The Applicability of the "Best Books for Young Adults" List as a Book Selection Tool in Public High Schools in a Three County Area

Ricki Hemenway Chowning

Western Michigan University

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THE APPLICABILITY OF THE "BEST BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS" LIST AS A BOOK SELECTION TOOL IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN A THREE COUNTY AREA

by

Ricki Hemenway Chowning

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Specialist in Arts
School of Librarianship

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1981
THE APPLICABILITY OF THE "BEST BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS" LIST AS A BOOK SELECTION TOOL IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN A THREE COUNTY AREA

Ricki Hemenway Chowning, SP.A.
Western Michigan University, 1981

The purpose of this study is to gather statistical evidence to determine attitudes toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" booklist as a positive selection tool for book selectors in public high schools in a three county area. The survey method was used to investigate attitudes towards the list and specific collection holdings of titles recommended by the "Best Books for Young Adults." Data were collected through questionnaires to book selectors in twenty-five high schools in Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. Results of the survey indicate that book selectors are ambivalent toward the list, and that selection patterns correlated slightly with rankings of the list among other selection aids.

Results of the survey indicate a need for further research on the possible divergence of book selection philosophy between public library and school library book selectors and on the reassessment of school book selection policies regarding the balance of social, recreational and curricular requirements.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to members of the Faculty of the School of Librarianship for their assistance and guidance during the course of my post-graduate work. In particular, I would like to extend thanks to the members of my advisory committee, Dr. Jean Lowrie, Dr. Hardy Carroll, and Dr. Howard Major. A very special and personal thanks is also extended to Eleanor McKinney for the encouragement she gave to me in the attainment of this particular goal. I would also like to mention a good friend, Marjorie Larson, who typed this manuscript. Without her sacrifices, it might never have been completed.

Ricki Hemenway Chowning
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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, SP.A., 1981
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the September, 1974 issue of *English Journal* Barton of Washington State University stated as one of his requirements for prospective English teachers, "a teacher who reads a minimum of 52 books a year --- two-thirds 'adult' literature and one-third 'adolescent' or 'children's literature' and exchanges views and opinions on those books with a colleague."¹ This admirable goal not only applies to English teachers. School media specialists, to be effective as promoters of reading skills and reading enjoyment, should also read at least "52" books a year. Janeczko states that "to do a satisfactory job of selecting books for young people you must become an expert in adolescent literature. That means you must read."² Ideally, no book, fiction or non-fiction, would be placed in a collection without having been selected with full knowledge of its contents. The book would have been read by personnel responsible for book selection and chosen for its value in full compliance with the school district's book selection policy. Many school media personnel are intimately familiar with thousands of titles, both in and outside of their collections.


Very few media specialists however, have the opportunity to read new books before they are purchased for their collections. The problem is one of a lack of time coupled with the often-cumbersome procedure of book acquisition. This results in a necessary reliance on the national book reviewing sources. A concurrent problem is the reliability of these sources. Wolford notes that "one of the difficulties in selection is that it is frequently impossible to see the books before they are purchased. Sometimes even books that are favorably reviewed prove disappointing when they arrive in the library." Gillespie and Spirt state the problem even more succinctly. "The opportunities to examine materials before purchase are available, but with an explosion of information in all media and with the age of specialization upon us, prior examination of all materials is neither possible nor practical. Media personnel must depend on the opinions and advice of professional specialists which are often found in the various reviewing media. Commonly called selection aids, these are bibliographies, catalogs, indexes, review periodicals, and basic or "best" lists. The proper interpretation, evaluation and understanding of these lists is one of the essentials for effective selection."4

Many published sources designed to aid professionals in the selection of books for young adults are available to book selectors. Sponsorship for these selection aids ranges from professional organizations


and commercial publishing companies to individuals committed to young adult literature. No easy key or guide to the usability of these aids is available. Evaluation, interpretation and understanding of the various reviewing media is a primary responsibility for the selector. Holmes, a young adult librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library, suggests that the book selector determine, through observation, individual reviewers whose opinions and evaluations the selector can consistently trust. With a thorough background in the techniques of book selection and experience in evaluation of material, the selector becomes knowledgeable about the selection aids which are most applicable to the needs of individual collections.

The School Library Bill of Rights, endorsed by the American Association of School Librarians in 1968, asserts that the responsibility of the school library media center is to "provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials selected in compliance with a basic written selection policy and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials." It is further noted that these guidelines in selection of instructional materials for school libraries state that "reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids should be consulted as a guide."

The school media specialist is therefore charged with providing a viable core collection. Despite the intentions of selectors to purchase and circulate only titles that are in keeping with curriculum requirements


7. Ibid., p. 74.
and that are quality literature which will broaden minds and experiences, books are often purchased which may be unsuitable or unusable. With the rising costs of books and diminishing budgets, mistakes like this are unacceptable to everyone and causes need to be investigated more thoroughly. It would appear that a study which would examine attitudes of a specific population towards one of the best known reviewing aids would be useful.

The "Best Books for Young Adults", published under the sponsorship of the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association, is an annual booklist published in the fall issue of *Today's Education* and the April issues of *Booklist* and *Top of the News*. YASD is a professional association of library personnel involved in working closely with young people. The goal of the YASD is to "advocate, promote, and strengthen service to young adults as part of the continuum of total library service." Membership is primarily from the public library sector as most school librarians choose as their primary interest the ALA division, AASL (American Association of School Librarians), which serves primarily the young adult in the school organization.

The selection of books for the "Best Books for Young Adults" list is made by a fifteen member committee called the Best Books Committee. Appointment to the committee is made by the YASD President-Elect and is considered a prestigious appointment. Most committee members are

9. Ibid., p. 121.
public librarians (the membership of the 1979 committee was fourteen public librarians and one library school instructor). Discussion and voting take place at the Midwinter meeting of ALA. The statement of responsibility for the Committee is:

Selection is made on each book's proven or potential appeal and worth to young adult readers. Titles chosen must meet the following standards: Fiction must have believable characters and dialogue and plausible plot development; nonfiction must have a readable text and appealing format. Although the list attempts to represent a variety of reading tastes and levels, no effort has been made to balance it according to subject or area of interest.  

In order for a title to be placed before the committee, eight members must have read it. In order to make the lists, five votes from members who have read the book in full must be received. However, this procedure often leaves a list of selected titles still too unwieldy to be useful, and a further winnowing is yet necessary. A procedure proposed by Rackow in January, 1979, allows members who have read the book only in part to vote at this point. After a list of forty to forty-five titles has been selected, the list is then annotated for publication.

In the professional literature, as in open discussion of the selections at the Midwinter meetings, the issue of community standards are raised. Carter and Bonk in Building Library Collections say,

Although selection principles are generally the same for the school library as for other types, there is a special problem in selecting books for the school child. The books chosen


are supposed to support the socially acceptable (indeed, the socially demanded) indoctrination of the child into the ways of society. Where censorship of materials for adults is considered pernicious, censorship of materials for children is demanded. Items selected are supposed to have positive qualities, to serve high purpose.\textsuperscript{12}

While many professionals in the library and publishing fields will instantly refute the statement that censorship is a requirement of selection for school-age children, the school media specialist often carries the bulk of responsibility for this task. Unlike the public library, whose clientele reflects all strata of a community, the school librarian serves primarily only one, the student. School personnel are constantly reminded that they are at the mercy of the community for funding. Defeat of a millage request often reflects a community not only unhappy with high taxes and costs, but one dissatisfied with the operation of a school. Haines, in \textit{Living with Books}, says, "The selector must represent in book selection all subjects that apply to community conditions and that reflect community interests."\textsuperscript{13} The school librarian has the dual responsibility of providing materials that will broaden, enrich, and entertain while at the same time meeting local community standards.

In each of the 1975-79 lists of "Best Books for Young Adults" specific titles selected for the list have previously been reviewed by school librarians as being questionable choices for school libraries. These titles have been unfavorably reviewed and often have not been


recommended for purchase. In *Booklist*, for example, forty titles or eighteen percent appearing on the 1975-79 lists were excluded from review and therefore not recommended for purchase (Appendix C, page 66). Despite the unfavorable reviews these titles appeared later in the "Best Books for Young Adults" list.

It is acknowledged that the "Best Books for Young Adults" list is a tool primarily conceived as a public library selection aid. However, annual publication of the list in *Today's Education* and *School Library Journal*, journals intended to be read and used by professionals and book selectors in the education field, would in itself imply widespread interest in and use of by school personnel. Furthermore, in the introduction to *Selecting Materials for Children and Young Adults*, a bibliography published by the American Library Association, it is stated, "We hope this list of bibliographies and review sources will be very useful to all those who select materials for children and young adults."  

The "Best Books for Young Adults" list is included in this collection of recommended selection aids and described as "an annotated list of significant titles for young adults." This further lends credence to its consideration and use as a school library selection aid as well as a public library selection aid.

It would appear that a study to determine attitudes toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" list and its use as a recommended selection aid would be valuable to book selectors.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Reviews and the Review Media

Donelson and Nilson, members of the English Department at Arizona State University, have written a textbook entitled Literature for Today's Young Adults. They express many different areas of concern for advocates of children's and young adult literature. The authors state, "For all of us working with books and young people, skilled evaluation is a primary function. It is not always the same kind of evaluation, nor should it be. People select books for different purposes and evaluate them according to different criteria, but we should understand the reasoning and the value system behind the choices that are made, whether these choices are our own or those of a critic or reviewer." Criteria for evaluation fall into three general categories; popularity, quality, and social or political philosophy. Misunderstandings over the reviewer's objectives in each of these three areas cause confusion for readers and book selectors. The disagreements over quality versus popularity and motives of reviewers are an integral part of this research question.

The Winter 1979 issue of Top of the News had as its focus "Reviews, Reviewing and the Review Media." In an interesting article, ten experts


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in the field of children's and young adult literature gave opinions on what makes a good review. Responses ranged from admonitions against editorializing to pleas for inclusion of the reading level of a book. Other descriptors for a good review were: Comparisons with other works on similar subjects; possible areas of controversy, such as strong language, explicit sex, or violence; consistancy of evaluation; format faults or advantages; types and quality of illustrations; jacket or cover art; and above all, fair assessments. Eaglen, editor of Top of the News, also gives elsewhere in the same issue a brief overview of the reviewing media serving the young adult. Among those listed are English Journal, School Library Journal, Wilson Library Bulletin, and Booklist. The same issue includes Rosenberg's article on the "nonlibrary review media." Included here is the New York Times Review of Books and again, English Journal. Weber's assessment of the frequency and duplication of titles reviewed in seven national sources is the capstone article. Weber discovered in her evaluation of the reviews that School Library Journal and Booklist accounted for 57 percent of titles reviewed among seven top sources. Between the two, over half of the titles reviewed were included. School Library Journal had the most reviews, followed by Booklist. In the area of unique reviews (titles reviewed by only


one reviewing source), Booklist and School Library Journal again led, with 90 percent of Booklist's unique titles in the young adult field. Barrette in his thesis examined reviews from School Library Journal, Publisher's Weekly, and Library Journal and determined that the reviews failed to meet even minimum standards as determined by Haines. His recommendation suggested that better reviews and reviewing tools should be made available to the book selector.

**Literary Quality versus Popularity**

Shapiro's article, "Quality or Popularity? Selection Criteria for YAs," made a number of charges relating to book selection of young adult books. Specifically she claimed that "best" book lists in recent years have become popularity lists geared to students whose interests and tastes are undemanding. A discussion of demand versus the availability of quality material raised several important issues. Shapiro claimed that social responsibility includes the responsibility of the youth towards goals that will make them happier, healthier, and cognizant of their role in society. This responsibility on the part of the book selector encompasses the selection of books that are discriminating, intellectually stimulating, and free from racist, ethnic, or sexist overtones. Shapiro draws a parallel between the drugstore collection of books and the library's collection.

"If the library and the drugstore do not serve different purposes, then

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why have professional personnel in one and not the other?" Shapiro also suggests that the time used in preparing "best" lists would be better spent in pressing for better reviews; that there is too wide a divergence of agreement on what makes a "best" book.

Reaction to Shapiro's essay was immediate and varied. Harris, John Brown High School, Flushing, New York, agreed with Shapiro and said that students needed to be encouraged to read above the "lowest level." Whitson, Manhatten High School, Manhattan, Kansas, also said, "I am very concerned: for I do feel many librarians find a list like the "Best Books for Young Adults" and order them all without consulting original reviews or reading questionable books themselves." Strong opposition came from Jeffrey, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Parma, Ohio, chairperson of the 1979 Best Books Committee, who said, "What does the public learn from our refusal to buy these books? They learn that the library is irrelevant, but that the drugstore knows what they want. YA collections must be a mixture. The collection without fad interests has no credibility with young people." Jeffrey also defends the "Best Books for Young Adults" list and solicits recommendations of titles for consideration by the Best Books Committee.

In a thoughtful rebuttal entitled "YA Selection Criteria -- a Second Opinion," Forman claims that Shapiro's "discriminating judgement" and "sensitivity" as selection criteria are no more than personal taste
and moral categorization. Forman says, "Vague and confusing guidelines that are dependent on personal taste and moral rules should be avoided in book selection for young adults." YA librarians should offer teen readers as broad a range of books as is possible and be ready to discuss with them the books they have read and the questions they may raise. Young adults need to be encouraged to develop critical reading skills and not be governed by individual interpretations of moral taste and quality.

Several more responses to Shapiro's article on popularity versus quality appeared in the November 1978 School Library Journal. Rather than voicing outright opposition to Shapiro, Sleeman said, "Is it necessary to foster a love of good reading or is it more realistic to foster the enjoyment of books and being comfortable with them? Does anyone else wonder...if the libraries and their selections will become so good that nobody will come to borrow or read the books?" Silver characterizes the problem as more complex than just popularity versus quality. Her answer to Forman is "to choose books that affirm life and tell some truth about life." In that way books will be provided that "test and question values and promote an awareness of life's possibilities."

In discussing the issue of popularity versus quality, Leedy states, "Certainly those working with YA's in public libraries have different criteria as a basis for book selection than those working in schools.

17. Ibid., p. 2.
I agree with Ms. Shapiro that many of the titles on the "best" books list seem to be those popular ones rather than those of lasting timeliness and literary quality.\(^{18}\) She also observed that letters supporting Ms. Shapiro came primarily from school librarians and those opposing her primarily from public librarians.

"Best Books for Young Adults" List

In an earlier article, Lillian Shapiro also pressed for more stringent criteria in the selection of children's and young adult books.\(^{19}\) Due to the proliferation of published and produced materials, the selector looks more and more to guides prepared by experts. Among the recommended guides mentioned were Wilson Library Bulletin, Books for the Teenage, Booklist, Senior High School Library Catalog and School Library Journal. Especially valuable, Shapiro asserted, were guides and reviews that gave indications where language or incidents might make the book a problem in some communities. This does not mean censorship but a careful evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses. It also implies learning how to defend a controversial title if it is worth acquiring.

Shapiro strongly attacked the usefulness of the YASD "Best Books for Young Adults" list.

In the past the Young Adult Services Division list "Best Books for Young Adults," was the sine qua non for my selection assistance. I used it in my own libraries and recommended it warmly as an excellent guide to the prospective librarians I taught. It is a sad disillusionment for me that, having observed the selection committee this year and last, I am no longer sanguine about the list.\(^{20}\)

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20. Ibid., pp. 803-804.
She called for "truth in advertising" and for a new name for the list. "Let us call the list "popular" books - which students will probably find on their own." Cohen and Besant both supported Shapiro's stand. Cohen said, "What children want is not the only criterion in book selection." Scilken, of U.N.A.B.A.S.H.E.D Librarian fame, says, tongue in cheek, "Shapiro has given yet another proof of Scilken's First Empirical Law of Library Science: Librarians much prefer buying books nobody wants in preference to books they know everybody wants, or, it's better to serve a possible reader tomorrow than an actual one today."

Forman, member of the 1977 Best Books Committee, took exception to Shapiro's comments on the selection of titles on the basis of popularity. According to Forman, the intent of the Committee is to "highlight adult and juvenile books during a specified twelve month period which meet the criteria of popularity and literary quality." He also disclaimed any attempt at balancing the list by subject. As did Jeffrey, he encouraged librarians working with young people to submit titles for consideration.

Criticism was levied directly at the "Best Books for Young Adults" list by Yates. Yates criticized not only the final selection of titles

21. Ibid., p. 804.
for the 1978 list, but the practice, newly instituted during the selection procedure in January, 1979, of voting on books not fully read by the voting member, (previously described in Chapter One, page 5).

Response to Yate's charges was quick in appearing. The following issue of School Library Journal carried two letters by 1978 Best Books Committee members, Jeffrey and Rakow. Both addressed themselves to Yate's characterization of the "Best Books for Young Adults" list as "a list of books the committee never read." Jeffrey defended the committee's selection process by saying, "The quality of the discussions of the committee was quite professional." Rakow explained the new procedure in depth and said, "The Best Books list is not intended as an annual buying guide nor a checklist nor an ego-massage for those who need to confirm their ability to 'still pick 'em'."

Censorship and Book Selection

It is not within the scope of this research study to discuss the role of censorship in its larger sense of intellectual freedom. However, within the boundaries previously determined here, the debate over demand selection versus selection that tries to balance demand with equality is one that required comment. Silver says in a School Library Journal "Make Your Point" column, that "although judging people is not our business, judging books is." Her thoughtful comments on this issue

only serve to emphasize the differences of opinions of equally well-read and well-motivated professionals. Silver says, "If librarians reject their responsibility to identify, to sort out bad from good, then who needs librarians?" To paraphrase what Leedy would say, "What if libraries became so good nobody came?"

Chelton, in an article discussing the differences between children's and young adult librarianship, responds to another comment on the drift toward selection by demand as evidenced by the "Best Books for Young Adults" list. "Perhaps YA service is like the teenagers for whom it exists: a transition between the quality-oriented selection of children's services and the almost demand-only selection of adult services. I find myself...more of a materials interpreter/facilitator for teenagers."

The survey of the literature appears to indicate that:

1) The ability to evaluate the reviewing media is a necessary skill for book selectors.

2) Sharp disagreement among professionals exists over such integral issues of book selection as demand versus quality.

3) This divergence of opinion is extended to the use of the "Best Books for Young Adults" as a useful selection aid.

30. Ibid., p. 35.


CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to test the following hypotheses. The first hypothesis is the opposite of what the author thinks, but is stated in a positively testable form: Book selectors in public high schools in a three county area in Western Michigan have a positive attitude toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" list. A second hypothesis is that there is a positive relationship between the attitudes that book selectors in a three county area in Western Michigan have towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" list and their holdings recommended by it.

Definition of Terms

Several terms used in both the hypotheses and the survey instrument will be clarified here. These terms are ALA, YASD, school media specialist, book selector, selection aid, selection policy, unacceptable choices, "Best Books for Young Adults" list, positive selection aid and correlation of attitudes and collection holdings.

ALA is an initialism for the American Library Association, the largest national library association, whose concern spans all types of libraries; state, public, school, special, and academic libraries.

YASD is an initialism for the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association.

School media specialist is a person with the appropriate certification and a broad base in both education and media, with the competencies to develop and implement a media program.

Book selection is the process of choosing and purchasing books for use by library patrons. This process necessitates a knowledge of the community, curriculum needs, students, the collection, and book selection aids.

Book selection policy is the written document describing the principles by which a book selector chooses books. It is a mutually agreed upon document involving media professionals, school administration, and school boards of education. Such a policy would include the objectives of the media program, criteria for selection of materials, procedures for selection, and procedures for challenged materials.

Unacceptable in referring to the book selection procedure indicates a book whose treatment, content, language or theme contains elements in conflict with local standards of the principles outlined in the book selection policy. Such books might contain controversial issues such as sexuality, violence, religion, drugs, or politics.

The "Best Books for Young Adults" list is an annual booklist published by the American Library Association and sponsored by the Young Adult Services Division.

A positive selection aid is defined as having received a value between zero and plus two as determined by the respondent's average score on Part Two of the survey instrument.

A high correlation between the attitudes that book selectors have toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" list and their holdings recommended by it will be shown if the correlation coefficient is +.7 or above.

Selection of the Sample

The population for the survey was defined as all personnel serving as book selectors in public high schools in Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa

counties. On March 4, 1981, a letter was mailed to principals in each of the forty-seven high schools in the sample (Appendix H, page 85). This initial contact introduced the writer and explained the purpose behind the survey which would later be sent to the book selectors in those respective high schools. The following information was requested: 1) the names of certified media personnel, and 2) phone numbers where these people could be contacted. This information was used as a basis for the initial mailing to book selectors. Forty of forty-seven of the enclosed, addressed, post-paid cards were returned. Names of media personnel in the remaining seven school districts were obtained through personal phone calls.

Socio-economic Descriptors of Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties

The information gathered in the survey may be of use to other book selectors in similar socio-economic regions in the United States. The socio-economic make-up of this three county area is typical of other areas in the United States. Results of the survey may therefore be projected to similar regions. For this reason the following demographic information is provided for the three counties composing the sample. Table one on page 20 is a detailed description of socio-economic descriptors of Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa Counties. Kent County's population is the largest of the three, with Muskegon and Ottawa following respectively. Kent County also leads with density of population and percentage of urban population. Muskegon and Ottawa


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<th>KENT</th>
<th>MUSKEGON</th>
<th>OTTAWA</th>
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<td>Density of population</td>
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<td>Percentage of rural population</td>
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<td>Median years of school completed</td>
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<td>Percentage of blue collar workers</td>
<td>31.8</td>
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<td>Percentage of white collar workers</td>
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<td>Percentage of government workers</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<td>Median income</td>
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<td>Percentage of income less than poverty level</td>
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<td>Percentage of income more than $15,000</td>
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<td>K-12 school enrollment</td>
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<td>Percent of males over 25 with H.S. diploma</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of females over 25 with H.S. diploma</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

counties also follow in that order in those two characteristics. Kent County is a highly urbanized and industrialized area. The industries are furniture, automotive bodies and parts, institutional seating, boats and propellers, and graphic arts. The main city is Grand Rapids, containing almost one-half the population of Kent County. Eighteen percent of Kent County's population is of foreign stock, primarily Dutch and Polish. The percentage of white collar workers outweighs that of blue collar workers. Nearly 10% of the county's workers are employed in government jobs. The unemployment rate is 5.8%; midway between that of Muskegon, the county with the highest rate, and Ottawa, with the lowest rate. Muskegon County, with no strong industry in its major city Muskegon, also has the lowest median income and fewest families with an income over $15,000, well behind that of the leader in both these categories, Kent County. The level of educational attainment is also lowest in Muskegon County, with forty-eight percent of males and forty-four percent of females over twenty-five years of age having earned a high school diploma.

Ottawa County, located on the western edge of lower Michigan, borders Lake Michigan. Ottawa County's population is primarily rural, with slightly more than half of its population involved in farming. The main crops are celery, flower bulbs, and blueberries. The unemployment is lowest in Ottawa County, as well as the percentage of

households with incomes less than poverty level. It falls midway between Kent and Muskegon with the number of men and women having earned a high school diploma.

Construction of the Survey Instrument

The purpose of the study is to test the hypotheses described on page 17. Book selectors in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon County public high schools have a positive attitude towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" book list, and that there is a positive relationship between the attitudes that book selectors in a three county area have towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" and their collection holdings recommended by it. The survey is divided into four sections. Part One will be a ranking by book selectors of ten commonly used book selection aids, including the YASD "Best Books for Young Adults" list. Part Two will be a Likert-type opinionnaire, which will test attitudes towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" list as a selection aid. Part Three will ask for professional experience data. This information will be used to evaluate the individual responses. Part Four will ask the respondent to check specific titles purchased from the 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979 "Best Books for Young Adults."

Part I: Ranking of Selection Aids

The following nine book selection aids, listed below, are cited
These titles were selected in addition to the YASD "Best Books for Young Adults" list to form the content for Part One of the survey. Appendix D is an annotated list of these aids. The "Best Books for Young Adults" list has been included in a list with these other selection aids in order to determine its ranking against this list of widely-used and widely-accepted aids.

Selection Aids Used in Construction of Survey

- Booklist
- Books for the Teenage
- Junior High School Library Catalog
- New York Times Book Review
- Professional magazine reviews, e.g. English Journal and School Arts
- School Library Journal
- Senior High School Library Catalog
- Specialized bibliographies, e.g. Books for You
- Wilson Library Bulletin

Part II: Opinionnaire

Part Two will be a Likert-type scale constructed to test attitudes of book selectors to the "Best Books for Young Adults" list. In a Likert-type scale, the respondent is asked to indicate his or her degree of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements on a controversial topic. In this survey statements will reflect satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the "Best Books for Young Adults" list as a selection aid. The number of favorable and unfavorable statements will


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approximately be equal. Participants will choose from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The Likert scale assigns a value to each of the five responses. The survey then yields a score for each respondent. Starting with the initial hypothesis, that book selectors in Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties have a positive attitude towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" list, all statements favoring this position would be scored as follows:

a. Strongly agree 2 points
b. Agree 1 point
c. Undecided/No opinion 0 points
d. Disagree -1 point
e. Strongly disagree -2 points
f. Don't know 0 points

For statements opposing this position, statements are scored in the opposite manner:

a. Strongly agree -2 points
b. Agree -1 point
c. Undecided 0 points
d. Disagree +1 point
e. Strongly disagree +2 points
f. Don't know 0 points

The value for each question lies between -2 and +2. A +2 would reflect the most favorable response possible and a -2 would be the most unfavorable response possible. The average score for any individual would fall between -2 and +2. Above 0 opinions would tend to be favorable to the given point of view, that book selectors in public high schools in the geographical target area have a positive attitude towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" list; below 0, unfavorable to this point of view.
Measuring opinions in this fashion is not as precise as it might be. Different combinations of positions on statements can result in equal score values for each of several participants, without necessarily indicating equal positions. Nevertheless this technique can provide useful research results and has been chosen as a method in this survey for that reason.

The specific statements used in Part Two were designed to test attitudes toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" list. The following statements comprise the Part Two opinionnaire.

1. The "Best Books for Young Adults" list is a valuable selection aid used frequently in the selection process.

2. A significantly high percentage of titles purchased in the past from this list have proved to be useful and valuable additions to the existing curriculum.

3. The list is often an extremely unbalanced one in terms of the subject matter of both fiction and non-fiction.

4. Popularity and demand cannot be equated with quality as a reason for selection.

5. The list is evenly weighed on the presentation of controversial issues.

6. The fact that public librarians are responsible for selection has no adverse effect on the usability of the books for school libraries.

7. A collection without fad or popular interests has no credibility with young people.

8. It is not justifiable under any circumstances for Best Books Committee members to vote on books they have not fully read.

9. Too many titles on the list are unacceptable choices when selected with the school's selection principles in mind.
10. Books selected for the list are geared toward average students whose tastes are not very demanding.

Statements one, two, five, six and seven are favorably disposed toward the use of the "Best Books for Young Adults" list as a selection aid, while numbers three, four, eight, nine and ten are unfavorably slanted.

Statement one reflects overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the list. Statement two also follows through with this attitude by determining long-term satisfaction with titles purchased in the five years making up the sample.

Statement three refers to the balance of the list. The disclaimer of any attempt at balance is made by the Best Books Committee itself in the foreword to observers. The attempt by the Committee is to provide a list of titles of proven interest rather than a balanced list. However, it is often unbalanced in terms of the subject matter of non-fiction titles on the 1975-79 lists.

Statements four and seven refer to the issue always present in book selection - that of demand versus quality. Shapiro, a noted children's library service advocate, calls it "taste versus trendiness," and says, "Although reducing fractions to their lowest terms facilitates mathematical processes, reducing people to their lowest common denominators in suggested reading material does not bring about similarly useful results." Simpson speaks for the opponents of any type of selection that connotes censorship. In endorsing selection of titles that speak


to the needs of today's young people, Simpson says, "Let us use reason, not emotion, in selection. Let us recognize that we are living in a changing world with changing values and crucial problems and that a book about today, to be honest, must reflect this world." These two statements by two equally well-respected and well motivated children's library advocates only highlight the depth of the controversy over this issue.

Linked closely to the issue of demand versus quality in book selection is that of mediocrity. Statement ten refers to the claim that books on the "Best Books for Young Adults" list are geared toward the average student. The title of "Egoff's article "If That Don't Do No Good, That Won't Do No Harm!" evokes clearly the message she sends. For young adult literature and the "junior novel", the brilliant, the challenging, the innovative, and often controversial is passed over in favor of the mediocre. Statements five and nine are tied closely together. As defined earlier in the definition of terms, an "unacceptable" choice of book, one not compatible with school book selection policy principles, often deals with the controversial issues of sex, language or violence. Statement six, selection of the books by public librarians, has been introduced into the survey in an attempt to gather data on the possible dichotomy of book selection goals of public librarians and school librarians.


Statement eight, referring to the practice of voting on titles not fully read, is one of the criticisms voiced in the professional literature and answered by Rakow in his School Library Journal article of May 1979. Despite Rakow's defense of this practice, some school book selectors may feel uneasy with purchasing books from a recommended list which cannot be wholeheartedly endorsed.

Part III: Professional Data

Part Three of the survey asks for educational background and length of service of the respondent. This information will be used to insure that certified personnel will be completing the survey. All surveys completed by respondents who have less than one year of experience will be invalidated.

Part IV: Collection Holdings

Part Four of the survey is an alphabetical list by author of the 215 titles selected for the 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979 "Best Books for Young Adults" lists. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the title was purchased. Respondents were also cautioned not to mark a title as unpurchased if it was missing, lost or discarded. The information requested in this section was simply whether or not a title was purchased. No assumptions can be made as to the reviewing source used to select a title for purchase. The percentage of titles purchased from this list, might, however, indicate the level of use-

fulness the "Best Books for Young Adults" list has for the school book selector. Regardless of the source of the recommendation for purchase, a significantly high or low rate of acquisition of these specific titles will give pertinent feedback on the overall usefulness of this list. The total number of titles in each collection will be correlated with the Part Two Likert scores to determine the correlation coefficient.

The 215 titles will also be evaluated on the basis of subject categories. Using the *Books for the Teenage* as a guide, each title will be placed in its appropriate subject category. Approximately seventy subject categories are outlined in the *Books for the Teenage*. Titles will be assigned to subject categories by means of their original inclusion in the *Books for Teenage*, annotations in School Library Journal, and the writer's familiarity with the content of each book. Data will be interpreted on the basis of the percentage of available votes given each title in each subject area.

CHAPTE: IV

FINDINGS

Responses and Rate of Return

The survey was mailed out on May 7, 1981. Forty-seven surveys were sent to book selectors in public high schools in Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties. By May 28, 1981, thirty-three surveys had been returned. On May 29, 1981, a reminder letter was sent to all recipients of the survey who had not responded (Appendix I, page 86.) Following this letter, two more surveys were returned, for a total of thirty-five, a return rate of seventy-five percent. (Despite the relatively high response rate, it should be noted that the survey population was a small and rather homogeneous group. Participants within this group might be expected to respond at a higher rate than other, less professionally oriented groups.) Ten surveys were discarded:

1) One survey contained no Part Four.

2) One respondent did not fill out Part One.

3) Five respondents incorrectly completed Part One by duplicating some values and eliminating others.

4) One respondent replied "Not at all" on two book selection aids in Part One.

5) Two respondents did not complete Part Two of the survey.

Twenty-five survey instruments were usable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELECTION AID</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books for the Teenage</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booklist</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times Book Review</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School Library Catalog</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Arts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Library Journal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High School Library Catalog</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for You</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Library Bulletin</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Best Books for Young Adults&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part I: Ranking of Selection Aids

Part One of the questionnaire asked respondents to rank ten selection aids. Included in this list was the "Best Books for Young Adults". Respondents were to assign the value of ten to the selection aid most frequently used and the lowest value, one, to the selection aid most infrequently used. The other values from nine to two were to be assigned to the other selection aids according to their usability. Table two, page 31, is the total of votes under each rank value given by respondents to each of the selection aids.

Multiplying the number of votes times each rank value and adding the totals gives a point value to each selection aid. The maximum point value would be 250. This number is determined by the number of respondents, twenty-five, times the highest point value given to a selection aid, ten.

Table three, a listing of the ten selection aids in rank order of the total number of points earned, appears below.

### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELECTION AID</th>
<th>NUMBER OF POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booklist</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Library Journal</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High School Library Catalog</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Best Books for Young Adults&quot;</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Library Bulletin</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Arts</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School Library Catalog</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for the Teenage</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for You</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A clear choice for the selection aid most frequently used as the ALA Booklist. Close behind was Bowker's School Library Journal. School Library Journal and Booklist have already been established as leaders in the field of reviewing young adult titles. In third position is the Senior High School Library Catalog published by H.W. Wilson, Co., an annual recommended basic book collection. In fourth position is the "Best Books for Young Adults" list, the focus of this study. Following the "Best Books for Young Adults" list are the Wilson Library Bulletin, School Arts, Junior High School Library Catalog, Books for the Teenage, Books for You and the New York Times Book Review, in that order.

On the basis of the data collected in Part One of the survey the following can be stated:

1) **Booklist** and **School Library Journal** are the most commonly used book selection tools.

2) The "Best Books for Young Adults" ranks fourth of ten book selection aids used by book selectors in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon County public high schools. However, the point spread between the leader at 219 points, "Best Books for Young Adults" at 131 points and the book selection aid most infrequently used, New York Times Book Review, at 109 points, shows a large gap at the top level and five titles at the bottom bunched very closely together. The data would appear to be inconclusive in ranking the "Best Books for Young Adults" either high or low.
3) Two of the three "nonlibrary review media" are ninth and tenth respectively; *Books for You*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, and *New York Times* Book Review. The third "nonlibrary review journal" is *School Arts*, representing the subject area professional journals, ranking sixth. Book selectors appear to prefer journals and selection aids published by the established library publishers and professional associations.

**Part II: Opinionnaire**

Part Two of the questionnaire is a Likert-type opinionnaire designed to test attitudes towards the "Best Books for Young Adults" list as a positive selection aid. As described in the methodology, respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements on the "Best Books for Young Adults." According to the bias of the statements, the responses were assigned a value between -2 and +2. A positive score would confirm the initial hypothesis. Table four is a listing by questionnaire number of the Likert rating, the "Best Books for Young Adults" Part One ranking, the number of titles indicated in the respondent's collection holdings, and the percentage of total titles in the respondent's collection holdings.
### TABLE 4

**SUMMARY OF SURVEY DATA BY QUESTIONNAIRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER</th>
<th>PART TWO OPINIONAIRE RATING</th>
<th>&quot;BEST BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS&quot; RANKING</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TITLES IN RESPONDENT'S COLLECTION</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TITLES IN RESPONDENT'S COLLECTION HOLDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>+.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>+.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>+.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>-.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>-.7</td>
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<td>-.1</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>-.4</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>-.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td>+.2</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>+.2</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>-.5</td>
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<td>128</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>-.4</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>+.4</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>-.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in the Part Two opinionnaire were analyzed by two methods:

1) An overall score for the Part Two opinionnaire was determined.

2) Individual statements were analyzed.
In computing the Likert score for each questionnaire as described in the methodology, the following data were determined:

- **High**: +.4
- **Low**: -.8
- **Median**: -.4
- **Mean**: -.26
- **Range**: 1.2

The high value determined by the Part Two opinionnaire is +.4. Low value is -.8. The range is 1.2, and the median is -.4. The mean is -.26. This negative value disproves the initial hypothesis, that book selectors in Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties have a positive attitude towards the "Best Books for Young Adults".

Table five on page 37 reflects the totals for values of individual statements in Part Two and the mean for each statement. The mean is computed by assigning the negative or positive value to the raw score on the basis on the statement's bias and computing the average of all ten statements. Values for the mean will fall between -2 and +2. A positive value on each statement reflects an attitude positive to the "Best Books for Young Adults" list; a negative value reflects a negative attitude towards the list.

Attitudes toward statement one, referring to the general use of the "Best Books for Young Adults" as a positive selection aid were favorable. Fifteen respondents indicated it was "a valuable selection aid used frequently in the selection process." This would appear to contradict solidly the slightly negative overall score for Part Two.
TABLE 5

TOTALS FOR PART TWO OPINIONAIRE STATEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNDECIDED</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>+.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 2</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-.07</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>-.68</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-.77</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>-.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 7</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 8</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
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<td>Statement 9</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes were divided almost evenly on the issue of the useful titles purchased from the list (Statement two) as well as the issue of mediocrity (Statement ten). Means for both these statements fell close to the neutral score of 0.
Respondents agreed that the list was unbalanced in terms of subject matter (Statement three). This may be due to the balance of titles published during this period.

Book selectors were overwhelming cohesive in their agreement that quality cannot be equated with demand as a reason for book selection (Statement four). This was also the only statement in which no respondent checked either "undecided" or "don't know."

Book selectors also appeared to agree that the list was unevenly weighed on the presentation of controversial issues (Statement five). This would be consistent with the negative response toward statement nine, referring to an excessive number of unacceptable choices on the list. Titles involving sex, violence, drugs, religion, or politics would appear to be unevenly represented on the list, thus causing conflict with the principles set forth in individual book selection policies.

Respondents also appeared to disagreed with the statement that selection of the books on the list by public librarians has no adverse effect on the usability of books for school libraries (Statement six). It would appear that further study on this issue would be useful at a future time.

Statement seven, concerning the credibility of a collection without fad interests for young people, also garnered a majority of fifteen respondents who agreed with this statement.
On Statement eight, referring to the practice of voting on books not fully read by the voting member, there was not a single disagreement among the twenty-five respondents. Twenty-one respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was an unacceptable practice. This statement had the lowest mean of any statement, -1.16. Three respondents were undecided, and one did not know.

Part III: Professional Data

The professional data in section three of the survey were collected in an attempt to characterize the sample drawn for the survey. These data were gathered as a check to insure that the recipient of the survey was actually part of the target population; that of certified library personnel. Table six on page 40 is a summary by questionnaire number of the respondent's years of experience in the library field, and years in his or her present position.

All respondents are certified personnel. The average length of experience in each respondent's current position is 9.64 years. Average length of experience overall is 11.64 years.

Part IV: Collection Holdings

Respondents were asked to indicate purchase or non-purchase of each of 215 titles which comprised the 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979 "Best Books for Young Adults" booklists. Respondents were cautioned that initial purchase of the title was the only indicator for inclusion on the list. If a title was subsequently weeded, lost, removed from the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER</th>
<th>YEARS EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>YEARS IN POSITION PRESENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
collection, or reported missing, it was nevertheless to be marked as having been purchased.

Data in this selection are evaluated in each of four different methods:

1) Percentage of total titles held in the collection of each respondent.

2) Percentage of titles held in the collection of each respondent correlated with the "Best Books for Young Adults" booklist rating as indicated in Part One of the survey.

3) Percentage of titles held in the collection of each respondent correlated with the Likert scale rating as indicated in Part Two of the survey.

4) Analysis of the subject orientation of titles selected by respondents.

The percentage of total titles indicated by respondents as included in the respondent's collection holdings ranged from a high of fifty-nine percent to a low of seven percent (Table 4, page 35.) Using Pearson's "r", the correlation coefficient was computed for the percentage of total titles indicated by respondents to be included in the respondent's collection holdings and the ranking determined by the respondent's ranking of the "Best Books for Young Adults" in relation to nine other book selection aids in Part One of the survey. The correlation coefficient is +.083. A slight correlation was found between the percentage of titles in the collection and the ranking given the "Best Books for Young Adults" list by the respondent. When the percentage of titles recommended by the "Best Books for Young Adults" held in the respondent's collection was correlated with the Likert score determined by Part Two
responses, a coefficient of \(-0.064\) was computed. No correlation between these two areas of data determined by the survey was found.

Using the subject area defined by the New York Public Library's *Books for the Teenage* (Appendix E, page 74), the 215 titles on the integrated list were categorized. Titles appearing in *Books for the Teenage* were assigned the subject heading under which it originally appeared there. Titles not appearing in *Books for the Teenage* were assigned a subject heading on a subjective basis through analysis of the annotations in the professional journals and through the writer's intimate knowledge of the title.

Seventy-two subject categories appeared in the 1978 *Books for the Teenage*. After assigning subject headings to the 215 titles, twenty-eight headings had no titles under that heading (Appendix E). Books on the list were therefore assigned one of forty-four subject headings. Although not formally acknowledged by the publishers of *Books for the Teenage*, it is apparent that titles on the list might easily be assigned more than one subject heading. For the purpose of both *Books for the Teenage* and this study, one subject heading only has been assigned.

Table 7 on page 44 indicates the subject headings used, the number of titles under each heading, and the percentage of those titles selected by respondents for their collections.

and five categories contained only fiction. A disproportionate number of titles are assigned to the category "Junior Novels." This category contains adolescent fiction. Adult novels for young adults are placed in the category "Novels and Short Stories."

After eliminating all categories with one choice, several patterns emerge:

1) The category containing the most titles (46), "Junior Novels," also has a high percentage of titles selected (45%). Adolescent fiction appears to be an area in which a high degree of titles are purchased.

2) "Fantasy and the Supernatural" and "Science Fiction," subject areas often linked together, also show a high percentage of titles selected by book selectors (33% and 25%, respectively).

3) "Germany," the only geographically oriented category other than the "U.S.A." to contain more than one title, has a 32% for the five titles in this category. All five titles were on the Holocaust.

4) Eleven titles were included in the category "Black America." This category also showed the highest percentage of acquisition, (82%). This is clearly an area of interest and demand.

5) "Mystery and Suspense", with eleven titles in it, has a 28% selection rate.

6) "Novels and Short Stories," with thirteen titles indentified in the category, also has a moderately high percentage of titles selected (31%).

7) "Love and Sex", a category with seven titles, has a comparatively low rate of acquisition by respondents (10%). Purchase of books dealing with sex, sexual ethics, or sexuality is extremely low. This may be a reflection of the area's religious orientation.

8) Another category with a low rate of acquisition by book selectors is "Film, Photography, and Video." Titles in this category might be described as primarily for
browsing or casual perusal. Budgets may not allow for non-curriculum oriented titles such as this.

9) "Overcoming Odds" is a category with seven titles and a high percentage of acquisition (50%). Titles in this category are true accounts of handicapped persons; either mental, physical, or social, rising above their handicaps. It would appear that this kind of human interest story is popular with book selectors.

TABLE 7

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF TITLES UNDER BOOKS FOR THE TEENAGE SUBJECT HEADINGS IN COLLECTION HOLDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT CATEGORIES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TITLES IN EACH SUBJECT CATEGORY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TITLES SELECTED BY RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventures in ideas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animals and animal stories</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black America</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>82 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars and bikes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts, hobbies and games</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and justice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current and changing scene</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escapes and espionage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family stories</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy and the supernatural</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film, photography and video</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk, jazz, pop, rock, and soul</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians of the Americas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior novels</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT CATEGORIES</td>
<td>NUMBER OF TITLES IN EACH SUBJECT CATEGORY</td>
<td>PERCENTAGE OF TITLES SELECTED BY RESPONDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love and sex</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind sciences and ESP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery and suspense</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, N.Y.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Novels and short stories</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming odds</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of interest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico and the Puerto Ricans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science fiction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories of sports and action</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True adventure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and peace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A list of the most frequently and infrequently cited titles may be found in Appendix G. The titles below are the fifteen titles receiving eighteen or more votes.

Peck, R. Are You in the House Alone? (24)
Cormier, R. I am the Cheese (23)
Haley, A. Roots (23)
Anson, J. Amityville Horror (23)
Guest, J. Ordinary People (22)
Hinton, S.E. Rumblefish (22)
Lund, D. Eric (22)
Zindel, P. Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball (22)
Dixon, P. May I Cross Your Golden River? (21)
Elfman, B. A House for Jonnie O. (21)
Kerr, M.E. Gentlehands (20)
McCracken, M. Lovey (20)
Hinton, S.E. Tex (18)
Kerr, M.E. Is That You, Miss Blue? (18)
Mazer, N. Dear Bill, Remember Me? (18)
In the analysis of titles, ten titles are adolescent fiction, two are adult novels, two are stories of overcoming handicaps, and one is fantasy and the supernatural. The sixteen titles below are the titles more infrequently cited.

Hankel, F. A Way of Love, A Way of Life (10)
Kaplan, H. Making Sense of Sex (10)
McCartney, L. Linda's Pictures (0)
Szabo, J. Almost Grown (0)
Telender, R. Heaven is a Playground (0)
Beck, C. Heroes of the Horrors (1)
Davis, T. Vision Quest (1)
Hamilton, E. Sex, With Love (1)
Holliday, L. Heart Sounds (1)
Kopay, D. David Kopay Story (1)
Leckley, R. Moments (1)
McFarlane, M. Cudjoe of Jamaica (1)
Mojtabi, A.J. 400 Eels of Sigmund Freud (1)
Ryden, H. God's Dog (1)
Saleh, D. Rock Art (1)
Wood, B. Killing Gift (1)

In analyzing these titles, three are love and sex, three are photography, two are sports stories with highly sensitive treatments, two are mysteries, one is a biography, one is an animal story, one is a diary, one is a novel, and two are popular culture, art and photography books.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The problem as stated in the introduction deals with the usability of the national book selection aids for public school book selectors. Specifically focused upon is the "Best Books for Young Adults," a national book selection tool sponsored by the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association. The initial hypothesis stated that public school book selectors in Muskegon, Ottawa and Kent counties have a positive attitude toward the "Best Books for Young Adults". A second hypothesis claimed a high correlation between the attitudes that book selectors in a three county area have toward the "Best Books for Young Adults" list and their holdings recommended by it. Data were collected by the writer from a survey of forty-seven public high school media specialists. The survey included three methods of evaluating the "Best Books" list and a request for professional background of the respondents. Surveys were answered by thirty-five book selectors, twenty-five of which were usable.

A summary of the data indicates the following information:

1) In Part One, the ranking of selection aids, Booklist and School Library Journal were clearly the primary choices of book selectors.
2) The "Best Books for Young Adults" ranked fourth on a list of the ten selection tools most frequently used. Due to the point spread between fourth and tenth, however, it is perhaps not as definite a preferred selection aid as its ranking implies.

3) A slight negative score was earned on the opinionaire in Part Two. This score would indicate that book selectors do not view the "Best Books for Young Adults" as a positive selection aid.

4) Analysis of individual questions within the opinionaire, particularly statement one, seems to contradict the above conclusion. Over sixty percent (60%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the "Best Books for Young Adults" was a valuable selection aid used frequently in the selection process.

5) Six other statements reflected a clear consensus of opinion. Book selectors in the majority felt that the practice of judging or voting on books not read in full by the selector was unacceptable. Respondents agreed that selection of books by public librarians had an adverse effect on the usability of books in the school. Respondents agreed that a collection without fad interests held no credibility with young adults. Respondents agreed that demand could not be equated with quality as a reason for selection. They agreed that the list
was unbalanced in terms of subject matter. Respondents agreed that many titles on the list were unacceptable choices when selected in accordance with the school's selection policy.

6) In Part Four, which dealt with actual purchase of the titles, the overall acquisition rate was 28.48%. When the individual percentages in this section were correlated with the ranking given the "Best Books for Young Adults" in Part One, a slight correlation coefficient was found.

7) In analysis of the subject matter of books selected by the respondents, several patterns were identifiable. Respondents preferred to select adolescent literature, adult novels, mysteries, fantasy and science fiction, books on Black America, and stories highlighting personal struggles against odds. They avoided selection of books on photography and related areas, love and sex, popular culture, and frank treatments of sensitive subjects.

The writer concludes that the data are insufficient to confirm the initial hypothesis. Although a negative score on Part Two indicated a negative view of the "Best Books" list, other data contradict this. It would appear that book selectors use the list but have mixed feelings about its usability. There is a slight correlation between the ranking given the "Best Books" list as a selection aid and the percentage of books in each collection recommended by it. Book selectors are only
slightly consistent in their feelings toward the list and their application of it to the selection process.

Recommendations

Generalizations are drawn at the conclusion of the study for the reader and the book selector. Several implications are evident from the assessment of the data and research.

1) The book selector needs to be fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the national book reviewing source. To effectively select books to fit curriculum needs, the selector needs to know the procedure for inclusion in a recommended list and any possible bias the reviewer might have.

2) The issue of popularity versus quality deserves further research. Despite a majority of book selectors agreeing that popularity cannot be equated with demand as a reason for selection, a majority also felt that a collection without fad interests held no credibility for young people. Are the qualities of fad interest and literary quality mutually exclusive? Literary quality seems to imply a long-lasting value, and fad interests would appear to be transitory in nature. As brought out in the literature survey, does an emphasis on quality begin to exclude the casual reader? Conversely, does the purchase of popular, but poor quality literature violate the responsibility of the school book selector to participate in the healthy socialization of children?
These issues continue to be raised by book selectors.

3) An inherent problem seems to exist in the use of selection aids by both public and school librarians. If the "Best Books for Young Adults" list is indeed a collection of desirable books with proven appeal to young people, why, then, do local school collections contain an average of less than 30% of the recommended titles? Two reasons can be conjectured. Budgets may not have leeway for non-curriculum-related titles, although purchases of paperback books might alleviate budget stresses and negate this reason. A more important reason might be in the area of censorship. Are public librarians less likely to censor materials available to children and young adults? If so, why?

4) There is a need to examine book selection policies in high schools in order to meet recreational and social needs. If indeed the public library purchases more titles of "proven appeal" to young people, perhaps the titles being purchased by school book selectors are not meeting the social and recreational needs of school children and young adults.

Conclusions

The evaluation and use of book selection aids is a matter of extreme importance to all professional library personnel. All book selectors are charged with the responsibility of the effective selection of materials,
whether the clientele is a special interest group, the public, or the school child. Effective selection is defined as meeting the needs of the patron. In a special library or a public library, needs are more easily identified than in a school library. Easy access to information is the primary goal of most public or special libraries. The goal of the school library is considerably more complex. In addition to access of information the school library is responsible for encouraging growth, developing literary and cultural appreciation, and enabling students to make informed decisions. Although this may be ideally the goal of every library, the school library is held particularly accountable for all these tasks. To this end, it is vitally important that the book selector be knowledgeable about selection aids and their purpose. Incorrect choices can be costly in both dollars and credibility. The school librarian must be able to trust the integrity of reviewers and reviewing sources.

Research studies are needed in several areas:

1) Factors in selection unique to the public library or the school library should be identified.

2) Philosophical differences in selection between the school library book selector and the public library selector should be isolated and analyzed.

3) School book selection policies need to be examined more closely to determine the importance of meeting social and recreational needs of young adults in relation to curricular needs.
As the selector is accountable to his or her clientele, so are the reviewing sources accountable to the selector. Thorough understanding of the philosophies and biases of sponsors and publishers of reviewing sources and "Best Book" lists will enable the selector to make wise, informed, critical, and professional judgements about books. Decisions such as this will facilitate and enhance the use of the school media center by both student and faculty alike.
May 7, 1981

Dear ____________________________:

My name is Ricki Chowning, and I am a media specialist with Kent City Community Schools in Kent City, Michigan. I am currently working on a research project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Specialist degree in library science. Will you be willing to help me?

I have been interested in recent years in the quality of choices selected for the YASD "Best Books for Young Adults" list. From discussions with media personnel in high schools in this region, I have formed reservations about the applicability of this list as a primary selection tool. Will you help me test this theory through completion of a survey instrument? The survey will test two things: attitudes toward and use of the list itself and the percentage of titles actually purchased. The lists in question are the 1975 through 1979 lists. Completion of the second part of the survey testing this latter question will be a time-consuming task, I agree, but one designed to be completed by a responsible student assistant or other library staff member. I ask only that you personally look over the list and verify that titles were indeed unpurchased rather than missing, lost or discarded.

I appreciate the fact that this is a busy time for you as the school year winds down. I can only hope you will help a fellow professional, and that you will indeed be able to see the application of this kind of research to your own professional activities. Enclosed is an addressed and stamped envelope to return the questionnaire. I would very much appreciate your prompt attention to the completion and return of the questionnaire. Please call me at any time if you have questions. My schedule is as follows:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 1-678-4210
Tuesday and Thursday 1-678-7711

The above numbers are my school phone; my home phone is 1-675-5334.

Thank you very much,

Sincerely yours,

Ricki L. Chowning
Media Specialist
SURVEY

Please complete and return in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope. If envelope is misplaced, please return to:

Ricki Chowning
465 Kenowa
Casnovia, Mi 49318

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Part I

Please rank the following selection aids used in your media center for selection of books. Rank them from 1-10. The value of 10 would represent the selection aid most frequently used; the value of 1 would represent the selection aid most infrequently used.

_____ Professional magazine reviews, e.g. School Arts, English Journal, etc.
_____ Specialized bibliographies, e.g. Books for You (NCTE).
_____ YASD"Best Books for Young Adults," American Library Association.
Part II

Opinionnaire

The following statements represent opinions, and your agreement or disagreement will be made on the basis of your beliefs. Statements will refer to the "Best Books for Young Adults" list, published annually by the Young Adult Services Division of ALA. Please mark each statement according to the following scale. All responses will be kept completely confidential. Please indicate how you personally feel about each statement.

- a. I strongly agree.
- b. I agree.
- c. I am undecided/no opinion.
- d. I disagree.
- e. I strongly disagree.
- f. I don't know.

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<th>a.</th>
<th>b.</th>
<th>c.</th>
<th>d.</th>
<th>e.</th>
<th>f.</th>
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1. The "Best Books for Young Adults" list is a valuable selection aid used frequently in the selection process. ____________

2. A significantly high percentage of titles purchased in the past from this list have proved to be useful and valuable additions to the existing curriculum. ____________

3. The list is often an extremely unbalanced one in terms of the subject matter of both fiction and non-fiction. ____________

4. Popularity and demand cannot be equated with quality as a reason for selection. ____________

5. The list is evenly weighted on the presentation of controversial issues. ____________

6. The fact that public librarians are responsible for selection has no adverse effect on the usability of the books for school libraries. ____________

7. A collection without fad or popular interests has no credibility with young people. ____________

8. It is not justifiable under any circumstances for Best Books Committee members to vote on books they have not fully read. ____________

9. Too many titles on the list are unacceptable choices when selected with our school's selection principles in mind. ____________

10. Books selected for the list are geared toward average students whose tastes are not very demanding. ____________
Part III
Professional Experience Data

The following information includes pertinent data for evaluating your responses. All survey information will be kept absolutely confidential.

Highest degree held___________________________________________
Institution granting degree____________________________________
Number of years experience as a school media specialist__________
Number of years in present position_____________________________

Part IV
Collection Holdings of Titles Selected from the 1975-79 "Best Books for Young Adults"

An alphabetical list of the titles from the 1975-79 "Best Books for Young Adults" begins on page 4. As outlined in the cover sheet, please have a responsible library assistant complete this section. In order to have valid results, please verify personally that titles marked unpurchased (No) are not missing, lost or discarded. It is extremely important to know for the purposes of this survey which titles, for whatever reason, were not purchased.
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APPENDIX B

PART I SELECTION AIDS: AN ANNOTATED LIST


Books for You is an irregularly published, annotated reading list for high school students. Books covered constitute a broad reading program, including both fiction and non-fiction.

American Library Association. Young Adult Services Division, Best Books Committee.


The "Best Books for Young Adults" list is an annual list selected by members of the Young Adult Services Division of ALA. The titles are selected for their proven appeal for young people.


Published semi-monthly, Booklist is specifically designed as a buyer's guide for small and medium sized public and school libraries. Containing critical reviews of fiction and non-fiction for children and adults, Booklist contains only reviews for recommended books.


A companion volume to the Junior High School Library Catalog, the Senior High Catalog lists books specially directed toward students in grades ten through twelve.


This journal is included as representative of professional journals such as School Arts, Learning, and Elementary Journal. Most of the professional journals contain reviews of books pertaining to that field. These reviews are helpful in selecting subject-oriented books.
A weekly publication, the purpose of editor George A. Woods is to cover books promptly and currently. Most weeks a children's section is included, containing reviews that are uncritical but detailed and exhaustive.

Most comprehensive of all review media, *School Library Journal* contains reviews for recommended and not recommended books. Reviews are written by practicing school librarians.

Designed as a basic book collection for junior high school libraries, this volume is divided into two parts: an annotated list of titles arranged by Dewey number and an alphabetical index of books by author. Considered an indispensable selection aid for junior high school libraries.

An annual list designed primarily for leisure reading. No reviews are given, but inclusion in list arranged in subject groupings, is on the basis of having been successfully used with young people.
# APPENDIX C

## TITLES EXCLUDED FROM REVIEW IN "BOOKLIST"

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<th>Author</th>
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**1979**
### APPENDIX D

**SCHOOL HOLDINGS-OF INDIVIDUAL TITLES**

YASD "BEST BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS:" 1975-79

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3 12 Curtis, E.  The Girl Who Married a Ghost...
1 4 Davis, M.  Tell Them What’s Her Name Called
3 12 Davis, T.  Vision Guest
9 36 Delarrabetti, M.  The Horribles
6 24 Derby, P.  The Lady and the Tiger
7 28 Dickinson, P.  Flight of Dragons
5 20 Dickinson, P.  Tulku
19 76 Dixon, P.  May I Cross Your Golden River?
6 24 Dolan, E.  How to Leave Home...
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15 60 Eagan, A.  Why am I so Miserable...
15 60 Elder, L.  And I Alone Survived
19 76 Elfman, B.  A House for Jonnie O.
2 8 Ellison, H.  Deathbed Stories
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3 12 Forman, J.  A Ballad for Hogskin Hill
8 32 Francke, L.  The Ambivalence of Abortion
9 36 Fuller, J.  The Ghost of Flight 401
8 32 Garfield, B.  Recoil
4 16 Gedge, P.  Child of the Morning
3 12 Gerani, Gary  Fantastic Television
4 16 Giovanni, N.  The Women and the Men
8 32 Giriron, B.  A Tangle of Roots
4 16 Glass, F.  Marvin and Tige
2 8 Gordon, S.  You!
21 84 Guest, J.  Ordinary People
7 28 Guy, Rosa  The Disappearance
6 24 Guy, Rosa  Edith Jackson
4 16 Guy, Rosa  Ruby
22 88 Haley, A.  Roots

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War and Peace
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* Subject categories having no titles assigned to them.

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APPENDIX G

MOST FREQUENTLY AND INFREQUENTLY CITED TITLES

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Wind Eye  

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APPENDIX H

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

March 27, 1981

Dear ____________________________

My name is Ricki Chowning, and I am a media specialist with Kent City Community Schools in Kent City, Michigan. I am currently working on a research project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Specialist degree in library science. The project I am developing centers on book selection aids, specifically the "Best Books for Young Adults," an annual booklist published by the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association. I would like to send a survey to the certified library professional in your building. If this meets with your approval, would you please complete the enclosed postcard and drop it in the mail? I very much appreciate your cooperation in identifying these personnel for me.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Ricki L. Chowning
Media Specialist
May 29, 1981

Dear Fellow Media Specialist:

Help! Two weeks ago I sent you a letter requesting your help in completing a survey on the "Best Books for Young Adults" list. To those of you who have already returned this survey, I send my heartfelt thanks. If you have not, however, would you please take time out to complete it? The successful wrap-up of this final aspect of nine months' investment of time, money and work depends entirely on your participation. Each response is extremely important to me; please don't think that it won't matter if you don't complete it.

I would very much appreciate your participation. Please complete the survey and return it today. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ricki Chowning
BIBLIOGRAPHY


