

Capstone Project: Librarian Interview

I conducted my librarian interview with Sonja Humphries on December 4, 2025, at the Donelson Branch of the Nashville Public Library. She is the current children's librarian at this branch. Here are the following questions with answers from the interview.

- **Ask the librarian to give you a tour of the children's area of the library. How are the books arranged? What other resources (besides books) are available? How does the physical library promote literacy? Look at aspects such as welcoming, fun atmosphere, book displays, easy-to-locate books, reading, working, and/or play areas; technology, etc.**
 - Ms. Sonja gave me a tour of the children's and teen section of the library, which was on the second floor. The floor was divided into two sections: children's books and a play area, and teen books, with a separate room for teens to hang out in. In the children's library section, the books were arranged by the author's last name. There were a few cases that utilized the Dewey system. The "easy books" were stored by last name, like a record store, so kids could flip through casually to decide what they wanted. She talked about how this arrangement is very successful for kids of this age, and it makes choosing fun and interactive. This section also has an "I Spy" wall for children to find items throughout the library, as well as a holiday scavenger hunt in which they can find certain symbols throughout the space; once they complete a row, they can receive a fun holiday sticker. It was really cool to see all of the displays and colorful books in this area.

- One thing that surprised me was the additional resources available to teens within the library. There were musical instruments, a 3D printer, and a mobile kitchen for all of their programming. It was so cool to see all of the other resources, besides books, to keep teens interested in coming to the library. They really created an excellent space for the older kids to enjoy because she mentioned that activities seem to drop off as the kids get older. These additional resources are a wonderful way for teens to remain active in the library.
- **What are the most popular books for PreK-8? How about for reluctant readers?**
 - The most popular books at this branch are the easy-read picture books. Ms. Sonja mentioned that this demographic frequented the library the most, which made this section the most popular to choose from. For reluctant readers, this section offers talking books, which help those who are just starting to read or kids who just want to listen along as the book is read aloud. The majority of her demographic is younger children, so most of this section is chosen over the teen books. She even places the very easy books near the floor so babies or toddlers can pick up or just look at them. This was a cool idea for getting even very young children interested in books.
- **What type of children's programming is offered? How do the programs promote literacy?**
 - This branch offers a lot of children's and teen programming. The library provides a different program each day, typically a read-aloud for the children. Ms. Sonja notes that she leads an after-school program for elementary children every Thursday afternoon, promoting information literacy through read-alouds. They

even offer a read-aloud experience with a therapy dog. For teens, they offer a once-a-month program for crafting and cooking. Ms. Sonja provides a “tween” experience for those who want to make crafts, eat snacks, or play games. This program is for ages 9-12, so the younger “tweens” are included as well. She also provided a monthly calendar for all of the programming, which is available both online in print at the circulation desk.

- **Is there a focus on providing diverse books? How does the children’s department serve minority groups?**

- The library ensures a mix of diverse books throughout its displays. Ms. Sonja recently set up a display of books about libraries and made sure to include diversity in this section. The “new” book section also contains books about many different people and cultures, thereby promoting diversity and inclusivity within the library. There is no current need to serve specific minority groups, but she mentions that they still provide the resources just in case. There was a section specifically tailored to books written in different languages to accommodate minority groups, but she discussed that there isn’t a specific demographic in this area.

- **Do the public library and schools work together at all? How?**

- Miss Sonja talks about how a Pre-K group visited the branch very recently as a field trip to sit in on a read-aloud they were hosting. Other examples include librarians visiting schools and Pre-K classes to conduct read-alouds. She mentioned that there aren’t many schools nearby, so there isn’t as much traffic to coordinate with. She’s worked at other branches that were closer to schools, and

they developed after-school programs to collaborate with school libraries. There are different outreach programs within the city, just not this specific branch.

- **If he or she could tell all future school librarians one thing, what would it be?**
 - Ms. Sonja discussed how she started out wanting to be a college librarian, but studying abroad and teaching children led her to pursue a career as a children's librarian. Her advice was to keep an open mind throughout this process, and she noted how rewarding it was to be a children's librarian. Another piece of advice she offers specifically to librarians is to let kids read what they want. She sometimes has to remind the parents who frequent the library to let their kids pick up something they're interested in, because enforcing specific books can deter kids from enjoying reading. This is also reinforced in this class, as we discussed censorship and the cultivation of readers.