AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLISHED BOOK REVIEWS AND THE CIRCULATION OF BOOKS AT AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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Thornton, Glenda A. An Examination of the Relationship between Published Book Reviews and the Circulation of Books at an Academic Library. Doctor of Philosophy (Higher Education), December, 1993, 87 pp., 14 tables, bibliography, 98 titles.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if book reviews are useful and significant indicators of potential circulation. Major book reviewing sources were studied to determine if some were more useful than others in selecting books which circulate. Six hypotheses were developed and tested. A random sample of books published and purchased in 1987 was taken from the circulating book collection of the Auraria Library and used to test these hypotheses. Detailed descriptive statistics allowed comparisons between the findings of this research and that of other researchers.

Correlation analysis indicated no significant relationships between reviewed books and cumulative circulation, between books reviewed in major selection sources used by librarians and cumulative circulation or between books reviewed in specialized reviewing sources and cumulative circulation.

Regression analysis found no significant relationships between books in biology, business, education, history and
mathematics and scholarly reviewing sources or sources frequently used by librarians. Chi-square showed that reviewed literature books were no more likely to circulate than literature books not reviewed. Reviewed literature books circulated more than reviewed books in all other subjects, however books in all other subjects which had not been reviewed, circulated more than expected.

The fact that a book was reviewed or reviewed many times had little bearing upon its potential for circulating. It was also concluded that these results provide the basis to question some of the assumptions that librarians and others hold in regard to the value of reviews.

It is recommended that librarians should replicate this research to see if their situations produce similar results. It is further recommended that a definitive definition of just what constitutes a successful circulation history or acquisition should also be formulated. Finally, it is recommended that librarians and publishers forge more interactive partnerships. Currently publishers work to get their books reviewed so that libraries will buy them. Publishers should seek information on what users actually borrow from libraries.