

July 2014

Looking Back: The Subjective Assessments of a Children's Librarian

Laura Mikowski
Hillsboro Public Library

Recommended Citation

Mikowski, L. (2014). Looking Back: The Subjective Assessments of a Children's Librarian. *OLA Quarterly*, 19(1), 17-18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1382>

© 2014 by the author(s).

OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

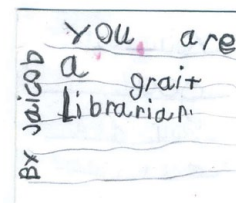
Looking Back:

The Subjective Assessments of a Children's Librarian

by **Laura Mikowski**
Youth Collection
Development Librarian,
Hillsboro Public Library



For the last 18 years, I have been a Children's Librarian at the Hillsboro Public Library. In July of this year, I will assume my new job as Hillsboro's Youth



Collection Development Librarian. While I'm looking forward to changes and new challenges, there is much about my work as a Children's Librarian that I will miss.

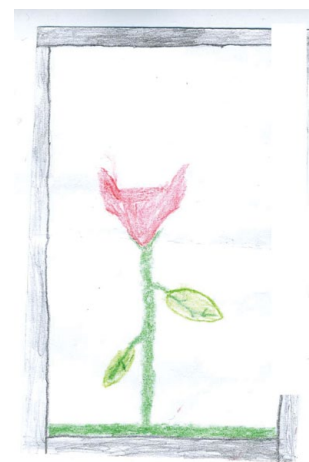
Collection Development is a much more macro, 30,000 feet sort of job. In Collection Development, numbers and statistics figure

prominently and are excellent markers of performance. Measuring success can be straightforward: Are the holds lists too long? Are there vast numbers of books that haven't been checked out in years burdening our shelves? Is our library one of Washington County's net borrowers or net lenders?

When thinking about measuring my success as a Children's Librarian, I could use numbers. I have years of statistics about the circulation of the materials that I selected. I have several decades of Storytime and other program attendance statistics that can be charted. But none of these measures would paint a complete picture of how I have done as a Children's Librarian. For that, I think I would need to rely on more subjective criteria.

I know that I am successful when I engage with a new family at their first Storytime. I always try to make the connection that will encourage them to keep coming back. As they become regulars, I support parents and caregivers by promoting literacy with their child and find them the best of what their child loves to engage in.

I know that I am successful when I help parents and caregivers find the picture books and board books they will be reading to children for years.

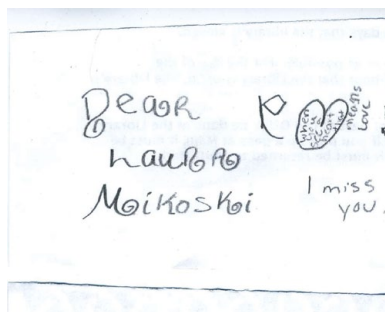


I know that I am successful when a parent offers me their time and listens to my early literacy spiel and then takes it to heart by taking home a large stack of age appropriate items more than once.



I know that I am successful when I help children explore new interests and discover new series. It's especially rewarding when my work inspires a reluctant reader and their desire to read blossoms. Thank goodness for audio books, graphic novels and Garfield!





I know that I am successful when families return week after week. I see the children growing into the adults they will become.

I know that I am successful when coworkers tell me that a young patron was looking for me.

I know that I am successful when, over the course of a reference desk shift, I see familiar face after familiar face. Many come up to talk about what they have

been reading, some just say “hi,” but I know that I have done my job making an environment that they keep wanting to come back to.

I know that I am successful when the Children’s area is, frankly, kind of loud. I think that children are their happiest when the library feels more like a Living Room than a Study Hall.

I know that I am successful when parents come in to update me on their children—children who were in my Storytimes and who have now moved on to college.

I know that I am successful when the same family shows up on the same day at the same time.

I know that I am successful when I convince parents to make a stop at the library a regular part of their week. Going to the pool? Stop in at the library. Stopping by McDonalds? Come visit us when you are done.

I know that I am successful when I recommend a book to a child and tell them to let me know what they think when they’re finished with it. And then see them come back to discuss it.

I know that I am successful when I see a new book come through and know exactly which patron I’m going to give it to when I next see them.

I know that I am successful when I get what I call “love letters” from my young patrons. One little picture from a child gives me all the data I need to know that I am doing a good job.

My new position will lessen my daily interactions with our public here at HPL. As the collection develops in depth and success, I will too, in both familiar and new ways. Intrinsic measurements demand my continued attention to foster relationships that create readers and library users. I’ll then continue to reflect on this type of measurement in order to create a greater future here and thus, a more complete community. 🌱

