The Effect of Early Literacy on Children as Taught in Libraries and Preschools: An Annotated Bibliography

Catherine Wright
INFO 522: Information Access and Resources
November 25, 2012
Introduction and Scope

The following bibliography includes information and research on early literacy and libraries. Libraries have become very involved with helping children with their literacy skills, especially with the introduction of the Public Library Association’s literacy project in 2000; Every Child Ready to Read. This initiative has paved the way for how libraries support children by including research on the ways children learn to read and write. The articles in this bibliography contain research on how early literacy effects children as they begin to read and write in school. There are also articles on the best practices on how to achieve this early literacy support. The articles are from a wide range of dates which just goes to show how long early literacy development has been around.

Description

Early literacy is the foundation of children’s reading and writing habits. It gives children a head start on what will eventually be very important skills. Libraries are the perfect place for children to become more familiar with the written word and also oral language. Story times and other library programs are the perfect opportunity to help children experience all of these. With the Every Child Ready to Read project, librarians have the opportunity to be trained on what early literacy really is and with this knowledge will be able to teach parents, caregivers and teachers on ways to help children explore their early literacy skills.
Summary of Findings

Not surprisingly, early literacy is a very positive thing. All of the articles and research have only good findings. The Every Child Ready to Read project started in 2000 and many libraries jumped on board. In Ohio, a library created a PLAY (Preschool Literacy and You) Room. This room is filled with interactive toys, games and computer software that stimulate children. Each piece was selected on how it would benefit children’s early literacy skills. Activities and story times are also done in the room especially ones that focus on parents and children reading and learning together. (Dickerson, 2012) This idea is one of many that librarians are incorporating in their day to day library setting. There was also a 24 hour observation in the children’s area of a public library in Arizona. This research reflects the important role libraries play in a child’s life. The researchers concluded that children are stimulated to learn early literacy skills in a variety of ways in a library, thus making libraries an integral part of a child’s life. (Becker, 2012)

Many early literacy ideas are focused on story times. Research has shown that engaging children in story time by using techniques such as open ended questions about the book being read, having children participate in creating sorting charts, and even play help children to grow with their early literacy skills. These are just a few of the ideas supported by research in these articles.

Professional development is also an area that is addressed in research on early literacy. It seems that many teachers and/or librarians don’t fully understand how early vocabulary development can effect a child’s reading later in life. (Cahill, 2012) Librarians can use their knowledge of books and other information about childhood development to teach classes to
parents and other caregivers on the best ways in which to stimulate children and help them learn about reading and writing at an early age.

The final outcome of most research regarding early literacy is that it is extremely beneficial for children. The more children are exposed to written and oral language the better their reading and writing skills will be when they start school. Even play helps children with their early literacy by helping them to use their cognitive and imaginative abilities. Libraries are and should strive to be an integral part of a child’s literacy needs.

---

**Bibliography**

**Entry 1:**


**Abstract:** “The article offers a history of the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library (ECRR) program. The importance of early childhood experiences involving emergent literacy is discussed. Collaboration between the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) to develop an emergent literacy curriculum for parents and caregivers to support early literacy is explored. The components of ECRR, three case studies involving the program's implementation, and the process of evaluating the program are also presented.”

**Annotation:** This article talks about how the Every Child Ready to Read initiative was started. The ECRR was produced by the ALSC and the PLA and is the backbone for how many librarians are involved in teaching early literacy skills at their libraries.

**Search Strategy:** Keyword

**Database:** Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
Method of Searching: A keyword search with Boolean operators was used in the Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts database. Full text access to the PDF was available straight from the database.

Search String: Emergent literacy and librar*

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 2:


Abstract: “The purpose of this study was to explore patronage and usage of the children's section of a public library. Patrons of the children's section of a public library in a small Northern Arizona city were observed for a total of 24 h over 12 sessions. Analytic induction was used to formulate categories based on field notes made during these observations. An observation of a story time session was also conducted. Data from an interview with a librarian was triangulated with observational data. In terms of patronage, the clear majority of parents/adult caregivers accompanying a child or children to the children's section were observed to be female and speaking English. In terms of usage, the following three categories of early learning were identified from the data: early literacy learning; learning how to use a library; and other developmentally appropriate learning. Study results offer insight into both the role of females in the intergenerational transmission of literacy and the rich learning young children experience at the library. At a time of library cutbacks and closures across the United States, this study speaks to the continued relevance of the children's section of the public library in providing free early learning experiences during the pivotal birth to five age range.”

Annotation: The basis of this research is to see how patrons use the children’s area of a library. The research states that through patrons using the library with their children, early literacy skills are reinforced in a variety of ways. It talks about the different ways a child can be stimulated to learn early literacy skills in a library. This research, because it was observational, is a true indicator of how patrons actually use a library.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: Education Research Complete

Method of Searching: A keyword search with Boolean operators was used in the Education Research Complete database. Full text access to the PDF was available right from the database.

Search String: Emergent literacy and story time
Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 3:


Abstract: “Teacher librarians can offer professional development, services, and programming to instructional leaders and care providers of young children; however, to optimize instruction, they should understand the general knowledge base of early care professionals. This study examined the literacy beliefs of the instructional leaders of child care facilities. Instructional leaders self-reported their beliefs through response to a survey that contained the Teacher Beliefs Questionnaire (Seefeldt, 2004). Results suggest that instructional leaders' beliefs are most consistent with research-based best literacy practice in the areas of book reading and writing and most contradictory in decoding knowledge. Additionally, care providers appear not to have a full understanding of the relationship between early vocabulary development and later reading ability. These findings point to areas which teacher librarians should target in offering professional development. Specifically, in read-aloud sessions librarians should model repeated readings, the use of expository text, facilitation of children's vocabulary development and incorporation of developmentally appropriate code-focused instruction into fun-filled, child-friendly activities and conversations. In co-planning and delivery of professional development, librarians can underscore the importance of vocabulary-building experiences and interactions and promote the reciprocal benefits of reading and writing development.”

Annotation: This is a research paper dealing with the first beliefs of librarians and teachers about early literacy. The conclusion of the research states that professional development for librarians, teachers and other people who deal with preschoolers will help with early literacy in children. When these professionals are knowledgeable with the practices of early literacy, children will benefit more. It references PLA’s and ALSC’s Every Child Ready to Read as a very helpful tool. This article is useful in in seeing how professional development for librarians and teachers affects early literacy in preschoolers.

Search Strategy: Footnote Chasing

Database: ProQuest

Method of Searching: This article was referenced in another article that was found using controlled vocabulary about emergent literacy, preschool children and libraries. The full text is accessible by using the *Get It* button. The “article” link did not work but the article was found by consulting the citation to find the journal through the *Library Literature and Information Science Full Text* database.
Search String: Referenced in:

Scholarly/Refereed Status: School Libraries Worldwide is listed in Ulrich’s database as being refereed and a scholarly/academic journal.

Entry 4:


Abstract: “This evaluation examines a crucial facet of public libraries’ services: children’s summer reading and preschool programs. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this evaluation examines how children’s preschool and summer reading programs contribute to their reading skills.”

Annotation: A group of researchers studied the literacy effects of summer reading programs in public libraries in Pennsylvania. They concluded that not only are summer reading programs fun and a good way to get kids reading and handling books, but they are beneficial to their literacy skills. This includes the many special programs libraries hold over the summer. The authors of this research are Dr. Donna Celano from Temple University and Dr. Susan B. Neuman from Michigan University. The research was supported by a grant provided by the Library Services and Technology Act.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: Google Scholar

Method of Searching: A keyword search in Google Scholar for early literacy and library was done. Access to the full text of the entire research paper was available straight from Google.

Search String: Early literacy and library

Scholarly/Refereed Status: This research was listed in Google Scholar as an academic article and it was administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Pennsylvania Department of Education.
Entry 5:


**Abstract:** “Literacy development does not begin after schooling starts. Things that teachers, librarians and parents can do to help very young children develop literacy skills are discussed.”

**Annotation:** This is a very interesting article about how libraries first started incorporating early literacy theories into their libraries. By learning how children develop written and oral skills they were able to adapt their story times and library surroundings to fulfill early literacy practices. This article focuses on New York Public Libraries and also includes background information on how the Early Childhood Resource and Information Center was started.

**Search Strategy:** Controlled Vocabulary

**Database:** ProQuest

**Method of Searching:** Controlled vocabulary for emergent literacy, preschool children and libraries was used for this search in ProQuest. The full text PDF was accessible straight through ProQuest.

**Search String:** SU(preschool children) AND SU(emergent literacy) AND SU(librar?)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** This article was listed in ProQuest as a scholarly article. Ulrich’s database also states that its content type is academic/scholarly and it is also refereed.

Entry 6:


**Abstract:** “The article looks at ways in which children's librarians can design early literacy education activities with limited space and budgets. Particular focus is given to the Preschool Literacy and You (PLAY) room at the Noble Neighborhood Library, part of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Libraries in Ohio as an example. The author discusses software, the design, and games that were used for the literacy education room. Activities of staff members and volunteers are also covered, including creating word labels, teaching reading techniques, and implementing activity guide sheets in play areas.”

**Annotation:** This article focuses on ways to implement strategies for helping children with early literacy skills. The main example is from the PLAY (Preschool Literacy and You) Room. This
room pulls together research findings on early literacy to create an environment that will help children grow in their literacy skills. Along with the PLAY room the librarians also have programs for parents and caregivers on ways to help their children with early literacy. The author of this article is the branch manager at the library and seems very well versed on the effects of early literacy and children.

**Search Strategy:** Keyword

**Database:** Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts

**Method of Searching:** A keyword search with Boolean operators was used in the *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* database. The full text PDF was accessible straight from the database.

**Search String:** Emergent literacy and library*

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

**Entry 7:**


**Abstract:** “There is a substantial and persistent gap in achievement between children from different backgrounds [National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). Children's reading and mathematics achievement in kindergarten and first grade. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office] that can be traced to the preschool years [Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Washington, DC: National Research Council, National Academy Press], highlighting the importance of ensuring that preschools that serve low-income populations provide strong support for children's language and early literacy development. The current project sought to improve program quality in Head Start classrooms throughout New England with the Literacy Environment Enrichment Program (LEEP), an in-service intervention that was delivered in the form of a credit-bearing course. The impact of LEEP was studied using a wait-list comparison group strategy to determine whether intervention group teachers (n =30) showed more fall–spring growth in measures of classroom support for literacy than did comparison group teachers (n =40). Multiple hierarchical regression analyses that controlled for background measures and fall scores on classroom measures revealed moderate to large positive effects on all measures of classrooms support for language and early literacy with the exception of writing, for which only a small effect was found.”
**Annotation:** This research is aimed at how professional development helps achieve early literacy skills in children. It specifically studied an enrichment program to see how it helped at preschools. The author of this research, David Dickinson, works for Vanderbilt University.

**Search Strategy:** Footnote Chasing

**Database:** Education Research Complete


**Search String:** This article was referenced by another article that was found by using a keyword search for emergent literacy and story time in the Education Research Complete database. The full text of the article was accessible by using the Get It button and linking straight to the article from the ScienceDirect database.

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

**Entry 8:**


**Abstract:** “Discusses the role of libraries in providing emergent literacy experiences for children in day care and preschool programs. The importance of exposure to print is discussed, and a study is described that evaluated a library outreach program that was developed to promote emerging literacy in preschoolers.”

**Annotation:** This article is a study of a librarian outreach program to help with early or emergent literacy. The study found, among other things, that big books and predictable books play an important role for pre-reading skills during a story time. The study goes on to find that pre-reading skills are picked up at a higher rate when taught by using the context of a book. This article has relevant information on how early literacy can be imparted to preschool children during a story time.

**Search Strategy:** ProQuest was searched for articles specifically dealing with emergent literacy, children and the library. The results were limited to scholarly journals. The full text of the article was
accessible by using the Get It button and locating the entire journal through Drexel Libraries. The citation was consulted to find the volume number and year of the article as the Get It link only went as far as the journal page in EBSCOhost and not the specific article.

**Database:** ProQuest

**Method of Searching:** Controlled Vocabulary

**Search String:**

SU(preschool children)
AND SU(emergent literacy)
AND SU(librar?)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** This article is listed as scholarly in ProQuest. Ulrich’s database also states that its content type is academic/scholarly.

---

**Entry 9:**


**Abstract:** “The article discusses strategies to increase literacy in early childhood education in the promotion of emerging literacy in children. The authors discuss preliteracy skills that increase literacy learning in children such as alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and vocabulary learning. The authors also discuss strategies for libraries to increase literacy instruction during time spent reading a story to young children. Topics include book handling skills that help children become comfortable with books and print awareness, the use of illustrations to support the learning of vocabulary, as well as the use of alliteration to teach phonological awareness.”

**Annotation:** This article gives many good suggestions and ideas on how to improve early literacy skills in preschool children. It talks about how early literacy skills prepare children for reading and focuses on story time activities to achieve this goal. It is an important article to read to know how to implement early literacy teaching after seeing the research on the positive effects.

**Search Strategy:** Keyword

**Database:** Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts

**Method of Searching:** A keyword search was done in the *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* database. The full text PDF was accessible right from the database.
Search String: Emergent literacy and story time

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 10:


Abstract: “This paper outlines the use of a technology toolkit to support emergent literacy curriculum and instruction in early childhood education settings. Components of the toolkit include hardware and software that can facilitate key emergent literacy skills. Implementation of the comprehensive technology toolkit enhances the development of these critical literacy skills in learners at risk of academic difficulties.”

Annotation: This article focuses on using technology to help children with early literacy skills. Things such as computer programs, power point slides, and tech toys are demonstrated. This article would be useful for librarians or teachers who are trying to familiarize themselves with different technology to help with early literacy.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: ProQuest

Method of Searching: A keyword search with Boolean operators was done in ProQuest. The full text PDF was accessible straight from the database.

Search String: Emergent literacy AND story time

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 11:

Abstract: “Enhancing children's literacy achievement has been identified as a top priority in education policy and research. Recent federal policies and legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind Act and the Reading First Act, have placed special emphasis on academic readiness for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The present project evaluated the effect of the Stony Brook Emergent Literacy Project, an approach that combines teacher training, classroom-based activities, and teacher-evaluated performance using rubrics to target preschoolers' emergent literacy skills. Ten Head Start classrooms were matched and randomly assigned to implement the Literacy Project or serve as the comparison group. Teachers in Literacy Project classrooms implemented 20 group activities and evaluated children's mastery of skills during the activities through rubrics. Children were assessed on their emergent literacy skills by independent evaluators at the beginning and end of the school year. Classrooms that implemented the Literacy Project demonstrated gains in children's emergent literacy skills over the course of the academic year. Results demonstrate the effect of implementing the Literacy Project on children's growth in emergent literacy skills and emphasize the utility of including explicit emergent literacy instruction in early childhood. (Contains 3 tables.)”

Annotation: This research paper focuses on the effect of early literacy in at risk children. The Stony Brook Emergent Literacy Project was used and evaluated at Head Start programs. It was found that these early literacy practices improved children’s reading skills better than standard Head Start practices. The research also states that fitting these early literacy practices into the current curricula rather than redoing the entire approach was beneficial. This research proves valuable when discussing the positive effects of early literacy on children.

Search Strategy: Controlled Vocabulary

Database: ProQuest

Method of Searching: ProQuest was searched using controlled vocabulary for emergent literacy and preschool children. The results were limited to scholarly journals. The full text of this article was accessible by using the Get It button and accessing the Education Research Complete database.

Search String: SU(preschool children) AND SU(emergent literacy)

Scholarly/Refereed Status: This article is listed as being scholarly in ProQuest. Ulrich’s database also states that its content type is academic/scholarly and it is also refereed.

Entry 12:

Abstract: “The article discusses early childhood literacy activity programs run by children's libraries and community centers in the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, focusing the ways in which these programs and children's librarians align parents' and children's goals towards literacy. The authors look at how early care providers can navigate conflicting social interactions among parents and the unintended consequences of social exclusion of parents and their children from the programs. Topics also include cooperation between library and community early learning programs, and problems of standardizing programs to the detriment of sensitive decision-making regarding children's developmental progress.”

Annotation: This article has great information on how programs for babies and toddlers affect literacy. It has many great arguments about how story time is not just a fun thing to do but how it is a child’s “work”. There are also ideas on how different community organizations can work together to better serve their patrons when it comes to children and early literacy. The authors of this article are both professors at the University of Western Ontario in Canada.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts

Method of Searching: A keyword search with Boolean operators was done in the Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts database. The full text PDF was accessible straight from the database.

Search String: Emergent literacy and librar*

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 13:


Abstract: “What are some effective group story-reading strategies that engage children and build skills for reading? This article describes teaching techniques that can be implemented tomorrow!”

Annotation: This article gives strategies for incorporating early literacy skills while reading a book during story time. There are many examples of activities used in story time such as story sequence time lines, graphic organizers and open ended questions. These ideas will be very
helpful to any librarian or teacher as they are preparing for a story time and incorporating early literacy learning.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: Google Scholar

Method of Searching: A keyword search was done in Google Scholar for emergent literacy and story time. This article was from the journal *Dimensions of Early Childhood* and the full text of the entire journal was accessible straight from Google.

Search String: Emergent literacy and story time

Scholarly/Refereed Status: This journal is published by the Southern Early Childhood Association and Ulrich’s database states that it is a refereed title and scholarly/academic.

Entry 14:


Abstract: “The importance of emergent literacy skills as a foundation for proficient reading has led to the development of interventions to teach these skills. These interventions are particularly important for children from disadvantaged homes because they often lack the home literacy experiences necessary for building foundational literacy skills prior to school entry. While previous interventions have been successful in developing literacy skills, noticeably absent has been instruction to develop comprehension. In this study, teachers explicitly taught the narrative structure to kindergarten and first grade children in high poverty schools to increase their comprehension of children’s literature. Instruction was delivered as children listened to stories during daily story time. The findings indicate that children who learned story structures recalled more ideas from new stories and answered more questions about structural elements of those stories (e.g., who is the main character?). The results suggest that teachers can deliver effective comprehension instruction to emergent and beginning readers in the context of listening comprehension activities.”

Annotation: This research paper identifies the issue of disadvantaged children and a lack of early literacy skills. Their findings promote narrative readings in story time because in their study it helped children with their overall comprehension of the story which leads to better early literacy skills. The three authors of this research are all affiliated with the Educational Psychology department at Pennsylvania State University.
Database: Education Research Complete

Method of Searching: A keyword search with Boolean operators was done in the Education Research Complete database. The full text was accessible by using the Get It button and linking straight to the article using SAGE Journals.

Search String: Emergent literacy and story time

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.

Entry 15:


Abstract: “An adaptation of a talk given as part of the session “The Literate Preschooler: Public Libraries and Emergent Readers” at the 1998 American Library Association Annual Conference is presented. Some ideas from current research and early childhood programs on how libraries can promote early literacy learning are discussed.”

Annotation: This article describes ways in which libraries can help to promote early literacy, especially during story time but also in the different areas of the physical library. It also gives brief research on how children develop their reading and writing skills. This article is an adaptation of a speech given at an ALA conference by William Teale.

Search Strategy: Keyword

Database: Google Scholar then Library Literature & Information Science Full Text

Method of Searching: This article was found using a keyword search in Google Scholar. Once the citation was located, the full text of the article was found through the Library Literature & Information Science Full Text database.

Search String: early literacy and library

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The database lists this article as being an academic article and Ulrich’s database also states that the content of the journal is refereed and academic/scholarly.
Conclusion and Personal Statement

There is a lot of information on early literacy and libraries out there but many of the results are practice articles. There has been a lot of research done on the effectiveness of early literacy, especially in preschools. It seems to me that many of the ideas and information used in preschools translates to libraries just as well. Librarians have many of the same opportunities as preschool teachers to instill literacy ideas in children. Story times and other programming and even the way a library is set up all come into play for children learning about language.

While searching through databases for this topic I found that “emergent literacy” and “early literacy” were used synonymously. There were other terms used as well such as “reading readiness.” I used both “early” and “emergent” in my searches to broaden my results. I had originally just thought to focus on early literacy in story time but then realized that this was not the only way libraries were helping children with early literacy. I found it very interesting and inspiring to see the many ways librarians were creating environments and programs specifically geared towards early literacy.

I certify that:

- This paper/project/exam is entirely my own work.
- I have not quoted the words of any other person from a printed source or a website without indicating what has been quoted and providing an appropriate citation.
- I have not submitted this paper / project to satisfy the requirements of any other course.

Signature: Catherine Wright