

# LIS Youth Services Education: An International Perspective

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This paper looks at the provision of LIS youth services education in five different countries: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. The study started with three research questions:

- 1) To what degree are youth services courses available in each of the regions studied?
- 2) What youth services content is taught in each of these regions?
- 3) Is there a substantive difference in courses and course content between regions?

## What is a “Youth Services Course”?

- Courses in literature, services, media for children and/or young adults, in school or public library environments.
  - Children’s & Young Adult Literature & Services (Australia/New Zealand)
  - School Library Collection Development (Canada)
  - Electronic Resources for Children & Young Adults (United Kingdom)
  - Storytelling (United States)

The term “youth services course” could cause some difficulty, principally because “services” is a component of the youth services curriculum. Just for clarification, we are defining “youth services courses” as those courses which focus on library materials or services to children or young adults, in the public or school environment, or courses which focus on the librarians and caretakers of those children or young adults.

## Previous Literature

- Descriptions of one or two specific courses (generally literature/materials courses)
- Discussions focusing on an apparent lack of faculty, lack of courses, or lack of support for courses

“There is no reliable data on the content of courses or the extent to which that content has altered in the digital age.” – E. Dresang

Eliza Dresang’s background paper titled “Education for Youth Services Specialization in Librarianship” included a fairly extensive review of literature on the topic. As she notes, there has been no previous systematic study of course content. However, from 1967 to 1995, there were many articles in LIS literature which discussed the contents of specific courses, in every country except New Zealand. There were also reports from the United States/Canada and the United Kingdom, dealing with the perception that the youth services specialization was fading away.

## Web Survey

- Invitation to participate sent to 192 U.S./Canadian youth services faculty; 24 program deans/directors in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom
- Response Rate:
  - US (176) : 36%
  - Canada (15) : 47%
  - UK (17) : 65% \*\*
  - Australia/New Zealand (7) : 57% \*\*

For this paper, we were really more interested in what youth services instructors were teaching their students than we were in whether they'd all be on the unemployment line next year. To study that question, we designed a web-based survey to elicit information about course content.

We used two different methods to contact youth services faculty. I (Denice) scanned LIS school web pages to determine the names of youth services faculty currently teaching. I identified and invited 176 U.S. and 17 Canadian instructors to participate. This included permanent faculty as well as adjunct instructors. While I was doing this, Susan contacted LIS school directors and deans in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, asking them to forward an invitation to participate to their youth services faculty. I've asterisked the response rate for those two regions because, in order to calculate it, I assumed that there was one youth services specialist per school. Really, this number is kind of a gentle fiction.

# Content Analysis

- Unit of Analysis = Individual Courses
  - Data provided for 139 courses included Title, Description, and Instructor Goals
    - 4 from Australia/New Zealand
    - 22 from Canada
    - 7 from United Kingdom
    - 106 from United States
- Final coding scheme contained 100 codes in 5 overarching categories

The survey was available from March to May 2004. Questions on the survey asked for course title, description, content, and instructor goals for up to three youth services courses taught within the past three years. The 71 respondents provided information on 139 classes.

Our coding scheme came from the data itself. I performed the first analysis of all the data, and created a coding scheme based on that analysis. Susan provided a reliability check which revealed several areas of disagreement. We renegotiated codes in the trouble areas, I recoded, and Susan re-checked, until we reached agreement. Our final coding scheme contained 100 codes in five categories:

- 1) Youth as Persons
- 2) The Youth Services Librarian
- 3) Managing the Youth Services Library
- 4) Youth Materials
- 5) Library Services to Youth

## Service Venues

Service Venues	AUS	CAN	UK	US
<i>Course Titles</i>				
Public Libraries	0	9%	0	4%
School Libraries	0	27%	29%	25%
<i>Descriptions</i>				
Public Libraries	50%	5%	1%	21%
School Libraries	25%	35%	3%	37%

Once Susan and I had established a reliable coding category, we performed an analysis of information provided in course titles and another of information provided in full course descriptions. We had course title information for 139 courses and full descriptions for 124.

As you can see above, if a service venue is mentioned in the course title, it's more likely to be the school library than the public library. However, public libraries get more coverage in course descriptions than they do in course titles, particularly in Australia/New Zealand. When public libraries are mentioned in course descriptions in the United States, that mention is usually in conjunction with school libraries – in other words, subjects are presented as practiced in each setting.

## Service Audience

	AUS	CAN	UK	US
<i>Course Title</i>				
Children	0	32%	29%	24%
YA	0	9%	0	24%
Children & YA	50%	23%	29%	18%
<i>Course Description</i>				
Children	25%	50%	40%	39%
YA	50%	25%	40%	40%

Looking at course titles would suggest that children dominate the LIS youth services curriculum in Canada, the UK, and the US. However, course descriptions suggest that young adults receive slightly more coverage in the US and Australia.

## Course Titles

	AUS	CAN	UK	US
Youth as Persons	0%	0%	0%	1%
Managing the YS Lib	0%	0%	0%	4%
Youth Materials	50%	45%	43%	47%
Services	25%	14%	14%	15%
Materials & Services	25%	9%	0%	8%

This slide presents the results of an analysis of course titles based on the five overarching categories of the coding scheme. Courses typically fell in only one overarching category, with the exception of some courses which focused on “materials & services.”

The dominant field here is Materials, with about half of all courses covering this area. The other strong field here is Services, covered in all regions. There is, however, little focus on Youth as Persons or Managing the Youth Services Library, and no focus on the Youth Services Librarian.

## Full Course Descriptions

	AUS	CAN	UK	US
Youth as Persons	50%	45%	40%	65%
YS Librarian	25%	45%	40%	55%
Managing the YS Lib	14%	25%	20%	29%
Youth Materials	75%	75%	40%	75%
Youth Services	75%	45%	60%	62%

While course titles generally fell in only one of the five categories, course descriptions included multiple categories. A course that included an analysis of youth reading interests and graphic novels would receive a tick mark in the Youth As Persons category and another in the Youth Materials category. For this table, however, if a course included graphic novels and picture books and chapter books, it would receive only one tick mark in the Youth Materials category.

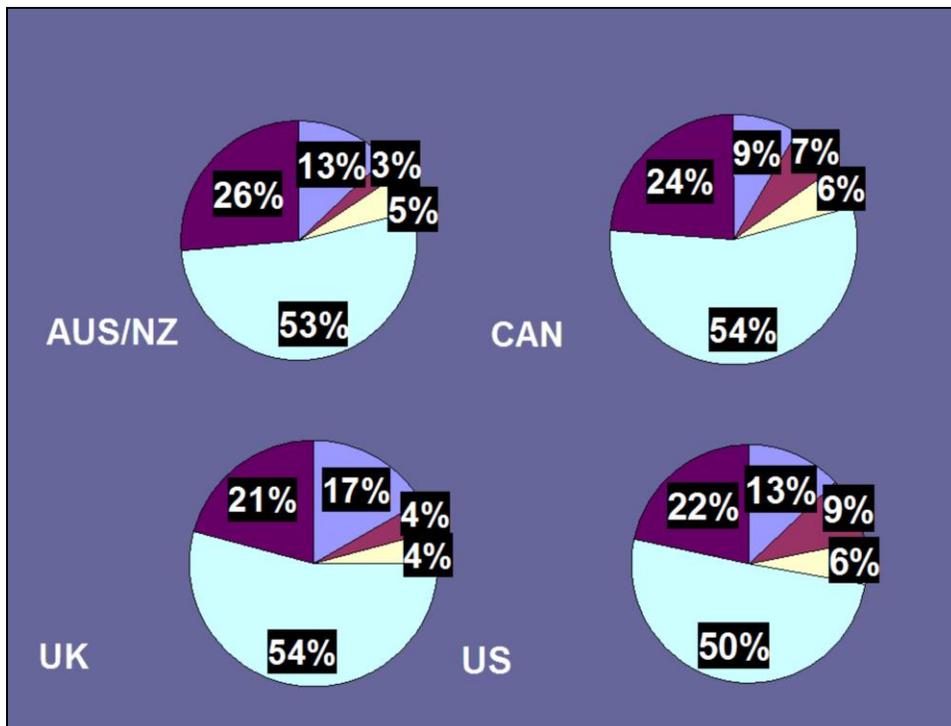
When we turn to full course descriptions, the previous dominance of Materials becomes more significant. In all regions except the UK, materials were included in three-quarters of class descriptions. This includes standard “Materials for Children & Young Adults” courses, as well as courses on multimedia, electronic materials, and toys.

The Youth Services category also makes a strong appearance, with over half of all classes mentioning it. Services can include public services like programming, reference, or reader guidance. They can also include behind-the-scenes services like web page development, collection maintenance, and cataloging.

Youth as Persons received considerable emphasis. Courses considered such topics as youth needs, youth interests, youth development, and special needs or multicultural youth.

The Youth Services Librarian category dealt with the role of that librarian and his or her interaction with children, parents, caregivers, and other librarians. The strong emphasis on this element in the United States and Canada was driven by consideration of censorship and intellectual freedom. Professional development and professional resources made up some of the focus on this area in other regions.

The category that received the least coverage in all regions was Managing the Youth Services Library. This area received surprisingly little attention, given the flurry of articles that tie youth services librarianship to management.



This table looks at the frequency of presentation of youth services content. In this category, if a course description mentions graphic novels and picture books and chapter books, three tick marks were put into the Materials category. This table focuses, then, on the total picture of course instruction.

The large pale blue areas represent the Youth Materials category, which takes up about half of youth services education in each of these four regions. Youth Services takes up 20-odd percent of instruction in all regions – materials and services combined take up about three-quarters of youth services instruction in all regions. The rest of that time is divided between Youth as Persons, ranging from 9 to 17% of instructional time, the Youth Services Librarian, ranging between 3 and 9%, and Management, ranging from 4 to 6% of the curriculum.

## Research Questions

- 1) To what degree are youth services courses available in each of the regions studied?
- 2) What youth services content is taught in each of these regions?
- 3) Is there a substantive difference in courses and course content between regions?

RQ1: North American schools seem to offer a greater variety of courses than schools in other countries. This may be related to the greater number of options for LIS education in North America, with 57 ALA-accredited schools in the U.S. and Canada, as compared to 18 programs recognized by the UK's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 12 recognized by the Australian Library and Information Sciences Association, and one program recognized by the Library and Information Association of New Zealand. It is also likely due to the heavier reliance on adjunct instructors in the United States.

RQ2) The overwhelming emphasis in each of these regions is Youth Materials, with Youth Services and Youth as Persons coming in second and third places respectively.

RQ3) Assuming course content is represented by the five overarching categories, there is not much difference in course content between regions. A look at individual codes reveals very similar coverage of Youth Materials. Youth Services are broadly covered in the U.S. and Canada, with coverage of programming very slight in Australia/New Zealand and the UK. Youth needs and interests are covered well in the US, the UK, and Canada, but not so well in Australia/New Zealand. History and philosophy of youth services is covered only slightly in all regions, with more emphasis in the U.S. and Canada. Management is covered to a greater degree in Canada and Australia than in the UK.