"The Guardians of Children's Literature? A study into the attitudes of public library staff and parents regarding issues of censorship of children's books."

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by

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Abstract

Background

There have been a number of studies, mainly in the UK and America, investigating the attitudes of public librarians in regards to censorship and intellectual freedom. However, some of the major studies are now quite dated, with the most recent publication in 1997. Only a small amount of these studies investigate attitudes specifically in relation to children and young people and there is almost no literature investigating the attitudes of parents. America has a number of principles in place to safeguard a child's freedom to read and right to access information. However, to date, there are no comparable standards in place in the UK.

Aims

The main aim of this piece of research is to ascertain whose responsibility it is to be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library. It sets out to investigate parents and library staff's attitudes to censorship regarding children's books, their roles in this and their perceptions of each other's roles. It also aims to identify potential training needs for public library staff and methods of communication.

Methods

This research was conducted using a mixed methods approach. Self-administered, predominantly quantitative, questionnaires were used to obtain the opinions of parents and front-line public library staff. Qualitative interviews were then conducted with managerial staff to buttress the questionnaire findings.

Results

Almost half (48%) the parents thought that library staff were in a position to recognize dangerous or controversial ideas in books but only 32% (n=14) said that they would like library staff to decide on the suitability of a book for their child. 67% (n=14) of staff said they would not like to decide on the suitability of books for children. 96% (n=42) of parents and 90% (n=19) of staff agreed that what a child reads should be more the responsibility of parents than librarians. 85% of staff agreed that the library should have a written policy confirming this, however managerial staff preferred the idea of guidelines rather than a strict policy.

Conclusion

Both staff and parents feel that parents should be the guardians of children's fiction in a public library.

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Contents

Chapter One - Introduction

The importance of reading for children is a truth universally acknowledged. It helps a child to develop intellectually, emotionally and socially. It is a way for children to learn about themselves and the world around them. Libraries play a significant role in this. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals wrote a report on library provision for children and young people in 2002, concluding:

"Libraries are a hugely important part of children's and young people's lives because they bring books and children together, they provide reading opportunities free of charge, and so they encourage experimentation and learning. They represent a non-judgmental place for children to feel safe and empowered to make their own choices." CILIP (2002:9).

However, in practice, the library is not always a 'non-judgmental place'. Censorship has affected libraries for many years. Challenges to materials are often notably made by users, yet censorship can also be practiced by library staff, either through selection, or later, through restriction.

Although censorship is ardently opposed by CILIP and the American Library Association (ALA), many adults still believe that children should be protected from inappropriate material. Curry (2001) found that books for children and young adults are challenged on the following grounds: profanity, heterosexual activity, homosexuality, sexual activity deemed immoral/illegal, religion/witchcraft, violence/horror, rebellion, racism/sexism, substance use/abuse, suicide/death, crime, crude behavior, depressing/negative.

To date, there are no strict standards in place in the UK regarding the management of potentially controversial material for children and young adults. Studies have been conducted both in the UK and in America, about the attitudes of librarians to censorship and intellectual freedom, however little research has been conducted about public librarian's attitudes in relation to censorship and children and young people. Also, as far as a review of the literature suggests, there has been no significant study exploring who should be responsible for the content of books borrowed by children from

a public library. This piece of research sets out to fill these gaps by questioning librarians, front-line staff and parents/carers in public libraries.

Aims and Objectives

Aim
The main aim of this research is to ascertain whose responsibility it is to be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library.

Objectives
Based on this main aim the research objectives are as follows:
- investigate public library staff's attitude to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.
- investigate the attitudes of parent's to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.
- assess parents' perception of the role of public library staff in issues of censorship.
- assess library staff's perception of the role of the parent in issues of censorship.
- investigate whether issues of gender, age, education, number of children etc impact on a person's attitude towards censorship.
- identify potential training needs for public library staff and methods of communication relating to issues of censorship.

Terminology

Censorship
The term censorship has a variety of meanings for different people. Curry (1997) found that 'censorship' defies exact definition because of this reason. There are also many different forms that censorship can take, some are viewed positively, others negatively and the literature discussing this is vast. However, due to its clear and concise nature, the following definition will be used for this study:

"Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons— individuals, groups or government officials—find objectionable or dangerous." (ALA, 2008c).

Intellectual Freedom

Similar complexities apply to the definition of 'intellectual freedom', however where it is referred to, the following definition will apply:

"Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction" (ALA, 2008c).

Children

In the questionnaire, children were defined as 'young people aged 0-12'. However, this does not necessarily apply where parents were asked to consider their own children.

Unless stated otherwise, the terms 'children's books' and 'children's literature' refers to books or literature written for children, teenagers and young adults.

Young Adults

Young Adults were defined in the questionnaire as 'young people aged 13 and over'. However, throughout this study, the term 'teenager' is used interchangeably.

Limitations

In order to complete this research in the three month timescale allocated for it, it was decided to focus primarily on issues arising from children's literature. That is, fictional books over non-fiction or other materials. The internet was also deemed to be too large a topic to cover.

Due to the timescale, financial and geographical constraints, all the data collection took place in Sheffield Libraries. Although this research hopes to give an indication of the attitudes of parents and library staff in relation to the objectives summarized above, these results cannot be applied to the wider population. Further limitations are discussed in Chapter Two.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter Two outlines the methodology used to conduct this research, the questionnaires and interview questions are attached in the appendices. Chapter Three

discusses the literature that influences this research and identifies the gaps that this research will fill.

The results of this research will then be analyzed and discussed in the subsequent chapters. Chapter Four comprises an introduction to this analysis and a description of the sample. This description replaces Objective 5; the reason for this is detailed in Chapter Two. Chapter Five relates to Objectives 1 and 2 and investigates the opinions of staff and parents to different forms of censorship. The role of parents is discussed in Chapter Six, thus addressing Objectives 2 and 4. Objectives 1 and 3 are met in Chapter Seven which, analyses the role of staff. Chapter Eight considers staff training – Objective 6.

Finally, Chapter Nine offers conclusions derived from the research. Based on these conclusions it makes a number of recommendations to overcome some of the issues discussed, as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two - Methodology

A mixed methods approach was taken for this study in order to combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methodology to meet the research objectives and further validate the study. Rudestam and Newton (2001:45) cite the combination of methodologies as "a good choice of method" which "combines the rigor and precision of…quantitative data with the depth understanding of qualitative methods and data." The literature details a number of ways of combining these two methodological approaches in order to enhance the research (Bryman, 2005; Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Kelle & Erzberger, 2007 and Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The approach taken for this research relies primarily on quantitative methodology; qualitative methodology is employed in a smaller capacity to "buttress" the main findings (Bryman, 2005:128).

Instrumentation

Literature Review

A Literature Review was conducted initially at the time of the research proposal. Hart (1998:1) emphasizes the importance of a literature review in research projects as "without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic, of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are."

The literature review concentrates on four main areas. Firstly, the rights of the child are explored in terms of UK and International law, and then as they are promoted by the American Library Association (ALA) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in the UK. This provides the context in which issues of censorship, its forms and practices, are explored in the second section. The third section explores the reasons why children's literature is controversial, as well as investigating why censorship takes place in this context and why it is opposed. Fourthly, the responsibilities of parents and librarians are discussed in light of the literature on this subject. Overall, the literature review provides the context in which this research takes place and identifies the gaps that it will fill. The methodologies employed by studies discussed in the literature review, are also used in this chapter to justify the approach taken in this research.

The initial review of the research was used to direct further investigation through the systematic review of bibliographies and citation searching. In addition, key word searches were conducted in the University Library catalogue, STAR, and relative material was also found by scanning the library shelves. More considered and targeted searches were performed in Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) and News UK. Although newspaper articles are not considered highly reliable sources of information, they were consulted due to the up-to-date nature of this topic.

Questionnaires

One of the main reasons for using quantitative methodology, in this case questionnaires, was that the opinions of many could be recorded relatively easily and in a short-space of time; thus providing a "broad picture" of parent and staff opinions and practice (Clough, 2002:118). Other advantages are that questionnaires, to a great extent: eliminate interviewer bias; questions are less likely to be interpreted differently between respondents; and they are relatively inexpensive in terms of material costs (Powell & Silipigni, 2004). Powell and Silipigni (2004:125) also argue that "questionnaires can be constructed so that quantitative data are relatively easy to collect and analyze." Furthermore, a quantitative approach is better at "facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of data" (Patton, 2002:14). Both these factors were considered to be major advantages in investigating the attitudes of two different groups.

For these reasons especially, questionnaires were chosen as the best means to gather data from parents. In a majority of cases, especially with Sheffield Libraries, library staff are happy to help with student's research. However, with parents, research is encroaching on their free time and they might not directly see the benefits of participating. Therefore, a self-administered short questionnaire, consisting mainly of fixed response questions was chosen in order to provide the highest possible response rate.

Questions

A number of similar studies used mainly closed questions. That is, a question with the option of choosing from a fixed number of responses. Busha (1972:102) rejected open-ended questions because of the "strong possibility that a study of censorship attitudes (a relatively sensitive area of inquiry) would elicit irrelevant and unpredictable

responses". McDonald (1993) and McNicol (2005a) also used questionnaires and adapted questions used by Busha (1972) for this reason, as well as to gain a higher response rate. Czaja and Blair (2005:101), in their guide, also suggest avoiding them due to problems of "illegible handwriting, unclear abbreviations, and ambiguous answers".

However, one open-ended question was included in the questionnaire for parents and two in the questionnaire for staff. Both groups were asked to respond to a statement of library policy and staff were asked to make suggestions for further training. The advantage of the open-ended question, in this case, is that it offers respondents an opportunity to state their views in their own words (Fink, 1995; Oppenheim, 2001). However, all the other questions were closed-ended to allow for the questionnaire to be conducted more easily and quickly and to cater for the sensitive nature of the research.

The likert-scale was used for the majority of closed-questions. Originally devised by R. Likerts in 1932, it is a "device to discover strength of feeling or attitude towards a given statement or series of statements" (Bell, 2005:142). The likert-scale has been used in previous studies on the attitudes of library staff to issues of censorship and intellectual freedom (Busha, 1972; McDonald, 1993 and McNicol, 2005a). As a result, and because the "reliability of Likert scales tends to be good" due to the range of answers available, the Likert-scale was used as the format of response in these questionnaires. In addition they are relatively easy to construct and are often preferred by the respondent as offering more choice (Oppenheim, 2001).

Likert-scales were used in all but one question to assess the opinions of parents and library staff to censorship. Both groups were asked to state their opinions on a child's ability to self-censor, whether books should be labeled, and the accessibility of books in the library. These issues are discussed in more detail in the literature review.

These scales were also used to assess parents and staff opinions of their roles and those of each other. The section on library staff asked about a librarian's knowledge of and ability to control access to children's books. The section on parents was designed to gather opinions on how involved a parent should be in their child's reading. The wording of the statements was changed slightly so that they would apply

to each group directly. However, the fundamental question remained the same so that the results could be compared more easily.

There are two attitudinal questions included in the questionnaire that only allow for a yes/no response. The first asks the respondent whether fiction books with particular content are suitable for a children's library (Objectives 1 and 2) and the second relates to the circumstance of a child borrowing a book with particular content (Objectives 1 and 3). Originally likert-scales were provided for these questions; however this dramatically lengthened the questionnaire and gave it a repetitive feel. Therefore the question was reworded and located in a table in order for it to be completed more quickly.

Layout

The questionnaire for parents is laid out in four sections: about you; opinions of censorship and related issues; my role (the role of the parent); the role of the librarian. The one for librarians comprises of the same four sections - although sections three and four are reversed: my role (the role of the librarian); the role of the parent - plus an additional section on staff training.

Bell (2005:145) suggests starting with "straightforward, easy-to-complete questions and move on to more complex topics". As a result it was decided to place the 'about you' section first. A number of texts suggest leaving this section until the end (Frazer & Lawley, 2000; Oppenheim, 2001) due to the sensitive nature of the questions. However, nobody refused to fill in the questionnaire because of the location of this section.

The following sections were compiled to gently introduce the subject, to meet the objectives of the research and allow for ease of comparison and analysis. Czaja and Blair (2005:6) state that in a questionnaire "each question may exert a subtle influence on the interpretation of those that follow", a fact that is often overlooked when the researcher is writing the individual questions. Therefore, care was taken when ordering the questions. It was also considered to be fairer to the other party if the respondent commented upon their own role before that of the other. The questions were put in sets, as recommended by Oppenheim (2001) and Powell and Silipigni

(2004). This gives more consistent results as the respondent can see the flow of the questionnaire and any vagaries of wording are more likely to be resolved.

Design

A number of questions were taken or adapted from previous studies. Czaja and Blair (2005:21) state that "when putting together initial drafts of our questionnaire, borrowing questions from other research studies is acceptable, even encouraged." Both McDonald (1993) and McNicol (2005a) have clearly borrowed questions from Busha (1972). This study borrows from McNicol (2005a) and Busha (1972) in particular. The main advantages of borrowing questions are that they have already been piloted, the wording is easy to understand and "by asking the same questions, we can compare the results in our survey area with the results from the previous research" (Czaja & Blair, 2005:21).

The remaining questions were developed by the researcher in order to meet the research objectives. This mainly consisted of the design of further attitude statements – "a single sentence that expresses a point of view, a belief, a preference, a judgment, an emotional feeling, a position for or against something" (Oppenheim, 2001:174). Care was taken to make sure the wording was clear, concise and avoided double negatives.

Piloting

Bell (2005:147) advises that:

"all data-gathering instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable you to remove any items which do not yield useable data."

Both the questionnaire for parents and staff were piloted at the researcher's place of work. This was so the researcher could be at hand to answer any questions, to gain immediate feedback and, because some of the researcher's colleagues are parents as well as library staff, both questionnaires could be tested at the same time.

The main comments received were that some of the statements were too wordy and that the questionnaire was too long. Therefore, after serious consideration, a number of questions that were not integral to the research were dropped. Where possible, the remaining questions were made more concise and some questions were

reformatted, as discussed above. Due to the amount of changes, the questionnaire was then sent to the researcher's supervisor for approval. Ideally, if time allowed, the questionnaire would have been re-piloted.

Sample

As a result of the limited time and capabilities of this research, a non-probability sample was drawn. The major problem with this design is that there is no assurance that the sample is representative and therefore the results cannot be generalized (Czaja & Blair, 2005; Fink 1995; Gorman & Clayton, 2005, Powell & Silipigni, 2004). However, Bell (2005:145) suggests that for a small scale project "opportunity samples of this kind are generally acceptable as long as the make-up of the sample is clearly stated and the limitations of the data are realized." In order to make the sample as representative as possible, the research was conducted in four different libraries across Sheffield. The researcher's knowledge of Sheffield, in consultation with the research supervisor, was used to pick libraries in different socio-economic areas of the city.

Implementation

The questionnaires were designed to be self-administered, so that the individual could complete it by themselves (Fink, 1995). Staff questionnaires were sent to each of the four libraries after permission had been obtained from the person responsible for staff in each library, either over the phone or via email. Completed questionnaires were collected in batches when the researcher visited the libraries to conduct the parents' questionnaires. A full response rate was not received due to a number of staff being on holiday at the time, or only working part time hours.

Questionnaires for parents were conducted onsite at each of the libraries. The researcher visited each library for a period of roughly two hours. The researcher visited Library A late morning on a Saturday. This is known to be one of the library's busiest periods, with a large number of families visiting. Data was collected at Library B, after school, when a number of children and parents were attending swimming lessons (the library is located in a leisure complex). The researcher visited both Library C and Library D during organized baby and toddler times as the manager's had deemed these as times when a large amount of parents were guaranteed to be available.

In all libraries, parents were therefore approached in that capacity. This was because they were more easily identifiable. Also the researcher wanted to avoid any embarrassment caused by asking a potentially sensitive question to users who were not easily identifiable as parents.

Interviews

Qualitative, face-to-face interviews were chosen to assess the managerial view of issues relating to this research. In this case, because little was known about Sheffield Libraries' managerial stance on issues of censorship, the open nature of interviews allowed respondents to convey this information to the researcher. The interviews also allowed for the researcher to follow up areas of interest, and to ask subjects to elaborate or clarify as necessary (Bell, 2005; Curry, 1997; Gorman & Clayton, 2005).

Censorship studies that use interviews suggest one of the main reasons for doing so is due to the controversial and sensitive nature of the topic (Cole, 1997; Curry, 1997). Although not deemed as important in the questionnaires, due to anonymity of the respondents, it is important here because the researcher worked in the same organization as the interviewees.

Due to the time consuming nature of interviews (Bell, 2005) and their use to supplement the questionnaire results, only three were conducted. However, the problems of bias and analysis of interview responses, as suggested by Bell (2005) and Gorman and Clayton (2005), has to an extent been compensated for by using the data as personal responses that add to the questionnaire data.

In order to gain the subject's opinions with the minimum amount of bias, a semi-structured interview format was adopted. The idea being that a range of issues can be explored in as much depth as necessary (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). A brief interview guide was used as "a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered", as suggested by Patton (2002:342).

Design

The interview guide was structured in order to explore the subject's experience and then opinions. It was felt that by asking them to explore specific experiences first, it would be easier for subjects to give their opinions with these in mind. Respondents were also asked to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction and children's ages in order to provide a working insight into the differences.

In order to explore the different roles of the main groups involved – parents and staff – and as a main question of the research, respondents were asked who they thought was responsible for a child's reading. Subjects were also encouraged to explore library staff's role in this as this directly related to the next topic - staff training. Finally respondents were asked for their thoughts on local and national policy. A copy of the guide appears in the appendix. The questions in italics were used as prompts and not necessarily phrased that way during the interview.

Piloting

Due to the limited time available, the small number of respondents and the semi-structured nature of the interviews, a separate pilot interview was not conducted. Instead the researcher asked the first interviewee, after the interview, about how the interview was conducted and if they could make any recommendations. There were no apparent flaws noticeable with the structure during the interview. However, the interviewee did suggest that the format could be more conversational. This was improved upon in the next interview, as the researcher made a conscious effort to be more conversational and had gained more confidence having already conducted an interview.

Sample

Three respondents were chosen at varying managerial levels and with varying experience, in order to provide a cross-section of managerial viewpoints. Respondents included a Community Development Librarian, a member of Sheffield Library's Senior Management Team and a member of the Children's and Young People's Team. They were chosen due to their specific insights into the subject areas. The Community Development Librarian was approached in person and the other two were approached

via email. Both of whom asked to see a copy of the research proposal. All interviews were conducted onsite.

Interviewing

The format of the interviews was conducted according to Gorman and Clayton (2005:134). The stages included

"introductions; completion of ethics paperwork and obtaining permission to record… establishing rapport and putting the interviewee at his or her ease;…then more open-ended questions; an opportunity for the interviewee to raise any matters which may have been overlooked; and concluding remarks and thanks."

Two of the subjects had received a copy of the research proposal before the interview was conducted so they were aware of the line of inquiry. The remaining subject had been involved in the piloting of the questionnaires so was also aware of the main aim of the research.

The researcher recorded all three of the interviews as there were no objections from the subjects. This was especially helpful for the middle interview, as the subject had a lot of information to impart that was not necessarily covered under the main themes used by the researcher. Notes were also taken, so that the researcher could follow up issues, reformulate questions, facilitate analysis and in case of recorder malfunction (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

Each set of questionnaires were numbered and the data entered into two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, one for parents and one for staff. The responses to the open-ended questions and any additional comments were typed into a Word document so that they could be accessed more easily when it came to writing up the results. Responses to questions from each section were then counted and entered into separate spreadsheets. Parent and staff responses were located next to each other and combined visually in bar-charts. The answers from the open-ended questions were then coded according to the themes that they raised. The interviews were transcribed and the data was transferred to relevant sections as defined by the questionnaire data.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of the topic – censorship – the potential challenging nature of discussion cannot be avoided. However, all attempts were made to ensure that participants felt at ease with the questions being asked, and their responses. A brief paragraph detailing the aims of the research was provided at the top of each questionnaire. All participants were offered the chance to opt out of the study at anytime. Participants were also assured that there responses would remain anonymous. Information sheets and consent forms were presented to the interviewees before the interview commenced, giving the option to opt out at any point. The subject's permission was also obtained to record the interview and for the researcher to make notes.

Limitations

General

Unfortunately, due to the time and financial constraints placed on the researcher, the research was only conducted in one library authority and therefore the results cannot be generalized to other library authorities in the UK. However, it is hoped that this research provides some indication of the opinions of parents and library staff to censorship, their roles and the perceived roles of others in this.

Although the researcher consciously tried to be as objective as possible, she has worked for Sheffield Libraries for three years. This was not perceived to be a problem in terms of the questionnaires, as all staff remained anonymous. However, the researcher knew two of the three interviewees prior to the interviews taking place. As a result care was taken to record responses accurately and present them faithfully.

Sample

Limitations also apply to the method for approaching parents. Potential respondents were identified if they had children with them or if they were browsing in the children's library. Firstly, parents are more likely to be involved with their child's reading if they visit the library together. Secondly, parent's who have teenage children are potentially excluded as the two groups; typically, do not often visit the library together. A third limitation that became apparent during the visits was, even in the libraries with more

diverse communities, the respondents were of a similar social makeup. One of the reasons for this could be that the researcher visited three of the libraries at a time when organized events were taking place.

Instrumentation

While the methods used to obtain the data were deemed to be most suitable, their disadvantages do have to be taken into account. The use of likert-scales meant that statistical analysis could not be carried out on the data as a respondent who 'strongly disagrees' does not feel twice as strongly as a respondent who 'disagrees'. Therefore, the results are presented quite simply. Also, it can be difficult to determine the meaning of a 'neutral' response. It could mean that the respondent does not know, is undecided or does not feel strongly about this issue. This is taken into account in the discussion of the results.

There was also a problem with the Yes/No questions in that a number of response options were taken away from the respondents thus, forcing them to make an opinion when they might not have one (Powell & Silipigni, 2004). It was decided not to include a 'don't know' or 'undecided' option as it was felt that many respondents would opt out of answering the question due to the nature of it. Therefore, solid conclusions cannot be drawn from this data. However, interestingly, the lack of options did force a number of respondents into making written comments by the side of the question.

Analysis

A preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data indicated that there was little correlation between respondents' attitudes and the classification criteria. One of the main objectives of this research had been to investigate whether issues of gender, age, job title, number and age of children impact on a person's attitude towards censorship. As will be discussed in the results chapters, a large amount of respondents were female and of a similar age. Therefore, it was felt that if any conclusions could be drawn from this analysis they would be flawed.

A further review of similar studies measuring correlation between variables and attitudes showed little evidence. Busha (1972) did not find any correlation between age and attitudes and also suffered the problem of a number of his respondents being female. McDonald (1993:101) found that age, years of experience, and gender "showed

no significant relationships on either scale." McNicol's study (2005a) concluded that there were only limited links between demographic factors studied and attitudes towards intellectual freedom.

Therefore, due to the preliminary analysis of the data, results of previous studies and, in consultation with the research supervisor, it was decided not to spend time exploring this objective in further detail. However, a description of the respondents will still be provided at the beginning of the results chapter.

Chapter Three - Literature Review

Censorship is an issue which has affected books since their inception and, as a result, also the libraries who stock them. In recent years an increasing number of challenges have been made against books for children and young adults with a large proportion of these directed at both school and public libraries as the main institutions which stock them.

The aim of this literature review is to present the problem from both sides, thus placing the proposed research in context. Initially it will look at the rights of the child as advocated by UK and International Law and American and UK professional library bodies. However, these rights are not always upheld in practice. As such, the idea of censorship and the various forms and practices it can take will then be discussed. The third section will look at why fiction is challenged and why these challenges are opposed. Lastly, the role of the parent and the librarian will be presented as they have been discussed in the literature.

Legislation/Current Practice

Legal Rights

It would appear that children and young adults have as many rights as adults when it comes to accessing information. The Human Rights Act (1998) states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers." (Office for Public Sector Information, 1998:1).

The use of the term "everyone" emphasizes the fact that children have the same rights as adults. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (2001?) conveys the same message and is age specific:

"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers,

either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

While the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2002) highlights these rights in the library:

"Libraries and information services shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users. There shall be no discrimination for any reason including race, national or ethnic origin, gender or sexual preference, age, disability, religion, or political beliefs."

The important word in this case being 'age'.

America and the ALA

These freedoms and rights are highly defended in America by the American Library Association (ALA). America has a slight advantage over the UK in this area due to the existence of the First Amendment - which defends freedom of speech (ALA, 2008b) – and the Library Bill of Rights – opposing discrimination on the basis of "age" (ALA, 1996). The ALA's (2006) Intellectual Freedom Manual interprets the Library Bill of Rights (ALA, 1996) specifically in relation to minors, explicitly stating that "the America Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users" and that "children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information in the library" (ALA, 2006:152-153). There have and continue to be a great many challenges to books for children and young people in America. Combined with the existence of the First Amendment, this can be seen as a reason why the ALA defends the rights of minors much more strongly than its UK equivalent - CILIP.

The UK and CILIP

To date, there are no strict standards in place in the UK regarding the management of potentially controversial material for children and young adults. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA, 2008) have attempted to draw up some new guidelines for Public Libraries. However, the only specific mention of children and parents relates to the internet where it is written that "parents are responsible for children's use of the internet" (MLA, 2008:7). MLA does not appear to acknowledge the different needs

involved when managing potentially controversial material for children and young adults. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP, 2008b) has also noted this omission in their official response to the MLA's proposed guidelines. In response to section 6.2 in the MLA guidelines -

"6.2. In the case of controversial material, librarians may choose to introduce 'managed access' – e.g. for reference only or restricting use by children. Library authorities must be able to justify such actions to their communities and local authority." (MLA, 2008:6)

 - CILIP (2008:9) argued that 'managed access' was an ambiguous term. They acknowledged that restricting children's access is possible in terms of lending items but libraries cannot bar children from the adult section. Instead they suggest that it should be made clear that 'managed access' for children "is only regarding that which is 'harmful to minors'." However, neither MLA nor CILIP appear to clearly acknowledge who is responsible for the content of items borrowed by children and young adults from a public library or define what is 'harmful to minors'.

CILIP's view is that if the material is legal and there is a demand for it then libraries should have it. The Code of Professional Practice states that librarians should "avoid inappropriate bias or value judgments in the provision of services" (CILIP, 2007a). However, before this there is a slightly ambiguous phrase suggesting the librarians should "consider the public good, both in general and as it refers to particular vulnerable groups" (CILIP, 2007a). CILIP's (2007b) Ethical Principles are less open to interpretation: Library and Information Professionals should be committed to defending and advancing access to information and remain impartial and unbiased during all forms of the service.

Unlike the ALA, CILIP does not specifically mention restriction by age. In one of it's main documents regarding the provision of library services to children – A Safe Place for Children – CILIP (2005:1) states:

"Public library staff do not assume the responsibility of a parent but do have a responsibility to provide for the care, control and safety of children visiting libraries. The ultimate responsibility for the child rests with the parent. This should be made clear to

parents whose children attend activities such as homework clubs and story times in the library."

This statement appears to mainly refer to a child's physical safety, which is concurrent with the rest of the document; however, there is still a slight degree of ambiguity.

Therefore, unlike America, the UK's position on a child's freedom to read is most ambiguous. There might be a number of valid reasons for this but when it comes to defending material in the UK; librarians face more difficulties in finding information from their professional body.

Censorship

Censorship and Intellectual Freedom

Issues of censorship lie hand in hand with intellectual freedom, its polar opposite. Many studies both here and in America explore both. One of the most highly cited works in this area is Curry (1997). She explores the attitude of Library Directors in the UK and Canada to intellectual freedom and censorship. Interestingly she examines the literature of the UK, Canada and America. Bearing in mind that Curry's research was published in 1997, the main UK literature to which she refers is Thompson (1975) - an examination of issues of censorship in public libraries from 1900-1974 which concludes that censorship was widespread in British public libraries – and Malley (1990) – a short pamphlet discussing the role and effectiveness of the Library Association and its censorship related policies. There is a similar situation with the Canadian literature and some of the major studies conducted in the US – Fiske (1959) and Busha (1972) – are also quite dated.

Forms of Censorship

Censorship can take many forms. Busha (1972) argues that there are four types of censorship: psychological, political, paternal and social, while Ingram (2000) defines five different areas: religion, politics, moral, culture and intellectual. The censorship of children's literature mainly falls under the paternal, social or moral categories and can take a number of forms. The ones that directly pertain to this study are discussed below.

Pre-selection Censorship

Hannabuss and Allard (2001:86) suggest that "selection is only a more socially acceptable word for censorship", an opinion supported by Allen (2007). Busha (1972) and Cole (1994; 2000) both found disparities between a librarians attitude – support for a diverse collection - and their practices. However this is not supported by Edmonds and Miller's (1990:145) research into patterns of services in six UK library authorities. They found that "in all areas, the care taken over the selection of stock was impressive." Many stock selection teams read the books, or reviews of them, a method recommended by Blanshard (1998). She recommends that new books be stringently examined but should not be avoided on the basis of "controversial or ethically, socially or politically sensitive issues" (Blanshard, 1998:165).

Self-censorship

There is a substantial amount of literature advocating a child's ability to self censor their reading. A number of these advocates are authors (Bruce, 2004; Stannard, 2008; Reichman, 2001). It could be argued that they are merely trying to defend their work, however, their contact with and insight into the child's mind makes them more credible. Their arguments are also supported by research and experience.

Giles (2008), a supporter of children being able to make their own choices, writes "my group of lower teen readers are surprisingly careful in their reading, and will very likely decide that a book about 16 or 17-year-olds is far too advanced for them." Watson and Styles (1996:42) found some teachers objections "bemusing, as I have never know a child to look closely at a book he or she finds disagreeable. Children are their own censors." Furthermore, McNicol's (2006b) research conducted with teenagers showed that many thought a younger child would not necessarily understand a more explicit book and as such they would not be interested in reading it.

Paternal Censorship

However, many adults still believe that children should be protected. Busha (1972:28) defines paternal causes of censorship as those "which originate from the desire of parents to have their children confronted only with those influences which might allow them to develop along lines deemed acceptable or attractive." Paternal censorship is one form of censorship that does not tend to attract as much attention and the literature

relating to this subject does not tend to challenge it (Ingram, 2000; Reeve, 1996; Reichman, 2001). Reeve (1996:365) writes that "the paternalism of a parent…even one who restricts the liberty of a child in the child's own interests, has not generally been thought to require extensive justification".

Censorship in Practice

The different types of censorship discussed above are not always immediately discernable as such. In practice, censorship, especially of children's literature, can take a number of more subtle forms.

Age-Banding

A current debate in the UK is concerned with the placement of age ratings on children's fiction titles. Research conducted by the Publishers' Association in 2006 found that 86% of consumers were in favor of age guidance (BML, 2005). Supporters argue that age-banding will increase consumer confidence and sales figures as a result (BML, 2005; Lea & Boase, 2008; Rosoff, 2008; The Publishers Association, 2008). Age-banding is practiced to a varying extent already in libraries, in the way that stock is located and categorized. McNicol's (2006a) research found that many librarians supported this, arguing that it helped the child to find age-appropriate material.

However, the opposition is fierce, with heavy-weight authors such as JK Rowling, Philip Pullman, Michael Rosen and Adele Geras publicly denouncing age-banding (Dammann, 2008; Hope, 2008; Irvine, 2008; Pullman, 2008). Many opponents feel that age-banding will impact negatively on the reluctant reader, and that "accurate judgments about age suitability are impossible" because each child is unique (Cornwell Internet, 2008).

A possible repercussion of age banding is its potential to lead to censorship. Mal Peet, the Carnegie winning author, was quoted as saying "sooner or later this age ranging is going to degenerate into a moral code" (Lea & Boase, 2008). This is also cited as one of the main arguments in the current online petition, 'No to Age Banding', which suggests that age-banding is "likely to encourage over-prescriptive or anxious

adults to limit a child's reading in ways that are unnecessary and even damaging"
(Cornwell Internet, 2008). However, due to the current nature of the debate, parents
and librarians views have not yet been fully investigated.

Labeling

Age-banding, to some extent, is a form of labeling, as it guides the reader on the
suitability of the content. Labeling of children's books, in terms of suitability, has a
number of advantages and disadvantages as purported by the literature. The ALA's
(2004) Freedom to Read Statement is wholly against labeling, which "presupposes that
individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine".

However, research conducted by Cole (1994:66) found that "the vast majority of
respondents agreed with labeling for protectionist reasons." Greyson's (2007) research
into graphic novels also found that the lack of labels made stock selection more difficult.
Therefore, although the ALA argues that people should be allowed to make up their
own minds, in practice people appear to want that information.

Handling Complaints

The use of stock or collection development policies is often cited in the literature as one
of the best ways to deal with controversial material (CILIP, 2008b; Jones, 1983, Jones,
1999; Malley, 1990, Reichman, 2001). CILIP (2008b:4) believes that

*"a published CDP [collection development policy], which is easily available to the public,
should be mandatory. It should be rigorously adhered to and provide a tool to assist the
public library authority and elected local authority members to defend the inclusion of
any controversial material."*

However, the practice differs from the theory. Cole (1998) only had one
respondent, out of 24 librarians, who cited the use of stock policy to defend
controversial material. Cole suggests a reason for this might be that the majority of
literature advocating the use of collection development policies is American, however,
the Library Association advocated it in 1990 (Malley, 1990) and CILIP still hold that line.
Yet Elkin and Kinell's (2000) research found that only half of respondents had a written
CDP and very few of those included specific directions for the children's collection. This
would suggest that not many public library authorities are following CILIP's advice.

A Child's Freedom to Read

Why is children's fiction deemed to be so controversial? Why does censorship take place and why is it opposed?

Importance of Reading

"There is a fairly common agreement that the books young people read are important for their intellectual, social and affective development as individuals." (Meek Spencer, 2005:129). Watson and Styles (1996:30) look at the importance of picture books in a child's early development and highlight their role in providing access "to the serious issues of life in an accessible form and with humor." Reynolds (2007:1) work looks in depth at the more radical side of children's literature. She suggests that children's literature encourages readers "to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new perspectives and so prepare the way for change."

These views are prevalent in library literature. IFLA's (2001:3) Guidelines for Library Services for Young Adults state:

"Libraries can be an important force for the individual in achieving a successful transition from childhood to adulthood by providing access to the resources together with the environment that will foster intellectual, emotional and social development and offer a positive force for an alternative to societal problems."

Both Elkin and Kinnell (2000) and Elkin et al. (2003) found that libraries play an important role in promoting reading for pleasure rather than to develop reading skills. Libraries also "perceive the importance of reading as contributing to the social and cultural development of the child" and seek ways to advance this (Elkin & Kinell, 2000:31). Therefore, as CILIP (2002) argue, in order to support this development, libraries need to stock diverse collections.

Dangers of Literature

However, a diverse collection can raise a number of problems. The main one being children's access to 'inappropriate material'. Cole (1994) found that many of the public respondents to her study were concerned about the access children had to adult materials. However, there is also concern about the unsuitability of a lot of children's

literature. Blackburn (2008), in her newspaper article, argues that children's literature now requires an X rating and quotes Jacqueline Wilson as saying "today's children are being invited to engage with ideas that they simply don't have the maturity to deal with". According to Curry's (2001:31) research into the main reasons why books are challenged, these ideas are "profanity", "heterosexual activity", "homosexuality" and "sexual activity deemed immoral/illegal". "Violence/Horror" came joint fifth on the list. Reynolds (2005) looks at this genre of children's fiction but suggests that adults overreact to it and if one looks closely they will find violence and horror prevalent even in fairytales and nursery rhymes. Furthermore, she argues, series like Point Horror and Goosebumps market themselves as worse than they actually are.

The majority of complainants, it has to be acknowledged, are adults rather than children. As suggested by Gibson (2004), children's reading in Britain "remains a battleground of adult ideologies around 'what is best for the child'." This is a factor that determined an unwritten code of "no sex, no violence, and no 'bad' language" in children's books for much of the twentieth century (Reynolds, 2007). However, the fact that a book is challenged does not necessarily mean children will not try to access it. McNicol (2006a) found that a number of librarians felt that restricting a title would actually promote it to children.

Controversial Titles

A number of controversial titles have received a great deal of publicity in recent years. A picture book about two male penguins adopting an egg – *And Tango Makes Three* – is the most challenged book in America for the second year running (ALA, 2008a) and has just recently been published in the UK. The reaction here has been much more muted; however two primary schools have withdrawn the title due to objections from Muslim parents (Clark, 2008; Lea, 2007). Some schools in America recently refused to stock the Newberry Award Winner – *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron – due to its use of the word 'scrotum' on the opening page (Tanner, 2007).

A number of titles for young adults are notorious for the furor they caused at the time of publication, the most prominent of these being Judy Blume's *Forever* – for containing sexually explicit scenes - and *Junk* by Melvyn Burgess – for containing scenes of drug abuse. Burgess caused further controversy with his novel *Doing It*,

receiving condemnation from former children's laureate Anne Fine, for its explicit scenes (Blackburn, 2008; Fine, 2003). However, Burgess (Bruce, 2004) and Robshaw (2003) defend the novel on the grounds that it is a subject that teenagers want to read about.

Fiction Reflecting Reality

This is an important argument in the defense of controversial titles and is reflected heavily in the literature. Teenagers want to read about real life situations and authors would be doing them a disservice if they do not write on these issues (Bodart, 2006; Chelton, 2006). The author Barry Lyga (Stannard, 2008), speaking at the Forbidden Fruits Conference, stated that getting rid of controversial books will not make the reality go away. A number of writers argue that young adult fiction is more controversial now than in previous years, the reason for this being that the world has also changed (ALA, 2004; Bodart, 2006; Jones, 1999).

They and others argue against censorship. Instead they suggest that discussing controversial issues can help a child or teenager to understand the world around them (CILIP, 2002; Clyde & Lobban, 2001; Curry, 2001, Elkin et al, 2003; Jones, 1983; Meek Spencer, 2005; Patee, 2006; Reynolds, 2007). Patee (2006:30) argues that "fictional texts should be considered as unique information sources". Judy Blume wrote *Forever* for her teenage daughter who wanted to read a book that dealt with sex without anything bad happening to the main characters (Whitworth, 2008). Recently, Jacqueline Wilson, has also received complaints against *My Sister Jodie* – aimed at children 10 and over – for including the word 'twat'. Although the publishers are replacing the word with 'twit' they released the following statement:

"Jacqueline Wilson aims to reflect the realities of modern life, including dialogue, in her books. Children do hear a wide variety of language in the playground and through this, learn what is and isn't acceptable, and also how language demonstrates mood and feelings." (Flood, 2008).

Responsibilities

As a result of the controversial nature of some children's books, there are a number of groups who try and protect children. The two main groups that this research is concerned with are parents and librarians.

Parents

A parent's right to restrict the rights of their own children is one that is infrequently challenged (Busha, 1972; Ingram, 2000; Reeve, 1996; Reichman, 2001). However, there is some debate around whether parents should solely be responsible for their child's reading. CILIP (2005) has been slightly ambiguous on this topic. A Safe Place for Children states that the responsibility lies with the parent, however this refers largely to the child's physical safety rather than its reading choices.

The majority of research conducted around this subject offers the viewpoint of the librarian rather than the parents. Some of the main studies in this area - conducted by Bundy and Stakem (1982), Busha (1972), Cole (1994) and Sutton (2001) - found that a large percentage of their respondents thought parents were more responsible than librarians for a child's reading. However, the fear of parental complaint was found to influence stock selection and access (McDonald, 1993; McNicol, 2005a; 2005b). Very little research has been conducted into parent's attitudes towards censorship and their role in this. As mentioned above, a parent's rights are rarely questioned.

Librarians

A number of studies into the attitudes and practices of librarians with regards to censorship and intellectual freedom found many disparities. Bundy and Stakem (1982:589) conducted a study of American Public Librarians and found that there was strong support for the principles of intellectual freedom but that there were "types of literature whose inclusion in libraries draws less than overwhelming support from these professionals".

This was also found by Cole (1994; 1998; 2000) more recently, who commented

"the most striking feature of the stock management practice in the authorities surveyed is its inconsistent and contradictory nature, again reflecting the inconsistent and contradictory attitudes displayed by almost all respondents."

Busha, (1972), Curry (1997), McDonald (1993), McNicol (2005; 2005a; 2006a) and Sutton (2001) also found that respondents contradicted their attitudes with their practices. This is somewhat surprising considering the amount of years these studies span.

Although principles of intellectual freedom are promoted by the professional bodies in America and the UK, censorship is still taking place in public libraries. Cole (1994) found that users of the library were in favor of some degree of censorship with regards to young people, and although librarians viewed parents as having the main responsibility for monitoring what their child read, they also exhibited concern over children's access to adult materials. A respondent in Curry's (1997:138) research commented on the problem of working in a small community as "everyone looks out for the welfare of all the community's children". McMenemy et al. (2007:20-21) have the welfare of children in mind when they suggest that a librarian "may also have to adopt the gatekeeper role and ensure that children cannot access inappropriate materials." This is with regards to the internet. However, they also write that "there are many books and resources that, while being perfectly appropriate for adults, are not so for children and young people." Therefore, in practice, librarians are still opposing intellectual freedom, regardless of the message promoted by professional bodies.

Training

If librarians appear to be aware of the principles of intellectual freedom but do not put this into practice, is there a need for more training? Overall, the literature is in favor of staff training in this area. CILIP (2002) are aware of the important role library staff play in a child's reading and as a result encourage staff training. Elkin and Kinnell (2000:46) advocate training in child development as well as customer service training for staff in order to "develop and operate a customer-focused environment".

However, again in practice, this does not appear to be happening. Hannabuss and Allard (2001) argue that it is a managerial responsibility to train staff to deal with complaints but it often does not reach the frontline level, leading to confusion as to how to deal with complaints. A number of sources also mention staff training as a method of resolving complaints (Bodart, 2006; Chapman & Birdi, 2008; Jones, 1983). Pooley and Birdi (2008) found that two thirds of respondents agreed that all levels of staff should receive training in issues of censorship however not many respondents had received specific training to date.

Conclusion

Legislation states that children have the right to access information. Both America and the UK's professional library bodies defend this - although CILIP's position is slightly more ambiguous than that of the ALA. However, censorship still exists. The forms in which it takes place are perhaps much more subtle than many people realize, especially with regards to children and young people.

The importance of reading for children is widely recognized. Yet there are a number of people who believe that some children's literature deals with subjects that are unsuitable for its audience. In such cases, they often challenge particular titles, especially those that reflect reality. However, many argue that fiction for children and young adults should reflect reality as they are confronted with it on a daily basis. Furthermore, reading about issues can actually help a child's development.

Due to the belief that children and young adults need to be protected, who should take that role in the public library? Research has been conducted to find the attitudes of librarians to issues of censorship and intellectual freedom; however a number of the more comprehensive studies are now out of date. Furthermore, there are not many studies that specifically investigate the attitudes of front-line staff or librarian's attitudes towards these issues in relation to children and young adults. The majority of research has also been conducted with librarians alone, and no significant study of the attitudes of parents has been achieved. This piece of research sets out to fill this gap and to further investigate parents and library staff's perceptions of each others role.

Chapter 4 - Analysis and Discussion

The aim of this research is to ascertain whose responsibility it is to be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library setting by questioning librarians, front-line staff and parents in Sheffield Libraries.

In order to achieve this, the data collected during the course of the research will be presented and discussed in relation to the research objectives presented in Chapter One. As detailed in Chapter Two, Objective 5 was not deemed to be worth investigating. Instead the data collected will be used in this chapter, to provide a description of the questionnaire respondents.

Results will mainly be presented in percentages, rounded to the nearest whole number. This is so that the opinions of staff and parents can be compared. All graphs contain parent and staff data. Additional comments made by questionnaire respondents will be discussed in relation to the questions they were directed at. Interviewee data will also be discussed alongside questionnaire responses where the subjects overlap. In order to analyze and discuss the results in more depth, literature will be referred to where relevant.

Sample Description

Parents

Forty-four parents responded to the survey in total, across the four libraries. The sample is not representative of the population due to the convenience sample used. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 31 and 49 (88%) and a large proportion was female (73%). The number of children was commonly under three. 30% of the sample had one child, 45% of the sample had two, 18% had three, 5% (2 respondents) had four and only one respondent (2%) had five. No respondents had more than five children. The age of the children varied, but was typically the younger age groups. This is a situation than probably arose from the way the sample was approached. 34% of the children were between 0 and 4; 32% between 5 and 9; 14%

were 10-12 and 19% were over the age of 12. All the children were members of Sheffield Libraries, as were 88% of the parents questioned.

Library Staff

Twenty one members of library staff responded. 43% of the respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 with the rest fairly evenly split amongst the remaining age groups. No respondents were over the age of 60 or younger than the age of 16. As found in previous studies (Busha 1972; McNicol, 2005, 2005a) the majority of respondents (86%) were female. Surveys were completed mainly by Library and Information Assistants, one respondent was a Community Development Librarian and one was an Operations Supervisor. The respondents had been in libraries for a varied number of years.

Interviewees

Three members of the management of Sheffield Libraries were interviewed. One from the Senior Management Team - Interviewee A; one from the Children's and Young People's Team – Interviewee B; and one Community Development Librarian, Interviewee C.

Chapter Five – Analysis and Discussion: Parent and Staff Attitudes to Censorship

This chapter presents the results from Section 2 of the questionnaires which meets part of Objectives 1 and 2.

- Objective 1 - investigate public library staff's attitude to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.
- Objective 2 - investigate the attitudes of parent's to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.

Self-Censorship

Parents and Staff were both asked for their views on a child's ability to self-censor their reading. The responses differed between the groups as shown in Figure 1. 55% of parents disagreed that children and young adults should have the right to decide what reading material was appropriate for them, whilst 72% of library staff either agreed or responded neutrally to the statement.

Figure 1
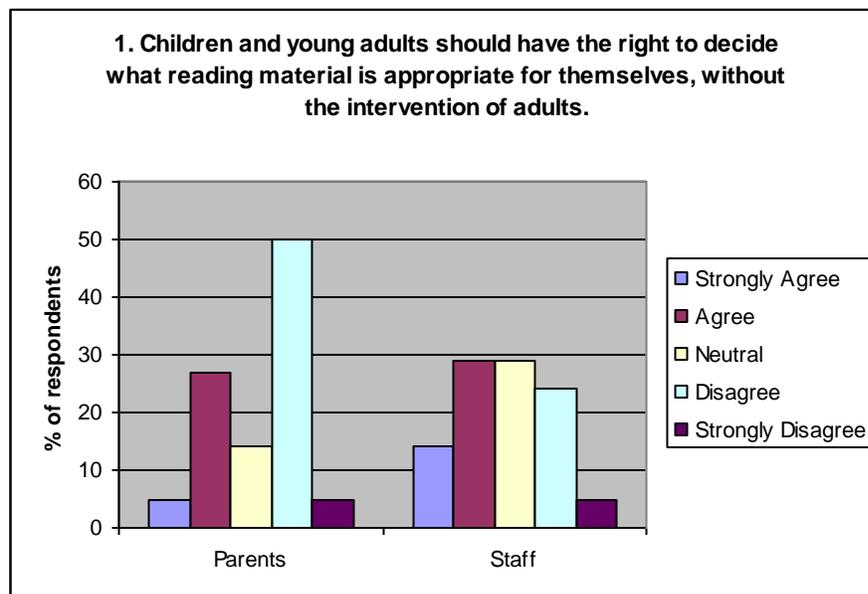
The reason that parents disagreed with the statement can be linked to the fact that an overwhelming majority (96%) stated, in response to Question 7, that they were aware of what their children were reading. Also, parents are generally much more involved in their child's reading than library staff. The nearest similar research in this area, carried out by Chapman (2007:100), found that her respondents were of the view that "young people developed at different rates and were capable of regulating their own reading."

However, the difference here is that Chapman's research relates to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender materials and not all the respondents may have been parents. In terms of the library staff, these results are in accordance with those found by Curry (1997:142) where the library directors she interviewed stated that the "ultimate choice lies with the borrower." Although not asked in this research, it is interesting to note that McNicol (2006b) and Giles (2008) both found that teenagers especially, thought they should have the right to make their own choices and frequently practiced self-censorship.

Labelling

Following on from self-censorship, respondents were then asked if books and other resources about controversial subjects should be clearly labeled (Figure 2). Somewhat surprisingly both parents and staff were in agreement that materials should be labeled. 79% of parents agreed with the statement (18% of those strongly agreed) as did 52% of library staff.

Cole (1994), in her research, found that most people thought materials should be labeled for protectionist reasons, which would account for the high agreement in this research. 11% (n=5) of parents and 19% (n=4) of staff remained neutral, with one staff respondent commenting that it "depends by whom? Publisher or library?"

Only 29% (n=6) of staff disagreed with labeling. This is in contrast to the results found by McNicol (2005a:32). On asking the same question, with the added part "as a guide for young people, parents and teachers who wish to avoid works of this type", almost half (48.8%) of her respondents disagreed. This response also goes against the

position of the ALA (2004) on the subject who advocate that labeling is not in the public interest and that individuals should make up their own minds. Curry (1997:142) only found two British library directors in her study who mentioned the practice of labeling. In contrast to the ALA, they believed that it was the "least judgmental and most impersonal way to alert patrons to possible offense from sexual or violent content."

Figure 2
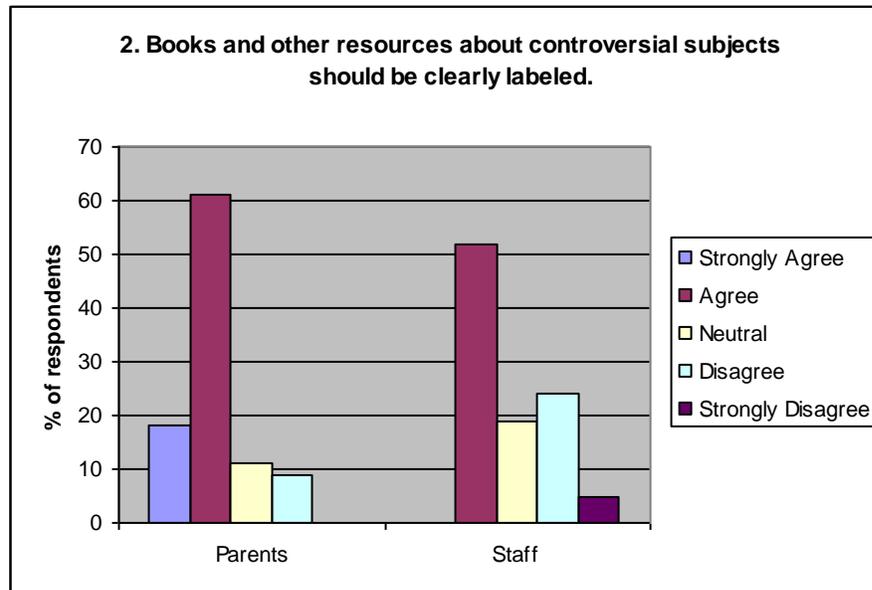
Age Ratings

In part, due to the debate raging in the press at the time of the study, parents and staff were asked their opinions on age ratings. The argument for age ratings on children's books is that they give guidance to adults on the suitability of the content and reading level. Here, unlike the response to labeling, parents and staff tended to disagree, as shown in Figure 3. Also, surprisingly respondents were more against age-ratings than labeling, even though age-ratings are a form of labeling.

Half (50%) of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that books for children and young adults should have age ratings on the cover. One respondent agreed but commented that these should be "guidelines not ratings". The possibility suggested by this comment is that some respondents may have likened the ratings to those on films and therefore thought they may be enforced.

In contrast, only 14% (n=3) of staff agreed with the statement. 33% (n=7) of staff responded neutrally, with the majority of staff (52%) being in disagreement. The same respondent who made a comment about labeling again asked by whom the age rating would be done, publisher or library?

Figure 3
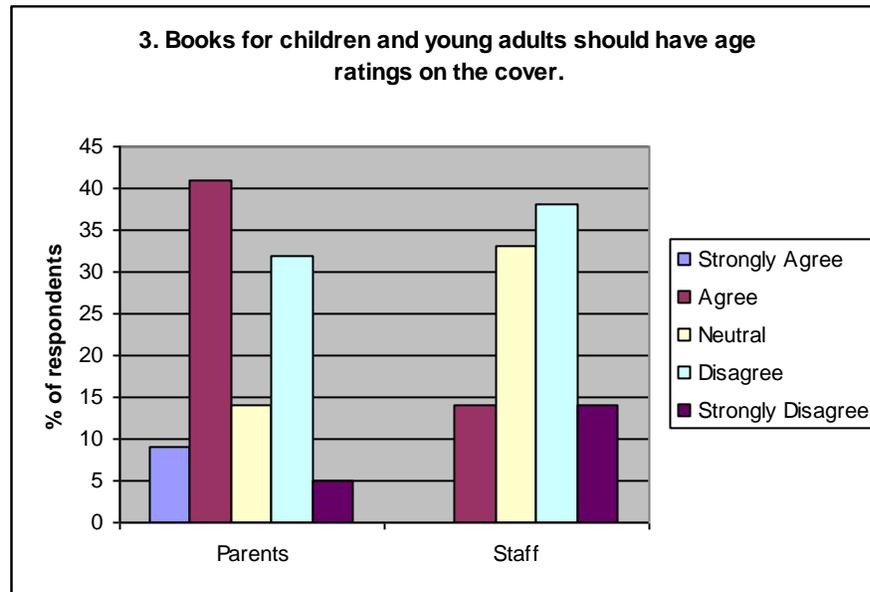
To a large extent, libraries tend to shelve their books for children and young adults in age categories anyway. Arguments against age-banding often cite the inexactitude of defining age categories, as what might be appropriate for one child, might not be for another (Cornwell Internet, 2008; Lawson, 2008). McNicol (2006b) in her research conducted with teenagers, found that they would appreciate more guidance on the content of books but were strongly against any legal restrictions on books, as there are on films.

Accessibility

Location

Both parents and staff answered similarly when asked if young adult books should be located in a separate section in the adult library to prevent young children having easy access to them. The majority of parents (50%) and staff (57%) agreed that the books should be located in a separate section. The same parent who commented on the

previous question wrote that her child "mistakenly borrowed a very gruesome book from the young adult section". The library that this respondent uses locates the young adult books in the children's area.

32% of parents and 33% of staff disagreed with the statement; however no one in either group disagreed strongly. Comments made to the researcher by some members of staff said that there were many other reasons why young adult books should be located separately. In this case respondents were just asked to respond to the statement about preventing access. However, it is worth noting that staff especially might have been considering other reasons at the time of their answering.

Borrowing Restrictions

Continuing with the theme of accessibility, respondents were asked if children under the age of 16 should be allowed to borrow fiction books from the adult library. The majority of both groups advocated open access to children. Almost three quarters (71%) of parents disagreed with restricting access. These were a mixture of strongly disagree and disagree. The same percentage (71%) of staff also disagreed, however, only 3 staff (14%) disagreed strongly.

19% (n=8) of parents and only 14% (n=3) of staff agreed with restricting access. In contrast, Cole (1994, 1998, 2000) in her research found that there was more concern for younger people among her public respondents. Many people felt that restricting access would stop children from accessing inappropriate material and Cole (1994:68) received comments such as "'it would possibly stop some of the youngsters getting it, the impressionable ones really' and, 'it's a good idea because there are children around'." In her PhD research Cole (1998:86) posed a slightly different question to the one used in this study, although it is on a similar theme: "Children should not be exposed to adult library stock that might be inappropriate for them". Thirty-two respondents out of seventy-six agreed that children should not be exposed to inappropriate material. However, the major difference here is the use of the word "inappropriate". This many not have been on the minds of the respondents in this study, especially as one parent commented that their child often borrowed classics from the adult section.

Respondents were also asked if under 16s should be allowed to borrow graphic novels from the library. The situation here is that children aged 15 or under cannot borrow graphic novels from Sheffield Libraries without parental approval or unless the book is obviously suitable.

Responses from parents were fairly evenly spread, suggesting there is little strong opinion on the matter. 15 parents (34%) agreed that under 16s should not be allowed to borrow them. 14 parents (32%) were neutral and 15 parents (34%) were in disagreement. Parents of younger children especially may not have been familiar with graphic novels as a format therefore an explanation was provided on both questionnaires. "Graphic novels are a type of comic book, usually with a lengthy and complex storyline similar to those of novels and are often aimed at mature audiences." This statement was taken from Wikipedia (2008) as a concise and clear definition. However, this definition may be another reason why the results were varied.

Library staff have a much stronger opinion on the matter. 14 staff (67%) disagreed with the statement, 4 (19%) remained neutral while only 3 (14%) agreed that under 16s should not be allowed to borrow them. This is mainly due to the fact that staff either have to derive permission from a parent or deny access if no parent is available. Interestingly Cole (1994) found that the concern over children's access to adult materials, mentioned in the previous section, had prevented one authority from stocking graphic novels. However, this was in 1994 and graphic novels have increased greatly in popularity and numbers since then. Even Shakespeare's most prolific titles are now available in graphic format.

Controversial Subjects

The last question in this section asked whether fiction books containing controversial content were suitable for a children's library. Respondents were asked to select either YES or NO for each of the following: sex, homosexuality, violence, strong language and drug abuse. The limitations of this question are discussed in the methodology chapter. However, to recap, this line of questioning forces a choice from the respondent, regardless of whether they have one or not. The problems of this question are also

shown by the number of respondents, both parents and staff, who made additional comments.

The results are shown fully in Figure 4. Out of the five categories, parents thought fiction books containing homosexuality were slightly more suitable for a children's library (20 parents, 45%) than any of the other categories. Staff also seemed to accept the idea of books with homosexual content more than any of the others (16 staff, 76%). Research conducted by Bundy and Stakem (1982) found that librarians were equally in agreement and disagreement about exercising caution in providing gay literature for children and youth, whereas Chapman's (2007, 2008) more current research found that there was little opposition to LGBT related material being located in the Young Adult section.

A large proportion of parents, ranging from 50 to 60% thought that none of these themes were suitable for a children's library. Interestingly staff disagreement with all the themes ranged from 24 to 48%. Parents were mostly against violent content in a children's library (61%), closely followed by strong language (59%). Whereas more staff were against strong language (48%) than violence (38%).

McNicol's (2006b) research with teenagers indicates that they feel differently to adults regarding the categories presented in this question. Unlike the parents and staff questioned in this study, the teenagers viewed swearing as generally acceptable as it was often used of heard in daily life. They were more worried about books containing sex, mainly due to the embarrassment issue of borrowing or purchasing them.

Figure 4

Please indicate whether you think fiction books with the following content are suitable for a children's library:					
	Parents			Staff	
	Yes %	No %	No Response%	Yes%	No%
Sex	39	57	5	71	29
Homosexuality	45	50	5	76	24
Violence	34	61	5	62	38
Strong Language	34	59	7	52	48
Drug Abuse	39	55	7	67	33

Respondents stipulated a number of provisos for this question, the majority of these suggested that it depended on the age of the child and the context in which the content was placed. Ten parents made additional comments, indicating strong feeling on the subject or a need to justify their answers. These comments were made at the side of the question as there deliberately was no additional comments box.

Five members of staff made additional comments, a similar proportion to the number of parents. Here staff made more of the distinction between children and young adults. Two respondents circled YES for all the categories, writing "but mainly just for young adults" and "for young adults readers really". Interestingly most respondents either circled YES for all the categories or NO for all the categories, few distinguished between the different types of content.

Summary

Parents appear to support censorship more than staff. Parents mainly disagreed with self-censorship and overwhelmingly thought that books and other resources about controversial subjects should be clearly labeled. Although the consensus was not as strong for age ratings, half the number of parents still agreed that books should be rated.

However, when it came to access, opinions were more divided. Half the parents thought that books for children and young adults should be located in separate sections but they were in favor of allowing under 16s to borrow adult books. Parents had no strong opinion about whether under 16s should be allowed to borrow graphic novels. Opinion was divided as to what content is suitable for a children's library. More parents were accepting of books containing homosexuality however, a slightly higher percentage were against any of the options.

Staff tended to agree or answer neutrally about a child's ability to self-censor. Many staff agreed with parents, that controversial books should be labeled, however they were mainly against or neutral about age ratings.

In terms of access, staff also thought sections for children and young adults should be located separately and under 16s should have access to the adult library. Staff thought under 16s should be allowed to borrow graphic novels and they were more in favor of controversial books being located in a children's library. Again they were more accepting of books with homosexual content. However, as with the responses from parents, accurate conclusions cannot be made due to the nature of the question.

Chapter Six – Analysis and Discussion: A Parent's Role

This chapter examines the role of the parent in their child's reading. It addresses part of Objectives 2 and 4.

- Objective 2 - investigate the attitudes of parent's to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.
- Objective 4 - assess library staff's perception of the role of the parent in issues of censorship.

Awareness

In order to assess their involvement with their child's reading, parents were asked if they were aware of what their child was reading. As pointed out by some parents with young children, they were obviously aware, being that they often chose and then read books to their child. However, it did seem the best was of posing the question at the time. Library staff were asked their opinion on the matter in order to assess their perception of a parent's role. Figure 5 shows how similar the results are between the two groups.

Figure 5

8. I am aware of what my child is reading.
15. Parents should be aware of what their children are reading.
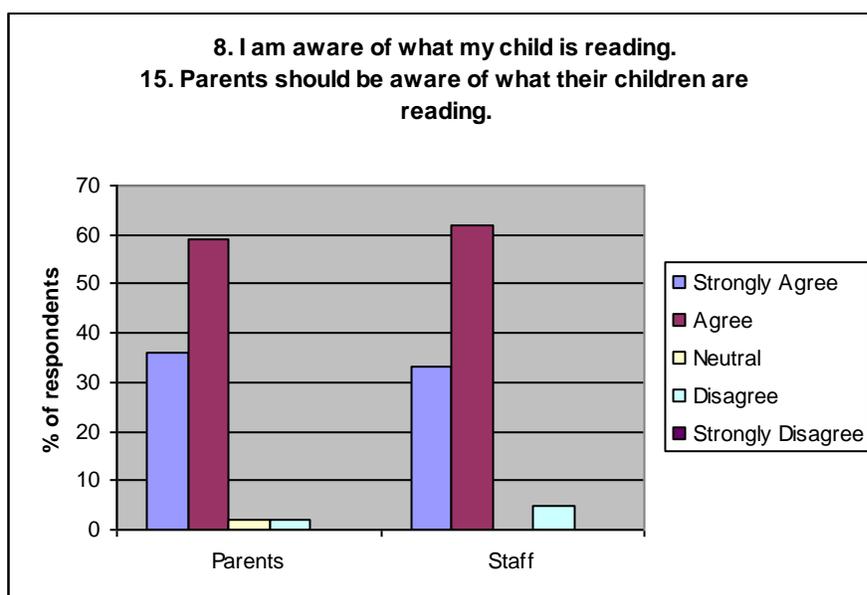
In total, 96% of parents either agreed that they were aware of what their child was reading. This can be attributed to a number of reasons. Firstly, all the parents approached were either with or choosing books for their children, thus indicating a high degree of involvement. Secondly, parents might have felt it to be a sleight on their ability to parent if they were to disagree with the statement. Only 1 respondent disagreed, she had one child aged 5-9 and one child aged 10-12.

These results are in accordance with McNicol's (2006b:17) research which found that "many teenagers said that their parents like to know what they were reading". Library staff also advocated high levels of involvement, with 95% agreeing that parents should be aware of what their children are reading.

Opinions of Others

Question 9 was directed at parents only and asked if they would feel more comfortable with their child borrowing a controversial book if it was on an awards shortlist. One of the reasons for this is that *And Tango Makes Three* was currently on the Sheffield Children's Book Award shortlist at the time this study was carried out. Also, some of the more controversial books for young adults, such as *Junk* by Melvyn Burgess and *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff have won awards, the Carnegie and the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize respectively. The majority (43%) responded neutrally. No one strongly agreed and only 7% (n=3) strongly disagreed. This left 11 (25%) parents in agreement and 11 (25%) parents in disagreement. These results seem to suggest that although a controversial book is on an awards shortlist it does not mean that it is any more or less likely to be opposed than if it were not.

Leading on from this, parents were asked if they would liked to be warned if the book their child wanted to borrow had been deemed to be controversial. 50% of parents responded that they would like to be informed. 23% remained neutral and 28% did not want to be warned. When asked if a parent should be warned a large proportion of staff (38%) answered neutral, with one respondent commenting "depends on who and why". However, a slightly larger percentage (43%) agreed that parents should be warned. This might well be to save themselves from recriminations or to provide the best service to the customers.

Responsibility

Both parents and staff were asked to respond to the statement: 'what a child reads should be more the responsibility of parents than librarians'. This is an issue that has been raised a number of times in previous studies. As Figure 6 shows, parents and staff are in agreement. In total, 96% of parents and 90% of staff agreed with the statement. No library staff and only one parent disagreed with the statement.

Figure 6
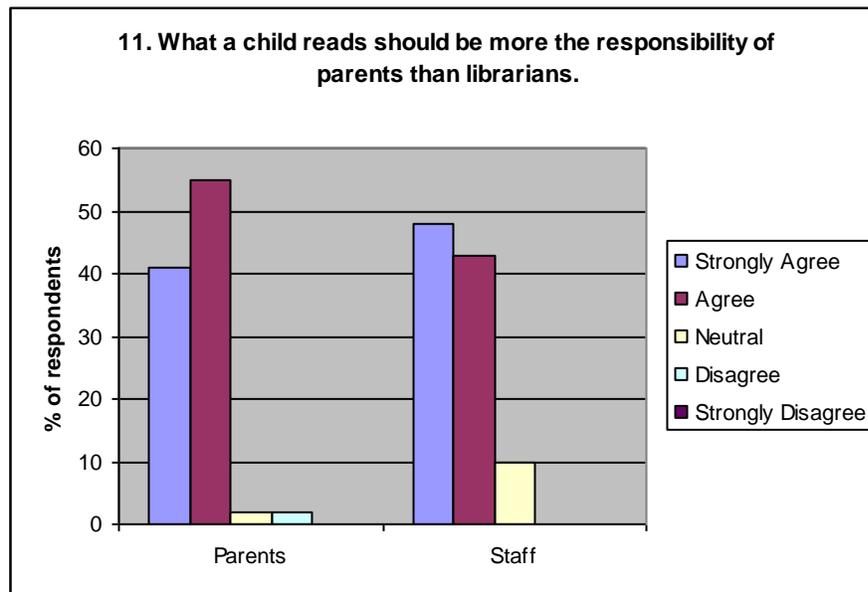
Interviewees were also asked for their views on who should be responsible for what a child reads. All acknowledged the need for a parent to be involved in their child's reading. Interviewee B said "Ultimately I think it's the parent's responsibility because only parents know what their standards are…" Interviewee A stated: "I would say ultimately it was down to the parent but again, as with so many things, we leave everything to the parent but they must be the ultimate arbiters." Interviewee C commented that a child "does need guidance from a parent. A parent needs to know what's going on in a child's mind.

However, two of the respondents thought that the choice should lie with the child. When asked 'who is responsible for what a child reads?' Interviewee C replied "By and

large the child" and continued on to suggest that a child has the ability to self-censor to some extent.

"A child obviously, until its early teens, probably doesn't have a clue as to what is going on in a book that is too old for it but after that it probably understands some things but sees through a glass darkly, doesn't see the whole picture and I think at that stage a parent has to be very vigilant." (Interviewee C).

Interviewee A commented that "there should be a degree of protection, but ask me where the line is, the line is, I think, with the individual".

Questionnaire respondents were not given the choice to comment on this; however, over half the parents questioned did not think that children had the right to decide for themselves what reading material was appropriate (Figure 1).

Of the 96% of parents who agreed that they were more responsible than staff, two felt the need to add comments. One stated that they agreed "however, if parents don't behave responsibly, maybe it is appropriate for librarians" and the other, similarly, wrote "but not all parents are able to fulfill this responsibility, therefore the library staff/managers have a duty to protect vulnerable children from inappropriate content."

The role of staff was also highlighted by the interviewees. Interviewee A was quite broad in her thoughts, stating that "We have, at the end of the day, a duty of care to everyone who uses our services and everyone who works for us and it's where you put that duty of care as a senior manager". Interviewee B was more specific, stating, the library staff have a "responsibility to make sure that we display thing appropriately, make it as clear as we can roughly what age range things are appropriate to". Interviewee C also thought that staff should play a subtle role, suggesting that they

"have a responsibility to show a responsible adult attitude and yet to be friendly and in that way we can perhaps influence what they do read... I don't think that just standing there and saying what is right and what is wrong… I don't see that as our responsibility." (Interviewee C).

These results are in accordance with results found by a number of similar studies. Busha (1972:208) found that 75% of respondents were in agreement, while a

slightly larger number than found by this study (20%) disagreed. Bundy and Stakem (1982:585) asking the same question ten years later found that 92% of public librarians agreed that "the responsibility for what a child reads should lie with the parents, not the library." This is a large increase, more in keeping with the results found in this study and confirmed by Cole (1994) with her study. She found that professional respondents answered similarly to those in Bundy and Stakem's (1982) research.

However, she did not ask the question outright which might account for the fact that in her later research, Cole (1998:86) found that "only 4 library users asserted and then consistently maintained that responsibility for what children see in the adult library should lie with the child's parents or guardians." During the course of her interviews, Sutton (2001) found that the issue might not be as clear cut as the evidence from this research would suggest. Two of her five respondents brought up the subject of parents leading Sutton (2001:37) to conclude that

"the library service does have a responsibility to the children and young people it serves, but it is by no means their sole responsibility, it should be shared by others, such as parents and guardians."

However, the notable difference between previous studies and this research is that parents were asked their views and vast majority agreed that they should be more responsible. Furthermore, respondents were asked outright. In the case of Cole (1998) and Sutton (2001), those respondents who did not mention it may have thought that the responsibility of the parent was implicit.

Summary

Parents thought their role in their child's reading, and thus their role in censorship, was to be highly involved. Parents overwhelmingly were aware of what their children were reading. When it came down to the opinions of others, parents were not so willing to accept these. The fact that a controversial title was included on a prize winning shortlist had little affect on a parent's opinion and half of parents were either neutral or did not want to be informed if a book was controversial. Parents also, overwhelmingly, thought that they should mainly be responsible for what their child was reading.

Staff also thought parents should mainly be responsible for what a child reads, advocating that parents should be aware of what their child is reading. Again, when it came to the opinions of others, staff felt similarly to parents. These opinions remained consistent at managerial level. However, interviewees also thought that children were responsible for what they read, and suggested that library staff do have a general, although lesser, responsibility to their users. Overall, these results are consistent with those found by similar studies.

Chapter Seven – Analysis and Discussion: The Role of Library Staff

This chapter examines the role of library staff as seen by themselves and as perceived by parents. It addresses Objectives 1 and 3.

- Objective 1 - investigate public library staff's attitude to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.
- Objective 3 - assess parents' perception of the role of public library staff in issues of censorship.

Knowledge and Availability

Similarly to respondents being asked to comment on parents' awareness of books, respondents were asked their views on the knowledge of library staff. Question 12 posed to the parents, asked for their level of agreement to the following statement: 'I expect library staff to have a strong knowledge of the books in their library'. Staff, meanwhile, were asked if they should be expected to have a strong knowledge.

Staff respondents primarily agreed that they should be expected to have a strong knowledge of stock, 14% (n=3) strongly agreed and 38% (n=8) agreed. However, 3 (14%) remained neutral and 7 (33%) disagreed suggesting there is no unanimity of thought amongst the staff. Parents on the other hand, had much higher expectations. 80% of respondents agreed with the statement, 32% of those strongly. The remaining 20% (n=9) were neutral.

McNicol (2005b) in her study of censorship in school and public libraries found the greater onus to be on school librarians, who apparently felt a perceived pressure to have read the majority of books in their library, as they were the ones who would have to defend them if necessary. Conversely, McNicol (2005b:9) suggests that public library staff "may not feel so vulnerable because most of the staff on the issue desk are not responsible for stock selection". However, these results suggest that this is not so.

Using Knowledge to Control Availability

Respondents then voiced their opinions on whether library staff are in a position to recognize dangerous or controversial ideas in books or other resources and their ability to control availability. The results, as can be seen in Figure 7, differ between the two groups. 29% (n=6) of staff agreed that library staff were in such a position. However, almost as many (24%, 5 staff) were neutral and the majority (48%, 10 staff) disagreed.

Figure 7

13/9. Library staff are in a position to recognise dangerous or controversial ideas in books or other resources and should ensure their availability is carefully controlled.
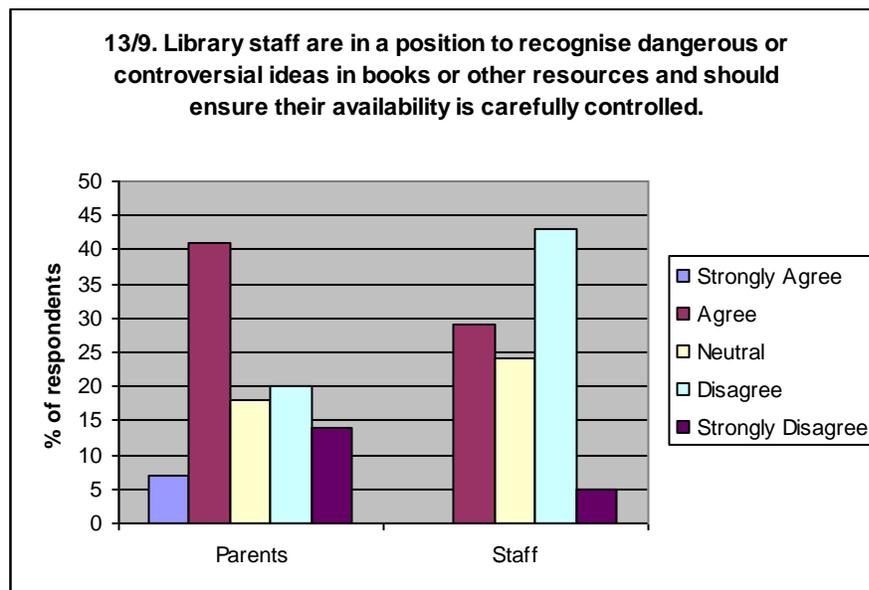
McNicol (2005a) asked a similar questions, replacing staff with 'school/children's librarians', and found that over half (50.6%) the respondents agreed, and that only a quarter (24.1%) disagreed. This differs greatly from this research as well as research conducted by Busha (1972). Although Busha's (1972:204) question was fundamentally different, presupposing that librarians are in a position to recognize dangerous ideas in books and other material and therefore should control their availability, he found low levels of agreement. Only 11% of his respondents agreed that librarians were in that position as opposed to the 80% who disagreed. The opinions of library staff in this study and librarians in Busha's study, is more in keeping with the principles of open access and intellectual freedom as advocated by CILIP (2007a) and the ALA (1996).

However, interestingly, parents appear to perceive library staff to be in a position to recognize dangerous material and control their availability. Almost half (48%) agreed with the statement as opposed to only 34% who disagreed. One of the eight parents who remained neutral commented that they were not sure as they "don't want books banned, but helping kids choose appropriately is a responsibility of librarians".

Personal Opinion and Availability
Continuing on the theme of availability, respondents were asked their opinions on whether it would conflict with the public interest for librarians to establish their own political, moral or aesthetic views as the sole standards for determining what books should be circulated.

80% of parents agreed that it would conflict with public interests, 32% of these strongly agreed. The remaining 20% (n=9) responded neutrally. One parent who did not respond wrote, it "depends how you define 'public interest'! This is the problem with lack of consensus/absolutes in our society, with the over-emphasis on 'rights' and lack of acknowledgement of responsibilities."

Of staff, only 10% (n=2) responded neutrally and 5% (n=1) disagreed. The majority of staff were equally split in agreement and strong agreement. This is similar to the results found by Busha (1972), where 41% of respondents strongly agreed and 55% of respondents agreed. However, both Busha (1972) and Cole (2000) found that theory differs greatly from practice. Cole (2000:47) writes that "regardless of the type of authority a person works in, the data indicate that all librarians will impose their personal or personal-political opinions on stock management".

Intervention

Parents and staff were asked their views on the practical role of library staff. Firstly it was suggested to staff and parents that 'library staff should be vigilant as to what child and young adults are reading/browsing in the library and intervene where necessary.'

Half the parents (50%) agreed that library staff should have this role as opposed to only a quarter (24%) of staff. The most probable reason for this is that parents are concerned with people looking out for the welfare of their children whereas staff may see it as an added responsibility that they could do without. As shown in Figure 8, a much larger percentage of staff than parents responded neutrally to the question. 38% as opposed to 11%.

Figure 8

15/11. Library staff should be vigilant as to what children and young adults are reading/browsing in the library and intervene where necessary.
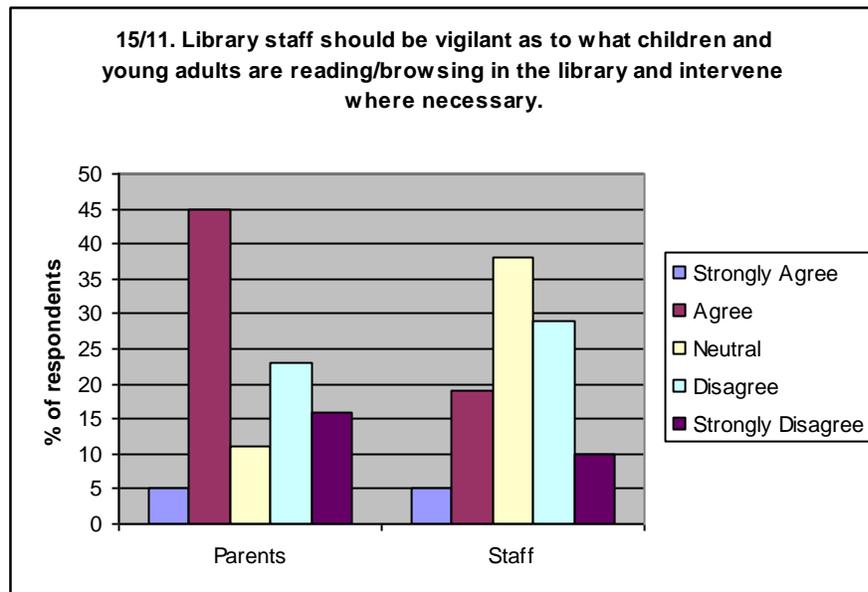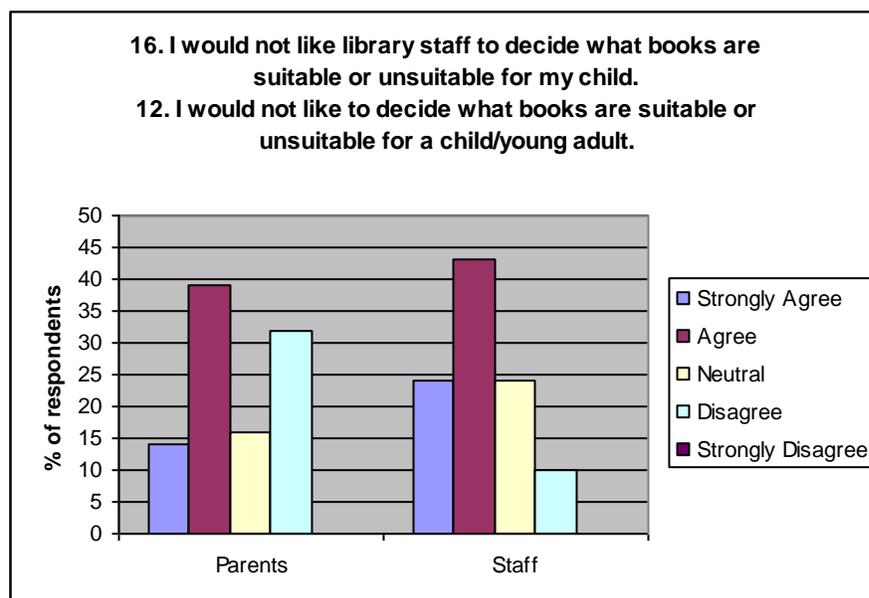
The Right to Decide

Secondly, parents and staff were asked their opinions on the whether library staff had the right to decide what was suitable or unsuitable for a child. As can be seen in Figure 9, a large proportion of both parents and staff did not consider it to be a member of staff's role to make such a decision.

Figure 9

16. I would not like library staff to decide what books are suitable or unsuitable for my child.

12. I would not like to decide what books are suitable or unsuitable for a child/young adult.

There is only one written disclaimer regarding the responsibility of library staff in relation to children in Sheffield Libraries, and it relates to intervention. This is a bye-law last updated in 1985, referred to as "archaic thinking" by Interviewee A. It is obviously out of date as a number of the other bye-laws no longer apply. However, as the only piece of policy in existence, parents and staff were asked for their reactions to it.

"Registered borrowers may borrow books from any lending library maintained by the Library Authority except where a library officer is of the opinion that a registered borrower aged 15 and under is seeking to borrow books which the library officer considers to be unsuitable." (Sheffield City Council, 1988?).

Thirteen parents responded positively, either agreeing or finding it reassuring. Six respondents actually used the word 'agree' while others suggested that it was 'fine', 'fair enough', 'sensible', 'reasonable' and a 'good idea'. Four respondents mentioned the suitability of the book. One said "Children under the age of 16 should not be able to borrow books if the content is not suitable for their age", another said that they would "support the librarian refusing access to the book. My child can then ask me to come in and evaluate the book and accept/agree if suitable." Four respondents commented that although they supported the library officer in this role, the ultimate responsibility resides

with themselves as parents. One respondent wrote: "If I disagreed with the librarian (unlikely) I could always get it out/give express permission myself. A good safeguard."

This left thirty-one parents who reacted negatively to the statement. However, the subject is not clear cut. A number of parents objected to the statement, but were not totally against the intervention of the librarian. One respondent wrote: "Ultimately parental responsibility but do not think any parent would object to being warned regarding controversial content." While another suggested

"I think this should be more the responsibility of the parent/carer. Some input from library staff would be great, but I do think at the end of the day it has to be decided between the parent and child. I guess where there is no presence of a parent than it's a good idea for the library officer to intervene."

Only ten respondents were totally against the policy. One respondent wrote:

"The idea that library staff should have some kind of policy role determining what children can and cannot read is outrageous. On what basis would they consider something unsuitable? Would there be a national policy or would it be down to the individual librarian?"

Nine respondents did not believe that it was a librarian's role to make such a decision. Comments such as "librarians should not be censors" and "it is not the library officer's role to be a moral guardian" were made. Five respondents questioned the subjectivity of the librarian to make such a decision while another four respondents raised the subject of the age of the child and the type of book.

Interestingly, no members of staff completely agreed with this statement or said they would enact it in anyway. One respondent said that maybe it is "a safety net!'" but they could not think of an occasion when they would "refuse any child any book". Three respondents said that they would probably warn the parent or patron if the material was controversial.

Six respondents actually stated that they did not think it was their role or that they would not like to make that decision. One respondent wrote "I am a library assistant, not a policeman, teacher or social worker! I do not consider it to be part of my

job to monitor what someone is choosing to read and whether it is suitable." As with the parents, the strength of respondents' reactions varied. Only two respondents reacted negatively and did not expand on their answers. One wrote that it was "totally unacceptable" while the other merely said "I do not agree with this statement."

Again, comments made by staff were similar to those made by parents. The subjectivity of the librarian was questioned by two respondents, one of whom wrote:

"Would hate to think that a 'library officer' could choose which books a child can or cannot borrow. This is a very dangerous route to take. Most people have prejudices against certain types of material but no individual library worker should have the right or power to impose their views about suitability onto someone else."

Five respondents suggested that this cannot be based on age alone, as one respondent wrote, "The level of understanding is not dependent on his or her age, and it seems very unfair to judge them on how old they are." Two staff commented that the way books were shelved in age categories was guidance enough.

Only one respondent, out of both staff and parents, considered the child's feelings. A member of staff wrote "I would also like to think that children feel they can come to the library and choose books freely without the fear and embarrassment of coming to the counter and having the books taken off them." This may have been due to the fact that the questionnaire mainly focused on the role of parents and staff.

Lending Controversial Books
Thirdly, parents were asked if they would react negatively to a librarian knowingly lending their child material containing the following content: sex, homosexuality, violence, strong language, drug abuse. Again, as with Question 7, opinion was divided and similar comments were made regarding age and context. The number of non-respondents was slightly higher at approximately 10%.

The presumption was that parents who did not deem these books to be suitable for a children's library would also be upset if a librarian knowingly let their child borrow them. Interestingly, 35% (15) of respondents did not answer Question 7 and Question

17 consistently, suggesting that this is not the case. However, as indicated in Chapter 6, parents felt that they were more responsible than library staff for what their child reads, which might account for this disparity.

In order to compare the perceptions and actual role of library staff, staff were then asked if they would let a child/young adult borrow a book that they knew contained the same content. The major difference with this question is the inclusion of the two terms child and young adult, whereas parents were only commenting on their own children.

Only 1 respondent (5%) did not answer the question. In theory, staff appeared more hesitant to lend books containing violence and strong language. 33% (n=7) said they would not let a child/young adult borrow books containing this content. Staff were much more likely to lend out books containing homosexual content, with only 3 respondents (14%) saying that they would not. These results are also more consistent with the results from Question 7. However, two respondents commented, in response to sex, homosexuality and drug abuse, that they would only lend non-fiction titles. Three respondents emphasized that they would only let young adults borrow these books and one respondent said that it would depend on the "age and maturity" of the child.

Summary

The perception of the role of library staff differed substantially from a librarian's actual role, as they see it, when it came to staff knowledge. In terms of knowledge of stock, a much higher percentage of parents, than staff, expected library staff to have a strong knowledge. Parents also thought that library staff were in a position to recognize controversial books and control access to them. This was not a view taken by the majority of staff. However, both staff and parents were against staff using their personal opinions to dictate the circulation of books.

More parents than staff thought library staff should be vigilant of children and young adults in the library and should intervene if they were reading or browsing something unsuitable for them. However, when it came to making a decision about the suitability, both staff and parents did not consider it to be the role of library staff. This

was also supported in parent and staff reactions to a Sheffield Libraries bye-law stating that a library officer can refuse to lend a book to someone under 15 if they consider it to be unsuitable.

When it came to a librarian knowingly lending a child an item with controversial content, parents reactions were evenly split. However, although some parents thought that these books should not be located in a children's library (Figure 4), they indicated that they would not be upset if they were knowingly lent to their child. On average, three quarters of staff said they would knowingly lend these items although more staff were hesitant to lend books containing violence and strong language.

Chapter Eight – Analysis and Discussion: Staff Training

Staff were asked for their opinions on training and policy. This also involved assessing their reactions to methods in practice and suggesting similar practices not currently in widespread use.

- Objective 6 - identify potential training needs for public library staff and methods of communication relating to issues of censorship.

Communication

Using the Library Management System (LMS)

One procedure that is used by Sheffield Libraries is to place warnings on the LMS that appear each time the book is checked out.

Staff were asked if controversial books should have warnings placed on them on the catalogue. Overall, 53% (n=11) of staff agreed that warnings should be placed on the catalogue. One respondent added "or stickers on books for parents to see" which is similar to labeling. 10% (n=2) remained neutral and 38% (n=8) disagreed. McMenemy et al. (2007:49) argue that using the LMS to inform staff of the suitability of books for children is important because library staff "will not necessarily be able to determine whether a book is inappropriate for an age group unless it has already been evaluated."

Staff Meetings

Next staff were asked if controversial books should be discussed in staff meetings in order to increase awareness. Although looking at it in a more positive light, Elkin and Kinnell (2000:128) found several library authorities who noted that "regular meetings to review children's books as part of the book selection process, was a vital part of training and expanding knowledge of children's books and children's reading needs".

62% (n=13) of staff agreed that it was a good idea. One respondent commented that it "would be useful in order to be able to respond/be aware of complaints". The remaining respondents were equally split between neutral and disagree. Interviewee C

brought up the idea of discussing books in meetings when asked if there should be more guidance on issues of censorship and children's fiction, "it would be nice to feel that one had time in staff meetings to discuss books but it's not a thing that comes up very often."

Policy

Staff were asked if they thought the library should have a policy stating that parents are responsible for what their children read. An overwhelming 85% (n=18) of respondents agreed that the library should have such a policy. The three remaining respondents answered neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

However, the managerial interviewees were not entirely in favor of a policy. Interviewee C said that she thought debate would be better than guidance. Interviewee B said that she was not keen on the idea of a poster, although she did recognize that it might be useful for staff. Instead Interviewee B stated:

"I almost feel it's intrinsic that as a parent you should be taking responsibility, yes you've got a right to complain if you think things haven't been done correctly or properly but if it matters that much to you then you need to get very closely involved in what your kids are choosing and what they are bringing home from the library."

Interestingly, Interviewee B was the only respondent who mentioned a written stock policy. Cole (1998) also found that only one of her interviewees mentioned stock policies, something that is often cited in the literature as being a library's main defense against complaint. Interviewee B thought that there was "something very brief on the website that says very general things…some type of disclaimer or something?..." but that there was not "anything concrete to refer back to." On further investigation, it could not be found on the Sheffield Library website (2008) by the researcher.

Interviewee C worried that having a concrete policy might backfire on the library:

"There might just be an occasion on which we did feel that our view was more important, I can't think what it would be because it hasn't cropped up yet, but if you have a policy then you have to stick rigidly to that policy, otherwise what's the point of having a policy."

Instead, Interviewee C suggested having a written disclaimer, which could be seen by the parent. "That might cover us but I'm just a little bit against having set in stone policies on things that are as nebulous as literature." Interviewee A preferred the idea of guidelines, as she thought that it often depends on the individual. Interviewee A was also in favor of supporting staff, stating:

"I think if we have guidelines, it wouldn't be so much as to stop that individual choice of library staff… it's if you are challenged you have a written statement of what the library stance is… so it's not just your opinion."

Interviewee A was also open to the idea of having a policy, commenting:

"We haven't done a censorship policy, if you like, there isn't one in the staff guidance manual, if your research says that's something we need, well obviously strategy team will consider that and maybe we haven't been explicit enough about what to do in this situation, if you get queries about books…"

Training

The last question in this section attempts to assess the need for training in Sheffield Libraries. Staff were asked if they would appreciate more guidance or training about dealing with children and young people.

62% (n=13) of respondents said they would appreciate more guidance or training. 14% (n=3) remained neutral and 24% (n=5) disagreed. Interestingly, of the five respondents who disagreed, three have worked in libraries for over twenty years. The other two had worked in libraries for 8 and 10 years. This would suggest that they have had a great deal of experience of working with children already and may have previously attended courses.

These results are similar to those found by Pooley and Birdi (2008) who conducted a study into training, censorship and intellectual freedom. Nearly two-thirds of the public library participants agreed that staff at all levels should receive training on intellectual freedom and censorship.

Staff were also given the option to offer suggestions for further training. The response rate was quite low, with only seven respondents making a written comment. One respondent commented: "I think for graphic novels and age groups, guidance would be especially useful for under 13's." Similarly another respondent wrote "definite guidelines re. what is suitable/unsuitable materials would be a starting point." Another suggested that it was best to "keep an open mind! But, always be aware that 'victorian' attitudes still permeate areas of society. This can lead to censorship of the worst kind." Similarly, a member of staff who has worked in libraries for 40 years commented that "staff should use their common sense". A respondent who has worked for libraries for 28 years expressed a desire to know the legalities, commenting, "don't' know what a librarian can legally do about issuing books or refusing to issue them."

One of the two managerial respondents commented: "I would like to think that we take more care in appointing staff who have an interest in books and reading!" This is in accordance with CILIP's (2002:23) advice that "the recruitment process for all new staff should include criteria which demand evidence of a positive attitude towards children and young people." While another respondent suggested that "new staff working in libraries may need some training on dealing with children's choice of books, types of stories to read to them, songs, crafts, etc". From these comments, guidance seemed a more popular option than training.

Management's view of staff training was obtained during the interviews. Overall they were in favor of further training for staff however; they cited a number of reasons why it was not conducted. Interviewee A, a member of the Senior Management Team, commented that management have "a degree of responsibility" to deliver training. This view is in accordance with Hannabuss and Allard (2001:88) who also suggest that it is management's responsibility to "develop training which equips and empowers staff to provide informed, convincing, and congruent…responses to queries and complaints". However, Interviewee A also commented that it is "not something that we ever think of. No library authority has said to me what their position on censorship is. It's something you learn by osmosis." Interviewee B, a member of the Children's and Young People's team, said that "All staff should have a general awareness of these sorts of issues and I think it would be useful to perhaps do some wider training than we do at the moment".

There was some disagreement as to the caliber and content of existing training. Interviewee B thought that these issues were covered in the general awareness sessions attended by all staff, whereas Interviewee A dismissed the current training offered to new staff as it does not cover these issues adequately. Interviewee C, a Community Development Librarian also in support of further training for staff, stated that she and some colleagues had received outside training "from a lady called Anne Harding who is an extremely good trainer but she costs a lot of money." Anne Harding delivers training on services for children and young people and is often used by CILIP (2008a) and more locally, SINTO (2008).

Interviewee C emphasized the importance of having "someone who knows what they are talking about", she stated that "It's got to be somebody that we have faith in; somebody we feel could tell us something that we didn't know already or that could help us to resolve our own thoughts…" Interviewee A made a similar comment that it "depends far too much on the quality of the person who trains you."

Interviewee B highlighted some further reasons why training was not being offered, mainly that a lot of time has to be set aside for it and that new things take priority, in this case Sheffield Libraries are about to implement a new Library Management System. Cost was mentioned by Interviewee C, and is a factor recognized by Hannabuss and Allard (2001).

Summary

In regards to methods of communication relating to issues of censorship, staff were generally in favor of discussing such issues in staff meetings. However, when it came to written warnings, opinion differed. There was no strong opinion about the placement of warnings on the LMS but frontline staff were definitely in favor of having a written policy stating that parents are responsible for what their children read. The Community Development Librarian was also in favor of discussing controversial material in staff meetings but on the whole, management disagreed with the idea of having a written policy.

Two-thirds of the front-line staff questioned said that they would like more guidance and training about working with children and young people. However, although the response rate was quite low, suggestions made by staff, indicated that guidance was preferable to training. All management respondents were in favor of extra training for staff however quality, cost and time were cited as reasons why it did not currently take place.

Chapter Nine - Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this dissertation was to ascertain whose responsibility it is to be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library setting by questioning librarians, front-line staff and parents/carers in Sheffield Libraries. It aimed to examine whether there is a discernable gap. As in, do parents feel staff are responsible and staff feel parents are responsible? Or is one particular group perceived to be the primary guardians?

The results from parents and staff have been compared throughout the analysis and interview data, providing managerial perspectives, was discussed where relevant. Due to the organization of the questionnaire, some of the objectives overlapped. Therefore, the results were discussed as they related to the questionnaires. However, the results will now be discussed as they directly relate to the objectives in order to show how they have been met.

Conclusions

Objective 1

- investigate public library staff's attitude to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.

Staff answers to the questions posed in Section Two of the questionnaire indicate that they are generally against censorship. On the whole, staff were against the idea of age-ratings on children's books, however, a large number thought that books about controversial subjects should be labeled. This goes against the position of the ALA (2004) but is in line with Cole's (1994) findings which suggest that labeling is a form of protection rather than censorship.

Over half the staff questioned thought that books for children and young adults should be located separately to help prevent access but few staff were actually against children borrowing adult books and graphic novels. Although it is difficult to draw

conclusions because of the type of questioning used, staff mainly thought that books containing sex, homosexuality, violence, strong language and drug abuse were suitable for a children's library.

In terms of their role, staff were more obviously opposed to censorship. Half thought that they should have a strong knowledge of stock but overall staff did not think that they were in a position to recognize dangerous or controversial ideas in books or control their availability as a result. They also felt that their own views should not affect the circulation of books and did not believe that it was their place to watch or intervene in what children were looking at in the library. As well as not feeling capable, many staff did not want to decide what books were suitable or unsuitable for a child. Following on from this, no member of staff said they would enact the bye-law if they were in that situation. Some respondents said that they would warn the patron or parent if they thought the content was unsuitable. However, many respondents did not feel that that was their role. On average, three quarters of staff said they would knowingly lend books with controversial content therefore advocating the principles of intellectual freedom.

The findings suggest that front-line staff are mainly against censorship in theory and are more definitely opposed to it in practice. As a result, these conclusions differ from the conclusions made by Busha (1972), Cole (1994; 1998; 2000), Curry (1997), McDonald (1993), McNicol (2005a; 2005b; 2006a) and Sutton (2001) who all found a degree of disparity between a librarian's attitude towards censorship and their practices.

Objective 2

- investigate the attitudes of parents to censorship regarding children's books and their role in this.

The attitudes of parents to censorship differed from those of staff. This is to be expected considering that it is a librarian's role to promote intellectual freedom and that a parent's right to restrict the rights of their own children often goes unchallenged.

Overall parents thought that adults should intervene in a child's choice of reading, and this extended to labeling and age-rating on books. Although parents were

in favor of children being able to borrow books from the adult library, they thought that books for children and young adults should be kept separately to prevent access. Again, there are problems with the line of questioning, but slightly more parents thought that books containing controversial material were not suitable for a children's library. However, they were marginally more accepting of books containing homosexuality.

As regards their role, parents were highly aware of what their children were reading. They were not as willing to accept the opinions of others which suggest that they feel the main decision about suitability lies with them. Although half the parents questioned would like to be warned if the book their child wanted to borrow had been deemed to be controversial parents overwhelmingly thought that they were more responsible than staff for what their children read.

Objective 3

- assess parents' perception of the role of public library staff in issues of censorship.

To some extent parents' perception of the role of library staff differed from the actual role of staff as they reported it. Eighty percent of parents thought staff should have a strong knowledge of stock and almost half thought that staff were in a position to recognize dangerous and controversial ideas and control their availability. Parents also thought staff should be vigilant as to what children and young adults are reading or browsing in the library and intervene where necessary.

However, similarly to responses received from staff, parents did not think that staff should let their own views determine which books should be circulated. They were not keen on staff being able to decide what reading material was suitable or unsuitable for their child. In reference to the bye-law, opinion was mixed, some considered it to be a safety net but many more thought that they, as a parent, should make the final decision. Reactions to librarian's knowingly lending their children controversial books were also mixed. Interestingly some respondents, who objected to material being included in a children's library, said that they would not be upset if a librarian lent it to

their child. This again suggests that parents believe themselves to be responsible for their children.

Objective 4

- assess library staff's perception of the role of the parent in issues of censorship.

Unlike parents' perception of staff roles, staff tended to agree with parents about a parent's role in issues of censorship. Nearly all staff thought that parents should be aware of what their children are reading. The lack of clearly discernable opinion as to whether parents should be informed about controversial titles relates to the fact that staff, overwhelmingly, thought parents were responsible for what their children read. This is in accordance with results found by Busha (1972), Bundy and Stakem (1982) and Cole (1994). Management interviewees also confirmed staff views.

Objective 5

- investigate whether issues of gender, age, education, number of children etc impact on a person's attitude towards censorship.

This objective was not followed through because the sample was deemed to be insufficient to draw accurate conclusions from. Also, there was a strong possibility that no conclusive evidence would be found as shown by Busha (1972), McDonald (1993) and McNicol (2005a).

Objective 6

- identify potential training needs for public library staff and methods of communication relating to issues of censorship.

Staff and management respondents were, on the whole, in favor of extra training and improved communication. In terms of communication, staff respondents preferred the idea of discussing controversial books in staff meetings to increase awareness as

opposed to placing warnings on the Library Management System. The idea of discussion in staff meetings was also proposed by one of the management interviewees.

However, when it came to the suggestion of a policy, staff and management views varied. Eighty-five percent of staff respondents thought that the library should have a policy stating that parents were responsible for items borrowed by their children. However, management was not so keen on the idea. Instead they preferred the idea of guidelines and suggested that having a rigid policy might backfire on them.

One interviewee mentioned referring to a written stock policy, but said that Sheffield Libraries did not have one. Cole (1998) found that not many libraries in the UK had a written stock policy at that time. However, it is often cited as one of the best methods of resolving complaints (CILIP, 2008b; Jones, 1983, Jones, 1999; Malley, 1990, Reichman, 2001). Another interviewee mentioned using guidelines so that staff had something to refer to instead of relying on their own opinion.

Almost two-thirds of questionnaire respondents said they would appreciate more training/guidance about how to deal with children and young people. Those who disagreed had worked in libraries for a number of years. The few suggestions received indicate that staff would prefer guidance rather than training. Management was in favor of training in theory but cited quality, cost and time as reasons why it was not conducted.

Aim
- ascertain whose responsibility it is to be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library.

As is shown throughout the research, both staff and parents feel a parent should be the guardian of children's fiction in a public library.

Recommendations

The data unanimously states that parents are mainly responsible for what their children read. As a result only a few recommendations for service improvement are made.

Labeling
Sheffield Libraries might consider the possible identification of and labeling of controversial subjects. Although the ALA is against labeling, both parents and staff expressed the opinion that books and other resources about controversial subjects should be clearly labeled. However, further investigation may suggest that labeling is the responsibility of the publisher.

Graphic Novels
Graphic novels should be categorized according to age instead of the current system. According to Interviewee B this is being undertaken by Sheffield Libraries, but is currently on hold, due to other staff commitments. However, in the meantime, staff should be made aware of the existence of age-ratings on the covers of Manga Novels.

Reassessment of the Bye-Laws
As stated by Interviewee A, the Bye-Laws need updating as a whole. However, it is recommended that attention be given to the one discussed in this research as a number of parents opposed it and staff do not appear to enact it.

Guidance
As shown by the responses of front-line staff, there is a need for more guidance on what children can borrow and the role that library staff and parents should take in this. It may also be useful for staff to have guidance on what to do if a parent complains about a book, detailing the library's stance on this.

Collection Development Policy
As recommended by CILIP (2008b), Sheffield Libraries should create a written Collection Development Policy which, can be viewed by the public and be used to defend material if the occasion arises.

Staff Discussion

Any controversial books should be discussed in staff meetings. This will increase awareness and enable staff to respond to any complaints that they might receive.

Suggestions for Further Research

It was deemed to be beyond the scope of this research but it would be interesting to explore if the attitudes of staff and parents, in relation to fiction, extend to non-fiction and the Internet. There are obvious differences between the way controversial ideas are presented in fiction and non-fiction. Furthermore, controversial content is easier to recognize in children's non-fiction which often takes an educational role. The MLA (2008:7) recently stated that "parents are responsible for children's use of the internet". Due to the role played by libraries in controlling access through filtering and information literacy, it would be interesting to compare the views of library staff and parents.

Findings from this research are limited, in terms that data was only collected in one library authority. Furthermore, although steps were taken to make the sample more representative, respondents tended to be mainly female and of a similar age group. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct this research in a number of different library authorities with a more effective sampling strategy. This would hopefully include more parents with children of higher age groups.

A more qualitative study of the opinions of parents and users in general would also add to the findings from this study. Unfortunately, due to ethical considerations, parents were not interviewed in depth during this research. A qualitative study of this nature would also help to rectify the current gap in the literature which, this research partly fills. Many studies investigate the attitudes of librarians to censorship but hardly any look at the attitudes of users, either adults or children.

Word Count: 20,000

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for Parents

You are being invited to take part in a research project which seeks to investigate the responsibility of library staff and children's guardians regarding censorship and children's literature in public libraries. The research will culminate in the production of a dissertation which will be submitted as part of the course requirements for the MA Librarianship at the University of Sheffield.

By answering this questionnaire and returning it to the researcher you have given your consent for your answers to be used in this research. All responses are anonymous.

For the purposes of this questionnaire the following definitions of the key terms are suggested:
  Children: young people aged 0-12
  Young Adults: young people aged 13 and over

Section One: About you

a. **Age** (please circle):

 16-25   26-30   31-39   40-49   50-59   60+

b. **Sex** (please circle):   Male   Female

c. **Number of Children** (please circle):

 0 1 2 3 4 5 5+

d. **Age of Children** (please indicate the number in each age group):

 0-4 ☐ 5-9 ☐ 10-12 ☐ 13+ ☐

e. **Are you a member of the library?** (please circle): YES NO

f. **Are your children members of the library?** (please circle): YES NO

Section Two:

Please indicate your opinion of the following statements by circling the appropriate response below each statement.

1. Children and young adults should have the right to decide what reading material is appropriate for themselves, without the intervention of adults.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. Books and other resources about controversial subjects should be clearly labeled.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. Books for children and young adults should have age ratings on the cover.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Young adult books should be located in a separate section in the adult library to prevent younger children having easy access to them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. Under 16s should not be allowed to borrow fiction books from the adult library.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. Under 16s should not be allowed to borrow graphic novels from the library.
    Graphic novels are a type of comic book, usually with a lengthy and complex storyline similar to those of novels and are often aimed at mature audiences.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7. Please indicate whether you think fiction books with the following content are suitable for a children's library:

    a. Sex   YES   NO

    b. Homosexuality   YES   NO

    c. Violence   YES   NO

    d. Strong language   YES   NO

    e. Drug abuse   YES   NO

Section Three:

8. I am aware of what my child is reading.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. If a controversial book is on an award shortlist, I would feel more comfortable with my child borrowing it.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10. I would like to be warned by library staff if the book my child wants to borrow had been deemed to be controversial.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. What a child reads should be more the responsibility of parents than librarians.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Section Four:

12. I expect library staff to have a strong knowledge of the books in their library.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

13. Library staff are in a position to recognise dangerous or controversial ideas in books or other resources and should ensure their availability is carefully controlled.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14. It would conflict with the public interest for librarians to establish their own political, moral or aesthetic views as the sole standards for determining what books should be circulated.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

15. Library staff should be vigilant as to what children and young adults are reading/browsing in the library and intervene where necessary.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

16. I would not like library staff to decide what books are suitable or unsuitable for my child.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

17. I would be upset if a librarian let my child borrow a book from the library that they knew contained the following content:

    a. Sex   YES   NO

    b. Homosexuality   YES   NO

    c. Violence   YES   NO

    d. Strong language   YES   NO

    e. Drug abuse   YES   NO

18. Please write down your reactions to the following statement.

Registered borrowers may borrow books from any lending library maintained by the Library Authority except where a library officer is of the opinion that a registered borrower aged 15 and under is seeking to borrow books which the library officer considers to be unsuitable.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for Library Staff

You are being invited to take part in a research project which seeks to investigate the responsibility of library staff and children's guardians regarding censorship and children's literature in public libraries. The research will culminate in the production of a dissertation which will be submitted as part of the course requirements for the MA Librarianship at the University of Sheffield.

By answering this questionnaire and returning it to the researcher you have given your consent for your answers to be used in this research. All responses are anonymous.

For the purposes of this questionnaire the following definitions of the key terms are suggested:
>**Children**: young people aged 0-12
>**Young Adults**: young people aged 13 and over

Section One: About you

1. **Age** (please circle):

   16-25   26-30   31-39   40-49   50-59   60+

2. **Sex** (please circle):   Male   Female

3. **Job Title** _____

4. **How many years have you worked in libraries?** ☐

Section Two:

Please indicate your opinion of the following statements by circling the appropriate response below each statement.

19. Children and young adults should have the right to decide what reading material is appropriate for themselves, without the intervention of adults.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

20. Books and other resources about controversial subjects should be clearly labeled.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

21. Books for children and young adults should have age ratings on the cover.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

22. Young adult books should be located in a separate section in the adult library to prevent younger children having easy access to them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

23. Under 16s should not be allowed to borrow fiction books from the adult library.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

24. Under 16s should not be allowed to borrow graphic novels from the library.
Graphic novels are a type of comic book, usually with a lengthy and complex storyline similar to those of novels and are often aimed at mature audiences.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

25. Please indicate whether you think fiction books with the following content are suitable for a children's library:

    a. Sex   YES   NO

    b. Homosexuality   YES   NO

    c. Violence   YES   NO

    d. Strong language   YES   NO

    e. Drug abuse   YES   NO

Section Three:

26. Library staff should be expected to have a strong knowledge of the books in their library.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

27. Library staff are in a position to recognise dangerous or controversial ideas in books or other resources and should ensure their availability is carefully controlled.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

28. It would conflict with the public interest for library staff to establish their own political, moral or aesthetic views as the sole standards for determining what books should be circulated.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

29. Library staff should be vigilant as to what children and young adults are reading/browsing in the library and intervene where necessary.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

30. I would not like to decide what books are suitable or unsuitable for a child/young adult.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

31. I would let a child/young adult borrow a book that I knew to contain the following content:

    a. Sex   YES   NO

    b. Homosexuality   YES   NO

    c. Violence   YES   NO

    d. Strong language   YES   NO

    e. Drug abuse   YES   NO

32. Please write down your reactions to the following statement.

Registered borrowers may borrow books from any lending library maintained by the Library Authority except where a library officer is of the opinion that a registered borrower aged 15 and under is seeking to borrow books which the library officer considers to be unsuitable.

[ ]

Section Four:

33. Parents should be aware of what their children are reading.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

34. A parent should be informed if the book that their child wants to borrow has been deemed to be controversial.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

35. What a child reads should be more the responsibility of parents than librarians.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Section Five:

36. Controversial books should have warnings placed on them on the catalog.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

37. Controversial books should be discussed in staff meetings so that all staff are aware.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

38. The library should have a policy stating that parents are responsible for what their child reads.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

39. I would appreciate more guidance/training about dealing with children and young adults.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

24. Do you have any suggestions for guidance/training?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. INCIDENTS (Complaints from parents/guardians).
Have you had or do you know of any complaints that have been made against fiction books by parents/guardians?

2. INCIDENTS (Resistance from staff).
Have you had or do you know of any instances where staff have been resistant to children's fiction titles – reading them, issuing them etc?

3. FICTION/NON-FICTION (distinguishable?)
Is fiction different from non-fiction? – selection, reaction to, knowledge of etc

4. AGE (of children/young adults)
Do all of the above differ between ages?

5. RESPONSIBILITY (parents/library staff)
Who do you think should be responsible for what a child reads?

6. TRAINING (staff)
Should staff have more training on these issues?

7. POLICY (local and national)
Do you think there should be more professional guidance on these issues? Within Sheffield? Are you aware of nationally?