



The Influence of Bibliographies and Book Displays on Motivation for Extensive Reading

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This paper discusses the use of short annotated bibliographies of books available for students participating in an extensive reading program at a Japanese university. These bibliographies, along with displays of books, are available in the extensive reading room of the university library. Are they a resource that is used by the students? Do they attract readers and help motivate them to find books that they might enjoy reading? A brief survey of first and second year students who are participating in the Extensive Reading Program was conducted and their awareness of and response to the bibliographies and displays was sought. Their response overall was positive. However, an unexpected observation was that many students were unaware of the purpose of the bibliographies and consequently never made independent use of that resource.

Reading is a basic path to knowledge and language acquisition. Reading is more pleasurable if the reader has an interest in the topic or story. Generally, students are encouraged to read books of their own choosing when engaged in extensive reading programs. Students can choose from about 2,500 titles in the university library's extensive reading collection, but making such choices can be overwhelming or confusing for them. Many students select books randomly, scanning the shelves for titles, taking a quick look at the cover and perhaps inside the book (Campbell, 2015). In order to help students select books that they might like, students were offered bibliographies (also called booklists) on a variety of topics. For the past two years, displays in the library's extensive reading room, with

selected books on a particular subject, have been available every month.

Background

The library and the classroom both serve as a platform for bringing readers and books together. Loh (2015) listed the library as a basic resource in creating readers. She also included sources on the Internet, personal recommendations from teachers, friends or parents, as well as printed lists of recommended books as tools to encourage student reading and the building of a reading culture.

Promoting reading through displays of books is not a new technique. Public libraries have been displaying books for over a century (Kucalba, 2000). Day (1998) noted that just as any retail business benefits from attractively displayed merchandise, so do books for extensive reading. "Students are drawn to materials that are well displayed

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and accessible" (p. 115). Loh (2015) mentioned the critical importance of the library space in "creating excitement about books" (p. 219). Skaggs (2006) discussed many ideas for promoting library services to young people. Among the most important are displays of books on various themes. She also mentioned other materials to familiarize readers with the collection, including bibliographies or booklists and maps of the library (Skaggs, 2006).

Larkin-Lieffers (2013) noted that "displays are a popular and time-tested way [to introduce] readers to the range of stories and informational books available to them in libraries" (p. 25). Limited time to browse, a lack of reading and searching skills and a limited understanding of a library's classification and shelving system may make finding a book difficult for some readers. Displays provide an easy way to scan for and select a book. Book circulation often increases, Larkin-Lieffers (2013) also said, when attractive, "well-designed and themed" (p. 25) displays are offered to readers at libraries. Guidance, noted Day (1998), should not end with an orientation to the library. Students can benefit from ongoing individual and group guidance and modeling.

According to Mahood (2006) there are four reasons to create book displays. First, they allow a chance to scan and quickly pick a book. Second, books on display represent the collection. So, a reader can then later go to a series, an author, or a subject and read more after selecting a book from a display. Third, the display "signals that the library staff members are working" (p. 84). Finally, the creation of book displays helps to build expertise on the part of librarians and teachers who recommend books to readers. A deeper understanding of the available reading material can help them to guide

readers and be a valuable resource in filling weak points in a collection. Sanderson (2017) built enthusiasm for reading in her class by having students create their own library displays based on topics they liked.

Day also mentioned that dividing books into categories within the extensive reading library helps to guide readers. Mahood (2006) said that "booklists promote reading and books by making it easier for readers to find books to read" (p. 114). Booklists promote categories of books, describe storylines briefly, and provide a handy reference for readers. Mahood (2006) also recommended displaying booklists in upright holders, and distributing them as inserts in books at library checkout counters.

Research Questions

As students can choose from about 2,500 titles in the extensive reading collection, choosing books may be overwhelming and time-consuming for them. Bibliographies on a variety of topics were printed to suggest books that might be appealing. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of displays and bibliographies.

Are the displays and bibliographies an effective method of guiding readers toward books that they might find enjoyable or interesting to read?

Do the displays of books attract readers and help motivate them to find and read books that they like?

Method

In summer of 2014, the Extensive Reading Research Group began producing annotated bibliographies to guide student reading. These bibliographies were created on a variety of subjects, such as "Nobel Prize Winners", "African Americans", "Pirates",

“Shakespeare”, or “Gothic Romance”. Each bibliography was generated based on the library’s existing holdings shelved in a room reserved for the Extensive Reading Program (See Appendix A). These books are leveled and have quizzes online available through the MReader Extensive Reading Foundation (<https://mreader.org/mreaderadmin/s/>).

Materials

Creating a bibliography involved the following steps: selecting a topic; searching the online catalogue of library holdings by keyword; scanning the catalogue for additional titles; listing book titles with the publisher and level; writing annotations and descriptions of books. Next, to create the physical document for distribution to students and teachers, titles were laid out attractively and organized into subcategories and/or sorted by level, and then sometimes illustrated with simple graphics. Finally, these annotated bibliographies were photocopied onto colored paper, in varying sizes, depending on the number of titles in a topic. Each bibliography contains roughly ten to thirty titles. If the number of titles were to exceed thirty, then the category would be split. For example, “Shakespeare” could be divided into “Tragedy” and “Comedy”.

Once the bibliographies had been created, ways of distributing them to students had to be explored. Initially, teachers who were interested in using the bibliographies took copies of them and distributed them in classes or used them together with book talks given by students or the teacher. However, hoping to reach more of the students participating in the Extensive Reading Program, it was then decided to ask the library for permission to display the bibliographies in the extensive reading room of the library. This negotiation involved the library staff

and members of the Extensive Reading Research Group discussing the location and size of the displays and how the work of curating them would be allocated. Eventually, it was decided that space would be set aside on a large table for displays, easily visible when students entered the extensive reading room of the library. A permanent display of bibliographies was put on a plastic stand large enough to hold about ten of them neatly. A display of books, generally 20 to 50 titles on a given theme, would be set up at the beginning of each month. It was agreed that members of the Extensive Reading Research Group would decide the themes and set up the display of books, posters, and bibliographies. The library staff would gather selected titles in advance and reserve the space for the display. That arrangement has now been in place since October of 2015, and a new display is set up at the beginning of every month that school is in session.

Short, annotated bibliographies were prepared on a variety of topics, such as “Nobel Prize Winners”, “African Americans” or “Pirates” (For some examples, see Appendix B). These were printed and put out on a table in the library’s extensive reading room for students to look at or take. The bibliographies were also offered to teachers of reading and other classes so that they could distribute or show them in their classes.

Participants

Freshman and sophomore students, aged eighteen to twenty years old, were surveyed about their responses to library displays and bibliographies in July 2017. All freshman and sophomore students at the university are required to participate in the university’s Extensive Reading Program and are assigned a word count for extensive reading, depending upon their

TOEIC scores, class level, year and major. Students' assigned word count goals range from 30,000 to 100,000 words per semester. Eighty students from five classes, including both English majors and non-English majors, answered a brief questionnaire about their response to the library displays and bibliographies. The survey questions and instructions were printed on paper in English and distributed in class by two teachers. Students were told that participation in the survey was related to research, and that they were not required to join in. Survey responses were anonymous.

Results

The students who responded to the questionnaire were all required to participate the Extensive Reading Program at the university. In April, they should have been taken or sent to the library by one of their teachers, and been given an introduction to the extensive reading collection. Subsequently, the students should have visited the extensive reading room of the library on their own periodically to return and check out more books. During their visits, all students would have had an opportunity to see the displays and bibliographies prominently arranged on a table in front of them as they entered the room. The survey questions and responses can be seen in Table 1. While only 16% answered that they had used a bibliography, all of those students who had used the bibliographies agreed that they were helpful in selecting books.

Some comments from students who found the bibliographies helpful in selecting books are extracted below to illustrate the reasons they noted. Please note that the language used by the students is preserved in their own words, including errors.

I felt happy and useful.

I always take a lot of time to select books. If I had a list, I would select books at the home.

There was never such a list in my library. It's good for me.

I think it is useful, because I don't spend many time to find books.

I can read various books this way.

I can find books I like.

Students were also asked what topics they found attractive. Since the survey included freshman students who had only been in the Extensive Reading Program since April of 2017, the topics listed on the survey were only those which had been used in displays in the spring semester of the 2017-2018 school year. These included displays and bibliographies on "Animal Stories" in April, "Mysteries" and "Detectives" in May, "Britain" in June and "Pirates" and "The Sea" in July. "Mysteries" was the most

Table 1. Percentage of yes and no responses to survey items.

Question	Yes	No
Do you look at books on display?	78%	22%
Have you ever used a bibliography?	16%	84%
Have you ever checked out a book from the display?	42%	58%
If you used a bibliography, was it useful?	78%	22%
Were bibliographies helpful in selecting books?*	100%	0%

*Responses from the 16% who answered yes to the second item.

popular topic of those choices given in the survey (See Figure 1).

Discussion and Conclusion

This is a preliminary study. In regards to displays, most students, 78%, indicated that they had looked at library displays. Less than half of them, 42%, had checked out a book from the display. Of course, this may reflect that topics of books on display did not appeal to them. In regards to the bibliographies, the majority of the students surveyed, 84%, answered that they had not used the bibliographies. However, of those students who did use the bibliographies, the response was very positive, with 100% of those students finding them helpful in choosing books. Furthermore, these students all made positive comments.

While it was not a factor in the survey, one teacher had brought in bibliographies and distributed them directly to one class the week before administering the survey.

Most of the students who responded that they did use the bibliographies were in this particular class. An unexpected finding was that many Japanese students may simply have been unaware of the purpose of bibliographies on display in the library. It would seem that publicizing the bibliographies to students in class might be effective in increasing their use.

For further study on the effectiveness of topical displays of books, library circulation patterns could be examined in relation to the displays and bibliographies. Based on monthly statistics gathered by the library staff, future studies could look at whether book titles used in displays are checked out more frequently than when those books are simply on the shelves.

References

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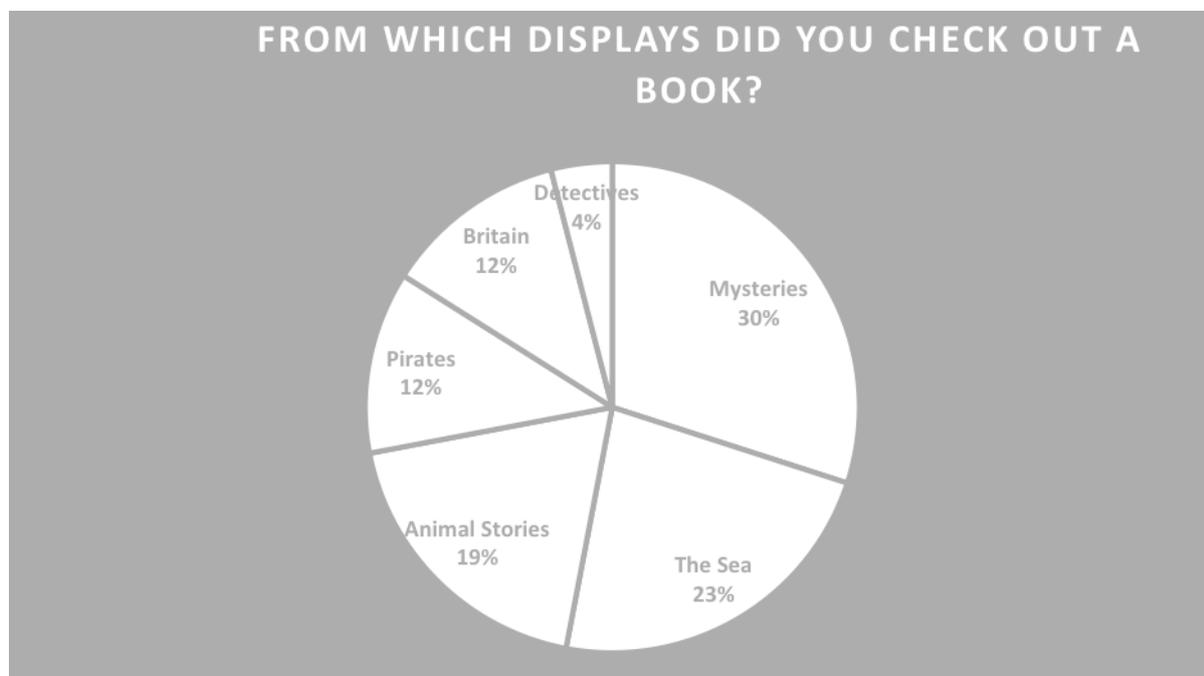


Figure 1. Display topics from which students selected books to check out from the library.

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Appendix A. Photograph of a library display of books about "The Sea" and "Pirates" with small posters and annotated bibliographies.



Appendix B. Photo of some annotated bibliographies available to students in the Extensive Reading room of the library.



Appendix C. Sample annotated bibliography

Northanger Abbey is Jane Austen's only gothic romance. It tells the story of Catherine trying to solve a mystery.

- level 4

In *The Moonspinners*, Nicola is on vacation when she becomes involved in a murder mystery in a small village. She has no friends and doesn't know who to trust.

- level 7

First published in French over a hundred years ago, the romance of *The Phantom of the Opera* has remained a popular story. The beautiful singer Christine is kidnapped by the Phantom, who hopes that she will learn to love him.

- level 4
- level 4
- level 6
- level 8
- level 9

Jane Eyre is the story of a young woman who goes to work as a governess. There are mysterious events in the house of Mr. Rochester.

- Macmillan level 4
- Scholastic level 4
- Yohan level 4
- Usborne level 5
- Penguin level 5
- Reading level 6
- Penguin level 8
- Oxford level 9
- Compass level 9

What if the man you love is a murderer? Young Mrs. de Winter wonders what happened to her husband's beautiful first wife, *Rebecca*.

- level 8
- level 9

Gothic Romance



A gothic romance has mysterious or supernatural events. These love stories are dark and full of secrets.

Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* tells the story of the consequences of a forbidden romance.

- level 5
- level 9

Lorna Doone is a girl raised by the Doone family, who are smugglers and outlaws. She falls in love with John Ridd, the son of a farmer and an enemy of the Doones.

- level 4
- level 7
- level 7

A young couple fall in love in the gloomy and mysterious *House of the Seven Gables*. A mysterious past threatens their happiness.

- level 2