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TECHNIQUES USED BY ELEMENTARY LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS
TO TEACH AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS

by
Carol A. Sabol

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 9, 2005

Approved by
Professor

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ABSTRACT

Carol A. Sabol

TECHNIQUES USED BY ELEMENTARY LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS TO TEACH AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS

2004/05

Dr. Marilyn Shontz

Master of Arts in School Librarianship

The purpose of this study was to determine elementary school library media specialists' perceptions of the role of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum. The study was conducted to measure the uses of author/illustrator studies and which techniques that teach authors and illustrators were considered most effective by elementary school library media specialists. Of the 46 respondents to the mail survey, 55% replied that author/illustrator studies were very important, 36% replied that they were important, and 9% replied that they were somewhat important. The majority of library media specialists responded that storytelling with brief biographies of authors/illustrators and author/illustrator visits were most effective. Opinions about the effects of author/illustrator studies on students' reading habits indicated a positive influence of author/illustrator studies on students' interest in reading more books by the featured authors and illustrators. Overall, the results supported current research which suggested that author/illustrator studies influenced students to develop more interest in reading.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Bob, who encouraged me to pursue a Master of Arts degree in school librarianship and offered me much understanding and support during my coursework and thesis writing. He was always there to encourage me to complete this endeavor.

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Significance of the Topic

There are various techniques that library media specialists utilize to teach students about authors and illustrators. During an author study, students have opportunities to examine an author's writing style such as narrative voice, character development, and literary devices in addition to learning about the author's personal life. In an illustrator study, students have opportunities to examine an illustrator's artistic style, various uses of materials and media in the illustrations in addition to learning about the illustrator's personal life. Current research shows that the use of author and illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum fosters more student interest in featured authors and illustrators and their books which increases student motivation to read more books independently.

Evelyn Krieger, a teacher, reading specialist, and researcher, researched the uses of author studies and concluded, "The best readers (as defined by test scores and teacher identification) showed a high level of author awareness" (Krieger, 1997, p.5). This process called author awareness involves recognizing author style and purpose for writing. Krieger believed that the more readers were aware of the author's influence on a written work, the higher the readers' comprehension skills were, which increased student interest in reading and writing. Krieger also suggested that students who were avid readers were aware that authors use various literary techniques when writing books.

Krieger further suggested that students with high levels of author awareness were more willing to read from a variety of books and authors (Krieger, 1997). This can also be true for illustrators' awareness.

There was much research that indicated that for children to acquire literacy skills and become lifelong readers, they need to have experiences with good books. Author and illustrator studies are important components in the elementary school library curriculum to aid library media specialists in helping children not only become exposed to good books but also to relate to them more. A recent article in *School Library Journal* promoted author studies in the library curriculum in order for children to learn to ask questions of authors for the purpose of understanding authors' motivations and styles of writing (Kiefer, 2001). Library media specialists are facilitators who connect students to books, authors, and illustrators.

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine library media specialists' perceptions of the effects of author and illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum with students' interest in reading books. This study was being conducted to explore the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists on the usefulness of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum. Current research indicated that students who had high levels of interest in featured authors and illustrators were more motivated to read books by the featured authors and illustrators. The study also attempted to determine how widely used author and illustrator studies were in elementary school libraries and examined those techniques that were considered most effective. This

research study also attempted to examine the role of technological sources such as the Internet and various author and illustrator websites in author/illustrator studies.

Current research also indicated that more access to books resulted in more reading which develops better reading skills in students (Krashen, 2004). A series of studies by Stanovich confirmed that “those who recognize more authors’ names have read more and have superior literacy development” (Krashen, 2004, p. 12). Research further suggested that when students had opportunities to explore specific authors through school visits, biographies, pictures, interviews, and online communication, they were more interested and involved in the authors’ books and were motivated to read more books by these authors (Krieger, 1997). Planned visits of authors to elementary schools reinforced students’ interest in books and showcased the authors who wrote the books (Asher, 1998).

Since there are various techniques used to teach about authors and illustrators to students, this study attempted to form generalizations about the most popular and successful methods to promote author and illustrator awareness in the elementary school library curriculum. The findings of this research study can be used by library media specialists who need to develop new curricula that include lessons on authors and illustrators. The results of this research study would also be helpful to library media specialists who are currently implementing existing library curricula and are interested in highlighting authors and illustrators to promote their books.

Research Questions

1. Did elementary school library media specialists view an author/illustrator study as a useful component of the library curriculum? How widely was it used in the curriculum?

2. Which of the techniques that elementary school library media specialists used to conduct author/illustrator studies were the most effective in reading motivation?
3. Did elementary school library media specialists perceive an author/illustrator study as an important method to aid them in increasing student interest in reading more books?
4. How widely used were technological sources such as the Internet utilized by elementary school library media specialists to teach author and illustrator studies?

Definition of Terms

Author –“ person chiefly responsible for the intellectual or artistic content of a work; writer of a book” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Author study – careful examination or investigation of the life and work of a writer of a book or story (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Author awareness – act of developing a sense of who wrote a story, how, and why (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Elementary school – a place for teaching or learning the basic subjects of education; for this study it is grades kindergarten to five or kindergarten to six; not middle school or kindergarten to grade eight (Merriam-Webster, 1998).

Elementary school library curriculum – sequential course of study offered by an elementary school to teach library skills (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Illustrator – “an artist who uses the visual elements of line, color, shape, and texture through such media as ink, woodcuts, oils, watercolors, acrylics, collage, or photography to create a visual picture to complement and enhances a story” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Illustrator study – careful examination or investigation of the life and work of an illustrator of a book or story (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Library media center – an area in a school that has various types of materials and audio-visual equipment with programs and services provided by a library media specialist; a school library (Merriam-Webster, 1998).

Library media specialist (LMS) – “professional administrator of a library media center who has the appropriate college degree and state certification; required to have a master’s degree in most states; also known as school librarian” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Reading motivation – incentive or inducement that incites an individual to read more (Merriam-Webster, 1998).

Student- one who attends an elementary school to receive instruction in the basic subjects (Merriam-Webster, 1998).

Technological sources – for the purpose of this study defined as computer equipment or programs

Assumptions and Limitations

There were several assumptions about the value of reading and the influence of author/illustrator studies in a library curriculum to consider when conducting this research study. First, it was assumed that educators generally agree that it is beneficial for students to read often, and to read a variety of books. Both guided reading and independent reading help to improve reading skills. To determine the usefulness of author/illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum with student interest in the featured authors’ or illustrators’ books, the best source for information about the success of author/illustrators studies would be the library media specialists who teach students about authors and illustrators.

A second assumption in this research study was that the library media specialists surveyed answered honestly and accurately when they responded to the survey. Finally, a third assumption of this author/illustrator study was that some library media specialists surveyed actually conducted valid examinations of authors' and illustrators' works to help motivate their students in reading.

This study was limited to elementary school media centers and elementary school library media specialists. This study was conducted using a non-randomly selected sample of library media specialists in public elementary schools in Camden and Gloucester Counties in New Jersey. This study was also limited by the fact that library media specialists introduced students to authors and illustrators using many different methods that varied from school to school. These factors limited the generalizations of the study's results.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE SEARCH

Techniques for Teaching Author Studies

Current research suggested that students' reading abilities improved when time spent reading independently increased (Kiefer, 2001). Elementary school library media specialists have had a major impact on the reading motivation of students in various ways. "To develop a concept of books as living literature, children need to learn about authors and illustrators" (Huck & Kuhn, 1968, p. 567). The use of author and illustrator studies was given as one method that elementary school media specialists utilized to work individually and collaboratively with teachers to develop and implement programs that encouraged reading for enjoyment and information. This collaboration, a major goal for the elementary school media specialist, was strongly encouraged by the American Library Association (American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998).

Research also suggested that author and illustrator studies helped students to thoroughly examine an author's or illustrator's work and identify various elements of style such as point of view, imagery, connotation, and characterization. Moreover, there were educators who believed that when students study an author or illustrator, they tended to view the author or illustrator as a real person. This personal view of an author or illustrator caused students to develop more interest in reading works by the author or illustrator (Jenkins, 1999).

Kotch and Zackman described several ways that elementary school library media specialists used to choose authors or illustrators for their students to study. During student book talks and discussions, library media specialists listened to students' responses about particular books and topics in which students seemed interested. Some library media specialists distributed attitude surveys to students for the purpose of collecting data on students' interests and favorite genres of books. Sometimes library media specialists chose authors whose works modeled good writing for students. Books that contained good examples of literary techniques were appropriate models for teaching students to write well (Kotch & Zackman, 1995).

In choosing an author or illustrator for a study, Jenkins stated that library media specialists needed to consider certain aspects about the quality of books. Books needed to be age-appropriate in order to stimulate the readers emotionally and intellectually. Books which were suitable for an author or illustrator study generally evoked aesthetic responses and portrayed believable characters and interesting plots. For successful author or illustrator studies, educators often recommended books of high literary quality which presented universal themes that generated critical thinking about life. It was also important to have available biographical material on the author or illustrator for students to develop feelings of connection with the author or illustrator, (Jenkins, 1999). Some print sources of information on authors and illustrators recommended by West included *Something about the Author: Autobiography Series* and *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, both published by Gale Research (West, 1997).

Kiefer discussed various techniques that library media specialists utilized to implement author and illustrator studies in the elementary school curriculum. Visits by

an author or illustrator of children's books to an elementary school to speak with the students generated enthusiasm for reading. The author or illustrator may describe his or her family life, daily routines, and writing habits. Authors may also identify story structure, character development, and story plot. Illustrators may present original drafts of illustrations and demonstrate how changes were made before final publication. This personal contact with a published author or illustrator may provide children with enthusiasm for reading the particular author or illustrator's books which can encourage students to read more books by a particular author or illustrator (Kiefer, 2001). Carr also pointed out that author visits increase the emotional response to reading, which translates into students being excited about reading and wanting to read more (Carr, 2002, p. 38).

McElmeel discussed the planning and preparation involved to arrange an author or illustrator visit to an elementary school. Some authors and illustrators prefer that school librarians contact their publishers, while others prefer to be contacted directly (McElmeel, 1998). Several weeks before the actual author or illustrator visit are important to concentrate on the author or illustrator's work by reading the author's books or viewing the illustrator's illustrations and discussing them. Students may connect with the author or illustrator and his or her work in addition to recognizing similar themes in the works. "These are opportunities for significant learning. An author's visit, and the weeks leading up to it, can be a time of heightened interest in the library and learning" (McElmeel, 1998, p. 264).

McElmeel also emphasized attempting to involve as many teachers as possible in the planning and implementation of the author or illustrator visit in order to help students to focus on the author's or illustrator's work. Classroom activities such as reading and

discussing one book of the author's or illustrator's works and a follow up activity could bring focus on the upcoming visit. Some follow up activities may include an art project, reader's theater, creating a play, or comparing other works by the author or illustrator (McElmeel, 1998).

Many benefits were defined for an author or illustrator visit. An author or illustrator visit can support the reading program, highlight good writing skills, focus attention on art, and introduce students to talented authors and illustrators. Well-planned author or illustrator visits can also enrich the library and school community by including more books in the curriculum and providing in-depth studies of quality books. "When students and staff are offered up a strong diet of one author's work, it can create a unified interest that transcends grade levels and bridges curricula" (Folios, 2004, p. 8).

Huck and Kuhn described another technique that elementary school library media specialists can utilize in an author or illustrator study, encouraging students to correspond with a favorite author or illustrator during or after the author or illustrator study. They suggested that students have information about the author or illustrator's biography and work so that they can ask pertinent questions when writing to an author or illustrator. Children can write letters to authors or illustrators to convey their enjoyment of the books, suggest ideas for sequels, or to request biographical information (Huck & Kuhn, 1968). Students can also become author experts by reading several books written by a favorite author or illustrated by a favorite illustrator and preparing a presentation about the books and the author or illustrator of these books. Librarians can encourage students to compare books written by one author or illustrated by one illustrator and draw conclusions about the author or illustrator's works (Huck & Kuhn, 1968).

Literature circles were also described as being utilized in elementary school libraries to conduct author or illustrator studies. Students form groups of four or five and read the same book by an author or illustrator. Then they research biographical information on the author or illustrator. Students share their thoughts on the author's writing style and use of fictional elements like character development, setting, point of view, and theme within their groups or to the entire class. This same technique can be utilized to examine the media, design, and colors of the illustrator's work (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003).

Another technique described by Huck and Kuhn was the creation of a file of biographical information, illustrations, and book lists for children's favorite authors and illustrators. "Publishers' materials, news clippings, magazine articles, teachers' notes, pictures of authors and illustrators, and book jackets may be included in the file for use by children and teachers" (Huck & Kuhn, 1968, p. 571). Elementary school media specialists can also meet authors or illustrators at book signings or media specialist conventions and share information as well as enthusiasm about the authors or illustrators with students (Carr, 2002).

Using Technology in Author/Illustrator Studies

Educators generally agreed that helping children to develop a lifelong love of reading is important to literacy development (Golant, 2004). When elementary school library media specialists want to utilize author or illustrator studies for literacy development, technology can be used to enhance their author/illustrator programs. Virtual author/illustrator visits are possible through e-mail exchanges, virtual chats, and webcam visits. Creating an online author/illustrator program within an elementary school cannot be a substitution for an actual author/illustrator visit to the school but it can be a practical

technique to develop an author/illustrator study in depth while supplementing any other author/illustrator studies that are conducted. Communication via technology with authors and illustrators is relatively inexpensive and enables students to communicate with authors and illustrators around the world (Golant, 2004). There are many Internet sites that generate information for popular authors and illustrators. One site recommended in a *School Library Journal* article was www.scbwi.org, the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. This website provides links to information on authors of easy fiction books (Golant, 2004). Other websites on authors and illustrators that have been suggested were <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/dkbrown/authors.html>, Children's Literature Web Guide/Tell Me More, and <http://www.scil.rutgers.edu/~kvander/AuthorSite/>, Kay Vandergrift's Learning about the Author and Illustrator (Jenkins, 1999).

Carol Brennan Jenkins, author of the book, *The Allure of Authors*, also recommended journals such as *Journal of Children's Literature* and *The Reading Teacher* as sources of current information on the lives, interests, and works of authors and illustrators (Jenkins, 1999). Many of these journal articles also contained links to author and illustrator website resources on the Internet.

Buzzeo explained that another method to initiate online communication with an author or illustrator was that of locating an author or illustrator's personal web page and utilizing the link to e-mail. Through e-mail, an elementary school media specialist can inquire if the author or illustrator would be willing to participate in an online communication program with students. Procedures, time frames, and possible fees are important points to consider when seeking an author's or illustrator's permission for participation in an online program (Buzzeo, 2003).

Golant explained how elementary school library media specialists can use their own e-mail accounts to contact children's book authors and illustrators in order to ensure online security for their students. Library media specialists can enter young children's questions into the computer and older children can type their own questions with adult supervision. Online security is also ensured when library media specialists or teachers read all responses from authors and illustrators prior to sharing them with children (Golant, 2004).

A virtual chat with an author or illustrator was another method identified by Buzzeo whereby elementary school library media specialists can use technology to enhance an author or illustrator study. After downloading and installing a free instant messaging program that contains chat features onto a computer's hard drive, the computer is set up for a virtual "visit" with an author or illustrator. A library media specialist can contact an author/illustrator or his or her publisher to discuss the possibility of a virtual chat and to determine the actual procedures, time frames, and fees. A recent article in *Instructor Magazine* stated that the standard fees were approximately \$100 for a one hour visit. If the computer is connected to a projector, students could have the opportunity to view the visual content of the virtual chat (Buzzeo, 2003).

Another technological advancement to promote an author/illustrator study proposed by Buzzeo was a webcam visit. This tool is a digital video camera that is connected to a computer and provides audio and video communication. After downloading and installing video-chat or net-meeting software onto the computer's hard drive, the computer is set for students to look at the camera not the computer screen for a virtual author/illustrator "visit". The library media specialist needs to contact the author or

illustrator to establish procedures, time frames, and fees. The fees for a webcam visit are comparable to those of a virtual chat (Buzzeo, 2003).

An online author/illustrator program can be very educational and motivational for students. Golant, an educator, promoted online communication between children and authors because she believed that it connects children with books which encourages them to read more. Golant also endorsed online author programs for their value to inspire children to eventually become writers or illustrators (Golant, 2004). Buzzeo also recommended the utilization of online author programs as valuable literature experiences since they provide students with opportunities to converse with an author or illustrator which also fosters a better understanding of the writing process (Buzzeo, 2003).

Another suggestion was viewing an author or illustrator on videotape or DVD. Students can view the videotape or DVD and see the author or illustrator and learn about the life of the author as a writer or the illustrator as an artist (Vandergrift, 2004).

Case Studies of Author and Illustrator Studies

“Until recently, research findings suggested that children are developmentally incapable of both critical and affective response to literature” (Jenkins, 1999, p. 45). In 1978 Applebee studied the objective and subjective responses of children aged 6, 9, 13, and 17 when questioned about a favorite story. Many of the six-year-olds simply retold the story and most nine-year-olds retold shorter versions of the story. Both groups of children concentrated on the actions in the story rather than abstract story elements like theme or point of view. Based on the results of the study, Applebee concluded that children were not able to think abstractly and subjectively about literature until the ages of 11 or 12. Another study that was conducted by Bernice Cullinan in 1983 to examine

fourth, sixth, and eighth graders' responses to literature validated Applebee's conclusions. In Cullinan's study, fourth and sixth graders retold and summarized the stories that were read, while the eighth graders were able to relate the stories to their personal lives (Jenkins, 1999).

More recent studies have disputed the findings of the earlier studies. A 1991 study of fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students concluded that 40% of the fourth graders were able to interpret the story events, and 16% were able to make connections between the stories and their personal lives (Jenkins, 1999). In 1992 McGee conducted a study on children's responses to literature and concluded that even children in first grade were capable of personal responses when listening to stories (Jenkins, 1999). Various other studies that were conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s suggested that reader response was tied to the reader and his or her experiences with literature, the quality of the literature, and the classroom context. Jenkins (1999) stated the following:

Hence, when implementing author studies, we need to find authors whose literature jars the soul, to share repeatedly our personal responses to this literature, to ask questions and to design activities that evoke life – literature links, and to provide multiple forums for peer construction of meaning (p. 55).

Jenkins, teacher, reading specialist, and teacher educator, conducted a non-random survey research on author studies with elementary school students. Jenkins surveyed 32 third grade students and 19 fifth grade students using informal questionnaires which analyzed the readers' responses about their opinions of author studies. These questionnaires consisted of six questions; half were cloze questions and the other half were open-ended response questions. When Jenkins analyzed the data, she found that 20

of 32 third graders who responded to the survey chose as their favorite authors those who wrote funny or scary plots or developed humorous characters. Jenkins concluded that most of the third graders were attracted to authors who appealed to the readers' basic emotions of laughter and fear. Also, 13 of 19 fifth graders who responded chose favorite authors because of their character development and plot. However, only two fifth graders and one third grader chose authors who seemed to be writing of their own life experiences (Jenkins, 1999). Although Jenkins's research study was limited by the small sample population surveyed, the results suggested that author studies were of value in an elementary school curriculum.

Carr, a seventh grade reading teacher in Michigan, conducted a small sample study to determine students' reactions to meeting an author and illustrator. Prior to meeting Brian Selznick, all of the students were given copies of books that he had written or illustrated and instructions to look at them and compose a few questions to ask the illustrator. The students viewed a presentation, created group questions, participated in a question and answer session, had lunch with Selznick, and then attended a meeting with Selznick. For three weeks, Carr introduced the rest of her students to this illustrator by reading and discussing several of the books which he had illustrated. Carr concluded that the three classes that included students who had met Selznick "received the books openly and actively engaged in discussions" (Carr, 2002, p. 42). Students in the two classes, that contained no students who had met Selznick, "didn't see the point of spending that much time working with books with pictures" (Carr, 2002, p. 42). Carr concluded that meeting an author and illustrator was the study's variable which helped students to become enthused about his books.

Summary

For years educators primarily limited author studies to biographies that, as a form of author studies, provided an overview of the lives of famous authors in relation to their literary works. Today, author and illustrator studies that delve more deeply into the aesthetic and critical responses to authors' and illustrators' works in addition to the biographical aspects are becoming more popular in the elementary school curriculum (Jenkins, 1999). Jenkins further stated, "Communal study of an author is a decidedly different experience - one that brings intuitive thoughts and feelings to a conscious level" (Jenkins, 1999, p.16). She also stated, "When lived-through experiences and universal themes are shared with other readers, heightened understandings of life and literature unfold. It is then that readers return to beloved authors or new authors with renewed insight and appreciation" (Jenkins, 1999, p. 16).

Jenkins, (1999), offered five guidelines that summarized the development and implementation of author and illustrator studies. They were as follows:

1. Readers respond in various ways to the works of authors and illustrators.
2. Aesthetic involvement comes before critical and biographical responses to literature.
3. Critical response deepens experiences with literature.
4. Biographical response extends experiences with literature.
5. Children learn best when interacting with others who are more knowledgeable.

Most of the research reports that this researcher found were limited by using small samples and populations. The study conducted by Carr was not only limited by a small sample population but also by Carr's utilization of personal observation as a data collection technique. Studies that utilize personal observation for data collection can

have biased results. More studies need to be conducted on techniques used by elementary school library media specialists to teach about authors and illustrators. Further studies on the uses of teaching authors and illustrators and their effectiveness in the literature program could aid elementary school library media specialists in developing and implementing their curricula.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overall Design and Justification

This study was comprised of descriptive research that included a survey to determine how elementary school library media specialists perceive the role of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum. The study was conducted to measure how useful author and illustrator studies were and which techniques to teach about authors and illustrators were used most often by elementary school library media specialists.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to determine library media specialists' perceptions of author and illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum with students' interest in reading books. This study was being conducted to explore the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists on the usefulness of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum. Current research indicated that students who had high levels of interest in featured authors and illustrators were more motivated to read books by the featured authors and illustrators. The study also attempted to determine how widely used author and illustrator studies were in elementary school libraries and examined those techniques that were considered most effective. This research study also attempted to examine the role of technological sources such as the Internet and various author and illustrator websites in author and illustrator studies.

Research Questions

1. Did elementary school library media specialists view an author/illustrator study as a useful component of the library curriculum? How widely was it used in the curriculum?
2. Which of the techniques that elementary school library media specialists used to conduct author/illustrator studies were the most effective in reading motivation?
3. Did elementary school library media specialists perceive an author/illustrator study as an important method to aid them in increasing student interest in reading more books?
4. How widely used were technological sources such as the Internet utilized by elementary school library media specialists to teach author and illustrator studies?

Population and Sample

This survey which was non-randomly distributed was mainly qualitative and consisted of both cloze questions and open-ended questions. The survey was distributed by mail to 89 library media specialists in public elementary schools located in Camden and Gloucester counties of Southern New Jersey. The elementary schools that were selected for the survey were comprised of students in grades pre-kindergarten or kindergarten to grades five or six and were of various socio-economic levels.

Variables

There were several variables in this study that explored the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists on the methods used in author and illustrator studies and the usefulness of author/illustrator studies in the library curriculum. A major variable was the existence of a written library curriculum and if the written curriculum included methods for teaching authors and illustrators. Other variables were the methods that elementary library media specialists used in author/illustrator studies and which methods

were perceived by the library media specialists as useful. Another variable was the use/nonuse of technological sources in author and illustrator studies. Also, schools varied in the amount of funds available for implementing author and illustrator activities due to different socioeconomic levels and different library media center budgets.

Method of Data Collection

A paper-based and typed questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisting of eight cloze questions and three open-ended questions was utilized to collect the data for this study. Each elementary school library media specialist was asked to complete the survey and return it to the researcher in the stamped, addressed envelope that was provided with the survey. Each survey contained a specific identification number to indicate which surveys had been returned.

Instruments Used

An introductory letter (see Appendix B) which briefly explained the rationale for this study and qualitative survey were mailed to library media specialists who taught in public elementary schools that serviced students in grades Pre-K to six located in Camden and Gloucester counties in Southern New Jersey. The introductory letter contained a statement of confidentiality and an explanation of the purpose of the study. After two weeks when slightly more than 50% or 46 of the 87 useable surveys were returned, the researcher compiled the information on the returned surveys. Data collected from each completed survey were analyzed utilizing the Microsoft Excel computer program. The frequency charts demonstrating the percentages of responses for answers to the cloze questions are in Chapter Four of this research paper.

Reliability and Validity

The introductory letter and survey were pre-tested by students enrolled in the school and public librarianship thesis class at Rowan University and by Dr. Shontz, the instructor of the thesis class. The 15 library media specialists in the thesis class were not part of the sample population of the study. The library media specialists were asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on the specific questions and possible answers. Based on the responses from the pre-test, adjustments were made to the initial survey form.

The validity of the study was accounted for in the survey questionnaire being mailed directly to each elementary school library media specialist. The results were assumed to be valid based on the responses of library media specialists who taught library curricula in public elementary schools in Camden and Gloucester Counties in New Jersey.

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CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures Used

Library media specialists in public elementary schools with grades Pre-K or K to grades five or six in Camden and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey were asked to respond to the written questionnaire survey about their perceptions and methods used to teach authors and illustrators. The library media specialists were chosen because they are usually responsible for organizing and implementing activities that teach about authors and illustrators. The written survey was pre-tested by Dr. Shontz who made several recommendations in the wording of the questions to more thoroughly inquire about specific procedures. Then, 15 members of Rowan University's thesis class in the school and public librarianship program completed a practice test of the survey. Only minor changes were made to the survey allowing for the inclusion of reference books and periodicals as another method to teach authors and illustrators. In mid-February, an introductory letter that briefly explained the rationale for this study with a statement of confidentiality and the qualitative survey were mailed to 89 library media specialists who taught in public elementary schools in Camden and Gloucester Counties in Southern New Jersey. By the beginning of March, 46 respondents had mailed their completed surveys to the researcher. Two questionnaires were returned and were not useable. The useable response rate was 52 %.

Data for this study were analyzed utilizing the Microsoft Excel computer program to determine the frequency distributions for each question on the survey. The Excel program was also utilized to create various pie charts and bar graphs to display the descriptive statistics of the data compiled.

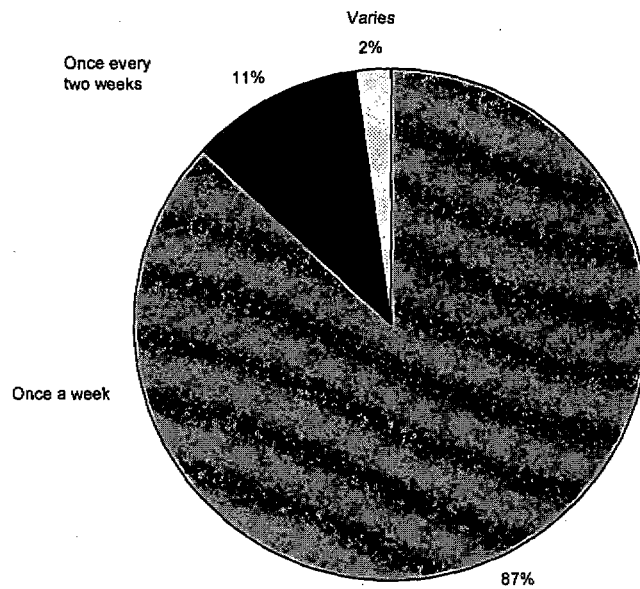
Variables Studied

There were several variables that were examined in this study to explore the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists on the methods used and the usefulness of author/illustrator studies in the library curriculum. One important variable was the existence of a written library curriculum and if that written library curriculum included methods for teaching authors and illustrators. Other variables were the techniques that elementary library media specialists utilized to teach authors and illustrators and which techniques these same elementary school library media specialists perceived to be most effective with their students. The use/nonuse of technological sources in author and illustrator studies was also another variable.

Presentation of Results

Data for this study were analyzed utilizing the Microsoft Excel computer program to determine the percentages for each question on the survey. Of the 46 surveys that were returned by elementary school library media specialists, 84% had regularly scheduled periods, 9% had some classes regularly scheduled with others flexibly scheduled, and 7% had classes scheduled at varying time periods according to need. Also, 87% had the scheduled periods once a week, 11% had the scheduled periods once every two weeks, and 2% had varied schedules. Results are in Figure 1.

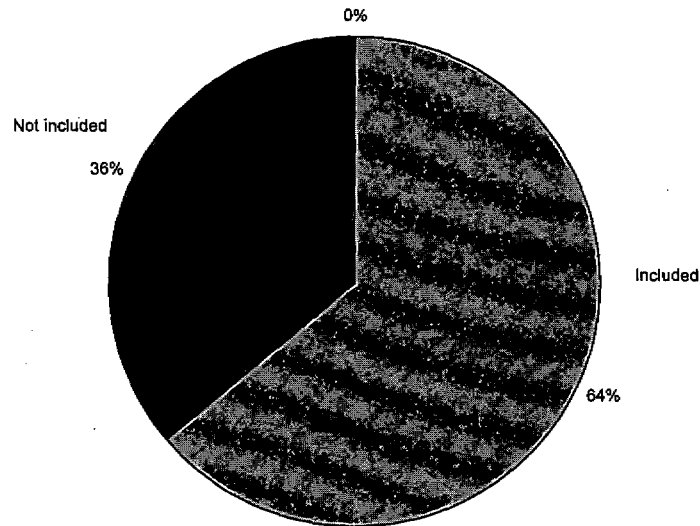
Figure 1 Frequency of Scheduled Library Periods
n=46



When responding about a written curriculum guide for library skills, 83% had a written curriculum, while 17% did not have a written curriculum. Of the 83% (n = 46) who had a written curriculum guide for library skills, 64% responded that the curriculum guide included methods for teaching authors and illustrators, and 36% responded that the curriculum guide did not include methods for teaching authors and illustrators. Results can be seen in Figure 2.

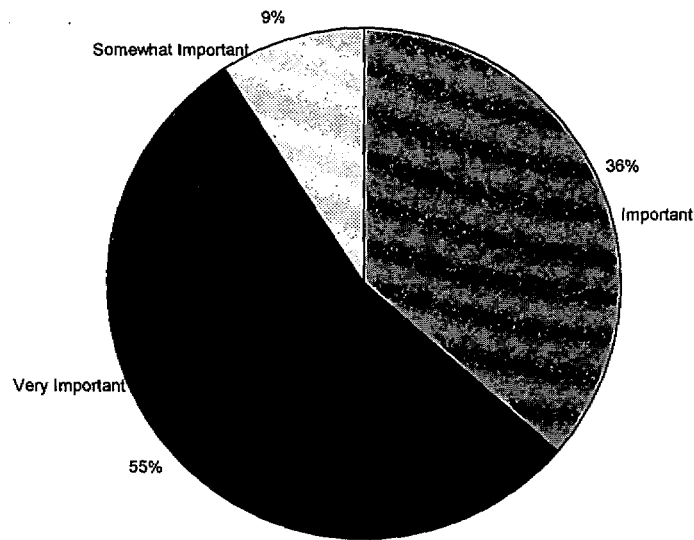
Figure 2

**Teaching Authors and Illustrators in
the Library Curriculum**
n=46



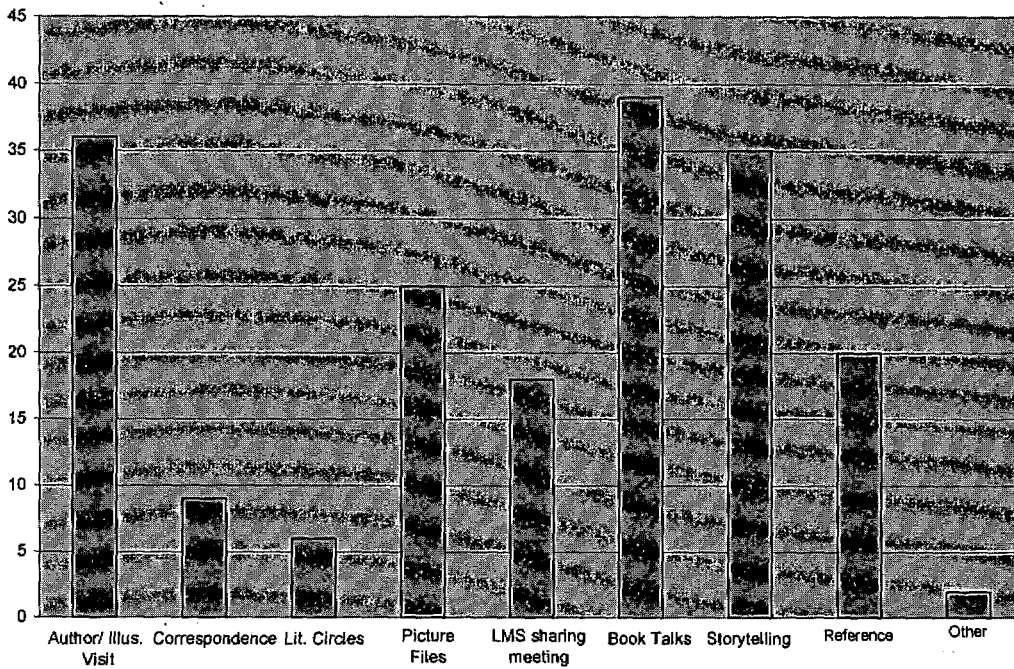
When asked about the importance of author and illustrator studies in the elementary library curriculum, 55% of the respondents replied that these studies were very important, 36% replied that they were important, 9% replied that they were somewhat important, and no one replied that they were not important. Results can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Importance of Author and Illustrator Studies
n=46



The most widely used methods for teaching authors and illustrators (n = 46) were in the following order: 39 of the library media specialists used book talks, 36 used author/illustrator visits, and 35 used storytelling with biographies. Picture files were used by 25 library media specialists and reference books were used by 20 library media specialists. Also, 18 of the library media specialists shared meetings with authors and illustrators, 9 used student correspondence, and 6 used literature circles as other methods for teaching authors and illustrators. Results can be seen in Figure 4.

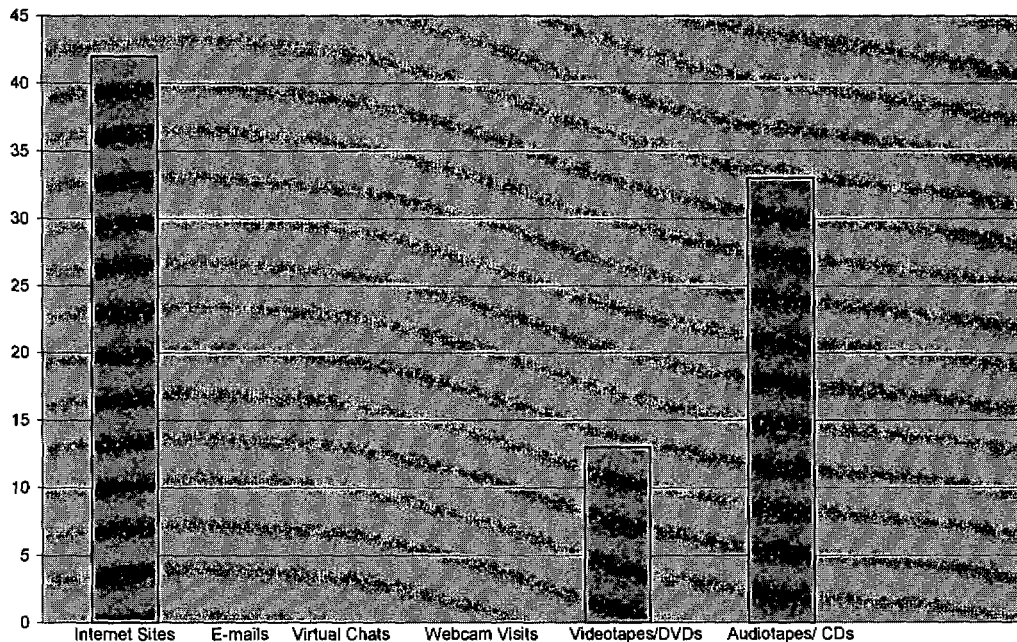
Figure 4 **Methods to Teach Authors/Illustrators**



In the area of utilizing technological sources, 42 of the respondents stated that they used Internet sites for information about authors and illustrators, while 33 stated that they used videotapes or DVDs, 13 claimed that they used audiotapes or CDs, and 3 used e-mail. No one reported utilizing virtual chats or webcam visits in author/illustrator studies. Results can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Use of Technology to Teach Authors/ Illustrators

n=46



When asked to respond to three open-ended questions about the methods most often used to teach authors and illustrators, most elementary school library media specialists responded that they primarily utilized book talks with brief biographies of authors/ illustrators. Another method used often was storytelling with brief biographies of authors/ illustrators followed by author/ illustrator visits to schools and sharing picture files of biographical information on authors/ illustrators. The methods least used were student correspondence with authors/ illustrators, literature circles that discussed authors/ illustrators, and reference books or periodicals on authors/ illustrators. In the area of technology, elementary library media specialists responded that they most often used videotapes, DVDs, and audiotapes on authors and illustrators.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

This study, which was descriptive and qualitative, was designed to determine library media specialists' perceptions of the role of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum. The study was conducted to measure the uses of author and illustrator studies and which techniques to teach about authors and illustrators were perceived as most effective by elementary school library media specialists.

It was assumed that the best source for information about author and illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum were the library media specialists who taught students about authors and illustrators. It was also assumed that the library media specialists who responded to the written survey of seven cloze questions and three open-ended questions answered honestly and accurately. Of the 87 elementary library media specialists who received questionnaires, 46 responded and their responses were analyzed using the Microsoft Excel computer program. The Excel computer program analyzed the descriptive statistics in order to determine the frequency distributions and create charts and graphs for each cloze question on the survey. The researcher categorized the library media specialists' responses to the three open-ended questions according to their similarities in comments and drew conclusions on the library media specialists' perceptions of author and illustrator studies.

Use of Author and Illustrator Studies in the Library Curriculum

The computer analysis of the statistics of the author/ illustrator studies survey indicated that 84% of the elementary library media specialists who responded to the survey had regularly scheduled library classes and 87% had the scheduled classes on a weekly basis. Of the respondents, 83% had a written curriculum for library skills, and 64% of those written curriculum guides included methods for teaching authors and illustrators. Interestingly, 55% of the respondents replied that author/ illustrator studies were very important, 36% replied that they were important, nine percent replied that they were somewhat important, and no one replied that they were not important. Both the majority of library media specialists who were surveyed and their respective school districts believed that author and illustrator studies were important enough to include methods of teaching authors and illustrators in the elementary school library skills curriculum.

Of the elementary library media specialists who responded to the survey, 39 replied that they utilized book talks and 35 replied that they utilized storytelling with biographies to teach about authors and illustrators. Also, 36 responded that author and illustrator visits were used to teach authors and illustrators.

When questioned about which methods that they considered most effective for teaching authors and illustrators, the majority of library media specialists responded that they used storytelling with brief biographies of authors and illustrators and author/ illustrator visits to schools. The majority of respondents also commented that because of the expense of author/ illustrator visits, this technique was very limited in their library

programs. Some respondents stated that they were only able to schedule one author or illustrator visit during each school year.

Role of Technology in Author and Illustrator Studies

When elementary school library media specialists utilized author or illustrator studies for literacy development, technology was used to enhance the author/illustrator programs. The computer analysis of the author/illustrator survey indicated some interesting statistics for the role of technology in teaching authors and illustrators in the elementary school library curriculum. Internet sites containing information on authors and illustrators were utilized by 42 of the elementary library media specialists who responded to the survey. Use of Internet sites was relatively inexpensive and generated much information on a variety of authors and illustrators. Also, 33 of the respondents utilized videotapes or DVDs, 14 utilized audiotapes or CDs, and 3 utilized e-mail correspondence with authors and illustrators. No one reported using virtual chats or webcam visits to teach authors and illustrators.

The respondents' most widely used methods for teaching authors and illustrators were older and more cost efficient than the recent developments in technology. Both virtual chats and webcam visits probably required technological equipment and procedures that either were not available or familiar to the elementary media specialists. Also, the additional costs incurred with this equipment most likely were not allocated in the schools' library budgets.

Library Media Specialists' Perceptions of the Effects of Author/ Illustrator Studies in Student Motivation to Read Books

When asked to respond to the open-ended question concerning the correlation between teaching about authors and illustrators and their students' reading habits, all 46 survey responses indicated a positive influence of teaching authors and illustrators on students' interest in reading more books by the authors and illustrators. Also, 30 respondents replied that their students sought out other works by the authors and illustrators whom they studied. Moreover, 12 respondents noted that highlighting certain books and authors/ illustrators created excitement and made the authors and illustrators seem real which increased students' desires to read these particular books. Interestingly, 17 library media specialists replied that when students identified authors whom they liked, the students were motivated to read those books. Furthermore, three elementary school library media specialists responded that author/ illustrator studies aided students in making connections with authors and illustrators. Three library media specialists also responded that when students made connections on personal levels, the students found books more exciting and were more inspired to read and write. Two respondents noted that when their students understood how and why authors wrote, the students better understood the purposes of the books and read more of a particular author/ illustrator's books. These survey results strongly support the value of teaching author and illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum.

Significance of the Results

Current research indicated that more access to books resulted in more reading which developed better reading skills in students (Krashen, 2004). Research further suggested

that when students had opportunities to explore specific authors through school visits, biographies, pictures, interviews, and online communication, they were more interested and involved in the authors' books and were more motivated to read more books by these authors (Krieger, 1997). Elementary school library media specialists who responded to this research study, replied that author/illustrator studies were important components of the library skills curriculum to connect students to books, authors, and illustrators. The majority of library media specialists responded that author/illustrator visits were effective but expensive methods to teach about authors and illustrators. Many elementary schools have limited library budgets which do not include more than one author or illustrator visit per school year and some replied that their library budgets do not include funds for author or illustrator visits. As a result, most elementary library media specialists utilized book talks and storytelling with biographies when author/illustrator studies were implemented.

Recommendations for Further Study

Further review of the literature on elementary school library media specialists' perceptions and uses of author and illustrator studies in the library curriculum is needed to more thoroughly investigate the effectiveness of author and illustrator studies. This additional review of literature may also lead to some changes or additional questions in the survey. Follow-up interviews with some of the elementary library media specialists who utilized author and illustrator studies may also generate more depth to the information on the use and value of author/illustrator studies in the elementary school library curriculum. Interviews may also generate more information on the use of technology and lack of use of webcam visits and virtual chats. A study involving the

effects of this lack of technology and high costs of technological methods could also be conducted.

The study could be repeated with a larger sample rather than library media specialists in only two counties of New Jersey. Administering the survey to a larger sample population of elementary school library media specialists in various parts of the United States would provide more reliability and validity to the study.

In order to determine the effectiveness of author and illustrator studies in an elementary school library curriculum, a study could also investigate students' knowledge of author and illustrator studies. A study that involved discussing authors and illustrators with a large sample population of students would correlate with Krieger's research on the use of author studies. Krieger concluded that the more readers were aware of authors and their influences on written works, the higher the readers' comprehension skills and interests in reading and writing were (Krieger, 1997). A further study involving a large sample population of teachers who utilized author and illustrator studies could also be conducted to examine the effectiveness of teachers' support and involvement with author/illustrator studies in the core curriculum.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey on Techniques Used by Elementary School Media Specialists to Teach Authors and Illustrators

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personal information is being requested.

1. Which of the following best describes the type of scheduling for classes in your media center? (Please check one.)

- All classes are scheduled flexibly for varying time periods according to need.
 All classes have regularly scheduled time periods.
 Some classes are regularly scheduled; others are flexibly scheduled.

2. How frequent are the scheduled periods for the media center? (Please check one.)

- Once a week
 Once every two weeks
 Varies

3. Does your library program have a written library skills curriculum guide? (Please check one.)

- Yes
 No

4. If your library program has a written library skills curriculum guide, does it include methods for teaching authors and illustrators? (Please check one.)

- Yes
 No

5. How important do you believe author and illustrator studies are in the elementary school library curriculum? (Please check one.)

- Very Important
 Important
 Somewhat Important
 Not Important

Please continue on the other side.

6. Which methods to teach authors and illustrators have you utilized in your library program? (Please check all that apply.)

- Author/ illustrator visits to the school
- Student correspondence with an author/ illustrator
- Literature circles to discuss and study an author/ illustrator
- Sharing of picture files of biographical information on author/ illustrator
- Media specialist meeting with author/ illustrator at book signing or convention ; sharing of information and experience with students
- Book talks with brief biography of author/ illustrator
- Storytelling with brief biography of author/illustrator
- Reference books or periodicals on authors/ illustrators
- Other (Please describe briefly.)

7. Which technology have you utilized to teach authors and illustrators? (Please check all that apply.)

- Use of Internet sites for information on authors or illustrators
- E-mail exchanges between authors/illustrators and students
- Virtual chats
- Webcam visits
- Viewing videotapes or DVDs on authors or illustrators
- Listening to audiotapes/CDs

8. Which of the methods listed in questions 6 and 7 do you use most often to teach authors and illustrators?

9. Which techniques to teach about authors and illustrators do you consider to be the most effective in your library program? (Please write your response below.)

10. How does teaching about authors and illustrators motivate students to read more books? (Please explain below.)

Thank you for your time and effort!
csabol@wtps.org

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER

February 14, 2005

Dear School Media Specialist,

I am in the process of writing a master's thesis for a School Librarianship degree at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, under the direction of Dr. Marilyn Shontz. My research involves the techniques that elementary school media specialists utilize to teach their library classes about authors and illustrators.

Please respond to the attached 10-15 minute survey and return it to me in the enclosed, stamped envelope by February 25. Your support in this study will help me to identify which techniques elementary school media specialists use to teach authors and illustrators in addition to media specialists' overall perceptions about author and illustrator studies.

Although participation is voluntary, your personal cooperation and support are important and will help make this study a success. All responses will be kept confidential and no individuals or schools will be named in the reporting of the results.

If you have any questions, please email me at csabol@wtps.org or Dr. Shontz at shontz@rowan.edu.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Carol Sabol