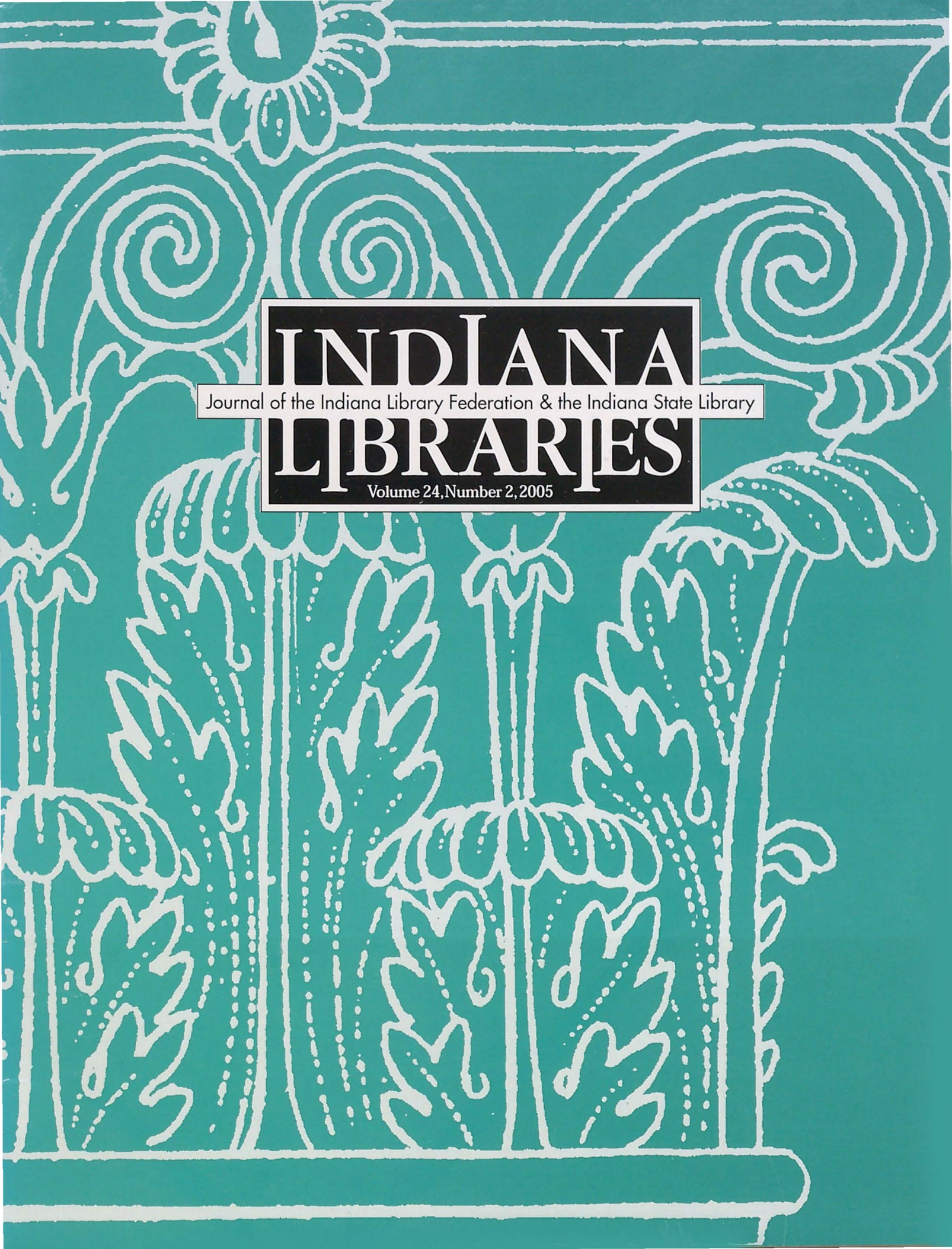

INDIANA LIBRARIES

Journal of the Indiana Library Federation & the Indiana State Library

Volume 24, Number 2, 2005

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C O N T E N T S

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FOREWARD:

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE A LIBRARIAN?

by Steven J. Schmidt,
Guest Editor

They [librarians] are subversive. You think they're just sitting there at the desk, all quiet and everything. They're like plotting the revolution, man. I wouldn't mess with them..." —Michael Moore

Originally, the word stereotype was used to describe a method for making a copy of a page of type so that exact duplicates could be made. It wasn't until 1922 that Walter Lippman first used the word to describe groups of people. Less than a decade later, social scientists had begun to look at the accuracy of stereotypes. Many of these early studies found that overall; stereotypes were "simplistic, inaccurate, [and] not based upon personal contact with a group."

For over nearly a century, librarians have waged all out war on the image of the hair-in-a-bun & shhing librarian, to the point that our profession has become obsessed with eradicating this image. A 1989 American Library Association long rage planning survey ranked the image of the librarian as one of the top five concerns of the profession, along with access to information, intellectual freedom, library finances and personnel.

Before you read any farther, I am going to ask you to try a little experiment. Close your eyes for a moment and concentrate on the first picture that comes into your mind when you think of the word "librarian."

Chances are that since you are reading this issue of ***Indiana Libraries***, that it is safe to assume that you either work in a library, or work closely with a library or at least visit a library with some regularity. And yet I'll wager that the image you conjured up belongs to a character you've run across in a movie, a cartoon or even a book, rather than one of the people you work along side of everyday.

Everyone knows what a "librarian" is, or more importantly, what they are not. So why do these stereotype images jump to the fore when we are asked to describe the profession? Why? The pervasive impact of the movies, television and the other forms of mass media on modern society are well documented, so it is no wonder that these images are among the first to spring to mind.

Questions about the librarian's image and our role in society are not new. Long before the term "Cyberian" was bandied around as a new label for our professions, other terms have been suggested to replace the title of "librarian." In 1905 Robert Louis Stevenson suggested that the term "librarian" be replaced by the phrase "virgin priest of knowledge," which definitely conjures up a specific image. The 1991 film ***Salmonberries***, also offers the positive, if over long, title of the "beautiful educated princess of the world of books."

What ever you call us, this issue of ***Indiana Libraries*** is dedicated to exploring some of the many faces that we present the world.

SIDEBAR: While you have that picture in your mind, let me set the record straight on one issue — I am a librarian. I have been one for nearly twenty years, and despite the typical stereotype for our profession, let me state for all time that I am not now, nor have I ever been female. Nor am I a spinster. I have never worn my hair in a bun. I don't wear. . . Well, okay, I do wear sensible shoes, but they are not orthopedic. Finally, never, ever, in my entire professional life have I ever gone "Shhh!" during the course of my duties.

-Steven J. Schmidt-

REEL VS. REAL LIBRARIANS

by Steven J. Schmidt

Librarian. a person who is skilled in library work." — The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

> *"Let's try a game of word association. What profession do you think of when you read or hear "ambulance chaser," "take two," "slide rule," "pork barrel," "open wide," "shhh"? You probably think immediately of lawyer, doctor, engineer, politician, dentist, and librarian. You are reacting to common stereotypes, even though these professional people perform important tasks. My line happens to be science/ technical information specialist and library administrator, but you'd call me a librarian.*[1] *– Wayne Wiegand*

"...the days of the librarian as a mouser in musty books must pass..." Melvil Dewey.

In 1986, the popular television game show, ***Family Feud***, posed a question to a group of 100 people and then asked the contestants to identify the four most frequently given answers. The question was: "What are the typical characteristics of a librarian?"

Survey said, librarians are:

- quiet
- mean or stern
- usually single or unmarried
- Wear glasses.

At the time, this program irritated a number of librarians, but whether their irritation was based on the question, the answer or the fact that the contestant guessed all four "correct" answers is still to be determined.

Librarians are a funny lot. We like to spend a great deal of time and energy describing and defending what we are and what we do. This phenomenon is not new. In his story "The Last Librarian," Norman Stevens chronicles the birth of the librarian image. Stevens starts with Dewey, who described librarians in 1876 as "a mouser in dusty books" at a time when the profession was predominately made up of men. Less then three decades later mainly because of Dewey's efforts, the profession was primarily made up of women.

Melvil Dewey's influence on the structure of the library profession can not be over emphasized. The librarian's profession has existed as the care-taker of knowledge, but the library profession truly came of age in the late nineteenth century in large part because of his efforts. Dewey established a highly efficient organizational scheme for libraries which, coupled with Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy and the desire of the middle- and upper-classes of the time to control the reading habits of the masses, created the public library movement. The effectiveness of this troika is demonstrated in the jump in the number of public libraries. In 1876, there were just 188 public libraries in the world. Less than forty years later, there were nearly 4,000.

The "library science" which Dewey designed to support this structure was a combination of library management and library expertise, dealing essentially with reference and classification. His structure did not give the librarian the authority to determine the "best reading" materials. That duty was relegated to other professionals, more knowledgeable in literary and scholarly matters, who he believed would be more capable of judging the value of the objects librarians acquired, organized, and made accessible. The only exception to rule was in the "area of children's literature where, he believed, that cultured and refined women had a "natural" ability to distinguish between "good" and "bad" reading."

"To select good books wisely requires an abundance of time, knowledge of books, and sympathy with the popular taste," Dewey protégé Mary Cutler Fairchild told a New York Library Association audience in 1895. "Such reviews and criticisms as can be found in the ***Literary World***, ***Critic***, ***Nation***, etc., will also be helpful."[2]

Dewey's library science was driven by a "library faith" which supported and was supported by the reading standard of a white middle-and upper-class patriarchy. Dewey recruited women into the profession in order to fill the supporting role he had assigned it both cheaply and efficiently. As far as Dewey was concerned, these women were not a threat to the

decisions of literary and scholarly experts. He expected the turn-of-the-century female library professionals to deliver "the uplifting messages others had already prescribed as valuable for the masses."

Not everyone agreed with Dewey's focus. Cutler wrote that the ALA motto, "The best reading for the largest number at the least cost," smacked of "arithmetic and commerce."

Dewey countered by saying that "It is sometimes said that the spirit of the library should be that of a merchant and his well-trained clerks, anxious to please their customers.[3]" Cutler disagreed, saying that "it should be rather the fine spirit of a hostess with the daughters of the house about her greeting guests."

The gender switch in these two sentences is significant; Cutler thought the typical male orientation toward commerce and management would have a cold and distant influence on librarianship. She thought the female inclination toward family and domestic tranquility would offer a warmer and more involved influence on the profession.

Early stereotypes of librarians may have grown from perceptions of the job market that opened to women for the first time in the 1870's. Prior to that time, most librarians were male. As the profession began to grow in the late 1870's, librarianship became a "suitable" occupation for single women (who were generally the only women to enter any job market). While Dewey deserves a lot of credit for facilitating the entry of thousands of women into the profession, he must also bear the blame for laying the foundations of the profession's low status. It is undoubtedly from this beginning that the perception of the unmarried female as the librarian stems. From this starting point society went on to create the image of the spinster librarian, with both negative and positive characteristics.

It was not until the 1930s that the image was examined through scientific studies.

Two of the earliest studies of librarians' personalities were conducted in 1934 by E.K. Strong[4] and in 1948 by Alice Bryan[5]. Strong developed a vocational interest profile for female librarians, drawing a sample from the membership of the American Library Association. She found that female librarians exhibited the highest interests in the outdoors, writing, music, and physical science, with the lowest scores in teaching, religious activities, and social service. Strong only reported the high and low scores for the twenty-two categories surveyed. Based upon this pattern of interests, librarians were grouped with artists and authors. Male librarians were not tested at this time.

Bryan used the Guilford-Martin Inventory of Factors (GAMIN) and the Strong Vocational Interest Blank, to test approximately 2,400 librarians in 60 public libraries in the United States. Of the librarians sampled, 92% were women, a figure that was representative of the librarian population throughout the country.

Her results showed that public librarians were submissive in social situations and less likely to show qualities of leadership. Bryan found these librarians to be reasonably well-adjusted; however, they exhibited less self-confidence and greater feelings of inferiority. As a group, the women she tested scored highest in the "librarian" occupational group. They also scored high in the artist, author, and office-worker occupations. Male respondents scored highest on the scale as musicians, writers, public administrators, advertising men, and printers. At the time of the study, the tool Strong used did not have an established occupational norm for male librarians.

In ***The Personality of the Librarian***, Robert Douglass[6] reported the results of studies conducted in 1947 and 1948 using a battery of tests administered to 144 male and 400 female library school students. The trends he identified were similar to those reported by Bryan. As a group, library school students were orderly, conscientious, responsible, conservative and conformist, introspective, aloof and impersonal, and lacking in vigor, ambition and imaginative thinking. They were also found to be weak in self-confidence and leadership qualities.

Douglass did however find a few differences between male and female library school students. Male students were found to have a strong sense of responsibility and strong theoretical interests, while female students were more orderly and self-sufficient, and exhibited stronger social and religious values than their male counterparts. Both groups were more interested in the cultural and aesthetic aspects of life than in science, technology, politics and economics.

In the late 1950s, Perry Morrison[7] tested over 700 academic librarians, including administrators, middle managers and non-supervising librarians. Although each group showed high intelligence, they also displayed a lack of supervisory qualities and the desire to supervise. Overall, Morrison found a weakness leadership and decision-making skills, although he found that female librarians in the lower supervisory ranks scored much higher in these areas than their male colleagues. Bryan had spoken of the frustration of female librarians who held middle administrative positions without any real chance for advancement into the realm of top leadership which was populated by a disproportionate number of men. Writing in 1950, she noted that librarianship had formerly been a profession where women were welcomed and could rise to the top.

In the 1960s, personality studies came into vogue, and studies of librarians started to produce more detailed personality and interest profiles. Studies by

Baillie[8] and Rainwater[9] confirmed the findings of Bryan and Douglass. McMahon[10] tested a small sample of professional librarians in Tasmanian libraries. She found that male librarians were sociable, sensitive, prone to worry, insecure, and somewhat over-controlled. Female librarians in the study were found to be sensitive, idealistic, socially and withdrawn, with feelings of inadequacy. The results for both male and female librarians found that they placed a strong emphasis on aesthetic values with a low emphasis on economic values.

A larger study consisting of 648 Canadian library school graduates was conducted between 1960 and 1967 by Laurent-Germain Denis[11]. Denis found male academic librarians to be self-sufficient, orderly, achievement-oriented, respectful of authority, conservative, conformist, kind, unselfish, and sympathetic, although oddly enough, they were not prone to helping people. Female academic librarians tended to be independent and highly achievement-oriented.

In 1967, David Campbell[12] tested 410 female librarians, drawn from "Who's Who in Library Science", and discovered that his subjects scored their highest interests in writing, public speaking, music, and law/politics, with the lowest falling in sports and medical services. These results, as well as the results of a 1965 study by Earl Nolting[13], supported the vocational interests discovered by Strong, i.e.—Writing and music were consistently ranked high, but other interests varied.

This idea was further supported by a 1969 study by Goodwin[14]. After comparing library school students with other graduate students at the University of British Columbia, Goodwin concluded that the library school students formed a distinctive personality group. Using the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, she determined that the personality profile of library students included: reserved, intelligent, easily upset, sober, shy, suspicious, apprehensive, anxious, self-sufficient, tense and conservative. This study also showed the emergence of new characteristics: expedient, rule-evading, undisciplined, careless of protocol, socially precise, imaginative, unconventional, careful, and proper.

Studies of the 1960s and early 1970s, along with those conducted by Clayton and Magrill, showed little overall change in the personality or interest profile of librarians: results of personality studies continued to reflect the image of "Marian the Librarian," even during the freer and more turbulent society of the Sixties and early Seventies. The beginning of a shift toward non-conforming, imaginative librarians, however, was also evident.

Beginning with Strong's earliest studies and continuing through studies conducted in 1990, the general pattern of the librarian's personality type appears to shift. The pattern that emerges in the 1990s is of an updated female "Marian" who has been, since the 1940s, consistently intelligent, introverted, self-sufficient and interested in a life of the mind and in the arts. At the same time, studies in recent years show more interest by librarians in social services and people-oriented work than in the past. These changes also show librarians to be expedient, rule-evading nonconformists.

Of great significance for the profession, the pattern of librarians' personality characteristics and interests also includes imagination, decisiveness, self-respect, and leadership qualities in sharp contrast to those found in the early studies. These qualities point out the increasing appearance of female "Marian", rather than male "Marion," in administrative and supervisory positions. While the general profile for librarians describes an individual who is reluctant to face change, taking comfort in solutions of the past, there are signs also of librarians who can characteristically apply innovation and creativity to the use of information technologies.

In her work ***Stereotype and Status***, Pauline Wilson pointed out that librarians have been struggling against this image since the early part of the 20th century. Article titles such as "Are We Librarians Genteel?" (1937), "Can't Librarians be Human Beings" (1945) and "Librarians Do Have Dates!" (1947) peppered the early days of the professional literature and reveal an early backlash against the spinster stereotype.

In 2000 Stacie Marinelli and Tim Baker, two library students at the University of Maryland, created a web page that looked at the image of librarians in the profession. There research found that while many people like librarians and have a fairly realistic image of what a librarian does, many of the negative stereotypes still linger. "Indeed, there are people within and outside the profession who believe that negative images have affected the professional status and self-image of librarians. Where these stereotypes come from, how they affect library professionals, and whether our new role as "information specialists" relying on computer technology will change how we're regarded will be explored here.[15]"

One of the most recent salvos in the battle for the image of the librarians is the "Library Action Figure". Reactions to the figure have been mixed, but at least some saw the humor in it. Lewiston, Idaho librarian Heather Stout is quoted as saying "I thought [the action figure] was a riot, myself. It'll bring a chuckle to many librarians who know it's a play on an old stereotype...and I hope that other people will see that it's the librarian of the past."[16]

In 1997, an informal survey asked members of the Kentucky Library Association about their personal lifestyle in an attempt to define typical librarians. The respondents of the survey were 93% female, with men appearing primarily in academic and special libraries. 91% were 36 years of age or older. Over two-thirds of the respondents were married, with 11% divorced and 3% widowed. Approximately one third of the respondents described themselves as teetotaler, while the remaining two-thirds admitted to having less than one drink per week. Nearly half described themselves as political moderates and 22% classed themselves as liberals.

The survey asked if the librarians thought we worried about our professional image too much. 34% said yes, while a resounding 84% answered no. Finally, the survey asked, "Overall, do you enjoy being a librarian?" 94% said yes.

What makes up a real librarian? "E. J. Carnell describes the basic requirements as "a lively interest in people, in ideas, and in the exciting, changing world about us, and, second, an intellectual belief in the printed word as a tool of modem man," adding that "People who have not this line of approach to librarianship should go away and type letters for the Town Clerk or learn to be tram conductors or university lecturers or anything else they like so long as they remove themselves from the library profession."

He goes on to say that "all substantial achievement in librarianship has been due to the presence of a strong individual. . . Personality for this purpose implies powers of mind, clarity of thought, physical strength and the ability to follow through policies founded on correct analysis of situations."

Who are the real librarians? Look in the mirror and check all around you. We are everyone.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Wiegand, Wayne A. Irrepressible Reformer. ALA, Chicago, 1996. p.207-8

[2] Wiegand, Wayne A. Irrepressible Reformer. ALA, Chicago, 1996. p.207

[3] Ibid.

[4] Strong, Edward K. ***Vocational Interests of Men and Women***. Stanford, CA., Stanford University Press, 1943.

[5] Bryan, Alice I., & Boring, E. G. (1946). Women in American psychology: Factors affecting their professional careers. ***American Psychologist***, 2, 3-20.

[6] P. R. Douglass, "The Personality of the Librarian," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago, Graduate Library School, 1957)

[7] Morrison, Perry. ***The career of the academic librarian; a study of the social origins, educational attainments, vocational experience, and personality characteristics of a group of American academic librarians***. Chicago, American Library Association, 1969.

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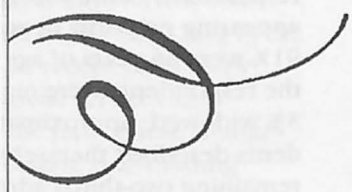
BAD TO THE BONE, LIBRARIANS IN MOTION PICTURES: IS IT AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL?



by Monique L. Threatt

In 1992, author Mary Jane Scherdin used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instrument to survey personality traits of 1,600 librarians. The study resulted in an overwhelming number of librarians displaying personalities consistent with being Introverted / Sensing / Thinking / Judging (I/S/T/J) followed by Introverted / Intuitive / Thinking / Judging (I/I/T/J). She conducted this survey in response to a 1984 survey done by the Center for Applications of Psychological Type which had concluded that librarians were Introverted / Sensing / Feeling / Judging (Scherdin, Beaubien 3).

It is this author's intention to compare how accurately the personality traits listed in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instrument and the findings of Scherdin's survey reflect the personalities of the librarians caricatured in films such as: ***It's a Wonderful Life*** (1946), ***Sophie's Choice*** (1982), ***Ghostbusters*** (1984), ***The Name of the Rose*** (1986) ***The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag*** (1992) and ***Philadelphia*** (1993).

What is the purpose of the MBTI instrument? The MBTI (available online at: http://www.discoveryourpersonality.com/MBTI.html) is a psychological personality instrument based on the cultural observations of psychologist Carl Jung in the 1920s, and human behavior observers/researchers Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katharine Cook Briggs in the 1940s. The MBTI is used by many schools, businesses and organizations to determine which personalities are compatible with certain careers, assess leadership potential, and determine why people do or do not work well together. The MBTI is geared to find out which environments or situations people feel most comfortable and natural with. The primary areas of the test determines a person's "Direction in which Attention and Energy is Easily Drawn" (Introverted or Extroverted); "Way of Gathering Information" (Sensing or Intuition); "Making Decisions and Coming to Conclusions" (Thinking or Feeling); and, how that person "Seeks Closure" (Judging or Perceiving). Based on feedback, a person is then categorized into one of 16 possible personality groups such as an I/S/T/F or E/S/F/P (Bayne 15-39).

What definitions do the MBTI use to determine personality traits? *Introverts* are considered inward, focused on thoughts and ideas, likes quiet space and quiet concentration, prefers to write instead of talking. *Extroverts* are outgoing, focused on people, active and interactive with others, likes variety. *Sensing* people prefer facts, is realistic, practical, patient and good with details. A person who is *Intuitive* sees possibilities, is speculative, and impatient with routine. *Thinking* people are fair, firm skeptical, critical, analytical, and may hurt feelings unknowingly. A *Feeling* person is considered warm, sympathetic, trusting and enjoys pleasing others. A *Judging* person is organized, likes to have things settled and decided, in control and structured. *Perceiving* people are flexible, tolerant, easygoing, open to change and leaves things open.

Several years ago, contestants on a popular television show were asked to name characteristics associated with being a librarian. The top 5 chosen were: quiet, mean or stern, single/unmarried, stuffy, wears glasses (Walker and Lawson 16). In this author's opinion, the contestants did not entirely come to their conclusion based on reading books, but rather by visual representations in various media venues such as advertisements and movies. Which begs the question, did Hollywood create the archetype librarian from its imagination or do the cinematic portrayals listed below reflect the results of the Scherdin MBTI survey?

In the classic Christmas tale, ***It's a Wonderful Life*** (1946), George Bailey (James Stewart) is given the opportunity to see what life would have been like if he had never been born. Clarence, who is George's guardian angel, takes George to the public library where he learns that his otherwise beautiful wife (Donna Reed) ends up as an old-maid librarian. Mary wears dark clothing; she wears glasses; and looks homely. In an effort to get Mary to recognize him, George grabs Mary's arms and tells her that he is her husband. A look of horror engulfs Mary; she let's out a blood curdling scream because the thought that she could be desirable or someone's wife mortifies her. She escapes George's clutch and runs into the arms of nearby women where she faints.

Sophie's Choice (1982) is a tragic and poignant film set during World War II. Sophie (Meryl Streep), is an Auschwitz survivor and polish immigrant. One evening while attending night class to learn English, a fellow immigrant incorrectly gives her the name "Emile Dickins" instead of Emily Dickinson. Sophie enters a branch of the New York City Public Library and approaches the reference desk. The male librarian does not acknowledge her presence, is arrogant, wears glasses and busies himself with the card catalog. The librarian also yells at her and likens her to a child when he proffers "Look I told you we have no such listing for the American poet Charles Dickens, do you want me to draw you a picture?" The frail woman collapses after her ordeal and the librarian offers no medical assistance.

Not all films are tragic, but the image of the librarian is the same. In the fantasy/science fiction film ***Ghostbusters*** (1984), Drs. Peter Venkman (Bill Murray) and Raymond Stantz (Dan Aykroyd) try to rid the New York City's Public Library of its ghost librarians and other monstrous apparitions. As card catalogs start to fly everywhere, a ghost from the past "shushes" a hysterically screaming, poorly-dressed modern-day librarian. In this film, audiences see two types of stereotypes coming together in one scene. The ghost librarian is dressed in 19th century clothing; her hair is in a bun, long skirt, and high collar. The modern day librarian's hair is not in a bun, but it is nearing gray; she appears unmarried, and unassuming. Eventually, Drs. Venkman and Stantz are able to "suck up" the ghost librarian with what looks like a backpack in the shape of a vacuum cleaner.

The Name of the Rose (1986) is a murder mystery set in an Abbey, during the 1300s. It is a film that reflects the original gatekeepers of information—religious leaders. However, in this story, a nonconformist monk William of Baskerville (Sean Connery) and his assistant Adso von Melk (Christian Slater) are sent to investigate the murder of priests who are dying under strange circumstances. This is one of the most fascinating illustrations of a medieval monastic library. Audiences are treated to images of monks as transcribers and translators. However, Bernardo Gui (F. Murray Abraham) and other priests are secretive about the Abby's historical documents and try to use scare tactics to prevent Baskerville and Melk from entering the Archives.

The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag (1992) involves the portrayal of two female librarians. Betty Lou Perkins (Penelope Ann Miller) is a young, quiet, attractive librarian who is admired by the children. However, she is often ignored and does not stand up for herself. Her supervisor is totally the opposite. She is middle-aged, ultra-conservative, wears glasses and tells the children to read quietly and be quiet. In one scene she says that the goal of the library book is to be returned to the shelf un-mutilated. She does not care for patrons in her library. The idea of having a reception in her library to raise funds mortifies her. However, in the end, it is Betty Lou who wins over the admiration of the community and becomes an independent thinker while the supervisor's role is pushed to the background.

In the film ***Philadelphia*** (1993), two male law librarians are portrayed. Joe Miller (Denzel Washington) eats a sandwich in the library where he receives a menacing stare from an unidentified librarian. A few seats away, Andrew Beckett (Tom Hanks), a gay lawyer stricken with AIDS, is treated with disdain and disrespect from the law librarian (Tracey Walker) who is thoughtless, and uncaring. The law librarian notices lesions on Andrew's skin and asks him if he wouldn't feel more comfortable in an isolated room. In response, Andrew says: "Would it make you feel more comfortable?" The scene illustrates how Hollywood uses a librarian as an unofficial mouthpiece against people with AIDS.

These six films represent but a small fraction of films with negative portrayals. For a more in-depth look of films featuring librarians, see Martin Raish's filmography at http://www.lib.byu.edu/dept/libsci/films/introduction.html and Steven Schmidt's filmography at http://www.filmlibrarian.info.

In conclusion, it is this author's inference from having watched the above films in their entirety, the librarians do possess characteristics in synch with Scherdin's findings. The librarians display characteristics that are Introverted/Sensing/Thinking/Judging (I/S/T/J). The librarian's behavior on screen seem to imply that they are more focused inward and not outwards towards patrons; wanting the facts; unknowingly hurt other's feelings; and, are in control and organized. This author believes the librarians do share a love for books, but not necessarily an innate desire to interact with the general public. Does this characteristic or personality trait make them bad librarians? No. But, what is evident and a common thread interspersed throughout these films is that the librarian provides unacceptable or inadequate reference assistance. That, in this author's opinion, is bad behavior.

If Scherdin's MBTI survey is an accurate reflection of librarian personalities, then is it appropriate to generalize all librarians who have been categorized as I/S/T/J to be providers of poor customer service? No. Katherine Adams points out in her article, "Some librarians are prim, unconcerned with fashion and unfriendly. But, this observation only becomes a stereotype when it is assumed that frumpiness and fussiness is both natural and innate to librarians and they are generalized to the entire population of librarians" (Adams 293).

The reality is that Hollywood's primary function is to make money and provide entertaining films. As film scholar Martin Raish points out, "I don't think we have it worse than any other field. I think the way people deal with life to a large extent is by stereotyping. Librarians are relatively well-off in terms of being stereotyped and fairly well-respected. People think we have a low stress life—that's a lie—but that's okay, too" (Brooks 22). Raish may be correct, but what is troubling is that the cinematic librarian caricature is rarely given a chance to grow. Even in 21st century films such as ***Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones*** (2002), or ***Down with Love*** (2003) the portrayal of librarians as old-maids or suffering from low self-esteem respectively does little to uplift the profession. Librarians on screen rarely escape the mold of being tragic and one-dimensional.

Hollywood is also unlikely to portray librarians in modern-day fashion. Unfortunately, what was appropriate dress for librarians in the 17th century still continues to manifest into cinematic exaggerated stereotypes in 20th century films (Harris 165). For example, in films such as ***It's a Wonderful Life, Ghostbusters*** and ***The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag,*** the negatively portrayed female librarian is dressed in dark, unadorned, ultra-conservative clothes that sometimes start at her neck and end at her ankles. Her shoes are usually dark and unadorned, and her only accessory is a pair of glasses. Comparatively, the male librarians in the films ***Sophie's Choice, the Name of the Rose and Philadelphia,*** fair no better than their female counterpart. The reality is that many librarians dress no differently from other professional occupations such as educators or businesswomen. They also have the option to wear contact lens, and wear various manicured hairstyles.

Where do we go from here? In 1989, the negative portrayal of librarians had reached an all-time high prompting Linda Wallace, then Director of the American Library Association's Public Information Office to write an article in how to reevaluate the role of the librarian. Her first suggestion was that the profession be given more respect. Her "Ask a Professional" campaign encouraged librarians to be proud of their profession and their contributions to society. She also encouraged librarians to dress for success, take risks, make friends with the media and "last but not least, lighten up and learn to laugh at ourselves and do everything in our power to make the rest of the world take us seriously" (Wallace 24).

In 1999, graduate student Beth Yeagley wrote a dissertation based on the impact of Wallace's campaign. She concluded that films produced by Hollywood between 1989 and 1999 showed a significant improvement in its portrayal of librarians. She cited such films as: ***Quiz Show*** (1994), ***Monkey Trouble*** (1994), ***Matilda*** (1996) and ***At First Sight*** (1999) (Yeagley 27-28). Unfortunately, by 2002, Hollywood had resorted back to its negative portrayal with the release of ***Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones.*** It is this author's opinion that if librarians want a more accurate portrayal on film, then it would be advantageous for the American Library Association to hire a documentary or sympathetic feature filmmaker to direct, produce and market its own production.

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BUNS OF STEEL: FROM LIBRARIAN TO WOMAN IN *STORM CENTER, DESK SET, PARTY GIRL*

by Noa Wahrman

"Melville Dewey", declares chief-librarian Judy Lindendorf, Mary's godmother in ***Party Girl,*** *"hired women as librarians because he believed the job didn't require any intelligence. That means it's underpaid and undervalued!"*

In ***Party Girl,*** a film from 1995, Judy reflects on what was a common assessment of the librarian's profession for women throughout the 20th century. What are the common traits of this condescending image? What are its social roots? and has the librarian's offensive image changed or improved over the years or has it remained the same? This article begins to explore the visual images and stereotypes appearing in films produced in the second half of the twentieth century. Of the four-hundred-odd films featuring librarians, I will focus here on three in which the female librarian is the main character, two from the 1950s and one from the mid 1990s: ***Storm Center*** (Daniel Taradash, 1956), Desk Set (Walter Lang, 1958) and ***Party Girl*** (Daisy von Scherler Mayer, 1995).

A quick overview of social trends in Post WWII America can help set the scene leading to the images discussed here. Pre-WWII America had women nested safely in their domestic traditional role of homemakers. Social studies, as well as popular culture representations, portray women primarily as mothers, housewives and husband-supporters, women whose primary role was to be the perfect-looking homemaker. As home and family constructed the center of ideal American life, women who did not fit this formula found themselves at the edge of society. These women presented either a serious threat to American family values, like the loose, dangerous women of ***film noir*** (a prosperous and bleak genre of Post WWII America) or drew pity from the audience for their obvious misfortune as doomed old maids.

The women in ***film noir*** were, thus, always punished for their evil nature by an expected certain death. On the other hand, women who, for some misfortune, failed to fulfill the American ideal of wife and mother, were forced to work in order to make their living. Amongst the most noted professions in which women could find in those decades, at least by common stereotype, were telephone-operators and librarians. These women were treated with collective condescension, looked at pitifully by the society around them: even while they filled an essential position in their communities they nonetheless remained in the position of mere Spectators, observing from the outside as others formed romances leading to family-cells around them. Telephone-operators connected lovers' conversations, while librarians sat behind their desks, strict and foreboding, loaning romance novels to young lovers who came to the library to woo and giggle amongst the stacked book shelves. For a filmic example one needs only to think of Donna Reed in Frank Capra's 1946 ***It's a Wonderful Life***. Reed, as she walks out of Pottersville's public library in her potential alternative existence as Mary Hatch, sports every possible detail of the female-librarian stereotype: unmarried, childless and extremely unattractive, "an old-maid", as she is specifically referred to by Clarence the angel. The other classic example is Marian, the librarian in ***The Music Man***, who, at age 26, is considered River City's pathetic old-maid, with no hope for social salvation despite her broad education and her efforts to introduce further literature and culture to this little Iowa town.

During WWII women found themselves for a short while fulfilling masculine domestic and professional roles, instead of the men who were at war. But shortly after the war this hiatus was over. In 1950s films, and especially in the ever-more popular television, women were depicted in their most conventional female pre-war role models. One only has to think again of Donna Reed in ***The Donna Reed Show,*** where she is standing by the door every morning bidding farewell to her family, all made-up and perfect, to cook, clean, bake, mend and await their happy return.

The 1950s witnessed fascinating negotiations between contrasting views of social and family values, and in particular the position of women. Donna Reed, in her TV show, as well as her other visual counterparts in various sitcoms of the 1950s and numerous film roles, represented the ideal woman, the one who proudly carried and embodied old-fashioned American family and social values. "Over and over", says Betty

Friedan in her breakthrough 1963 book **The Feminine Mystique**[1], "women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to bask in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him ... They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for ... By the end of the 1950s the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20, and was still dropping, into the teens. Fourteen million girls were engaged by age 17. The proportion of women attending college in comparison with men dropped from 47 percent in 1920 to 35 percent in 1958. A century earlier, women had fought for higher education; now girls went to college to get a husband. By the mid-fifties, 60 percent dropped out of college to marry, or because they were afraid too much education would be a marriage bar." On the other hand, this decade also saw the publication of Dr. Alfred Kinsey's report on women's sexuality in 1953[2]. Women responded enthusiastically to Kinsey's private questions about sexuality and sexual fulfillment. Out of the 5,500 women who responded to the survey, only 5% (amongst them librarians as well!) were professional women and 26% were upper white-collar women, presumably housewives. The early 1950s sexual revolution burst into the American screen with the voluptuous sexually-explicit characters of Marilyn Monroe, but simultaneously, although less sexually-flamboyant, through a new form of professional women; ones who were single yet beautiful, professional yet admirable, dating freely yet respected. Those were the characters played primarily by Doris Day, especially in her series of comedies with Rock Hudson[3].

At the same time, however, it should be noted that Friedan, while lamenting a lost desire for high education and career opportunities for women half way into the 20th century, did not count librarianship amongst those aspiring vocations. Neither did Hollywood with its sudden reverse of its negative image of the librarian. So let us look at two 1950s filmic examples of female librarians.

Against the backdrop of ***Music Man***'s Marian, Alicia Hull's visual and character introduction are not at all surprising. The heroine of ***Storm Center***, the female-librarian of a small town, refuses to remove Communist materials from the shelves, insisting rather that difference of opinion is not sufficient ground for removing books from public access, and threaten freedom of speech and democracy.

Storm Center, starring Bette Davis, was based on the true story of Miss Ruth Brown, the public librarian of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, who in 1950 was laid-off from her thirty-year long position of public librarian of the town. Ruth Brown's "crime" was her unremitting stance for equal rights and for the open access to all shades of opinion on the shelves of her public library – in this case, during the heyday of McCarthyism, even communist works. Despite strong support in the community, Miss Brown was dismissed from her position. When film-maker Daniel Taradash encountered this story in a letter published in the **Saturday Review**, it inspired him to write a script for a film he was determined to make, a film he called at first "The Library", in order to show the dangers of unbridled ignorance. Finding a producer who would be willing to invest in a project as potentially controversial as Taradash's script was difficult. Finding an actress to play the librarian who refuses to give up her principles was no easier matter, given the potential damage that could be caused to this actress' public image, not to mention bringing her to the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee's Hollywood investigation. But Bette Davis saw matters differently. To an accusation made to her by Anne Smart, a crusading-against communism housewife, that "certain interests are using or misusing ... your ability without your full knowledge of what is behind this picture"[4] she responded: "On the contrary ... as an American I was extremely careful of my approach to this film ... I wish my children to be proud of me... it is my conviction that they will be proud of me for having appeared in this motion picture"[5].

However, principles aside, in terms of her Alicia Hull (Davis' character in ***Storm Center***) joins her fellow female, single librarian's full-force. Sporting the inevitable librarian's paraphernalia she walks into the library in the opening scene of the film. Compensating for her singlehood and childlessness she has established herself as a true friend of children. Again, not unlike Marian, a woman of high standards, high education and liberal views, Alicia Hull is still seen as a harmless yet pitiful woman, however known, loved and respected she is by her townsfolk.

But Alicia is kindly and dismissively respected by her town only as long as she remains harmless and non-threatening. The first crack appears in a relationship with a vulgar, ignorant father, whose child is enamored of reading, hence with Alicia herself[6]. Alicia, unlike Marian, is truly middle-aged, as is Ruth Brown, the woman her character was based on. She is not pretty even potentially, hence has no hope for a romantic relief which will expose her external beauty. The men by whom she is confronted, and with whom she later negotiates, the forbidden reading materials' issue, see her as a sensible and respected member of her community. Even men who are friendly with her or who negotiate complex issues with her, like her friend amongst them, Judge Robert Ellerbee (Paul Kelly)

would never see her as an object of desire. Her complete lack of romantic potential is only accentuated by the character of her library assistant, Martha Lockridge (Kim Hunter) the young, pretty librarian who is engaged to the major opponent to free choice library materials, Paul Duncan (Brian Keith). Not only is Lockridge young, beautiful and marriageable, but her fiancée assumes that her role as librarian will end when she marries him and assumes her position as helpmate to her career-politician husband and mother to their future children.

However, despite her physical and social establishment as a "Mary Hatch/Marian" type, as it were, Alicia Hull can be seen as the first point of departure from the standard pathetic character of the female librarian. This point of departure is neither in the visual sense (no ugly-duckling transformed into swan) nor in the family-status sense (no marriage which will also mean end of the doomed "old-maid" professional career)[7]. Mary Hatch, we recall, is condemned only in the virtual reality world. Marian is "saved" by Roger Hill's love, which also dramatically and beautifully transforms her physical appearance. But Alicia is neither. I believe one can attribute the bleak ending of the movie not only to the disastrous consequences of ignorance and blind hate, but also to the fact that no wedding bells ring and no beautiful bride emerges on the church's doorstep with her long-term rediscovered Prince Charming Judge Ellerbee. It is intriguing that despite her central role as a main character of a librarian, the film's message switches from the romantic salvation of a female character to the exclusively heroic reevaluation of social ideas. Hull/Davis of ***Storm Center*** is on a mission and the mission is not to save herself but only to serve as a martyr on the altar of principles and the common good. And for this purpose it is essential to keep her character as an ugly duckling. Her portrayal and reestablishment as the strong, undeterred librarian and a proud and loyal member of her community, does not require a cosmetic change as well but, if anything, the opposite. In making this film director, producer and actress wanted to manifest the dangers of small minds and ignorance and fear of unknown ideas. However, even while standing up to other social prejudices, the image of the female librarian in this film did not really deviate from the commonplace stereotype.

Two years later the film ***Desk Set*** was released. Its four main characters, and especially Bunny Watson (played by Katharine Hepburn) still seem much further away in their characteristic depictions than Alicia Hull, and even further away from Marian, Mary Hatch and their predecessors. More than any other female-librarian-in-a-leading-role film, Desk Set serves as the successfully-negotiating/mediating point between the traditional female librarian depiction and her future, at times more positive, screen colleagues.

In a reference library of a big broadcasting company in New York City work four happy, self-fulfilled and professionally successful female librarians. Location is the first hint of change. The move from an anonymous small, rural, prejudiced mid-western town to the big, famous most exciting American city is a significant one. This reference library provides answers to nationwide callers on any subject. It is a highly distinguished information-providing establishment, one that is attractive, spacious and airy, rather than confining and musty: another departure from previous library scenes. Accordingly, the proud librarians look rather different as well. Thus, this film presents a new observation point of not only a highly professional working environment, but also at some new personal and physical traits of the librarians themselves.

To begin with, the ages of the four vary from young (20s) to older (late 40s and 50s). In terms of dress-code, theirs is miles away from their predecessors. Where young Marian, Mary and Alicia Hull wore Victorian-looking, unflattering spinster's clothes, here middle-aged women Peg Costello (Joan Blondell) and Bunny Watson (Hepburn) dress in an expensive, flattering manner, suitable of highly-professional women in working environments such as a law-firm or the business world. Along with the big city setting grows also the level of sartorial as well as mental sophistication. While in terms of appearance they resemble their younger colleagues, in terms of knowledge they are unsurpassed. Here they represent a most desirable role-model for their younger colleagues, something which would be unthinkable for the small town's public-librarian of the previous films. What's more; with every one of the above-mentioned, earlier films, while the women themselves are proud of their vocation (perhaps with the exception of Mary Hatch) the townsfolk around them do not share this pride or are, for that matter, able to even fathom it. For the others this is seen as the bottom of the pit, something which is bluntly but clearly articulated in the character of Mary Hatch. But Desk Set brings a new dimension to the librarian's character and self-esteem. Here are four highly-educated single women, living on their own in Manhattan. These women date freely, are highly fashion-oriented; one only needs to note their dress-to-kill look and the phone call Ruthie secretly makes to a dress shop, asking for the windows' display strapless dress' price.

Storm Center's Alicia, a librarian who is really committed to her vocation to the point of not allowing herself romantic aspirations, or indeed any other aspirations, is nonetheless a far cry from the librarians of earlier films, in her pride and confidence in the value and importance of her work. But for Bunny Watson, head-reference librarian, her workplace is ideal and desirable. To Richard Sumner's question: "do you like

working here?" she answers, "I love working here. If I didn't work here I'd kill to get in!" Bunny is the first screen librarian to articulate her pride in her vocation in such enthusiastic terms (and given Katharine Hepburn's strong screen persona the message of women representing their own agenda is even more reinforced here). The reference room is her kingdom, she knows every book in it, location and contents. Her spectrum of knowledge is unbelievable. From Longfellow poems through Biblical quotations to Santa's reindeer's names, Bunny recites an endless range of sources, quotes and references. Despite Bunny's status as the head of the reference library, each librarian is in charge of a certain research area and thus they refer questions to each other as appropriate ("I'll pass you to our baseball expert" says Miss Blair to a caller, while diverting the call to Peg, who instantly provides a speedy and accurate answer).

In filmic representations that came before ***Desk Set,*** a clear distinction has been drawn between a woman and a librarian. The illustration of the female-librarian has been not only unflattering but doomed. This working woman, in her eternal glasses, "bunned" hair, sensible shoes, tweed skirt, severe facial expression and well-known ""shushing"" position, seemed mostly like an old woman, regardless of her real age. Not only was she always single, but any suggestion of a romantic attachment seemed, to her and to others, preposterous. Small wonder, therefore, that when George Bailey chases Mary into the crowded tavern, shouting "Mary, you're my wife!" she faints into the arms of the people around her. Similarly, as a librarian, ***Music Man***'s Marian embodies the same stereotypical traits. However, when the unbelievable happens to her and she is saved by love – what Roger Hill refers to as "getting under her glasses" – not only do her behavior and physical appearance change radically, but there are no more scenes that take place in the library. In combining external femininity with proud librarianship ***Desk Set*** seems to me to be the first film to allow for a unified figure of librarian and woman and appropriately for a reference librarian, she conquers not only with her looks but also, powerfully, with her brain.

And yet, this transformation in ***Desk Set*** was not complete. In the end, the film was transitional, still retaining some aspects of the earlier figure of the female librarian while rejecting others. Bunny is a single not-very-young woman (Katharine Hepburn was 50 years old when playing this role). Despite her asserted independence, her self-assurance and her suggested sexual freedom, Bunny is still possessed by the idea of marriage and the fear of being left a bitter spinster for the rest of her life (thus reincarnating the "old-maid" curse). Her uncertain affair with Mike Cuttler (Gig Young), officially her boss but practically her emotional and professional exploiter, exposes unexpected insecure feminine sides in her which the audience and her peers (here embodied and articulated by Peg and her blunt, albeit just, criticism) find unpleasantly surprising. When Mike's secretary secretly calls to warn Bunny of Mike's momentary arrival in her office (a gesture of secret-camaraderie among single women) Bunny's cool professionalism flies out the window as she panics over a lost lipstick. Moreover, despite her independence, Bunny is locked in old-fashioned ideas about the relationship between men and women and thus, continually, remains passive in her relationship with Mike, always waiting for him to make the next move. Bunny has come a long way from her earlier vocational sisters, but she is yet to cross the fear of singlehood in order to become the full independent agent she represents in any other aspect of her life.

But there is a new danger too, one presented by progress itself. Modernity in ***Desk Set*** may give the female librarian more freedom, but also threatens her through the agency of the machine. Will the fate of the female librarian, just as she achieves this freedom, be replaced by a computer?

Richard Sumner is the inventor of a computer brain named EMERAC, operated with love and narrow mindedness by Miss Warriner, a computer programmer. Miss Warriner, however, while very able as a computer programmer, is really capable of very little else, especially in the human department. Her social skills are deficient, she seems to have no romantic attachments, she is only interested in her work. In other words, it is Miss Warriner who really is a "librarian" in the old, unsexed meaning. So while Bunny, Peg, Sylvia and Ruthie resent her personally, they also clearly see the threat she presents to them in threatening to bring the old stereotype. So what Miss Warriner presents is actually a double threat: on the one hand she embodies all the unattractive characters that used to be the hallmarks of the female librarian. She also threatens with her new-fangled machine to make the newly emancipated librarians completely redundant. On the other hand, by bringing a machine to replace people, and placing herself as the sole operator of the formerly very-human library, Miss Warriner makes the library and female-librarian again an undesirable environment, taking the human progress a step back despite the technological progress represented by the computer installment as an information-providing tool in the library. In this, however, a threat that echoes common fears of the 1950s, she fails. In a wonderful scene, in which Miss Warriner is helplessly trying to get information out of EMERAC, while failing the most basic human steps to draw such information, Bunny and company not only demonstrate her information as wrong, they also manage to find and provide the accurate information at top speed. They prove indispensable indeed.

The film's romantic ending's relief also hails the female librarian as a liberated woman. Mike expects Bunny to melt at his finally-delivered marriage proposal, and to drop her job to move to the west coast with him as the supporting wife of a high-career executive (reminded of Martha Lockridge's fiancée in ***Storm Center***). In so doing he finally proves himself to be disrespectful and unworthy of her. On the other hand, what Sumner falls in love with is really her mind. What he sees in her is her rare mental capability and outstanding professionalism. Sumner sees no other option for Bunny but to keep on doing what she does best. But at the same time he sees her as an object of desire and certainly as a marrying kind. It is highly appropriate that he will propose to her in the library and use EMERAC for this purpose. The end of ***Desk Set*** promises the new future librarian, now proudly and successfully combining her profession and her femininity into one.

So where does the new librarian go from here? Is the promise made in 1958's ***Desk Set*** to deliver a new female librarian kept over the years? 1995's ***Party Girl*** is a fascinating example of the changes in female librarian's reel image in the four decades since ***Desk Set.*** Female-librarian characters which appeared on screen in the second half of the twentieth century did not do justice to the liberated, feminine positive image of the librarian. The only major change noticeable in films of this period is the introduction of male librarians into this formerly strictly-female profession. But in filmic examples such as in an episode of the television series ***Get Smart*** in 1965, or 1984's ***Ghostbusters,*** or 1993's ***The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag*** (even if the librarian in this latter film is married) the character of the recognizable offensive librarian stereotype was back in full force.

In one recent film, however, ***Party Girl*** of 1995, the promise of ***Desk Set*** seems to be kept. The setting, appropriately, remains the bustling modern city of New York. By the late twentieth century, of course, New York also represents new problems of the urban environment: not only questions and redefinitions of familial and domestic roles for both sexes, but also unemployment, drugs and sex, lack of professional interests or skills, the overwhelming loneliness of a big city and immigrants' hardships. The character of Mary is a failure and a misfit; in this she fits the many other misfits in this film. And yet she is a far cry from the self-assured, intelligent and professional Bunny Watson.

Mary's godmother, Judy, the professional librarian in charge of a small branch of New York's public library, does little herself to strike the ***Desk Set*** chord. "Veteran" librarian Judy and "newly-initiated" librarian, Mary, portray in juxtaposition to each other the hardships of the librarian's vocation as well as the injustice of this stereotype. So this film not only moves gradually from a condescending vision of a questionable career opportunity to one of value and pride, precisely the type of image prefigured by the 1958 ***Desk Set*** crew.

Mary is a young, jobless, penniless uneducated woman in 1995 New York, living on the edge of constant eviction. It is only as a result of her godmother's dare that she accepts the temporary low-paid, low-respected job of a library clerk, much to her godmother's and her own surprise. The point to note is that both godmother and god-daughter, at this stage, seem to confirm the stereotype of the woman who was left in this position because she had no other choice. As Judy is a pitiful figure personally and professionally, it is really up to Mary, in the course of the film's plot, to restore the profession's honor to the heights proposed by ***Desk Set***. In her training as a library clerk, while growing to appreciate its advantages and importance, Mary comes to see the library as a place used not only for knowledge but also as a social center. Where Judy represents the old-world librarian, hence clinging to the old separation routine between woman and librarian, Mary represents the modern new librarian, the one who combines the two. It is amusing to watch Mary at the end of the film, when trying to prove to Judy her seriousness regarding becoming a librarian, sporting a librarian's look: black skirt-suit, hair in a bun and glasses. But here Mary does not intend to mock the librarian's appearance; only to reinforce her respectable and dignified look as preparation for this respectable and dignified profession. Here she uses the familiar librarian's physical and sartorial features but elevates them to a degree of fashion and respectability. In a way, more than any other, the transformation Mary undergoes, from undertaking upon herself the most degrading job of a library clerk to the self-conscious person who voluntarily chooses to become a librarian, liberates librarians on the screen from the condescension of society.

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Main:

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- ***Party Girl,*** USA 1995, color. Dir.: Daisy von Scherler Mayer, Scr.: Harry Birckmayer and Sheila Gaffney. Cast: Parker Posey, Sasha von Scherler, Anthony Joseph De Santis, Omar Townsend, C. Francis Blackchild.
- **Storm Center,** USA, 1956, B & W. Dir.: Daniel Taradash, Scr.: Daniel Taradash and Elick Moll. Cast: Bette Davis, Brian Keith, Kim Hunter, Paul Kelly, Kevin Coughlin, Joe Mantell, Sallie Brophie.

Referential:

- ***Down with Love,*** USA, 2003, color. Dir.: Peyton Reed, Scr.: Eve Ahlert and Dennis Drake. Cast: Renée Zellweger, Ewan McGregor, David Hyde-Pierce, Sarah Paulson, Tony Randal.
- ***The Donna Reed Show,*** USA, ABC Sitcom, 1958-1966, B & W. Creator: William Roberts. Main cast: Donna Reed, Carl Betz, Bob Crane, Shelley Fabares, Kathleen Freeman, Patty Petersen, Paul Petersen.
- ***Get Smart.*** USA, ABC Sitcom, 1965-1970, color. Episode 137 "Do I hear a vault". Creators: Mel Brooks and Buck Henry. Main cast: Don Adams, Barbara Feldon, Edward Platt, Robert Karvelas, Bernie Kopel.
- ***The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag,*** USA, 1993, color. Dir.: Alan Moyle, Scr.: Grace Cary Bickley. Cast: Penelope Ann Miller, Eric Thal, Alfre Woodard, Julianne Moore, Ray McKinnon, Cathy Moriarty.
- ***It's a wonderful Life, USA,*** 1946, B & W. Dir.: Frank Capra, Scr.: Philip Van Doren Stern, Frances Goodrich. Cast: James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Thomas Mitchel.
- ***The Music Man,*** USA, 1962, color. Dir.: Morton DaCosta, Scr.: Meredith Wilson and Franklin Lacey. Cast: Shirley Jones, Robert Preston, Buddy Hackett, Paul Ford, Pert Kelton, Ron Howard.
- ***Now, Voyager,*** USA, 1942, B & W. Dir.: Irving Rapper, Scr.: Casey Robinson, based on an Olive Higgins Prouty novel. Cast: Bette Davis, Paul Henreid, Claude Raines, Gladys Cooper.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Friedan, 1963, Chapter 1, p. 1-2.

[2] I wish to thank Jennifer Bass of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction, in Indiana University, Bloomington, for her help in providing this statistics of women's response to Kinsey's questionnaires.

[3] It is highly piquant yet not really surprising that Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor, in a recent film, 2002's ***Down With Love,*** 2003, follow closely on a Doris Day-Rock Hudson dynamics/plot-line, however with the surprising end-twist of Zellweger's character, the highly successful Barbara Novak, who writes the sexual-independence bible for women, herself an extremely-transformed ugly-duckling from mousy, scared, unloved librarian to a hot, successful blond feminist author, advising and looked-up to by other women; this is the ultimate feminine transformation: from the bottom of the professional and visual pit - a small town public librarian - to a successful, beautiful and sought-after professionally and personally alike woman.

[4] The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown, Louise S. Robbins. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, p. 145-6.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Here, claims Louise Robbins (Robbins, 2000, p. 149) this is clearly depicted as a love-story between Alicia and 10-year-old Freddy; these is a love affair of the mind but also fulfills strong emotional deprivations for the older-childless woman and the culturally-deprived boy respectively.

[7] It is hard not to be reminded here of Davis' character in ***Now, Voyager,*** where her appearance radically changes along with her state of mind, both there to prepare her for her later role as Paul Henreid's love interest and the popular expected message that love conquers all, even physical appearance.

BECOMING UNSHELVED

by Cindy Rider

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Run, don't walk, to your nearest computer and surf your way to www.overduemedia.com to see yourself in print a la Dilbert in the comic strip called *Unshelved!* Co-authored by real-life librarian Gene Ambaum (a pen name) and software engineer-turned professional cartoonist Bill Barnes, *Unshelved* provides a humorous look at librarians while presenting various serious issues of our times, such as unattended children, Internet filtering, and the Patriot Act.

Unshelved debuted online on February 16, 2002 under the title Overdue and claims to be "the world's only daily comic strip set in a public library." (http://www.overduemedia.com)

FIGURE 1.

Its popularity grew quickly and it wasn't long before subscribers were asking for a book of the cartoons. Just as the book was about to be published, a trademark problem with the name *Overdue* was discovered, so the creators held a contest to rename the comic, resulting in the title *Unshelved.*

No one is safe from Bill and Gene. They get away with poking fun at stereotypical library professionals and patrons alike by keeping their tongues firmly implanted in their cheeks. Take Reference Librarian Colleen, for example. She's an old fashioned gal who is "technologically challenged" (i.e. computer illiterate), although she does NOT wear a bun or even glasses! (Since I have never seen her feet, I'm not sure if she wears sturdy shoes, however.) Her major modern attribute is that she adopted a baby from China, thus becoming a single mom. Of course, what she reads to her baby isn't exactly Dr. Seuss.... (You'll have to check out the strip for October 12, 2002, in the website's archive to find out.)

Mel, the branch manager of the Mallville Public Library, tries hard to keep things running smoothly, but Murphy's Law frequently thwarts her efforts. Dewey is the laid back (spell that l-a-z-y) young Young Adult Librarian who readily embraces all things modern, such as downloading pirated music on library PCs, graphic novels, and (gasp!) disrespect for his elders!

We all know the patrons seen in this comic strip — the pseudo-techno savvy ones, those who either ask for books on multiple topics all in one breath, or don't know what they want, are confused, or make unrealistic demands (e.g. asking for photos of Moses). Patrons doing their kids' homework are fair game also.

Few topics seem to be taboo. Take gender difference in salary, for instance. This was explored in a series of cartoons in June, 2002. Mel is working the reference desk and tells a patron on the phone that she will not read him any more TV listings because "the library is a FINITE RESOURCE" and asks him to please

use it responsibly. It turns out that the patron is Dewey, sick in bed at home with a cold caught from a patron who sneezed on him. His whining and complaining prompts Tamara, the children's librarian, to say, "Men can be such whiners!" to which Mel replies, "And they STILL get paid more than us."

Another "hot topic" is budget cuts. It was addressed succinctly with only one cartoon on August 26, 2002:

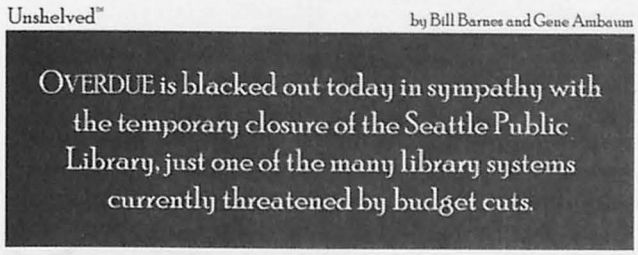

FIGURE 2.

Other subjects dealt with include ergonomics, banned books, public displays of affection, tax forms, and the infamous "Library Police."

Ideas for the cartoons come from many sources. Bill writes on the Overduemedia.com website, "Some of the stories are made up, some of them are based on real life, and some are absolutely true stories sent to us from our readers. And the stranger the story, the more likely it is to be true." The writers actively seek opinions from readers to help maintain a humorous approach to each issue and keep them from being confusing. Experiences from their personal lives also enter the strip from time to time. For example, Bill recently returned to studying Aikido, so he had Tamara perform it on a male "problem patron" (August 9, 2003).

Unshelved is also great at giving its readers the opportunity to vicariously experience doing what we wish we could do in real life. One example is a strip I call "Payback": A male patron attempts to check out a video. Mel says to him, "One moment please." She steps over to Tamara and asks, "How long did that really tall guy make you wait in the video aisle?" Tamara icily replies, "Fifteen minutes." Mel returns to the patron and says, "Sorry, the computer just went down. It'll be back up in exactly fifteen minutes."

Unshelved is a brilliant source of tips on management techniques and providing excellence in customer service. The following exchange says everything one needs to know about Proper Attitude (the old "It's not *what* you say, but *how* you say it" thing):

Dewey (to patron): I'm afraid you have some serious fines here, ma'am.

Lady: Oh?

Dewey: These books are overdue by many months. Did you lose them?

Lady: Young man. I never lose ANYTHING.

Dewey: Okay then, it looks like you decided to keep them.

Lady: That's better. How much do I owe? (March 18, 2002)

One more area simply cannot be ignored any longer. It is a librarian's finest hour when he or she enlightens an impressionable young adult about the librarian's primary duty...SHUSHING!! This is aptly illustrated in the strip that ran November 23, 2002:

FIGURE 2.

The June 11, 2003 "List-A-Day" website recommends *Unshelved,* saying it "takes a sarcastic look at all the weirdness that goes on whenever the general public approaches the reserve desk, the stacks or the computerized catalogs." Weirdness?? I resemble that remark! Truly, however, I love this comic strip because it treats the hard issues and the stress of my job with humor and helps remind me not to take myself so seriously. Watch for *Unshelved Volume 2,* due to be released on the comic's second anniversary, February 16, 2004. For

now, though, point your mouse to http://www.overduemedia.com and start laughing!

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PROFESSIONAL READING? OR THE CASE OF LIBRARIAN DETECTIVES IN MYSTERY FICTION

by Jennifer Burek Pierce

In real life, reference librarians field a wide range of questions; in fiction, librarians-turned-amateur sleuths take on the classic murder question, "Whodunnit?" in addition to their library duties. A number of mystery series have come to feature crime-solving librarians. The prevalence of these librarian-as-detective books, including the Aurora "Roe" Teagarden mysteries by Charlaine Harris and the Claire Reynier mysteries by Judith Van Gieson,[1] encourages consideration of features of the fictional librarian in her role as sleuth.

This article examines selected murder mysteries by contemporary U.S. authors which rely on librarians as amateur detectives. How is the profession depicted in these mass market novels? What, in other words, is the image of the present-day librarian as presented in amateur detective stories?

THE LITERATURE ON LIBRARIANS' IMAGES: FICTION AND REALITY

It has been noted that "librarianship is characterized by pervasive anxiety about its image and identity" as evidenced in part by researchers who "undertake such tasks as monitoring the popular media for portrayals of unflattering occupational stereotypes."[2] Among those who write about the image of the librarian, Radford and Radford's postmodern theory-driven work stands out. Radford and Radford articulate the image of the librarian as one more strongly influenced by stereotypes rather than by professional realities. They describe this stereotypical librarian as female and characterized by features with negative associations, such as being plain, single, and preferring quiet to conversation.[3] These negative aspects of the professional stereotype are also acknowledged in an earlier article which sees the library and the librarian as entities to be feared.[4]

The literature on librarians' images also analyzes the work and ideas of actual librarians. A recent survey for the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) concluded that real librarians suffer from image problems as much as the fictional ones described by Radford and Radford do. The results of this survey demonstrate that at least one aspect of the stereotype is factual – that the profession of librarianship is associated with women. Additional image problems of the profession are elaborated this way:

> As far as the general public is concerned, the librarian's occupation is largely invisible. To the average user, the librarian is virtually indistinguishable from other library staff. In addition to this, the public have almost no idea what it is a librarian actually does since a great deal of the work, such as collection management, is done out of sight of the users.[5]

These issues converge in the depiction of librarians as amateur sleuths in contemporary detective fiction. Two female detectives in particular are evocative of the image issues identified by scholars in this area.

IMAGE PROBLEMS: THE AMATEUR IN THE STACKS

Charlaine Harris's Aurora Teagarden mysteries feature library employee Aurora "Roe" Teagarden. One of the first facts we learn about this protagonist – beyond her interest in historical crimes and her physical description – is that her professional life "fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a librarian."[6] While the Teagarden books sometimes offer a degree of verisimilitude in acknowledging that the field is dominated by women and that budgets are strained, the development of Roe's character and profession draws heavily on stereotypes of the librarian.

This stereotyping begins with her physical appearance. Roe tells the reader that she "wears round tortoise-rimmed glasses" and "a plain blouse and skirt" to work.[7] Elsewhere, more detail on this librarian's garb is offered: Roe wears "a solid navy skirt of neutral length with a navy-and-white striped blouse, plain support hose, and unattractive but very comfortable shoes."[8] In her self-reflections, she characterizes herself as "a quiet librarian."[9] Eventually, a clothing store owner aids Roe in a sartorial make-over: "Under Mrs. Day's influence, I'd begun to weed out my librarian clothes, my solid-color interchangeable blouses and skirts."[10]

This wardrobe revision responds to Roe's life as a singleton. She is seemingly befuddled by her recent rediscovery of men and seeks a friend's help in sorting things out. As she tells us, "The nuances and dosey-does between the sexes were Amina's bread and butter. I hadn't had anything like this to tell Amina since we were in high school."[11] Upon seeing a couple arrive together at a meeting, Roe reflects, "It did cross my mind to feel sorry for myself that Melanie Clark had a date and I always arrived ... by myself, but I didn't want to get all gloomy."[12] Later, when she sees the couple together again as she works through her Sunday chores, she thinks about her single status again: "What did I have to look forward to? I asked myself rhetorically. 60 Minutes and heated up pot roast."[13] The spinster theme is repeated in the second book in the series, where Roe reacts to the news that a former beau is getting married: "I saw green for envy, I saw red for rage, I saw blue for depression. I would never get married, I decided, I would just go to other people's weddings for the rest of my life."[14] More problematic than the evocation of personality stereotypes in creating this character, though, is the fact that the job of librarian in these books likewise appears to be derived from stereotypes.

Despite her self-declared long-interest in librarianship, Roe seems little acquainted with the profession. While she mentions having attended college, she makes no mention of having been to library school.[15] Perhaps then it should not be surprising that her duties at the library are often clerical ones. One day at the library finds Roe "reshelving books that had been checked in."[16] That this is normal rather than exceptional is evident when she adds, "Lillian Schmidt, another librarian, was shelving books a few stacks away."[17] On a day when she hopes to kill time until her shift is over, Roe "hid among the books all morning, reading the shelves, dusting, and piddling along."[18] She has no job title and seems to hop wildly about the library from task to task. One day she spends hours shelving, the next she is repairing worn volumes in the back room.

While Roe explains her assorted on-the-job tasks by stating that the library staff is "too small to permit much specialization," her knowledge of librarians' responsibilities simply seems lacking. Despite her participation in a club which pursues information on historical murders, when she needs information about a particular case, she almost seems relieved to hand it over to another individual (a retired school librarian and volunteer at the public library) simply because Jane Engle "had a larger personal collection."[19] When an acquaintance confronts her at work – interrupting the interminable shelving — with the question, "'Have you read this book on bargello?'" Roe's response fails to show any familiarity with reader's advisory practices:

I blinked and recovered. "Now Sally, I can't sew on a button. You'd have to ask Mother if you want to know about needlework. Or Lillian," I added brilliantly, as my co-worker wheeled her own cart past the other end of the stack.[20]

Roe offers a simplistic, almost child-like explanation of working with the public:

I usually enjoyed my tour in Circulation. I got to stand at the big desk to one side of the main entrance. I answered questions and accepted the books, taking the fines if the books were overdue, sliding the cards back in and putting them on book carts for transportation back to their shelves. Or I checked the books out."[21]

Roe later provides another description of an afternoon shift, saying, "I was on the checkout/check-in desk for three hours, making idle conversation with the patrons."[22] In these and other references to her professional obligations, Roe never serves on the reference desk, researches challenging questions, manages the collection, or catalogs. Computer technology does not figure at all in the library in these novels, published in the early 1990s.

Most disturbingly, though, Roe fails to demonstrate knowledge of library functions that have the potential to reveal who the murderer is. When a would-be reader tells her that all nonfiction items relating to murder are checked out, she first considers that others in the historical murders club might have them, then suspects that the murderer, who patterns crimes based on famous cases, might indeed be the researcher. Roe's reaction, instead of wondering about violating patron confidentiality to see who has the books, is this: "That was sickening. I looked it in the face for a second, then had to turn away. I could not visualize, did not dare to visualize, someone I knew pouring over books, trying to select what old murder to imitate next."[23] At this point in the story, and in subsequent ones which should rely increasingly on behind-the-scenes knowledge of libraries, the constraints of the plot are sorely tested by the author's reliance on stereotypes.

In the character of librarian Roe Teagarden, readers are offered a superficial rendition of the librarian. Her professional skills do not aid her in solving the murder of the woman whose body she found. Instead, reliance on the image of the "stamping and shelving spinster" librarian results in a weak narrative and an untenable career choice for Roe.[24] The depiction of this character's work life echoes the worst findings in much of the library literature about image problems in the profession.

IMAGES OF THE PROFESSION: ON THE ROAD AND ON THE 'NET

Judith Van Gieson's Claire Reynier mysteries involve the efforts of her protagonist, a librarian responsible for collection development for a university

research center, to solve crimes involving books and libraries. Set in the desert Southwest, these books also fall in the genre of regional mystery fiction. Van Gieson presents Claire's professional qualifications and her personality before her looks, and these narratives ultimately reflect a more grounded awareness of the library profession.

This librarian-turned-sleuth is a credentialed one. Claire, readers learn, attended library school at the University of Arizona. She is described as "the head of collection development,"[25] but she has a supervisor and no staff of her own to supervise in turn. Her responsibilities range from research and acquisitions to the pragmatic problems of transporting collection items. This situation means Claire has a measure of independence acquired only "after years of having to account for every minute of her time."[26]

Some personal background is also offered about this character. She is adept with computers, using them for avocational interests like electronic games of solitaire as well as for work-related needs like emailing book collectors and researching the availability of rare books.[27] She has a grown family, including an ex-husband.[28] It was because of him, rather than her profession, that she adopted "more subdued" clothing and "a quiet, professional style."[29] Claire is not young. Readers are not told her age but are given descriptions indicating she is somewhat older than 50, including this passage:

At this point in life, how good she looked depended on the light. In a diffuse light her hair was blonde. In daylight it was silver. In soft light she had fine wrinkles. In hard light her face was a road map of an overcrowded city.[30] Her tai chi practice and her cat, Nemesis, are among the other details which characterize this protagonist.

Her work life is not intended to reflect the working conditions of every librarian. Claire's job is referred to as "a dream spot," researching and purchasing rare books.[31] Nonetheless, there are indicators about what actual librarians do for a living, even as Claire works to resolve the mystery of the stolen books. There are descriptions of her attending meetings and interacting with colleagues,[32] of those colleagues' advanced degrees and other credentials,[33] and of decision-making regarding collections and special exhibits.[34]

It is perhaps her decision-making and her knowledge that most distinguishes Claire as a professional librarian. She sometimes travels to do her work. When she acquires a collection of rare books, Claire acknowledges the importance of its artifacts and its value to her career: "It was a collection any library would be proud to own, and it would be a coup for her to bring it in."[35] She is readily able to promise recognition to the benefactor, evaluate an inventory list, and identify mistakes regarding publication information.[36] She can assess the value of items in the collection and recognize significant authors.[37] She outlines online search strategies and develops ways of acquiring information which she does not already know how to find.[38] These traits and evidence of learning are important to creating an positive and realistic image of the librarian as a professional in Van Gieson's books.

In creating the character of Claire Reynier, Van Gieson begins to modify stereotypes of library professionals presented in popular fiction. This character calls attention to the need for education and intellectual acumen in order to solve information problems, and the series featuring her gives some attention to the behind-the-scenes work done in libraries. While stopping short of depicting the demands of more typical library jobs, such as reference work or cataloging, the Claire Reynier mysteries reflect more professional, less stereotypical images of librarians. It is in these recent novels that the librarian-sleuth begins to call attention to some of the aptitudes and the skills needed for library work, applying these traits in pursuit of both professional and criminal problems.

CONCLUSION

Whereas Harris depicts the profession as dull and amorphous in its responsibilities, Van Gieson suggests that librarians are educated, skilled individuals who use knowledge to make decisions that aid others and themselves. Harris's Roe is someone who is largely occupied with clerical tasks, fails to enjoy collegial relationships with many of her coworkers, and leaves her library job at the earliest opportunity. Reynier's Claire sometimes works weekends and cannot live in the charming but expensive neighborhoods she would like to call home, but she also knows and loves books and computers, wanting to make the treasures of her library available to users.

The ways the library profession is represented in mass market detective fiction is only one dimension of the image of the librarian, yet these narratives still have the potential to either obscure the nature of the librarian's role through the evocation of stereotypes – as is done in the Teagarden books – or to enhance the librarian's image – as is the case in the Claire Reynier books – showing applied problem-solving. As libraries function in challenging social and economic environments, facing the need to recruit future librarians, to make decisions about access to information, and to meet the difficulties of limited budgets, which representations of the librarian will enable readers to understand our profession and its responsibilities? Which librarian-sleuth's adventures do we want to recommend to our readers, and in turn, which image of the librarian best recommends us to them?

FOOTNOTES

[1] Mysteries featuring the librarian as amateur detective also include Miriam Grace Monfredo's nineteenth-century librarian Glynis Tryon; Kate Morgan's Dewey James, a small-town librarian; Elizabeth Peters' Jacqueline Kirby, an academic librarian. For a fuller list of mystery titles featuring librarians, one source is Lake County's "Where There's a Book, There's a Librarian" Web page at www.lakeco.lib.in.us/library_lovers_month.htm.

[2] Roma M. Harris, *Librarianship: Erosion of a Woman's Profession* (Norwood, N.J.: Alex Publishing Corp., 1992), 3.

[3] Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, (2003). "Librarians and Party Girls: Cultural Studies and the Meaning of the Librarian." The Library Quarterly, 73(1), 54-69.

[4] "The portrayal of a librarian as young, energetic, and friendly would be meaningful only against the prevailing negative stereotype of the librarian as an aging, scowling spinster" (p. 325) in Gary R. Radford and Marie L. Radford, (2001). "Libraries, Librarians, and the Discourse of Fear. The Library Quarterly, 71(3), 299-329.

[5] Hans Prins and Wilco de Gier with Russell Bowden, *The Image of the Library and the Information Profession/ How We See Ourselves: An Investigation* (New Haven: KG Saur, 1995), 21, IFLA Publications 71.

[6] Charlaine Harris, *Real Murders* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 1990), 2.

[7] Harris, *Real Murders,* 2.

[8] Charlaine Harris, *A Bone to Pick* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 1992), 131.

[9] Harris, *Real Murders*, 81.

[10] Harris, *Bone to Pick*, 67.

[11] Harris, *Real Murders*, 59.

[12] Harris, *Real Murders*, 3.

[13] Harris, *Real Murders*, 69.

[14] Harris, *Bone to Pick*, 4.

[15] Roe's only description of her education occurs in this passage where she describes her friendship with another character named Amina: "I'd grown up with her and remained best friends through college." Harris, *Real Murders*, 58.

[16] Harris, *Real Murders*, 79.

[17] Harris, *Real Murders*, 79.

[18] Harris, *Bone to Pick*, 133.

[19] Harris, *Real Murders*, 57-58.

[20] Harris, *Real Murders*, 85.

[21] Harris, *Real Murders*, 87.

[22] Harris, *Bone to Pick*, 33.

[23] Harris, *Real Murders*, 88.

[24] In the second book in the series, Roe inherits a house and an accompanying small fortune, allowing her to resign her position at the financially troubled local public library.

[25] Judith Van Gieson, The Stolen Blue (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 2.

[26] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 3.

[27] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 1, 63-64.

[28] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 2.

[29] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 30.

[30] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 30.

[31] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue* , 2.

[32] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 33.

[33] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 33.

[34] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 38.

[35] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue*, 8.

[36] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 8-9.

[37] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 12-13, 25.

[38] Van Gieson, *Stolen Blue,* 64-65.

"REFLECTIONS"

REFLECTING ON THE MAIN ARTICLES

The following three articles are Reflections on the main articles of this issue of *Indiana Libraries*.

- *Warrior Librarian: How Our Image is Changing (A Personal Look)* by Melissa Pappert
- *Looking in a Mirror Backwards* by Stanley Melburn Campbell
- *Liberry Funnies* by Charles A. Wagner

WARRIOR LIBRARIAN: HOW OUR IMAGE IS CHANGING (A PERSONAL LOOK)

by Melissa Wooton

When I decided that a librarian's life was the life for me, I really didn't consider it to be a career where I would do battle daily. At the time, I was exhausted from being a Warrior Manager and ready for a slower pace. So it was serendipity when the flier from library school came in the mail. Like Harry Potter getting his first owl post, I wasn't sure how it knew to find me, but it did. And it sounded perfect: reading, helping people—grateful people—find things, and of course, quiet. Of course, the brochure didn't promise any of that, but my preconception was that I would be a peacekeeper, and leave the war behind. Having been a librarian for four short years now, I realize we *are* a group of warriors, although some of our battles are changing.

Becoming a librarian, for me, was all about timing. Right out of high school, I would not have considered the career. But after college and four years in the high pay, high stress, no fun world of corporate management, I was ready to listen. Even in spite of the big roadblock that had stopped me before: the Image. The image of the bun-wearing, finger-pointing shush-er who didn't want anyone touching "her" books, and who had no friends or interests or social life. In my defense, I was just part of the flock—as it turns out, that old stereotype is even getting her own action figure, complete with bun and sensible shoes, pointing the finger at all the *Chatty Cathys* of the world.

Debunking that myth is a daily battle of mine, answering patrons who question why I actually *wanted* to be a librarian, or that I actually needed a master's degree in order to be one. I've had in-depth conversations with more than one patron who wanted to be absolutely clear that this was my chosen career, that I had been serious enough about this goal to actually pursue higher education, and that I realized all of the connotations in terms of compensation and social status. But after assuring one man that it was shockingly true, he was kind enough to validate my choice with a pitying look, and a unenthusiastic "That's great. Good for you." I guess that battle is never-ending.

So, I aspired to be a librarian, ala Parker Posey in the movie ***Party Girl***—an interesting, fun-loving snappy dresser who just happened to find fulfillment cataloguing and shelving books. Again, naïve. The bigger fight in public libraries is not keeping things ordered and peaceful. It is in actually attracting people to work in them. Even in *library school*, the shift is toward *Information* Science, not just Library Science. To be fair, there is usually much more money to be made in web design than in story time. And you don't have to also do maintenance and security to boot, unless you're working for a new start-up.

In my case, I had my mid-life crisis in my twenties, and knew that public service was where I wanted to be. However, it is just as challenging as my previous career. In the past, public libraries may have been more about books and quiet, but now they are all about community needs and marketing. Bringing in the programs that the people want (and trying to tie books to them) and selling then to compete with the thousand other options available to our patrons is job number one. Fortunately, this is a battle I can care about and believe in.

My own awareness of the fight on the national front has changed also. Growing up, I don't remember too many hot news stories featuring librarians, but probably because I wasn't looking for them. Librarians and library organizations are still fighting the same fights for money and personal freedoms and against censorship. Now, I try to pay more attention, and it's amazing what I find out: I am part of a profession that "constitute(s) one of the nation's main centers of thoughtless and unreconstructed leftism.[1]" That kind of blows the bun right out of the hair. I don't feel that I'm a controversial person, but it's good for the image. Maybe the action figure should carry a stylus, pulling up the (Library) Bill of Rights on her palm pilot. And the conservative dress could be replaced by a knee-length skirt and a pair of kicky boots, while we're at it. Yes, it's hypocritical keeping the doll a "her," but maybe the old stereotype isn't *all* bad.

I'll even admit, some days I resemble that old image. I do often wonder where all the parents have gone while their children are in the library for hours unattended? And why anyone thinks it's acceptable to hold a conversation on their cell phone while surfing the net? And, if anyone actually comes in the library to read anymore? I've "shushed" a patron before, but I'm learning to let it go. Sometimes the greener fields of corporate librarianship look good. I wouldn't mind the normal hours and the extra money. But at the end of the day, the public library is still the place for me. As we change from guardians of quiet study to information specialists in library community centers, our battles are even more important and well worth waging.

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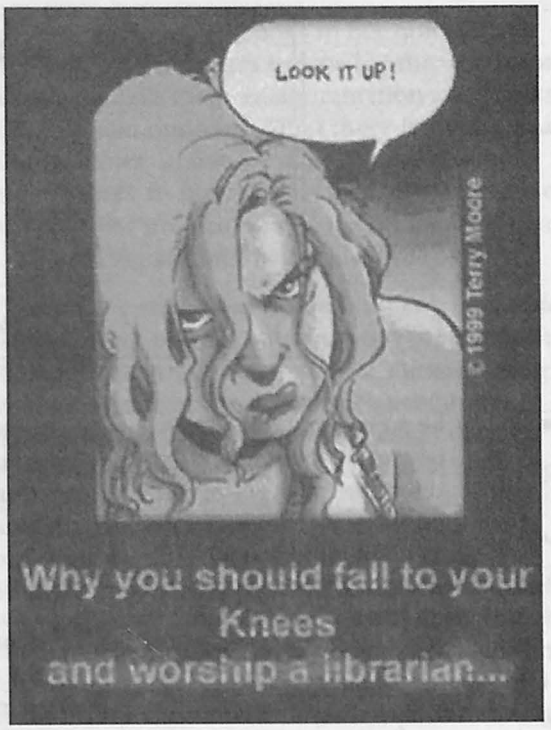
FOOTNOTES

[1] Lowry, Rich. "The Ideological Librarians ", www.townhall.com/columnists/richlowry/rl20030922.shtml



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LOOKING IN A MIRROR BACKWARDS

by Stanley Melburn Campbell

The stereotype of a librarian seated behind a large reference desk stamping books and telling patrons to be quiet is just a figment of the imagination when it comes to a small town library. Many of the traditional rules just do not apply. That is even more so when you are trying to enter the twenty-first century on a ridiculously limiting budget.

When I first discovered that a theme issue featuring "The Image of the Librarian" was being planned I ignored it. I was hardly the average image of a librarian, I did many things wrong, and so I reasoned no one would be interested in what I had to say. Then after having a few weeks to think about it I realized that I should write a few words.

My own career as a librarian got under way just over eight years ago. I honestly tried to fit into the stereotypical mold perfected by my retiring predecessor. Admittedly I had my own concept of what a typical librarian should be, based on those librarians I encountered over the years, and was amazed how erroneous that concept truly is in a real-life situation. This held especially true on those days when I pull an eleven-hour shift and work solo.

Patrons simply expect their librarian to be able to do just about anything. Personally I love being a detective, researching answers to questions and uncovering some obscure fact that results in creating a great research paper or report but there are occasions when I help locate the neighbor's cat or dog.

Then, despite efforts to avoid it, the information specialist in a small town is of course the librarian. Often you are the final authority on a subject because you are expected to have all the pertinent data at your fingertips.

The reputation of the library rested on my shoulders. All that responsibility made me nervous, until I finally accepted the fact that I was the one in charge and needed to establish my own foundation for operating the library.

The Poseyville Carnegie Public Library is a rare commodity for a community our size. Although the library was constructed in 1905 and despite an extensive renovation and remodeling project completed in 2000 and weekly publicity in the local papers, there are still individuals who think we are an abandoned building. Others accustom to the habits and traditions of our previous library director who served for over 45 years are surprised to discover games being played in one room, computers dominating another and a learning resources room almost exclusively designed around children.

When I started as library director it was difficult to get children and young adults into the library. For six years now I have been collecting data concerning patron reading habits, seasonal changes, and popular trends in entertainment. I have been shifting our material purchases accordingly. Of course monetary shortfalls interfere with the scope of these purchases and from year to year it is easy to tell when funding was sparsely distributed.

SIDEBAR: I can condense my image at the Poseyville Carnegie Public Library to the following job titles: babysitter, repairman, security guard, medic, public relation specialist, advisor, artist, mentor, business consultant, councilor, loan agent, tutor, detective, confidant, excuse, alibi, and friend.

-Stanley M. Campbell-

I've lost count of the number of times I go shopping on my days off just to purchase items for our programs or to pick up books. I read every dust jacket of every book we receive, view every video, play the computer games and listen to all of the books on tape. I have acquired a reputation for being a walking card catalog of what is available on our shelves. Admittedly, I do forget things like who has what item checked out and if a particular patron has read a given book in a series before, but I know the cheat codes to the computer games we loan out.

We are overrun with school age kids. Now do not take this as a complaint because I enjoy working with them. The bicycle rack I had made by a local welder is always full and there are usually several propped against our steps or scattered haphazardly on the lawn. A close good friend, amazed at the number of children regularly visiting our library, once told me she would not be surprised to discover one of the kids had arrived at the library on a pogo stick. If that ever occurs I will take a picture of the event. Honestly, I have actually come to anticipate those rare quiet times when I can accomplish routine paperwork but during the summer such moments have become virtually nonexistent.

On the other hand, our library has a number of elderly patrons who grace our premises once a month. They complain about any and all changes. One lady complained to my predecessor that there were so many kids in the library she was afraid to come in and wanted us to deliver her romance books to her home. Then there is a lady who becomes irritated at the very sight of computers and calls them an abomination and thinks I should have them removed. Then there is a gentleman who always shows up five minutes before closing wanting to access an Internet site he saw advertised on television but has no idea how to use a computer and keeps me working another half hour.

When we increased our hours from twenty-two to forty a week other patrons were not only horrified but also confused. Yet another lady wrote a letter stating that when she came to the library we were always closed and, despite our hours being posted on both entrances and published weekly in the local newspaper, she stated she and her friends could never find us open.

Admittedly my situation is probably trivial and of my own doing. I spend considerable time just listening to patrons' problems that are unrelated to library services. And yes I deliver books to several elderly patrons' home when they are unable to visit the library. Of course I stay overtime just to help late arrivals. It is my image and I have to accept it.

LIBERRY FUNNIES

by Charles A. Wagner

You are not going to find a plethora of cartoons in library publications. That being a given, I am, however, surprised there are not herds of anti-library cartoons in the publications of certain business and agricultural powers. Political Action Committees dislike libraries, you know. Libraries are supported by property taxes!!

Evil and timid weasels that we are, we are not even allowed to mention our adversaries in disrespectful tones.

Oh, well... Life goes on. Library themed cartoons do surface in newspaper strips and the few publications that still publish gag cartoons, but I doubt that many of them are drawn by librarians, though...

A search of Amazon.com for library cartoon collections turns up a slim set of pickings, but if you are desperate my Liberry Funnies can be purchased from the Amazon Marketplace. (I just thought I would mention that. They make swell gifts. Buy lots of them).

Why do I call them "Liberry" instead of "Library"? When I assumed my first professional position, I was surprised by the number of folks who dropped the first "r" in "library." Thinking it humorous, I titled my cartoons "Liberry Funnies." Alas, none of my patrons get it.

So, why don't librarians include cartoons in their publications? Maybe ink is too expensive. Maybe they are too stuffy. Maybe they take too much pride in their professionalism to laugh at themselves and their bailiwick. Beats me.

Librarians come out of graduate schools trained in the ins and outs of arcane databases that no civilian would ever care about, but they have forgotten how to laugh. Or at least they do not laugh as much as they should.

Maybe a couple of my cartoons will help. I hope you enjoy them. Better yet, buy the collection from Amazon Marketplace.

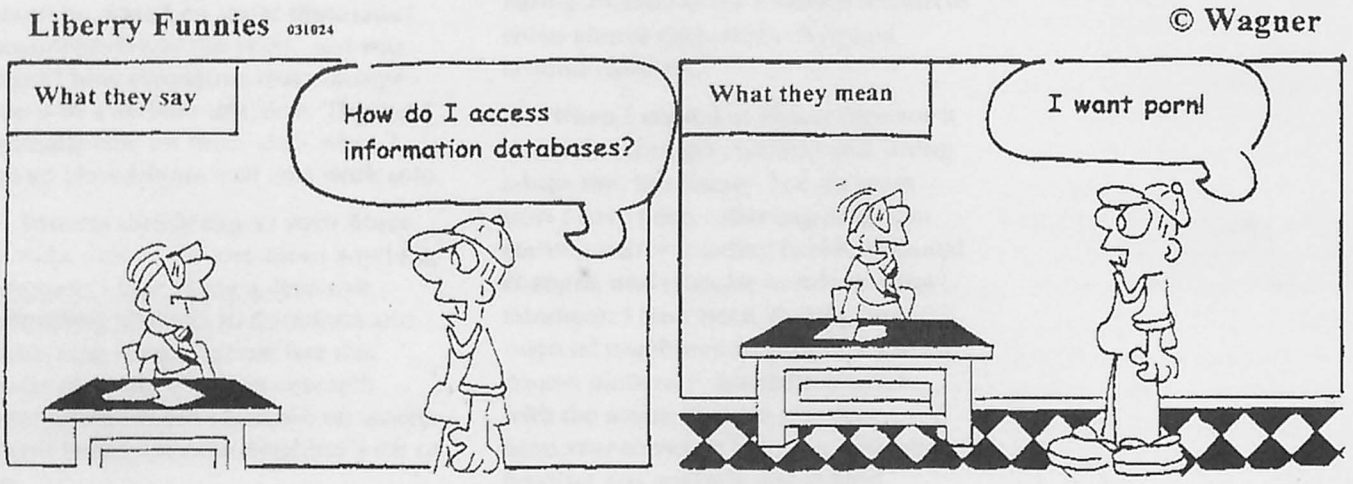
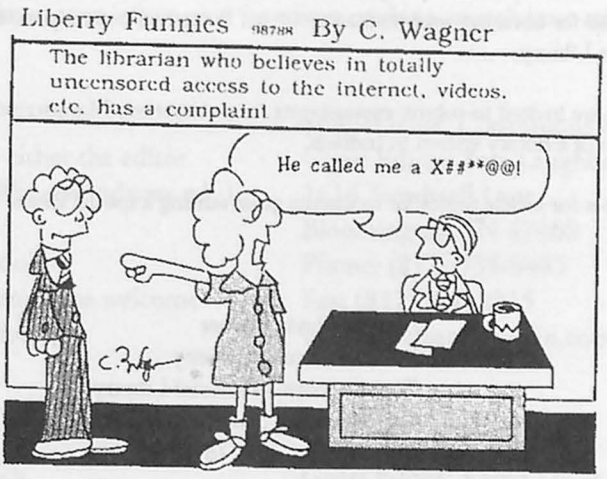


FIGURE 1.

Liberry Funnies



You can't talk to *her* like that!

FIGURE 2.

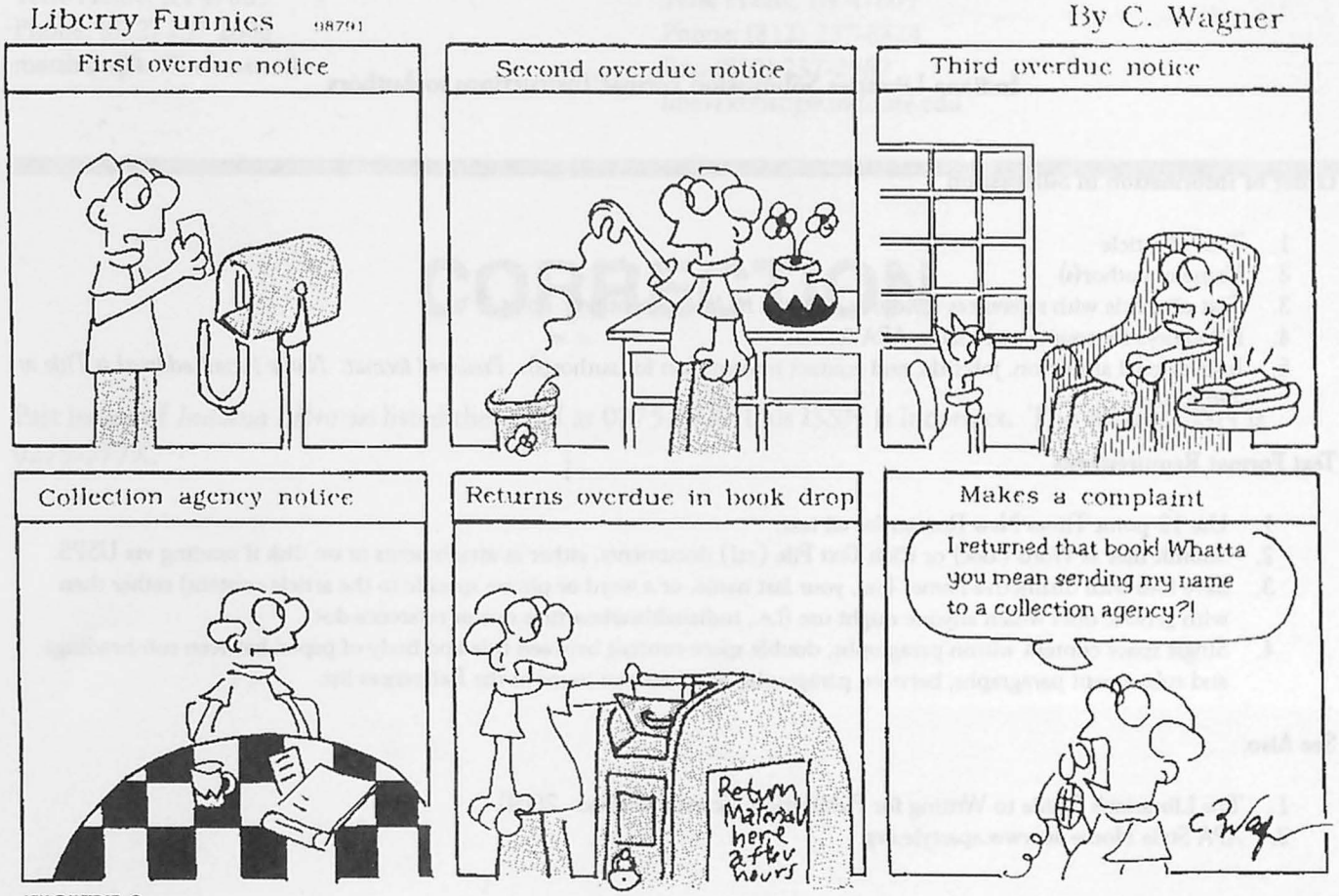


FIGURE 3.

Indiana Libraries Submission Guidelines

Indiana Libraries is a professional journal for librarians and media specialists. Published twice a year, it is a joint publication of the Indiana Library Federation and the Indiana State Library.

Practitioners, educators, and researchers are invited to submit manuscripts for publication. Manuscripts may concern a current practice, policy, or general aspect of the operation of a library system in Indiana.

For more information and to discuss ideas for article topics, or to discuss guest editing a special theme issue, contact the **Indiana Libraries** editor:

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Indiana Libraries Submission Format/Instructions to Authors

Order of Information in Submission

1. Title of article
2. Name of author(s)
3. Text of article with references to source material in APA parenthetic notes
4. References for source material in APA format
5. Institutional affiliation, job title, and contact information for author(s). *Preferred format: Name (email address) is Title at Institution.*

Text Format Requirements

1. Use 12-point Times New Roman for all text.
2. Submit files as Word (.doc) or Rich Text File (.rtf) documents, either as attachments or on disk if sending via USPS.
3. Save files with distinctive names (i.e., your last name, or a word or phrase specific to the article content) rather than with generic ones which anyone might use (i.e., indianalibrariesarticle.doc or reference.doc).
4. Single space content within paragraphs; double space content between title and body of paper, between sub-headings and subsequent paragraphs, between paragraphs, and between items in the References list.

See Also:

1. The Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication (Scarecrow Press: 2004)
2. APA Style Home at www.apastyle.org

Forthcoming Issues of *Indiana Libraries*

The following issues are in the works; contact information for editors working on each issue are provided for potential contributors.

General Issues
To contribute an article, contact either the editor (Alberta Davis Comer/libcomer@isugw.indstate.edu) or the associate editor (Emily Okada/okada@indiana.edu).
Winter 2005: No theme; all submissions welcome
Summer 2005: Health Information

Guest-Edited Issues

Special Issue: Information Literacy
Guest Editor: Marsha Miller, Coordinator, Library Instruction
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Special Issue: Continuous Improvement
Guest Editor: Sara Laughlin
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Special Issue: Diversity
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CORRECTION

Past issues of *Indiana Libraries* listed the ISSN as 0275-77X. This ISSN is incorrect. The correct ISSN is 0275-777X.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the stereotype image of the librarian so dominant in people's minds?

2. Is there any truth to the stereotype image of the librarian?

3. A lot of time and energy has been spent in our profession defining and fighting this stereotype. Is it worth the effort?

4. Are the majority of depictions of the profession in the cinema positive or negative?

5. What personality traits are usually assigned to members of our profession?

6. Can the profession use the stereotype as a tool to market our skills in the 21st century?

7. What is the role of the librarian in today's society?

8. How do you accurately describe a librarian?

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