

Awards with rewards: implications and perceptions for collection development for youth

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Including award-winning literature in children's library collections is often openly stated in a library's collection development policy. Hateley (2012) notes these "meaningful markers" as a way "to grant our wish of someone somewhere, somehow having read all the books, and worked out which one is best" (p. 190). In an age where librarians are pushed to their limits with time, budget, and curriculum, such designators are useful in helping to develop and maintain a quality collection. At the same time, Hateley (2012) enlists readers to acknowledge the unavoidable human subjectivity involved in the judging process of literary book awards:

What must not be forgotten, however, is that this superhuman work is undertaken by humans—passionate and knowledgeable humans, to be sure, but humans nonetheless. To automatically rely on award winners for collection development may mask the necessary fallibility and idiosyncrasies of individual judges or judging panels. (p. 197)

In a study of "Children's-Choice" State Book Awards in the US, Storey (1992) further notes censorship issues associated with the selection of books on the award lists and, thus, the availability of books to the children readers meant to select the winners. Storey's (1992) research reports on a survey of school librarians about censorship related to these book awards. The librarians in the study noted that censorship was "expected and accepted" (Storey, 1992, p. 1). They also supported the use of award lists for selection and collection development which is the focus of the current study reported in this paper. Specifically, the purpose was to investigate youth librarians' perceptions of using award lists for collection

development and to also survey their collections for the presence of five children's book awards.

Literature Review

The professional library literature is fraught with debates about the value and quality of children's book awards. Sometimes the crux of the issue in these discussions is the fact that adults are making the choice of the best books; these may not necessarily be the books that the intended audience (i.e., children) would choose as the best or would even check out from the library at all. In the Australian context, Hateley (2012) notes the importance of encouraging librarians and young patrons to use a critical lens when evaluating award winners and to also examine the collection development policies in relation to such choices as one would any addition to the collection. In the United States, much controversy surrounds ethnic specific book awards including the Coretta Scott King Award honoring African American writers and illustrators (Aronson, 2001; Pinkney, 2001), the Pura Belpré Award recognizing Latino/a American writers and illustrators (Balderrama, 2006), and the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (APAAL) acknowledging outstanding literature with Asian/Pacific American themes.

However, children's book awards like these based on ethnicity were created due to a lack of diversity within the ranks of popular non-ethnic specific awards such as the Caldecott and Newbery Awards (Pinkney, 2001). Gillespie, Powell, Clements, and Swearingen (1994) analyzed the ethnicity of characters within the 73 Newbery Award-winning books from the award's inception in 1922 through 1994 and found 90 percent featured White Anglo characters. Characters from non-Anglo backgrounds (using labels from Gillespie et al., 1994) included: Blacks at 26 percent, Native Americans at 19 percent, White non-Anglos at 18 percent, and Hispanic and Asian/Pacific peoples both at 10 percent. Research by Rawson (2011) of young adult awards and lists like the Michael L. Printz Award suggests a similar lack of diversity. For example, in her sample of 297 books, she found 241 books (81.1 percent) included White characters but only 11 books (3.8 percent) included Hispanic characters (Rawson, 2011).

Research from Kidd (2009) suggests "anticensorship efforts...function much like literary prizing" (p. 197). This makes sense considering that a lack of diversity within literary award lists like the Newbery Award and Caldecott Award is partly what led to awards like the Coretta Scott King Award and Pura Belpré Award (Pinkney, 2001). Kidd (2009) notes that the very presence of censorship creates "nearly always leads to or involves anticensorship" (p. 214).

Methods

The research reported here resulted from findings from the author's dissertation study (Garrison, 2012). In this mixed methods study analyzing the factors influencing the collection development of multicultural literature in children's collections, the researcher surveyed the collections themselves and the youth librarians tasked with developing these collections. The researcher searched the library collections for five children's literature awards including the APAAL, King Award, Newbery Award, Belpré Award, and Caldecott Award. The APAAL began in 2006 by the Asian/Pacific American Library Association (APALA), and is awarded annually to books "related to Asian/Pacific Heritage, not necessarily written by or illustrated by an Asian/Pacific American" (APALA, 2010, para. 1). The other three awards are given by

sections of the American Library Association (ALA) including the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) and the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC). The Coretta Scott King Award began in 1970, and is given annually to one African American author and one African American illustrator who have created books celebrating the African American experience (EMIERT, 2011). Started in 1922, the oldest award, the John Newbery Award annually honors the author of “the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (ALSC, 2011c, para. 1). The Pura Belpré Award was started in 1996 and honors one Latino/a author and one Latino/a illustrator who have written or illustrated a children’s book celebrating the Latino cultural experience (ALSC, 2011a). It was given biennially until 2008 and has been awarded annually after that. Since 1938, the Randolph Caldecott Award has annually honored the illustrator of “the most distinguished American picture book for children” (ALSC, 2011b, para. 1).

As stated previously, the Newbery and Caldecott are non-ethnic specific while the other three awards focus on specific ethnic groups. Since these awards began in different years, the researcher started the survey with books honored from 1996 to 2010 for the Belpré, Caldecott, King, and Newbery as the Belpré began in 1996; the APAAL survey started in 2006 when the award came into existence. Further, the APAAL, Belpré, and King include author and illustrator awards so each year, there will be two winners of these. All of the awards also include one to four honor titles each year depending on the pool. Of these years, the research looked for a total of 221 books in the ten communities in the sample. The researcher searched the library’s online public access catalog for these books.

This purposeful sample included ten communities of different geography, population, and cultural diversity in one mid-Atlantic state in the US. The characteristics of these ten communities and their representing library systems are shown in Table 1.

Communities	Total Population ^a	White, Non-Hispanic	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian & Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Collection Size in Volumes ^b	Number of Libraries and Branches in System	Number of Municipalities Served by Library System
Riverburg	2,321	98.6%	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%	16,469	1	1
Brookfield	72,711	95.5%	2.3%	1.3%	0.5%	149,818	2	2
Grasston	35,604	38.5%	59.0%	2.1%	0.4%	93,990	2	3
Treetown	97,032	64.2%	28.5%	5.5%	1.8%	265,639	6	1
Creekton	118,542	86.2%	5.7%	8.2%	1.5%	246,770	3	3
Lakeland	149,270	88.8%	3.2%	8.1%	1.6%	274,946	7	3
Streamland	204,214	40.8%	50.6%	6.3%	2.4%	467,627	8	5
Forest City	209,021	78.7%	12.9%	4.6%	3.8%	691,807	9	1
Watervale	437,994	67.7%	19.6%	6.6%	6.3%	754,796	10	1
Hillville	1,104,291	62.8%	9.1%	15.6%	17.6%	2,302,357	22	2
Sample Totals	8,001,024	68.6%	19.4%	7.9%	5.6%	5,264,219	70	22

Table 1. Characteristics of the Ten Communities in this Sample

^aPopulation data is from U.S. Census Bureau (2011).

^bThis data is from Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) website (2009).

As shown, these ten communities are of varying sizes and cultural diversity. Riverburg is the smallest in the state while Hillville is the biggest. The information in Table 2 includes characteristics of the youth librarians selecting resources for these libraries. Library System	Chosen Pseudonym	Job Title	Highest Degree Attained	Cultural Background	Study Participation
Riverburg	Renee	Library Director	Bachelor of Arts	Not given	Questions only
Brookfield	Dixie	Children's Librarian	Bachelor of Arts in K-6 Education	Caucasian	Interviewed by phone
Grasston	Virginia	Library Director	Masters & 36 post graduate credits in non-profit leadership	Not given	Interviewed by phone
Treetown	Dana	Youth Services Librarian	Masters of Library and Information Science	Caucasian	Interviewed by phone
Creekton	Carolina	Youth Services Librarian	Not given	Not given	Interviewed by phone
Lakeland	Kari	Coordinator of Youth Services	Double Bachelors	Irish	Questions only
Forest City	Frog	Children's Services Manager	Masters	Caucasian	Interviewed by phone
Streamland	Leann	Collection Development Manager	Masters	White/ European descent	Interviewed by Skype
Watervale	Mary	Youth Librarian	Masters in English, Masters in Library Science	Not given	Interviewed in person
Hillville	Libby	Children's and Young Adult Selector	Masters of Library and Information Science	German, English, Irish	Interviewed by phone

Table 2. Characteristics of the Ten Youth Librarians in this Sample

Each of these librarians was interviewed by phone, on Skype, or in person or answered a survey questionnaire including questions about their collection development practices and the tools they use to aid in selection. The interview guide was developed using a blueprint based on a thorough review of the professional literature regarding collection development and selection. During this review, themes of professional practice and personal beliefs emerged within the areas of the value of multicultural literature, professional policies regarding selection, user value for multicultural literature, selection sources, and challenges during the selection process. The interview guide is included in Appendix A. In order to analyze the interview data, the researcher first used a deductive approach to examine the more fixed questions (e.g., What specific review journals do you use?). The researcher then

used an inductive content analysis approach to analyze questions eliciting more open-ended answers (e.g., How important do you believe award lists are for your collection development?). An inductive approach allows themes and patterns to emerge from the data instead of implementing strict codes of analysis. The research reported in this paper focuses on the aspects of the awards lists and the participants discussion of that topic.

Findings

The study reveals interesting results for the way librarians use award lists for collection development. To give a background context, first examine the data in Table 3.

Award (N)	Mean of Titles (percent of N)	Median of Titles (percent of N)	Mode of Titles (percent of N)	Range of Titles (percent of N)
<i>Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (APAAL)</i>				
Winners (8)	2.89 Titles (36%)	3 Titles (38%)	3 Titles (38%)	0-6 Titles (0-75%)
Honors (11)	2.97 Titles (27%)	2 Titles (18%)	1 Title (9%)	0-9 Titles (0-82%)
Totals (19)	5.81 Titles (31%)	5 Titles (26%)	3 Titles (16%)	0-14 Titles (0-74%)
<i>Pura Belpré Award</i>				
Winners (18)	7.24 Titles (40%)	7 Titles (39%)	8 Titles (44%)	0-17 Titles (0-94%)
Honors (47)	12.32 Titles (26%)	11 Titles (23%)	8 Titles (17%)	0-40 Titles (0-85%)
Totals (65)	19.56 Titles (30%)	17 Titles (26%)	17 Titles (26%)	0-56 Titles (0-86%)
<i>Coretta Scott King Award</i>				
Winners (18)	12.37 Titles (69%)	14 Titles (78%)	16 Titles (89%)	0-18 Titles (0-100%)
Honors (42)	20.39 Titles (49%)	22 Titles (52%)	22 Titles (52%)	1-42 Titles (2-100%)
Totals (60)	32.76 Titles (55%)	36 Titles (60%)	36 Titles (60%)	1-60 Titles (2-100%)
<i>Randolph Caldecott Award</i>				
Winners (9)	8.20 Titles (91%)	9 Titles (100%)	9 Titles (100%)	2-9 Titles (22-100%)
Honors (30)	22.75 Titles (76%)	25 Titles (83%)	25 Titles (83%)	8-30 Titles (27-100%)
Totals (39)	30.95 Titles (79%)	34 Titles (87%)	37 Titles (95%)	10-39 Titles (26-100%)
<i>John Newbery Award</i>				
Winners (9)	8.22 Titles (91%)	9 Titles (100%)	9 Titles (100%)	2-9 Titles (22-100%)
Honors (29)	22.71 Titles (78%)	25 Titles (86%)	27 Titles (93%)	8-29 Titles (28-100%)
Totals (38)	30.92 Titles (81%)	34 Titles (89%)	37 Titles (97%)	10-38 Titles (26-100%)

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Awards across Library Sample

This table shows descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, mode, and range of titles, to compare the prevalence of these five awards in the ten library systems overall. The full range of the APAAL and the Belpré Award were present in the library collections *less often* than the King, Newbery, and Caldecott Awards. None of the libraries had all of the APAAL and Belpré Award titles, but some of the libraries did have all of the King, Newbery, and Caldecott Awards based on these figures. The APAAL and Belpré also had the lowest means for their winners and honors.

Using Award Lists for Selection

In the interviews, the participants revealed their perceptions about award lists and how/if they used them for collection development and reading promotion. They were specifically asked about their familiarity with the five awards used in this study; these results are shown in Table 4.

Community-Librarian	Newbery	Caldecott	King	Belpré	APAAL
Riverburg- Renee	X	X	X	-	-
Brookfield- Dixie	X	X	X	X	-
Grasston- Virginia	X	X	X	-	X
Treetown- Dana	X	X	X	X	-
Creekton- Carolina	X	X	X	X	X
Lakeland- Kari	X	X	X	X	-
Forest City- Frog	X	X	X	X	-
Streamland- Leann	X	X	X	X	-
Watervale - Mary	X	X	X	X	X
Hillville- Libby	X	X	X	X	-
Totals (N=10)	10	10	10	8	3

Table 4. Youth Librarian Participants' Knowledge of Awards used in this Study

As shown in the table, the least known awards were the awards for literature specifically honoring minority groups including Latino/a Americans and Asian/Pacific Americans. This finding is mirrored in the presence of these titles in the library collections as shown in Table 3.

Overall, all of the librarians noted award lists as tools they use to help select books for their collections. Many of the librarians talked about waiting to hear the titles on the award lists when they come out in January and then matching up what they already had in their collection to the winning titles. Dana and Dixie talked about how good it felt when they had already selected the books because they knew the books were good the preceding year when they were first published. Others were purchased right after the award announcement. Frog said, "I am most aware of [the awards] when, you know the Newbery and the others come out, and at that time, I usually order most of them."

In fact, the Newbery and Caldecott Awards were often mentioned in the interviews as important pieces of the collection before the award question was asked. Mary reflected that "...those [Caldecott and Newbery] are the books people are going to possibly hear about, read about, so I think it's a real disservice to the public if you don't have those." Dixie echoed Mary's sentiment:

...we want to have the award lists, and especially the most known ones, but I can't wait to try this Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature and take a look and see that too because, you know, you want to have these things, and they are recommended things, and I love recommended lists...you know if it is a list, I mean someone is going to come looking for it.

Dana further noted that the award lists offer "librarians a way to do readers advisory unplugged if necessary. You want a great illustrated book? Go visit the Caldecotts."

Publishing Challenges

It was further evident in the interviews that using ethnic specific award lists are particularly useful when the ethnicity is outside of one's own cultural experience. Leann is the sole selector for her nine-branch library system. She noted that "Because of the background that I have, sometimes I feel like I am not, that I am making assumptions about what people of a different culture are going to want that may not be true." Mary identified ethnic specific awards like the three used in this study as holding strong implications for selection and collection development because the books have "that stamp of endorsement on it." At the same time, Dixie was mindful that "you still take them with a little grain of salt for the most part."

Circulation

Circulation was one of the main reasons identified by the librarian participants for purchasing books, whether or not the books were recognized by the field as high quality like the Caldecott and Newbery Award titles or acknowledged by the librarian participants as lower quality like Dana's examples of "Dora the Explorer" and "Transformers." Leann talked about this with her statement, "the reality is, it's not always high quality stuff that is really moving out the doors the fastest." Dana noted that:

I need to have books that are going to serve the people that come in these doors, because there is nothing better than being able to pull a book off of the shelf that is what they want at that instant.

At the same time, the librarian participants identified circulation as a conflicting balance between what culturally diverse materials will and what will not get circulated. While Dana wants to have the books for her patrons, she does not feel she can justify buying them because that particular ethnic demographic is not visiting her library. Virginia echoes this with regards to the APAAL used in this study:

I have seen that [Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature] but I have not really ordered that because we don't have a lot of Asians in our community. I have seen it in some readings I have done, but I have never had to use it, it would not have been desired here.

Virginia does not think purchasing the APAAL will serve her community because they are not represented by the Asian/Pacific American demographic. According to Virginia, the demand is not there because the demographic is not there.

Whilst not a specific question, many of the librarian participants cited the same circulation order for the book awards used in this study. Of further interest is that this order (Caldecott, Newbery, King, Belpré) mirrored the mean order featured in Table 3. Carolina explained:

so Newbery and Caldecott are asked for right away. Coretta Scott King Awards, they always circulate, I find that within that same day they are checked out. I don't hear the running footsteps on them as I do for Newbery and Caldecott, but Coretta Scott King Awards, they are. The Pura Belpré Awards will be checked out, but as soon as we focus on that, put up a display. We do still give some explanation of that. And then the Asian/Pacific always seem to be very vibrant books that have great covers and so whether it is an award winner or not, people are going to pick them up.

Carolina's quote also indicates the way the books are marketed to patrons encourages circulation, which then encourages the selectors to purchase the books. Some of the librarians mentioned that in order to facilitate access to the Caldecott and Newbery Awards, they are separated out from the general children's collection and put on their own shelves. While this may assist patrons in finding these books, it could also prevent them from checking out other shelves, including those where the King, Belpré, and APAAL titles reside.

Significance

It is clear from the interviews and collection surveys that librarians are using award lists for selection and collection development. However, as the descriptive statistics included in Table 3 show, different awards are present (i.e., selected) at different frequencies. As is common in mixed methods studies, the qualitative data collected from the interviews serves to shed light on the findings from the quantitative data.

A potential explanation for the low mean and familiarity of the APAAL could be its lack of affiliation with ALA. The APAAL was the only award in this study that is not awarded by divisions or groups within ALA. Some of the librarian participants pointed at this lack of affiliation with ALA as a reason it is not as popular. Dana was explicit about this in saying, "because [the APAAL] is not on the ALA list, I don't think it gets as much push as it should." The Newbery, Caldecott, King, and Belpré Awards hold authority for these selecting librarians partly due to the awards' relation to ALA. Further, the librarian participants identified the ALA awards, specifically the Newbery and Caldecott, as getting more media attention than other award lists. Renee said that "those are the ones that get recognition in the news so they're the ones people will be asking for." This perpetuates the cycle of circulation and drives selection decisions as librarians know award titles like the Newbery and Caldecott will circulate, but may be less convinced about the three ethnic awards. By focusing on circulation, the librarians are supporting the demand of the patrons who already use their library, but could potentially be missing other groups. Dana stated this explicitly:

In my mind, I am trying to address the needs of the people who use our library. I would love to have an award winning collection of beautiful gorgeous books that won every illustration award possible, but you know, those are not books that consistently check out for our patrons.

Some of the librarians noted the challenge in encouraging diverse groups in their community to use the library and check out books, which would in turn, justify more diverse book purchases. As shown in Table 1, many of the communities represented by these youth librarians have high populations of Latinos and Asian/Pacific Americans who need literature with metaphorical mirrors reflecting their socio-cultural identity. Further, as stated in the IASL 2015 conference theme, the library should serve as a window to the world. Thus, patrons from other ethnic groups need to have access to cultures different from their own but represented in their local and global communities.

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Biographical Note

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Opening Script

- Thank you so much for doing this interview with me; I really appreciate your time! First, let me explain a little bit about this study. The main purpose is to analyze factors impact your collection development decisions of multicultural children's literature. You have read the study description and have forwarded me your signed informed consent forms. Do you have any questions about the study or your participation before we begin?
- I am going to be using pseudonyms for you and your library system in the transcripts and paper, I already have a pseudonym selected for your library and will replace that with any references you make throughout the interview, so feel free to use your system's real name.
 - Have you chosen a pseudonym for yourself?

Library Pseudonym_____

Participant's Selected Pseudonym_____

- I am going to be a little repetitive here once I start the recording, but just to be sure, you agree to be audio recorded? **If yes, push record on recorder.**

Introductory Questions

- I am interviewing *Participant's Pseudonym*_____ on DATE_____, discussing my dissertation study on collection development. *Participant's Pseudonym*_____ has signed the informed consent forms, and again, do you agree to be recorded? **Have Participant say yes so it is recorded.**
- *Participant's Pseudonym*_____, before we begin, do you have any questions about the study or your participation?

Interview Questions

Professional Organizations

1. What professional library organizations do you belong to?
2. How would you describe your level of activity with these organization(s)?
Possible Probes: VLA, ALA, ALSC; Do you attend the national, state, or regional conferences? Do you read the organization's publications?
3. How does your participation in these organizations influence or guide your collection development activities?
Possible Probes: Do you use them as a reference? Do you have a copy of the policies?
 - a. Does your library have its own collection development policy?

User Value

4. What community factors do you take into account when selecting books for your children's collection?
 - a. Do you perform needs assessment of your community? Formal or informal?
 - i. If so, what factors do you analyze? How does this process work?
 - ii. What is most challenging about this process?

Selection Sources

5. What vendors does your library use?

6. How does your library use your vendor for selection?
 - a. Do they offer specific services?
Possible Probes: Needs Assessment of community by vendor; Outsourcing
7. Besides your vendors, what other resources do you use when selecting books for your children's collection?
Possible Probes: People including patrons, word of mouth
8. What selection journals do you use most frequently for your children's collection development?

Award Lists

9. I am going to name five children's book awards, you will be familiar with some of them. Please tell me which ones you are and are not familiar with.
Newbery Award Y or N **Caldecott Award** Y or N **Pura Belpré Award** Y or N
Coretta Scott King Award Y or N **Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature** Y or N
10. Do you use any of these award lists when selecting books for your children's collection?
 - a. Which ones?
 - b. Why or why not?
 - c. Do you see these awards being circulated frequently?
 - i. How does this influencing your selection decisions?
11. How important do you believe award lists are for your collection development?

Challenges in Selection

12. What is most challenging about choosing multicultural literature for your children's collection?
Possible Probes: Lack of experience with representing cultures; Lack of quality titles being published or included in review sources like journals and award lists
13. To what degree do you believe your own cultural background affects your selection and collection development decisions?
14. How diverse do you think a children's collection should be?
Possible Probes: Reflective of immediate community; reflective of global community

Other Potential Questions

1. Does your library use the state's interlibrary loan system?
 - a. If so, how much is this used by your patrons?

Closing Script

- Thank you so much for doing this interview with me; I really appreciate your time! Is there anything you would like to add to your responses or clarify? Do you have any other questions about the study?
- Is the address I sent your form packet to the address the best address to reach you via postal mail?
 - If not, please give me the best address:
- Thanks so much again!!