

# Whither the Child? The iSchool Approach to Research Relating to Children and Adolescents

**Leanne Bowler**  
University of Pittsburgh  
[lbowler@sis.pitt.edu](mailto:lbowler@sis.pitt.edu)

**Kate McDowell**  
University of Illinois  
[kmcdowel@illinois.edu](mailto:kmcdowel@illinois.edu)

**Denise Agosto**  
Drexel University  
[denise.agosto@ischool.drexel.edu](mailto:denise.agosto@ischool.drexel.edu)

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## Abstract

This alternative event will investigate how iSchools are approaching research in the area of children and adolescents. Participants will work together to tackle this overarching question: *Where does youth research fit in to the iSchool movement?* Participants will be asked to contribute to the development of a collaborative agenda for youth-related research in the iSchools by identifying related challenges and opportunities within the iSchool community.

*Keywords:* iSchools, children, adolescents, research agenda, research methods

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**Introduction:** This alternative event will investigate how iSchools are approaching research in the area of children and adolescents. Participants will work together to tackle this overarching question: *Where does youth research fit in to the iSchool movement?*

The iSchool movement grew, in part, out of the traditional library school. This is especially true of schools that have a history of preparing students to work with children and adolescents in public and school libraries. In fact, many of the iSchools are ALA accredited and continue to provide courses to train children's, young adult, and school librarians. The web site for the iSchool caucus identifies eight schools with a specialization in children and adolescents, including school librarianship (Drexel, Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Indiana, Michigan, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Texas and Washington). A survey of the web sites for each of the 38 iSchools in the iCaucus found at least 42 faculty members from 22 iSchools who teach or conduct research with a focus on children and adolescents. When we looked at the proceedings for the 2011 and 2012 iConferences, we saw evidence of contributions to research, with five of 177 papers in 2011 and nine of 148 papers in 2012 on topics related to children and adolescents.

The iSchools have a broad vision of information, people, and technology, and they focus on critical information issues in society. The iSchool movement has allowed the lens of inquiry to widen, opening up new areas for research. But will this new vision continue to include research related to children and adolescents? How does the language around youth research (qualitative, outcome-based, story, etc.) mesh with the language of "information"? Are there opportunities waiting to be discovered? Or have we left the children behind?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this alternative event is to:

- Open up a conversation about the nature of research in the area of children and adolescents at iSchools;
- Identify opportunities and barriers for researchers conducting research in the area of children and adolescents at an iSchool;
- Bring together researchers, educators, students, and others interested in issues relating to youth and information;
- Begin to build lasting youth-focused communities and support systems within the iSchool movement.

**Intended Audience:**

- Professors who conduct research in the area of children and youth;
- Doctoral students;
- Prospective doctoral students;
- Deans and directors of iSchools;
- Librarians;
- Designers of children's media.

**Length of time:** 90 minutes

**Agenda:** Participants will be asked to contribute to the development of a collaborative agenda for youth-related research in the iSchools by identifying related challenges and opportunities within the iSchool community. Questions for participants will include:

- 1) What is the role of youth-related research in your iSchools today?
- 2) What should the role of this research be in the future?
- 3) What are some of the unique challenges, barriers, and opportunities for youth-related research?
- 4) Where should our community of youth-related researchers go from here?

**Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field:** This event will build on traditional strengths of the field while inviting new approaches and vision to research and teaching related to children and adolescents. It will focus on youth-related scholarship in action, with an emphasis on identifying the kinds of youth-related data gathering, innovations in youth-related research, and knowledge of youth and information that is unique to the iSchool community.