning and allowing students the freedom to explore library materials to help develop their interests and understanding of the world. The participants' decisions to genrefy their fiction collections seemed to be, in part, a response to this tension, as a way to provide students with the opportunity to do more focused browsing in a short amount of time. Several researchers (Raqi and Zainab 2008; Reuter 2008; Montgomery 2014) have noted the importance of patrons browsing for materials when they are choosing a book to read. While they could not change the culture of the school, they could change how students interacted with the fiction collection. Participants also discussed how the demands on the school librarian's time is such that they are often away from the physical collection, thereby leaving students to "fend for themselves" with regard to finding a book that may interest them. Through the connections they made between literary genres and those genres presented via music and video streaming services, the participants felt that that they were appealing to stu-

dents through their own tools and language to provide a kind of self-reader's advisory service.

The more prevalent benefit identified by the participants was in response to their impetus for genrefying in the first place: reorganization had decreased the time students needed to explore the fiction collection and find a book they wanted to read. Not only did the students save time, but the librarians also discussed how they were able to be more judicious with their own time. They were able to give more extensive help to students who needed it, whether it was through reader's advisory services or through technical or account assistance. The participants also discussed how genrefication gave students the opportunity to enjoy the fiction collection. They felt that students quickly gained a familiarity with their libraries' fiction collections to the point that they could work independently and, thus, explore the fiction collection more thoroughly than before. Through the use of the students' own terminology, or the terms they use to describe types of stories, and familiar physical organization, genrefication seemed to impact the way in which students learned about, considered, and discussed genres. Indeed, the participants reported that they observed more social engagement about reading between students and were more often engaged by students themselves to talk about their reading. Several researchers (for example, Guthrie et al. 1995; Smith and Wilhelm 2002; Baker and Wigfield 1999) have found social engagement to be a strong motivational factor in children's decisions to read for pleasure. In addition to the social engagement observed by the librarians, students provided each other with recommendations of books, based on what they had read and the expressed interests of other students. In a sense, the students provided reader's advisory services for each other, which suggests they felt confident in their reading and suggestions. This phenomenon also indicates that the students felt a kind of ownership or authority about the fiction collection. Perhaps one of the elements of genrefication that made this sense of authority possible was the visual organization of materials. The participants had created genre section with accompanying signage that made sense to the students, by using a language and organizational scheme with which they were already familiar from other formats of information such as video and music apps. As Martínez-Ávila (2017, 235) noted, "The way books are physically arranged and how classes are displayed within the system have always been among the most important aspects of reader-interest classifications." As students relied solely on signage and knowledge of genre arrangement to choose books, the data supports Martínez-Ávila's (2017) assertion that fiction collection arrangement is more important than how materials are classified.

The challenges described by the participants focused largely on administrative tasks. The most onerous of these was the one-time reorganization of the fiction collection. While the effort of this task is not to be downplayed, all of the participants indicated that this undertaking was worth the effort. Perhaps most interesting was the librarians' struggles with how to or if they even should consider facets of culture as genres. These struggles suggest a broader tension related to the librarians' desire to connect students with stories in which they can see themselves as well as with stories about people unlike them who have experiences different from their own. In writing about one public library's response to a challenge over LGBTQ material, Lechtenberg (2018) described how that library decided to transition to using the BISAC system to reclassify the collection. She described the dangers related to censorship when a library reclassifies its collection with the goal of steering patrons to or away from material, based on particular topics. Similarly, the librarians in this study realized the dangerous waters into which they were swimming when they considered creating genre labels based on race, sexuality, and gender. If they did choose to label books as such, the librarians might potentially risk reducing characters and the stories in which they're featured into a single-faceted human experience, when most characters and stories are actually multi-faceted. This caution is supported by Martínez-Ávila, San Segundo and Olson (2014, 151), who encouraged interrogating BISAC and other classifications systems with regard to:

the socio-cultural aspects of the systems, including the misrepresentation of marginalized groups, and the consequences that these misrepresentations could have for the social construction of identities regarding such sensitive matters as race, religion, and gender studies.

The librarians' decisions not to move forward with these labels suggest their realization that doing so would restrict some students from engaging in quality literature that they otherwise might have found rewarding.

## 6.0 Implications

The reason that school librarians are embracing genrefication is simple: they feel that students are struggling to find fiction books that appeal to them. This finding begets another—that these participants' focus was on helping students become readers, not actually teaching students how libraries are traditionally organized or using the catalog to find materials. As noted by most of the participants, the technological difficulties related to, and lack of time to teach students how to use the catalog, greatly influenced



their decision to genrefy their fiction collections. This finding suggests that the larger school library shift to organizing by genre is rooted in schools' focus on reading, instead of teaching students how libraries are organized or how to use a catalog to locate specific information. In the current educational culture of standardized testing in which reading gains are closely examined, this approach makes sense. Another product of the current stringent testing environment is the lack of time teachers allow for students to visit and peruse the library fiction collection. For their part, school librarians have seen the effects of this shift and have essentially thrown an anchor to students. Examining this finding from another perspective raises concerns about how students will continually interact with library collections. If students don't learn in their formative years how libraries systematically classify information, how successful will they be in progressive schooling years? Will they know how to use library catalogs to find specific information? What are the consequences if they don't learn in primary or secondary school? Additionally, similar research should examine the differences in genrefication approaches between librarians serving different age groups, a factor which was outside the scope of this study. Such research may expose unique challenges or considerations in librarians' ability to create better access to reading materials for their students.

The data from this study suggest that physical organization and visual signage are imperative to the success of genrefication. As has been noted previously, reorganization, rather than reclassification, proved to be the pivotal factor in the participants' experiences with genrefication. Whichever way librarians choose to classify and organize a collection, it is important to consider, as Martínez-Ávila (2017) wrote, that there are no objective organizational strategies. One genre identified by a librarian may mean something different to a patron or even another librarian. In other words, organization and classification systems tend to privilege one reader over another by using written and visual signifiers that are more familiar to certain readers and not all readers. That said, the data from this study shows that students are taking ownership of the genrefied fiction collections in their school libraries by providing reader's advisory services to other students. This practice suggests that students are becoming very familiar with the nature of items classified under specific genres, and where those items of interest are located within the fiction collection. The students' ability and desire to provide reader's advisory services to other students suggests that these students are becoming experienced and frequent users of the library's fiction collection.

The reason that librarians classify and organize information is to provide patrons with a systematic method of finding information they need. This takes on a different

meaning in the context of how librarians use this theory in education. As Martínez-Ávila, San Segundo and Olson (2014) noted in their analysis of BISAC as a new case of RIC, the benefit of such an approach is that it is supported by a centralized organization that has developed standards for this type of classification. The genrefication approach that is described in this paper adheres to no such centralization. Questions about genres, including whether or not they be common, who decides what is a genre, and who is included in which genres, are questions that should be considered as school librarians move forward with genrefication. Currently, there is no common system of genres for school librarians to use when reorganizing and reclassifying, but booksellers such as Follett may change that (Follett Corporation 2018). Recently, this company formed an advisory board to help guide school librarians on how to genrefy their collections, including mutually agreed-upon genre standards that they could adopt for their own collection needs. While this would make classification of materials much easier for librarians, the data from this study suggests that local school community considerations were important for the participants in terms of the genres they selected. Pre-established genres may or may not assist librarians in reaching the needs of their students. Martínez-Ávila (2017, 65), in his description of the local versus global interests of RIC suggested that, historically, locally developed RIC approaches "ended up as individual practices that were hard to standardize and reuse in subsequent projects" or, perhaps, with changing library administration, while those approaches developed with a global interest in mind ultimately failed patrons whose interests did not match those established by the centralized body. Researchers should continue to follow the development and implementation of genre standards in RIC of school library fiction collections in order to better understand if and how such an approach meets the reading needs of students.

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