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30 YEARS OF JUDY BLUME NOVELS...ARE WE STILL CENSORING?

by
Nina Amidon

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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May 15, 2008

Approved by _____
Advisor

Date Approved May 15, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Nina Amidon
30 YEARS OF JUDY BLUME NOVELS...ARE WE STILL CENSORING?
2007/08

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Judy Blume has been a target of censors since she started writing novels in the 1970s. Her books have been removed from shelves in school media centers all over the country by either the school board, or even the media specialist. Many studies have been done in the past about censorship and Judy Blume's books were always a popular target.

A survey was sent out to 53 middle and high school media centers in Morris County, New Jersey. Survey Monkey.com was used to create the questionnaire and interpret the results. An email message was created and a link to the online survey was placed in the message and sent out to the media specialists. Out of the 53 schools, 13 responded to the questionnaire. The results from this survey showed there is very little, if any censorship of Judy Blume books in these libraries.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Judy Blume is one of the most popular and one of the most controversial young adult authors of today. Since she began writing young adult novels in the late 1970s, her books have been the targets of censorship attempts. Her books speak frankly about teen issues such as sex and family issues. Because of these issues discussed, her books are often the targets of book banning in middle and high school libraries. She is the second author on the American Library Association's list of top ten most challenged authors of 1990-2004.

Blume's honest portrayal of teenagers in her books is what makes her novels so popular with teens through time. Some parents and members of the religious right have tried, and were sometimes successful in removing Judy Blume's books from the shelves in their community's schools throughout the years. Many school media specialists have also removed her books from the bookshelves on their own to avoid any controversy that may arise. School districts and their media specialists are often put on the spot on what to do about Judy Blume's books. Students in schools should always have the right to read, and Judy Blume's books should not be removed arbitrarily from school media centers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the status of Judy Blume books in the Morris County, New Jersey middle and high school libraries. Specific book titles were: *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret*; *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*; *Forever*; *Tiger Eyes*; and *Deenie*. A survey was sent to the Morris County middle and high school media specialists to determine the status of Judy Blume books with parents or community members, or even themselves. This study determined if the books were removed from the library shelves and why. It also determined whether or not the media specialist was pressured by the community to pull the books off the shelves, or simply never put certain Judy Blume books in his or her library to avoid controversy. The study also determined whether or not the media specialists were self-censoring, not putting some of the books on the shelves; whether these books were lost or stolen; how they were labeled; if they were not put on public shelves but put behind the desk for limited use; or if they required special permission to take out.

Research Questions

1. What was the current status of the five titles?
2. What was the status of all copies owned in the last five years? Were any of them removed or labeled by the media specialist?
3. Were any of the books removed from the shelves as a result of complaints?
What were the outcomes?
4. Were any of these books not purchased and why? Were lost or damaged copies replaced?

Definitions:

Censorship-“Prohibition of the production, distribution, circulation, or display of a work by a governing authority on grounds that it contains objectionable or dangerous material” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Censor-The person who decides what should be prohibited.

Self-censoring-The media specialist as the person who is removing or prohibiting materials from the shelves.

Book banning-“A book, the publication and/or sale of which has been prohibited or suppressed by authority because its content is considered objectionable or dangerous, usually for political and/or social reasons” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Young adult novels-“A book intended to be read and enjoyed by adolescents 12 to 18 years of age” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Young adult author-An author who writes books intended to be read and enjoyed by adolescents 12 to 18 years of age.

Middle school libraries-“A library in a public or private school that serves the information needs of its students, grades 6-8 and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff” (Reitz, 2004-7).

High school libraries- “A library in a public or private school that serves the information needs of its students, grades 9-12 and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff” (Reitz, 2004-7).

School media specialist/media specialist- “A librarian trained to deliver library services to students in a school library media center on a walk-in basis or at the request of the classroom teacher” (Reitz, 2004-7).

School districts- An education agency at the local level that exists primarily to operate public schools or to contract for public school services.

Community- A group of people living in a particular local area.

Challenged-“A complaint lodged by a person acting as an individual or representing a group, concerning the inclusion of a specific item (or items) in a library collection, usually followed by a demand that the material be removed” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Lost book-No longer in the collection; unable to be found or recovered.

Stolen book-A book taken from the library without permission.

Labeling-“The controversial practice of affixing a warning mark or label to library materials considered unsuitable for young children or that contain language or images that some readers or viewers might find offensive or distressing” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Bookshelf-“A set of thin pieces of rigid material set horizontally at right angles into a frame or wall, to hold books and similar items” (Reitz, 2004-7).

Public shelves- A bookshelf that is accessible to everyone.

Nonpublic shelves- A bookshelf that is hidden or away from public access.

Assumptions and Limitations

For this study it was assumed that the school media specialist answered the survey questions truthfully and accurately. Furthermore, it was assumed that Judy Blume books rightfully belong in middle school and high school libraries and that students should not be denied access to these books. This study was limited to middle school and high school librarians in Morris County, New Jersey.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Censorship is defined as, “The official restriction of any expression believed to threaten the political, social, or moral order” (Blume, 1999). Judy Blume has often been the target of censorship throughout the years. Judy Blume did not intend to be a controversial writer. She started writing books, such as, *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret* out of her own life experiences as a young girl. From the time it was published, a Blume book often never reached school library shelves because the school board felt the material was inappropriate for the students. She often heard the story of a mother cutting pages from *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, so her 13-year-old son could not read about masturbation. A middle school principal took *Deenie* off the shelves of the library because the book references masturbation. The list goes on and on (Blume, 1999).

In 1980, censors seemed to have crawled out of the woodwork almost overnight. Suddenly books were seen as a threat to young minds (Blume, 1999). Judy Blume's books especially were targeted. In schools that had no way to deal with challenged materials, anything that was controversial was pulled off the shelves. Judy Blume was at the center of the controversy. Her books were challenged almost daily, often put on restricted shelves in the media center, or removed entirely. There was even a pamphlet that was created at one point entitled, “*How to Rid Your Schools*

and Libraries of Judy Blume Books” (Blume, 1999). It is clear that Judy Blume had a very long history with censorship.

Freedom to Read

Because of Judy Blume’s frequent censorship attacks, she has become an outspoken advocate for free speech and the freedom to read. The freedom to read and the students’ right to read is one of the most important rights of students, and to deny students access to Judy Blume books would be doing a great disservice to all children. The American Library Association’s *The Library Bill of Rights* is a document relevant for both public libraries and school media centers. There are two important rights that explicitly forbid any act of censorship, or denying anyone the right to read. They are as follows:

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation. (ALA, 2007, ¶1).
2. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment. (ALA, 2007, ¶3).

Previous Studies on Censorship in School Media Centers

It was clear from the literature search that there have been several studies on censorship, and banned or challenged books. In all of these studies, Judy Blume’s books always made the list. In 1993, a study was done in Manitoba’s (Canada) school media centers. This study was completed to compare with another study that was completed in 1982 in Manitoba to see if the problems with censorship had

decreased, increased, or remained the same. In the 1982 study, Judy Blume was the most challenged author in Manitoba; however, Robert Munsch replaced her in the 1993 study. Also, in the 1982 study, Judy Blume's book, *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* was the most challenged title in Manitoba's media centers. (Jenkinson, 1994). In the 1982 study, the most common reason for pulling a book was for "Profanity" and "Explicit Sex", however, in the 1993 study, they were replaced by "witchcraft and/or the Supernatural." In one incident, a parent actually went through every single book in the media center and pulled every book she found to be objectionable (Jenkinson, 1994).

Many challenged books in the school's media center are also altered. For example, one page was removed by the media specialist from Norman Bridwell's *Clifford's Halloween*. Also, a media specialist covered the character's penis in the book, *In the Night Kitchen*, by Maurice Sendek because a teacher in the school was "upset" (Jenkinson, 1994). One library clerk said rather than pull the books altogether, she just shelves the challenged books in the teacher's section, where students have no access (Jenkinson, 1994).

Looking at the results of the 1993 study by Jenkinson (1994), Judy Blume's books were challenged a total of 8 times. The books that were on the challenged or banned list were the following, *Are You there God, It's Me, Margaret*; *Deenie*; *Forever*; and *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*.

In Texas, an annual report on censorship in the public schools is conducted. There were a total of 48 school districts that participated in the study. There were 65 challenges to books reported. All but 18 books were removed from the shelves.

(“Banned and Challenged”, 2006) Of these books, 37% of the challenged books were restricted. Judy Blume’s book, *Forever* was in the top 10 of the most challenged books of 2005 for sexual content and offensive language. Furthermore, two more of her books, *Blubber* and *It’s Not the End of the World* were restricted.

In 1995, a censorship survey was sent out to 1,127 school media specialists in Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana. Of those, 30.9% of the responding media specialists reported having had an item challenged since 1980. Of those 290 items that were challenged, 36.8% were removed from the shelves, and the remaining items were restricted or altered (Hansen, 1987).

Analysis of Censorship Surveys

Some books that were challenged were not removed from the library, but simply moved to a different location in the library. In British Columbia, young adult librarian Jessica Yates believed public librarians move “controversial” Young Adult materials to the adult section, for fear that a younger child may wonder into the Young Adult section (Curry, 2001). In the United States, Louis Adler found that school media specialists were responding to complaints about library material by reclassifying books into different sections of the media center. The reasons for challenges varied, but can be broken down into categories. These categories included profanity, sexuality, religion/witchcraft, violence/horror, rebellion, racism/sexism, substance use/abuse, suicide/death, crime, crude behavior, and depressing/negative (Curry, 2001). Profanity seemed to be the most common reason for a book challenge. Judy Blume’s *Forever*, was frequently challenged due to sexuality. Her book, *It’s*

Not the End of the World was also cited for sexuality. *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret* was also challenged due to religion.

Ken Donelson recently conducted a ten-year survey. He took the censorship incidents from the American Library Association's Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom from 1986-1995 and created his list of censored books. He then listed the books by how many incidents the book encountered, whether they were protested, attacked or censored. Judy Blume's book, *Forever*, came under attack 13 times over the 10-year period. He reported that, "an Illinois parent wanted the book banned because, 'this is the Bible belt, and most people here have high moral standards. It's not just sexually explicit. It's arousing to a teenager. You can't just get them aroused and leave them with no place to go'" (Donelson, 1997, p. 24). Donelson felt strongly that all forms of censorship were wrong. Some people talk about the good old days where nothing bad ever happened and all things were innocent. However, there were the horrible conditions of factory work, and World War II. The world was unsettled then, and it is unsettled now. That is the nature of the world and the nature of censorship (Donelson, 1997).

Ken Donelson reflected on his ten years of book protests study. Judy Blume's books, of course, were some of the most frequently challenged books. From 1980 to 1984, two of Judy Blume's books were in his top ten list of books that have been protested or censored. *Forever* made number three on the list, and *Deenie* made number seven. In August 1980, in Brigham City, Utah, a complaint by an attorney led to the removal of four books from the state library's book mobile. One of the books included was Judy Blume's *Deenie*. The lawyer argued that the books

contained “the vilest sexual descriptions” and, if given to “the wrong kid at the wrong time of life, would ruin his life” (Donelson, 1985, p. 95). In total, from Donelson’s study, Judy Blume had five books with a total of 33 protests. The titles were, *Forever*, with thirteen protests, *Then Again, Maybe I Won’t*, with eight, *Deenie*, with seven, *Are You There God, It’s Me, Margaret*, with three, and *It’s Not the End of the World* with two (Donelson, 1985).

Self-Censorship

Self-censorship has also been a problem with librarians and media specialists. Researchers describe it as “a secret practice [that is] the least obvious but arguably most powerful and pervasive form of censorship which is informal, private, and originates with the decision maker” (Coley, 2002, p. 3). Self-censoring librarians use a variety of reasons for not choosing a book. The reasons can be anything from lack of budget to values of the community. Ken Coley did a study with randomly selected Texas public high schools to see if the school media specialists were self-censoring. Ken Coley is the Head Librarian for the White Settlement Independent School District in Texas. He completed this study as part of his graduate research project for the School of Library and Information Science at the Texas Women’s University in Denton, Texas (Coley, 2002, p. 8). He used each high school’s online public access catalog (OPAC), rather than sending out a questionnaire. The results of the study proved that Texas media specialists were self-censoring. Eighty-two percent of the high schools involved practiced self-censorship (Coley, 2002). From the sample list of books that he used, eighteen percent of the schools owned none of the titles.

Summary

Censorship is mostly done out of fear. Fear of new ideas or fear of not conforming to society. It was clear from the literature search that Judy Blume's books were a target of censors since the books came out on the shelves in the 1970s. Several censorship and book protest studies were done over the years, and there was not one where one or more of Judy Blume's books were not on the list. It is important for librarians to realize that all students have the right to read. The Judy Blume books that were looked at in this study were age appropriate and wonderful books for young adults to read. No one has the right to deny any student the right to read these books.

This study determined if Judy Blume books were being censored in some Morris County middle school and high school libraries. This study also determined whether or not the media specialists were self-censoring these books.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overall Design and Justification

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the Judy Blume books selected for this study had been removed from shelves or were not on the shelves in the middle schools or high schools in Morris County. The purpose was also to determine why the books were removed, or not purchased, either by a complaint by a member of the community or from the school, or if the school media specialist was self-censoring any of these books. If books were not purchased for these libraries that might indicate that the school media specialist was self-censoring.

For this study, the researcher chose five of Judy Blume's books that were frequently targeted by censors. These books were either found on the ALA top 100 challenged books of from 1990-1999, or from previous studies found on the literature search. The books included were, *Forever*, which was number 7 on ALA's list; *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret*, which was number 60; *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*; *Deenie*, which was number 42; and *Tiger Eyes*, which was number 89. Also, the target audience for these books was young adults. These chosen books were the most appropriate of all Judy Blume books since these books caused the most controversy throughout the years.

Data Collection Method

For purpose of data collection, the researcher created a survey form (see Appendix B) to send out to high school and middle school media specialists. This survey was created in SurveyMonkey (*SurveyMonkey*, 2008) and was emailed to the media specialists. The survey contained questions about the status of Judy Blume books in their libraries. There was also an introduction letter emailed out to all media specialists, explaining the intentions of the survey (see Appendix A). By sending out this survey, instead of looking through OPACs, the researcher found out the reasoning behind why or why not these five Judy Blume books were in school libraries

Research Questions

1. What was the current status of the five titles?
2. What was the status of all copies owned in the last five years?
3. Were any of the books removed from the shelves as a result of complaints?

What were the outcomes?

4. Were any of these books not purchased and why? Were lost or damaged copies replaced?

Population and Sample

This study involved the high school and middle school libraries and media specialists in Morris County, New Jersey. For the purpose of this study, only public middle schools and high school were chosen. Any k-8, k-12 or specialty schools were omitted from the study. A total sample of 22 high schools and 30 middle schools were chosen to receive the surveys

Variables

The main variable of this study was the existence of the Judy Blume books in the schools. If the librarian did not purchase Judy Blume books for his or her library, this survey was difficult to answer. An other variable included was whether the school was a middle school or high school. Some Judy Blume books may only be appropriate for high schools, while others may only be appropriate for middle schools. Another variable to consider was the popularity of Judy Blume books among the students. Judy Blume books may circulate well in some schools, but not in others. If the librarian actively promotes reading of Judy Blume books, and had some on display, they were more likely to be popular among the students.

Data Collection Results

Data were collected from February 15th through March 10th of 2008. Survey invitations were sent by the researcher via email to all high school and middle school media specialists in Morris County. The data collected were then analyzed to see if there was any censorship or self-censorship happening with these Judy Blume books and to what extent censorship was taking place in these libraries.

References

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Tracy, K. (2005). *Story tellers: Judy Blume*. Hockessin, DE: Michell Lane Publishers.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures

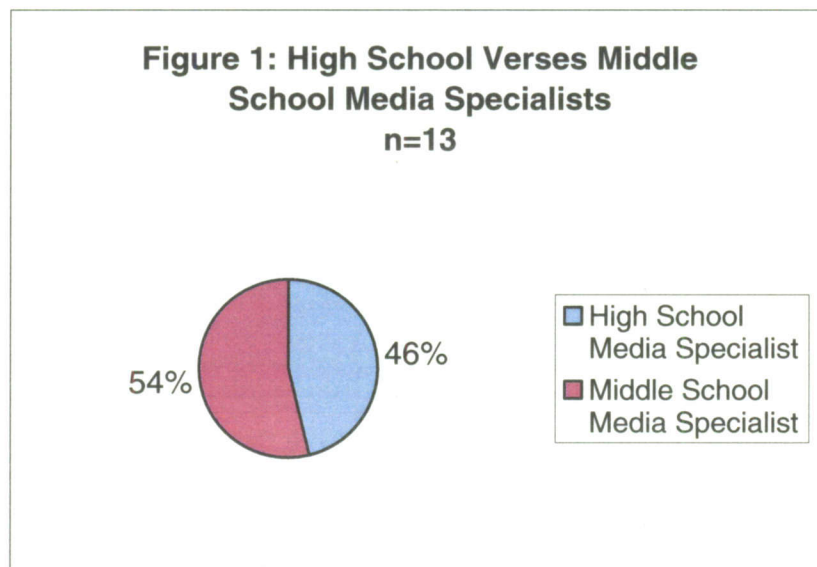
There were a total of six Judy Blume books that were used in this the survey. The books included were; *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret*; *Blubber*; *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*; *Forever*; *Tiger Eyes*; and *Deenie*. A pre-test was completed in January using SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, 2008) by a total of five participants. This was done to check for errors and to check for misinterpretations. There were only some minor spelling and grammatical errors, which were corrected. In February, the researcher sent via email surveys to 53 high school and middle school media specialists of Morris County, New Jersey. The email included an introduction letter (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the survey, and asked each participant to fill out the survey using SurveyMonkey (see appendix B). SurveyMonkey was also used to collect the results of the survey. Participants were given a 15-day time span to complete the survey. In total, 13 out of 53 participants (25%) answered the researcher's survey.

Data Interpretation

SurveyMonkey was used to calculate the results of each question. Microsoft Excel was used to create charts to illustrate and interpret the results. Microsoft Word was used to create tables.

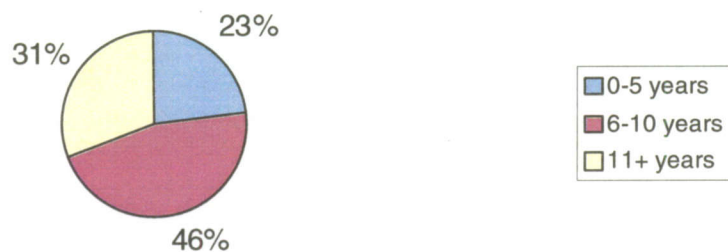
Results

Question 1: What is the grade level of your school? The researcher asked the participants whether he/she was a high school or middle school media specialist. There were slightly more middle school media specialists (54%) than high school media specialists (46%). Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the media specialists.



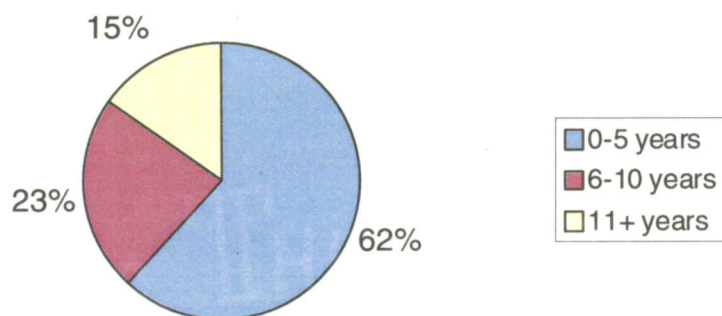
Question 2: How many years have you been a media specialist? The results of this question varied. Nearly half of the results indicated the media specialist had been a media specialist for six to ten years. Participants who had been a media specialist for 11 years or more totaled 31%, and the remaining 23% had been a media specialist for 5 years or less. Figure 2 shows the complete results.

Figure 2: Years as a Media Specialist
n=13

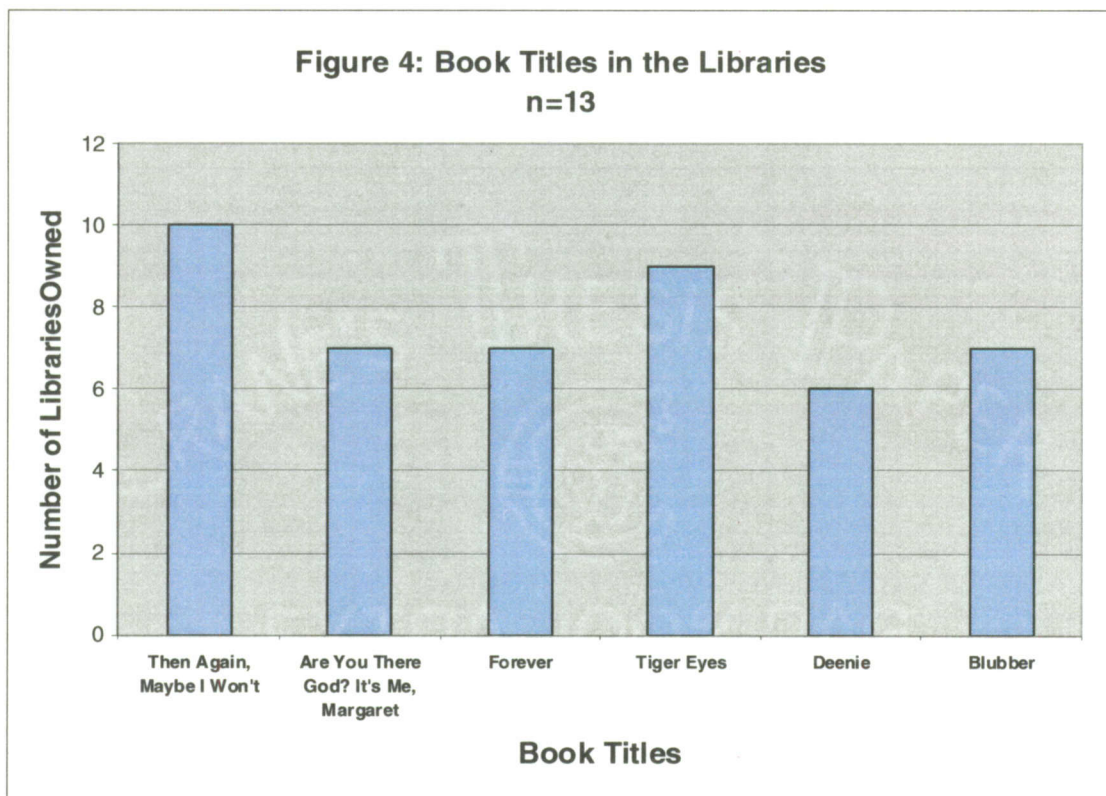


Question 3: How many years have you been at your present library? The majority of the participants (62%) had been at their library for 5 years or less. Very few participants had been at their library for 11 years or more (15%), while slightly more participants had been at their school six to ten years (23%). A pie chart of the results can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Years at Present School
n=13



Question 4: Which of the following Judy Blume books do you have, or have you had in your library? Knowing what books were in each library was the next question the researcher presented. The most popular book owned in the libraries was the book, *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, with a total of 10 libraries carrying the book. The least popular book was *Deenie*, with only six libraries carrying the book. The full results can be viewed in Figure 4.



Question 5: If a book was considered for your library and not selected, list the reason why. The researcher wanted to see which books had not been selected for the libraries and the reason why. None of the media specialists chose, "Inappropriate for

age”, “Lack of Funds”, or “School board request.” However, some librarians chose

“other”, and listed their response. The responses are listed below:

“Didn't realize we didn't have it.”

“Not in the collection when I started, however I would consider them.”

“Not a great interest in Judy Blume books at this school.”

See Table1 for complete results.

Table 1: Books Not Chosen for Library				
	Inappropriate for Age	Lack of Funds	School Board Request	Other
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	0	0	0	0
Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret	0	0	0	1
Forever	0	0	0	1
Tiger Eyes	0	0	0	0
Deenie	0	0	0	2
Blubber	0	0	0	1

Questions 6, 7, 8: In these three questions, media specialists were asked if any of the six books had ever been lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed. Only one book at one library was lost. No other books in the libraries were reported as lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed. Table 2 shows these results in detail.

Table 2: Status of Books in the Library				
	Lost	Stolen	Damaged	Destroyed
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	0	0	0	0
Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret	0	0	0	0
Forever	0	0	0	0
Tiger Eyes	0	0	0	0
Deenie	1	0	0	0
Blubber	0	0	0	0

Questions 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13: In these questions, the researcher wanted to know if the media specialists had ever removed any of the six books. None of the media specialists had. However, some of the media specialists did label some of the books. The media specialists explained that they labeled the book “YA”, for young adult to discourage younger students from taking out the book. None of the media specialists ever had any of the books challenged or destroyed by anyone. Since no one had ever had a challenge to any of the books, question 10 was obsolete. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3: Censorship Issues with Books				
	Challenges/ Censorship Issues	Removed from Shelves	Self-removed from Shelves	Book Labeling
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	0	0	0	1
Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret	0	0	0	0
Forever	0	0	0	0
Tiger Eyes	0	0	0	2
Deenie	0	0	0	0
Blubber	0	0	0	0

Question 14: This was an open ended question where media specialists would feel free to write any additional comments about Judy Blume and her books. Comments included in the results were:

“We have not had any Judy Blume books removed from our shelves.”

“I have not had any negative reaction to any of Judy Blume's books. I think most of their mothers read them!”

“I have labeled some of her books as YA. If a 6th grader wants to read one, I call home to get permission first.”

“With all of the 'edgy' award-winners out there, Judy Blume seems tame by comparison. As a result of your survey, I just looked up a review of "*Forever*" and realized that I had avoided it years ago. However, I just added it to an order that I am building!”

Summary

All thirteen school media specialists who answered the researcher's survey completed it in full. All the research questions stated in Chapter I were answered. The researcher found out the status of the five titles, and also found that none of the schools had ever had a complaint about any of these books. There were some books that were not purchased for the libraries for various reasons. Also, several of the media specialists had interesting comments about Judy Blume books in general. More of an awareness of their Judy Blume collection in their libraries was one of the results. None of the six books seemed to present a collection problem for the responding high school and middle school media specialists.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Judy Blume has remained one of the most challenged authors. In 2005, she was in the top ten of the American Library Association's banned or challenged author list. All six of the books the researcher used in the survey were in the top 100 frequently challenged books from 1990-2000, with *Forever* being the highest at number eight (ALA, 2008). Judy Blume writes these books through the eyes of a young adult, and many can relate to her realistic characters. Because of these censorship issues, she has become an advocate for the right to read and defending book challenges. The six books used were all targeted towards young adults and highly recommended, therefore, all high school and middle school libraries should carry these books. A lack of Judy Blume books in any of these libraries can be an indicator of censorship or self-censorship with the six titles.

The researcher wanted to see if high school and middle school media specialists were experiencing any censorship issues with the six Judy Blume books. A survey was sent out using SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, 2008) to 53 high schools and middle schools in Morris County, New Jersey. A total of thirteen surveys were emailed back. The results showed that none of the participating librarians were experiencing any major censorship issues.

Interpretations of the Results

The first research question asked about the status of all six books in the media center. The researcher wanted to determine which of the six titles the libraries owned. Not one of the thirteen librarians who responded owned all six books. The most popular book owned by schools was *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, while the least popular was *Deenie*. This result was disappointing because all six books mentioned in this survey were geared toward young adults in middle school and high school and were expected to be owned by the schools.

The next research question was to determine the status of the books that the librarians did own in the library. Some of the librarians labeled Judy Blume books "YA". One librarian who worked in a middle school reported actually calling the parent of the student if he/she wants to take certain Judy Blume books out. The middle school librarian said she did this for her sixth grade students only. As a middle school librarian, the researcher felt that books with a higher adult content, such as *Forever* may not be appropriate for a younger, sixth grade student, however, labeling a book YA may not deter a younger student from checking out the book. *Forever* also deals with characters who are 17 years old, so this book may be more appropriate with older students. The librarians who did label books, however, did not label the books the researcher expected them to. They labeled *Deenie* and *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*. This was determined by the researcher to be not appropriate since both books were written about middle school age children, and were targeted toward a middle school audience.

Research question three wanted to determine if there were any censorship issues with the books purchased. All thirteen libraries reported no issues with any of the Judy Blume books. However, none of the libraries owned all six copies, so it was difficult to determine if the reason that there were no censorship issues was because the books were not purchased in the first place.

The fourth research question asked if any of these books were not purchased and why. The researcher also wanted to determine whether or not and lost or damaged copies were replaced. From the responses, only one librarian said her copy of *Deenie* had been lost. The librarian did not say whether or not the lost copy was replaced. Also, none of the pages of any of these six books were ever ripped out, and none of the books were damaged. One librarian's response to the question to why these books have not been purchased was a lack of interest in Judy Blume books. Because these books are geared toward these particular students, the researcher believes the librarians should try to promote them or have some on display for the students. A great way to get books circulating is to display them or recommend them to students who enjoy realistic fiction.

Most of the responses toward Judy Blume books were very positive. One librarian even realized she had avoided buying some of her books years ago, but will now add them to her collection. Other librarians took a second look at their Judy Blume collection, and were now going to purchase more of her books. Another librarian quoted that she had no negative reaction to these books, since most of her student's mothers read them.

Overall, the results of this survey, while limited, were extremely positive. There was no evidence of censorship going on. There were only a few cases of book labeling, however, the books were never removed from the shelves. Out of 53 total surveys, the researcher got back 13 positive responses. It was possible some of the non-respondents did not respond because there were censorship issues with the books, and the librarians were embarrassed. Possibly, the librarians censored the books themselves by not buying them in the first place, or keeping them on limited access shelves.

Recommendations for Further Study

Additional studies can be done to get a better idea of who, if anyone is still censoring Judy Blume books. All six books are still on the top 100 challenged list and she is still in the top ten most challenged authors of 2006. A study of all of New Jersey middle and high school libraries, rather than just Morris County may yield more negative or positive reactions to Judy Blume. By surveying all of New Jersey, there would be a greater diversity of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. It would also be interesting to do a comparison of the different counties of New Jersey, to see if where you live in New Jersey makes a difference.

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APPENDIX A
EMAIL INVITATION

To all Middle School and High School Librarians:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ School Library Media Specialist program. I am conducting a survey as a part of my master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not Judy Blume's books are being removed from shelves from our middle school and high school libraries. I will use this study to determine if these books are being censored or restricted in use, and the reasons for such limits.

Your responses will be completely anonymous. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. If you would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of this survey, please type your email address in the space provided at the end of this survey. If you have any further questions, please contact me at ngazzillo@gmail.com. You may also contact my thesis advisor for any additional questions.

Marilyn Shontz
shontz@rowan.edu

Please go to the following SurveyMonkey Web site to complete the survey:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=QjLuWJs5AdnrXSNBnn2NbQ_3d_3d

If you can complete the survey by February 21st that would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,
Nina E. Amidon
Rowan University

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Judy Blume and Censorship

1. What is the grade level of your school?

High School Media Specialist

Middle School Media Specialist

Other (please specify)

2. How many years have you been a media specialist?

3. How many years have you been at your present library?

4. Which of the following Judy Blume books do you have or have you had in your library some time during the last five years?

Then Again, Maybe I Won't

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret

Forever

Tiger Eyes

Deenie

Blubber

5. If a book was considered for your library and not selected, list the reason why.

	Inappropriate for age	Lack of Funds	School board request	Other
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Forever	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Tiger Eyes

Deenie

Blubber

Other (please specify)

--

6. Were any of the following books ever lost or stolen?

Lost

Stolen

Then Again,
Maybe I Won't
Are You There
God? It's Me,
Margaret

Forever

Tiger Eyes

Deenie

Blubber

7. Were any pages of these books ever ripped out, or damaged? What parts or pages?

Then

Again,

Maybe I

Won't

Are You

There

God? It's

Me,

Margaret

Forever

Tiger

Eyes

Deenie

Blubber

8. Have any of the following books ever been destroyed? If known, by whom, parent or student? Other?

	Yes/No	By Whom
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forever	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiger Eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deenie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blubber	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)		
<div></div>		

9. Has your library ever had any challenges or censorship issues with any of the following books? If yes, was it: A parent complaint? A student complaint? A community member? Other?

	Yes/No	Type of complaint
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forever	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiger Eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deenie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blubber	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)		
<div></div>		

10. If the answer to question nine was yes, what was the outcome of the complaint(s)?

11. Were any of these books ever removed from the shelf? If yes, why?

Principal's request

Lost challenge

Parent request

School board request

Other

	Yes/No	reason books were removed
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Forever	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tiger Eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Deenie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Blubber	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other (please specify)		<div><div></div></div>

12. Have you ever removed any of these books from your shelves? If yes, why?

Then Again, Maybe I Won't	<input type="text"/>
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	<input type="text"/>
Forever	<input type="text"/>
Tiger Eyes	<input type="text"/>
Deenie	<input type="text"/>
Blubber	<input type="text"/>

13. Have you ever labeled these books, or put them on a shelf that was

not in the public view?

Yes

No

Then Again,
Maybe I Won't

Are You There
God? It's Me,
Margaret

Forever

Tiger Eyes

Deenie

Blubber

14. Please feel free to add any comment you may have about Judy Blume's books or about this survey.

Next >>

Judy Blume Censorship

[Exit this survey >>](#)

2. Thank you for participating in my survey!

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at
ngazzillo@gmail.com

Thank you!
Nina Amidon
Media Specialist
Bee Meadow Elementary School
Whippany, NJ

1. If you'd like to receive a copy of the summary of the results of this survey, please provide your email address below.

[<< Prev](#)

[Done >>](#)