

**THE CHALLENGE OF CROSSOVER**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE  
EXISTENCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF CROSSOVER FICTION**

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## **Abstract**

Crossover fiction is a relatively new term but one that has gained considerable publicity in recent years. Given the amount of crossover fiction which is now being published, it is surprising that it has not been the subject of more debate. Most attention has been paid to bookshops but as important providers of fiction, libraries also must react to its development.

To fill these gaps in the research, this investigation set out to study the existence and implications of crossover fiction qualitatively. It did this by identifying what is meant by crossover fiction, discussing its implications for readers and for libraries and considering what its future may be. The reasoning underlying this research was that by furthering the understanding of crossover fiction, libraries could better respond to the challenges and potential that it presents.

In order to do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with secondary school aged readers. Additionally, questionnaires were sent to publishers, school librarians and public librarians. Although the publishers did not reply, there was a good response rate from the librarians. The questionnaires and interviews, along with a detailed literature review, provided a wealth of data.

It was found that there is no comprehensive definition of crossover fiction. It was acknowledged to be fiction which crosses age boundaries, and it was thought to have existed as a concept before a particular name was given to it, but there was little else which was agreed upon. As a consequence, there was limited consensus as to which books could be defined as crossover. Significantly, the largest gulf in understanding was between the readers and librarians. This has considerable implications on how libraries deal with crossover fiction.

Most readers did not show any strong feelings for or against the term crossover fiction, contrary to the expectations of the librarians. Although journalists argue that crossover fiction has obtained “kudos” and librarians staunchly defend the right of adults to read children’s literature, the readers had clear ideas about which books were appropriate for adults to read.

In relation to how libraries deal with crossover fiction, it was again found that there was little consensus. Up until now, there has been limited co-ordinated promotion of crossover fiction. This is despite the fact that many librarians acknowledged important roles which crossover fiction could play in libraries, such as increasing issues and reader development. However, a number of difficulties with crossover fiction were also highlighted, primarily based around its placement in the library and the perceptions which readers have of it.

The future of crossover fiction is difficult to predict. It has had a meteoric rise in recent years, but it has received a mixed reception. The concept behind crossover fiction, that of a multi-age appeal, is unlikely to be a passing fad and is increasingly seen not only in literature but also in television and films. Nevertheless, the future of the term itself is in doubt. Librarians and readers dislike its ambiguity and although publishers use it at the moment, unless it gains wider acceptance, it is likely to be changed.

It is of course up to libraries as to how they are going to respond to the challenge of crossover fiction. Several practical recommendations are suggested to help do this, along with potential areas for further study. However, it is also hoped that this investigation encourages librarians to take crossover fiction seriously, to harness the current enthusiasm which permeates it and therefore to better serve their readers.

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## **1 - Introduction**

In the publishing world, summer 2005 meant one thing: the publication of “Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince”. It had already topped Amazon’s bestseller list for months before its release, so on publication day 150 extra postal vans were drafted in to ensure their delivery (Freeman, 2005). Yet perhaps the most extraordinary part of this story is to whom these books were being delivered. For Harry Potter’s latest adventure is predicted to be the best-selling adult and children’s book of 2005 with 3.2 million copies being sold in the first week (Reynolds, 2005). It is now one of many books which attract a mixture of ages. This diverse appeal has acquired a term of its own – ‘crossover fiction’ which Sexton (2004:65) describes as “the main event in publishing over the last few years.”

### **1.1 The origins of crossover fiction**

Before the mid-eighteenth century there was not such a strict divide between adult and children’s literature. Fewer people read because of lower levels of literacy, the higher costs of books and, as Shavit (1999) argues, a less developed concept of childhood. This meant that it made financial sense for writers to ensure they had a wide audience (Van Lerrop-Debrauwer, 1999). Therefore at this time, books were shared across the ages and as such, all fiction was crossover fiction.

Then in the eighteenth century the concept of childhood grew and with it the development of books aimed specifically at children (Shavit, 1999). Rabinovitch (2005) states that this meant several adult books, such as “The Waterbabies”, became known as children’s texts. Additionally, the cost of publishing decreased and literacy levels increased because of compulsory education. These changes led to a higher demand for books and a widening gulf between adults and children’s literature.

This divide increased to such an extent that children’s literature gained its own status, rules and publishers. Children and adults’ literature began to demonstrate different characteristics (Hunt, 2001). For example, children’s books tended to be shorter, have larger print and third person narrative. Adult

books were allowed to be more experimental and have multiple characters which it was assumed children could not cope with (Nikolajeva, 1999). Lurie (1991:xiii) disputes the validity of these differences but states, “editors, critics and readers seem to have little trouble in assigning a given work to one category or the other”. The divide has meant that the status of children’s literature has traditionally been inferior to that of adult literature (Nikolajeva, 1997; Zipes, 2002; Shavit, 1999; Pullman in Lane, 2004).

However, when Harry Potter was released in 1997, it caught the attention of both adults and children. This mixed age readership was soon given the name of ‘crossover fiction’, which tended to be used interchangeably with ‘kidult’ and ‘adultlescent’. As more literature was published which fell into this category, the term ‘crossover fiction’ began to dominate the popular press. Yet while journalists and publishers eagerly embraced the term and concept, the academic world lagged behind. As a result there is a mass of newspaper articles and a deficit of relevant academic literature which directly addresses crossover fiction.

The US National Reading Panel (Train, 2003) claimed around 100,000 research studies had been conducted on reading between 1996 and 1999, so it seems surprising that so little attention has been paid to the topic. Beckett (1999a) argues that while some research has been conducted, most studies focus on one specific author or aspect. Moreover, Falconer (2004) submits that more attention has been paid to dual address writing than reading (the former being the focus of Beckett’s book). Added to this, concentration has been primarily on adults rather than teenagers and children, and on bookshops and publishers rather than libraries.

## **1.2 Aim**

Given the recent proliferation of crossover books being published, the term has gained ever more popularity. It is hoped that by conducting this study, this new term can be better understood and the gaps in research be filled. This will mean that readers will be better equipped to know what crossover fiction is and what it can do for them. As a result, libraries will be able to better respond through more targeted marketing and promotion.

Therefore the aim of this dissertation is to *assess the existence and implications of crossover fiction*.

### **1.3 Objectives**

To fulfil this aim, four objectives are considered:

1. *To identify the meaning of the term crossover fiction*

This objective is necessary because of the ambiguity which surrounds the concept, both in terms of what it means and which books fall into it. Moreover, for crossover fiction to be considered there needs to be some kind of consensus of opinion. It therefore involved gaining opinions from participants about their understanding of the term.

2. *To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to readers*

Crossover fiction is written to be read. Consequently, this objective looks at how crossover fiction impacts on readers. Issues were highlighted in the literature and discussed with the research participants.

3. *To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to libraries*

If crossover fiction impacts readers then libraries, in their provision for them, must respond to it. This objective therefore considers what librarians thought about crossover fiction, the problems and opportunities it presents to libraries and how they should respond.

4. *To consider the future of crossover fiction*

If readers and libraries are going to invest in crossover fiction then they will want to know its life expectancy. This objective therefore addresses the possible futures that crossover fiction may have. It did this by considering the impact that crossover fiction is having and speculating on how this may develop.

#### **1.4 Structure of the research**

This research is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review for the entire research project. It considers the literature relevant to each objective in order.

Chapter 3 details the methodology. It discusses the use of the research tools and how these were applied in practice. Finally it reviews the limitations of the data.

Chapter 4 contains both the research results as well as discussion about those findings. The results and discussion are structured according to each objective.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusions which have arisen from the discussion of the findings. It also gives a number of recommendations.

Finally the appendices contain a bibliography as well as copies of the interview schedule and questionnaires which were used.

## **2 - Literature Review**

This literature review will lay a foundation from which the research objectives detailed in the previous chapter will be developed. Therefore, after an initial introduction to the relevant literature, the review will be structured according to the four objectives. A single literature review has been written because many of the topics are interrelated and to fragment this chapter would be to deny these relationships.

### **2.1 Literature on crossover fiction**

While the dearth of academic material about crossover fiction seems disheartening, the area has not been completely bypassed. The scarcity of academic consideration in itself has drawn some attention to the topic and it is the centre of much debate, albeit in the press. Cadden (2000) offers hope by suggesting that critics are beginning to pay attention to crossover fiction.

### **2.2 Objective 1 - To identify the meaning of the term crossover fiction**

#### *2.2.1 Definitions within the literature*

Within the literature, the term is ambiguous. The crossover has been seen as being between cultures, genres or established works (Falconer, 2004). It is Knoepfmacher who is often credited to have first used the term in relation to crossing ages (Beckett, 1999a). Furthermore, Galef (1995) subdivides the authors who write crossover fiction into three possible categories. The first is the author who originally targeted one audience then moved to another (e.g. Roald Dahl). The second is the author who writes for both adults and children but in completely separate books (e.g. Russell Hoban). The final definition is of the author who writes for both children and adults in the same work.

It is this third definition which the press and publishers favour: “books that appeal to both adults and children” (Armistead, 2001:33); “those written for children but read by adults too” (Kellaway, 2003:5); “appeal to readers young and old” (Smith, 2005:12). Consequently, it is this definition which this research focuses on.

However, even Galef's last interpretation does not provide a clear-cut definition. Some writers assume that the crossing is from children to adult (Kellaway, 2003), while others think it is from teenager to adult (Armstrong and Beever, 2001; Orman, 2003). This is perhaps because just as there is no set definition of crossover fiction, there is no clear guide as to what constitutes adult or children's fiction. For example, Hunt (2001) and Lurie (1991) argue that just because a book has a child protagonist, focuses on toys, or is written by a children's author, does not automatically make it a children's book. Hunt (2001:1) states that "one of the delights of children's literature is that it does not fit easily into any cultural or academic category." A parallel can be drawn with crossover fiction.

Therefore, it is difficult to know whether picture books can fall within crossover fiction. Beckett (1999a:xvi) sums up the debate: "Although the picturebook traditionally has been seen as a children's genre, in the eyes of many contemporary authors and illustrators, it is a narrative form that can address any or all age groups". Many commentators argue that some picture books (by authors and illustrators such as Colin Thompson, Anthony Browne, Maurice Sendak) are complex and a high quality, as well as being aesthetically pleasing (Scott, 1999; Jordan, 1993; Morris, 2004; Hughes, 2004; Falconer, 2004). If adults can derive pleasure from them as Beckett submits, then perhaps they too can be crossover fiction. This argument is furthered as some picture books deal with issues which may not be suitable for young children (e.g. Raymond Briggs' nuclear disaster tale: "When the Wind Blows"). Picture books then start to blur distinctions with graphic novels and comics which are read by a variety of ages (Williams, 1999; Falconer, 2004).

Falconer (2004) points out that another difficulty with defining crossover fiction is in relation to children's classics. She cites "Alice in Wonderland" as an example, but it equally applies to other novels like "The Wind in the Willows". These books were originally written for children (even dedicated to them) but are now read by many adults. Kellaway (2005) however, points out that we interpret literature differently depending on our age. Bertagna (2002) argues that whereas classics have gradually developed an all-age audience, crossover fiction attempts this instantly. Despite highlighting the difficulty, Falconer only

implies that they are not crossover; she never conclusively answers what she believes.

It is also problematic when a particular book is labelled as appropriate for one audience in one country then a different audience in another. Beckett (1999a) uses the example of Jostein Gaardner's "Sophie's World" which was a young adult book in Norway but an adult book in America. This lack of consensus about intended audiences means that it is harder to know if the fiction is indeed crossing between age groups.

In addition, it has been argued that a crossover book does not necessarily have to pass for an adult book. Consequently, Falconer (2004) contends that "Artemis Fowl" is crossover but not an adult text. Wagner (2005) makes the same distinction between Harry Potter which she calls a children's book that adults read, and "His Dark Materials" which she describes as true crossover. Equally, Kellaway (2004) maintains that just because a book is contentious or deals with adult issues (e.g. Melvin Burgess and Julie Burchill's novels), does not necessarily make it crossover fiction.

### *2.2.2 Has crossover fiction always existed?*

Although crossover fiction is a relatively recent label, Galef (1995) states that there are a number of authors whose books predate the term but would fall into the current definition, such as C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia". Beckett (1999a) concurs by reminding us that ever since the divisions between adult and children's fiction were created, authors (like Jonathan Swift and John Bunyan) have crossed these boundaries. Said (2002) describes "Watership Down" as one of the original crossover books. Eccleshare (2004) in turn cites a number of adult books which have been appropriated by teenage fiction such as "The Catcher in the Rye" and "The Lord of the Flies". Mooney reiterates the point by asserting that having a dual audience is not an original concept; "what is new is the hype" (2002:1).

### *2.2.3 Conclusions drawn from the literature about objective 1*

Overall the literature is indecisive about a definition for crossover fiction. Issues are raised about what affects the definition but are never answered.

Essentially all that can be deduced from the literature is that crossover fiction involves a crossing of age boundaries, but that no starting point, direction or destination can be pinned down. Only one thing is unequivocal: the concept behind crossover fiction (whatever that may be) is not a new one. Crossover fiction has existed as long as the divide between children and adult fiction has.

## **2.3 Objective 2 - To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to readers**

### *2.3.1 Crossover fiction affecting child readers*

Shavit (1999) conclusively demonstrates that adults have always had a role in children and young person's fiction. Not only do they write it, they make decisions about publication and distribution. Only at the end of this chain do children ever become involved as the final consumers. Adults, who are often the final arbiters on children's reading selections, influence even this involvement. With adults now being formally recognised as the final consumers as well, children and young adults must be affected by this takeover. Kelleher (2002) suggests that it is perhaps time for children to recover their fiction from adults.

However, in the past children have often claimed adult fiction for themselves. This can be in the form of abridged versions or the original texts being dropped entirely as adult books, such as "The Call of the Wild" (Beckett, 1999b). Additionally, Kelleher (2002:12) argues that "for children, there's a strange inverted delight in discovering that adults are not only interested in 'your' books, but hungry for the next instalment, which all serves to increase the appeal of reading." Donnelly (2004) wholeheartedly agrees.

All the recent media storm and hype surrounding crossover fiction has also brought certain titles to the fore. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) suggest that children can feel compelled to read books, not because they want to, but because of peer pressure. Frank concludes (2000:1) "After all, an important element of reading a book or seeing a movie is the ability to discuss the experience with friends. Indeed, once the popularity of a cultural experience reaches a certain threshold, failure to consume it may entail significant social

costs.” Children may then feel obliged to read certain novels (though adults may feel equally fashion-conscious: Clee, 2004; Kean, 2005).

A final concern, which Falconer (2004) highlights, is that adults have become concerned about children reading more adult content. She states that children’s literature now contains contentious topics such as warfare, death, sex and drug use. It has already been pointed out that controversial texts are not necessarily crossover, but clearly some are. Falconer (2004:566) argues that adults’ concerns are “a reaction against the ‘tweenager’ phenomenon (children developing ‘too quickly’ into adults), which is a direct counterpart to ‘kiddultery’ (adults masquerading as children)”.

### 2.3.2 *Crossover fiction affecting young adult readers*

Burgess (2000) points out that the 14-25 year old market is very profitable and therefore publishers are very aware of this audience. Crossover fiction is in many ways similar to teenage / young adult fiction. The two have been associated because they are both seen as an attempt to break down or cross the barriers between the distinct areas of children and adults’ literature.

Although children’s literature is relatively recent, that for teenagers (or young adults) is even younger, beginning in the mid-twentieth century (Eccleshare, 2004). Young adult literature developed as it became recognised that teenagers might have different needs to other age groups and therefore literature began to address these issues. Nikolajeva (1997:17) describes this:

"The young adult novel (or teenage novel or adolescent novel) is the intermediary mode between children's and adult fiction, depicting the character's marginal situation between childhood and adulthood, when there is no way back, but the inevitability of the final step into grown-up life has not yet been accepted."

Orman (2003) and Elkin (2003) suggest that teenage fiction helps its audience to make meaning of the world. Significantly, whether the crossover novel can fulfil these needs and whether it should is not discussed. However, this developmental role of fiction, a way to promote understanding, may not be limited to young adults.

### 2.3.3 *Crossover fiction affecting adult readers*

Adults read to for a variety of reasons. Elkin (2003) suggests reading can fulfil the needs of communication, education, company, pleasure, escapism, intellectual satisfaction, entertainment and problem-solving. Usherwood and Toyne (2002) label them slightly differently (pleasure, escapism, self-development, relaxation and instruction) but essentially carry many of the same motivations. For adults to bother with crossover fiction, it must therefore fulfil one or more of these needs, just as it must with children and young adults.

As a result of recent adult interest in children's literature, crossover fiction has become embroiled in the 'dumbing down' debate which is raging in many areas of culture and entertainment. However, Morris (2004:1) claims, "In these post-Harry Potter days, reading children's books is no longer looked down on." Whittaker (in *Western Mail*, 2005) argues that 'dumbing down' occurs increasingly in adult, not children's literature. Anyway, adults have read children's fiction since the idea was first conceived. Zipes (2002) contends that adults are actually the main readers of both children and young adult literature and not just in a professional or educational capacity (Falconer, 2004). Haddon (2004) considers the entertainment value of crossover fiction while Galef (1995:34) submits that "adults have just as pressing a need as children to understand the universe." The needs of self-development, instruction and recreation are therefore being met by this fiction.

It is difficult to reconcile the 'dumbing down' argument with the reality of crossover fiction. Donnelly (2004:31) maintains that "just because we choose to take Harry Potter along on the morning commute doesn't mean we're regressing." Although Elkin (2003) argues that readers prefer quick, easy reads when they are feeling pressurised, it does not mean that this need is being met by crossover fiction, which is often neither short nor simple. Philip Pullman is just one writer who has been very vocal in his belief that some issues are too weighty to be dealt with in adult fiction (Allsobrook, 2004; Pullman, 1996). Moreover, Almond (in Rees, 2003) suggests that children's books can provide what adult fiction may not.

Alternatively, adults have been accused of wanting to relive their childhoods: part of a Peter Pan complex (Donnelly, 2004; Tonkin, 2002). Hunt's suggestion (2001) that books such as "The Wind in the Willows" offer escapism for adults would seem to validate such a statement. However, adult literature can also offer such escapism. The fantasy genre is very popular with adults and some texts are definitely not aimed at children (Nikolajeva, 1999).

It has also been argued that the labelling of a book as crossover just excuses adults reading children's books. This suggests that adults need an excuse. Publishers do package the books differently for children and adults. Kelleher (2002:12) gives the publishers' reasoning as being so that "grown-ups desperate to read the books wouldn't have to suffer the 'indignity' of being spotted reading a children's book in public." Although Kelleher submits that it is fashionable to be seen reading children's versions of crossover fiction, Smith (2005) quotes several figures illustrating how popular the adult versions are. For example, 80% of sales of "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" were of adult covers.

A more sympathetic argument is that crossover fiction has heralded an acceptance of children's literature by adults and demonstrates adults' interest in traditional storytelling (Clee, 2004; Said, 2003; Rees, 2003). Donnelly (2004:31) eloquently argues the point:

"The idea that books for and about children can only be of interest to children is not just absurd, it's offensive. It's like telling a reader not to bother with *Beloved* unless she's black or *Trainspotting* unless he uses heroin. Books are not gated communities; they're open cities where we can come and go at will, freely sampling other lives and times, other cultures and realities. The crossover novel reinforces this."

Since children's literature can appeal to adults, Kellaway (2004) points out that having the crossover label can highlight books to adults which they would otherwise miss.

#### *2.3.4 Conclusions drawn from the literature about objective 2*

It has been demonstrated that children and young adults read for different reasons, many of which mirror those of adults. If crossover fiction fulfils those needs then it is not surprising that children and adults are drawn to the same book. Nevertheless, the increasing interest in crossover fiction by writers and critics will impact on readers as they are alternatively accused of “dumbing down”, complimented on accepting quality children’s literature and pressured into reading the bestsellers.

### **2.4 Objective 3 - To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to libraries**

Around 80% of adults read recreationally (Book Marketing Ltd, 2000). To help fulfil this need, the public library service has 121 million books which it lends out 430 million times a year, with 107 million of these being children’s books (Elkin, 2003). In 2003-4, £19 million were spent on children’s materials in public libraries (LISU, 2004). In 2001-2002 the top five children’s titles borrowed from public libraries were the instalments of Harry Potter (Boyland, 2003). These statistics show that libraries are major providers of crossover fiction. As such libraries need to consider the implications that it has on their service and publishers need to be aware of libraries’ concerns.

#### *2.4.1 Book placement*

One problem of crossover fiction is the difficulty of placement in libraries. Libraries cannot necessarily afford to place books in all relevant sections (Nodelman and Reimer, 2003) and therefore need to decide where best to locate them. Clee (2004) and Rosen (1997) quote major publishers saying that bookshops have similar difficulties. Placement of fiction is often problematic since individual books may belong to several genres or target different audiences but can only be physically placed in one location. Denham (2003:184) considers this to be “the major drawback of genre classification schemes” because it only focuses on one aspect of the book. Just as with other genre classifications, crossover fiction causes somewhat of a quandary over library placement.

The problems with placement escalate because it is not clear whether crossover fiction does indeed constitute a separate genre. Nikolajeva (1997:19) defines a genre “as an abstract concept of a group of texts, which can be identified through a number of recurrent patterns”. However, she stresses that the borders between genres are flexible and ever changing to allow for development and crossover between them. Armstrong and Beever (2001:3) emphasise this aspect of genre classifications by stating that “genre divisions too are necessarily arbitrary.” It is therefore unclear whether crossover fiction would be regarded as an independent genre or just represent the movement between other genres.

The fact that the label of crossover fiction is based on decisions about age further complicates the matter because “the demarcation of reading by age is always a tricky one” (Eccleshare, 2004:542). Sutherland (2002) argues that books change their audience and uses Tolkein’s Lord of the Rings trilogy as an example. When first published it was mainly read by twenty year olds. Now the majority of its readers are 12. Therefore, Orman (2003) criticizes the attempts of librarians to set fiction within pre-determined age boundaries to make book placement easier. In a similar vein, Rothschild (2004) found that teenagers often did not find separate teenage sections as useful.

#### 2.4.2 *Same book, different covers*

The idea that the same book could be published with different covers for child and adult audiences was first raised eight years ago (Rosen, 1997). Having such a choice of editions has implications for both placement and stock decisions in libraries, especially since research shows that 66% of readers choose books by their covers (The Bookseller, 1999).

Many writers consider the publication of different editions to be damning evidence that crossover fiction is just a marketing tool of publishers who want to sell their books to a wider audience (Hunt, 2001). Publishers have even admitted this (Strait Times, 2004). In support of this, Zipes (2002) and Nodelman and Reimer (2003) emphasise the commercialisation of publishing. This is particularly evident given the mass sales of the Harry Potter books (e.g. “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” sold 3.3 million copies: Sabbagh, 2005). However, such a marketing ploy may not be efficient for it has been

established that word of mouth is much more influential than publicity (Jury, 2005).

#### *2.4.3 Reader development*

Libraries are increasingly interested in reader development, yet there is very little which considers the role of crossover fiction in reader development. This is surprising because crossover fiction has been shown to increase the number of parents reading to children (Nursery World, 2002). Furthermore, Nodelman and Reimer (2003) specifically note that librarians excitedly welcomed the Harry Potter phenomenon for its potential role in encouraging reading. However, they have since found no evidence to confirm that readers of Harry Potter necessarily extended their reading beyond Rowling's books.

#### *2.4.4 Conclusions drawn from the literature about objective 3*

Libraries have been neglected in the literature about crossover fiction despite their continuing role in its provision. The main difficulties which crossover fiction presents libraries are the problems with its physical location. This is partly a result of the ambiguity of its boundaries, i.e. whether it is a genre in its own right. The publication of different editions of the same text also affects libraries' purchasing and placement decisions. Finally there is limited coverage of reader development initiatives using crossover fiction because so far it has played a limited role.

### **2.5 Objective 4 - To consider the future of crossover fiction**

It is indisputable that the number of crossover texts is increasing (Galef, 1995; Beckett, 1999a). Where this will lead has been the subject of much debate and discussion. This is one of the few aspects of crossover fiction which is well documented.

#### *2.5.1 The book industry*

Publishers seem very keen to promote crossover fiction. Zipes (2002) states that publishers are no longer small time businesses but international conglomerates with links to food and toy companies. This means that a shift in

priority has occurred from the promotion of quality books to the production of capital. The popularity of crossover fiction has resulted in high book sales and, as Nodelman and Reimer (2003) note, profit is attractive to investors. Consequently, both Rees (2003) and Pepper (2005) predict the introduction of crossover fiction shelves in bookshops. This suggests that it is an area that will be heavily developed in the future.

Beckett (1999a) notes that authors can be the ones to initiate a book's crossover appeal. However, Galef's (1995) acknowledgement that the decision is in the hands of the publisher seems more realistic. He relates the story about the author Russell Hoban, who when asked why his adult book was published for children, answered that: "he had wanted the manuscript published, that Faber was interested, and if Faber had marketed tables and chairs, he would sold it as a table or, if they preferred, as a chair" (Galef, 1995:31). This demonstrates the power that publishers hold and furthermore, as Nodelman and Reimer (2003) stress, more mergers occurring will mean these decisions being made by fewer and fewer people.

### 2.5.2 *The status of children's literature*

Libraries stock children's literature. Librarians choose, buy and review their stock. As such it is important to consider how crossover has affected and continues to affect the status of children's literature, for this will in turn affect libraries and readers.

As already noted, children's literature is often considered to have a lower status than its adult counterparts; Lurie (1991:201) calls it "the black sheep of serious fiction". Yet some writers suggest that crossover fiction, and adult interest in it, demonstrates that children's literature is gaining recognition (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Myers, 1997; Beckett, 1999a). Other writers maintain that children's literature has always been of a higher quality than adult literature:

"I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story." (C.S. Lewis in Beckett, 1999a:xvii).

“...sometimes I apply myself so well and have so much talent that what I write can also be read by children. When my pen is less lucky, what it writes is only good enough for adults.” (M. Tournier in Beckett, 1999b:31).

As more critics begin to concur with writers like Lewis and Tournier, readers will find increasing opportunities to access children’s literature.

However, many academic writers have commented on the fact that authors frequently deny being children’s authors (McCrum, 2000; Rees, 2003; Kellaway, 2003; Zipes, 2002). They justify this by maintaining that they do not write for a specific age group. However, these denials could be more to do with the perceived lower status of children’s literature than any commentary on their writing processes (Nodelman and Reimer, 2003). In Shavit’s opinion (1999:90) part of the reasoning for their denial is that authors are afraid. He claims that many people concur with C.S. Lewis’s statement that good children’s literature is universally popular and so children’s writers whose work is only popular with children “will be confined to a cultural Ghetto.” Yet these explanations do not hold for those who refuse being called a crossover author. They have already demonstrated their universal appeal by the mere fact that their books do cross the age boundaries. Instead their denial may refer back to the derogatory tone sometimes used for crossover fiction, as mentioned in section 2.3.3.

Therefore there is an uneasy polarisation between those who believe that children’s literature has gained mainstream literary acceptance (e.g. Said, 2003) and those who reject this (e.g. Falconer, 2004). Equally, while the term crossover fiction has been used derogatorily<sup>1</sup>, it has sparked off extraordinary interest. Crossover fiction has received attention that is virtually unheard of for children’s literature; Harry Potter was reviewed by renowned adult authors and critics (Nodelman and Reimer, 2003). This is particularly apparent as both Pullman and Haddon’s crossover novels beat adult books to win the Whitbread Book of the Year (Brennan, 2002; Ezard, 2003).

Crossover fiction is slowly being recognised in not only newspapers but also the academic sphere. In Myers’ opinion (1997), this will in turn promote

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Mark (2004:1) in a book review stated “no crossover nonsense here.”

children's literature. She enthusiastically asserts: "Without too much overstatement, we hope to claim cross-writing as an unlocker of doors that have shut off and devalued our field. More than a simple key, however, cross-writing offers the versatility of a critical Swiss Army knife." (1997:xv). Other writers are less optimistic. Being more reserved, McCrum (2000) refutes that such books will change the perception of children's literature as a whole, instead only individual writers like Pullman will gain their due recognition. Thacker (2004) takes a harder line stating that despite the popularity of crossover fiction, critics still avoid discussing children's books.

#### 2.5.2.1 Shifting boundaries

Writers also disagree about the extent to which the boundaries between adult and children's literature are shifting and disappearing. This is significant to libraries and readers because it affects how the books are published, where they are placed and their target audience. Therefore while several critics suggest that they are being dramatically realigned; others argue that this is occurring to the point where children's literature is disappearing (Rees, 2003; Stephens, 1999; Beckett, 1999b).

However, Lurie (1991:xiii) maintains that "the barrier between children's books and adult fiction remains." She justifies this on the basis that many of the themes predominant in adult fiction such as sex, money and death, are either missing or toned down in children's literature. While this may remain true to a certain extent, nearly fifteen years have passed since Lurie made this statement. Certainly today's teenager, and perhaps children's, literature frequently includes all of these, although Tucker (2004) suggests that children's books do still treat them differently.

In contrast, Zipes (2002) denies that boundaries are of concern at all. He argues that children's literature has always crossed boundaries and therefore it is not a notable feature. Beckett in turn suggests that categories according to age are becoming less important. She suggests (1999a:xix) that "Perhaps the twenty-first century will bring an age in which 'child' and 'adult' are no longer defining categories and crosswriting will no longer be seen as a transgressing or transcending of 'borders'".

### *2.5.3 The future of society and crossover fiction*

Whether age becomes less of a consideration in literature may reflect how society deals with age. Just as in the past, society has alternatively not acknowledged, then promoted the notion of childhood, so the future may see other developments. Hunt (2001:18) declares that “concepts of childhood ebb and flow” and with that, how literature is viewed. Nikolajeva (1997) states that certain books have changed their audiences as time has passed, so crossover fiction may change in its duality. This suggests that crossover fiction may be a ‘sign of the times’ whereby it reflects how society views age. Certainly, Jenvey (in Rees, 2003) argues that current interest in crossover fiction is due a change in popular culture rather than infantilisation and Falconer (2004:569) suggests that crossover fiction should be viewed “as part of a broader cultural context”.

Some writers believe that this ‘kidult’ trend will spread into our culture more generally (White, 2004). The term is already in the Oxford dictionary as a film or television programme which appeals to all ages (Hartston, 1997). It is in this other media that the attraction of crossover was first recognised. Falconer (2004) highlights the fact that films have long had crossover appeal, citing examples such as E.T., Indiana Jones, Star Wars, Pixar animations like Shrek and Monsters, Inc., and the recent Lord of the Rings trilogy. To this, Kellaway (2005), Grice (2005) and Falconer (2004) add the crossover appeal of television programmes like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Dr. Who, The Simpsons and South Park. Children, teenagers and adults watch all of these, even if their enjoyment is on different levels. Pepper (2005) argues that this extends into musicals and plays such as The Lion King. Therefore, so these commentators argue, crossover fiction is not such a wild leap. If anything, it would seem to be a delayed reaction to a phenomenon that has long been recognised elsewhere.

### *2.5.4 Conclusions drawn from the literature about objective 4*

The future for crossover fiction is still very much under debate. There are both writers who criticise its existence and those that consider it to be a panacea to the poor reputation held by children’s literature. For the foreseeable future, crossover fiction will dominate publishers’ interest because it is commercially successful. For how long this will continue and what this means to the boundaries of literature cannot be predicted. What remains evident is that how crossover fiction develops will impact both readers and libraries.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

As has been demonstrated, although there are many articles in the newspapers about crossover fiction, there are few academic papers specifically on this topic. By conducting this research, these gaps will begin to close and it is hoped that further interest and discussion will be triggered. This investigation is the first step and how it was conducted will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **3 - Methodology**

This chapter details the research approach, the research tools and the limitations of the data.

#### **3.1 Research approach**

This research was conducted qualitatively. Gorman and Clayton (1997:23) define qualitative research as:

“a process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction to derive possible explanations based on observed phenomena.”

Gorman and Clayton (2003) advocate the use of the qualitative research in the field of librarianship because they claim it is well matched to the reality of the profession. Additionally, it was felt that because the research is into a relatively new area, it would be impractical to begin with a hypothesis, as quantitative research requires (Bryman, 2001). Instead this qualitative research draws on real examples to research inductively. Consequently the data collected is more in-depth and allows for opinions and beliefs to be considered.

Nevertheless, qualitative research has been criticised as being subjective, unrepresentative, difficult to replicate, decontextualises the data and potentially lacks transparency (Bryman, 2001; Denscombe, 2003). Controversially the positivistic concepts of reliability, validity and generalisability become more complicated with qualitative research.

Denscombe (2003) states that the difference between qualitative and quantitative is primarily in data analysis. However, it should be acknowledged that this has repercussions all through the research process because the basis of the research becomes founded on qualitative principles.

### 3.1.1 *Validity and reliability*

Bryman (2001) states that although some commentators have attempted to apply reliability and validity to qualitative research, other writers condemned them as being incompatible because they are derived from quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) instead suggest judging qualitative research according to its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They also propose the idea of an audit trail so other researchers can follow the decisions made and arrive at similar conclusions.

On the other hand Mason (2002) adapts these quantitative concepts. She suggests that instead of conventional reliability, researchers should show that their data generation and analysis are appropriate to research questions and are “thorough, careful, honest and accurate” (Mason, 2002:188). Instead of conventional validity, researchers should reflect “on the quality of your methods in relation to your research questions, and on how well they produce relevant data which can be used in constructing your explanation” (Mason, 2002:189).

### 3.1.2 *Generalisability*

Generalisability is concerned with the degree to which the research findings are applicable and relevant to other situations (Mason, 2002). Qualitative research is not usually representative of the population and as such has a restricted claim to generalisability. Instead it has been suggested that qualitative research is transferable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This means that its findings may be transferred to similar situations but cannot be assumed to hold true for all circumstances.

## **3.2 Methods of research**

Mason (2002:24) describes qualitative research as “characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive. Given that, it would be both inimical and impossible to write an entire advance blueprint”. However, she then stresses the importance of a basic design. As such, a general research structure was devised but the process had to be sensitive to the research context.

### 3.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the research method with which to engage readers. Gillham (2000a:1) states, “the form and style of an interview is determined by its purpose”. It was initially decided that it would be more beneficial to conduct individual interviews rather than focus groups for this research. This was decided because both reading and choosing books is often a solitary activity which individual interviews could reflect. Additionally, individuals could show how they understood the term crossover fiction without any opinions being lost in a group setting. However, some interviews had to be changed to focus groups because of practical considerations noted in section 3.2.1.3.

Interviews vary in the rigidity of their structure. This investigation’s interviews and focus group were semi-structured. This meant that questions were listed in an interview schedule but interviewees were encouraged to lead the direction of the interview. Together with open-ended questions, this ensured flexibility.

A structured component was introduced where interviewees were shown different book titles and asked to indicate whether they thought they were crossover, then where they would place them in a library. The value of the exercise was in engaging the interest of the participants early on. In the focus group it also meant that participants had an opportunity to express their opinions individually. Afterwards the group came together to discuss their decisions. From the point of view of analysis, it meant that there was something concrete to compare between the readers.

#### 3.2.1.1 Benefits and disadvantages of interviews

Interviews are particularly adept at providing in-depth explanations of opinions. Gillham (2000a:10) describes this as “the richness and vividness of the material”. He also explains that interviews tend to have a high response rate, because people like to be listened to and the participants have already agreed to take part. Furthermore, interviews benefit from the immediacy of the situation and are a very flexible research tool (Gorman and Clayton, 1997; Denscombe, 2003).

On the other hand, interviews are very time consuming and the personal attributes of the interviewer may inhibit the participants (Krueger and Casey, 2000; Denscombe, 2003). They are also more susceptible to bias than other research tools (Gorman and Clayton, 1997). This can be exacerbated in semi-structured interviews where the wording and order of the interview are flexible, which means essentially, the different interviewees are responding to different situations. Finally, in interviews participants are talking about what they do and feel, rather than actually doing and feeling. Therefore the veracity of their answers is difficult to confirm (Denscombe, 2003).

### 3.2.1.2 Combating bias

The role of the interviewer was a neutral one. Although a fairly detailed interview schedule was used, the questions were open-ended to give the interviewees the freedom to express their opinions. To avoid the researcher's personal views affecting those of the interviewees, the interviewer's role was purely to encourage the interviewees and guide them onto topics of interest. To aid this, a number of prompts and probes were noted on the interview schedule. Unintentionally, the participants may have picked up subconscious communication from the interviewer because as Gillham (2000a) lists, there are a number of ways that this could occur: gesture, head nods, posture and tone of voice. It is hoped that by being aware of these dangers, they were kept to a minimum.

To ensure that the correct interpretation was taken of the answers, the end of the interviews included a brief summary of what was discussed. The interviewer summed up key points to confirm their accuracy.

### 3.2.1.3 Collection of results

In total 7 students were interviewed. A focus group of 5 female students aged 12-14 years was arranged through a local school librarian. This lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in the school library.

Focus groups have different advantages and disadvantages to individual interviews. Although they are group interviews, the group is not required to come to a consensus but, as Krueger and Casey (2000:5) state, "group

members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments of others". They argue that this is more natural than an interview. They also suggest that smaller focus groups (4-6 participants) are popular because they are easier to manage and more comfortable for the participants, although obviously it limits the range of opinions expressed. On the other hand, focus groups run the risk that quieter participants will be intimidated and not contribute, or that minority opinions will be disregarded (Denscombe, 2003).

Two other students were interviewed individually. Interviewee 1 was a 17-year-old male and Interviewee 2 was a 14-year-old male. They were both interviewed in their homes with the interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

The locations of the school library and homes were chosen because of convenience to the participants as well as ensuring that they were on neutral ground where they would feel at ease. This was particularly important given the age of the participants. The length of the focus group and interviews were intentionally relatively short also because of the participants' ages, as recommended by Krueger and Casey (2000). All participants were given an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form.

Although the topics to be discussed had been piloted before the first focus group, it was found that the timing of the structured exercise needed changing so that later topics flowed more naturally. Therefore the interview schedule was slightly adapted after the focus group was conducted.

#### 3.2.1.4 Recording the results

Once the participants had granted their permission, the interviews were tape recorded so they could later be transcribed. Field notes were also taken contemporaneously. These observations supplemented the tape recording by conveying the atmosphere, non-verbal communication and other aspects of the interviews which the tape recording would inevitably miss.

The dangers with tape recording include malfunctioning equipment, the voices being inaudible and the participants being intimidated by the recording. These possible risks were far outweighed by the benefits of having an accurate record of the discussion. The alternative would have been relying completely on field

notes or memory, both of which are potentially unreliable. Fortunately the participants were all willing to be recorded and not put off by the tape recorder. Despite this, part of the focus group recording was inaudible, as described in section 3.4.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaires

Due to time constraints, conducting more interviews was impractical, therefore questionnaires were used to gain the opinions of relevant professionals.

Questionnaires vary according to the types of questions that they contain. Those with close questions are easier to analyse but restrictive. Therefore the questionnaires contained mainly open-ended questions so that respondents could express their opinions and thoughts. However, as with the interviews, there was a structured exercise. This was used to develop the respondent's own ideas about crossover fiction as well as provide a way to compare the different respondents' views. Additionally, by having a variety of question formats, the questionnaire maintained the respondents' interest so they were more likely to complete it (Gillham, 2000a) and prevented them from "falling into a 'pattern' of answers" (Denscombe, 2003:155).

#### 3.2.2.1 Benefits and disadvantages of questionnaires

Questionnaires, as already noted, are quicker to administer than interviews. They are an efficient way to acquire information from a large number of people and although require analysis, do not need to be transcribed. Furthermore, they can cover a wider geographical range because the researcher does not need to be present for their completion. They are convenient to respondents because they can be fitted into their schedules and also ensure a degree of anonymity which face-to-face interviews do not (Gillham, 2000b).

Nevertheless, questionnaires tend to have a lower response rate than interviews (Gillham, 2000b). Since Denscombe (2003) argues that the length of a questionnaire is a key factor in whether potential participants respond, questionnaires need to be kept as short as possible, reducing the potential to gain comprehensive answers. Gillham (2000b) cites other problems with

questionnaires: confusion cannot be resolved, the wording can be very influential on the answers and there is a lack of control on the part of the researcher. The first two were minimised by piloting the questionnaire and the last by instructing the respondents to answer the questions in order. This meant that responses to previous questions, which could influence later answers, would affect all the respondents identically (Peterson, 2000). Finally Gillham (2000b:13) argues that open questions are much harder to answer in questionnaires than interviews because “people talk more easily than they write”. He suggests that only educated, professional groups should be faced with open-ended questions in questionnaires. As this research targeted publishers and librarians, it was expected that this would not be a problem.

#### 3.2.2.2 Combating bias

Gillham (2000b) suggests that questionnaires inherently reduce bias because they are conducted away from the researcher. However, to further reduce the possibility of bias and encourage the respondent’s personal reflection, the questions were open-ended which Peterson (2000:34) suggests “permit freedom of response. Because study participants provide answers in their own words, no researcher bias is introduced by presenting or predetermining answers”.

Careful consideration was also given to the ‘space-time effect’ where the space provided affects the length of answer that the respondent gives (Peterson, 2000). However, because most of the questionnaires were distributed by email the space was not restricted and so this was not a concern.

#### 3.2.2.3 Collection of librarians’ questionnaires

The questionnaires were piloted to ensure that the questions were easily understood and in a logical order. Although the questionnaire looked long, it was relatively quick to complete. However, Gillham (2000b) stresses that questionnaires should look short to ensure that its length does not deter potential respondents.

An initial email was sent to 23 secondary school librarians and 45 public librarians who worked in a variety of English counties thereby ensuring an extensive geographical range of respondents. They held a variety of positions,

though all were responsible for children or young adult libraries. The initial email sought permission from a named individual to send a copy of the questionnaire. This initial contact had the advantage that the respondent would commit to the questionnaire therefore increasing the possibility that they would respond. Since correspondence was also via email, it was necessary to ensure that they were aware that they would receive several attachments (the questionnaire, information sheet and consent form) and so not automatically delete it.

Of the 37 public librarians who agreed to answer the questionnaire, 25 actually did. 16 school librarians agreed to respond and 11 returned the questionnaire. A follow-up email was sent to encourage more replies.

#### 3.2.2.4 Collection of publishers' questionnaires

Six publishers were contacted by email. They were specifically chosen as publishers who promoted crossover fiction and therefore the sample size was small. Although three publishers agreed to complete questionnaires, none were returned. A follow-up email was only acknowledged by one publisher who warned that they were very busy. Therefore a shortened questionnaire was sent, emphasising that it would not take long to complete. This did not result in any replies.

#### 3.2.2.5 Recording the results

The questionnaires were numbered and labelled as either public or school librarians. This meant that they were anonymous but identifiable.

#### 3.2.3 *Literature review*

The purpose of the literature review was to demonstrate the issues surrounding crossover fiction. It was also to ensure that the research was not duplicating other studies because as Denscombe (2003:293) states, research should not "reinvent the wheel". The literature review is critical because as Hart (2001) emphasises, the role of the literature review runs through all parts of the investigation. Therefore the literature review was arranged by objective and related to each stage of the research.

The literature review was compiled through a comprehensive search of relevant journals and other academic literature. Some articles were found by using the LISA and Web of Science databases. Given the prevalence of the term crossover fiction in the press, online newspapers were also searched. Two Internet search engines (Google and Dogpile) and an Internet directory (Yahoo!) were used to search for online references.

### **3.3 Analysis of data**

The interviews were transcribed from the tape recordings and the field notes. This provided an accurate representation of what occurred at the interviews and increases transparency in the research (part of Lincoln and Guba's audit trail). However, the very process of writing down what was said means that intonation can be lost (Denscombe, 2003). To overcome this, when emphasis was significant it was also noted on the transcript.

Key phrases from the transcripts were highlighted. The structure of the interviews and questionnaires had mirrored the objectives therefore all the data were compiled according to the objectives. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews were brought together under each objective to illustrate the range of answers according to each group. Key themes and trends were identified from the full spectrum of answers. These were then linked with the findings from the literature review.

The difficulty with analysis is ensuring that the researcher's bias is not permitted to influence the results. Mason (2002:148) warns that "in choosing or devising a particular system, you are at the very least making certain assumptions about the kinds of phenomena you are cataloguing and the kinds you are not..." Systematic analysis and the inclusion of those findings which run against general trends should minimise any subjective element of the analysis.

Quotes are used to illustrate the points being made and "lend authority to the case description, as well as humanize the study narrative" (Gorman and Clayton, 1997:206). The difficulty with including quotes within the report is that they are removed from their context and risk losing their impact.

### 3.4 Limitations of data and solutions

The first limitation is that by only being able to give questionnaires to the librarians, as opposed to interviewing them, the data is more limited than was desired. For example, their responses could not be questioned, so it is difficult to know how they arrived at their answers. However, conducting so many interviews would have been impractical so questionnaires were the best alternative.

A more pressing problem was that when the focus group was recorded, parts of the discussion were inaudible. It was held in the school library which meant that there was considerable background noise. Added to this, the participants tended to speak over each other and therefore data was lost. These problems were removed during the interviews as the reduction in numbers meant fewer interruptions and there was limited background noise. In addition, because there was only one participant, the microphone could be placed closer and so could pick up voices more clearly.

It was necessary when organising the interviews to make allowances for the practicalities of attendance. In one case this meant having a focus group rather than holding individual interviews. Focus groups have some advantages over interviews so it was not deemed to be a limitation. The reiterative nature of qualitative research means that the change of interview design is not necessarily detrimental (Gorman and Clayton, 1997), but the fact that the data came from different methods may have influenced the findings.

A more significant problem was the difficulty in persuading people to participate in the research. Many of the librarians were eager to help but did not have the time. Consequently some did not respond and others made their answers very brief. However, Gillham (2000b) claims that having over 50% response rate has to be considered as good. This was achieved with the librarians, unlike the publishers.

It must be recognised that despite a conscious effort to reduce this, the researcher may have affected the data. Bryman (2001:23) submits that research "cannot be value free" and Denscombe (2003:273) argues that "the researcher's self is *inevitably* an integral part of the analysis, and should be

acknowledged as such". The researcher may have inadvertently sent signals to interviewees which affected their answers. Alternatively the researcher's own viewpoints may have subconsciously affected the data analysis. By being aware of these dangers, it is submitted that they are reduced.

Finally, it is also acknowledged that by merely discussing the topic of crossover fiction, the respondents' views may have been affected. By bringing their attention to the term, the research may have highlighted its significance and as such altered the situation and opinions surrounding it.

Although these limitations exist, attempts have been made to reduce their impact on the investigation. If this research were to be extended, additional steps should be taken to minimise them further. However, it is submitted that this research has produced useful findings which are discussed in the next chapter.

## **4 - Results**

In this chapter, the findings are laid out and then discussed for each objective.

### **4.1 Results fulfilling objective 1 - To identify the meaning of the term crossover fiction**

#### *4.1.1 Defining the term*

All the participants were initially asked what they understood by the term crossover fiction. A large number of both public and school librarians focused on the idea that they were books for any age. They did however, vary in their emphasis, some focusing on the fact that the fiction must be 'enjoyed' by different ages, while others stating that it need only be 'read' by different ages. Only a few public librarians included both aspects within their interpretation.

The focus group was influenced by the fact that there had been previous discussions in class. Despite this, they considered whether the books had to be read or enjoyed by the different age groups. One participant thought they could be read without being enjoyed while the others seemed certain that the fiction should be enjoyed.

Another public librarian considered crossover fiction to mean that the text appealed to a variety of ages, but qualified this by arguing that they appreciated the book on different levels. One focus group participant agreed.

I understand crossover fiction to mean that it is a book which appeals to both Children and Adults in the same way. This isn't a book which you read as a child and still love, but a book which can span both audiences, resulting in them both engaging on different levels to the text. (Public 3)

"Sophie's World". I read that a couple years ago and my sister read it a couple of years ago...I think it is crossover so far as it's read by both adults and children but I think if you read it when you're younger, you probably have to go back and read it again because you didn't really understand any of it. (Focus Group)

Only one school librarian and Interviewee 1 suggested that the books needed to be suitable in terms of both content and style.

Books which are written in a style suitable & comprehensible to a very wide range of age groups, from children (usually teenagers) to adults, and which contain ideas / plots which appeal to the wide range of age groups. (School 11)

There was some dispute amongst several librarians as to whether the crossover was from children to adults or teenage to adults.

Fiction aimed at children, read by adults. (School 6)

These are usually novels which will appeal to young adults, but have initially been written targeting teenagers rather than adults. (School 1)

I have usually understood it to mean adult fiction with an appeal to young adults, rather than vice versa. (Public 8)

Some librarians (both school and public) expressed the opinion that crossover fiction implied a bridge between different age groups. Only one public librarian thought that crossover fiction also meant a crossing over between genres.

I think crossover fiction refers to books which can be used as a stepping-stone from children's to adult stock but I also see them as books which can be read and enjoyed by adults and young people. (Public 24)

Book and other stock which forms a "bridge" between different categories in libraries, e.g. older Teens to Adult, age 16 or thereabouts, could apply to a lesser extent to the group between primary and secondary at age 11. (Public 6)

Fiction that bridges the gap between overtly teenage material & adult material, that can be read & understood & appreciated by teenagers, & that can simultaneously be read by adults without them feeling patronised or bored by material written for children / teenagers. (School 7)

A primary difference between the school and public librarians is that many of the school librarians focused on the publishers' role in determining a book to be crossover fiction. Several noted that crossover fiction was "marketed" as being for different ages while only a couple of public librarians mentioned the publishers at this stage.

A term currently used by the book industry to describe fiction marketed to both adults and children, sometimes under separate covers. (School 9)

Crossover fiction seems to be a marketing term for books which appeal to a range of different-aged readers. (Public 23)

#### 4.1.2 *Deciding which books fall into the crossover label*

In order to establish whether there was a consensus about the label, a short exercise was conducted (see Appendices 6.2 and 6.3). This involved participants deciding whether 27 books were crossover fiction.

##### 4.1.2.1 Public librarians

While there were no books that every public librarian considered to be crossover fiction, all the books were named at least once.

Table 1: Exercise in marking books as crossover fiction - public librarians

<b>Position of being called crossover by public librarians</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
2	Northern Lights
3	A Gathering Light
4	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix The Colour of Magic
5	Across the Nightingale Floor The Hobbit The Catcher in the Rye

While nearly all public librarians decided that “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” and “Northern Lights” were crossover fiction, the rest did not have many nominations (only about half the librarians).

#### 4.1.2.2 School librarians

The school librarians’ results mirrored those of the public librarians fairly closely. All the school librarians marked “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time”. Nearly all considered “Across the Nightingale Floor”, “Northern Lights” and “A Gathering Light” to be crossover. However, after that the scores were much more even therefore displaying less certainty in their categorisation as crossover fiction.

Table 2: Exercise in marking books as crossover fiction - school librarians

<b>Position of being called crossover by school librarians</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
2	Northern Lights Across the Nightingale Floor
3	A Gathering Light
4	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix The Hobbit Snoopy
5	Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone

Only one book (“The Bed and Breakfast Star”) was never marked as crossover by the school librarians.

#### 4.1.2.3 School and public librarians

Most public and school librarians did not mark the two picture books (“The Gruffalo” and “Guess How Much I Love You”), but both books were described at least once as crossover fiction.

The classics included in the exercise (i.e. “The Waterbabies”, “Winnie the Pooh” and “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe”) tended to score very poorly. Only a handful of librarians thought that these constituted crossover fiction.

Many librarians thought that the graphic novel “Maus” was crossover fiction, but only a few marked the two cartoon books (“Snoopy” and “Calvin & Hobbes”).

#### 4.1.2.4 Readers

The readers’ results were noticeably different from those of the librarians. Given the fact that there were fewer interviewees than questionnaire respondents, the results were much closer and therefore more dependent on the individual views of the respondents.

Table 3: Exercise in marking books as crossover fiction - readers

<b>Position of being called crossover by readers</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
2	Northern Lights The Hobbit Sabriel The Colour of Magic
3	Across the Nightingale Floor The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time Winnie the Pooh The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
4	1984 Eragon
5	The Waterbabies Snoopy Shadowmancer

Only two books were never described as crossover (“The Bed and Breakfast Star” and “The Gruffalo”). All of the respondents called the two Harry Potter texts crossover, although only one respondent rejected those in second position.

While the readers were more accepting of the classics as crossover fiction than the librarians (“Winnie the Pooh” in particular), nearly all discounted the cartoon books and graphic novel. It is contended however, that these results are heavily influenced by the readers’ unfamiliarity with the titles.

#### 4.1.2.5 Difficulties with the exercise

All of the participants were given the opportunity to point out any difficulties that they had with the exercise. Some questionnaire respondents did not answer this question therefore it is difficult to know whether they had no problems or they could not verbalise the difficulties that they experienced. Others definitely wrote that they did not have any problems. However, as previously mentioned, the most frequently cited problem was unfamiliarity with the text.

Other difficulties arose because of the problem that there is no exact definition of crossover fiction. This was particularly true with the classics which the librarians knew adults enjoyed but still considered to be children’s books.

I talked about this with our Adult Services Librarian and there were some "The Hobbit" and "The Waterbabies" that I felt were children's books but she felt would also issue in adult stock. (Public 24)

There are classics both modern and older which will have an adult interest, but are essentially children's books e.g. Lion, Witch & Wardrobe. There are books that can be appreciated by both, but more will be got out of them by one or the other e.g. Snoopy. (Public 18)

Some are classics which adults enjoy rather than children these days hence the crossover. (Public 19)

Similarly when asked what made the decisions difficult, Interviewee 1 cited classics:

Just things like...“The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe”, that’s a classic but you get adults reading that. (Interviewee 1)

Several librarians expressed problems with the fact that there were no exact criteria to follow. Therefore some acknowledged that their decisions were based on what they perceived others to think.

To an extent most of these were quite difficult, partially because I was unsure exactly what criteria to use. When identifying titles that I would class as crossover I decided to identify those that I \*think\* would currently be termed crossover by a large proportion of people working for the library service, within the book trade and for publishers. (Public 10)

Some have been deliberately published as crossovers, some have become them over time. It's quite difficult for a children's libraries to make these decisions - as an adult I read (and enjoy) a lot of children's books, but that doesn't necessarily make them crossover titles. (Public 25)

This lack of criteria was also the difficulty which the readers highlighted.

I mean my Grandma loves “The Gruffalo” but I wouldn't call it crossover fiction. (Focus Group)

One school librarian considered the decision as to whether a book is crossover as “subjective” which is perhaps the basis of the whole problem.

The whole subject seems rather subjective. For instance Winnie the Pooh - I hated it as a child and I don't enjoy it now but to most people it is wonderful & definitely ‘crossover’. (School 5)

In relation to the picture books, only one public librarian considered the crossover potential of these texts:

Titles such as Guess How Much I Love You and The Gruffalo are interesting in that they will on the whole be read by adults to their children, so there are aspects which do appeal to both children and adults. I suspect

because of the format of picture books crossover appeal would be lessened. This is a great shame as I think there is great crossover potential with a number of picture books. (Public 10)

Some librarians highlighted the crossover potential of cartoons and graphic novels.

Calvin & Hobbes, Snoopy - both are probably enjoyed by children, teenagers & adults (I loved Snoopy as a child) but they're not really written - I don't think - as crossover. They just have a very broad appeal. (School 7)

#### *4.1.3 Has crossover fiction always existed?*

When shown a list of statements and asked to mark those that they agreed with, nearly all the librarians marked the statement "crossover fiction has always existed." It was also the point on which most public librarians expanded.

Crossover fiction has always existed even if not fully recognised. (Public 6)

Literature which we now assign to crossover fiction has existed for a number of years but the category now designated to it makes it acceptable for adults to be seen reading children's books. (Public 7)

For years we have had books that would be "crossover" fiction, but it is only now, at a time when we are obsessed with guiding people to things, that we feel the need to label these books. (Public 16)

#### *4.1.4 Discussion of findings for objective 1*

It is worth noting at the outset, that while none of the librarians seemed unfamiliar with the term 'crossover fiction' the readers were less sure. Interviewees 1 and 2 both had to be shown definitions taken from the literature. Their interpretations are therefore coloured by these definitions. However, while the focus group had heard of the term, they had never heard it used. This unfamiliarity could explain why there was little uniformity in their interpretations of crossover fiction.

Consequently, just as was found in the literature review, there appears to be little agreement about what crossover fiction is. There is general acceptance that it implies movement between age groups, but what those groups are and in what direction that movement runs, is unclear. Despite this, nearly all respondents concurred with Galef's (1995) third description of a crossover writer, i.e. one who addresses different audiences in the same text. It is this definition which features most commonly in the media (Armistead, 2001; Smith, 2005) so it is unsurprising that this has gained widespread acceptance.

The difference between the books being enjoyed or read may seem unnecessarily pedantic but young readers often read above their level of understanding. Kellaway (2005) argues that this is how readers develop. However, for a book to be truly crossover, it needs to be not only read but also understood, otherwise a toddler deciphering the words in Tolstoy's "War and Peace" would make it crossover fiction. While many librarians and readers correlated this understanding with enjoyment, one focus group participant pointed out a book ("1984") that she had read, understood but not enjoyed. Therefore it is submitted that although enjoyment can be part of crossover fiction, it cannot form part of its definition; understanding is more important.

However, this concept of understanding the text is in itself contentious. Some librarians and readers thought that different readers understood the books on different levels. Kellaway (2005:5) agrees: "The extraordinary thing is that works of art – especially books – change according to age. A book read at 18, reread at 48, may seem entirely different." This becomes more controversial when considering picture books. While the readers and librarians generally thought that they were not crossover, many writers argued that they are because adults can interpret them on different levels to children (e.g. the hidden visual jokes in Colin Thompson's or Anthony Browne's work). Whether crossover fiction is understood on different levels cannot therefore be laid down as part of the definition.

It is difficult to know what can be put into a formal definition of crossover fiction. So far, it has only been established that there are boundaries which this fiction crosses. Yet these boundaries in themselves are poorly defined as is highlighted by Hunt (2001). It could be for this reason that the librarians and

readers had different opinions about whether crossover fiction is the movement from children to adults, teenage to adult, or vice versa.

Whether crossover fiction can act as a bridge between the age groups was fairly uncontroversial. This can be explained by the inherent nature of crossover fiction. By moving between age groups, it is seen as a path between them. Equally, the discussion surrounding whether crossover fiction has always existed was conclusive. The literature review was full of examples of books which predated the term but had had different audiences. Most of the librarians were similarly convinced.

As the results from the exercise on labelling books demonstrate, there was a considerable amount of agreement between the public and school librarians. However, it is significant that all the books were thought to be crossover by at least one librarian. This demonstrates that the reasons behind those decisions varied widely.

An alarming discovery when comparing the tables is the incongruence between the librarians' views on what constitutes crossover fiction and those of the readers. The readers' results are particularly interesting because Harry Potter is such a clear winner but these came fairly low in the librarians' results. This was unanticipated because the media and many writers commonly attribute the crossover term to the hype surrounding Rowling's books. The readers' opinions therefore mirror those in the media while librarians must be working according to alternative criteria. The impact of this difference of opinion is an important consideration, because there is the danger that librarians will begin working at cross-purposes to readers. This could feed into stock purchasing and placement issues, which will be discussed in section 4.3. This disparity can also have wider implications because there must be a reason why librarians are found to be so different from their readers. Librarians need to understand their readers and work on their level.

## **4.2 Results fulfilling objective 2 - To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to readers**

### *4.2.1 Effect on readers of calling a book crossover*

The focus group participants did not think that the label crossover would affect their opinion of a book. Interviewee 2 agreed, indicating that he did not look at labels but focused on the content instead. Interviewee 1 was the only one to have a negative reaction to the term crossover.

Probably I'd less read it because I'd think it was for kids, as well as adults. There'd be different things in it which I, I don't know actually. I'm sure I would [read it] but if I had a choice out of the two I'd probably go for the adult one because it would probably deal with more adult things.

(Interviewee 1)

Many librarians named the negative perceptions that crossover fiction can have as a major disadvantage of the label. Several complained that the label would deter certain age groups from reading the books. School librarians were particularly sensitive about this.

...also people are often put off by "labels" - I'm talking of teenagers who often ask for suggestions but don't like things to be too prescriptive.

(School 3)

Young adults / adults may be put off reading it as they think if it is suitable for children then it's too easy for them. (School 8)

Some adults may still perceive it as being for teenagers & not for them & might leave it alone. Similar to confident child readers perceiving picture books to be for babies & missing out on some wonderful stuff. (School 7)

Some librarians were also concerned that parents or library staff would think that by describing a book as crossover, it denoted a more adult content.

Some staff may not be aware that it is suitable for children - they may believe it has unsuitable references to sex / violence etc. (Public 22)

#### 4.2.2 Perception of adults reading crossover fiction

When asked for their reactions on seeing an adult reading certain books in public, the readers responded very differently depending on the book in question. Interviewees 1 and 2 saw nothing special about an adult reading Harry Potter. One of the focus group participants reflected this opinion:

I wouldn't think, *ooh they're reading Harry Potter* [emphasised]. I'd think, they are reading Harry Potter [neutrally voiced]. If it was something that I hadn't read, I'd wonder what it was about. (Focus Group)

However, the focus group made the comment that it would be more noticeable if they were reading the book with the child's cover.

It would be kind of weird. (Focus Group)

When asked the same question about "Winnie the Pooh", the focus group were more judgemental:

I'd be very worried.

I wouldn't be worried but I'd be amused by the fact that they were reading it on the train.

[Interviewer] So you think that they should read it in private?

Yeah, if they want to read it, read it somewhere else.

Unless they were reading it to a kid. (Focus Group)

Interviewee 1 echoed these sentiments by suggesting that he would assume the adult would be reading it because of their occupation, e.g. teacher. Interviewee 2 was more to the point:

I'd think they're a bit childish. (Interviewee 2)

On the other hand, one focus group respondent was more concerned about children reading adult books than vice versa:

We were all trying to remember once when we saw this like six-year-old reading “Birdsong”. Me and my Mum were just like, *okay*. [Negative emphasis].

[Interviewer] So you’d be more shocked by a six-year-old reading “Birdsong” than like a sixty-year-old reading Harry Potter?

Yeah. Because “Birdsong” is not crossover fiction. (Focus Group)

Finally using an example of Snoopy, Interviewee 1 stated he would find it “odd” if an adult read it.

I’m not knocking anyone who wants to read Snoopy on the train or something, but it’s a bit of an odd thing for like a middle-age man or woman to start reading. (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 2 however, refuted this because of his personal taste in favour of Snoopy.

Only one librarian agreed with the statement that crossover fiction is a result of the “dumbing down” of adults. A few school librarians and an even smaller proportion of public librarians thought that crossover fiction is just an excuse for adults to read children’s literature. This implies that most disagreed with the statements. Some argued particularly strongly against them:

Some of us don't need an excuse! (School 7)

I do strongly disagree with the comment that crossover fiction is a result of the dumbing down of adults. Implicit within that statement are value judgements about the nature of reading and of adulthood. ... Childhood plays a crucial stage in our development and maturation, children's literature explores concepts and constructions of childhood which are by necessity almost exclusively adult... Reading children’s literature can be an

important cultural, sociological and even psychological exercise therefore!  
(Public 10)

#### 4.2.3 *Discussion of findings for objective 2*

It is interesting that the readers were unconcerned about whether a book was labelled as crossover. Many of the librarians expressed concern that the label would deter some users, though on this evidence such worries would seem unfounded. However, Interviewee 1 was more reluctant about the term because he thought that a crossover book implied a simplistic content. Interviewee 1 was older than the other readers which suggests that the label could be more of a problem to older readers. Some of the librarians agreed with this.

While children and young adults may not reject the term crossover, it is possible that adults will do it for them. Falconer (2004) thought that some adults considered crossover fiction to contain inappropriate content. Some of the librarians also raised this issue. They argued that adults might assume it contains sex or violence and therefore restrict access to the materials.

The responses which readers gave about adults reading certain books were very varied. Some seemed to think that adults should be embarrassed to read books like “Winnie the Pooh” in public unless they had a reason, such as their profession or they were reading to a child. This idea that adults should be embarrassed to read certain books reflects the negative press that crossover fiction sometimes gets: that adults are ‘dumbing down’, nursing Peter Pan complexes or regressing. These perceptions were (often fiercely) denounced by the librarians. Yet, while Clee (2004:6) argues that children’s literature is gaining “kudos”, this is plainly not universal. Morris (2004) argues that such acceptance is general, but if that were true then the sight of morning commuters reading “Winnie the Pooh” would not have generated so much comment. The readers would not find it “childish” or “kind of weird”.

Nevertheless, the readers clearly saw some texts as being more socially acceptable for adults to read in public (e.g. Harry Potter vs. Snoopy). On the other hand, there was no evidence that the readers themselves felt pressured to read the books, as has been argued by Nodelman and Reimer (2003) and Frank

(2000). Yet, the readers were not directly questioned about this because it was decided that it would be unlikely to provide any reliable answers.

#### **4.3 Results fulfilling objective 3 - To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to libraries**

In order to investigate the degree to which libraries already exploited crossover fiction, the librarians were asked whether they had run crossover fiction promotions. Several public librarians did say that they had, though most were in individual librarians, rather than on a large scale. Others had run promotions focused on a particular book or a particular age group. A considerable number stated that they did not run such promotions.

Individual libraries have had promotions in dump-bins of cross-over titles. We have not as yet had a full-scale crossover promotion but then the potential for us to do so across our large number of libraries (84 statics) is perhaps not great. (Public 10)

I have in my previous roles and will do so again. I always tend to hang it on the publication of a major title (e.g. “Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince”) but have not done so this time because of prior commitments. I found it to be quite well received... (Public 3)

Only a couple of school librarians stated that they had run promotions. The majority had not done any promotions but some argued that there was no need because all fiction was together.

No, but since we have a comparatively small library in one space, any displays of fiction titles are inevitably brought to the attention of all pupils. (School 9)

This lack of general promotion is reflected in the readers’ responses. The focus group claimed that they had never heard anything being advertised as crossover fiction. Interviewees 1 and 2 had not even understood the term.

Next, all librarians were asked whether they thought that adults borrowed from the children’s section for their own reading. By considering the movement

between the different age groups, it was hoped to see how readers use their libraries and expose the potential for crossover fiction. This resulted in a real spectrum of answers. A few librarians said that they do, a few said that they did not, with the majority of librarians being somewhere in between. A number argued that they could not be sure since statistics were not collected on this and if adults borrow for their children then the results would be unreliable anyway.

Yes. Especially from our Young Adult and Young Adult Plus collections.  
There is lots of interest in Harry Potter too! (Public 4)

Some do but I don't think they feel comfortable wandering in on their own - especially men. (Public 22)

I would have thought not, unless they have children (and thus a good excuse) or unless the titles are recommended e.g. 'Richard and Judy' type booklists. Some adults do browse the Teenage sections (I'm not sure they realise which section they're in). Graphic novels are definitely borrowed by adults. (Public 12)

This is an almost impossible figure to measure unfortunately. My suspicion would be that they do, they certainly borrow on adult tickets, but whether this is always for themselves or for children it is impossible to tell. (Public 10)

Some school librarians argued that because it was a school library, the only potential adult borrowers were teachers. Often teachers' borrowing was on a small scale – usually personal recommendations from the librarian.

I don't have a children's section as such but young adults & teachers share.  
(School 5)

No. Only English dept staff & usually because I've recommended they try something! (School 7)

The librarians were then asked if the opposite occurred, i.e. children borrowing from the adults' section. In this instance, school librarians overwhelmingly gave a positive answer to this question. While some public

librarians gave a definite yes and others gave a definite no. Again there were no official statistics to consult but a couple of public librarians stated that it was against the library rules for children to borrow adult books. Anecdotally, many librarians did think that children borrowed from the adult section but usually only the older children. One librarian felt sure it was more common than the converse situation.

There is a stop on adult titles being issued on a children's card - to protect under 11s from inappropriate material - so again it would be difficult to guess as any titles taken for an Under 11 would need issuing on an adult or Young Adult card. (Public 21)

Again I don't know - I think a lot of young people, particularly boys, use adult non-fiction sections for their subject interests. Also Graphic novels are well [used] by teenage boys. (Public 24)

It would mainly be young people rather than children per se. ... It is noticeable at this age range [13-14] the number of 'adult' books that they are reading. Andy McNab, Dave Pelzer, Helen Fielding are always popular. Boys often read non-fiction from the adult section. (Public 10)

#### *4.3.1 Benefits of crossover fiction to libraries*

Having considered libraries' current work with crossover fiction, the librarians were asked what they thought the potential benefits of crossover fiction might be to libraries. The first main advantage was that it would raise issue numbers in libraries. Essentially by appealing to a wider audience, more books would be borrowed. This was recognised by a significant number of librarians.

More issues as you would be promoting it to two or more different user categories. (Public 3)

I also think if books are good let a wider range of people have access to them and some adults would never think to look in children's and teenage sections. (Public 24)

Some librarians rejected this idea that crossover fiction could increase issues and widen reading:

BUT, I don't really feel labelling a book as crossover increases issues or readership. If people read a book, I feel they would have read it anyway, without the label. (Public 23)

The second advantage advocated by many librarians falls under the term reader development. Many of the librarians recognised that crossover fiction could widen the reading experience for readers, perhaps by encouraging children or young adults to move towards more adult material. The opposite was also recognised though to a lesser extent, in that adults may be encouraged to try different books.

Children will be tempted to read it to challenge themselves and think they are growing up. (School 8)

It encourages some young people to try adult titles - they often feel they aren't quite ready for the adult library, don't know what to choose, and to see a title and author they recognise helps a bit. (Public 24)

It could be a useful reader development tool to encourage young people to extend their reading through their teenage years. ... Library categorisation of stock is inflexible and sometimes raises false barriers to reading development: accepting a growing trend that many titles are 'crossover' might help reduce or even eliminate this inflexibility. (Public 12)

Widens the potential audience - adults may discover the excellent fiction they have hitherto dismissed as for children. (School 2)

Other advantages include promoting family reading and the practical benefit of helping staff when advising readers or shelving. One school librarian considered the wider picture and saw crossover fiction as promoting understanding between adults and teenagers.

Might help adults to understand that many teenagers can enjoy things adults do, and are not a separate species! (School 11)

When directly asked about the potential for basic skills provision, only a few public and some school librarians thought it was a viable possibility.

Crossover fiction can be useful in basic skills provision although this does depend upon the book, if we were talking about a title such as “1984” which has crossover appeal, its use in basic skills provision would be limited, something like Harry Potter (the first anyway) with relatively short chapters and fairly simple diction would be more useful. I would say some crossover fiction can be used a tool in basic skills provision. (Public 10)

Maybe, some adults who are daunted by some so-called adult fiction might try one, perceiving them to be ‘easier’ & consequently read a good book. (School 10)

[Although] this idea of re-covering & actually targeting the adult market, e.g. "Harry Potter" is definitely more to do with books sales than "basic skills provision" (School 10)

Only a few public librarians totally rejected the notion of labelling books as crossover.

I'm not sure that I do think it is beneficial as I think that sometimes we label too many things. I would not be happy to see the books that I have ticked in your questionnaire with a cross over label on. (Public 16)

#### *4.3.2 Limitations of crossover to libraries*

While a small number of librarians stated that they could not think of any disadvantages to labelling a book as crossover, many librarians focused on the public's difficulty in understanding the term. Given the varied results of the structured exercise (see section 4.1) this would seem to be a valid point.

Even if the public do understand the term, many librarians were wary of their reaction to it. A negative reaction to the label could actually decrease library issues.

It may not be taken seriously by either age group. (Public 7)

Young adults / adults may be put off reading it as they think if it is suitable for children then it's too easy for them. (School 8)

Parents/carers/teachers might have issues about the unsuitability (in terms of sexual or violent content) of some titles for younger teenagers. Conversely some adults might consider crossover titles as 'childish' or 'part of the dumbing-down process' and this might affect library issues. (Public 12)

Some people could be put off by the marketing hype which could be associated with this classification. (Public 9)

Other difficulties included having too many labels on books and pressure by publishers on authors may mean fewer good children's books being written.

Even more stickers on the books - we have far too many already. (Public 2)

Good children's books may be "lost" or not written because publishers may "drive" authors to specifically write "crossover" books. Not enough good books are published for younger children because of the current drive for "crossover" books. (Public 11)

Another major area of concern for librarians was the practical implications of crossover fiction. Most frequently cited was the difficulty of deciding on the location of crossover fiction. Multiple copies may be a financial impossibility and stock rotation may be impractical, yet where the books are placed will determine who can access them.

If the book fund is tight then you cannot duplicate for each client group it may appeal to. (Public 1)

Another disadvantage would have to be the confusion it would cause staff as to where books should be located. This is already an issue with certain titles and with certain members of staff who strongly hold the view that a

children's book is a children's book and an adult book an adult's book!  
(Public 10)

Children may be unwilling to look in the adults' section, particularly in libraries where younger library members cannot borrow adult books on their tickets. Similarly one librarian said that it would cause problems with their fines / request procedures.

The only practical problem for us would be any book stocked as Adult which a child wanted to read (i.e. under 11) as the book wouldn't automatically issue on a child ticket (thus protecting children from unsuitable material). (Public 21)

...and there may be administrative issues around requesting etc., and charges but they shouldn't stop us getting books to the customers. (Public 24)

#### 4.3.3 *Placement of crossover fiction*

Several librarians saw the practical considerations of crossover fiction as a major hurdle. This focused primarily on the placement of crossover fiction because most librarians did not have distinct shelves for it. The librarians were therefore asked where they place crossover fiction. They had already completed the exercise whereby they had to mark where they would expect to find certain books (see Appendix 6.3).

For many school librarians, they found this question to be inapplicable since the large majority shelve all fiction alphabetically. However, one claimed to distinguish "older fiction" with a sticker and another said crossover fiction was distributed between the children and young adult section. It is therefore likely that when filling out the exercise, the school librarians were imagining where they would place the books in a public library and therefore the answers were not based on real experience.

When the public librarians were asked the same question, most placed crossover fiction in a variety of locations.

It goes in with the main stock - children's, teenage or adult, it doesn't have specific areas. (Public 24)

Where we think they will go out best. Adult and junior stock is purchased separately and may be in both sections if supplier has marketed title to us both. (Public 25)

Only a few public librarians specifically stated that it would be put in a particular section. This was usually the teenage / young adult area, though one library was piloting a section of such material and another had dump-bins.

As a pilot scheme [started in 2004] we have Young Adult Plus collections in 8 of our libraries. These have proved so popular that we are creating small versions in all our libraries. (Public 4)

We have put it on dump bins between areas so all can see it. (Public 20)

In the structured exercise, the librarians were asked where they would place the listed titles. The results were diverse but the titles most commonly marked as crossover (i.e. "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time", "Northern Lights" and "A Gathering Light") were usually placed in the young adult section, with a few copies in the rest of the library. Other crossover books were primarily based in the children's section (e.g. Harry Potter and "The Hobbit") with some copies scattered throughout the library.

Overwhelmingly, the readers placed the books that they thought of as crossover in the young adult section. They often sited them in the children's and adult sections as well but to a lesser degree. The only exceptions to these were "Winnie the Pooh" (in children's), "Snoopy" (children's), "The Waterbabies" (equally young adult and adult) and "1984" (adults).

Given this assortment of possible locations for fiction, the readers were asked how they felt about going into different sections of the library. The focus group and Interviewee 2 seemed content to visit both the children's and adult's section of the library.

If it was in the adults' section, I don't mind either as long as it's a good book I don't really mind. (Interviewee 2)

In contrast, Interviewee 1 preferred to find books in the adult section than children's. However, while he would be willing to find a specific book in either section, he suggested that some adults would be self-conscious going into the children's section.

Prefer to find it in the adults but I wouldn't have a problem if I saw it. It's more like a self-conscious thing I think, walking into a children's section in a library. I imagine you'd get some funny looks or that's what you might think. Whether you do or not, might be why people don't go into it if it's in the children's section. ... It wouldn't put me off going. If I want to get the book I'd still go but I'd get a little child... [Laughter]. (Interviewee 1)

As a result of these feelings, the focus group thought that the books should be placed in the children's and adults' sections rather than a separate section. One participant suggested alphabetising all fiction and removing all separate sections. Interviewee 2 thought that crossover books should be placed with young adult fiction because most crossover books were about young adults and they were the target audience. Although he qualified this by saying that some books (e.g. "The Lord of the Rings") should go in the adults section because of the more complicated language.

Interviewee 1 decided that libraries should ask users where they wanted the books to be placed. Alternatively he suggested a discrete section for crossover fiction so that people would not be embarrassed to go there.

It's like the crossover thing. It's ridiculous to have the same book scattered across the library. They should do this with most books, like if they gave out a small questionnaire to people who go to their library often, they could have a section in the library which is like for crossover. Then it wouldn't be the same thing 'cos you could be walking in looking for an adult book or you could be walking in looking at a child's book. I don't think anyone would, you wouldn't be as [self] conscious. (Interviewee 1)

The scattered placement of crossover fiction in libraries suggests that librarians view crossover fiction as a mixture of different genres rather than a genre in its own right. Some librarians also emphasised that publishers had just concocted the term.

It is too broad to be a single genre. I think it needs to be promoted under the term though to draw attention to it. (Public 3)

Mixture - very much a modern publishing phenomenon - there have always been children's and YA books that adults have read, but in today's market driven world this is a useful tool to appeal to a wider audience. (Public 21)

A mixture of others. A term invented by marketing people. (Public 11)

Some of the public librarians were less sure about crossover fiction being either a separate genre or a mixture of others. One considered that it could be both. Another rejected both. A third public librarian thought that it was a mixture, but as more crossover fiction is published, could become a genre in its own right. One librarian thought that it was publishers who wanted it to be a separate genre when it was in fact a mixture.

Could be viewed as both, there are crossover in many areas of the book. (Public 18)

No, I don't think it is a separate genre or even a mixture of genres. Adults have always enjoyed reading children's books and similarly teenagers have always read adult books following peer or adult recommendation. (Public 12)

It's a mixture of others but I guess could also be considered a genre in it's own right as more of this type of book is published. (Public 17)

#### 4.3.4 *Same book, different covers*

All librarians were asked whether they had bought copies of the same books with children and adults' covers. A large majority of school librarians denied this

while most public librarians admitted to buying both covers. There were two main reasons given for this: suppliers' choice and appeal to different readers.

Several librarians said that they were reliant upon the decision of suppliers as to which copies they received and therefore they did not consciously choose the different covers. This was also the reason that most school librarians gave.

Yes, but not deliberately. We order from library suppliers and it is potluck which particular version of the cover we receive. (Public 4)

Yes we have. Again there is no policy regarding this and therefore there aren't specific reasons underpinning this decision. It is simply that our separate suppliers have provided us with different formats. (Public 10)

Simply the edition that was available at the bookshop / supplier - it wasn't a conscious choice. (I think one was on special offer!). (School 7)

Many other public librarians said that they bought the different covers because they appealed to different readers. Some librarians were specific and stated that they put the child covers in the children's sections and the adult covers in the adults' section. One librarian argued that adults do often prefer the adult covers. While a couple of school librarians said that variety was the reason for buying different covers, none of them mentioned that it was to appeal to different age groups.

This is to do with buying multiple copies. If we are placing stock as adult covers we will purchase the adult cover and if as Junior it will have the junior cover. It is just to appeal to the relevant groups as some people seem to be slightly embarrassed to take out a title with a more childish cover to it. (Public 3)

We buy the 'children's' cover for their library and the 'adult' cover for theirs. (Public 20)

Yes - just for variety. Publishers seem to change the covers so often anyway. (School 2)

The focus group participants chose their favourite covers based more on aesthetic appeal than whether they knew it was a children's or adult's cover. Although one participant thought that adult covers should be placed in the adult section and the children's one in the children's section, they generally agreed that libraries should buy both versions.

Interviewee 1 thought that adults might be self-conscious if they were seen reading a book with a childish cover so it might be worthwhile having the adult version. His personal preference was for the children's covers but he saw the value of both.

I suppose if you didn't do a section like I said of crossover, then it would be a good idea to buy the adult Harry Potter for the adult section and the child Harry Potter for the child section, but it would probably be easier and cheaper to buy in bulk and put a crossover section. (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 2 generally preferred the adult covers but appreciated that children would prefer the others. Overall he decided that it was the book itself and not the cover that mattered.

#### *4.3.5 Discussion of findings for objective 3*

The findings demonstrate a lack of widespread publicity from libraries about crossover fiction. Any promotions tend to be small scale or only exploiting certain books. Given the hype surrounding crossover fiction, as demonstrated in the press, this seems like a squandered opportunity. This is particularly significant because the librarians did recognise many benefits of the crossover fiction. Libraries seem to be constantly forced to justify their existence and despite Linley and Usherwood's (1998) arguments for using qualitative evidence, official statistics are often demanded. If increasing book issues helps libraries to prove their value then they should not let such an opportunity slip away.

In addition, the responses from the libraries suggest that there is only intermittent movement of users between different sections of the library. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) mentioned the potential of crossover fiction in reader development, even if they could not find any evidence. If crossover

fiction can be linked with initiatives like social inclusion projects, family reading or basic skills provision then its potential is increased. These benefits appear to be worth fighting for.

There are however, disadvantages which the librarians recognised as being connected to crossover fiction. They focused mainly on the practical issues of physical location which, while important, are potentially the easiest to overcome through policy changes and training (as suggested by Public Librarian 10). At present, crossover fiction is currently spread around libraries, depending on the librarians' decisions. Part of the problem stems from the indecision about whether crossover fiction is a separate genre. Most librarians claimed the contrary which makes the possibility of a separate area for crossover fiction unlikely. However, Orman (2003) condemns librarians who enforce strict classifications by age. To counter this criticism, libraries could encourage increased overlap between the sections.

This suggested overlap would perhaps more closely reflect readers' library habits. The readers interviewed were generally willing to move between sections, despite indications from the librarians that this was unusual, though this can perhaps be explained by the lack of official statistics. By increasing readers' opportunities to access different sections, they are ensured access to a wider range of fiction which would be of interest to them. However, it is possible that some librarians would shy away from this development, as can already be seen by the existing practice in some authorities to prevent children from borrowing adult fiction.

An interesting point mentioned by Public Librarian 22 was about the reluctance of men to enter the children's section alone. The readers interviewed were all young adults and therefore did not have this barrier, although Interviewee 1 was both the oldest reader and the most hesitant about going to the children's section. Libraries should be encouraged to provide fiction access to all readers, although in this instance, this may require duplication of stock which raises budgetary concerns.

The other major disadvantage is more difficult to overcome. How readers perceive books labelled as crossover and how this impacts their choices is difficult to foresee. Many librarians were wary about the term itself and

suggested that it would be off-putting to readers. This was somewhat refuted by the readers themselves, as described in section 4.2. What this predicament does demonstrate is the value of research such as this, which considers the reaction of readers.

Another choice which libraries have to make is in relation to buying books with different covers. Most librarians claimed that they did have the different books but often this was the suppliers' decisions rather than their own conscious selection. This leaves a lot to chance given the fact that 66% of readers do choose books according to their cover (The Bookseller, 1999). School librarians may not have considered variety to be an important consideration, because they focus on a smaller age range (possibly with teaching staff being a secondary consideration to students and so ignored because of constrained budgets).

#### **4.4 Results fulfilling objective 4 - To consider the future of crossover fiction**

##### *4.4.1 Effect on the status of children's literature*

Nearly all the school and public librarians agreed with the statement that crossover fiction reflects an increased recognition of the quality of children's literature.

I think the quality of writing has become widely recognised by a wide audience. (Public 24)

... I do think it has become a marketing tool - but it has brought the excellence of much children's writing to greater public awareness. (School 2)

Although one public librarian argued that it is dangerous to allow only publishers to make these decisions.

Crossover fiction does recognise a quality in children's literature but all too often this is decided by publishers rather than the book buying public. It was Scholastic who issued *His Dark Materials* with adult covers, Bloomsbury who did the same for *Harry Potter* and Random House were

the publishers who exploited the potential of the crossover market by being the first publisher to simultaneously publish adult and children's covers on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. We have to be cautious that publishers (or indeed anyone else) don't become the sole arbiters of 'quality' literature. (Public 10)

The librarians were later given the statement "It has been argued that the strict demarcations between children's and adult literature are being eroded." When asked if they agreed several public librarians disputed the notion that there are actual demarcations between children's and adults' literature. Instead they argue that readers and writers have always moved between age groups.

I think any strict demarcations have only been in the minds of people who enjoy categorising things. Readers have always chosen a book because they think they will enjoy it. In the nineteenth century children's and adult's fiction was often blurred. (Public 16)

I am not sure that there have been strict demarcations - in the past, the classics (i.e. Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Hardy, the Brontes, etc.) were used as crossover fiction, as were more modern classics. (Public 8)

On the other hand, a significant number of public librarians accepted this statement although they often qualified their agreement.

Yes - and there is also a blurring of the transition from teen to adult in today's society. (Public 22)

I think it is true. But from a Public Library point of view you need to have some sort of back-up to ensure that inappropriate material is not been accessed by those who are too young to understand the content of certain books or who may miss the point the author is trying to make. (Public 3)

Yes, but more between children using adult collections than adults using children's collections. (Public 11)

I think in some ways that's true, people are just reading 'good' books but I think that parents and children do use children's libraries and will continue

to do so because they need focused collections to help them in their selection of materials. (Public 24)

Only a few public librarians disagreed with the statement.

No - some haziness but there are still distinctions. (Public 13)

Not really. I think there will always be literature that is essentially for children, and likewise for adults. I do think, however, that the middle ground literature has become more accessible and that this is partly down to marketing and partly to a recent re-evaluation and appreciation of children's literature brought about by such books as 'His Dark Materials' trilogy and the fact that it has won a major literature prize. (Public 12)

It is only a small % of books that have potential to appeal to both markets. (Public 25)

The school librarians were equally split on this question. Several argued that the demarcations have been eroded, although one librarian did question whether they ever existed. Those librarians who thought the demarcations were disappearing were generally positive about this. Nevertheless, several school librarians thought that they still existed.

Well, it's debatable whether the demarcations have ever been that strict. But I would say adults are more likely to admit to reading children's fiction now - or are more aware of what there is. (School 2)

To a certain extent, & that's quite good. (School 11)

I think it is great that children's literature is emerging from its backwater and that there is a wider audience for writers such as Philip Pullman, Mark Haddon & Lian Hearn. But I do think we should stop pigeonholing everything! (School 2)

No. If you categorised the whole of this year's fiction publishing most would fall in one camp or the other. Few would sit on the fence. (School 7)

#### 4.4.2 *The future of the term*

Only a few librarians completely rejected the idea of crossover fiction having a future as a label. A few librarians were wary of applying too many labels to stock.

I hope not! It's a horrible term, and an artificial construct. But I do hope all ages will read all good books. (School 2)

I don't like the idea of putting labels on things. It's like publishers who insist on putting recommended reading ages on their books...bad practice. (Public 4)

If so, it's not really necessary! (School 11)

Quite a few librarians did think that crossover fiction, as a label, would have a future although their degree of enthusiasm for this varied significantly.

If the publishers have their way!! It is becoming a buzzword. Today I was asked by a young male teacher for some crossover books, he had read and enjoyed *His Dark Materials* and wanted more. (School 4)

Yes - I think it is a brilliant way to make sure that books which have genuine crossover appeal to both adult and children continue to be promoted in this way. (Public 3)

Many librarians were more cautious about the term (rather than the concept behind it). They seemed wary that it would only last if readers understood it, publishers profited from it, or until another term came along.

There is potential if our customers understand the term. If we learn from bookshops they use very direct descriptions for their categories leaving their customers in no doubt as to who the stock is targeted at. (Public 20)

The label may go, the reality won't. It's always been around. (School 3)

This is entirely dependent on whether it remains viable for publishers to market their books under this guise. I would imagine that it will remain viable and that therefore crossover fiction will have a future as a label. If, however, the demarcations that outline the field of children's literature are undergoing a change of which 'crossover fiction' represents only the edge then perhaps the way we classify literature generally might be subject to alteration? (Public 10)

When the readers were asked about the future of crossover fiction as a label, the most common concern was that most people probably would not understand the term. The focus group liked the concept of crossover fiction but not the actual words. They argued that they would not use the term because no one would know what they meant, a point which Interviewee 2 reiterated. He suggested an alternative label as "YAA" (young adult – adult) to indicate the crossover.

I don't know, just 'cos the thing is, I didn't really know what it meant. They probably wouldn't either so I'd just say oh it's like adulty-kid kind of book. Sort of in-between. [Laughed]. ... So maybe like, 'cos it's meant to cross over different age bands, maybe like, instead of having a young adult or adult, have like a YAA. Something in-between, sort of. (Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 1 said that he had not heard the term before but might use it now because he understood and liked the term.

#### *4.4.3 Crossover fiction's future role in libraries*

A few public librarians thought that crossover fiction might have a growing role in libraries and they were either developing the concept or thinking about it.

Certainly one worth exploring, I would like to trial it in our county. (Public 18)

It has a role - possibly a growing one. (Public 6)

We will continue to experiment with Young Adult Plus collections which combine fiction aimed at teenagers with some adult titles. (Public 4)

Mirroring the perceived benefits of crossover fiction, the most frequently predicted role in libraries was to increase readership and issues.

It will always provide a useful way to extend interest in reading. (Public 19)

I think we need to build on the Harry Potter and similar titles phenomenon and really place this at the heart of library work. It needs to be taken further and consolidated upon in daily working life. I feel that we should be promoting it eagerly, creating specific display areas that we maintain and only shelve the specific stock on these. (Public 3)

One librarian in particular emphasised this role as being important for libraries.

Strong future - in our interests to encourage and promote. (Public 5)

School librarians, along with a few public librarians, tended to focus primarily on crossover fiction's role in reader development.

Really useful for the transitional stage in moving young people on to the adult collections. (Public 11)

Any fiction which encourages people to keep reading has a vital and ongoing role in libraries, including crossover fiction. It also ties in with reader development work. (Public 8)

To widen the readership of excellent books in both directions. To make adults aware of children's authors & help them to be more involved in their children's / pupils' reading. To help children progress to include adult reading. (School 2)

Other predicted roles included special initiatives like family reading projects and promoting social cohesion.

One of the most positive and perhaps exciting roles crossover fiction can play in libraries is with regards to family learning and community cohesion.

... Crossover fiction has the potential to allow people of widely differing age ranges to read and discuss the same works. It thus has a part to play in breaking down barriers and could easily see children/young people's reading groups meeting with adult reading groups to discuss ideas and thoughts on the same books. If librarians are able to be responsive to the potential crossover fiction holds the future role it has is very positive. (Public 10)

These roles were however, countered by a couple of school librarians who were cautious about creating a separate section for crossover fiction

I'm not sure it would be helpful to have a separate section described as "crossover". I would have thought it more appropriate to continue to be treated as it is now: copies shelved in as many different sections as thought useful; displays drawing attention to fiction on diverse topics which can attract the attention of all readers; readers taking responsibility for their own choices, with librarians and reading guides and lists, whether in-house or published, helping with those who want guidance. (School 9)

At the moment I don't feel I would to create a special section... However I will keep my eye in the situation & create a section if I need to. (School 5)

In addition, some public librarians pointed out that crossover fiction only has a future role in libraries, because it always has had, irrelevant of the term used.

I am sure it has always existed and will continue to do. (Public 2)

It will be an element in any comprehensive stock - but is unlikely to have a specific fund allocated to it - it will still be bought for the stock and library areas that are the most appropriate. (Public 21)

#### *4.4.4 Discussion of findings for objective 4*

As providers of fiction, libraries cannot ignore how children's literature is affected by crossover fiction. It is therefore not surprising that most of the librarians were positive about the increased publicity which crossover fiction has created. Many of them agreed that crossover fiction did represent an increased

recognition of the quality of children's literature, particularly among adults, and that this was a helpful development.

Nevertheless, the librarians had diverse opinions about whether the boundaries between adults and children's literature were changing. Most notable was the difference in opinion between the academic writers who emphasise these demarcations (e.g. Lurie, 1991) and several librarians who disputed their actual existence. This is surprising because while readers access a variety of fiction, libraries often rely on strict classifications, as demonstrated in section 4.3. These classifications have more often than not, erected physical as well as mental barriers in libraries. Therefore, the boundaries recognised in the literature are being replicated in libraries. If these boundaries are shifting then libraries must recognise and adapt to this.

It is unfortunate that no publishers responded to the questionnaires because they were asked what they thought about the reluctance of many writers to be labelled as crossover authors. Instead it can only be supposed that writers have to accept the label because of the decisions made by the publishing industry (Galef, 1995). One public librarian was wary about the power that publishers were being allowed to wield in making the key decisions about crossover appeal. He was concerned that publishers were becoming the "sole arbiters of 'quality' literature" (Public 10). If this is coupled with Nodelman and Reimer's (2003) statement that mergers are causing publishing decisions to be made by fewer people, then the fate of crossover fiction is held in the hands of very few people. The consequences of this could manifest themselves in restricted choice and a narrow perception of what is crossover.

Certainly, the librarians often argued that the future of the term itself was connected to its monetary value to publishers. Many librarians suggested that once it fell out of favour with the publishers, the term might be changed. This would seem in line with Nodelman and Reimer (2003) and Zipes' (2002) perception of the priorities of the publishing industry.

However, at present the term seems popular with publishers. This runs contrary to the opinions and concerns of many librarians and readers who found it to be confusing (as confirmed in section 4.1). As it is, the concept outdates the term. Whether this name will stick will depend on the readers. If they

continue to disapprove, publishers will too. Librarians, readers and publishers need to reach a common understanding which does not exist at the moment.

The concept behind the term however, seems less controversial. As Said (2002) and Galef (1995) argue, fiction which appeals to all ages has existed for decades and it seems unlikely that this trend will stop. Instead, the signs seem positive that it will grow, but whether it has staying power is as yet undetermined. Publishers will continue to promote it as long as readers continue to buy it. This provides many opportunities for libraries to get involved. If they can exploit this current enthusiasm and link it to their other aims, such as social inclusion initiatives, then libraries are responding to their readers' needs.

Libraries need to keep up to date with society and society, as White (2004) argues, is beginning to accept the crossover concept. Interviewee 1, Kellaway (2005), Grice (2005), Falconer (2004) and Pepper (2005) all accept the crossover appeal of other media like television and film. In fact, these other media have exploited the crossover appeal for years. It is literature which has only recently caught on. Yet it has caught up spectacularly; Pullman, Rowling and Haddon have become household names. It is up to libraries to respond to these developments. At present, some librarians are resisting the idea of identifying crossover fiction as different but this cannot be allowed to mean that they forever rule it out.

## **5 - Conclusion**

The research results have been detailed and discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter brings these results together and summarises them according to the each objective. It then draws a number of recommendations which should be considered by libraries interested in using crossover fiction to their advantage.

### **5.1 Conclusions**

#### *5.1.1 Objective 1 – To identify the meaning of the term crossover fiction*

It has not been possible to find a definitive meaning of the term 'crossover fiction'. Instead, how readers and librarians have understood the term and applied this understanding has been demonstrated. The general concept underlying the term is that of a single book appealing to a mixed age range. This is in line with Galef's (1995) third description of a crossover fiction author. However, the composition of that mixed audience is up for debate, whether it is children or teenagers or adults has been disputed but ultimately the appeal will be subjective and an individual decision.

There was found to be no universal appreciation of which books fell within the category of crossover fiction. This is understandable given the lack of a concrete definition, but has repercussions as was discovered in relation to the other objectives. Significantly, librarians and readers made considerably different decisions. This suggests a lack of common understanding and highlights a dangerous gulf between library professionals and library users.

The only solid conclusion from this objective is that crossover fiction has always existed. While the name may be recent, most librarians and academic writers seem convinced that there have always been books which have attracted a wide age range. This means that libraries can draw on a long history of books and promote them to readers.

### *5.1.2 Objective 2 – To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to readers*

Although librarians were concerned that labelling books as crossover fiction would put readers off, the majority of the readers disagreed. Only one reader implied that the term might put him off, although he maintained that he would still read the book.

Interestingly, while the readers could not see any problem to their reading any book, they displayed stronger opinions about adults' reading choices. Often they connected adults reading children's books with their profession. If they could not connect the adult to the book in this way, then it was found that the readers often considered this to be childish. This is in direct opposition to the assertions in the press that there is widespread acceptance of adults reading crossover. However, the readers were inconsistent as certain books were given higher social value and seen as more acceptable. Librarians were less judgemental, with many staunchly defending the right of adults to read crossover fiction and refuting accusations of 'dumbing down'.

### *5.1.3 Objective 3 – To investigate the implications of crossover fiction to libraries*

The lack of widespread promotions of crossover fiction was found to be a lost opportunity for libraries. Although some did occur, these were generally small, one-off displays. Given that the librarians named a number of benefits that crossover fiction could provide, such as increased issues and reader development, much improvement could be made.

This does not mean that crossover fiction is without its limitations. Librarians were particularly aware of the logistical considerations with which libraries have to deal. Since libraries have to organise their stock somehow, it will ultimately be an individual decision as to where to place crossover fiction. This must link back to the needs of the users. At present, the confusion about what crossover fiction is: whether it is a genre in its own right, who it is aimed at, and what falls into it, complicates matters.

Added to this, is the difficulty in deciding which editions of the books to stock, especially as many crossover titles have both children's and adult's covers.

Currently, libraries tend not to have a well-thought out plan, relying instead on the suppliers' decisions and chance. Many librarians acknowledge that different covers attract different audiences, a point validated by the readers, therefore a more co-ordinated policy seems appropriate.

#### *5.1.4 Objective 4 – To consider the future of crossover fiction*

Whether children's literature has changed with the recent publicity of crossover fiction is difficult to prove. Some academic writers argue that the boundaries have shifted, but this is only partly supported by the librarians. Instead they were discovered to be more supportive of the statement that crossover fiction represents an increased recognition of the quality of children's literature, principally among adults. This is encouraging for all readers and writers. Libraries would do well to endorse this liberation of literature.

The concept behind crossover fiction is unlikely to be a passing fad. However, the future of the term itself is in doubt, especially given its ambiguous nature. On the other hand, the fluidity of the term may be its saving grace. By being adaptable, it can move with publishing trends. Nevertheless, it is at the mercy of the publishing industry's whim, and these decisions appear to be founded on its profitability.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It is up to libraries to decide how they are going to face the challenges and opportunities presented by crossover fiction. Several roles which it could play have already been named, but this is not enough. Librarians need to exploit its potential because as yet, crossover fiction shows no sign of fading away. To fulfil this, several recommendations are provided which should encourage librarians.

The results may not be generalisable but individual libraries should consider whether these recommendations are transferable to their circumstances. The recommendations are rated according to the value of fulfilling them and also their feasibility. Three stars is the highest rating of both value and feasibility.

### 5.2.1 *Further research*

- (1) It is recommended that further research be conducted into crossover fiction. Of particular importance would be to focus on readers' perception of crossover fiction. To fully develop the concept, a full range of age groups would need to be interviewed. This would be useful in understanding what readers think the term means and how this relates to professional opinion. In addition it could be used to develop effective promotional strategies and in particular, libraries could use it to organize their stock to meet their users' needs. (Value: \*\*\* / Feasibility: \*\*)
  
- (2) To further understanding of the term, a wider sample of professionals should be interviewed. It would be beneficial to libraries to know how publishers use the term and how they are planning to develop it, because then libraries can respond. If bookshops could also be included in the study, libraries may be able to learn from their experiences of stocking crossover fiction. This would reflect the current practice of libraries looking to emulate the example of successful bookshops. Nevertheless, while extremely valuable to libraries, it may be difficult to encourage publishers and booksellers to be involved. (Value: \*\*\* / Feasibility: \*)

### 5.2.2 *Practical recommendations*

- (3) Crossover fiction promotions should be integrated into other library initiatives, e.g. family reading, social inclusion projects. This should ensure effective use of resources as well as presenting opportunities for further funding because of their links to those aims favoured by the government. (Value: \*\*\* / Feasibility: \*\*\*)
  
- (4) Libraries should take advantage of the current enthusiasm for reading and crossover fiction. They should not just focus on the well-known crossover authors such as Rowling and Pullman, but diversify so as to introduce readers to a wider variety of authors. Given the fact that crossover fiction has a long history, there is plenty of choice. This could be achieved through promotions which offer alternatives to the popular writers, displaying booklists and publicising book awards. Other options include running reading groups or publishing readers' reviews, especially

as it has been found that many readers listen more to word of mouth than official publicity. By expanding readers' interests it is hoped that library issues will increase. (Value: \*\*\* / Feasibility: \*\*\*)

(5) In order to ensure that the stock is located in the most appropriate sections of the library, librarians may wish to take up Interviewee 1's suggestion of surveying readers' views on where books should be placed. In addition this may help to overcome the librarians and readers' different understanding of the term, as was demonstrated in Objective 1's results. The difficulty with this may be time and resources so instead they may prefer to consult websites which offer similar information. (Value: \*\* / Feasibility: \*\*)

(6) Some libraries are already piloting separate sections for crossover fiction and should be encouraged to publish their findings. Other libraries can then learn from their experiences and consider the suitability of such a scheme to their libraries. (Value: \*\* / Feasibility: \*\*\*)

(7) It is recommended that libraries draw up a policy, which is communicated to their suppliers, regarding different covers of crossover fiction. Many librarians acknowledged the value of targeting the right audience with the right cover yet the actual decisions made were more serendipity than design. (Value: \*\* / Feasibility: \*\*\*)

(8) As the crossover phenomenon also exists outside of literature, libraries should link their fiction promotions to their other stock, e.g. DVDs, CDs. (Value: \*\* / Feasibility: \*\*\*)

(9) Libraries should evaluate how they are currently using their space. If they want to promote movement of readers between different sections, the layout should make this obvious. The placement of crossover fiction at strategic points may encourage this. (Value: \*\* / Feasibility: \*\*)

### **5.3 Fulfilment of aim**

The aim of this research was to assess the existence and implications of 'crossover fiction'. It did this by considering four objectives: what crossover meant, how it affected readers, how it affected libraries, and its future.

It is hoped this research provides an insight into the development and current attitudes to crossover fiction. While more research has been recommended to further this understanding, it is anticipated that this study will persuade libraries to take crossover fiction seriously. It appears to be the rising star of publishing and libraries must take note if they are not to be left behind. Librarians are encouraged to harness the current enthusiasm which permeates crossover fiction and therefore better serve their readers. It would be a waste and a disservice to readers for libraries to ignore such a tremendous, exciting and growing opportunity.

## **6 - Appendices**

### **6.1 Bibliography**

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## 6.2 Interview schedule for readers

### Opening

Welcome, introduce self & explain research.

Give out information sheets and get consent forms signed. Ok to record?

Get them to introduce themselves so everyone has a chance to talk.

### Objective 1 (defining the term)

Anyone heard of the term crossover fiction? What do you think it means?

If not heard – *give definitions:*

Falconer (2004)

“...crossover is generally meant to refer to a crossing between age boundaries...”

Kellaway (2004)

“...a go-between genre, an appeal-to-all-ages idea”

Kellaway (2003)

“...those written for children but read by adults too.”

*Start with exercise* (show print outs of covers & actual books)

Please complete the two parts of this exercise:

In the left hand box tick those books which you think are crossover fiction.

Then on the right hand side, for each book, tick where you would expect to find it in a public library. For each one, tick as many as you like.

If you haven't read or heard of any of the titles, please cross them out.

Crossover?	Title	Children	Young Adult	Adult
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – J.K. Rowling			
	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – J.K. Rowling			
	The Gruffalo – Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffer			
	Across the Nightingale Floor – Lian Hearn			

	The Princess Diaries – Meg Cabot			
	Calvin & Hobbes – Bill Watterson			
	The Waterbabies – Charles Kingsley			
	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time – Mark Haddon			
	Northern Lights – Philip Pullman			
	The Hobbit – J.R.R. Tolkien			
	Maus – Art Spiegelman			
	The Bed and Breakfast Star – Jacqueline Wilson			
	Artemis Fowl – Eoin Colfer			
	Snoopy – Charles Schultz			
	Winnie the Pooh – A.A. Milne			
	Eragon – Christopher Paolini			
	The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents – Terry Pratchett			
	The Colour of Magic – Terry Pratchett			
	A Gathering Light – Jennifer Donnelly			
	Lady – Melvin Burgess			
	Sophie's World – Jostein Gaardner			
	1984 – George Orwell			
	Sabriel – Garth Nix			
	Shadowmancer – G.P. Taylor			
	The Catcher in the Rye – J.D. Salinger			
	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C.S. Lewis			
	Guess How Much I Love You? – Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram			

Discuss which they were sure of and which were harder.

Why were they harder?

### **Objective 2 (implications for reader)**

What do you think is the effect of calling a book crossover?

*Prompt:* does it make you more or less likely to read it? Or no difference?

Look back at the list for examples of titles.

Do you recommend books you've read to your parents or other adults?

Examples?

*Prompt:* can you think back to a time when you've recommended a book to your parents?

What would you think if they saw an adult reading Harry Potter? Winnie the Pooh? Curious Incident? Snoopy?

*Prompt:* appropriate / childish / nothing

### **Objective 3 (implications for libraries)**

Would they feel comfortable looking for these books if they were only placed in the adult or children's section of the library?

*Examples:* Harry Potter / Curious Incident / Lion, Witch & Wardrobe / Winnie the Pooh

How do you think libraries should deal with this? Put some books in both sections?

Feelings towards different covers? Can you tell which are for children / adults?

*Show example covers,* e.g. Harry Potter / Northern Lights / Curious Incident / Shadowmancer

How do you think libraries should deal with this? Buy both versions?

### **Objective 4 (future of crossover)**

Do you think that the term crossover fiction has a future?

*Prompt:* Do you like the term? Would you like libraries / publishers to label books as crossover?

Would you ever describe a book as crossover fiction to someone else? Why / why not?

### **Closing**

If time, summarise main ideas. Is this an accurate summary?

Anything missed? Any questions or other comments?

Turn off tape recorder. Thanks.

### 6.3 Librarians' questionnaire

Please answer this questionnaire in the correct order.

1. Job title \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Type of library (please tick)
  - a. School – primary
  - b. School – secondary
  - c. Public
  - d. Other, please stat
  
3. In what way are you responsible for children or young adult services in your library?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How does your library service categorise children or young adults? (i.e. what age groups does each cover)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Are your children / young adult services dealt with separately or together?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What do you understand by the term “crossover fiction”? (If you have not heard of the term, please refer to footnote<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> Crossover fiction has been described as:  
“...a crossing between age boundaries...” Falconer (2004)  
“...a go-between genre, an appeal-to-all-ages idea” Kellaway (2004)  
“...those written for children but read by adults too.” Kellaway (2003)

7. Please read the following list of titles
- tick those which you class as crossover fiction
  - tick which section you would expect to find these books in your library (they may be in more than one)

Crossover?	Title	Children	Young Adult	Adult
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – J.K. Rowling			
	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – J.K. Rowling			
	The Gruffalo – Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffer			
	Across the Nightingale Floor – Lian Hearn			
	The Princess Diaries – Meg Cabot			
	Calvin & Hobbes – Bill Watterson			
	The Waterbabies – Charles Kingsley			
	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time – Mark Haddon			
	Northern Lights – Philip Pullman			
	The Hobbit – J.R.R. Tolkien			
	Maus – Art Spiegelman			
	The Bed and Breakfast Star – Jacqueline Wilson			
	Artemis Fowl – Eoin Colfer			
	Snoopy – Charles Schultz			
	Winnie the Pooh – A.A. Milne			
	Eragon – Christopher Paolini			
	The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents – Terry Pratchett			
	The Colour of Magic – Terry Pratchett			
	A Gathering Light – Jennifer Donnelly			
	Lady – Melvin Burgess			
	Sophie's World – Jostein Gaardner			
	1984 – George Orwell			
	Sabriel – Garth Nix			
	Shadowmancer – G.P. Taylor			
	The Catcher in the Rye – J.D. Salinger			
	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C.S. Lewis			
	Guess How Much I Love You? – Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram			

8. Were there any that you were unsure of? What made those decisions difficult?

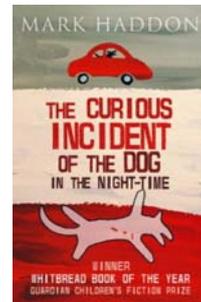
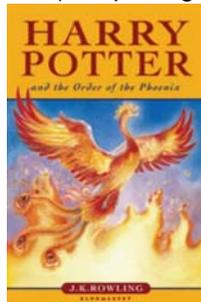
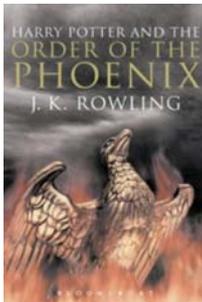
9. Have you ever actively promoted crossover fiction in your library?
10. Do you think crossover fiction is a separate genre or a mixture of others?
11. What do you consider to be the potential benefits to libraries of labelling a book as crossover fiction?
12. What do you consider to be the potential disadvantages to libraries of labelling a book as crossover fiction?
13. Please read the following statements and tick **all** those which you think are true:
- a. Crossover fiction is just a marketing ploy
  - b. Crossover fiction is useful in basic skills provision
  - c. Crossover fiction is a result of the “dumbing down” of adults
  - d. Crossover fiction is just an excuse for adults to read children’s literature
  - e. Crossover fiction reflects a recognition of the quality of children’s literature
  - f. Crossover fiction is a transitional stage between children’s and adults’ literature
  - g. Crossover fiction is just a passing fad
  - h. Crossover fiction has always existed

Please expand on any of those statements.

14. Where are your children / young adult collections based in relation to the adult collection? I.e. the same building / room / section?

15. Where do you physically place crossover fiction?

16. Has your library service ever bought copies of the same book with different covers (see photographs)? Why?



17. Do many adults borrow from the children's section for their own reading?

18. Do many children borrow from the adults' section for their own reading?

19. It has been argued that the strict demarcations between children's and adult literature are being eroded. Do you agree?

20. Do you consider crossover fiction to have a future as a label?

21. What future role do you think crossover fiction has in libraries?

22. Do you have any additional comments? (Please use another sheet if required)

Would you be willing to be contacted again in relation to this research? Yes

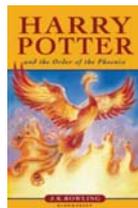
No

If so, please add your contact details. These will be held confidentially then destroyed when the research has ended.

## 6.4 Publishers' shortened questionnaire

Please answer this questionnaire in the correct order.

1. What is your job title?
2. What do you understand by the term "crossover fiction"?
3. Do you think crossover fiction is a separate genre or a mixture of others?
4. Do you sell the same book with different covers for different audiences?  
Why?



5. What evidence do you have to suggest that this is a successful measure?

6. It has been argued that the strict demarcations between children's and adult literature are being eroded. Do you agree?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. It has been argued that using the term crossover fiction is just a marketing ploy. Do you agree?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What do you consider to be the role of libraries (school or public) in promoting crossover fiction to readers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Some authors dislike being labelled as crossover writers. How do you counter this argument?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Do you have any additional comments? (Please use another sheet if required)

Would you be willing to be contacted again in relation to this research? Yes

No

If so, please add your contact details. These will be held confidentially then destroyed when the research has ended.