Among the overwhelming amount of resources available in the arts, it is difficult to identify the most relevant and valuable information. It is the intent of this paper to highlight quality resources for both artists’ books and miniature books from the viewpoint of professional librarians in Indiana. This paper reports on the perceived value of reference sources. Based on the findings of this study a better understanding of the value of the tools reference librarians use will be gained.

One way to evaluate the perceived value of reference sources is to ask experts (art librarians in this study). Experts’ perceived value in this study is assessed within the context of the users’ needs. Therefore, to begin this study, two users’ needs scenarios were developed. These scenarios, which illustrate potential needs within the rare books field, represent the viewpoint of two students with differing objectives to (Appendix 1). The first scenario involves an undergraduate student interested in combining their writing hobby with their sculptural background, and would like to research artists’ books as an appropriate medium. An artist’s book is “a book designed, produced, or illustrated by an artist. Also an idiosyncratic one-of-a-kind book or a very limited edition” (Greenfield, 1998, p.5). The patron would like to find non-conventional book forms along with information about the manipulation of text within the book form itself. The second scenario is from the perspective of a graduate student looking to research a paper topic. The student is to find the history of miniature books and the influence of their small format. A miniature book is “a book under 3 inches in height” (Greenfield, 1998, p.45). It should be said that miniature books are not necessarily art books; however, it is common for them to be artful in content or format.

After defining users’ needs in each scenario, a list of resources pertaining to each scenario was identified (Appendix 1). These resources were first located by subject searches in Indiana University libraries’ online catalog, IUCAT, for “artists’ books,” “artists’ books – specimens,” “miniature books” and “miniature books – specimens.” Then the list of resources was expanded by searching Art Index Retrospective, WorldCat, Art Full Text, LISA, and EBSCO host. These searches produced two sizeable lists of relevant resources and resulted in a list of twenty-eight sources for the first scenario and twelve for the second.

Since data collection involved art librarians, it was necessary to gain approval from the Human Subjects Committee. Submission of all procedures and instruments used along with the proof of passing a test was necessary before any research could begin. Once approval was confirmed, a list of librarians to contact was developed through two online sources. Libcat: A Guide to Reference Sources on the Internet, a website containing library information that is searchable geographically, was used to identify academic libraries in Indiana. Each library’s homepage was examined and a contact person was identified for each library. Another list of academic libraries in Indiana was identified and used, the Manchester College Library website. To be sure that all possible library contacts were identified and used, the Manchester College Library website. To be sure that all possible library contacts were identified, the American Libraries Directory was used (American Library Association, 2004). This search resulted in a total of twenty-eight relevant libraries and thirty-two librarians (Table 1).

During January and February 2006 recruitment emails were sent to all thirty-two librarians, from the assembled list of library contacts, inviting the librarians to participate in the research project. This initial email was met with an impressively speedy response from eight librarians who replied within an hour of the initial email. For the librarians that did not respond within a week, a second email was sent, followed by a third email if still no response was received after an additional week. Of the thirty-two librarians contacted, eight said they were unable to contribute, twelve gave no response to the emails, three said “maybe,” and nine agreed to participate. For those librarians that responded, a study information sheet was sent along with the scenarios and the resource lists requiring their responses within the word document attachments (Appendix 1). Data was received from only five librarians, at a response rate of fifteen percent. For each
scenario, all participants were asked to rank the top five most helpful resources from the list, and if they knew of additional resources that were not included on the list, to add and rank them.

All responses were recorded throughout the process for later interpretation. Librarian’s responses are reported in Table 2, which includes the rankings for the resources they found valuable, and the average of each resource’s rankings. The resources are ranked by rating averages first, then alphabetically. Both the averages and the individual values for each resource are included because incorporating only the averages would have hidden the instances when a book received both high and low values. For example, the Journal of Artists’ Books was ranked one by “Librarian 1” and ranked five by “Librarian 2” yielding an average value of three. Similarly, an average of three was found for Joan Lyons’ Artists’ Books: Critical Anthology and Sourcebook, but it was ranked three by both “Librarian 2” and “Librarian 3.” Additionally, the fifth librarian involved in the study gave a general response to the scenarios, which is included at the bottom of the table.

As seen in Table 2, thirteen books were assigned with a value for scenario one and eleven in scenario two. Librarians 1 through 4 were able to rank their top five most valuable resources for scenario one, however, as noted by “Librarian 3,” limiting the number of important items to five was not realistic. Scenario two seemed to present a greater challenge to “Librarian 3” who said, “This is not my area of expertise. I would send the student to the [Anonymous] Library.”
### TABLE 2: RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO 1: ARTISTS' BOOKS</th>
<th>Rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubert, Renne Riese, and Judd, David Hubert. The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists' Books. NY: Granary Books, 1999.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otis College of Art and Design, Artists Book Collection <a href="http://content.library.otis.edu/collections/artistsbooks.htm">http://content.library.otis.edu/collections/artistsbooks.htm</a></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

Librarian 3: “There are many useful resources on this bibliography. Limiting me to only 1-5 is not realistic.”

Librarian 4: “I would rank this higher if you could browse by format or materials rather than just by artist.”
The rating values for each item varied. The first resource in scenario one of Table 1, Johanna Drucker’s The Century of Artists’ Books, was ranked by almost all librarians; “Librarians 2 and 4” gave it a one and “Librarian 3” gave it a two. The first item in scenario two of Table 1, Miniature Books: Their History from the Beginnings to the Present Day by Louis W. Bondy, was ranked high by the most librarians. It received a ranking of one from “Librarians 1, 2, and 3,” and a two from “Librarian 4.” It was more common though for items to have been ranked by only two or none of the four librarians. A higher number of librarians indicate a higher value than items ranked by fewer or only one librarian. For example, Miniature Books: Their History from the Beginnings to the Present Day, was rated by all four librarians, for the second scenario, and The Century of Artists’ Books, was ranked among the five sources by three out of the four librarians. These two top sources were not only ranked high but also ranked by high number of librarians. Thus, almost all of the participant art librarians at Indiana agree on the perceived value of at least one item for each scenario.
This sample group is not large enough to be representative of all art librarians. Also, the use of only two scenarios limits the evaluation to a small number of sources. The values assigned to each item offer an introductory insight of the value of the resources. Further research could be done for closer examination by expanding the number of resources to be ranked and the number of librarians surveyed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank each person who made this study possible because without his or her help it would have been unfeasible. There was a great degree of patience with each participant who had to endure numerous emails with reminders of deadlines, and everyone was very helpful even if they could not participate in this specific research endeavor. Many librarians were unable to help due to their lack of familiarity with the resources or the topic itself for not every library collected the subject matter I was researching. In this instance, he or she tried to either provide me with contact information of another librarian they thought could help, or forwarded the information on for me. Their help made this study a positive and insightful experience.

APPENDIX 1

SCENARIO 1: ARTIST BOOKS

An undergraduate college student is interested in combining their hobby of writing with their sculptural background and would like to research artist books as an appropriate medium. In order to do this, the student would like to research the possible non-conventional book forms along with the manipulation of text among the book form itself.

Resources
[Please choose 5 resources, and rank them according to their usefulness in the spaces provided: 1 = most useful, 5 = least useful]


The Bonefolder. Dewitt, NY.


Kaar, Joanne B. Papermaking and Bookbinding; Coastal Inspirations. Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications, 2005.


SCENARIO 1 CONTINUED:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
[If there are any additional resources you would like to add, please do so below. If the resources are among your top five most helpful resources, please rank them. Please add any additional information you think would be relevant]

(Author, Title)

SCENARIO 2: MINIATURE BOOKS

A graduate student is researching the history of miniature books for an assigned paper. The paper is to include an overview of the topic, the books' influences, and a list of resources used.


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
[If there are any additional resources you would like to add, please do so below. If the resources are among your top five most helpful resources, please rank them. Please add any additional information you think would be relevant]

(Author, Title)

REFERENCES