The Sea Stacks Project: Enhancing the Use of Regional Literature in Atlantic Canadian Schools

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Abstract

Research over the past two decades has amply demonstrated the importance of literature to the formation of both regional and national cultural identity, particularly in the face of mass market globalization of children's book publishing in the 21st century as well as the predominance of non-Canadian content from television, movies, books, magazines and internet media. However, Canadian children appear to have only very limited exposure to Canadian authors and illustrators. In Atlantic Canada, regional Atlantic Canadian authors and illustrators for children receive very limited critical attention, and resources for the study and teaching of Atlantic Canadian children's literature are few. Print and digital information sources on regional children's books, publishing, authors and illustrators are scattered and inconsistent in quality and currency. This research project directly addresses these key concerns by summarizing the findings of a survey of Atlantic Canadian teachers on their use of regional books. In response to survey findings, the paper concludes by describing the creation of the Sea Stacks Project: an authoritative, web-delivered information resource devoted to contemporary Atlantic Canadian literature for children and teens.

Keywords

library and information studies; services and resources for youth; children's literature

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The significance of Canadian children's literature for developing cultural awareness is documented by a growing body of research literature (Egoff and Saltman, 1999; Diakiw, 1997; Pantaleo, 2000; Baird, 2002; Reimer, 2008). On the basis of a detailed analysis of Canadian children's literature, Saltman (2003) claims that "the children's literature of a nation is a microcosm of that country's literary and sociocultural values, beliefs, themes, and images, including those of geography, history, and identity" (n.p.). Jones (2001) maintains that children need to see themselves reflected in the stories they read in order to develop an understanding of where they live and who they are (10). Moreover, as Diamond and Moore suggest, reading about one's own culture results in positive self-image as well as improved academic achievement (cited by Pantaleo, 2000, 46).
Contemporary Canadian regional literature has flourished in the past fifty years through the development of small presses, literary journals and provincial writers’ associations. Six major literary regions – Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, the West Coast and the North – are generally recognized, and Keefer (2005) notes that some of the best and most distinctively Canadian writing foregrounds regional, in contrast to national or cosmopolitan, vision and experience. Since 1978 (the publication date of Kevin Major’s novel Hold Fast, widely considered to be the first contemporary Atlantic Canadian book for youth), Atlantic Canadian authors and illustrators have produced a wide range of quality books, both fiction and nonfiction, in a diversity of formats, which can help young readers of all ages develop their sense of regional culture, identity and heritage at a time when the globalization of publishing and exposure to non-Canadian media content from television, magazines, the internet and movies introduces young people to diverse cultural experiences.

**Regional Literature in Schools**

Despite the richness of literary traditions in Atlantic Canada, it appears that local children and youth may not be consistently exposed to their own regional literature in classrooms or school libraries. A survey of teachers in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan conducted by Hambleton and Jobe (1982) revealed that, of the 125 titles featured in the Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s *Our Choice* guide, teachers had only heard of 35 and used only 9. According to Pantaleo (2001), little further research has been undertaken investigating the use or influence of Canadian national or regional literature in Canadian schools, and recent research has focused on the school library rather than the classroom. Several researchers (Pantaleo, 2002; Baird, 2002; Aalto, 2004; Oberg and Bainbridge, 2005; Johnston et al. 2006) have directly linked the decline in school library budgets and staffing to a reduction in the visibility and use of Canadian children’s literature in schools. In a study commissioned by the Canada Council for the Arts on the use of Canadian literature in Canadian high schools, Baird (2002) found that most Canadian high school students study non-Canadian literature and that school libraries have inadequate collections of Canadian materials. Baird concluded that teachers and school administrators have neither the time nor the budgets to seek out appropriate Canadian literature to use in their classrooms and lack appropriate guides to the literature and/or useful selection tools. Bainbridge, Carbonaro and Green (2005) surveyed elementary school teachers in Alberta on their knowledge and use of Canadian children’s literature and their thoughts about the role of Canadian literature in elementary school classrooms and found that most teachers were unfamiliar with contemporary Canadian books.

Haycock (2003) conducted a large-scale analysis of school libraries in Canada and noted that Canada is out of step with an international trend to support school libraries and teacher-librarians as a strategy to promote economic and cultural development. Research demonstrates the positive correlation between properly stocked, funded and developed school libraries and student achievement. Haycock also notes the implications of proper school library collections, staff, programs and funding on cultural identity, as teacher librarians traditionally were responsible for selecting Canadian and
regional books for school library collections and for promoting these books to students and teachers alike.

**Existing Web Resources**

Several web-based Canadian children’s literature resources have been developed. Information on some well-known Atlantic Canadian authors and illustrators is available on the internet on sites such as the Nova Scotia Writers’ Federation (http://www.writers.ns.ca/), the Canadian Children's Book Centre (http://www.bookcentre.ca/), Pika: The Canadian Children's Literature Database, Library and Archives Canada (http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/pika/008007-3000-e.html), the Canadian Children's Illustrated Books in English website (http://ccib.arts.ubc.ca/CCIB/Print.html) and the Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers website (http://www.canscaip.org/). However, this information is scattered, inconsistently organized and erratic in currency and completeness. In particular, these sites are not structured to facilitate the discovery of regional books, authors or illustrators.

**Surveying Atlantic Canadian Schools**

**Research Questions**

Since the body of research investigating teachers' knowledge and use of regional books in Canadian schools is both limited and dated, a research study was conducted in 2009-10 to analyze the use of Atlantic Canadian books in Atlantic Canadian schools. This study was funded by a Research Development Fund grant from Dalhousie University.

This study addressed four specific questions:

1. What children's literature is currently being used in Atlantic Canadian school classrooms?
2. Are teachers in the Atlantic provinces familiar with the work of both national and regional children's authors and illustrators?
3. Do teachers in the Atlantic provinces currently use the work of regional children’s authors and illustrators in their classrooms?
4. What further information do Atlantic Canadian teachers need to facilitate or encourage their use of regional authors and illustrators?

**Methodology**

An online survey of Atlantic Canadian teachers was designed to address the key research questions identified above, and permission was sought from each school district in the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador requesting the participation of their elementary and secondary schools. The survey (see Appendix A) was constructed using Opinio, the survey software provided by Dalhousie University, and the survey operated from a secure server. Anonymity and confidentiality of survey respondents was assured, and
the names of individual respondents, schools or school districts were not gathered via the survey instrument.

Distributing the survey to teachers in the four Atlantic provinces proved to be a challenge. It was not possible to send the survey directly to teachers; all communication was conducted through the regional school boards. Thus, approvals had to be sought from the regional school boards in each province and then, once approval was granted, each school board agreed to distribute the survey electronically to all teachers in the district. While all school boards did agree to participate, the indirectness of this communication with survey respondents and the lack of follow-up reminders may have been responsible for the low rate of return. A total of only 56 questionnaires were completed, as described in Table 1. This low rate of return suggests that the survey results should not be generalized to all teachers in Atlantic Canada; the findings must be limited to the sample itself.

Table 1: Respondents by Province of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveys were completed by teachers working in elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools. See Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents by type of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF SCHOOL</th>
<th>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers represented a range of years of experience, with an almost even balance of teachers with less than five, five to ten, and eleven to fifteen years of teaching experience being represented amongst respondents. Teachers with over fifteen years of experience were least represented. See Table 3.
Table 3: Years of teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE OF EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>LESS THAN 5 YEARS</th>
<th>5-10 YEARS</th>
<th>11-15 YEARS</th>
<th>16-20 YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

(1) What children's literature is currently being used in Atlantic Canadian school classrooms?

Teachers were asked to identify their students' three favourite authors in general, with no limitation on jurisdiction. Teachers reported that Robert Munsch was by far the most popular with students in elementary school classrooms, and Stephenie Meyer was the runaway winner with both junior high and high school students (see Table 4). Authors who only received a single mention were not included in this table.

Table 4: Authors most popular with students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF MENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Munsch</td>
<td>Canada (Ontario)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephenie Meyer</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.K. Rowling</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Korman</td>
<td>Canada/US</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald Dahl</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Walters</td>
<td>Canada (Ontario)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geronimo Stilton (pseudonym)</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Spinelli</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Sachar</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Lowry</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Cleary</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Blume</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoebe Gilman</td>
<td>Canada (Ontario)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were also asked to identify their own three favourite authors of books for children and teens, again with no limitation on jurisdiction. A very wide range of authors were identified, with only six names receiving more than a single mention (see Table 5).
Table 5: Authors most popular with teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF MENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Munsch</td>
<td>Canada (Ontario)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.K. Rowling</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Spinelli</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoebe Gilman</td>
<td>Canada (Ontario)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Lowry</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Seuss</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, both lists are dominated by authors from the United States, with American authors representing roughly half of the "favourite" authors named. Canadian authors are represented by Ontario writers Munsch, Gilman and Walters. No regional Atlantic Canadian authors received more than a single mention.

(2) Are teachers in the Atlantic Provinces familiar with the work of both national and regional children's authors and illustrators?

Teachers were asked to name a Canadian children's book they had used in their classroom teaching in the past year. Thirty-eight of the fifty-six respondents answered this question and were able to name a long list of titles and authors. One teacher commented, "Robert Munsch and Phoebe Gilman were featured authors in our classroom. We feature one [author] a month [and] try to read a title by that author every other day for a month." Another teacher noted that "[m]ost of the books in our classroom library are written by Canadian authors". One teacher listed half a dozen titles and ended her list with the exclamation "and many, many more!!" Although a few teachers mis-identified American authors such as Dr. Seuss, Jan Brett and Mary Pope Osborne as Canadian, most were able to name several Canadian titles and authors with ease and seemed quite confident in their knowledge of Canadian writing for children and teens. Experienced teachers (those with ten or more years of teaching experience) and inexperienced teachers (those with less than five years of teaching experience) were equally able to name a Canadian children's book they had used in their classroom teaching in the past year. Teachers primarily reported using Canadian children's books in reading or language arts classes. A minority of teachers indicated that they used Canadian children's books across the curriculum, particularly in science and social studies classes.

Teachers were also asked if they had used an Atlantic Canadian children's book in their classroom teaching in the past year, and 48.2% of respondents indicated that they had done so. Some teachers apologized for their inability to answer this question with comments such as: "Sorry, not that I can recall at the moment," "Unsure, actually," "I am unsure at the moment," and "Not a lot. I do not feel like it is promoted a lot in our schools. Unless I go hunt it down and buy it myself I don't feel like Atlantic Canadian [writing] is promoted in lower elementary by my board." Overall, teachers exhibited much more uncertainty when asked to identify a book by an Atlantic Canadian author they had used in their classroom teaching in the past year. Experienced teachers (those
(3) Do teachers in the Atlantic Provinces currently use the work of regional children's authors and illustrators in their classrooms?

Teachers were asked whether they feel it is important to use Canadian books and, specifically, Atlantic Canadian books in their classrooms. The responses were uniformly positive; 94.6% of respondents stated that they felt it was desirable to include books by regional authors and illustrators in their classrooms. Some teachers stated that their students can more readily identify with the stories and characters. One teacher commented enthusiastically, "Kids love the books! It's great to use Canadian content since kids are exposed to so much American media outside of school." In a similar vein, one teacher stated, "Kids think everything good only comes from the US. We must change this perception." Another noted, "It's important for students to connect to what they are reading. When texts are written from the Canadian perspective and references are made to places in Canada or situations specific to Canadians, students connect on a deeper level." In other words, as another teacher stated, "Students need to know more about who they are as Canadians and how we became who we are." Focusing on regional literature, one teacher observed, "The formation of an Atlantic Canadian student's awareness of self might be strengthened by literature that reflects Atlantic Canadian themes."

Others noted that national and regional books can help young people learn about their own history and culture. One teacher eloquently stated, "Canadian books act as a window to expose children to the great cultural and geographical diversity found in Canada. Simultaneously, it acts as a mirror by reflecting Canadian students' own values and culture." Another commented, "Children need to see the connections of where they live to the rest of the world. Sometimes children know more about other places than where they live." Another teacher remarked, "We tend to be too general with understanding our own culture and history. Reading books and noticing that other people are writing books about their place of residence will hold value and meaning to the student. Kids love reading and looking at pictures about where they live. It also brings great connections [between] the author and the person reading the book."

Many teachers praised the high quality of Canadian books and the need to support our own authors, illustrators and publishers. One teacher noted, "I like to expose the children to the best, and we have wonderful Canadian writers and illustrators. These artists are often very open to emails, etc. from the children which makes communicating and connecting easy." Another emphasized that, "We need to support our home-grown talent and we do have a lot of talented Canadian authors. Eric Walters is like a rock star to my students. They love any book he has written. I know that they like that he writes about things that have happened locally or across the country." A teacher based in Newfoundland noted, "The children relate really well to local settings and characters. Kevin Major is a great resource and comes to our school often."
Lastly, some teachers stated that reading regional books can encourage some young people to consider creative careers themselves. As one teacher remarked, "It is important for children to see that there are many people in their own geographical area that write, illustrate and publish literature. I find this encourages young writers and lets them see that this is a viable profession to pursue."

(4) What further information do Atlantic Canadian teachers need to facilitate or encourage their use of regional authors and illustrators?

Although teachers found Canadian books quite accessible, many respondents commented on barriers preventing their greater use of regional Atlantic Canadian books. Typical comments include: "I would love to have more books readily available (already in the school) to use that are about our region and by authors in our region, to help make the content more relevant to my students, but this is not the case." "It [using regional authors and illustrators in the classroom] is important, but I don't know much about the books that are available." "There is not much attention given to Atlantic content at my school." "I know very few Atlantic Canadian children's authors and I am very big on children's literature. How can Atlantic literature for young children be better promoted?"

Many teachers complained about the time involved in finding age-appropriate Atlantic Canadian books to use with their students. A common sentiment is that too much of a teacher's time is spent hunting for resources and good quality, relevant books. A large majority of teachers (80.4% of respondents) indicated that they did not feel well informed about regional books and particularly noted that they found it difficult to identify regional books that connected with aspects of the curriculum. One teacher observed, "Finding children's books, particularly books written for ages 5 to 9 about Nova Scotians who have contributed to Nova Scotia's identity is particularly difficult. Alexander Graham Bell seems to be the one that always pops up. I'd like to see more biographies around Mi'kmaq leaders, leaders from the black community, Acadians, etc. that could be brought into the classroom." Several teachers from Nova Scotia particularly lamented the lack of materials about African Nova Scotians, their three hundred year history and unique cultural identity.

Several teachers noted that they had no specific strategy for finding regional books and tended to stumble upon them by accident: "I usually just find [Atlantic Canadian children's books] on my own when I'm at Woozles [an independent children's bookstore in Halifax] or Chapters, etc. It's almost accidental that I find them." To overcome this difficulty, teachers indicated that they would appreciate lists of books by regional authors that would be useful for teaching specific themes, classified by age range or reading level. Several teachers commented on the desirability of a website that could provide this information in one easy-to-use resource. One teacher stated, "I would love to have a list of local authors on a reference website I could go to to search for books related to what I am teaching at any given time. [At the moment] I don't know who the authors/illustrators are and what their books are called. I would have to have time to do
research to find out, and I don’t have that time.” Another teacher expressed a need for a list of authors, titles, reviews and curriculum connections.

**Discussion**

This study revealed that although 94.6% of teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they felt it was important in principle to include regional authors and illustrators in their classrooms, only 48.2% reported that they had actually done so in the previous year, and only 19.6% stated that they felt well informed about Atlantic Canadian books for youth. One respondent commented, "It is important for children to see that there are many people in their own geographical area that write, illustrate and publish literature. I find this encourages young writers and lets them see that this is a viable profession to pursue." Another respondent noted that "children need to see the connections of where they live to the rest of the world. Sometimes children know more about other places than where they live."

When asked about their knowledge of Atlantic Canadian children’s books, respondents expressed the need for a web-based resource listing regional authors, illustrators, titles and themes as well as information about curriculum links. One teacher stated, "I would love to have a list of local authors on a reference website I could go to to search for books related to what I am teaching at any given time. [At the moment] I don’t know who the authors/ illustrators are and what their books are called. I would have to have time to do research to find out, and I don’t have that time." Several teachers commented that school libraries do not typically promote Canadian or regional literature and attributed their minimal use of regional books to the lack of professional teacher-librarians in the schools. This observation supports Haycock’s (2003) conclusion that the neglect of teacher-librarians and school libraries has an impact on cultural identity through decreased selection of Canadian books.

This study clearly demonstrated that, although information on some well-known regional authors is available on a number of internet sites, this information is scattered, inconsistently organized and erratic in currency and completeness. Furthermore, teachers simply do not have the time to seek out information on a variety of widely dispersed sites and strongly expressed the need to have it collected and organized in a single easy-to-use and authoritative online resource.

**Developing an information resource: Sea Stacks**

The findings of the survey research provided the impetus for a successful 2009 SSHRC Standard Research Grant proposal, which resulted in a one-year research grant to begin work on the Sea Stacks content management system and prototype web interface for contemporary (1978-2010) English language Atlantic Canadian books for children and teens. An interdisciplinary research team consisting of principal investigator Vivian Howard (School of Information Management, Dalhousie University)
and co-researchers Susan Fisher¹, Keith Lawson² and Andrea Schwenke Wyile³ along with research assistants⁴ from Dalhousie University, Acadia University and the University of New Brunswick worked collaboratively to develop the website structure and content. MLIS student Nicole Dixon worked as the web designer, using the open source content management system Drupal to develop the Sea Stacks site.

This project defined a book as Atlantic Canadian on the basis of its subject and/or creator: books were included if they were about Atlantic Canada or set in Atlantic Canada or if either the author or illustrator was from Atlantic Canada or had lived in Atlantic Canada for at least one year.

The prototype Sea Stacks website (http://www.seastacks.ca) (see Figure 1) is now publicly accessible and includes selected profiles for twenty-five Atlantic Canadian authors and illustrators (seven from Nova Scotia and six from each of the remaining Atlantic Provinces).

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¹ Susan Fisher is curator of the Eileen Wallace Special Collection in Children's Literature at the University of New Brunswick, the most comprehensive research collection of children's and young adult literature in Atlantic Canada. She has overseen the development of the Portolan Database, an annotated bibliography of Atlantic Canadian books for children held within the Eileen Wallace Collection.

² Dr. Keith Lawson has expertise in electronic text design and information management systems. He has been involved in a number of digital humanities projects and has expertise in Web 2.0 applications which enable social and collaborative activity. He is currently researching the presence of technology in education and has particular interest in social networking and Web 2.0 technologies for educational collaboration.

³ Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyile is Associate Professor at Acadia University where she has taught Children's Literature courses since 2000. She is a member of the Children's Literature Association, the International Research Society for Children's Literature, is on the Editorial Board of Children's Literature in Education, and is co-editor of Considering Children's Literature: A Reader. Broadview Press, 2008.

⁴ Research assistants included Kimberly Wallace (Acadia), Chasity St. Louis and James Langer (UNB), and Lara Killian and Jasmine MacDonald (Dalhousie).
Figure 1: Sea Stacks homepage (http://seastacks.ca)

This resource builds upon the Portolan Bibliography (http://www.lib.unb.ca/collections/clc/portolan/) compiled by co-researcher Susan Fisher at the University of New Brunswick. Portolan is a publicly accessible listing of nearly 2000 historical and contemporary Atlantic Canadian books for children, 858 of which have been annotated and keyword identified. The Sea Stacks project expands upon Portolan by providing author or illustrator entries, accessible through our prototype web interface, that consist of a brief biography, an annotated list of primary works and a bibliography of secondary works (reviews, analytical essays, etc.). The bibliography of primary works is searchable by theme, genre, format and reading level, making it a valuable curriculum resource. An informative abstract is provided if the book has been examined first-hand. For books not available for direct examination, stub entries have been created. Figures 2 and 3 show the Janet McNaughton profile page and a sample entry for one of McNaughton`s books, Dragon Seer (2009).
Figure 2: Janet McNaughton author profile page

Figure 3: Dragon Seer (sample entry for primary work)
**Future Development of the Sea Stacks site**

In the future, we are hoping to expand the contents of our resource into a more complete research tool, including a comprehensive list of books, authors and illustrators; videotaped interviews with selected authors and illustrators; a more thorough analysis of curriculum links; and an original analysis of the history of publishing, marketing and selling regional books for children and teens in the Atlantic Provinces. In addition, we plan to develop and test different web interfaces which will make the contents "user friendly" for different subsets of users including children, teens, practitioners and researchers.

Ultimately, we hope that the website will be a significant research and selection tool for a diverse range of users within and beyond the Atlantic Canadian region, including scholars of children's literature and popular culture, teachers, public and school librarians and library staff, publishers, writers, illustrators, and young people themselves.

**Works Cited**


Appendix A: Survey instrument (for classroom teachers)

Assessing the state of regional children’s literature in Atlantic Canada

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled study. The purpose of the study is to understand the use of Atlantic Canadian children’s literature in Atlantic Canadian classrooms.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve completing a survey of 20 questions, which should take no more than 15-20 minutes. You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions. Your name will not appear on your completed survey, and no identifying information is being collected as part of this survey.

Any questions you have will be answered. You may leave the survey at any time before completing it. There are no known risks from your participation. The benefits of participating will be your contribution to an understanding of the use of regional Canadian children’s literature in Atlantic Canadian schools. There is no cost to you except for your time and you are not compensated monetarily or otherwise for participation in this study.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Vivian Howard, at 902-494-3031 or howardv@dal.ca.

By participating in the survey, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

As you answer these questions, please focus on the last school year (2008-9).

1. Which authors did your students enjoy the most last year? Please list the students’ three favourites.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. I can’t think of a favourite author

2. Which authors did you enjoy the most in your classroom last year? Please list your own favourites.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. I can’t think of a favourite author
3. Did you use any Canadian children's books in your classroom teaching last year?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No (please explain why not)

4. If you used Canadian children's books, in what subject areas did you use them?
   a. Language Arts
   b. Social Studies
   c. Math
   d. Science
   e. Art
   f. Other (please specify)

5. Do you have a favourite Canadian children's author?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

6. Do you have a favourite Canadian children's book illustrator?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

7. Do you have a favourite Canadian children's author from the Atlantic provinces (NS, NB, NL, or PEI)?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

8. Do you have a favourite Canadian children's book illustrator from the Atlantic provinces (NS, NB, NL, or PEI)?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

9. Did you use any Atlantic Canadian children's books in your classroom teaching last year?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No (please explain why not)

10. If you used Atlantic Canadian children's books, in what subject areas did you use them?
    a. Language Arts
    b. Social Studies
    c. Math
11. Do you think it is important to use Canadian books in your classroom?
   a. Yes (please explain why)
   b. No (please explain why not)

12. Do you think it is important to use Atlantic Canadian books in your classroom?
   a. Yes (please explain why)
   b. No (please explain why not)

13. How do you find Canadian children's books to use in your classroom? (check all that apply):
   a. Reading book reviews
   b. Visiting bookstores or bookstore websites
   c. Visiting the public library or public library website
   d. Other websites (please specify)
   e. Information from publishers or book reps
   f. Our Choice catalogues
   g. Recommendations from other teachers
   h. Recommendations from the school library staff
   i. Recommendations from others (friends, family, etc.)
   j. Other (please specify)
   k. I don't deliberately look for Canadian children's books

14. Are you familiar with the Canadian Children's Book Centre?
   a. Yes
   b. No

15. Did your school host an author/illustrator visit in the last two years?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

16. Do you experience any problems finding Canadian children's books to use in your classroom?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No
17. Do you experience any problems finding Atlantic Canadian children's books to use in your classroom?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

18. Do you feel you know enough about Atlantic Canadian children's book authors and illustrators?
   a. Yes
   b. No (what information do you feel you need?)

19. Would you like to include more books by Atlantic Canadian children's authors and illustrators in your classroom?
   a. Yes (please explain why)
   b. No (please explain why not)

20. What degrees have you completed? (choose all that apply):
   a. Undergraduate degrees
      i. BEd
      ii. BA
      iii. BSc
      iv. Other (please specify)
   b. Graduate degrees
      i. MEd
      ii. MA
      iii. MSc
      iv. PhD
      v. Other (please specify)

21. In the past year, have you participated in any continuing education opportunities (such as conferences, workshops, or lectures) related to Canadian children's literature in general or Atlantic Canadian children's literature in particular?
   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No (please explain why not)

22. What would encourage you to use more books by Atlantic Canadian children's authors and illustrators in your classroom?