RHYME OR REASON? IDENTIFYING DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY POETRY COLLECTIONS

A THESIS

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BY

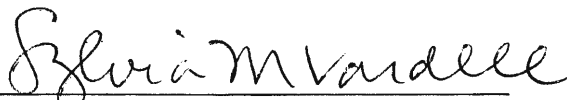ELIZABETH LEE ENOCHS, B.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

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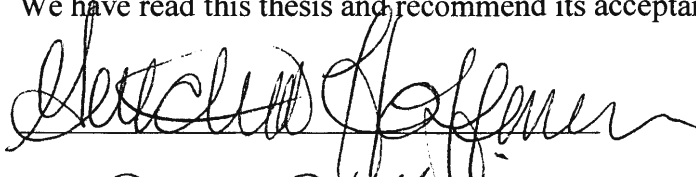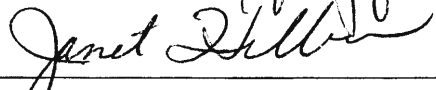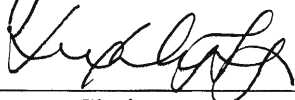TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth Lee Enochs entitled "Rhyme or Reason? Identifying Distinguishing Features of Elementary School Library Poetry Collections." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Library Science.

_____
Sylvia M. Vardell, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

_____

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_____
Department Chair

Accepted:

_____
Dean of the Graduate School

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This thesis is dedicated to my mom, who has been by my side with ready support, unconditional love, and impeccable grammar throughout my life, and to my dad, who I know is watching from the comfort of God's embrace.

ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH LEE ENOCHS

RHYME OR REASON? IDENTIFYING DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF
ELEMENTARY LIBRARY POETRY COLLECTIONS

MAY 2009

This research arose from a long-standing, scholarly concern that the poetry
collections in many elementary school libraries decline in condition and size over time.
To gauge the ability of elementary school poetry collections to support current pedagogy,
this research analyzed the poetry holdings of seventy-two libraries in one school district,
and answered the question: *What are the distinguishing features of elementary school
library poetry collections?* Nearly ninety percent of the schools' poetry collections were
less than half the recommended size. Most of the poetry collections were near the
fourteen-year age limit for a standards compliant school library collection, and circulation
of poetry over one school year totaled less than one percent of the average library's
circulation for that school year. Age of the poetry collection was a significant predictor of
circulation, but size was not. It was unlikely that these elementary school library poetry
collections could support current poetry pedagogy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Celebrating the joy and accessibility of poetry by offering children daily

opportunities to write, perform, and read poems in school can unlock a lifelong love for

the genre in the wariest young student. Ask Angela Williams, a second grade teacher who

honors National Poetry Month with a schoolwide Poetry Extravaganza. It is a day her

students anticipate with the eagerness they usually reserve for the last day of school, so

uninhibited is their enthusiasm for the poems they will recite and so clear is their comfort

with bringing their schoolmates into the fold. Plainly, Williams's love for the goofy

rhyme and silly metaphor that characterize the poems of the day is contagious and

irresistible.

Williams insists that students choose their poems without interference from

teachers or parents. It is a task the students assume with gravitas, some obsessively

pouring over every volume of poetry in the school library. But for the first years of the

festival, the library's poetry collection could not stand up to the challenge. Funds were

short and there were not enough poetry titles to go around. Children looking for recent

poems discovered that most of the books in the library were more than fifteen years old,

so they selected poems from teachers' more recent anthologies, collections they had at

home, and even from their basal readers. Eventually, it took an injection of grant money

for the librarian to purchase enough titles to update and increase the size of the school's collection.

The initial condition of the poetry section most likely indicated its underuse in the curriculum, first and foremost. Poetry teacher Gregory Denman calls this neglect the "curricular side step" of poetry teaching (1988, 57). But it begs the question – are elementary school library poetry collections languishing? Concerned academics and school librarians have raised red flags about neglect of poetry sections since the mid-1980s, warning that indifference toward maintaining a current poetry collection means frank neglect of an essential and enjoyable part of the curriculum (Harms and Lettow 1987; Vardell 2006). Given their current condition, can school library poetry collections provide sufficient resources to support modern trends in poetry instruction?

<div align="center">Significance of this Research</div>

The purpose of this study was to identify distinguishing features of elementary school library poetry collections in one large school district, and to determine if those collections could support current theory and practice in poetry pedagogy. The significance of the research was three-fold:

(1) Other research has not provided statistical analysis of the poetry collections in the libraries of an entire school district. This study provided data for describing and correlating the variables of age, size, and circulation of poetry in a group of seventy-two elementary school libraries over a single school year, which in turn offered a glimpse into trends in circulation and condition of the collections. Analysis of the data helped to characterize the poetry section in each library by answering several questions. Did the

newer poetry collections circulate more than the older ones? Were the larger collections the older collections? Were the smaller collections the newer collections?

(2) Descriptive and inferential statistics from this study allow school districts to compare and contrast their own elementary library poetry collections with those in the sample.

(3) This research suggests procedures, models, and routes of inquiry for school librarians seeking to develop their schools' poetry collections according to the needs of their individual school communities. The literature suggests that the results generated from studies like this one offer an overall picture of use, age, and size of the collection that complements existing research from surveys and interviews (Pierce 2003, 64-65).

Theoretical Framework

The Mission of the School Library

While this research examined the poetry collections of elementary school libraries, the study had at its core a concern for the careful stewardship of library collections in order to maintain their vital role in schools. In establishing standards for school libraries in the landmark *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (1998), the American Association of School Librarians framed the central mission of the school library: "…to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information" (6). With specific regard to collection development, the school library must provide "…access to information and resources for learning" (83). Yet even the preeminent professional organization of school librarians leaves the definitions of access and adequacy to the professional judgment of the local school librarian. In the end, to

evaluate one aspect of a given collection and then to consider whether the collection can support current pedagogy in that subject is to measure the ability of the collection to fulfill one of the fundamental missions of the school library.

Community Psychology Theory

Lukenbill applied the theory of community psychology to the work of the school librarian in maintaining the collection (2002). He took the chief tenets of this theory from pioneering community psychologists Penland and Williams (1974), who defined community psychology as the exchange of information between communities and organizations in order to allow those organizations to change in relevant ways (viii).

Community psychologists function as agents of change in their practices and communities. They gather information about the needs of their clients, the conditions of existing care providers, and the circumstances of agencies established for the care of the community – in order to assure that they provide for those needs in ways that improve the lives of those concerned. School librarians follow a remarkably similar model, clarifying the role of the library in the school community, evaluating the needs of the school library's constituents, and implementing appropriate change (Lukenbill 2002, 37).

From the work of Penland and Williams, Lukenbill identified assessment and understanding of the community, identification of needs and interests, familiarity with available resources, and serving as a clearinghouse for information as an appropriate community psychology framework for collection development in the school library (2002, 37). Penland and Williams suggested that community psychology works particularly well for community agencies and resources – particularly libraries and

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psychological services – who seek to be more available to those who need them and more reflective of the services offered by those who run them (1974, vii).

It is in selecting resources with an eye toward improving the lives of students and teachers that the theory finds its most pertinent application in library science. In reality, school librarians walk a tightrope when it comes to balancing the desires of young readers with the demands of the faculty and the exigencies of the curriculum. Specifically for this research, community psychology frames the need for a school librarian to layer strong familiarity with current curricula and trends in pedagogy over a keen knowledge of the collection when it comes to collection development.

Early definitions of community psychology included the idea of altruistic motivation, of "…understanding people within their social worlds and using this understanding to improve people's well-being" (Orford 1992, vii). Lukenbill noted that to apply community psychology theory in developing the collection is to realize the librarian's "responsibility … to develop missions, goals, and programs that will influence the behavior of the community" (2002, 38), emphasizing the reach of this theory beyond materials selection to library programming and management. Penland and Williams confirmed:

> *No matter how familiar the communicator may be with media, library and*
> *information agencies and their services, he will find it profitable to*
> *examine the total environment within which his agency operates. New*
> *experiences and knowledge will suggest new things to look for….He will*
> *more easily articulate the unspoken concerns and interests of the citizens*
> *(1974, 1).*

Theoretically, to improve the life of the user is to change for the better the functioning of the library — and vice versa.

Research Question

A faltering poetry section cannot serve as a pedagogical foundation for any teacher or librarian who maintains a thriving, ongoing relationship between students and poetry. Children, teachers, and librarians need access to poetry that mirrors their social circumstances, that reflects accurate content, that paints a world like the one in which they live, and that is a joy to read aloud. While some poetry is timeless, the best collections for schools where multiculturalism has become the norm contain plenty of titles by poets of color who write about the path that most children walk daily. For a librarian to evaluate the ability of a poetry collection to fill those needs, certain facts about the collection can clarify its deficiencies and its strengths. Accordingly, this study attempts to answer the research question: *What are the distinguishing features of elementary school library poetry collections in a large school district?*

Hypotheses

This cross-sectional study was not governed by an experiment or treatment, and there were no true hypotheses regarding the collected data. These hypotheses suggested instead the condition of the poetry collection at the time of data collection, along with associations that were likely between variables:

H_1. *These poetry collections are smaller than the size recommended by experts in the field of collection development.* Inattention to the poetry section of the library means the percentage of the collection devoted to poetry will be smaller than the size

recommended in authoritative texts on school library collections, which suggest that the collection comprise five percent poetry (Morris 2004, 339).

H_2. *The average age of poetry collections exceeds state standards for an acceptable elementary school collection.* The state standard in Texas for the age of an acceptable school library collection is less than fifteen years. The standard is the same for all classifications in the library (Texas State Library 2004).

H_3. *Older poetry collections circulate less than newer collections.* This predicts a correlation between the age of the poetry collection and its circulation.

H_4. *Larger poetry collections circulate more than smaller collections.* This hypothesis predicts an association between the size of the poetry collection and circulation of the poetry collection.

H_5. *Age and size of the poetry collection predict circulation of the poetry collection in an elementary school library.* This hypothesis anticipates the potential of the data to assess the impact of age and size of the poetry collection on poetry circulation.

Rationale

For nearly four decades, teachers have confessed a disinclination toward teaching poetry to children, mostly because of their own inexperience with the genre and insecurities with its interpretation (Hopkins 1972, 8; Koch 1999, 329). That common experience may also prompt many school librarians to neglect their poetry collections (Vardell 2006). In addition, faced with a shortage of funding for new materials, school librarians first select resources mandated by the curriculum, placing poetry purchases at

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the back of the consideration file. As a result, even the most well-tended school library often has a waning poetry collection (Florida Department of Education 2000).

This research provided data that characterized one group of school poetry collections, which in turn helped in evaluating the ability of those collections to support current poetry pedagogy. Teaching practices in creative writing and in poetry appreciation have evolved radically over the past fifty years, yet observers suggest that current school library poetry collections do not reflect those changes. Analysis of this data has the potential to illuminate problems with the collection that slow down circulation and impede growth in a section of the library that has substantial, proven potential to enhance children's literacy (Faver 2008; Sekeres and Gregg 2007; Israel and Israel 2006).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Like other sections in the elementary school library, poetry collections fulfill

teachers' and librarians' instructional requirements, while satisfying children's curiosity

and their need to read for pleasure. Historically, teaching poetry to children has included

three conventions: teaching children how to understand and interpret poetry, how to write

poetry, and how to enjoy it on its own. Familiarity with how children have learned about

poetry over time facilitates analysis of the ability of the collection to support each

practice.

Early Poetry Pedagogy

Teaching poetry to children in the nineteenth century often included an

assignment to memorize a long narrative poem and recite it for family or a school

program (Sorby 2005; Shepherd 2005). While the task seems onerous by today's

standards, children in the late 1800s were eager to learn poems by Whittier, Longfellow,

and Lowell, whose works were popular and beloved in their own time (xii-xiv). Sorby

traces the enduring cultural effect of students' memorizing poetry, beginning with the end

of the Civil War in 1865 and ending in 1917 (2005). She notes that poetry recitation was

not only a school assignment, but it served as entertainment, and in the end, provided a

"popular archive" that gave shape to the collective memory of generations (xiii). Sorby

theorized that formal structure and rhyme were so integral to the poetry memorized by

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schoolchildren that adults began to see rhyme as a part of verse exclusively for children (xlv), which prompted poets in the next generation to abandon rhyme for free verse. But at the time, formal structure and schema lent themselves to formal analysis in formal classrooms, and teachers and librarians for the first half of the century believed the way to a poem's heart was through its rhyme scheme (Neville 1958, 135-6).

The 1960s

Fellow teachers of English, we killed poetry! (Neville 1958, 133).

The 1960s marked the beginning of a pedagogical revolt against poetry memorization and dry poetry analysis, techniques which had characterized instruction for years (Neville 1958, 135). As much battle cry as lament, Neville's work explained the current state of poetry study in the schools in very clear terms, focusing on the mid-century pedagogical confusion between teaching meaning and enjoyment of a poem and teaching the form that circumscribes it (137). Sweetkind offered a book of more creative methods for teaching poetry writing to high school students, including writing verse in response to art (1964). His definition of the teacher's job was prescient: "to help the student *re-create* the poem as an aesthetic…experience" (xi), tentatively raising the idea of the teacher as agent for communicating the joy in a poem through reading it aloud – a concept that would see fruition in the 2000s. Dawson and Choate anticipated the shift in poetry pedagogy with their short instructional book for elementary teachers, which rejected memorization in favor of choral reading and lining out poetry hymn-style, called line-a-child (1960).

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Flora Arnstein, a San Francisco educator and poetry teacher, published *Poetry in the Elementary Classroom* in 1962, an account of the process of teaching poetry understanding to very young children. Her methods presaged a general uprising against forcing children to make their own poems rhyme (1962, 33-43). Perhaps most importantly, she said plainly in the introduction that the purpose of the book is to break the cycle of teacher reluctance in poetry pedagogy (2). Three years later, Herbert wrote of efforts to reach students whose prior experience with the genre had been markedly negative (1965, 91), a problem echoed by Perkins (1966). Interestingly, just as pedagogy entered the shift away from picky poetry analysis and toward enjoyment of poetry, teachers, poets and librarians began to encourage students to create poetry of their own.

The 1970s

I was aware of the breakthrough in teaching children art some forty years ago. I had seen how my daughter and other children profited from the new ways of helping them discover and use their natural talents. That hadn't happened yet in poetry (Koch 1971, 3).

Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry documents poet Kenneth Koch's work in the classrooms of P.S. 61 in New York, where he cultivated a noisy, collaborative classroom spirit in order to tap into the fear, hope, and innate creativity in his young students (1971, 29). It was a marked departure from poetry pedagogy of the past century. Deliberately avoiding pedagogical terms like "assignment," Koch brought his students to poetry by offering them what he called "ideas" for composing poems, like beginning every line with the same phrase, or writing to music

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(1971, 3-4). He scorned rhyme and meter in his instruction, seeing them as barriers to spontaneity and natural use of figurative language (1971, 16). *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* follows the evolution of his pedagogy as he developed it, mostly on the fly and always with an eye toward engaging children's interest and enthusiasm. The last part of the book comprises an anthology of student work from Koch's time as poet-in-residence at the school.

About the same time, Robert Burroughs noted a similar, pervasive negativity mirrored in his high school students, who said that they hated poetry with a passion, particularly when teachers expected them to swallow canned interpretation without discussion or question (1977). The emotion and personal expression that Kenneth Koch saw restrained in his elementary students grew into raw, angry intolerance as students went through school, and it became Koch's mission to release that energy through creative writing inspired by great poetry.

Certainly, Koch's professional standing as an award-winning poet and his experience teaching on the university level brought teachers and other readers to *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams.* But as his friend and successor at P.S. 61, poet Ron Padgett, wrote in the introduction to the tenth edition of the book twenty-nine years later, at the time that Koch began teaching poetry in elementary schools in 1968, "The landscape of poetry teaching at that level looked barren" (in Koch 1999, xiii). Social conditions – upheavals in civil rights and students' rights, coupled with the public's general dissatisfaction with the Vietnam war – nurtured radical change in the way teachers taught. For Koch, this meant a paradigm shift in the view of the child as a writer: "Teaching really is not the

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right word for what takes place; it is more like permitting children to discover something they already have" (1971, 25). He did not just escort his enraptured readers through a novel way of teaching – he gave teachers the tools to do it themselves. In the evolution of poetry pedagogy, Koch punctuated equilibrium, sending the teacher's pendulum in one shove away from poetry analysis and memorization and into the rich, untapped area of poetry writing.

Koch supplemented *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* with the publication of *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children* in 1973. He presented children with poems by known poets – Blake, Browning, Whitman, Herrick – and from each poem, he extracted a poetry "idea" as a stimulus for the students' own writing (Koch 1999, xxi). Both of Koch's books on poetry pedagogy included extensive anthologies of students' work. He did not address previous approaches to poetry pedagogy, preferring simply to outline his own methods.

Koch had his detractors. Children's poet and poetry scholar Myra Cohn Livingston wrote a long essay in which she placed the work completed by Koch's students squarely into the realm of practice instead of poetry, refuting with scholarly acumen Koch's idea that children could be called "poets" (1975, 1976). And where Koch did not position his books as alternatives to the formal poetry analysis that preceded them, children's poet and teacher Lee Bennett Hopkins, on the other hand, mentioned dozens of techniques to overcome history's "compulsion to analyze" children's poetry (1972, 13). His text, *Pass the Poetry, Please! Using Poetry in Pre-Kindergarten-Six Classrooms,* gave explicit instructions for teachers reluctant to read poetry aloud for fear

of misinterpretation (Hopkins 1972, 11). Along the same lines, Frederick noted that children responded to the experiences of single poems when they claimed to dislike poetry as a whole (1972). With regard to developments in children's poetry as a genre, Lil Brannon applauded new poetry books for including poetry that came close in subject matter to students' own life experience. In a short piece about new 1970s poetry books that she wrote for *English Journal*, she noted that engaging student interest is the first step toward having a relationship with a text, recognizing that modern poetry for children was slowly inching away from the arcane and unfamiliar (1979).

The 1980s

...We should be doing much more to ensure that children positively enjoy their encounters with poems as they go through primary school (Moore 1989, 42).

Michael True argued in 1980 for a poetry pedagogy based on an essential assumption that "time spent reading a poem aloud is much more important than 'analyzing' it, if there isn't time for both" (43). It became clear in the 1980s that teachers understood the necessity to reclaim the gratification children had found in poetry before the teaching world decided that to appreciate poetry meant to analyze it.

One familiar voice in poetry pedagogy intervened. In 1984, Myra Cohn Livingston published an expanded version of her 1975 essay questioning the acceptance of anything children write as genuine poetry. In *The Child as Poet,* she reasoned closely and within a historical context that children may not be inherently creative (21), as Koch says throughout his poetry pedagogy. Instead, she argued that the best poetry teachers

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acknowledge that "it is order and craft that lead to creativity and the making of a poem" (Livingston 1984, 292). The same year, Peter Benton assessed the state of poetry pedagogy in the United Kingdom with a survey of middle grade teachers, asking about the importance of reading, discussing, and writing poetry in the classroom (1984, 320). While nearly all teachers found reading and discussing poetry important, a vastly smaller contingent found writing poetry to be just as beneficial to students (323). Benton noted that the biggest problem in teaching poetry was a lack of teacher experience with the genre, and implored teachers to take poetry off its pedestal and get past their fear of teaching it (326).

The following year, poet Jack Collom published a guide to evaluating the poetry written by children, which included details of his work as a poet teaching in elementary schools, and his eccentric and sometimes indecipherable reasoning for considering one piece of children's writing better than another (1985). Much of his pedagogy was prescriptive, recalling Koch in its instructions for writing lunes and acrostic poems (1985, 2-3). Harms and Lettow deplored neglected poetry collections in school libraries (1987), warning against the temptation to patch the problem by selecting mediocre anthologies rather than collections by a single poet (35). Chatton made the case for teaching poetry by pairing it with appropriate children's fiction and information books (1989). Moore wrote of varying the oral presentation of poetry in order to engage children's imaginations (1989), recalling a theme mentioned by Gregory Denman his remarkably clear and cogent volume on poetry instruction for teachers (1988). Denman's text did not avoid poetry analysis; instead, he framed it in technique that takes into account every learning

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style – reciting while his students illustrated a poem, or providing manipulatives to allow children to move words of a poem to different places on the page. Throughout his text, he reiterated that poetry is meant to be said aloud.

Georgia Heard closed the decade with a highly personal, journal-like account of teaching poetry to New York schoolchildren, *For the Good of the Earth and Sun: Teaching Poetry* (1989). Part diary, part handbook, the book gave explicit directions for teaching children to write and revise poems, noting that integral to the writing process were individual conferences with children and at least a cursory consideration of form. Like Denman, Heard implored teachers and children to read poetry aloud and often, and made the case for creating interesting, welcoming classrooms that provided a wealth of stimuli for the budding writer (1989).

The 1990s

No one is asked to deliver a poem "product," a haiku or diamonte, on demand (Chatton 1993, xix).

In the wake of the 1980s' emphasis on extending, refining, and personalizing Koch's theories about teaching poetry to children, teachers and librarians in the 1990s published their own versions of his instructional techniques. Some addressed their books to the child writer, some to the teacher. Michael Benton argued for performing poetry in the classroom so that a poem could be experienced before it was analyzed – a relatively new concept that presaged the pedagogy of the end of the decade (1990). For middle grade writers in particular, Myra Cohn Livingston offered *Poem-Making*: *Ways to Begin Writing Poetry*, choosing the road not taken by Koch and others in the 1970s when they

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bypassed instruction in traditional forms and taught children how to write mimetic free verse (1991). Instead, Livingston believed that children could experience creative writing within the bounds of traditional poetry conventions. To that end, she interwove examples from great poetry with samples of children's work (1991, 4; 8). Addressed directly to the middle-grade writer, her text is firmly didactic in its tone and traditionalism:

Sometimes when I get an idea, I quickly write down all my thoughts and even some lines or phrases. When I put these together, I recognize where my patterns or lines have gone off - why it doesn't look or sound right. If you've learned the basic patterns - the couplet, tercet, and quatrain - you will be able to do this too (48).

Shortly after, educator and poet Leland B. Jacobs lamented what he saw as teachers' widespread neglect of poetry in the classroom, noting that children who hear poetry tend to understand the nature of poetry, and emphasizing the need of the child to hear spoken verse (1992). His reasoning anticipated the next decade's research on phonological awareness and the role of poetry in language development. Poets Dunning and Stafford published *Getting the Knack: 20 Poetry Writing Exercises*, which gave new ways to teach poetry writing by finding inspiration and poetic language in places unexplored (1992).

Two years later, poets Jack Collom and Sheryl Noethe followed Heard and Koch into the public schools and, like their predecessors, wrote a book about how to teach children to write poetry (1994). *Poetry Everywhere* recalled Koch in its exhortations to teachers to try new techniques and attitudes, but did include a few guidelines for using and writing poetry across the curriculum (250) and for integrating poetry with

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composition class or generalized writing instruction. Collom and Noethe expanded on both in later editions of the book (2005). More than anything, *Poetry Everywhere* offered a very specific prescription for instilling enthusiasm for creative writing in children, in a framework intent on recreating exactly the teaching experience of the poets who wrote it. Like Collom's *Moving Windows* (1985), the book began with instructions for acrostic poems, and added Japanese verse and other traditional forms. Mary Kenner Glover used her elementary class's gardening project in Arizona as inspiration for a poetry writing unit (1999), drawing heavily on the techniques first proposed by Heard (1989), including gentle encouragement, attention to technique and form in a way a child can understand, and the need to celebrate poetry at the end of the study.

Children's poet Paul B. Janeczko wrote a combination anthology and poetry writing guide for middle grade students – *Poetry from A to Z* – directing the instruction to the child and including seventy children's poems in his encouraging how-tos (1994). Janeczko also included tips from each poet about how that poet thinks about poetry. The following year, Morice's book, *The Adventures of Dr. Alphabet,* gave instructions about writing poetry with new tools – literally (1995). Morice suggested wrapping the school in paper for students to cover with poems and writing wearable poetry on a Moebuis strip meant to go around the child's wrist (38). As much art textbook as poetry pedagogy, the book defined the fringe of poetry instruction in the 1990s, catering to content at the expense of form in student creative writing and setting the stage for the pendulum of pedagogy's backswing toward research-based instruction in the 2000s.

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While poets and a few teachers in the early 1990s published guides to teach children to write poetry, more teachers wrote about teaching children to appreciate poetry, and for some time in the 1990s, poetry pedagogy diverged into two camps. McElmeel's *The Poet Tree* focused mostly on the lives of most of the major children's poets (1993), but mentioned practical ideas for surrounding children with poems that made connections with curriculum. The trend toward uncloaking the lives of poets when teaching children about poetry has continued; poet Sara London says "biographical details can provide and important bridge of accessibility for young readers" (2008). Interestingly, encouraging children to read poetry within the context of the poet's life and experience placed this book squarely in the middle of historicism, a school of criticism which had been discredited in academia but which is still embraced in language arts instruction in the twenty-first century public school.

Chatton, on the other hand, brought poetry pedagogy in line with language arts instructional practice of the 1990s, positioning a "whole poetry" environment as a part of a whole language curriculum (xviii). Her model for using poetry in all aspects of language instruction – speaking, writing, reading and listening – gave clear directions for integrating poetry with every school subject (xx). In *The Poetry Break,* Caroline Bauer offered teachers innovative, specific ideas for presenting poetry, suggesting, for example, that librarians walk into classrooms while holding up a sign proclaiming a poetry break and read or recite poetry to children (1994). The point was to immerse students in poetry, to make it a part of the daily classroom routine. Bauer offered more manual than pedagogy, but her emphasis on integrating poems with all parts of the curriculum gave

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practical expression to what it meant to surround children with poetry they could absorb through sight and sound.

Teacher Diane Lockward asked practicing poets what advice they would give to teachers on how to use poetry in the classroom, and the results likely approached the best summary of poetry pedagogy in the 1990s – or at least what it could have been under ideal tutelage and circumstances (1994). The advice was specific and loaded with baggage from the past and implication for the future of poetry instruction: do not give tests over poetry; stay away from analysis; give multiple oral readings of one poem; do not be afraid to venture into the unfamiliar. Poets reiterated that there were no right answers about poetry (69). Most telling, one poet entreated teachers to buy as many poetry books as possible and share them with classes often (70).

Zeece noted that selecting poetry to read to very young children should take into account their need to expand cognitively, as well as the need of the very young to experience the diversity of other cultures (1998). Cullinan added that children responded best to writing poetry in a non-threatening environment, admonishing teachers never to grade their students' attempts at writing a poem (1999). Classroom teacher Kathy Perfect wrote that whatever the reason for adding poetry to the curriculum, it should be taught with particular attention to its ability to help children construct meaning (1999). She asserted that the best way to accustom children to the language of poetry is to read it aloud daily in the classroom.

Eventually, interested academics turned their attention toward substantiating the ideas that had occurred in pedagogy about children, poetry, and learning. Toward the end

of the decade, British educator Fred Sedgwick began to question how children used the poetry writing process to learn, a constructivist approach that let the way into the research-oriented atmosphere of poetry education in the new millennium (1997, 4). Then, poets Georgia Heard and Paul Janeczko published new books which added to and revised their previous titles about teaching children to write poetry (1999 and 1999). Both focused on creating classrooms that were amenable to writing, and both came full circle in affirming strongly that poetry writing must never be forced upon any child: "There should be no tests or reports, no strings attached when we read poems aloud to a class: just the joy of hearing our language used at its best" (Janeczko 1999, 7). That turn toward listening as a means of appreciating poetry has made all the difference to the pedagogy of the early twenty-first century.

The 2000s

Practical reading skills include five key elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Poetry instruction supports them all (Stanley 2004, 9).

Skills-based Poetry Pedagogy

At the beginning of the new century, poetry pedagogy had not changed. Statman offered a loosely structured method based on Koch's techniques, intending to prod the poetry teacher into thinking about the integration of life, instruction, and poetry (2000). Statman invited students to think about a subject, assigned them to read a relevant poem – usually from the published adult literature, and then had them write their own poem on the topic (2000). Like Koch, Heard, Collom, and other poets who went into schools to

teach poetry, he offered instructions for teachers who sought replicate his methods.
Wormser and Capella offered *Teaching the Art of Poetry: The Moves* (2000), a poetry reading, writing, listening, and speaking curriculum designed to cover a school year, but the exercises in it could be pedantic – like analyzing scansion in Mark Antony's funeral oration from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

Eventually, though, other books began to spell out what would be the skills-based pedagogy of the new millennium, and often, the skills learned were only tangentially related to learning to read, write, and appreciate poetry. Michael Opitz discussed the ability of poetry's playful language to help children develop phonemic awareness, a strong predictor of later reading success (2000, 9). Within his extensive annotated bibliography, he listed single poem picture books and single subject poetry anthologies, noting each poem or volume's potential for phonemic manipulation or initial phoneme substitution and rhyme manipulation – and adding ideas for extending each book (104). The poetry chapters in Opitz's *Rhymes and Reasons: Literature & Language Play for Phonological Awareness* were among the first hints that books that seemed to be about teaching poetry might be transforming into books about teaching reading (2000).

Noted poetry teacher Iris Tiedt offered an expanded poetry pedagogy, emphasizing the coupling of theory to practice in order to "avoid killing students' interest in poetry before the poet has a chance to reach them" (2002, 2). She suggested sharing poetry with children in ways that foster phonemic awareness while at the same time capitalizing on the natural delight they find in rhyme, repetition, and play (61), and she emphasized research showing benefits in daily poetry presentation (21). These are

themes that run throughout the poetry pedagogy of the early 2000s – natural and daily

inclusion of poetry in instruction, and introducing the early reader to poetry in engaging,

natural ways proven to work toward eventual decoding and comprehension in reading.

Teaching Poetry with Technology

Sedgwick published a second volume about children learning through poetry

composition, focusing on primary age students and noting that technology – using

computers to compose – can boost student engagement with poetry (2000). Labbo

discussed the ability of the computer to bring the language of poetry to life through the

use of multimedia, noting that the seamless integration of multimedia with the text of a

poem makes a poem more accessible to children (2004). Kara-Soteriou, Zawilinski, and

Henry suggested using poetry in the writing workshop, enriching a mini-lesson with

targeted writing practice and visits to appropriate, interactive websites (2007).

Poetry Pedagogy in the ESL Classroom

Shortly after, Hadaway, Vardell and Young discussed the use of poetry to help

English as a Second Language (ESL) students develop oral language skills. They argued

that the concise, brief nature of poetry, especially in poetry for children, provided the

perfect vehicle for ESL students to practice oral language skills (2001). In particular,

strategies for reading poetry in chorus or response provided opportunities for students to

develop the fluency they otherwise might never gain outside the classroom (799). The

next year, Vardell, Hadaway, and Young added their observations that poetry offered

expanded opportunities for listening, a critical exercise for ESL students in particular

because of poetry's emphasis on rhythm and rhyme, which in turn help in identification

of phonemes (2002). Using poetry to break up the difficulty of reading long expanses of expository writing makes particular sense in the ESL classroom, particularly poetry with content-area subject matter (Vardell, Hadaway, and Young 2002, 52).

Multicultural Children's Poetry

Zeece and others mentioned multicultural poetry – poetry written by poets of color, reflecting the experience of many cultures – as a vital consideration for librarians selecting poetry resources for preschool and primary age children (1998). Soon after, Vardell, Hadaway, and Young mentioned specifically the importance of choosing multicultural poetry when selecting for ESL student populations (2002, 52). Agosto noted that the most important reason to include multicultural resources in the library's collection is so that teachers can integrate those resources into the curriculum and into students' independent reading choices (2007). This way, students acquire a sense of belonging within a context of diversity (Agosto 2007). Arsenault and Brown added that schools should have collections reflecting the cultures that dominate the school's student body (2007, 20), saying that multicultural poetry in particular adds dimension in its unique reflection of different cultures (21).

Nikki Grimes explained the poet's perspective on using multicultural sources in promoting poetry to children, anticipating the next few years' shift in teaching away from poetry analysis and toward a child's personal connection with a poem: "More than anything, I believe every child should have the experience of finding himself or herself in the pages of a book—whether she wears glasses, or not; whether he's thin as a reed, or round as a melon; whether she is culturally deprived, or not" (Grimes 2000). She added

that children who seemed reluctant to read lacked stories and poetry that validated their life experience, but that those children were motivated to read books that portrayed an authentic world of their experience (Grimes 2000). Reyes expanded on the idea with his success with spoken word poetry written and performed with children in a California middle school (2006). He discovered in his work that a combination of teaching only a little about traditional form but teaching a lot about listening to the voice of the individual student poet led to real progress in language and writing skills for previously disenfranchised inner city children. Reyes taught basics of poetic form and then allowed the students' voices to come through as they progressed through steps of the writing workshop (12). As he documented in his introduction, this became a shared experience that resulted in students of Latino, African American, Fijian, East Indian, Filipino, Chinese, Tongan, and Caucasian heritage taking ownership of language in ways they had not attempted previously (10).

Along the same lines, Pierce-Thomas wrote of the unique ability of poetry to galvanize a class of children with limited experience in a given content area, in this case, the Civil Rights Movement (2007). She assigned memoir poems and bio-poems to children who had just learned the stories of Emmet Till and other civil rights figures, and found that writing poems during a unit of unfamiliar multicultural content brought forth the emotional nature of that era for her students (4).

Vardell noted that a resurgence in children's publishing in the late 1990s took particular hold in children's poetry, paving the way for writers of color to publish poems that reflected varying cultures and traditions (2006a). She argued that including works by

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poets of color can enhance children's knowledge of other cultures. Similarly, in *Tiger Lilies, Toadstools, and Thunderbolts,* Tiedt urged teachers to keep in mind the cultural backgrounds, opportunities and self-worth of their students when choosing multicultural poetry for lessons designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of students (2002, 32). She specified that poetry lessons should contain works by poets who are from many countries and who write about living in all kinds of circumstances (32). Tiedt's pedagogy in the end was about the unique ability of multicultural poetry to enhance a child's view of content in the classroom as well as events in the world (154).

Booth and Moore's poetry handbook for elementary teachers covered poetry appreciation and poetry writing, and made particular note of reasons to include contemporary, multicultural poetry by living poets in children's curricula and choices for independent reading (2003). Manning noted the importance of keeping classroom libraries stocked with current poetry titles, especially those with social studies, science, and math as their subject, and she mentioned how repeatedly reading the same poem aloud improved children's reading fluency (2003). Manning also discussed technical aspects of poetry and how they facilitate a poem's meaning, but warned against using technical language (86). Fluency expert Timothy Rasinski reiterated Manning's call for repeated reading, and highlighted its benefits for comprehension and word recognition (2003, 120). The next year, Barton and Booth published *Poetry Goes to School,* a simplified text which supplied novice teachers with nonthreatening ideas for writing and performing poems in the elementary classroom (2004).

That year, Linaberger admonished teachers to be fearless in encouraging students to write poetry as well as read it, offering current student work as proof that following an adapted version of Kenneth Koch's methods thirty years after he wrote them was still an effective way to teach poetry writing (2004). Similarly, Janine Certo adapted Koch's concept of extracting a poetry "idea," or writing stimulus, from great poetry (2004). Certo's method was to introduce great poems chosen especially for their appeal to children and then to find a link from that poem to writing assignment for a poem children would write on their own. The link could be a dialogue poem between voices introduced in the great poem (read: poem written for adults), or a poetic tour of a place described. Certo insisted the link be loosely defined. She characterized poetry links as connections to the students' world, resulting from class brainstorming sessions after reading the poem aloud (2004, 270).

In recent years, Kovalcik and Certo used adult poems suggested by Koch to teach literary devices to primary age children (2007). If anything, Certo and Linaberger adopted regressive measures to inspire student writers, choosing adult poetry for the classroom despite a surge in published poetry for children that began in the 1990s (Loer 1990).

Poetry Pedagogy or Reading Instruction?

Heitman brought the focus of teaching poetry back to skills-based instruction – particularly literacy skills – finding best results in classrooms where teachers used the study of poetry for "practice and reinforcement of language elements" (2003, xi). She called attention to the particular use of poetry to teach fundamental phonological

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awareness, saying that simply reading poems aloud will "improve ... students' literacy for life" (xiii). For example, with early readers, she suggested common sense poetry methods like using haiku and cinquain to teach syllabication, and rhyme or sound repetition to encourage phonetic awareness. *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians and Teachers Using Poetry to Foster Literacy* contains dozens of poetry exercises to introduce students to traditional poetry forms (Heitman 2003).

Around the time *Rhymes and Reasons* was published in 2003, it became difficult to categorize literature that used reading research to show the unique place of poetry in language and literacy acquisition. Were these books and articles about teaching writing, teaching reading, or teaching poetry? For example, noted writing teacher Lucy Calkins included a long unit for teaching poetry to primary-age children in the series *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum* (2003). She and co-author Stephanie Parsons placed their emphasis on transferability of skills from writing poetry to writing prose, rather than on using poetry as a tool for understanding and appreciation in daily curriculum – and with the stroke of a key on a word processor, poetry pedagogy was co-opted by yet another school subject.

Calkins and Parsons explored poetry skills that had meaningful and immediate impact on students' prose, like concentrating ideas into just a few words, stretching metaphors across a poem, and using comparison and poetic language to convey feeling (2003). The lessons focused intently on the music of language, entreating children to listen to natural breaks in speech patterns in order to determine line breaks (11).

Teachers following Calkins's units exposed children to so much prose in other units of study that spotting natural patterns in poems was second nature to them. In the end, *Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages* is a writing text that uses poetry writing as its medium, mining freely the poetry pedagogy of the time (2003). So is Lipson's workbook *Writing Success Through Poetry,* which included a set of poetry response lessons as a precursor to teaching children how to write a traditional five-paragraph theme (2006).

Glenna Davis Sloan's poetry textbook for teachers lamented the lack of published research connecting poetry pedagogy to literacy, but noted that anecdotal evidence from the lives of great poets like Yeats and Dylan Thomas suggested that raising children around the particular language of poetry has the power to promote literacy (2003). The next year, Hanauer published a book that focused on the transformational power of poetry when used in teaching language to young children (2004). He marked the point at which poetry begins to influence literacy as the moment when children establish a personal relationship with the poem and its language. This could be when they took part in a reading, or when they were able to explain a poem on their own terms. In particular, Hanauer noticed that participating in poetry readings prompted children to want to read or hear more. It followed that once a child constructed meaning from the poem, the child would want to write such language independently (2004, 30-32). Hanauer argued for poetry to be a part of a new kind of literacy activity that creates personal meaning at the same time that it creates a new set of skills (88).

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Korina Jocson expanded this idea in her account of the success of Poetry for the People, a poetry in the schools program which took new methods of poetry writing to upper grade urban students (2006). Connecting poetry writing to literacy meant new definitions of what literacy was to these students, whose life circumstances fell so totally outside the traditional that to use known definitions of reading and writing would have been to negate the classroom experience altogether. Poetry for the People used a socio-cultural definition of literacy – and of poetry – instead, and the success of the student writers signaled the oncoming redefinition of poetry pedagogy as a whole.

Stanley, on the other hand, praised poetry as a teaching tool in literacy instruction, noting that the act of teaching children about poetry – in particular, children's poetry – covers each of the necessary skills for literacy acquisition (2004). His guide to using poetry in the reading classroom offered a compelling argument that teaching poetry may be the best way to teach literacy skills to struggling readers in particular (2004, 119). The book coupled his enthusiasm for the genre with his research-based ideas for bringing those skills into the reading center. In the end, *Creating Readers With Poetry* provided an apt, comprehensive literacy pedagogy for teachers seeking to tap into the skills-building power of poetry as a genre.

Kane and Rule affirmed the ability of poetry to build academic skills, particularly when teachers present poetry linked to subject matter (2004). Similarly, Miguez made the case for presenting poetry in collaborative units designed with classroom teachers, particularly as a way to restore children's sense of delight in the library that can be

eclipsed by standardized testing (2005). She used poetry centers in the library with activities designed by collaborating teachers to coordinate with curriculum.

In 2002, poet and performer Sara Holbrook published *Wham! It's a Poetry Jam*, with tips on hosting child-friendly festivals of recitations, choral readings, and call-and-response poetry; the book is also an anthology of Holbrook's poetry written for performance. The concept of performance poetry is grounded in research showing the benefits to language acquisition of reading poems aloud, but the book considers the finer points of public speaking more than it does the end effect of listening to such performances (2002).

Still, Holbrook's work implied that a literary genre which holds up well to being shouted, read in chorus, or spoken in a round may be just enough to prod a reluctant reader into new efforts in reading. She followed with *Outspoken! How to Improve Writing and Speaking Skills Through Poetry Performance,* which defined clearly how student written poetry performed in public can bring language arts classes in conformation with national language arts standards for speech and communication (2006). Holbrook and her collaborator, Michael Salinger, discussed the Poetry Slam movement and how writing poetry specifically for performance can sharpen a child's use of figurative language, characterization, and imagery – skills which in turn influence other types of student composition. Their units of study cover writing and performing memoirs, collaborative writing, and staging poetry performances in the schools. The book includes a DVD documenting Salinger's experience staging one school's poetry performance.

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Poetry Pedagogy Redefined

Holbrook and Salinger's work predicted a new path for poetry pedagogy in the late 2000s. Where mid-decade scholarship explained poetry's place as a mediator for language and literacy acquisition, poetry pedagogy of the present day places poetry firmly in the classroom and library of every school, defining it as a form of language that transcends efforts at dry analysis and tedious dissection while bringing joy to students. Where some saw the need to justify poetry instruction as standards-compliant or research-proven, current scholarship qualifies poetry as integral to the elementary school curriculum because it is a natural extension of the writer and reader's lives, and a powerful tool to explain the sometimes unexplainable (Vardell 2006, 4).

Sylvia M. Vardell's *Poetry Aloud Here! Sharing Poetry With Children in the Library* carefully considers the promotion and teaching of children's poetry in the library, explaining why it should be a priority to teachers and librarians (2006). Vardell redefines poetry pedagogy as a function of the way children perceive and appreciate poetry, rather than a way of simply facilitating literacy learning or writing instruction. While she includes practioners' tested methods for using poems as instructional tools, the heart of the book examines how librarians and teachers can reclaim poetry's place in children's education in a way that preserves instead of destroying their interest in it (4-6). By considering which poets and types of poetry children generally enjoy and then showing how to present poetry to children in the library, the book confirms that "just reading, listening to, performing, and responding to poetry offers rich learning experiences in and

of itself" (12), a marked departure from the marginalization of poetry as learning tool just a few years earlier.

Alison Kelly used informal interviews with children to assess what children in the United Kingdom liked about poetry after five years of studying it (2005). Most salient for a child-centered, non-threatening pedagogy were comments that betrayed what children actually thought about poetry – "rhyming poems are much better in general", as opposed to what they had been told to say about it – "it doesn't have to rhyme" (2005, 131). Children clearly favored poetry written in their time about their lives and circumstances (131). Kelly posited that responding in the classroom to these children's views about poetry – within the limits of the United Kingdom's National Literacy Strategy – would give children a richer view of poetry and poetic language (133).

Current poetry pedagogy maintains its child-centeredness, especially in its methodology. Faver's use of repeated reading of poetry in the classroom is structured around the psychological and social benefits that fluency brings to reluctant readers (2008). Likewise, Gill pointed out that poetry written for children is generally pleasing to them and is more approachable to the young mind than poetry from the adult canon (2007). She argued convincingly that libraries should contain large anthologies and collections by children's poets in order to fight the misconception that only adult poetry is well-written enough for instruction (2007, 624).

Maisha Fisher's *Writing in Rhythm: Spoken Word Poetry in Urban Classrooms* discusses the extension of poetry pedagogy to an after-school poetry writing group in a Bronx high school, where spoken word poetry became the *lingua franca* of a group of

inner city students who needed a place after school to process the daily events of their lives (2007). Fisher documented how the group learned to write and analyze each other's work in a process remarkably similar to any other collaborative poetry class – but framed by the difficult life circumstances of the urban classroom. The book continued the restructuring of traditional poetry pedagogy in its embrace of the rhythm of the street and its role in the life of the student, validating spoken word poetry as a new poetic form that values repetition and voice as much as meter and metaphor.

Sekeres and Gregg integrated poetry through every aspect of the day for a third-grade group of struggling readers, utilizing repeated reading and a series of manageable poetry lessons to bring structure and repetition to the classroom (2007). The technique was a unique pairing of poetry pedagogy with the goals of literacy instruction, and in the end, produced a classroom of fluent readers who loved poetry (466).

Near the end of the decade, poet and teacher Georgia Heard and education professor Lester Laminack constructed a three-part poetry teaching series called *Climb Inside a Poem,* which firmly established poetry pedagogy as a natural extension of the primary-age curriculum (2007 and 2008). The series comprised three parts – a book of twenty-nine poems by established, living, multicultural children's poets, published in big-book format; a book consisting of one week of lessons to go along with each poem; and a book of ideas for bringing general poetry reading and writing into the classroom for a full year. Heard and Laminack insisted that poetry must be included in the ritual of the primary grade classroom, fully integrated into a "poetry-rich environment" where teachers help students to see poetry in everyday objects and events (9-10). They

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established poetry read-alouds as a part of the school day, using poetry to make transitions from one part of the school day to another. They included poetry to open the day and to clarify content as work came to a close (55). The activities for *Climb Inside a Poem* take advantage of Heard's years of success as a poet in the schools, carefully observing what works with children as they hear, read, and write their first poems. The series itself is a comprehensive approach to poetry pedagogy, carefully assembling in material and in spirit the tools for making poetry a powerful force for humor and linguistic gratification in the lives of young children.

Teaching Poetry in the Twenty-first Century

Defining poetry pedagogy means understanding poetry as a literary genre that took a manifest beating from those who misunderstood and misused it in classrooms during the first part of the twentieth century. The visionary pedagogy of Heard, Koch, Collom and other poets in the schools who turned teachers and children away from poetry analysis and toward creative expression led the way for the teachers who refused to surrender their own joy of rhyme, rhythm, and meter to those who feared that poetry was a form of mathematic exercise. They prepared and maintained the field for scholars who discovered that children's language acquisition and reading ability blossomed when they listened to poetry and read it aloud. Rekindling interest in and use of poetry in the curriculum has paralleled a recent rise in the number of poets writing expressly for schoolchildren who live in a world of plentiful and diverse cultures.

This selected review of the literature suggests that in modern poetry pedagogy, model librarians and teachers in the twenty-first century read poetry aloud and include it

in their daily routines. They read poetry to students to start the day, to introduce new topics, to conclude old ones, and to smooth the transitions between them. Children read poetry aloud and they perform it – for themselves, for each other, for the school. They reinforce content knowledge; they practice oral language; they learn what parts of which words belong where and why. And at the same time, they laugh over rhyme and pound out rhythm – inspiring them to remember that which they otherwise might forget. Children learn about the world and its people by associating familiar people and events with sounds and words in poems written specifically for the young.

Poetry pedagogy that is child-centered, however, cannot thrive in a school where access to poetry resources is limited or where those resources are outdated and neglected. In fact, the history of poetry's use in the curriculum sets the stage for inquiry about the condition, nature, and number of poetry resources available for use in the library and in the classroom.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study answers the research question: *What are the distinguishing features of elementary school library poetry collections in a large school district?* Hypotheses for this cross-sectional sample suggest the condition of the poetry collection at the time of data collection, along with associations that are likely between variables:

H_1. *These poetry collections are smaller than the size recommended by experts in the field of collection development.* Authorities in the field of collection development for school libraries suggest that the collection should comprise five percent poetry (Morris 2004, 339).

H_2. *The average age of poetry collections exceeds state standards for an acceptable elementary school collection.* According to the state standards in Texas, the average age of an acceptable school library collection should be less than fifteen years. (Texas State Library 2004).

H_3. *Older poetry collections circulate less than newer collections.* This hypothesis predicts a relationship between the age of the poetry collection and circulation of the poetry collection.

H₄. Larger poetry collections circulate more than smaller collections. This hypothesis predicts a relationship between the size of the poetry collection and circulation of the poetry collection.

H₅. Age and size of the poetry collection predict circulation of the poetry in an elementary school library. This hypothesis anticipates the potential of the data to assess the impact of age and size of the poetry collection on poetry circulation.

Research Design

This study described distinguishing characteristics of the elementary school library poetry collections in one large urban school district in Texas. Clearly, evaluating the ability of a school's poetry collection to support pedagogy and fulfill children's needs requires familiarity with its statistical strengths, deficiencies, and circulation trends in the current poetry collection, along with knowledge of how poetry was used by teachers in the classroom. Describing the poetry collections in the elementary school libraries in one school district gave a remarkable initial glimpse into those characteristics and whether or not they have a relationship with circulation of the poetry collection *per se.*

Cross-sectional Study

This was a cross-sectional observation which did not address causation, time order, or intervening or lurking variables. Since there was no experiment or treatment, the force of the results lay in the description of the distribution of statistics about one school district's poetry collections individually and together. The chief concern of this study was to characterize poetry collections in a group of elementary school libraries over a given

school year, without consideration for the state of the collections in previous or subsequent school years.

For this research, the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) Department of Library Media Services gave permission to examine the bibliographic records for the poetry collection in each of its elementary school libraries for the 2007-2008 school year, with the provision that no individual school be identified in the published results (see Appendix). The FWISD uses Follett's Destiny on-line catalog in the district's 124 libraries. Library statistics collected from the Destiny catalogs of seventy-two elementary schools in the FWISD provided the data for this study.

Sampling

This study utilized nonprobability, purposive sampling in order to ensure complete representation of the variables to be studied and the largest sample possible. The FWISD has nearly 80,000 students, and during the 2007-2008 school year, the district had seventy-nine elementary schools. From that sampling frame, the design eliminated one library because the school's year-round calendar prevented analysis of circulation statistics for a given traditional school year. The design exempted seven other libraries because they did not serve students in grade levels pre-kindergarten through grade five, thereby minimizing extraneous variability and providing for roughly the same patron base across the sample. The final sample consisted of seventy-two elementary school serving children in pre-kindergarten through grade five.

Data Collection and Variables

To facilitate data collection, the FWISD Department of Library Media Services provided administrator access to the online catalog, which made reports containing library statistics available from a single computer terminal. Statistics collected from reports generated by the catalogs of each library in the sample provided the data for this study. Reports disclosed six variables for analysis in this research as those variables existed for the 2007-2008 school year for each school's library – age of the collection, age of the poetry collection, size of the collection, size of the poetry collection, circulation of the collection, and circulation of the poetry collection. For the seventh variable, percentage of the collection comprising poetry, the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) calculated the number of items in the poetry collection as a percentage of each library's entire collection (see Table 1).

Table 1

Variables of Interest

Size of the collection

Size of the poetry collection

Percentage of the collection comprising poetry

Age of the collection

Age of the poetry collection

Circulation of the collection

Circulation of the poetry collection

Four reports provided data for this research. The first, *Collection Statistics Summary*, provided the age and size of the collection for each library. Figure 1 shows an example of this report for the collection of one elementary library. Follett's Destiny on-line catalog explains in its help files that the catalog software calculates age of the collection from the publication date taken from the MARC record for a given title. The catalog program looks first at the fixed field, and then at the publication date in the 260 field. If the publication year is cataloged as a range of years, the Destiny program uses the first year shown.

The same report generated through additional filters allows the administrator to drill down within a given Dewey Decimal System classification in order to find the age and size of a given segment of the collection. For this study, the detailed report included the age and size of the poetry collection in each library. Figure 2 shows the report for the Dewey 800s, broken down by 1s in order to find the age and size of the school's poetry collection (Dewey 811). The catalog also presents the size of this library's poetry collection as a percentage of the larger collection in the final column.

The catalog's circulation snapshot entitled *Library Info* provides circulation statistics of the collection for a given time period. For this study, dates that the district's libraries were open for circulation during the 2007-2008 school year defined the beginning and end of this study's cross-section of library circulation. Figure 3 illustrates this report, which provided circulation data for each library for that period.

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	Age		Circulations		Collection
Range	Copies w/ Dates	Average Age	This Year	Total	Copy Count
000 - 099	191 [100.00%]	1998 [10 yrs.]	1 [00.02%]	17 [00.02%]	191 [01.62%]
100 - 199	43 [97.73%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	3 [00.06%]	48 [00.06%]	44 [00.37%]
200 - 299	28 [100.00%]	1993 [15 yrs.]	6 [00.11%]	52 [00.07%]	28 [00.24%]
300 - 399	883 [99.21%]	1993 [15 yrs.]	241 [04.58%]	2,700 [03.65%]	890 [07.56%]
400 - 499	90 [100.00%]	1992 [16 yrs.]	11 [00.21%]	204 [00.28%]	90 [00.76%]
500 - 599	1,938 [99.90%]	1997 [11 yrs.]	760 [14.46%]	13,479 [18.22%]	1,940 [16.47%]
600 - 699	581 [100.00%]	1995 [13 yrs.]	122 [02.32%]	2,764 [03.74%]	581 [04.93%]
700 - 799	323 [99.38%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	175 [03.33%]	1,861 [02.52%]	325 [02.76%]
800 - 899	247 [99.60%]	1993 [15 yrs.]	42 [00.80%]	589 [00.80%]	248 [02.11%]
900 - 999	842 [99.53%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	79 [01.50%]	1,076 [01.45%]	846 [07.18%]
AUD	4 [66.67%]	1988 [20 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	6 [00.05%]
AV	8 [50.00%]	2006 [2 yrs.]	9 [00.17%]	48 [00.06%]	16 [00.14%]
B	527 [100.00%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	62 [01.18%]	1,052 [01.42%]	527 [04.48%]
CL	31 [96.88%]	1982 [26 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	84 [00.11%]	32 [00.27%]
CONY	1 [100.00%]	2004 [4 yrs.]	1 [00.02%]	2 [00.00%]	1 [00.01%]
E	3,090 [99.97%]	1991 [17 yrs.]	2,085 [39.66%]	28,691 [38.78%]	3,091 [26.25%]
F	1,933 [100.00%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	1,022 [19.44%]	15,035 [20.32%]	1,933 [16.41%]
FIC	1 [100.00%]	1987 [21 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	4 [00.01%]	1 [00.01%]
KIT	2 [66.67%]	1988 [20 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	1 [00.00%]	3 [00.03%]
NP	1 [100.00%]	2003 [5 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	1 [00.01%]
PROF	5 [83.33%]	1995 [13 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	6 [00.05%]
REF	4 [100.00%]	1994 [14 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	5 [00.01%]	4 [00.03%]
SAG	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	1 [00.01%]
SP	849 [99.53%]	1996 [12 yrs.]	632 [12.02%]	6,125 [08.28%]	853 [07.24%]
TAK	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	1 [00.01%]
VT	116 [99.15%]	1990 [18 yrs.]	6 [00.11%]	98 [00.13%]	117 [00.99%]
No Call #	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
Temporary	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	52 [00.07%]	0 [00.00%]
	11,738	1994 [14 yrs.]	5,257	73,987	11,776

School A
Collection Age Report
Call numbers grouped by Dewey.

Figure 1. Follett Destiny *Collection Statistics Summary* for one elementary library, showing age and size of the collection.

	Age		Circulations		Collection
	School A				
	Collection Age Report				
	Call numbers grouped by Dewey.				
Range	**Copies w/ Dates**	**Average Age**	**This Year**	**Total**	**Copy Count**
810	2 [100.00%]	1999 [10 yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	5 [00.01%]	2 [00.02%]
811	201 [100.00%]	1995 [14 yrs.]	127 [00.68%]	427 [00.49%]	201 [01.68%]
812	1 [100.00%]	2007 [2 yrs.]	3 [00.02%]	6 [00.01%]	1 [00.01%]
813	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
814	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
815	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
816	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
817	0 [00.00%]	- [- yrs.]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]	0 [00.00%]
818	28 [100.00%]	1993 [16 yrs.]	91 [00.48%]	272 [00.31%]	28 [00.23%]
819	1 [100.00%]	1999 [10 yrs.]	2 [00.01%]	17 [00.02%]	1 [00.01%]
	233	1995 [14 yrs.]	223	727	233

Figure 2. Follett Destiny *Collection Statistics Summary* for one elementary library's Dewey 800s, showing age and size of the poetry collection.

Library Statistics for the date range 9/4/2007 to 5/22/2008

	Total Circulations	Total Holds Placed
Total	**29,117**	**11**

Report generated on 11/3/2008 at 1:18 AM

Figure 3. Follett Destiny *Library Info* report for one elementary library.

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The *Collection Statistics – Historical* report generated by Destiny provides

circulation statistics for a particular call number over a given time period. Figure 4

illustrates pages one and two of a sample *Collection Statistics – Historical* report for the

poetry collection in one elementary library. Follett notes in its Destiny catalog help files

that this report includes circulations for currently held copies and for copies that

circulated during the time frame but have since been deleted from the collection. The

program includes all checkouts, renewals, in-library use, and interlibrary circulation in

calculating circulation totals.

Collection Circulation Report

: Elementary School

Show Summary Only (Limited by call number, circulation date. See the final page of the report for limiter details.)

Call numbers grouped by Dewey number

Range	Circulations
811	152 [100.00%]
Totals	**152**

NOTE: The Collection Statistics Summary Report includes statistics for both current copies and copies that have been deleted.

Collection Circulation Report

: Elementary School

Show Summary Only (Limited by call number, circulation date. See the final page of the report for limiter details.)

Call numbers grouped by Dewey number

Circulation Dates: 9/4/2007 - 5/22/2008
Call Numbers: From '811' to '811'
Circulation Types: All circulation types

Figure 4. Follett Destiny *Collection Circulation Report*, pages 1 and 2.

Issues for Data Collection

Collecting existing data for each variable from the largest number of qualifying libraries provided the largest sample possible from this population. In addition, generating reports solely from the administrator client for the catalog eliminated the chance of non-response or librarian error had data been requested in survey form by individual librarians from each school.

Because errors are common in any library's transition to an automated catalog, the possibility existed for publication dates to be incorrect in the bibliographic records from these libraries, and in turn, for the catalog's calculations of age of the collection to be faulty. Accordingly, spot checks of a given group of poetry books classified in the Dewey 811 section of the library gave a brief look at whether or not records likely to have been entered by hand into the catalog of each library before automation at least had accurate publication dates.

In the literature, at least one informal survey has disclosed that most school library poetry collections have many titles by Jack Prelutsky (Vardell 2006), so for three of the libraries selected randomly from the sample, the WorldCat publication date for each Prelutsky title in the school's collection served as comparison against the date entered in the school library bibliographic record for that title. A visit to each school library in the spot check was not feasible; the campuses were separated by some distance, but more importantly, recalling the books from students and teachers in order to check publication dates could have interfered with instruction.

The results were unambiguous. For library number one, which showed twenty-four Prelutsky titles in its collection, every publication date was cataloged correctly. Library two held twelve Prelutsky titles, and all showed accurate publication dates in the catalog. Library three had eleven books by Prelutsky and showed one mistake in the publication date in the bibliographic record, a publication date of 1996 that should have been 1993. With ninety-eight percent of the books in the spot check showing correct publication dates in the online catalog, data collection proceeded as planned.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Measures of central tendency and variability (H1 and H2). A table shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the seven variables. For purposes of this study, the shape of each variable's distribution determined which measures best portrayed the central tendency of these collections. This table includes maximum and minimum values for each variable.

Univariate data comparison. For *H1,* a frequency table with grouped data shows the distribution of the size of the poetry collection in relation to the size of the larger collection in each library. For *H2,* two frequency tables using ungrouped data show the shape of the distribution of the age of the poetry collection and the shape of the distribution of the age of the larger collection.

Inferential Statistics

Pearson's r correlations (H3 and H4). Pearson's product moment correlations calculated among all seven variables flagged statistically significant relationships between those variables.

Multiple linear regression (H5). Multiple linear regression predicted circulation of the collection based on the age and size of the collection, and circulation of the poetry collection based on the age and size of the poetry collection. For this research, by controlling for the other indicator, the regression determined the extent to which circulation of the poetry collection had a linear relationship with age and size of the collection by predicting what portion of circulation of poetry books depends on two variables over which the school librarian has control.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study characterized the poetry collections in the elementary school libraries of the Fort Worth Independent School District. Specifically, the purpose of the research was to identify distinguishing features of the poetry collections in order to draw conclusions about the ability of these collections to support current trends in poetry pedagogy.

Descriptives

Seventy-two elementary school libraries provided the sample for this research. As shown in Table 1, the collections in the sample contained an average of 11,713 items (M = 11,713.74, SD = 2,890.14), and ranged from 6,635 to 19,199 items. The poetry collections contained an average of 197 items (M = 197.40, SD = 51.06), with holdings ranging from 92 to 347 items. The average percentage of the collection comprising poetry was 1.71%, and ranged from 1.13% to 2.60%. The average age of the collection was 14 years (M = 14.17, SD = 1.58) and ranged from 10 to 19 years. The average age of the poetry collection was slightly less than 14 years (M = 13.72, SD = 1.68), and ranged from 10 to 17 years.

The average circulation of the collection was 26,931 items (M = 26,931.49, SD = 15,797.17), and ranged from 5,569 to 75,298 items. The average circulation of the poetry collection was 170 items (M = 170.85, SD = 102.46), and ranged from 15 to 480 items.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of continuous variables

	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age of collection	72	14.17	1.58	10.00	19.00
Age of poetry collection	72	13.72	1.68	10.00	17.00
Size of collection	72	11715.74	2890.14	6635.00	19199.00
Size of poetry collection	72	197.40	51.06	92.00	347.00
Circulation of collection	72	26931.49	15797.17	5569.00	75298.00
Circulation of poetry collection	72	170.85	102.46	15.00	480.00
Percentage of collection comprising poetry	72	1.71	0.30	1.13	2.60

Size of the Collection

A grouping variable was created for collection size in order to classify libraries by intervals of collection size. The majority of the collections (80.6%) contained between 7,500 and 14,999 items. As shown in Table 3, the greatest proportion of collections contained 7,500 to 9,999 items (29.2%), followed by collections of 10,000 to 12,499 items (27.8%), and collections of 12,500 to 14,999 items (23.6%). Approximately fifteen percent (15.3%) of the collections contained more than 15,000 items, and less than five percent (4.2%) were made up of 7,499 items or fewer.

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Table 3

Frequencies and percentages for size of collection and size of poetry collection

	Frequency	%
Size of collection – categories		
Fewer than 7500	3	4.2
7,500 to 9,999	21	29.2
10,000 to 12,499	20	27.8
12,500 to 14,999	17	23.6
15,000 to 17,499	9	12.5
17,500 to 19,999	2	2.8
Size of poetry collection – categories		
Fewer than 125	3	4.2
125 to 149	9	12.5
150 to 174	13	18.1
175 to 199	16	22.2
200 to 224	13	18.1
225 to 249	5	6.9
250 to 274	8	11.1
275 to 299	1	1.4
300 to 324	3	4.2
325 to 349	1	1.4

Size of the Poetry Collection

A grouping variable was created for poetry collection size in order to classify libraries into groups by intervals of poetry collection size. Analyses revealed that three-fourths of the poetry collections (76.4%) contained between 150 and 274 items. The largest proportion consisted of poetry collections contained 175 to 199 items (22.2%), followed by poetry collections of 150 to 174 items (18.1%), and poetry collections of 200 to 224 items (18.1%). Approximately one-fifth of the poetry collections contained holdings ranging from 225 to 274 items (18.0%), followed by poetry collections of 275 to 324 items (5.6%), and poetry collections of 325 to 349 items (1.4%). Approximately ten percent of the poetry collections consisted of 125 to 149 items (12.5%), and less than five percent (4.2%) contained fewer than 125 volumes (see Table 3 and Figure 5).

Percentage of the Collection Comprising Poetry

A new variable facilitated analysis of the poetry collections by calculating the percentage of each collection comprising poetry. The percentage of the collection comprising poetry was classified into seven groups based on intervals of the percentage of the collection comprising poetry, which in turn facilitated descriptive analysis. The analysis revealed that nearly sixty percent (58.4%) of these libraries held poetry collections that accounted for 1.5% to 2.0% of the collection. Twenty percent of the libraries had poetry collections comprising 1.25% to 1.49% of the collection, and seven percent (6.9%) had poetry holdings that made up less than 1.25% of their total collections. Less than three percent (2.8%) had poetry holdings accounting for more than 2.25% of their collections (see Table 4 and Figure 6).

Size of the collection

Size of the poetry collection

Figure 5. Bar graph illustrating frequencies and percentages for size of collection and size of poetry collection

Table 4

Frequencies and percentages for percentage of collection comprising poetry

	Frequency	Percentage of sample
Poetry items in collection - categories		
Less than 1.25%	5	6.9
1.25% to 1.49%	14	19.4
1.50% to 1.74%	20	27.8
1.75% to 1.99%	22	30.6
2.00% to 2.24%	9	12.5
2.25% to 2.49%	1	1.4
2.50% to 2.74%	1	1.4

Percentage of the collection comprising poetry
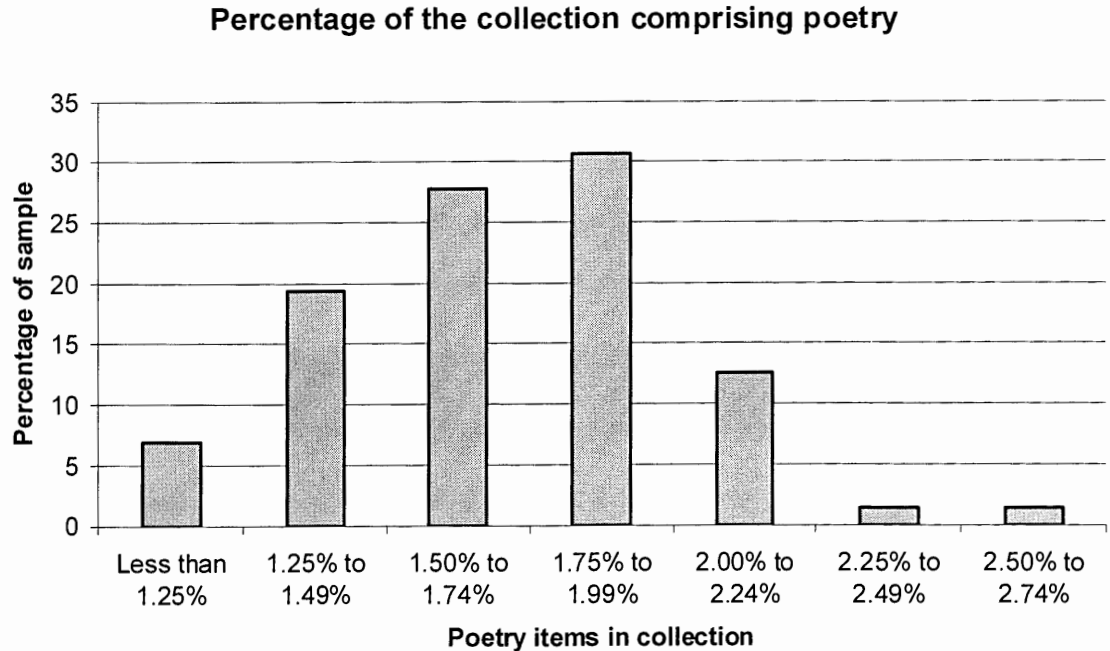
Figure 6. Bar graph illustrating frequencies and percentages for percentage of collection comprising poetry

Age of the Collection

A descriptive analysis of the ages of the collections revealed that roughly eighty-five percent (86.2%) were between 13 and 16 years old. As shown in Figure 7 and Table 5, the greatest proportion of collections were 14 years old (29.2%) followed by collections aged 13 years (22.2%), 15 years (18.1%), and 16 years (16.7%). In addition, approximately ten percent of the collections were between 10 and 12 years old (9.8%), and less than five percent of the collections were between 17 and 19 years old (4.2%).
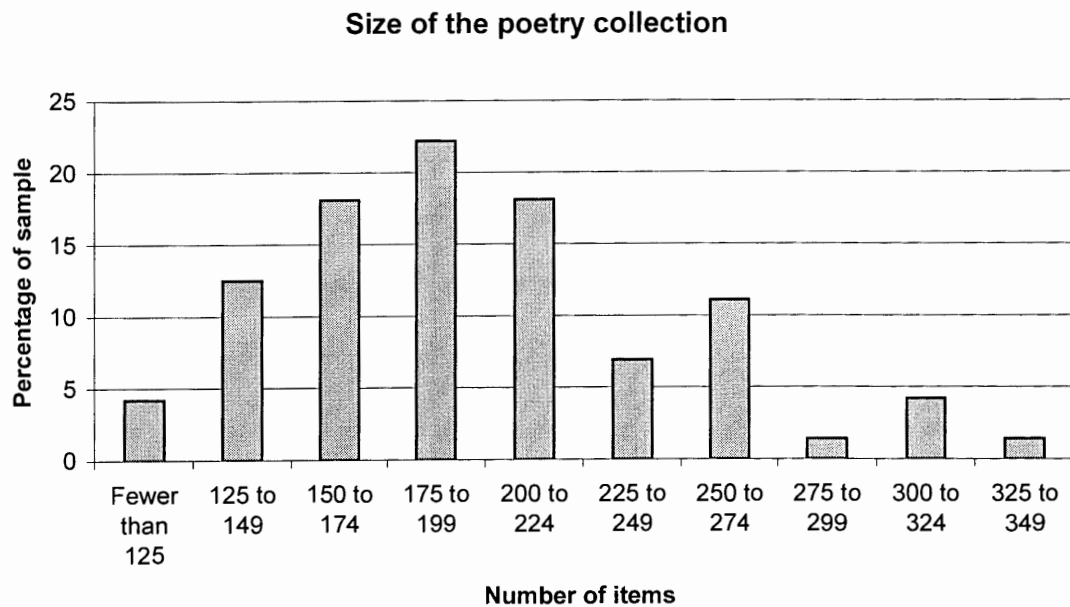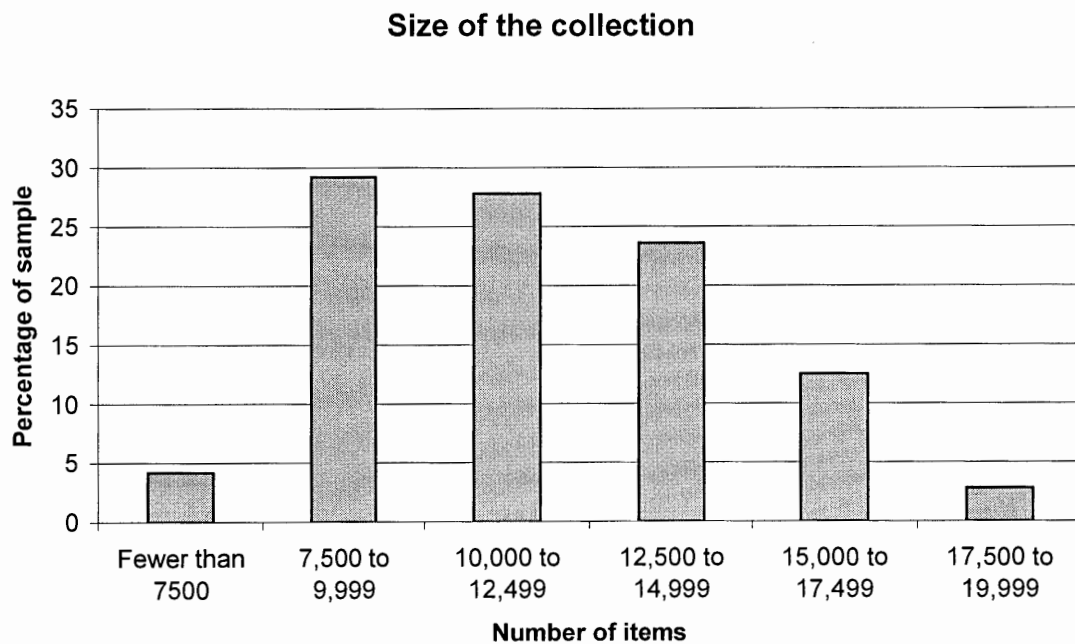
Age of the collections
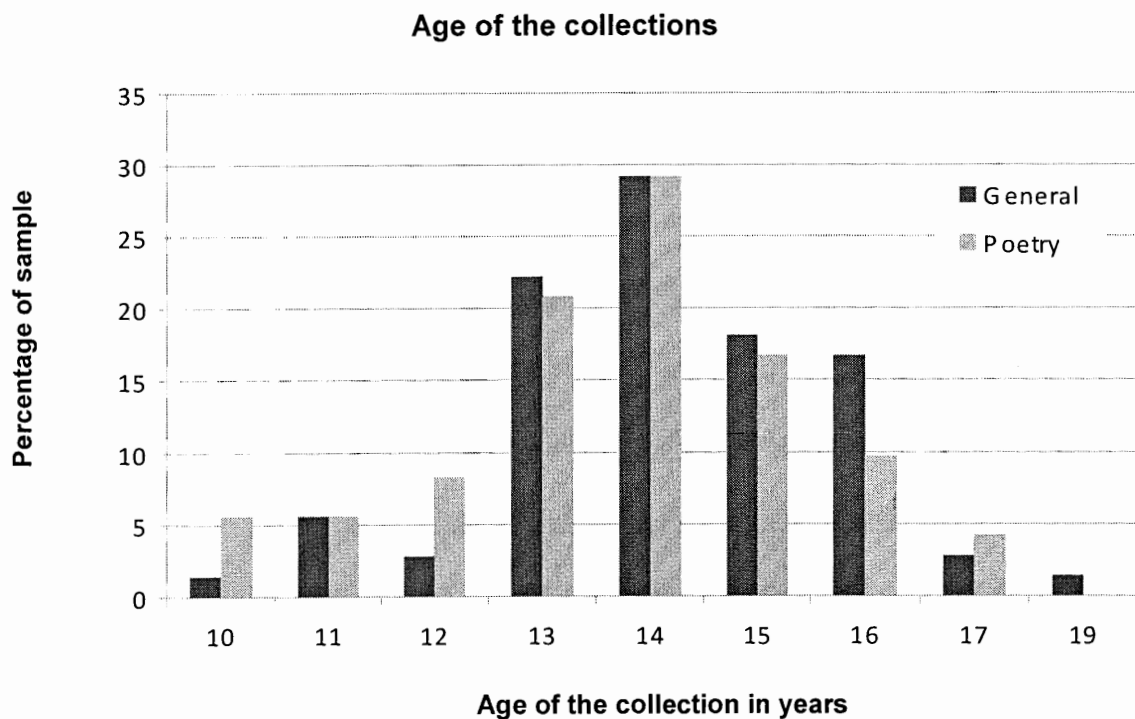
Figure 7. Bar graph illustrating frequencies and percentages for age of the collection and age of the poetry collection

Table 5

Frequencies and percentages for age of the collection and age of the poetry collection

	Frequency	%
Age of collection		
10 years	1	1.4
11 years	4	5.6
12 years	2	2.8
13 years	16	22.2
14 years	21	29.2
15 years	13	18.1
16 years	12	16.7
17 years	2	2.8
19 years	1	1.4
Age of poetry collection		
10 years	4	5.6
11 years	4	5.6
12 years	6	8.3
13 years	15	20.8
14 years	21	29.2
15 years	12	16.7
16 years	7	9.7
17 years	3	4.2

Analyses also revealed that approximately two-thirds of the poetry collections in the sample (66.7%) were between 13 and 15 years old. The greatest proportion of poetry collections were 14 years old (29.2%), followed by poetry collections 13 years old (20.8%), and 15 years old (16.7%). In addition, approximately one-fifth (19.5%) of the

poetry collections were between 10 and 12 years old, and less than five percent (4.2%) of the poetry collections were 17 years old (see Table 5).

Circulation of the Collections

A grouping variable was created for circulation of the collection in order to classify libraries by intervals of circulation of the collection. Descriptive analyses, in turn, allowed exploration of circulation of the collection. As shown in Table 6, less than ten percent (8.3 %) of the participating libraries had collections with circulation of fewer than 10,000 items. Results also disclosed that three fourths of the collections had a circulation ranging from 10,000 to 39,999 items. The largest proportion of circulation consisted of 20,000 to 29,999 items (30.6%), followed by circulations of 10,000 to 19,999 items (27.8%) and 30,000 to 39,999 items (16.7%). Approximately ten percent of the collections had circulation ranging from 40,000 to 49,999 items (5.6%) and from 50,000 to 59,999 items (5.6%). Finally, roughly five percent (5.6%) of the collections had circulation greater than 60,000 items.

A grouping variable was created for circulation of the poetry collection in order to classify libraries by intervals of circulation of the poetry collection. Descriptive analyses, in turn, allowed exploration of the circulation of the poetry collection. As shown in Table 6, three fourths of libraries had poetry collection circulation consisting of 50 to 249 volumes. The largest proportion of poetry collection circulation consisted of 100 to 149 volumes (26.4%), followed by poetry collection circulation of 150 to 199 volumes (19.4%), 50 to 99 volumes (16.78%) and 200 to 249 volumes (12.5%). Approximately ten percent of poetry collection circulation consisted of 250 to 349 volumes (11.1%).

Further, seven percent of libraries had poetry collection circulation of 350 to 499

volumes. Approximately seven percent of poetry collection circulations were made up of

fewer than 50 volumes (6.9%).

Table 6

Frequencies and percentages for circulation of the collection and circulation of the

poetry collection

	Frequency	%
Circulation of collection - categories		
fewer than 10,000	6	8.3
10,000 to 19,999	20	27.8
20,000 to 29,999	22	30.6
30,000 to 39,999	12	16.7
40,000 to 49,999	4	5.6
50,000 to 59,999	4	5.6
60,000 to 69,999	2	2.8
70,000 to 79,999	2	2.8
Circulation of poetry collection – categories		
fewer than 50	5	6.9
50 to 99	12	16.7
100 to 149	19	26.4
150 to 199	14	19.4
200 to 249	9	12.5
250 to 299	6	8.3
300 to 349	2	2.8
350 to 399	1	1.4
400 to 449	2	2.8
450 to 499	2	2.8

Circulation of the collection
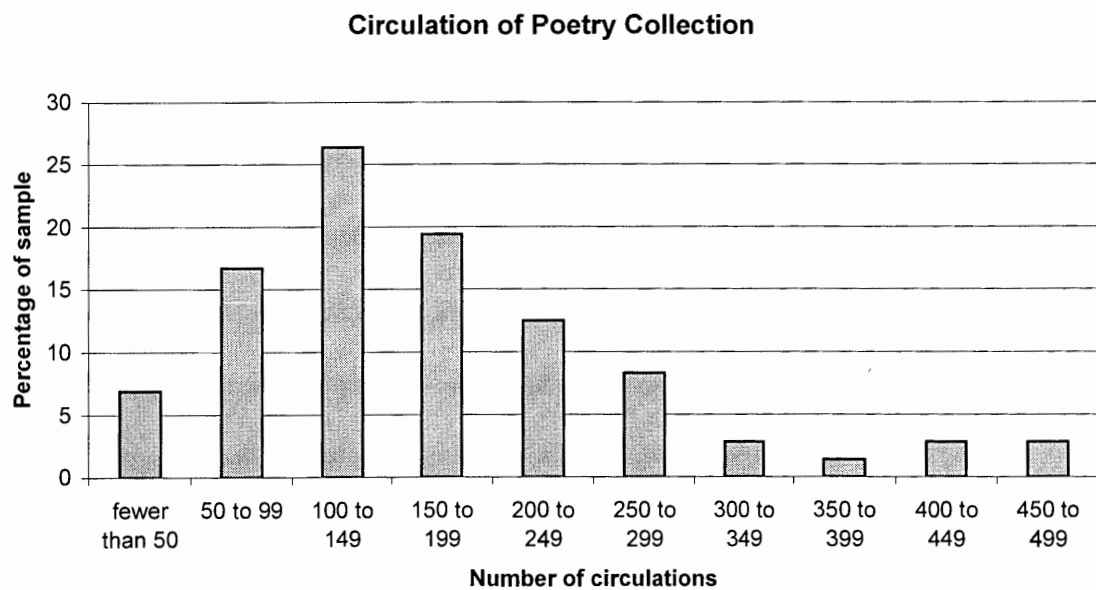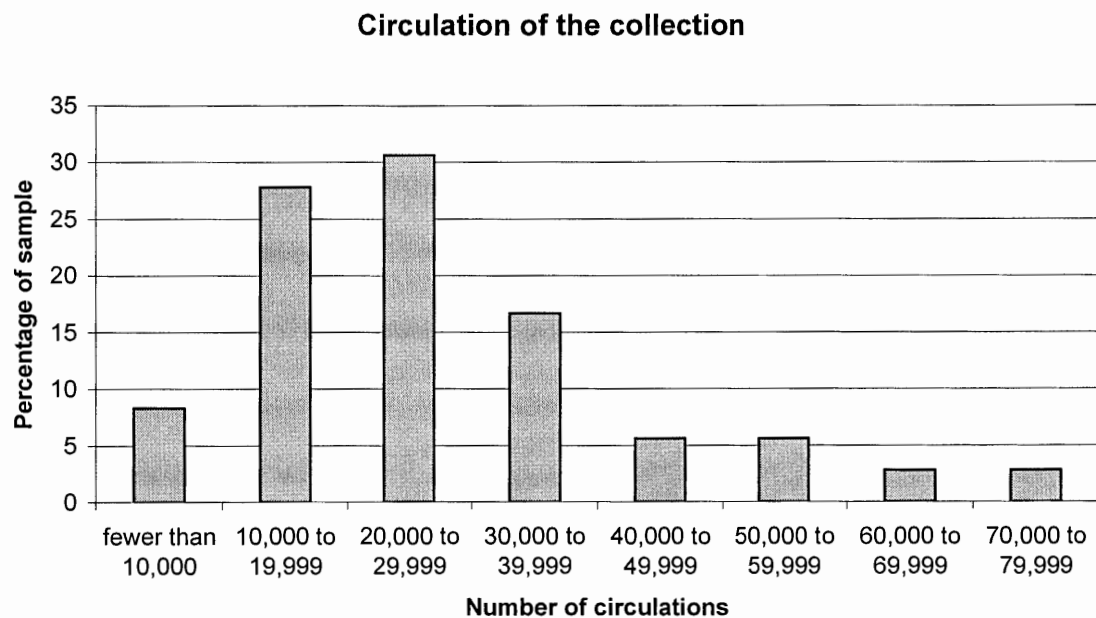

Circulation of Poetry Collection

Figure 8. Bar graph illustrating frequencies and percentages for circulation of the collection and circulation of the poetry collection

Relationships Among Collections and Poetry Collections

Pearson's product moment correlations were conducted in order to examine the relationships between the individual survey items. Pearson's product moment correlations are used to examine relationships between continuous variables measured on interval or ratio scales. Correlation coefficients can range between -1.00 and +1.00. A positive correlation indicates that increases in one variable are associated with increases in the other variable. A negative correlation, on the other hand, indicates that decreases in one variable are associated with increases in the other variable. Correlation coefficients close to 0 indicate a weak relationship or a lack of a relationship between variables.

Table 7 displays correlation coefficients for the relationships among the variables for the collections and the poetry collections. The results revealed a significant and positive correlation between age of collection and age of poetry collection, r (72) = .785, $p < .001$, where an increase in the age of a library's collection was associated with an increase in the age of the poetry collection. Further, the results showed significant and negative correlations between the age of a collection and circulation of the collection, r (72) = -.333, $p < .01$, and circulation of poetry collection, r (72) = -.340, $p < .01$. An increase in age of collection was associated with a decreases in circulation of the collection and circulation of the poetry collection. The correlation coefficients for the relationship between age of collection and size of collection, and size of poetry collection and percentage of the collection comprising poetry were not significant.

Table 7

Pearson's product moment correlations of continuous variables

	Age of collection		Age of poetry collection		Size of collection		Size of poetry collection		Circulation of collection		Circulation of poetry collection
Age of collection	--										
Age of poetry collection	.785	**	--								
Size of collection	-.007		.023		--						
Size of poetry collection	.083		.064		.762	**	--				
Circulation of collection	-.333	**	-.237	**	.485	**	.276	*	--		
Circulation of poetry collection	-.340	**	-.418	**	.041		.162		.379	**	--
Percentage of collection comprising poetry	.142		.095		-.294	*	.373	**	-.243	*	.178

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Results showed significant and negative correlations between the age of the poetry collection and the circulation of the collection, r (72) = -.237, p < .05, and circulation of the poetry collection, r (72) = -.418, p < .001. An increase in the age of a library's poetry collection was associated with a decrease in the circulation of the collection and the circulation of the poetry collection.

Results revealed significant and positive correlation coefficients for the relationships between the size of a library's collection and the size of the poetry collection, r (72) = .762, p < .001, and circulation of collection, r (72) = .485, p < .001, where an increase in the size of the collection was associated with increases in the size of the poetry collection and the circulation of the collection. Results also showed a significant and negative correlation coefficient for the relationship between the size of the collection and the percentage of the collection comprising poetry, r (72) = -.294, p < .05. An increase in the size of the collection was associated with a decrease in the percentage of the collection comprising poetry. The correlation coefficient between the size of the collection and the circulation of the poetry collection, however, was not significant.

Results showed positive and significant relationships between the size of the poetry collection and the circulation of the collection, r (72) = .276, p < .05, and the percentage of the collection comprising poetry, r (72) = .373, p < .001. The relationship between size of the poetry collection and circulation of the poetry collection, however, was not significant. Further, results revealed a significant and positive correlation coefficient between circulation of the collection and circulation of the poetry collection, r (72) = .379, p < .001, where an increase in circulation of the collection was associated

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with an increase in circulation of the poetry collection. In addition, results showed a significant and negative correlation coefficient between circulation of the collection and percentage of the collection comprising poetry, r (72) = -.243, p < .05. Finally, the correlation coefficient between the circulation of the poetry collection and the percentage of the collection comprising poetry was not significant.

<center>Primary Analyses</center>

Multiple regression models were used to predict the circulation of collections and poetry collections. Multiple regression analysis is used with continuous dependent variables and categorical or continuous independent variables. The multiple regression analyses performed to predict the circulations of collections and poetry collections used the continuous independent variables labeled age and size of the collection, and age and size of the poetry collection. A positive beta coefficient for any included predictor means it is associated with an increase in the dependent variable; a negative beta coefficient for that predictor indicates it is associated with a decrease (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

This study used a multiple regression analysis in order to predict the circulation of the collections based on the available independent variables. The predictors included age of collection and size of collection. The overall model was significant, F (2, 69) = 18.02, p < .001, and accounted for 34.3% of the variance. The results indicated that age of collection and size of collection were significant predictors of circulation of the collection (see Table 8). Age of the collection was associated with a decrease in the circulation of collection (*Beta* = -.329, p < .001). In addition, controlling for age of the collection, as

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the size of collections increased, circulation of the collections also increased (*Beta* = .482, *p* < .001).

Table 8

Regression predicting circulation of the collection from age and size of the collection

	Unstandardized coefficients				
	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Age of collection	-3282.79	973.51	-0.33	-3.37	.001
Size of collection	2.64	0.53	0.48	4.94	.000

A second multiple regression analysis predicted the circulation of the poetry collection based on available independent variables. The predictors included age of the poetry collection and size of the poetry collection. The overall model was significant, F (2, 69) = 9.21, p < .001, and accounted for 21.1% of the variance. The results indicated that age of the poetry collection was a significant predictor of circulation of poetry collection (see Table 8). The size of poetry collection, however, was not a significant predictor of poetry collection circulation. The age of the poetry collection was associated with a decrease in the circulation of the poetry collection (*Beta* = -.430, p < .001).

Table 9

Regression predicting circulation of the poetry collection from age and size of the poetry collection

| | Unstandardized coefficients | | | | |
	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Age of poetry collection	-26.25	6.54	-0.43	-4.02	.000
Size of poetry collection	0.38	0.22	0.19	1.76	.082

Summary of Results

This study called for analysis of age, size, and circulation of the total collections and of the poetry collections of 72 elementary school libraries in one school district in order to characterize the poetry collections of the sample as they stood at the time of data collection. Descriptive statistics for the sample found that the average elementary school library held approximately 11,700 items in its collection, with a mean age of 14 years. The average library circulation totaled approximately 27,000 items. Poetry items in the average library totaled 1.71 percent of the total collection. The poetry collection in the average library contained approximately 200 items with an average age of just under 14 years and an average circulation of 170 items.

The analysis showed a relationship between an increase in the age of the collection and a decline in circulation of the total collection and of the poetry collection. There was a similar correlation between an increase in age of the poetry collection and a decline in circulation of the collection and the poetry collection. Results also showed that the larger the poetry collection, the smaller the percentage of the collection comprising poetry. Regression models predicted the circulation of the total collections and of the poetry collections in the sample. The model was significant, with age and size of the collection significant predictors of circulation of the total collection and of the poetry collection. Age of the poetry collection was a significant predictor of circulation for the poetry collection, but size was not. Overall, age and size of the poetry collection accounted for approximately 20% of the circulation of the poetry collection.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This research arose from a long-standing scholarly concern that the poetry

collections in many elementary school libraries decline in condition and size over time,

due partly to neglect in collection development and partly to a general unfamiliarity with

the established benefits of poetry to the lives and language of children (Harms and

Lettow 1987; Vardell 2006; Gill 2007; Sekeres and Gregg 2007). For this research, a

survey of selected literature in poetry pedagogy traced a gradual transition in teaching

practice from intensive memorization and painstaking poetry analysis; to using poetry as

a tool in literacy instruction; to sharing poetry with children in performance, read alouds,

and as introduction to academic content and to literature about many cultures. With an

eye toward gauging the ability of school libraries' poetry collections to support current

poetry pedagogy, this study addressed the research question: *What are the distinguishing*

features of elementary school library poetry collections in a large school district?

Findings

The results of the cross-sectional observation provide a snapshot of seventy-two

elementary school library poetry collections as they existed for the 2007-2008 school

year. Five hypotheses predicted the condition of these poetry collections as they were at

the time of data collection:

H_1. These poetry collections are smaller than the size recommended by experts in the field of collection development.

H_2. The average age of poetry collections exceeds state standards for an acceptable elementary school collection.

H_3. Older poetry collections circulate less than newer collections.

H_4. Larger poetry collections circulate more than smaller collections.

H_5. Age and size of the poetry collection predict circulation of the poetry in an elementary school library.

Values for seven variables describing the collections furnished the data set for analysis: age of the collection, age of the poetry collection, size of the collection, size of the poetry collection, circulation of the collection, circulation of the poetry collection, and percentage of the collection comprising poetry. Analysis of the data revealed a group of aging collections with poetry sections that are older and smaller than recommended and circulation generally below what their sizes would suggest.

Size of the Poetry Collection

H_1. These poetry collections are smaller than the size recommended by experts in the field of collection development. Recommendations for the ideal size of the poetry collection in an elementary school library – the Dewey 811s – are essentially inextricable from recommendations for the size of the entire Dewey 800s section. Morris suggests five percent of the collection should comprise titles in the 800s (2004, 339), a figure adopted by Kerby (2006, 50). The number is widely accepted in the profession to be the recommendation for the size of the elementary school poetry collection *de facto* for two

reasons. Many of the non-poetry books that in other libraries might be classified as literature in the 800s are classified as fiction in elementary school libraries, and cataloging for school libraries can be subject to pronounced variability in choice of Dewey classification for poetry. The Texas school library standards do not give specific guidelines for the size of segments of the library collection, specifying instead the number of items per student or a given size of the entire collection required for designation as a below standard, acceptable, recognized, or exemplary library program (2005).

Clearly, the data support the contention that the poetry collections in this study are smaller than recommended. The average size of the collection in this study was 11,713 items. The average poetry collection (the Dewey 811s) in the sample contained just 197 items, and the average percentage of the collection comprising poetry was 1.71 percent — about one-third the recommended size for the poetry collection. In fact, a sobering ninety percent of the poetry collections accounted for 2.24 percent or less of their respective overall collections. This is a most troubling statistic, indicating that almost all of the libraries in the study held poetry collections that were less than one-half the size recommended by Morris (2004) and Kerby (2006). To put the problem in perspective — in a library with a collection of 11,713 items, the poetry collection should number 586 items if the percentage of the collection comprising poetry were the five percent recommended by Morris and Kerby.

Age of the Poetry Collection

H₂. The average age of poetry collections exceeds state standards for an acceptable elementary school collection. The school library standards for Texas specify that overall average age of the collection should be less than fifteen years in order to meet the criteria for a rating of *acceptable* (2005). Yet the same standards merely touch on the unique nature of some segments of the collection, specifying only that librarians should pay "special attention … to specific disciplines" when it comes to managing the age of the collection (2005). The standards suggest no separate age for poetry or for any other smaller segment of the library collection.

The results of this study offer a picture of aging general collections averaging fourteen years old at the time of data collection. The average age of the poetry collections was a little less than fourteen years. Most of the poetry collections were between thirteen and fifteen years old. Certainly, the data do not support the hypothesis that these poetry collections would be older than fifteen years, which is the standard for an acceptable library collection. But the results indicate that one year from data collection, an additional twenty-nine percent of these collections are approaching fifteen years old and soon will be older than the standard without meticulous collection management. Unless librarians give the poetry collection priority, a sustainable age for the collection in these libraries will be difficult not only to establish, but to maintain, since such a large proportion is aging rapidly.

Circulation of the Poetry Collection

The average collection in this study circulated 26,931 times over the 2007-2008 school year. The poetry collections in this sample had 170 circulations during the same period, which means that poetry circulations accounted for just 0.63 percent of total circulation in the average library. The average collection in these libraries comprised 1.71 percent poetry.

Bertland (1991) and Greiner and Cooper (2007) suggest that size of a given segment of a library's collection should have a roughly equal association with its circulation. In a public library, if a segment of the collection takes up a bigger percentage of the entire collection than its use takes up of total circulation, the section may need to be weeded, or the library may be purchasing items that patrons do not want to check out as much as they do those in more popular areas of the library (Greiner and Cooper 2007, 118). For this sample, the average poetry collection was substantially larger than its use. But for school libraries, the discrepancy in size and use indicates the need for more than a change buying habits, and it certainly does not indicate a reduction in the poetry collection, since the size of the collection primarily is dictated by the curriculum and by experts in school library collection development (Morris 2004; Kerby 2006). Instead, the sharp discrepancy in this sample between size and use highlights the dramatically low circulation of the poetry collection over the 2007-2008 school year, even in light of the small average size of those collections. In particular, it suggests the need to approach the problem from another perspective — in this case, most likely by promoting the collection to students and teachers so that increased circulation can bring the numbers into line with

each other. Of course, the goal is congruence between use and a poetry collection that comprises the recommended five percent of the collection.

Correlations Between Variables, Additional Observations, and Regression Analysis

Other studies have confirmed the relationship of age of the collection with circulation (Bertland 1991; Ettelt 1986). In fact, weeding improves circulation in part because removing outdated resources from the collection can lower the age of the collection and allow newer, more appealing books to circulate more easily (Arizona State Library 2008). The results of this research revealed that the poetry collections followed general trends in association between age of a collection and its circulation, but not between size of a collection and its circulation.

H_3. Older poetry collections circulate less than newer collections. Predictably, for this sample, circulation of the poetry collection decreased as the poetry collections aged, supporting the hypothesis that older poetry collections circulate less than newer collections. This result follows documented trends from other circulation studies (Ettelt 1986).

H_4. Larger poetry collections circulate more than smaller collections. For this sample, the relationship between the size of the poetry collection and the circulation of the poetry collection was not significant — which indicates that larger poetry collections do *not* circulate more than smaller poetry collections as anticipated. This result signals that simply adding resources to the poetry collection to increase its size will not solve the problem of a collection that languishes without circulating in these libraries. Instead, careful management of the poetry collection should probably include particular attention

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to lowering the average age of the section and promoting poetry resources in order to boost circulation. Certainly, advocating the integration of poetry resources with curriculum could boost the visibility of the poetry collection and most likely its circulation, as well as making the case for a newer collection to correlate with current teaching in the content areas.

Additional observations. Analyzing the relationship between the size of the collection and the percentage of the collection comprising poetry offers an additional statistic that may help to explain the small size of these collections. For this study, the larger the size of the total collection in the libraries in the sample, the smaller the percentage of the collection comprising poetry. This worrisome finding very likely indicates that as they purchase new resources for their libraries, librarians are not buying poetry books in a quantity that would maintain the size of the poetry collection, much less build the poetry section to the goal of five percent of the collection.

H_5. Age and size of the poetry collection predict circulation of the poetry in an elementary school library. This study used multiple linear regression to find out how much of the circulation of the poetry collection was due to the age and size of the collection – two quantitative variables over which the librarian in charge of developing the poetry collection has exclusive control. The intent also was to discover what proportion of circulation of the poetry collection might be due to factors other than the age and size of the collection. The results of the analysis were telling — twenty-one percent of circulation of poetry was accounted for by age and size of the poetry collection, and age was a significant predictor of circulation. However, size of the poetry

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collection was *not* a significant predictor of circulation, and of course, nearly eighty

percent of the circulation of the collection was accounted for by variables not taken into

account by this research. But the message is clear: librarians seeking to manage an

elementary school poetry collection according to state standards must pay attention to the

ability of age of the collection to account for one-fifth of poetry circulation in the library,

and must monitor the age of the poetry collection with diligence.

Limitations

Although the results of a non-experimental, cross-sectional study are not

generalizable to elementary libraries outside the sample school district, meta-analysis of

the same statistics for a larger group of school districts' libraries would lend validity to

the research, and would diminish any question of sampling bias or error variability

inherent in analyzing the poetry collections in the libraries of only one district. An

additional limitation for this study is in the ability for an online catalog to account for in-

library use only to the extent that a librarian or patron is vigilant in reporting it. For

example, if a class visits the library and seven students use a poetry book and shelve it, its

use is not recorded; if it is collected and scanned into the system, the catalog records only

one use. Lancaster noted that actual circulation figures can be as much as six times what

is actually recorded (1993).

Another possible limitation of the study involves the issue of shelving the poetry

collection. Poetry can be classified in many sections of the elementary school library.

Some librarians place verse novels in the fiction section and book-length poems with

large illustrations in the picture book section. Accordingly, detailed analysis of the

bibliographic records of the libraries in the sample could reveal that the poetry collections are larger than holdings in the Dewey 811 section of the library would indicate. If so, those values would lend accuracy to the correlations and descriptive statistics for these collections, and could lead to more precisely targeted collection management.

Future Research

Extension of this study's cross-sectional design into a longitudinal observation would lend strength to relevant correlations and to the linear regression resulting from the data. For example, the negative correlation between the percentage of the collection that is poetry and the age of the collection would be highlighted by an analysis of the same poetry collections over a period of years, which in turn would provide data for tracking whether or not the decline in the percentage of the collection that is poetry continues as the collection grows over time. The Fort Worth Independent School District implemented Follett's Destiny online catalog in its elementary school libraries in August 2006, so analyzing the same data from three complete school years will be possible after May 2009.

Greiner and Cooper (2007) and Bertland (1991) discuss two statistical analyses that likely would provide a deeper understanding of the positive relationship between age and circulation of the poetry collections in the sample. Bertland calculated a relative use factor for collections in a middle school library by dividing a given collection's percent of circulation by its percent of the collection (1991, 92). The number allowed comparison of circulation among collections in the library without regard to the size of those collections. Comparing the relative use of books of different ages provided a method of

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assessing the impact of new materials on circulation. The same comparison for this sample would likely make the argument for newer poetry collections irrefutable.

Also, Greiner and Cooper suggest analyzing the turnover rate of the collection, which is circulation (expressed in number of items) divided by size of the collection (2007). The figure represents average use per item, if use were spread evenly across the collection. Greiner and Cooper note other researchers have proved that turnover rate is a better predictor of future use than linear regression (83). Results of similar analyses for the aging poetry collections in the sample for this research would add useful information to future studies, and would substantiate requests for funding for new resources.

The research design of this study lends itself to use by librarians or district library directors in analyzing other classifications in school libraries that might be neglected routinely. For example, school librarians often complain about the derelict state of the professional collection in their own libraries. Data revealing slackened circulation of the professional collection can support a request for funding, and it also can inform a school's instructional team when teachers don't look to the school library for professional materials – even when the school provides them. Use of the design of this study to build a model for detailed collection analysis across school districts may be the most important future application of the research.

Can These Collections Support Current Poetry Pedagogy?

A small, aged collection can still contain some gems . . . but I believe that the poetry collections and anthologies published after the early 1990s provide a better reflection of the varying interests, backgrounds, and everyday worlds of children today (Janet Wong, personal communication; 2009).

When spring approaches and her thoughts turn to the school's yearly Poetry Extravaganza, classroom teacher Angela Williams runs through the list of questions she hands out to help her students choose a poem in the library for the big day: Do you love this poem? Does it speak to you? Does it tell about something that has happened to you or is the subject something that you know about? Do you understand the words? Do you like the sound of it when you read it out loud? Do you want to read this poem to someone else because it is so good?

Clearly, her teaching methods make certain demands on the school library's poetry collection. Children cannot answer these questions without plenty of poetry books to thumb through, nor can Williams's students from Burundi and Cambodia connect emotionally with poems in thirty-year-old books written for white American adults. To support the needs of Williams's students, the collection must be fairly new, with titles by poets of color writing about many cultures. And for children to find poems that they can read aloud and that reflect circumstances they understand, poetry books in the collection must reflect authentic experience reflected in language that is memorable, rhythmic, and repetitious.

Williams's teaching mirrors poetry pedagogy as it has been defined for the twenty-first century, and as it is reflected in a review of the literature. Poetry matches a child's sense of play with words a child can remember. Poetry connects children emotionally to a subject by using language they understand to describe events they've experienced. Poetry written by poets of different cultures about the people of different cultures allows children to read their own stories and learn about others'. Poetry in every form provides connections to children who might be otherwise unreachable, whether through the language of the street or of the playground. Poetry provides a concise approach for teaching children about the content areas, particularly science, social studies, and mathematics. Read aloud and repeatedly, poetry can advance children's literacy, encouraging fluency and prompting phoneme recognition. Above all, to teach poetry in the modern age is to understand that reading and listening to poetry is itself a learning experience that can be transformative, linking the kind of language children love to hear to that which they will be reading and writing in school and throughout their lives (Vardell 2006; Kutiper and Wilson 1993).

The findings of this research indicate that the school libraries in the sample cannot support current methods in poetry instruction. With the average age of the poetry collection at fourteen years, it is fairly certain that there are recent award-winning anthologies, themed collections, multicultural poetry books, and other poetry titles for children missing from these collections. As children's poet Janet Wong noted, most multicultural poetry written especially for children has been a part of the resurgence in children's publishing over the past fifteen years, so collections that suffer from infrequent

updating will not contain the titles that speak directly to students from different cultures (2009). Librarians seeking to supply recent books of poetry about the content areas must replace them frequently, since particularly in science and social studies, books like Douglas Florian's *Dinothesaurus* (2009) rely on current research to make content relevant to curriculum, and can become obsolete within ten years after publication. Students and teachers depend on the library to provide recent resources that they can trust (Arizona State Library 2008). It stands to reason that poetry collections that support pedagogy must keep pace with the world that inspires them.

Likewise, the poetry collections in the sample for this research are too small to provide adequate support for current methods in poetry pedagogy. Difficulties like those encountered by Angela Williams's students when they looked for poetry in the school library during the early days of the Poetry Extravaganza demonstrate the conflict between budget and goals of collection development in the school library, particularly when it comes to enlarging the poetry collection. In addition, circulation of the poetry collections in the sample stands at an essentially imperceptible level, indicating either a fundamental, administrative-level misunderstanding of the capabilities of poetry to enhance the curriculum, or teachers' unwillingness to use the poetry collection for those purposes. It is only when school librarians promote the poetry collection to teachers and students, bridging the gap between reluctance and enthusiasm for the genre, that those figures can improve.

Although an analysis of current trends in the pedagogy of any discipline is time- and labor-intensive, research that goes a step beyond familiarity with a school district's

mandated curriculum enables a school librarian to make educated, precise decisions in managing a school library collection. The effort can make for a responsive and effective faculty, and in the case of poetry in particular, a joyful and exuberant group of students.

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APPENDIX

Agency Approval Letter

Fort Worth
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 10, 2008

Graduate School
Texas Woman's University
P.O. Box 425649
Denton, TX 76204-5649

To the Dean:

Elizabeth Enochs is employed as a school librarian by the Fort Worth Independent School District. She has proposed to the Department of Library Media Services a research project for her master's thesis that will analyze the poetry collections of the elementary school libraries in the district.

We believe that her research will be beneficial to the field of library science, to our libraries, and to her in completing her degree and librarian certification. With the provision that she may mention the district but not individual libraries by name in her results, we approve of her research prospectus and plans for data collection.

Sincerely,

Jennifer D. LaBoon
Manager, Library Media Services

Carter Cook
Director, Library Media Services