

**Loveless Frumps, Old Maids, and  
Diabolical Deviants: Representations of  
Gender and Librarianship  
in Popular Culture**

**by  
Christina Neigel**

M.LIS, University of British Columbia, 2000

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1995

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

in the

Faculty of Education

© Christina Neigel 2018  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
Fall 2018

Copyright in this work rests with the author. Please ensure that any  
reproduction or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national  
copyright legislation.

# Approval

**Name:** Christina Neigel

**Degree:** Doctor of Education

**Title:** Loveless Frumps, Old Maids, and Diabolical  
Deviants: Representations of Gender and  
Librarianship in Popular Culture

**Examining Committee:** **Chair: Rebecca Cox**  
Associate Professor

**Elizabeth Marshall**  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor

**Michelle Pidgeon**  
Supervisor  
Associate Professor

**Celeste Snowber**  
Internal Examiner  
Associate Professor

**Suzanne Stauffer**  
External Examiner  
Associate Professor  
School of Library and Information Science  
Louisiana State University

**Date Defended/Approved:** October, 25, 2018

## Abstract

From the old-maid to the oversexed librarian to the unwelcoming gatekeeper, stereotypical representations of woman librarians are familiar in popular culture. Images and narratives construct important messages about what it means to be a librarian and highlight the cultural struggles of the profession, particularly around its status as women's work. Representations of librarians are rooted in a gendered history of the profession and the social norms that produce expectations about service work as an extension of the caring and organizing work of women.

To interrogate the legacy of this history, I examine the representation of gender in contemporary popular cultural texts. Drawing on visual discourse analysis I analyze visual-verbal texts featuring librarians as a way of understanding how gendered representations about librarianship as "women's work" are produced and resisted. Focusing on popular cultural texts produced between 2005 and 2017 from the United States, I analyze discourses of gender and librarianship in children's picture books, middle grade and young adult novels, a YouTube video, a made-for-television movie, and Internet sites.

I argue that popular cultural texts about librarians are sites of normative inscription *and* of resistance. While contemporary fictional representations continue to locate librarians in the past and as white, cisgender, heterosexual women, auto/biographical projects offer a disruptive turn from these mainstream characterizations to give voice to the rich and complex lives of real librarians whose work is focused on social action. I conclude with a call for library education programs to adopt a feminist critical media literacy curriculum to encourage undergraduate and graduate library students to critically examine, rescript, and repicture the discursive construction of librarians in popular culture.

**Keywords:** professional identity; librarian stereotypes; librarianship as "women's work"; visual discourse analysis; feminist discourse analysis; critical media literacy; visual-verbal discourse analysis; public pedagogy; representation; popular culture

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my fellow Bunbabes (you know who you are!) and all of the many library people who have struggled, like me, to navigate the complex spaces that make up our everyday.

## **Acknowledgements**

My Supervisor, Elizabeth Marshall who provided me with thoughtful encouragement, feedback, and insight in this journey. I am very fortunate to have been your student.

My Professor, Michelle Pidgeon who supported me through this journey by being a thoughtful and encouraging teacher.

SFU library staff who, through the curation of a robust library collection and support in making that collection accessible, were integral to this project.

Don, Alex, and Katherine, for giving me the space to do my work and enabling me to take the time I needed even though that meant time away from you. Don, I am forever grateful for your humour, your constant support, and your loving encouragement.

Mom and Dad, for always being in my corner. Best. Parents Ever.

## Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
Glossary.....	xi
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview of the Theoretical Perspective .....	6
The Problem .....	7
Research Problem and Questions.....	9
Research Design.....	10
Significance.....	11
Outline of the Dissertation .....	12
Conclusion .....	13
<b>Chapter 2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction .....	14
History of Women in Higher Education .....	15
Defining “Women’s Work” .....	17
The Shifting Value of Librarianship.....	18
From Vocation to Profession.....	20
Development of Library Education.....	22
Librarianship’s Tendencies to Self-blame .....	26
LIS Studies of Librarian Images .....	31
Feminist Poststructural Theory & Sites of Resistance .....	36
Meaning-Making through Popular Culture .....	38
Conclusion .....	40
<b>Chapter 3. Theory &amp; Methods.....</b>	<b>42</b>
Introduction .....	42
Theoretical Framework.....	42
Research Purpose and Questions.....	45
Significance.....	46
Ways of Seeing .....	46
Representation .....	47
Visual-Verbal Discourse.....	48
Permeability of Media.....	49
Selecting Texts/Media .....	50
Accessibility of Texts.....	51
Theme 1: Gatekeeping Librarians .....	52

Theme 2: Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians .....	52
Theme 3: Loveless-frumps, Spinsters, and Oversexed Librarians .....	53
Theme 4: Activist Librarians.....	54
Analysis of the Data .....	54
Rose: A Sample Analysis.....	55
Limitations of the Study .....	64
Situating Myself / My Positionality .....	64
Conclusion .....	65
<b>Chapter 4. Gatekeeping Librarians .....</b>	<b>66</b>
Introduction .....	66
Raucous Dragons .....	69
Hungry Wolf .....	74
Helpful but Loud.....	79
Summary.....	84
<b>Chapter 5. Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians.....</b>	<b>85</b>
Introduction .....	85
Villainous Rulers .....	86
Demonic and Diabolical.....	92
Summary.....	98
<b>Chapter 6. Loveless-frumps, Spinsters and Oversexed Librarians .....</b>	<b>100</b>
Introduction .....	100
Loveless Frumps and Spinsters .....	101
The Oversexed Librarian.....	109
Summary.....	115
<b>Chapter 7. Activist Librarians.....</b>	<b>116</b>
Reconceptualizing Image .....	116
Everyday Heroes: Activist Librarians in Biographies for Children.....	117
Something to Say About Themselves: Talk Backing Back.....	125
Summary.....	131
<b>Chapter 8. Discussion.....</b>	<b>132</b>
Introduction .....	132
Revisiting Librarianship's "Image Problem" .....	132
Discussion of Findings .....	134
Contributions of the Study .....	136
Directions for Future Research.....	139
Personal Reflection .....	139
Conclusion .....	142
<b>References.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix A. ....</b>	<b>165</b>

Annotated Bibliography of Selected Texts for Analysis .....	165
Theme 1: Gatekeeping Librarians .....	165
Theme 2: Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians .....	165
Theme 3: Loveless-frumps, Spinsters, and Oversexed Librarians .....	166
Theme 4: Activist Librarians.....	166
<b>Appendix B. ....</b>	<b>168</b>
Bibliography Featuring Librarians and Libraries.....	168



## List of Figures

Figure 1: A stereotypical “shushing” woman librarian. ....	2
Figure 2: A stereotypical “shushing” man librarian. ....	2
Figure 3: Librarian/Archivist "Rose" in <i>Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb</i> (2014). Despite the presence of a computer, she is surrounded by mid-20th century technology in the form of a typewriter, rolodex, card catalogues	56
Figure 4: Librarian challenging a boy’s dragon from entering the library. From <i>Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library</i> by Julie Gassman and illustrated by Andy Elkerton (2016). ....	70
Figure 5: Dragons are not permitted entry into the library so children must read with their dragons outside. From <i>Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library</i> by Julie Gassman and illustrated by Andy Elkerton (2016). ....	73
Figure 6: The librarian denies wolf entry to the library From <i>Winston the Book Wolf</i> by Marni McGee and illustrated by Ian Beck (2006). ....	75
Figure 7 : The wolf, now known as “Granny Winston” becomes the Story Lady. From <i>Winston the Book Wolf</i> by Marni McGee and illustrated by Ian Beck (2006). ....	77
Figure 8: Miss Merriweather confronts the Lion. From <i>Library Lion</i> by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (2006). ....	81
Figure 9: Miss Merriweather reunited with the Library Lion. From <i>Library Lion</i> by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (2006). ....	83
Figure 10: Dark Oculator, Radrian Blackburn talking with Ms. Fletcher (p. 257). From <i>Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians</i> by Brandon Sanderson, illustrations by Hayley Lazo (2007). ....	87
Figure 11: Librarian Guard (p. 193). From <i>Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians</i> by Brandon Sanderson, illustrations by Hayley Lazo (2007). ....	90
Figure 12: Librarian, Jane, discussing spinsterhood with Aurora. From <i>A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery</i> (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015). ....	102
Figure 13: Lillian the librarian: “the loveless frump”. From <i>A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery</i> (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015). ....	104
Figure 14: Ann Withers “helping” a library patron. From <i>Ann Withers the librarian</i> (Studio C, 2013). ....	112
Figure 15: With her patrons, Baker is shown in the rear centre with a green dress. From <i>The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq</i> by Jeanette Winter (2005). .....	119
Figure 16: Making a winter delivery of reading materials to the elderly Mrs. Maumey. From <i>Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile</i> by Gloria Houston and illustrations by Susan Condie Lamb (2011). ....	122
Figure 17: A self portrait of a librarian from Buffalo, New York, describing her work in exposing secret Tobacco industry documents. From <i>Lookslikelibraryscience.com</i> . ....	128
Figure 18: A self portrait of Deah, a librarian from Virginia participating in the 2017 Women’s March in Washington, DC. From <i>Lookslikelibraryscience.com</i> . .....	129

Figure 19: My edition of the Nancy Pearl action figure.....	143
Figure 20: Author Selfie: This is what a librarian looks like. ....	145

## Glossary

Discourse Analysis	The analysis of “groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking” (Rose, 2012, p. 190) to address questions of power/knowledge by focusing closely on the discursive formations of visual-verbal texts and their productivity.
Femininity	A social construction that “ <i>refers</i> to [female] bodies “but is not <i>determined</i> by [female] biology (Connell, 2000, p. 29). As an aspect of gender, femininity operates as a discourse that differentiates men and women through socially constructed practices that can be reified and/or resisted.
Image	Used in two ways – a) drawing from the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , image is “a concept or impression, created in the minds of the public” (“Image”, n.d.) that informs how librarianship is valued in society and b) images as pictures that are reproduced to copy/resemble “a thing or (now esp.) person” (“Image”, n.d.).
Librarian	Within the context of popular media, anyone working in a library.
Popular Culture	The everyday expressions and practices of culture that become part of the “struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups” (Storey, 2015, p. 10).
Public Pedagogy	The “various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and is distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites” (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011, p.338).
Representation	Social practices articulated through narrative images, illustrations and other visual artifacts by “giving specific meaning to images and by producing particular experiences from images” (Rose, 2012, p. 10). The intertextuality of images and other visual artifacts inform one another, creating new meaning.
Visual-verbal Texts	Visual-verbal texts refer broadly to cultural materials in which image and text work together to make meaning,

including picture books, comics, and other multimodal artifacts such as film and television.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

*When I was a kid, I was brainwashed into believing that all librarians had silver hair, wore half glasses, tailored suits, sensible shoes, and had their index fingers permanently frozen into a pointing position*

*-- Kathleen Glab, The Sensuous Librarians*

Dear reader,

Before you venture into this document, please engage in a quick exercise. Close your eyes and imagine a librarian. What do you see? Do you envision a man or woman? What colour is this person's skin? What do they wear? What kind of posture does this individual have? Where is the imaginary librarian situated? What are they doing? What feelings do you have when you conjure this image?

Whatever image you may have brought into focus reflects your "reading" of a librarian. The meaning that you have constructed for this image, while unique to you, is built on your experiences with librarians, whether these have been direct or indirect, through what you have seen, read, and heard about them. I invite you to place your representation of a librarian nearby – on a shelf in the forefront of your mind so that you can reach out to it and engage with it as you navigate this dissertation. You will want to return to that image, turn it around, and prod it, to contemplate how it came to be and how it continues to act.

I use the term "representation" to describe how visual artifacts like illustrations, photographs, and textual descriptions make meaning. Visual-verbal representations of librarians appear in a wide array of social spaces, including the Internet. A Google image search of the keyword "librarian" produces a number of stock images. Librarians are often anchored to books, as illustrated in the two examples below (Figures 1 and 2). These stock images sold by companies like Shutterstock are part of promotional images for various projects like calendars, television shows, and movies. The majority of results show librarians, mainly white women, conservatively dressed and spectacled (Figures 1 and 2). They are middle-aged women (Figure 1) often with their hair pulled tightly back, and sporting stern, uninviting expressions (Figures 1 and 2). They often peer directly into the camera to shush their audience.



Figure 1: A stereotypical “shushing” woman librarian.



Figure 2: A stereotypical “shushing” man librarian.

These visual-verbal representations cross different media platforms to circulate familiar stereotypes about women librarians. Librarian characters also appear in a surprising array of films like *Monsters University* (2013) and *The Public* (2018) and television shows like *Bob's Burgers*, *Mr. D.*, and *Parks and Recreation*. For instance, the popular contemporary Canadian comedy television series *Mr. D.* features the librarian

Emma Terdie. Librarians also often appear in advertisements, such as a 2016 television advertisement for KitKat (2017) candy bar in which a bespectacled and matronly-looking woman whips her head around at the sound of a crunch and aggressively launches herself into the personal space of the male “offender”, giving him a large and unmistakeable “shush”.

As a librarian and educator, the librarians that I encounter in popular media are always present, circulating in my mind, resurfacing when I meet new, non-library people who ask me what I “do” for a living. Shortly after graduating from “Library School” in 2000, my friends and I would jokingly discuss how we would defy the old-maid librarian stereotype. We would not only mock these images but we would also consciously think about the ways we dressed and acted at work that would challenge them. Throughout my career I have been acutely aware that most people know little about what a librarian does or why it is professional work. In fact, I have grown accustomed to people amusedly asking me if I teach people to “shush” and stamp books.

In 2015, as part of a career explorations week, I attended my daughter’s grade five class to share some details of what I do as a librarian and as a professor. Without first disclosing the nature of my work, I asked the class what they thought a librarian looked like. Quickly, this class of thirty students began calling out descriptions like “long skirts,” “glasses,” “glasses with pointy frames,” “boring,” “buns,” “old,” and “dark tights.” Their gendered descriptions quickly revealed their assumption that librarians were only women. Indeed, their depictions of unattractive, stern and unapproachable women were remarkably similar to elements seen in Figures 1 and 2 shown above. Even though these children all had regular visits in their own school library, they defaulted to broader and much more simplified descriptions that looked little like their own school library technician and more like what I had observed in popular media.

This group of enthusiastic children showed me that the stereotypes I spent so much time resisting seemed inevitably fixed in the minds of a whole new generation. I grew curious about these representations and their persistence. I became concerned about the sexist undertones of the stereotypes, their historical roots, and the implications they have for young people interested in similar work. How might it be possible to find more effective methods to grapple with stereotypes through education? This study is an

answer to that question and a feminist response to the cultural struggles that I have witnessed and experienced as a librarian and as an educator.

As the responses of these children demonstrate, representations of librarians teach about gender. Associating specific attributes and/or behaviours with specific forms of work is part of the daily practice of meaning-making that is socially constructed (Attebury, 2010; Badovinac & Južnič, 2011; Gaines, 2014). Beliefs that women and men are ideally suited to particular forms of work because of their gender, contributes to ongoing formations of gender stereotypes (Majid & Haider, 2008; Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014; Weihs, 2016). For example, in Davis-Kendrick's (2009) study of the career choices of African American male librarians she argues that gendered librarian stereotypes "[threaten] to break a large branch in the tree of their manhood" (p. 31), fuelling the field's lack of diversity. While the problems of stereotypes are not unique to librarianship, their effects are ongoing, as seen in the disproportionately high numbers of women librarians (Department, 2018; Ingles, De Long, Humphrey, & Sivak, 2005). There are very few comprehensive studies of library workers in Canada, including those that examine the field's ethnic or cultural composition. Ingles, De Long, Humphrey, & Sivak's national demographic study (2005) shows 80% of Canadian librarians are women. Although a 2016 census focused on Canadian academic librarians reveals that only nine percent identify as visible minorities (Revitt, Schrader & Kaufman, 2016), the demographic composition of the vast majority of library workers in Canada (including those who do not identify as "librarian" or work in other contexts like public and school libraries) is poorly examined.<sup>1</sup> The numerical prevalence of women in Canadian librarianship, combined with the notable "absence of public discourse relating to racial and ethnic diversity in librarianship" (Kandiuk, 2014, p. 514) requires a deeper look into how the field is understood in popular culture.

How people derive meaning about work is deeply embedded in our culture and our assumptions about the world. These assumptions are formed through a larger "public pedagogy" (Giroux, 1989a, 1989b, 1994; Luke, 1996; Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013) like books, film, and television that "teach" us how to think about gender and

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers are relatively similar in the United States. Studies show 82.8 % of all U.S. MLS graduates and 75.9% of all other types of library workers are women (ALA-APA, 011). In 2017, 86% of U.S. librarians were white (Department, 2018).



librarianship. For example, after surveying more than 20,000 primary grade children from around the world, a recent report published by Education and Employers (Chambers, Kashefpakdel, Rehill, & Percy, 2018) revealed that “children’s aspirations appear to be shaped by gender-specific ideas about certain jobs” (p. iv) that are largely informed by what these children experience through media including television, radio, and film. The everyday, as it is experienced through such media, contributes to the development of occupational aspirations and stereotypes that are likely to have lasting effects. While early exposure to such cultural formations become sites through which dominant culture structures meaning, the educative experiences of the everyday can also allow meanings to be disrupted, resisted, and overturned (Giroux, 1989a, 1989b, 1994; Luke, 1996; Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013).

These pedagogies have material effects. The ways we are taught to understand librarianship in popular cultural texts influences everyday experiences. In her 1972 book *Revolting Librarians* Kathleen Glab urged librarians to embrace their sensuousness and humanity through recommendations, such as “imagine yourself in the centerfold of LJ [Library Journal]” and “Dress like Spring, Summer, Winter, Fall but don’t ever dress like a librarian” (p. 20-21). Forty years after Glab’s (1972) exasperated description of the “old-maid Marian librarian”, this stereotype continues to dominate in popular culture. Spanning television, film, children and adult novels, and websites, this gendered image of the librarian persists. Across my career, I found that I consistently resisted the construction of librarianship as women’s work. For instance, I became very conscious of my attire, carefully choosing clothing that appeared more “business-like” than “old maid,” becoming silently critical of my colleagues who did not follow suit. I also sought out responsibilities that shifted me away from front-line service work so that I could spend more time with those who organized the work of others, believing that this would garner me more credibility as a professional. The old maid links librarianship to women and offers a cultural pedagogy in which professional women end up alone and unhappy rather than successful and fulfilled in all parts of their lives. I wanted to be respected for making important and valued contributions to my organization and I believed that this could be done by distancing myself from the very service work that originally attracted me to librarianship. I realized that I had internalized the larger public pedagogy about librarians and was secretly horrified at the prospect of becoming the “old-maid”.

In addition to worries about how I was perceived as a professional, I was greatly concerned with my earning potential, even with a Master's degree. After more than 20 years in the field, the jokes have never changed and the salaries have never caught up to those in other areas requiring similar levels of education. Librarians continue to earn wages that are comparable to occupations that do not require Master's degrees including public school teachers and skilled trades (Swigger 2010). Further, librarians see a downward trend in full-time employment and experience dissatisfaction with the kind of recognition they receive in their work (Girmscheid & Schwartz, 2014) with some evidence that wage disparities between men and women persist (CAUT, 2014; Lynch, 1999). As a teacher of library technicians, I feel a profound obligation to confront gendered structural inequities that inform how materially successful my students can be in this area of work. It is through a feminist agenda that I seek to empower my students and my colleagues to advocate for change and demand better treatment. Further, by turning to public pedagogy as a way of locating popular culture as an important site of education outside of formal systems of learning (i.e. schools), it is possible to interrogate cultural texts that teach us about what it means to be a librarian and what librarians do. These texts influence our understanding of the world by making meaning, including what we know and how we should "be". Specifically, public pedagogy offers a "way in" to an understanding of how representations of librarians in visual-verbal texts teach us about how librarianship is valued in broader culture.

## **Overview of the Theoretical Perspective**

This study draws on feminist poststructural scholars such as Judith Butler (2002), Chris Weedon (1997), Carmen Luke (1996, 2010), and Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b) to analyze representations of women librarians. This perspective situates gender as a central focus of inquiry and a site for political and social struggle because it can expose the relationship between "subjectivity and meaning, and meaning and social value" (Weedon, 1997, p. 18). Following feminist poststructural theories, gender in this study is considered a construct within the social order that can be understood by examining the underlying discourses and social relations that contribute to the organizing practices of everyday life. Discursive productions of gender appear in popular cultural texts that can be resisted and reworked as part of the politics of meaning. The process of analyzing relations of power requires a focus on the underlying ideologies

that shape, produce, and reproduce inequality. Discourses of normative femininity enact certain forms of power that often remain hidden from view but operate as truth. For example, the struggle for professional recognition can be attributed to the devaluation of service work but it is in the gendering of such work where power operates, establishing who does the work and how it is valued. This interpretative process considers how discourse teaches us “truths” about the world, that shape how roles are valued as part of the ongoing activity of “doing” gender that can be varied, unstable, and transgressive.

Feminist poststructural theory enables me to consider popular culture representations of librarians as active sites of meaning-making that are part of the gendered distribution of social power. A feminist poststructural theoretical approach enables me to analyze how the broader social assumptions about who librarians are and the work that they do shapes the contested terrain of women librarians’ professional status. By problematizing modern popular culture constructions of library workers, this work may offer those in library and information studies (LIS) an example of how the “image problem,” experienced by those in the field, might be better understood as a site of struggle. This feminist study offers other LIS scholars an example of how such work can form critical ways of understanding the representations of librarians that influence and organize our field.

## **The Problem**

What makes female librarians in popular culture important is how their representation is tied to a larger history of women’s higher education in Canada. Despite the rising opportunities for women to more fully participate in higher education and seek out professional work throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education scholarship (Blackmore, 1999; Cassin, 2004; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008) reveals the many struggles experienced by women as they negotiated spaces organized by men. Women’s professional advancement was structured around male-dominated value systems that limited women’s access to power and benefitted from their cheap labour. Excluded from control and authority, women were located within professions like librarianship and education for their “natural” affinity for the routine and practical aspects associated with caring work. Greatly influenced by the experiences of men, the knowledge, standards, and authority that shaped these fields also shaped the “ideal” image of the professional. For librarianship, this was largely a response to views that the growing numbers of

women entering the field, drawn to it for its respectability as paid work, were undermining its claim to high social status. As such, librarian education curricula developed with a focus on library “science” and information “management” that embodies rules and standards that are preferred over the “soft” knowledge of teaching and service work. These efforts to elevate the status of librarianship appear, however, to have failed and notions of librarians that populate broader culture continue to construct the profession (similar to fields like education, nursing, and social work) as something that is largely service-based, relying on the menial and caring work of women.

Representations of librarians in popular literature, film, and television do little to interrupt ideas that women’s work is somehow “less than” other forms of work that are performed by men, instead recycling visual-verbal discourses of women librarians that devalue their work. These texts offer constructions of librarians that are often sexist, drawing on discourses to police femininity through a focus on women’s looks and behaviour. Their work appears to be largely limited to protecting/guarding print books and maintaining order in libraries, making them seem fussy and irrelevant. Such representations rely on discourses of femininity that situate librarianship as an occupation that has little to do with the problems and issues of the “real” world. Beliefs about who librarians are and what they do are largely influenced by the pedagogic practices of popular media.

There is a very small amount of published work that considers gender as a major dynamic within the representation of women’s work and librarianship (eg. Gaines, 2014; Pagowsky & Rigby 2014). Most efforts that point out problems of image do not focus on gendered representations but rather circle back to tasking actual librarians to improve how they are recognized and respected in society (e.g. Adams, 2000; Attebury, 2010; Kneale, 2009; White, 2012) by encouraging librarians to change the way they behave, including being less resistant to technology, parodying stereotypes, and even being more approachable to patrons. While these highlight ongoing concerns that librarians have for their own “image problem”, much of the existing literature does not consider the history of gendered social norms and expectations that have shaped librarianship’s development as a profession. There is a compelling need to reveal the ways in which gender operates as a social relation within broader society if library and information studies educators wish to understand how to effectively prepare their students to question and confront the problems of professional status in productive ways. Because

these programs do not exist in isolation of higher education institutions, more broadly, these issues are equally important to others in the sector who also work to support students in a range of professional programs that are also gendered.

## Research Problem and Questions

The study uses visual discourse analysis to address embedded cultural assumptions within visual-verbal texts for a range of audiences that contribute to the production of the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian. This offers insight into why stereotypes of women and men librarians are consistently negative, often featuring women as unappealing, socially awkward, and obsessed with order and control and men as either evil or effeminate. The persistence of such images reveals an ongoing cultural struggle over how female dominated professions are characterized in modern Western society. My research questions include:

- What do representations of librarians in popular cultural texts reveal about librarianship, gender, and professional identity?
- What discourses of femininity and masculinity circulate in popular cultural texts about librarians?
- In what ways do discursive visual-verbal representations of librarians produce and resist constructions of librarianship as “women’s work”?

I examine representations of librarians within North American popular culture texts between 2005 and 2017. Platforms that dominate mainstream culture in Canada like television and books mediate the understanding and socialization of viewers and readers about librarians (Hallam, 2012). Unfortunately, in my extensive research on women’s librarians I found few examples of librarians in Canadian popular culture. Exceptions include Emma Terdie and Mr. Leung in Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s sitcom *Mr. D* and Linda Bailey’s (2017) newly published work, *The Tiny Hero of Ferny Creek Library*. A consultation with one of Canada’s experts on works for children, confirms a notable absence of Canadian librarians in children’s books (J. Saltman, personal communication, April 11, 2018). For this reason, my project turns to cultural products from the United States, acknowledging that globalization and the pervasiveness of U.S. media have far-reaching influence in the construction and portrayal of social values and norms (Jubas, Taber & Brown, 2015). As such, this study draws on children’s texts, a

family-oriented YouTube video, a made-for-television movie for adult viewers, and websites to explore representations of gender and librarianship.

## Research Design

This study uses visual discourse analysis (Rose, 2012) to examine visual-verbal texts that are part of the various media technologies that are woven into our everyday lives. These technologies include movies, television, YouTube, websites, and books. This feminist approach calls for a deliberate interrogation of the ways of doing things that often seem “normal” and “natural” but are, in fact, products of the social world that can be contested. Language is central to discourse, shaping meaning through words, groups of words/statements, and images that construct meaning, requiring a selection of “texts” to analyze. These texts are drawn from popular media, recognizing that popular culture is an important informal site of education. I specifically employ the techniques for visual-verbal analysis offered in Gillian Rose’s (2012) work on visual methodology to examine popular and gendered representations of librarians appearing in cultural texts.

The selection of material and the subsequent analyses is informed by my own experiences and subjectivity as an individual who has served as a librarian, library technician, and educator within the field of library and information studies. Interested in contemporary representations of librarians and limited by my monolingualism, I sought out materials that were produced/published in English after 2000 for audiences of all ages. Using publisher and library catalogues, websites inventorying librarian “appearances” in various media, relevant published LIS scholarship, and references from colleagues, I combed for media, compiling lists of possibilities. I was interested in finding images of librarians of any age and gender. Works focusing on the library as place but did not feature staff were not considered.

After this first “pass” over what was available, certain discursive patterns emerged and I began to organize possible texts for analysis into emergent themes around unpleasant, wicked, sexy, dowdy/old-maids, and policing librarians. Multiple readings deepened my analysis and sometimes resulted in shifting a work to a different theme. It was very helpful to discuss representations with colleagues and examine critical reviews (where available) of selections as a way of widening my own perspective and to “check” my assumptions. This highly iterative process led to a fairly stable

collection of materials under three main themes of gatekeepers, villains, and loveless frumps. With an inadequate sample from Canada, the selected texts incorporate a variety of cultural forms for different ages, spanning 2005 to 2017 from relevant materials located from the United States.

This research is largely focused on fictional representations of predominately white librarians in cultural texts. As such, this work does not examine actual librarians or ask people directly about their interpretations of librarians. Feminist scholars (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Mirza, 2015; Patton, Crenshaw, Haynes, & Watson, 2016) have drawn our attention to the intersectionality of social differences that challenges scholarship that reproduces “Western women as the only legitimate subjects of struggle” (Mirza, 2015, p. 4). This perspective allows me to consider how whiteness as a category intersects with gender, sexuality, and class in the dominant representations of librarians in popular culture that I study. In the conclusion, I advocate for expanded studies that consider the complexities of intersectionality. Specifically, I highlight how auto/biographical accounts of librarians in picture books and on websites serve as counterpoints to fictional accounts, and operate as sites of resistance that hold the potential to attend to intersectional identities.

## **Significance**

This study offers practitioners and educators a way to examine the professional status of librarianship by exposing how discourses of femininity construct a certain kind of librarian. Similarly, this project offers library and information studies educators new ways of exploring gender relations in LIS through the context of women in higher education and through an examination of popular cultural texts.

Theoretically, this project is important because it provides a way of looking into the underlying cultural assumptions that shape representations of women’s work. Specifically, this endeavour contributes to higher education scholarship by considering the manner representations of professional women in everyday cultural texts “teach” about gender relations, including women’s work. Through a poststructural feminist lens, I offer a visual discourse analysis to consider why women continue to face discrimination in their workplaces. The problematic construction of women observed in this study are not contained only within librarianship. Rather, these representations highlight pervasive

readings of women that exist wherever women work – including education, healthcare, and business.

This investigation also offers those within the field of LIS an example of research that uses discourse analysis that is informed by feminist poststructuralism as an approach to understanding how broader social practices shape librarianship's professional status. Specifically, such an approach reveals how librarian representations are part of a larger cultural struggle for professional recognition, how discourses of femininity and masculinity operate through these representations, and how these images are sites where librarian images are both contested and accepted. One of the dominant themes in this research is a focus on how stereotypes of women and men librarians are consistently negative, including women as unappealing, socially awkward, and obsessed with order and control.

## **Outline of the Dissertation**

Having introduced the way librarians are represented in popular media, Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of the history of women in higher education and a review of library and information studies literature as it pertains to representations of librarians in mainstream culture, Chapter 3 discusses my feminist poststructuralist theoretical perspective and the visual discourse analysis method that are used for this research. Engaging in an analysis of children's picture books, Chapter 4 explores how these visual-verbal texts normalize librarianship as women's work. Because gender is a relational concept, Chapter 5 focuses on masculinity and male librarians to reveal more sinister characterizations of librarians that push against the classic image of the "old-maid" librarian in works for older children. Moving into the realm of adult media, Chapter 6 explores the "old-maid" and the "romantically desperate" librarian images appearing in a television movie and an online video. Chapter 7 returns to children's picture books to discuss contemporary biographies of activist women librarians alongside social media by real-life librarians that resist problematic constructions of women as professionals. Drawing the findings of this project together, Chapter 8 will consider the implications and possibilities that emerge from this study.



## Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine how librarians are presented in popular visual-verbal texts to better understand the gendered history of librarianship as a profession, and how meaning about librarianship and women's work is constructed in North America. Applying a visual discourse analysis, this enquiry analyzes works produced in the United States to consider how discourses of femininity circulate in a range of materials for a variety of audiences (pre-school children to adults) and how these discourses generate meaning about women's work. By folding in the construct of public pedagogy as a useful way to understand the educative capacity of culture, I consider how the everyday images of and scripts about librarians work and rework notions of what librarians do and the labour they perform. This study offers practitioners and scholars a deeper understanding of how these representations contribute to librarianship's struggle for professional recognition.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Contemporary representations of librarianship are inextricably tied to the changing role of education and women's participation in paid labour. To understand librarianship, as a profession that grapples with its status, it is helpful to draw on the work of feminist education scholars who consider women's ongoing struggles with equity, including participation in knowledge creation, advancement, respect, and pay. Their work provides a way to examine how a profession like librarianship is negatively associated with women while also offering rich analyses and strategies that identify, confront, and advocate for change. I examine how librarianship, sharing an inseparable relationship with education, continues to struggle with its construction as a "women's profession". I then consider how popular culture is a site where professional anxieties about professional image are negotiated.

This interdisciplinary review analyzes LIS research on images of librarians and their relevance to professional status. I have organized this literature review into eight main areas: (1) History of women in Higher Education (2) Defining "Women's Work" (3) The Shifting Value of Librarianship (4) Development of Library Education (5) Librarianship's Tendencies to Self-blame (6) LIS Studies of Librarian Images (7) Feminist Poststructural Theory & Sites of Resistance (8) Meaning-Making through Popular Culture. This literature review argues that more scholarship is needed on popular cultural texts that feature librarians to address the persistent problems librarians face with their broader professional value. Others who have explored various disconcerting and negative images and stereotypes of librarians mainly focus on 20<sup>th</sup> century texts. My work extends such efforts by considering how historically embedded discourses of femininity continue to organize contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century representations in ways that undergird the field's angst around professional recognition. This is a necessary step in understanding why problematic librarian representations endure as part of the complex interplay between gender and work.

## History of Women in Higher Education

The ways in which women negotiate the sphere of higher education have been examined by a wide range of feminist scholars (Blackmore, 1999; Iverson, 2011; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Martínez Alemán, 2014; Midkiff, 2015; Morrison, Rudd, & Nerad, 2011; Smith, 1987, 1990a). Their work confronts the gendered landscape of higher education, pointing to ways difference is sustained and offering a variety of perspectives on how inequity can be overturned. As first-wave feminists, many, predominantly white, women of the late and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries fought to gain access to higher education opportunities in tandem with a push for political rights as part of the suffragist movement. Like other Western countries, Canadian women also participated in efforts to be admitted to post-secondary institutions and to advocate for their own self-interest as students (Burke, 2016). Concerned with access to education and opportunities outside of the domestic realm, these women played an important role in raising the consciousness of women's issues, including those specific to the academy and professional education (Eisenmann, 2018). Their experiences as students and, later, graduates of colleges and universities, was important to the development of the second wave feminist movement because it brought to light their limited access to power.

Recognizing a need to consider the context-specific ways women negotiate power, even within highly patriarchal systems, second wave feminists sought to expose the power relations associated with everyday social practices and challenge inequality by arguing that the “personal is political” (David, 2016; Eisenmann, 2018). These feminists pushed for change within higher education by complicating discrimination and sexism within the academy to address inequities in pay, advancement, and funding for research (e.g. Conway, 1974; Friedan, 1963). During this period, there was a growing resistance to essentialist notions of white women's oppression. Women of colour and Indigenous women were not part of this particular push for “equity” and considerations for the intersectionality of race and class were not a particular focus (Eisenmann, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. For some feminist academics, it was a time where there was a great sense of hope for

---

<sup>2</sup> There is a unique history of black women in higher education in the United States that is informed, in part, by the presence of segregated black colleges. Research in this area is expanding but it is evident, as Linda Perkins (2017) suggests, that these women were also greatly constrained by their gender and frequently subjected to sexism and inequity.

advancing women's interests. In Sue Middleton's (1999) reflection of the 1960 -1970s era of feminism in higher education, she recalls:

although the aspiring educators of my age-group 'felt marginalized' and had experienced alienation, we sublimated these into intellectual critiques. It was a positive time of 'full employment' which fostered our 'sense of both the desirability and the possibility of progressive or radical educational and social change. (p. 193)

Middleton (1999) describes having the privilege of intellectualizing the problems of gender as part of her academic work, helping students recognize relations of power so that they might not be "defeated by them" (p. 193) in their own lives. Middleton's (1999) reflection highlights a turn in feminist perspective that emerged in the 1980s as scholars, influenced by poststructural philosophers like Michel Foucault, theorized gender advantage/disadvantage as relations of power that enable local and specific resistance rather than operating as totalizing sites of oppression (Allan, 2010). Chris Weedon (1997) describes this shift as a response to a need for "a theory of the relationship between experience and social power" (p. 8). Her work on poststructuralist approaches to gender is important to the evolution of feminist methods in understanding difference during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Offering a new way of privileging language as a social construct that considers discourses as productive and dynamic, feminist scholars like Jill Blackmore (1999), Carmen Luke (1996), and Kathleen Weiler (1988) turn to poststructuralism to understand the gendering of educational work. The efforts of such scholars reveal new understandings of how women, operating in such professions, experience problems like those of recognition, compensation, mobility, and discrimination.

More recent studies of gender in higher education question women's access to power/knowledge. For example, Marguerite Cassin (2004) considers how women in Canadian universities are limited in their contributions to the production of knowledge because what is understood to be knowledge in the academy is based on the experience of men. Ana Martínez Alemán (2014) argues that the modern construction of universities as "corporations" has generated a new discourse of masculinity and new forms of sexism that draw on managerialism as an aspect of academic capitalism. Brooke Midkiff (2015) confronts the rise of post-feminism (the view that gender equity issues have been largely resolved) by interrogating how women continue to be "disproportionately economically disadvantaged due to family responsibilities" (p. 378) in

their professional roles in North American universities. Feminist poststructuralist theory continues to inform contemporary scholarship and the interrogation of the changing social conditions that inform higher education and women's experience in such contexts.

## **Defining “Women’s Work”**

Feminist historians (Eisenmann, 2016; Harris, 1992; Hildenbrand, 1996, 2000; Pompper, 2016) document why certain fields like librarianship and education have become negatively associated with women. This has been a problem for certain professions like nursing, education, librarianship, and social work because this gendered association results in lower social recognition and status for those working in such fields.

In her examination of the rise in women's participation in American higher education, Linda Eisenmann (2016) argues that post-war white women attending university and college were not the historical academic cultural norm (like white men) and were therefore considered “incidental” as students and faculty. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity around what women would do with their training and education because of continued social expectations for them to become wives and mothers. However, as Eisenmann (2018) demonstrates, these women carved out a variety of careers, including careers in colleges and universities as teachers and researchers. Many more women, however, participated in programs that prepared them for work in areas like school teaching, because it was assumed that such work served as an extension of mothering – raising and supporting the moral development of children (Conway, 1974). Further, their assumed familiarity with the domestic sphere meant that they did not require extensive education and training, their work was subject to the rationality and supervision of more skilled professional men, and they were a source of cheap labour (Apple, 1985).

Discourses of femininity defined women as subjects that performed the emotional labour associated with the domestic sphere. In addition, women were expected to uphold moral standards, through a configuration of femininity where white women's “natural” maternal abilities ensured their respectability as workers in organizations outside of the home (Blackmore, 1999). Early women professionals had to manage tensions between idealized white heterosexual femininity, including being attractive to men so that they may marry and being able to care for their husbands and children

(Pompper, 2016), and their interests in working outside the home in a “man’s world”. Women who entered the public sphere as workers were understood to be passive subjects, subordinate to men (Pompper, 2016). Assumptions that masculinity dominated over femininity organized divisions in the workforce that placed men in positions to design, oversee, and supervise the work of women. These attitudes laid the groundwork for the ongoing gendered evolution of various professions where gender is “built in” to their construction reflecting, as Williams (1993) describes, “a widespread cultural prejudice that men are simply better than women” (p. 3).

According to Donnalyn Pompper (2016) media assists in this process by framing “femininity as weakness, with limited ability” (p. 116) that shapes public attitudes towards women and girls as “second-class status in all spheres” (p. 116). She contends that popular media plays an enormous role in the construction of femininity where the “traditional female stereotype steeped in sexuality and submissiveness/dependence” (Pompper, 2016, p. 9) that continues to construct the ways women and their work are valued. The ongoing study of gender in higher education points to the continued struggle women face in the public domain of work and in fields where women numerically dominate, like librarianship, where the problems are amplified simply because it is women who perform the work (Harris, 1992). In other words, the value society places on such professions is not predicated on the work itself but on the value placed on *who* performs that work.

## **The Shifting Value of Librarianship**

Western librarianship was not always a field numerically dominated by women. For many centuries, libraries and male librarians were closely tied to the Church and places of higher learning. Prior to the humanist and democratic developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, access to education and libraries were limited, designed to specifically support the intellectual interests of the wealthy and the religious, focusing on subjects like theology and philosophy (Axelrod, 1989). Intellectual works within libraries were produced by men and their care was supervised by men. Histories of libraries, like Thomas Hendrickson’s (2017) *Ancient Libraries and Renaissance Humanism: The De Bibliothecis of Justus Lipsius* and Konstantinos Staiko’s (2000) *The Great Libraries: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, highlight the male-dominated and privileged world of those who built and accessed these institutions. Consequently, it was through the

gendered legacy of these elites (primarily male scholars and poets) (Gray, 2012) that helped establish librarianship during the rise of public education in modern Western democracy. Nineteenth century figures who benefitted from access to education and employment opportunities like Melvil Dewey, Charles Ammi Cutter, Anthony Panizzi, Charles Gould, and Herbert Putnam founded many of the standards still used today in North American librarianship. They occupied positions of respect and authority as library educators, chief librarians, and leaders, rising to their positions as educated scholars. The pervasiveness of male leadership, at this time, is made clearly visible in the leadership of the American Library Association (ALA), which did not see a woman President for the first 34 years of its existence. In the absence of a national association in Canada (until 1946), male Canadian librarians also actively participated in ALA and, in 1908, Charles Gould became the first Canadian ALA president. These figures led librarianship in a time when libraries were experiencing tremendous growth that coincided with the increasing production of print materials and demand for access to information for the purposes of education and social advancement (Suarez, Woudhuysen, & Woudhuysen, 2010).

While there is little scholarship that closely considers the professional image of librarianship before its explosive growth in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that the field's composition, including educational requirements and leadership, centred around the life of men. These men were involved in the scholarly pursuits of knowledge production rather than specifically librarianship. In 1876 John Wallace, lawyer, law librarian, and president of the Librarians of Philadelphia, probed his colleagues to consider the field an area of science. He reveals a view of librarianship that is nothing like today's popular book-stamping matronly image, and he highlights the work as something that is both prestigious and intellectual:

Gentlemen, a good librarian has ever been a valuable minister to letters. He has always stood between the world of authors and the world of readers, introducing the habitants of one sphere to the habitants of the other; interpreting often obscurities where the fault is with authors, imparting often intelligence where the fault is with readers. This, his ancient title, he still possesses. But in this day and for the future he is called to new offices and to higher distinctions. His profession belongs to the SCIENCES. He requires some fine faculties of mind. He takes his rank with philosophers. (Cadmus, 2011, p. 207-208)

Concerned with the incredible growth of print publishing, Wallace stresses concerns about managing collections – a problem that is later ultimately addressed by accessing women's labour. Ironically, instead of these women securing the “rank of philosophers” (Cadmus, 2011, p. 208), their entry into the profession led to its devaluation.

## **From Vocation to Profession**

Figures like John Wallace are examples of the white male privilege that advanced notions of professionalism in librarianship that are built on the assumption that “expertise [is] derived from formal education based on science and the control of knowledge and its application” (Stauffer, 2016, p. 312). Librarianship was no longer simply a vocation but a profession where order, control, and standards were necessary. Women hired to work in libraries were placed in an untenable situation where they were expected to act as feminine, cultured ladies but were also criticized by male library leaders like the Librarian of Congress, Herbert Putnam (1979), of being inflexible, passive, and lacking initiative. In a 1912 address to newly graduating librarians, Putnam (1979) reveals highly sexist views that resemble emerging stereotypes of women librarians when he remarks:

The relative inability to generalize is due to an absorption in the particular, which means a devotion which is in itself a virtue; the lack of sense of proportion which causes her to exaggerate the significance of the trivial is due to a similar absorption and devotion; her occasional peevishness is the result of an absorption, a devotion, which has become excessive, so that it has worn upon her nerves and upset her balance; the dread of change in any fact or method is due to loyalty to the thing which is, and to which she has dedicated herself. (Putnam, 1979, p. 61)

Putnam patronizingly reveals how women librarians were expected to follow rules and standards but were also required to control their femininity lest they appear too entrenched in their practice and risk the perception that they fear change or appear crotchety. Not only did such views emerge in broader public representations of librarians (e.g. Mary, the old-maid librarian in the 1946 film, *It's a Wonderful Life*), they contributed to librarians' ongoing concerns about pay and advancement (Weibel, 1979).

The movement to professionalize librarianship put assumptions about women in conflict with views on technical expertise, rationality, and power. Femininity and status were of particular concern for historian Dee Garrison (1979), who was one of the first



scholars to consider librarianship's social recognition issues within a gendered context. She concludes that the adoption of "feminine" attributes diminished librarians' legitimacy as professionals, leading to professional inequity. For Garrison (1979), the numerical dominance of women in the field, combined with their lack of professional commitment and leadership, transformed the field of librarianship into a "women's profession". In other words, women, by virtue of their nature, are the cause of the profession's image problem. Jody Newmeyer's (1985) study of the librarian image asserts that this feminization process was a calculated one. She argues that late 19<sup>th</sup> century feminists deliberately leveraged broader social assumptions about women's "purity," "morality," and "sensitivity" to gain entry into the workforce by supporting claims that such attributes would "uplift" the profession. This illustrates the ways women worked within male-dominated structures to validate their professional roles. As education historian Jill Conway (1974) points out, women were not, at this time, liberated by their education to challenge their social "place". Rather, women were concerned with "their search for a respectable bourgeois professional role" (Conway, 1974, p. 10) using assumptions about femininity to advance this interest. While this did facilitate women's entry into professions this approach had the effect of embedding an enduring assumption that librarianship's status issues were intrinsically related to the way women behaved (MacReynolds, 1985; Newmeyer 1985).

Turning away from blaming women for their low social status, Roma Harris (1992) describes librarianship's movement to professionalize as a tacit "attempt to escape its female identity" (p. 1) and control the public image of librarianship. As one of the few LIS books to analyze the field's struggle with professional recognition through a feminist lens, Harris's (1992) work, *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession*, argues that it is the very fact that the profession is mainly female that contributes to its low status. She reasons that the vestiges of the highly problematic feminization theory continue to "set occupational stereotypes that are sufficiently powerful to keep women in and men out of the women's professions" (Harris, 1992, p. 15). Harris (1992) calls on librarians to identify and challenge the external power structures that organize their work and impede their goals because of the patriarchal ways in "which the female endeavor is valued in this [Western] culture" (p. 164). According to Harris (1992), librarian stereotypes are less about what librarians do professionally and more about perceptions of women, warning:

regardless of how sophisticated and expensive their image campaigns are, they will not overcome negative stereotyping until they recognize that it is the image of women and the value of women's endeavor, not the image of particular occupations ...that is responsible for their status in the workforce. (p. 97)

Harris suggests that because women are valued differently from men, so too is their work. This "othering" of women leads to the devaluation of their work. Despite Suzanne Hildenbrand's (1996, 1999, 2000) call upon the LIS community to critically assess the problems of inequity and professional recognition through a more critical and analytical lens, there are few studies that do so. Harris (1993) and Hildrenbrand (1996; 1999; 2000) worry that if work that encourages a focus on social constructions to better understand how class, gender, and race intersect in librarianship are not taken, the profession will continue to adopt a problematic and masculinized "expert model" of service in an effort to gain greater professional status. Doing so merely reasserts the belief that changing practices *within* the profession will transform its value in broader culture – even though this value, as seen in pervasive librarian popular culture representations, is tightly aligned to broader understandings of gender.

## **Development of Library Education**

The movement to professionalize librarianship is intrinsically connected to the emergence of formalized library education and training programs. Librarianship worked its way into the fold of higher education gradually, over the course of the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the pre-war era of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, library education was based largely on an apprenticeship model, attracting women because of its acceptability as a field which welcomed cultured and educated women (Hildenbrand, 1996). This, combined with the low cost of women's labour, other limited opportunities for educated women, and a desire by male-led administrators/leaders to mitigate costs while expanding library services (Garrison, 1979), helped establish modern librarianship as a profession numerically dominated by women. Prior to 1870, only 20 percent of library workers in the United States were women and this was virtually reversed by 1920 when 88 percent of librarians were

women (Quinn, 2014) <sup>3</sup>. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the growing access to public and college education created new opportunities for library-specific training that emerged in libraries and in colleges. College education, in particular, was built on the interests and aspirations of men like Melvil Dewey who founded the first college “library school” in 1887. The appearance of formal library education in Canada was later, with the first library school offering a three-week library program in 1904 at McGill University (McNally, 2004). In a public address in 1886, library educator, Melvil Dewey (1979) assures his audience that, “We greatly prefer college-bred women in selecting new librarians” (p. 11) but, Melvil contends, women are monetarily hampered by their lack of commitment to their careers, insufficient business acumen, and a need to be “waited on” at work. In other words, women were, at least in part, to blame for the low wages they received at that time. Despite blaming women for their poor pay, Dewey was profoundly influential in establishing accessible schools with a highly practical focus that appealed to many middle-class white women (Stauffer, 2016). These one and two-year institutions “aided women’s advancement” (Brand, 1996, p. 271) by offering women a range of diverse options in acquiring library skills.

Despite such opportunities to access paid work, library education and library work benefitted men more greatly. In the anthology, *The Role of Women in Librarianship 1876-1976*, editors Kathleen Weibel and Kathleen Heim (1979) document the struggles (and prevalent sexism) experienced by women librarians. In their forward, they describe a two-tiered legacy where “Administration, scholarship, and technology are the province of men in librarianship. Guidance, nurturance, routinization, and popular culture are the province of women” (p. ix). This difference that existed within the field was particularly evident during the 1920s and 1930s when library education began a notable transformation. Pay inequity was an important by-product that extended much later into the 20<sup>th</sup> century including in Canada where, by the 1970s, male chief librarians earned \$4,500 per year more than their female counterparts (Quinn, 2014).

Tasked with investigating the status of U.S. library education, Dr. C.C. Williamson (1923), head of New York Public Library, produced a report for the Carnegie Corporation in which he recommended major revisions to library education as a way of

---

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, comprehensive historical statistics for Canada are not available.

improving the profession's social status. He argued that library schools needed to be reconfigured as part of universities to "make them the gateways to professional library work for college men and women" (Williamson, 1923, p. 109) as a way of solving recruitment and status issues. Training for "sub-professional" work (clerical and assistant work) would be the responsibility of individual libraries. The Carnegie Corporation provided substantial financial support to enact many of Williamson's changes to library education, specifically benefitting two library schools, the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Exploring the impact these changes had on one and two-year college programs, Barbara Brand (1996) argues that the successful push for university library programs "were far less hospitable to women ... [and] while most of the students were women, most of the administrators and senior faculty members were men whose primary interest was preparing male students for important administrative positions" (p. 272). While Canadian universities and college education programs did not directly benefit from the Carnegie Corporation, Canadian public libraries did receive funds for various projects, stimulating library development (McNally, 2004). This growth fuelled library education interest but, like the United States, these were "overwhelmingly male environment[s]" (McNally, 2004, p. 4). Canadian library education programs were also significantly influenced by LIS education programs from the United States in these early years. For example, three of the earliest women faculty at McGill University (appearing at McGill during the 1940s) earned their advanced degrees at Columbia University (McNally, 2004). Under the auspices of the University of Toronto, a one-year diploma program, offered at the Ontario College of Education, relied heavily on "a large number of guest lecturers from Canada and the United States" (Henderson, 2004, p. 9).

Less than three decades after Dr. Williamson's (1923) report, there were renewed attempts to elevate the field's professional status by further standardizing LIS education and gatekeeping through accredited Master's degrees in Library and Information Science (MLS). Studying this undertaking, Boyd Swigger (2010) concludes that despite streamlining and accrediting education for librarians, the Master's degree has done little to change the overall social and monetary status of those working in the field. While Swigger's (2010) focus centres around the activities and decisions of the American Library Association (ALA), he does not consider gender, class or other intersectional factors in his analysis. This reflects a tendency in LIS literature to miss close examination of the broader social conditions and relations that have impacted the

development of the profession. Roma Harris (1992) asserts that the lack of research examining the role of gender in librarianship is troubling and argues that the long-standing struggle for recognition and parity with other professions cannot be understood if gender is not presented as a central element in this struggle.

Suzanne Stauffer's (2016) recent efforts to insert a more critical cultural examination into LIS educational development, concludes that the profession has been historically focused on "a white Western male middle-class construction of professional education as formal education based on science and the control of knowledge and its application" (p. 321). This work to "managerialize" and "scientize" the field is part of an ongoing effort to attract more men to the field by making it look like other masculine professions (Harris, 1992; Stauffer, 2016). However, such approaches to education only further undermine the value of the work (largely service work) that librarians actually perform. For Stauffer (2016) and Harris (1992) this devaluation of librarianship is bound to the more overall devaluation of work performed by women that is further echoed by scholars like Apple (1985), England and Herbert (1993), Hildenbrand (1996;1999; 2000), and Martínez (2014).

Unlike other areas of higher education scholarship, library and information studies education offers only a very small sampling of feminist scholarship (e.g. Harris, 1992; Hildenbrand, 1996, 1999, 2000; Stauffer, 2016). It is not clear how the status issues of the profession can be successfully confronted and addressed without more critical feminist work. In a 1994 presentation to members of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), Jane Anne Hannigan argued the need for the application of a feminist standpoint when examining LIS curricular and pedagogical development. Doing so, she held, enables programs to move past tokenism into a greater, desperately needed sphere of inclusivity. Hannigan (1994) argued that gender is an essential consideration in addressing the concerns of LIS women, and women need to be reinserted into LIS' "womanless history".

James Carmichael and Marilyn Shontz's (1997) also express their concern about the way students in LIS programs may be prepared for the gendered terrain they will encounter as graduates. Curious as to whether students are made aware of gender issues in their graduate education, they reveal that many respondents could not even recall having been taught *anything* regarding gender. Carmichael and Shontz (1997)

conclude that “there is little evidence that males and females receive adequate information about how gender roles operate in society and how they affect librarianship” (p. 111). Noting the continued emphasis of technology in LIS education, Christine Pawley (2005) advocates “for truly ‘gender-oriented’ classes in the LIS curriculum [to] acquaint students and faculty with recent theoretical perspective and research on gender” (p. 309). For Pawley (2005) the application of postmodern theory may interrupt the continued domination of white male perspectives of LIS educational agendas. Such work can also enrich our understanding of power and how gender, class, and other social intersections inform the work that librarians do and the problems they face in being recognized for that work.

## **Librarianship’s Tendencies to Self-blame**

While the work of feminist scholars in higher education offers important insights into the construction of professional work and its relationship to gender, librarianship does not frequently draw on these critiques as it continues to wrestle with its professional image. While it is widely understood that the field is comprised of mainly white women, its composition has shifted very little in the last 100 years (Department, 2018; Hildenbrand, 1996; Ingles, Delong, Humphrey and Sivak, 2005; Jaeger, Bertot, & Subramaniam, 2013; Weibel, Heim, & Ellsworth, 1979). In the absence of being tightly aligned with high profile policy issues like public education and health, Hildenbrand (1996) declares that there has been little public interest in people who work in libraries. She argues that this has limited librarianship’s uptake of feminist projects and that “the women professionals in libraries who fight for gender justice wage an isolated struggle” (p.6). Given the slow uptake of work done by Hildrenbrand (1996, 1999, 2000) and other LIS scholars since the 1990s like Hannigan (1994), Harris (1992) and Maack (1997), it is not surprising that the field’s struggle with image and respect continues. Much of the literature that expresses anxiety around librarianship’s social image and standing does not delve deeply into the broader historical and social relations that have constructed librarianship as “women’s work”. Librarian responses to stereotypes include encouraging their fellow librarians to create a “brand” for themselves (Gall, 2010), become more tech savvy (Kneale, 2009), or focus on being more flexible when dealing with patrons (White, 2012). Rather than challenging outmoded ideas about femininity that are at the root of librarian stereotypes, much of the literature tasks librarians to be responsible for

improving their own feminine performance (being more helpful) or rejecting it in favour of masculinized practices (i.e. being more managerial or technological) as ways to improve their professional status and reputation.

It is the struggle for recognition as respected and valued “professionals” that stimulates much of the research around librarian image (Adams, 2000; Attebury, 2010; Badovinac & Južnič, 2011; Bartlett, 2014; Burns, 1998; Luthmann, 2008; Tevis & Tevis, 2005; White, 2012). According to these scholars, the “image problem”, fuels low social status and salaries. The concerns were prevalent even 100 years ago, as Rosalee McReynolds’ (1985) notes in her survey of librarian images from 1876-1950. Librarians’ worry over image appeared to have “a life of its own, often obsessing librarians to the point that they could not clearly separate the importance of the personal mien from that of their professional achievements” (McReynolds, 1985, p. 25). Librarians, according to McReynolds (1985), thought the way to higher status would be found by managing their femininity by becoming more glamorous and turning their backs on older women.

Turning from work that blames librarians for their image problems, this study supports renewed efforts to bring a feminist perspective into LIS scholarship, following the work of Suzanne Stauffer (2014, 2016) and Nicole Pagowsky and Mirriam Rigby (2014). Pagowsky and Rigby (2014) warn that a failure to deeply question librarian stereotypes could jeopardize the profession by ignoring “standing perceptions” that may discourage library users from engaging with librarians. This suggests that there may be broader societal implications in how people may be able to access information if librarianship is not adequately supported as a result of its image problems. Specifically, if communities do not see libraries as spaces that are accessible, information and literacy support, necessary for democratic participation, are less likely to be funded (Jaeger, Bertot, Kodama, Katz, & Decoster 2011). However, much of the LIS literature follows in the footsteps of earlier debates that attribute problems of professional status to its “feminized” nature that fails to account for broader social assumptions that devalue service-oriented work. Further, much of the literature takes an inward analytical approach that is focused on what librarians, especially women, do to contribute to the problems of image and recognition, without much attention on how this impacts people *outside* of the profession.

Professional self-blame is one particularly dominant theme that centres around concern that the field of librarianship has somehow failed to convince broader society that it is an occupation worthy of status and pay equivalent to other fields that require an advanced degree. Personality traits, formal credentialing deficits (compared to other professionally “recognized” fields, like law and medicine), cryptic job titles, and inadequate branding/marketing are seen as contributing factors to recirculating stereotypes (Arant & Benefiel, 2002; Gall, 2010; Jennings, 2016; Kneale, 2009; Majid & Haider, 2008; White, 2012). LIS scholars tend to associate poor professional status with the ways librarians present themselves to the public and the ways the profession is organized without probing into the deeper social issues that construct these images and explain their persistence (e.g. Kneale, 2009; Tevis & Tevis, 2005; Vassilakaki & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2014).

Instead, librarians are instructed to take control of their image and “show people what we are capable of” (Lindsay, 2011, p. 350), to be more professional. Abigail Luthmann’s (2007) study of librarian self-image encourages librarians to assume responsibility over their image and “work daily to counter” (p. 779) problematic views by focusing on the work they perform rather than focusing on how they look. Yet, attempts to “take control” of their image do not appear to have been impactful. For example, following their survey of librarians in 20th century cinema, Tevis and Tevis (2005) lament that despite librarians’ displeasure in their image, their aversion “has not effected one whit of change” (p. 191).

Inventories and explorations of librarian image do offer a necessary starting point for examining how librarian images are constructed in broader culture. Identifying the pervasiveness of various images and characterizations of library work offer entry points where these representations might be disrupted. For Nicole Pagowsky and Miriam Rigby (2014), librarians rely on being seen and/or being approachable as part of their work. They argue that analyses of the “presentation-of-self” are necessary because librarians are “in the business of presentation” (p.1). Pagowsky and Rigby’s (2014) compilation of librarian essays around librarian stereotypes stands out as an important and recent contribution that does adopt a more nuanced and more theoretical exploration of librarian stereotypes and public perceptions. Moving away from self-blame, they tackle questions around how to mitigate problematic representations of librarians/library work because they view them as barriers to people using libraries. Feminist in nature, they



seek to work towards “improving the status of librarianship” (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014, p. 5) and assisting in redefining the profession to reflect a more accurate representation of library work. Drawing from diverse interests and topics, articles consider gender, race, class, identity formation, and, even, pornography as entry points for uncovering the nature and scope of library and librarian images circulating within North American media and culture to renew critical discussion around the underlying social relations that inform image perception, identity, and status.

Although there appears to be ongoing interest in the librarian image, with discussions and debates appearing on blogs, LIS magazine/journal editorials, and social media (Annoyed, 2012; Critlib, 2014; DeFrain, Hathcock, Masland, Pagowsky, Pho, Rigby, & Roberto, 2016; Jennings, 2016; Pagowsky & DeFrain, 2014; Radford, 2010; Reese, 2016), views are hardly harmonious. For example, *College and Undergraduate Libraries*’ editor, Eric Jennings (2016), expresses frustration with image discussions, indicating that he is “sick” of seeing discussion about librarian stereotypes, “I think that we as a profession need to get over it and ourselves” (p. 93). Similar to other profession self-blame literature, Jennings’ (2016) comments indicate ongoing reductionist views of librarian public images that ignore systemic inequities and bias that have material consequences for librarians and others working in woman-intensive professions.

Scholars like DeFrain, Hathcock, Masland, Pagowsky, Pho, Rigby, and Roberto (2016) argue that stereotypes are a significant problem that warrants interrogation because “they point to lack of understanding and adequate representation for the group involved. ... [and] they signal deeper issues of power and oppression that must be addressed if we are to move forward as a society” (p. 217). In a blog article expressing her frustration towards modern librarian stereotyping, Marie Radford (2010) points out that many images of librarians are anti-intellectual, anti-feminist, and fundamentally harmful to both librarians and their communities. This harm manifests when politicians use negative library/librarian images to help justify library funding cuts (Radford, 2010). Such cuts reduce community access to resources and to librarian expertise, illustrating how the problems of librarianship and image relate to broader societal issues including access to information.

Interrogating femininity and its relationship with professional status, researchers like Ayanna Gaines (2014) and Keer and Carlos (2014) suggest that images and

storylines about librarians within literature and visual media operate as important sites in the cultural production of knowledge about women and librarianship. Representations of librarians in popular culture are sites where femininity is contested and where women struggle to “be recognized as legitimate members of the workforce and to expand societal definitions of ‘women’s work’” (Keer & Carlos, 2014, p. 74). Keer and Carlos (2014) further complicate this argument, suggesting that despite librarians’ ongoing “obsession” with librarian representations, negative stereotypes persist because of larger and enduring structural inequities that are embedded in sexist, racist, and classist practices. As Gaines (2014) points out, “The main problem is not that there are negative stereotypes of librarians, but rather that these negative stereotypes stem from hackneyed ideas of what women are and what women do” (p. 86). By arguing for a more nuanced and expansive examination of image that accounts for social relations like race and gender, these authors strive to confront long-standing issues, including librarianship’s “stark lack of diversity” (Bourg, 2014, para. 1).

As some critical LIS scholarship suggests, “being” a librarian is not simply about self-reflection and self-image, it is also about the social practices that coordinate the profession and its role in the social world. Similar to other female-intensive professions like teaching, the librarian “is subject to public and professional anxieties” (Cavanagh, 2007, p.7) that are made visible in popular cultural texts. For example, the “old-maid” image of librarians reflects societal concerns over the social acceptability of unmarried and working-women. Existing LIS literature demonstrates how public representations of librarians are closely related to the field’s status, producing meaning for future librarians, practicing librarians, and society that includes the structure of their wages and social standing (Jaćimović, & Petrović, 2014; Majid & Haider, 2008; Newmeyer, 1976; Pagowsky & DeFrain, 2014, Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014; Shaw, 2010). By examining these representations, it is possible to uncover discursive practices that serve as samples of “the social organization of femininity” (Smith, 1990b, p. 167) that are derived from broader social relations. In other words, visual-verbal representations of librarians are part of the complex and coordinating relations embedded in everyday life. These practices orient people to shared standpoints that are discursive and public (Smith, 1990b).

Despite the efforts of feminist scholars to confront the problematic terrain of gender equity, particularly within the higher education landscape, these concerns

continue to be largely invisible in LIS scholarship. Research focused on the nature and conditions of librarianship rarely appear outside the field in broader studies such as education. Within LIS, critical feminist work exists in the margins, often located in specialized journals and publishers (e.g. *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, *Progressive Librarian*, and *Library Juice Press*) and blogs (*In the Library With the Lead Pipe*). This is particularly worrisome for those who wrestle with concerns over the profession's image and status because this lack of feminist scholarship further limits possibilities for how the field might address the issues of gender equity.

## **LIS Studies of Librarian Images**

Despite the 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to rationalize the work performed in the field and elevate its status through higher education programs, concerns about the field's professional status are ongoing. There is a body of LIS scholarship that probes librarian images to uncover the ways the profession is de/valued. Pagowsky and Rigby's (2014) recent collection of contributions around the librarian stereotype suggest a growing interest in the ways power circulates in social relations even though much of the scholarship remains focused on content analysis and inventories of librarian images appearing in a variety of media (Heylman, 1975; King, 1990; Kitchen, 2000; Kneale, 2009; Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Poulin, 2008; Stevens, 1996; Tevis & Tevis, 2005; Vesper, 1994; Wells, 2013; Yeagley, 2013). These LIS studies highlight the persistence of negative images of librarians, revealing the often varied, sometimes contradictory, and highly gendered ways in which librarians are represented in motion picture, television, web media, children's literature, and adult literature. Moving beyond the systematic description of various librarian characters and characterizations, my research analyzes the discourses of femininity that circulate through various contemporary visual-verbal popular culture texts to understand why these images of librarians persist. Most LIS projects tend to focus on specific audiences (children or adult) within the context of discrete formats (books, films, television). By acknowledging that people are exposed concurrently to these ubiquitous and pervasive formats in ways that have become invisible within the everyday, this study folds in a variety of formats and audiences to better understand how representations generate meaning.

To varying degrees, librarian images are understood to be productive, educating readers/viewers about library work and libraries, more generally (Attenbury, 2010;

DeCandido, 1999; Helyman, 1975; Maynard & McKenna, 2005; Tewell, 2014). Studies that specifically examine libraries and librarians in children's literature are limited and largely concentrate on surveying content to identify the ways librarians dress and behave (Davis, 1991; Heylman, 1975; Kitchen, 2000). Indeed, it is not uncommon for LIS scholars to apply some form of content analysis to determine whether representations appearing in popular culture are negative or positive, shifting or static (Burns, 1998; Heylman, 1975; Kitchen, 2000; Maynard & McKenna, 2005; Yontz, 2002). Many scholars are inspired to analyze the content of film, literature, and television to reveal, like Elaine Yontz (2002), some kind of improvement in the ways librarians are represented in popular culture (Kitchen, 2000; Kneale, 2009; Maynard & McKenna, 2005; Robinson, 2006; Vesper, 1994; Wells, 2013) while others focus on the persistence of other, more negative, images, like the old maid (Adams, 2000; Lutz, 2005; Seale, 2008;) and the know-it-all/socially inept librarian (Attebury, 2010; Posner, 2003; & Casey, 2012).

While these studies identify the kinds of librarian stereotypes that persist in popular culture, this study exposes the underlying social constructions of race, class, and gender that are ever-present, inescapable, and important in the chronicles of librarianship. McReynolds (1985) argues that in the repudiation of librarian stereotypes, particularly "old maid" librarians that "betrayed a belief that there was something distasteful about women growing old, being plain or never marrying" (p. 30), thus, reproducing sexist and ageist attitudes within a field that has been widely accepted as feminized. Such efforts have not subsided. For example, Jenny Samuelsson (2012) cautions that the "bespectacled librarian" (p. 23) may not be far from reality if librarians fail to confront their homogenous and gendered workplaces. Raising the alarm that being bespectacled, unmarried, and/or middle aged is harmful for the profession actually resurfaces the field's gendered history as an "acceptable" profession for unmarried women. Samuelsson (2012) highlights the enduring connection between these dated social norms and contemporary perspectives about librarianship and its composition.

Influenced by theorist Stuart Hall, Katherine Adams (2000) uses the example of the "loveless frump" stereotype and the representation of a librarian in the film *Party Girl* (1995) to argue that it is possible for librarians, as receivers of communication, to "actively shape the meaning of a message" (p. 298), claiming aspects of femininity (i.e. beauty, intelligence and sexuality) that have been "deemed perverse by dominant culture" (p. 298). While reworking image is an important and interesting method of

disrupting assumptions about librarianship, Adams does not interrogate why images of librarians continue to exist as deviants of idealized femininity and why this matters to the social status of librarianship. Adams work is similar to other LIS contributions in which aspects of femininity are often identified as a factor in the production of image (e.g., Carmichael, 1992; Garrison, 1979; Maynard & McKenna, 2005; McReynolds, 1985; Newmyer, 1976). Like these other examples, Adams' work assumes that femininity is a kind of seamless practice rather than something that may be contradictory and transgressive.

For Adams (2000) reclaiming the image of "librarian" is about librarians being interested in reworking the image, like that of the fussy old-maid, to undermine its meaning. Such work illustrates a turn in LIS literature where meaning generated through popular culture can be revised to contest "the power of negative representations" (Adams, 2000, p. 288). However, without incorporating an analysis of the broader history of these images and the discourses of femininity that sustain them, it remains unclear how the reworking of the old-maid stereotype can result in diffusing "larger cultural notions about women" (Adams, 2000, p. 298). In other words, how can a counter to the old-maid actually shake loose views that librarians are middle-aged/old, white women? If such views are disrupted, are they likely to be replaced with images that say something different and insightful about librarians?

Incorporating historical and contemporary examples, Keer and Carlos (2014) take the analysis further, illustrating the pliability of the profession's image and how attempts to change such representations are productive. For example, they describe more recent efforts to subvert the image of the "feminine" librarian with that of the "professional" as a way of improving librarians' material conditions. However, such efforts have not always resulted in positive change because, as Keer and Carlos (2014) argue, "popular culture will not be dissuaded from perpetuating negative stereotypes simply because librarians insist they are not true" (p. 78). This suggests that there are underlying relations of power that sustain views about women and women's work that cannot be easily dislodged by those subjugated by hegemonic views and practices that organize meaning. As Pagowsky and Rigby (2014) point out, there are few works in LIS that probe how these representations naturalize the social constructions of the librarian as female.

Unique to LIS literature, Gary Radford and Marie Radford (1997; 2001) consider library and librarian cultural images in late 20<sup>th</sup> century films, novels, and television using a poststructuralist Foucauldian theoretical framework. This study builds on their work which draws on feminist perspectives to reveal that any reimagining of the library and/or the librarian as light, energetic, open and more generally positive is simply a “departure from the negative and it would not constitute a new discourse in its own right” (Radford & Radford, 2001, p. 325). Radford and Radford (1997) consider the old maid stereotype and the ideal of libraries as bastions-of-order that are not meant to be disrupted or disordered. Arguing that libraries are a contradiction, controlling access to discourses while simultaneously providing access to those discourses, Radford and Radford (1997) suggest that librarian stereotypes are a “strategy” to manage the discourse of fear that the library, as an institution, produces. The spinster-librarian, as gatekeeper, obsessed with the order of knowledge, “diffuses power and fear” (Radford & Radford, 1997, p. 261) of the library as a rationalized “space of knowledge” (p. 161).

These cultural struggles are also a concern for men. Studying men’s career choices within librarianship, Paul Piper and Barbara Collamer (2001) conclude that male librarian decisions are, at least partially, informed by a response to a “weak public image” (p. 410). The dominance of the female librarian in popular culture treats the librarian image “as if only one type exists for both sexes” (Blackburn, 2015b, para. 1). Examining the ways male librarians are represented in a Google image search of, “male librarian” reveals a limited collection of images, most of which are middle-aged men in bow ties, sweaters/sweater vests, and glasses. This conservative presentation mimics that of many of the frumpy female librarian images presented in more general Google search results for “librarians”. Surveying male librarians on the presence and nature of male librarian stereotypes, James Carmichael (1992) concludes, “many male librarians feel that their masculinity is cast in doubt by the association with a feminine profession” (p.12). This link between “feminization” of the profession and image is reinforced when Thad Dickinson (2002) considers representations of male librarians in a historical review of LIS literature and concludes that prevalent stereotypes tend to mirror broader, often feminized, views of library work. Dickinson (2002) argues, when librarianship was increasingly perceived as “feminized” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, male librarian images became effeminate.

Male librarians are often portrayed as evil, “unambitious, pathetic and sad” (Charmichael, 1992, para 41) or “seen as being unqualified for a position in a traditionally male occupation” (Dickenson, 2002, p. 105). Concerns over this effeminate librarian stereotype prompts Kaetrena D. Davis-Kendrick (2009) to consider its impact on practicing male librarians. While her respondents indicate a strong irritation over the stereotype, agreeing that it is “bothersome,” Davis-Kenrick’s work points to an enormous gap in current scholarship that considers occupational choices made by people of colour and males in the field of librarianship. Further, there is little research that explores how such “bothersome” stereotypes circulate and how this impacts decisions to dismiss librarianship as an occupation for men. To bridge this gap, Heidi Blackburn (2015a) studies millennial male librarians and their occupational choices and suggests that existing male librarian stereotypes not only serve as roadblocks for contemplating careers in librarianship but they also prescribe how male librarians should “be”. For example, male librarians can feel that they are perceived as effeminate, regardless of their behaviour. This points to the gendered construction of such images that are fueled by librarianship’s associations with femininity.

There is some hope, however, that the image is changing. Rafia Mirza and Maura Seale (2011) explore the possibility that more recent examples of male librarians in popular culture may represent a shift from the effeminate-male stereotype to reveal male librarians as manly and “cool”. They attribute this change to shifting models of masculinity among Generation Xers and contend that the librarian as “gatekeeper” is a new representation in popular culture. Although Mirza and Seale’s (2011) work is about male gatekeeping librarians, underlying discourses around fear and the ideal library as something that must be controlled and ordered (Radford & Radford, 1997, 2001) suggest that gatekeeping librarians are, in fact, part of a longer tradition of librarian representations in popular culture. Such images are documented in LIS literature and, in projects like the *Reel Librarians* website (curated by librarian Jennifer Snoek-Brown), providing a wealth of librarian image examples featured in popular media. My study not only extends into a range of very contemporary works, including children’s materials, it also offers an in-depth analysis of discourses of gender and femininity to assist in understanding the persistence of problems in librarianship social standing and recognition.

## Feminist Poststructural Theory & Sites of Resistance

Librarianship has a lot to gain by drawing on feminist research of those outside of this field for insight into librarianship's ongoing frustrations over professional respect. The social conditions that organize the profession and establish its social value are part of broader assumptions about what women and men do. These assumptions are embedded in material practices that can be exposed and resisted through feminist poststructuralism. Chris Weedon's (1997) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, strives "to develop strategies for change on behalf of feminist interests" (p. 11) through the mobilization of poststructural theory. While incorporating useful theoretical approaches (largely created by men), Weedon's (1997) work writes women's experience into what constitutes as knowledge by "conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness which focuses on how power is exercised and on the possibilities for change" (p. 19). Weedon's (1997) work links power relations and the discursive practices of discourse to illustrate how poststructural theory can help feminists see the underlying meaning-making that constructs knowledge, like that of biological difference, as sites of resistance in feminist practice.

Incorporating her own perspectives of poststructural theory, Dorothy Smith (1987) argues in her seminal work, *The Everyday World as Problematic*, that the exclusion of women from influence has material consequences that can only be understood by locating the individual in "the actual daily social relations between individuals" (p. 98). For Smith (1987), the standpoint of women in the everyday experiences of life is essential to understanding the material conditions of *all* women. Further, Smith (1990a) argues, women are not able to suspend their gender as it precedes their actions in the way it does not do so for men. Using her own experiences as a sociologist working within the gendered terrain of the academy, Smith (1990a) considers the analysis of discourses essential to identifying the institutionalized practices that organize power, particularly because the process of inquiry, methods, and conceptual practices have been largely organized by men. She considers "texts" as central to the everyday activities that create accounts which come to "stand in for the actuality" (p. 74). Smith's (1987, 1990a) theoretical and methodological approaches insert the lived experiences of subjects into the construction of knowledge and power,



offering a way of viewing discourses, like that of femininity, as sites where narratives about women are created but also reworked and disrupted.

Confronting issues of equity and inequality within the specific domain of higher education, Judith Glazer-Raymo's (1999) draws on feminist poststructural work to consider how institutional policies and practices impact the material conditions of women. These concerns overlap librarianship in that it, too, is a field subject to policies and practices within larger organizations, sometimes even as part of universities and colleges. Glazer-Raymo (1999) reveals two important approaches in confronting inequality, gender bias commissions and the application of feminist pedagogy, that have been used to advocate for improvement. Acknowledging that the foundations of her work draw on other feminist scholars who question women's ability to assimilate "into alienating institutional structures", Glazer-Raymo's (1999, p.x) research suggests that formal endeavours, like task forces, committees, and other "commissions" to improve material conditions for women in academia, while effective in changing policies, have been limited by their failure to address attitudinal problems faced by women. She concludes that assumptions "that new policies will solve old problems – fails to recognize that basic attitudinal changes are needed to create female-friendly university systems" (p. 205). Glazer-Raymo (1999) asserts that dominant policy-analysis approaches to the problem of equity rely too heavily on rationalist tools and there is a great need to rethink institutional practices by making gender, race, and ethnicity central to professional program curricula and by restructuring university institutions with "non-bureaucratic" models. In Glazer-Raymo's (2008) edited work *Unfinished Agendas: New and Continuing Gender Challenges in Higher Education*, she considers advancement in issues around women faculty and the complicating impact of corporatization and post-feminist attitudes.

Other higher education scholars like Brooke Midkiff (2015), Elizabeth Allan (2010), and Susan Iverson (2010) have applied poststructuralist analyses in various ways to shed light on persistent gender issues in the academy that are compatible with the gendered problems of librarianship. Their work provides examples that reinforce Glazer-Raymo's (2008) claims that women continue to face material challenges in their workplaces that are not resolved, simply, through policy change. For example, using a poststructuralist lens, Kelly Ward and Lisa Wolf-Wendel (2008), consider the ways women faculty negotiate work and family choices within academic structures. They

conclude that although women (particularly those with children) seem free to make decisions about their careers, these choices are made within traditional bureaucratic structures that have been designed to exclude women and favour men. Women's "free will" is actually structured by gendered discourses of work and family within the academy. These examples illustrate how critical feminist scholarship can offer new insights into how professional women can better understand the problems they face so that they can form workable strategies for overcoming sexism and discrimination, and act for "emancipation and social change." (Iverson, 2011, p. 80). This is of particular value to librarianship as a profession that not only wrestles with finding ways of addressing social problems in daily practice but also as a field that shares education's gendered history. Librarianship's unfortunate continued battle to be recognized as a profession of substantial social value, deserving of compensation and respect comparable to other fields, necessitates methods, like those used in education feminist scholarship, to speak out for change.

## **Meaning-Making through Popular Culture**

This study contributes to the needs of LIS educators, their students, and practitioners because it adds to previous feminist poststructural scholarship a study of popular cultural texts about librarians. Drawing from John Storey (2015), popular culture is a site where knowledge/power is created and resisted "within and across individual popular texts and practices" (Storey, 2015, p.11). I use popular cultural texts because they are educative. As feminist education scholar Carmen Luke (1996) argues, texts are part of a larger "public pedagogy" that operates as the *informal* location through which subjects are "formed in socially and culturally unique ways through the common experiences of schooling, growing up with television, learning from our mothers, 'othermothers,' childhood and professional peers, partners and friends" (Luke, 1996, p. 4). Later popularized by education theorist Henry Giroux (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013), public pedagogy operates in "various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning that occur beyond the realm of formal educational institutions" (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013, p. 4). As many scholars have argued (Giroux, 1994, 2003; Giroux & Simon, 1989a, 1989b; Jubas, Taber, & Brown, 2015; Luke, 1996; Tisdell & Thompson, 2007; Wright & Sandlin, 2009), people learn through the "doing" of the everyday and this includes interaction with texts like the ones I analyze in this study.

Explorations of representations of librarians in popular culture are important sites of dialogue that interrogate how knowledge and power are produced, reproduced, and resisted within the field. That the majority of fictional works about librarians continue to focus on middle aged, white women who are tightly connected with books (Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Yontz, 2002), suggests that changes within the profession (like the adoption of technology, the expansion of non-book materials, and efforts to serve marginalized/at-risk populations) go largely unnoticed outside of the field. Suzanne Monroe's (2012) recent study of library related works for children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests that there are is, perhaps, a small growth in the numbers of books featuring more diverse library encounters and ethnically diverse librarians, particularly in works that are biographical in nature.<sup>4</sup> The limited availability of alternative librarian imaginings, however, means that fictional stories continue to recirculate problematic images of librarians whose characterizations are dominated by normative qualities in dress and behaviours (like mothering and maintaining order) that contribute to an ongoing construction of librarianship as work for women. This is closely tied to the ongoing and much broader phenomenon, observed by Melanie Koss (2015), that American picture books rarely turn from stereotypes to feature people from more diverse populations. The repetition of images and texts of librarians coupled closely to the care of books, reference work, and limited use of technology in works for young readers has a normative effect. These representations map onto the history of librarianship and women in higher education to reproduce a rather singular narrative of what librarians do and who they are that limits possibilities in what it means to be a librarian.

This study builds on the critical and unique work of LIS scholars Radford and Radford (1997, 2001) who lead in providing a helpful analytical "turn" in LIS scholarship by considering the image of the library/librarian in popular films, television, and novels as part of more general social practices that specifically privilege discourses of knowledge and power. Their approach provides insight into how possibilities for reworking the representations of librarians are embedded in discursive constructions that permeate the broader social arena. Their focus on discourse and their emphasis on the need for the

---

<sup>4</sup> These include *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story From Iraq* (Winter, 2005), *The Storyteller's Candle/La Velita De Los Cuento* (González, 2008), and *My Librarian Is a Camel: How Books Are Brought to Children Around the World* (Ruurs, 2005).

application of a feminist research agenda, creates a space for incorporating new analyses of discourses of gender and femininity, responding to their call to, “dig deeper, to describe the conditions from which the stereotype is made possible... that go to the very heart of what it means to be male and female, powerful and marginalized, valued and devalued.” (Radford & Radford, 1997, p. 63). This study answers this call by looking at a range of contemporary texts produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including works for children and how those representations tie to a longer gendered history.

## **Conclusion**

The varied and informal popular cultural texts that exist in everyday life are pedagogical. They teach us, through visual-verbal narratives, what being a librarian means. These representations of librarians are not simply passive reflections of what the profession is about, what librarians do, and how they act. Rather, these narratives construct what it means to be a librarian and a professional woman. While some research defines the scope and complexity of librarian stereotypes/images in various media formats (Adams, 2000; Kneale, 2009; Mirza & Seale, 2011; Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014; Radford & Radford, 1997, 2001, 2003; Radford, Radford, & Alpert, 2015; Tevis & Tevis, 2005), this study seeks to contextualize librarian representations within the larger history of librarianship and higher education in Canada. Discourses of femininity contribute to anxieties about librarianship’s status and recognition that cannot be separated from its gendered historical roots and broader notions about work that is performed by women.

Confronting their own limits in accessing power, women scholars in higher education expose structural conditions that create gender inequality that exceed the individual. Their work has contributed to an enhanced understanding of how some professions become negatively associated with women, calling out systems of oppression and struggle that are rooted in social regimes that are designed by men. Those higher education scholars who turn to feminist poststructural theory, in particular, offer professions, like librarianship, an important approach that views gender as a social construction.

This literature review makes visible some gaps in the research, including a lack of critical feminist work focused on the relationship between a history of women

librarian's struggle with image and discourses of gender and femininity contained in popular culture representations of librarians. Further, there is very limited work in LIS scholarship that considers image in relation to power (rather than a focus on the individual). The toils experienced by librarians seeking gender equity and recognition for their work is also largely absent within the broader history of women and higher education. This work seeks to fill the gaps through the application of a discourse analysis of visual-verbal texts to expose the ways discourses of gender, masculinity, and femininity produce messages that devalue librarianship as "women's work". Drawing on feminist poststructural theory to analyze discourses of femininity in contemporary popular culture constructions of librarians, this work offers an example of how the "image problem," experienced by those in the field of LIS, might be better understood as a longstanding problem around gender, and an issue with a history that is constantly being struggled over and reworked. This study offers LIS scholars an example of how feminist poststructural theoretical approaches can point out the politics of difference that organize our field. In particular, this study's analysis of popular media exposes the gendered terrain of higher education and librarianship as a profession. This is a much-needed study as it opens up further exploration into the role of gender in librarianship's evolution as a profession, offering new ways of thinking about the failed efforts to diversify the field and elevate its recognition in wider society.

## Chapter 3. Theory & Methods

### Introduction

By examining representations of librarians in popular culture, this study takes the view that cultural texts are an important site of public pedagogy. This approach considers such works educative but in ways that, when compared to formal schooling, take “on a subtler, embodied mode” (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010 p. xxiii) that produces meaning in the social world. Studying popular culture is imminently useful in exposing relationships between social power and everyday experience as part of a feminist agenda because the discourses that organize these relations offer insight into how meanings are struggled over. This study analyzes visual-verbal discourses of femininity and masculinity among a selection of works that are published and/or produced in English from the United States but are made readily available, worldwide, through publishers, libraries, the Internet, and mainstream television. This chapter provides an explanation of the theoretical framework that guides this project, the purpose of the research, ways of seeing texts, the significance of the study, limitations, the permeability of texts and how they have been selected, an explanation of how data will be analyzed, and my positionality as researcher.

### Theoretical Framework

In this study I draw upon the work of poststructural scholars Judith Butler (2002) and Raewyn Connell (2000) and Dorothy Smith (1990b) to define gender. As a social relation, gender cannot be detached from people’s lived experiences (Smith, 1990b) and its intersection with other social relations like that of class and race (Connell, 2000) make it unstable. This gender instability, described by Judith Butler (2002) as “tenuously constituted in time ... through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (p. 179), is constructed in a “sustained social performance” (Butler, 2002, p. 180) that can be reified and/or resisted. This perspective rejects the notion that gender is “fixed as sex” (Butler, 2002, p. 10), refusing ideas that men *are* masculine and women *are* feminine. Instead, femininity and masculinity are things that we *do* or practice.

Gender is configured by creative and inventive social practices that are informed by history, culture, and personal life (Connell 2000). Gender is not intrinsically tied to biology and, as Butler (2002) suggests, it can become a “free-floating artifice” (p. 10) that can be transgressive and/or normative. This approach challenges “the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women” (Butler, 2002, p. 19) and offers a theoretical space for interrogating assumptions about the meaning of gender. This also enables me to consider representations of “women” librarians as a social construction that “refers to [female] bodies “but is not determined by [female] biology (Connell, 2000, p. 29). As an aspect of gender, femininity as well as masculinity operate as discourses that differentiate men and women through socially constructed practices that are situated in the politics of everyday life.

Social organization, both formal and informal, precedes or operates in concert with texts (and other modes including, images, speech, and gestures) revealing how operational “rules” establish norms and what the reader/viewer/listener will read and “hear”. Penetrating through the surface requires a consideration for the discourses enacted, for “each discourse has its own distinctive organization of authorities, means of dissemination, educational and knowledge-producing sites and productions processes” (Griffith & Smith, 2005, p. 34). Librarianship’s struggle for status and recognition is embedded in its historical construction as a “women’s profession” that operates through discourses of femininity that appear in popular representations of librarians. I consider how power circulates in practices that are “precarious, contradictory and in process” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32) that construct librarianship as part of ongoing social practices, that are unstable, active, and potentially changeable.

Examining cultural texts is informed by Weedon’s (1997) poststructural stance that feminism operates as a “politics which must have tangible results” (p. 11) so that we can attend to the patriarchal structures that organize us. This is particularly helpful to the examination of representations of librarians because it reveals how women librarians “are presented with, and inserted into, ideological and discursive positions by practices which locate them in meaning and in regimes of truth” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 87). These regimes are grounded in the historical development of librarianship as a profession that has been constructed as being ideally suited to women. The struggle over improving the status and compensation of librarians is informed by the ongoing social practices that

determine what work is valued and not valued in contemporary society that also manifest in contemporary visual-verbal representations.

Viewing the subject as “in-process” rather than unified, the image of librarianship can be denaturalized as ‘women’s work’ through a focus on discourses of femininity. Drawing on feminist poststructuralist orientations, this approach

is concerned with how gendered power relations and gendered subjectivities are produced in specific sites. It is concerned to account for the re-production of relations of gender oppression but also to look for discontinuities, incompletenesses, contradictions, differences, resistances, possibilities for transformation. (Lee, 1994, p.27)

The discursive structures that circulate in popular culture and produce librarianship as “feminized” can be unseated by theorizing that subject positions are contextual and varied (Mills, 1997). Social action is constructed through language that applies extra-local historical and social experiences and knowledge to organize and produce meaning. These varying discourses are ideological, favouring certain values, assumptions, and standpoints, at the expense of others as part of the distribution of social power (Rogers, 2004).

Power relations sustain social difference through discourses but they can also allow for the reworking of discourses. Although most LIS scholarship does not critique power and social constructions of image, presence of LIS scholarship, highlighted in Chapter 2, that is focused on librarian status and image does articulate a desire for improved recognition of librarian contributions to society. Social change cannot simply be invoked by changing the way we use language because the “discursive practices are embedded in material power relations which also require transformation for change to be realized” (Weedon, 1997, p.103). Feminist poststructural theory allows me to uncover discourses of gender, femininity, and masculinity that circulate through popular culture texts to expose the power relations that inform the social status of Canadian librarianship.

These relations need to be exposed in order to allow for the possibility of change. Discourses of gender, for example, vary according to context and can be seen at play in the ways librarians are represented in popular Western culture. Discourses of gender and, specifically that of femininity, are tightly woven into characters. The result is that the



meaning of librarianship is derived from how they are portrayed as women – it is how they look that makes us think about librarians, not the work they actually do. These visual-verbal samples illustrate how representations contain messages in what they say, how they look, how they act, and what is/is not visible.

## Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyze visual-verbal representations of librarians appearing in a range of works located within Western popular culture to understand the ways in which such media contribute to the construction of the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian in North American society. Doing so provides a deeper understanding of the gendered history of librarianship and how cultural products in various media forms, intended for non-librarian audiences of all ages, are persistently negative, constructing librarians as women who are unhelpful, awkward, obsessed with order, unattractive, and matronly/old, and men who are sometimes also awkward but also, at times, controlling and wicked. This research reveals how the profession of librarianship reflects broader ongoing social struggles about the meaning of work that is largely undertaken by women. My research questions are:

- What do representations of librarians in popular cultural texts reveal about librarianship, gender, and professional identity?
- What discourses of femininity and masculinity circulate in popular cultural texts about librarians?
- In what ways do discursive visual-verbal representations of librarians produce and resist constructions of librarianship as “women’s work”?

This study pulls from a range of materials including, a family-oriented YouTube video, a made-for-television movie for adult viewers, children’s texts, and websites to explore the production of librarian representations. However, due to a significant absence of Canadian popular culture material featuring librarians (confirmed by librarian colleagues and experts like LIS children’s literature scholar, Judith Saltman)<sup>5</sup>, my

---

<sup>5</sup> The one exception is a 2017 book for middle-grade readers that came out in Canada by Linda Bailey called *The Tiny Hero of Ferny Creek Library*. Unfortunately, it became available long after selections for this project had been made.

examination of librarian representation turns to United States popular culture media produced between 2005 and 2017.

## **Significance**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study offers a new “way-in” to understanding the underlying social relations that continue to fuel persistently problematic images of librarians who are portrayed as unappealing, frumpy, unhelpful, mean (even evil), irrelevant, and sexually frustrated. Despite the well-established presence of librarians in North American culture, stereotypes continue to be sexist, with little evolution in how their work, or the values that inform that work, are represented in mainstream media. This disconnect has fueled ongoing concerns for LIS practitioners and scholars about the field’s professional recognition in broader society. By analyzing visual-verbal discourses of gender and, specifically, femininity and masculinity, appearing in a selection of modern popular culture representations of librarians, this study offers the field of LIS new ways of considering how these discourses construct the social relations that shape its status. Specifically feminist in my analysis, I add to the work of other feminist education scholars who study how women continue to experience inequality in their workplaces.

## **Ways of Seeing**

Public pedagogy invites analytical approaches that conceive the verbal-visual production of popular culture as embedded in the social world, requiring a consideration of the power relations that produce, articulate, and challenge ways of seeing (Rose, 2012). As such, I use Gillian Rose’s (2012) visual discourse analysis to examine how popular culture representations of librarians in the United States are reinforced and resisted in complex and, often, contradictory ways. Her method is deliberately focused on detailed, flexible, and interpretive “readings” of visual works that contemplates the ways images enact, create, and counter discourses. Rose (2012) argues that visual images “are not entirely reducible” (p. 16) to their contexts by reflecting culture in passive ways but that they, instead, have their own effects that are neither innocent nor neutral. Visual images are embedded in and produce discourses and thus build systems

of knowledge and power that play out in popular culture making Rose's (2012) analytical method highly relevant for this examination of representations of librarians.

Sarah Ives (2009) describes the power of images in constructing knowledge, arguing that they "allow people to 'know' places or people that they may never visit or meet (or which may not even exist outside of media)" (p. 247). The ongoing construction of the librarian through popular media can be seen as sites where such variability creates opportunities for discourses, like those of gender and femininity, to be renegotiated. Further, if representations presented in images and texts can be assumed to have interplay with the material experiences of people, they can be understood to influence and be influenced by the politics of lived experience

Popular culture embodies a range of media that may be seen, read, or uttered as ways of generating meaning. Like text, images "visualise (or render invisible) social difference" (Rose, 2012, p. 11). Social relations and practices are expressed and built upon textual and visual forms that frequently operate together to generate narratives about the world. Movies and videos, for example, use verbal (dialogue) and visual messages to persuade the viewer of certain knowledge claims that may reinscribe or disrupt dominant cultural discourses. Incorporating the notion of "verbal" into Rose's (2012) method expands the idea of the visual to that which can also be heard, acknowledging their interplay and serving as locations where truths are constructed and seen as natural. Visual-verbal messages carry meaning that is accumulative (Hall, 2001), at times playing off of one another and at other times operating in concert with one another.

## **Representation**

Images appearing in books, videos, movies, and other popular media often rely on simplified portrayals of characters when building narratives. These portrayals, described by Gretchen Keer and Andrew Carlos' (2014) as "cultural shortcuts" are used to convey cultural assumptions and are commonly termed "stereotypes". Although stereotypes are socially constructed to offer simplified portrayals of groups in assisting with categorizing reality and expressing certain values, this is actually only part of the meaning-making process. According to Gillian Rose (2012), representations go beyond the stereotype by considering the way social practices can be articulated through

images, illustrations and other visual artifacts by “giving specific meaning to images and by producing particular experiences from images” (p. 10). The intertextuality of images and other visual artifacts inform one another, creating new meaning. According to John Storey (2015), “representation does not stand at one remove from reality, to conceal or distort, it *is* reality” (p. 202). Through this lens, images are not considered things that point to what exists, rather they also produce new meaning, blurring our possible understanding of what is real; what is truth.

## **Visual-Verbal Discourse**

I turn to the work of Sara Mills (1997) and Gillian Rose (2012) to define discourse in visual-verbal form. Discourse refers to language or “groups of statements” (Rose, 2012, p. 190) that not only draw from specific rules and conventions but also serve to shape and organize meaning that have “force and effect within a social context” (Mills, 1997, p. 11). For example, the ways in which librarians are drawn, photographed, filmed and described or pictured in popular visual-verbal texts generate messages for viewers/readers about what librarians look like, what kind of work they perform, and who they are as people that contributes to the meaning(s) of librarianship within society. Discourses of femininity and masculinity circulate through and in concert with discourse of librarianship in ways that also shape and re-shape our understanding of librarianship as a profession.

Visual-verbal texts are important sites where discourses are located and meaning is produced (Rose, 2012). Movies, books, graphic novels, television programs, online YouTube videos, Instagram, and websites serve as important terrain where meaning is produced for people of all ages. While storytelling through various media can appear separate from the material circumstances of “real life,” such media serve to construct meaning in discursive ways that shape social practice, including constructions of gender (Marshall, 2004) that have a larger history. That is, representations also have material effects and seek to affirm certain ideas including the idea that women who follow rules and standards are more “peevish” than men who, behaving similarly, are “right” and “true”.

## Permeability of Media

Because there is such a wealth of media sources, geared to a range of audiences but accessible, in this era of ubiquitous technology, to a vast range of people, it cannot be assumed that materials produced for one audience will not be accessed by others. When considering the selection of materials for this project, I take into account that access to media has become quite permeable for audiences of all ages. This means that the process of making meaning from popular culture can happen at any time in the everyday experiences of children and adults alike.

Elena Monoyiou and Simoni Symeonidou (2014) argue that “the way in which gender is depicted conveys messages to children about their role as boys/men and girls/women in a given society” (p. 589). These messages are bundled within language and images that embody “culturally encoded representational systems” (Coates, 2004, p. 3) that are formative for children and young adults who are accumulating experiences and ideas about the world around them. For example, popular works for youth “offer a space for theorizing and engaging with debates about gender” (Marshall, 2016, p. 473) that can assist in understanding how librarianship is both constructed and contested as “women’s work.” Children’s identities are constructed in normative ways when they engage in literature and other media that serve as “cultural artifact[s], working as part of a larger cultural narrative” (Wannamaker, 2006, p. 17). While Yontz (2002) suggests, children’s literature provides a useful and underutilized source for understanding beliefs and values emanating from the adult world, specifically, the cultural history of librarianship, it should also be noted that these values and beliefs actively construct and recirculate meaning for children – and their older caregivers.

Like children’s picture books, visual media including television, “fill our imaginations with information and models – for good or ill, whether intended or not” (Wright, 2010, p. 139). Further, television programs and streaming services are likely to be viewed by a wide range of people and ages. Patricia McDonough (2009) reports that when older children or adults enter a room to watch television, the likelihood that younger children will watch broadcast network programming increases significantly. Further, these habits have deep and lasting effects on children. Natascha Notten, Gerbert Kraaykamp, and Ruben Konig (2012) contend that “within the family home,

media consumption is a recurrent daily activity and a regular topic of family conversation” (p. 684) that has a lifelong socializing influence on children.

Crossover novels and the practice of cross-reading materials intended for children and teen audiences is another example of the permeability of cultural formations and, further, the mainstreaming of children’s media. Rachel Falconer (2009) argues that children and teen literature has never existed in a separate cultural sphere from adults but the growing popularity of the crossover work “becomes a medium through which the child and adult readers (re)fashion a sense of subjectivity in relation to the extreme edges of human experience” (p. 8). Even picture books, clearly intended for the very young, are mediated and experienced by children’s caregivers – older children and adults. Thus, examining a wide range of formats for a wide range of ages recognizes the ways culture is educative, infused in the everyday, producing and recirculating discourses that persuade us to see specific constructions of librarianship.

The materials covered offer a range of formats that reflect the ubiquity of media as a form that is consumed by people of different ages. These materials may be read/viewed/experienced by adults, teens, and children. Analyses that encompass a wide range of visual-verbal texts for a wide range of ages acknowledge the expansive landscape in which meaning-making occurs. The breadth of these “pedagogic agents” (Sandlin, Shultz, & Burdick, 2010, p. 4) are important when considering how discourses like that of femininity circulate in popular culture and how they are stabilized, recycled, resisted, and unseated. The works that I settled on specifically give prominence to librarians, providing rich sources of images and text for analysis.

## **Selecting Texts/Media**

The texts and media that I have selected for analysis are informed by their physical availability for study and their appropriateness as to how they represent librarians. Because the general public is largely unaware that library practitioners may or may not actually be librarians, I look at images and texts that treat the subject as a librarian. Similar to Fisher, Harris and Jarvis (2008), who relate popular culture to various discourses in education, this project is focused on cultural texts rather than on specific viewers and readers who engage with such works and their processes in meaning-making.

My selection is focused on visual-verbal texts published/produced in English in the United States from 2005 to 2017 for children, teen, and adult audiences. Locating appropriate and contemporary materials required using bibliographies (both in print and online) to identify media featuring librarians as well as reviews in library journals and magazines and online resources. One particularly helpful blog, Jennifer Snoek-Brown's (n.d.) "Reel Librarians," provides a current and extensive inventory of movies and films featuring librarians. This site organizes hundreds of popular culture titles that contain extensive and fleeting references to librarians over the last century. Additionally, I used WorldCat, a union, or "global," library catalogue, online book vendors including Amazon and Indigo, and conversations with library workers to identify potential resources. Once items were chosen, I reviewed the items to ascertain whether there was sufficient and appropriate material for analysis, weeding out items that feature the "library" as an institution rather than the librarian. Anyone working in a library was considered a "librarian" for this project because there is little acknowledgement, outside of librarianship, that there are different types of library workers.

## **Accessibility of Texts**

In addition to using a range of media formats, selections are focused on popular or well-known materials that appear in mainstream American culture. While produced in the United States, all of these materials are accessible in Canada to the public through the Internet, libraries, purchase, and rentals. Relying exclusively on information that has been made accessible to the public through publishing and public distribution, there is no reasonable expectation of privacy, eliminating concerns with anonymity and confidentiality.

It is important to note that the process of selecting and analyzing is a highly iterative one. Once selections were made, an initial analysis was conducted to loosely identify images that, in some way, "spoke to" librarian stereotypes that are identified in LIS literature. These "loose" image themes were helpful in organizing my project but it should be noted that both the themes and the selections were refined numerous times with every analytical pass. Analyzing discourses requires identifying "claims to truth, or to scientific certainty, or to the natural ways of things" (Rose, 2012, p. 215), requiring a deep immersion in the material and the persuasive effects of the "social context of discourse production" (Rose, 2012, p. 222). This project is organized by themes and

formats, first, with analysis of materials for young children, specifically picture books, then moving into materials for older children and teens and, finally, into materials intended for adult audiences. Through an analytical immersion that considers works with “fresh eyes” (Rose, 2012, p. 210), three themes emerged that correspond to each format: (1) gatekeeping librarians in picture books, (2) evil male librarians in books for older children, and (3) old maids, loveless frumps and oversexed librarians in more “adult” oriented visual media. When locating materials and reading contributions from the LIS community that address works about libraries and librarianship, I became interested in how various popular culture narratives might be disrupted. This is presented in a fourth theme of activist librarians that push against other librarian narratives. Particular samples are found in websites and biographies about real librarians.<sup>6</sup>

### **Theme 1: Gatekeeping Librarians**

The items selected for this theme are three picture books that are easily available in public libraries and for purchase with major book sellers. They include *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* (Gassman, 2016), *Library Lion* (Knudsen, 2006), and *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006). They have also received favourable reviews in *Kirkus Reviews* and/or *School Library Journal*. In all three samples, animals/non-humans serve as counterparts to actual boy children whose entry into the library is challenged by female librarians. These works reinforce ideas that childcare falls within the realm of women who must encourage “proper,” civilized behaviour from children. Boys are more likely to need greater taming interventions because their “maleness” makes boys more inherently disruptive and antisocial (Nodelman, 2002).

### **Theme 2: Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians**

Scholarship examining male librarians is extremely limited, with no consensus as to whether or not representations are becoming more positive (Dickinson, 2002; Meyers, 1998; Mirza & Seale, 2011; Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Poulin, 2008). While there are

---

<sup>6</sup> While the titles of selected works are listed in the following sections, Appendix A offers an annotated bibliography of these sources.



some modern examples of male librarians in adult media<sup>7</sup>, there are very few works for children that contain male librarian characters<sup>8</sup>, thus, the study of librarians in children's culture literature remains under-examined. I address this gap by analyzing two works that centre on male librarian characters, the middle grade illustrated novel *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) and the young adult novel, *Evil Librarian* (Knudsen, 2014).

### Theme 3: Loveless-frumps, Spinsters, and Oversexed Librarians

References to old-maid, sexually repressed, and spinster-like librarians are more prevalent in works intended for more adult audiences. Snoek-Brown's (n.d.) *Reel Librarians* website identifies the spinster and "naughty" librarian categories in particular. Texts in this chapter include a made for television movie, *A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden M*(Bure, Head & Wood, 2015) and a YouTube video drawn from television sketch-comedy program, *Ann "The Librarian" Withers* (Studio C, 2013). The old-maid and loveless frump overlaps the spinster and naughty librarian stereotypes and they are frequently mentioned in a range of LIS literature contemplating librarian stereotypes including Adams (2000), Bobrovitz and Griebel (2001), Lutz (2005), Seale (2008), and Wells (2013). Relying on discourses of marriage and sexuality, it is not surprising that these images do not fit comfortably with those creating works for children. While certain elements may be recycled in texts for the young (conservative forms of dress, for example), content relating to adult relationships logically appear in adult-focused media. The items analyzed within this theme, are selections that are current, widely disseminated visual-verbal narratives that feature librarians as main characters.

---

<sup>7</sup> Examples include: *Unshelved: The Library Comic Strip* (2002 --) by Gene Ambaum and Bill Barnes; *Rex Libris*, graphic novels vols. 1-13 (2005-2008) by James Turner; *The Librarians* (2014-2018) television series; *The Librarian* (2004) television movie; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003); *Librarian* (2004), a novel by Larry Beinhart; the feature film *Bookies* (2003), and the novel and feature film *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2003 and 2009, respectively).

<sup>8</sup> Some of the limited examples include: *Sorcery* by Terry Pratchett (1989), *Wind Singer*, by William Nicholson (2001), and the *Library of Doom* series by Michael Dahl (2008 --).

## Theme 4: Activist Librarians

This section features biographies for a child audience about activist librarians who resist the status quo and in turn challenge familiar stereotypes of women librarians as simply care takers or book sorters. Here, I analyze *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* (Winter, 2005) and *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (Houston, 2011). For librarians, social activism is about supporting members of communities to be literate and knowledgeable so that they have the best chances to fully participate in the world and, as such, I also analyze the contemporary autobiographical works *This is what a librarian looks like* (Newman & Howerton, n.d.), and *I Work at a Public Library: A Collection of Crazy Stories from the Stacks* (Sheridan, 2014). Librarian activism in children's texts and social media is part of the "construction of active resistance and struggle" (Giroux & Simon, 1989b, p.221) that challenges normative images and narratives about librarianship as "women's work". These texts provide counter-narratives that reimagine librarians as social agents who perform their work in ways that is complex and political.

## Analysis of the Data

My data analysis relies on Rose's (2012) work, *Visual Methodologies* and emergent themes by using her guiding questions:

- What is made visible/invisible within image/texts?
- How is social difference produced in the visual-verbal representations found within image/texts?
- When looking at the composition of the images/texts, how are they seen by audiences?
- How does the visual-verbal representations found within images/texts relate to others within the selections themselves? To other selections?

To address these questions, each text was analyzed multiple times, first identifying the ways in which librarians are described, illustrated, and enacted in extreme detail. Subsequent (re)readings/viewings considered the ways in which discourses of femininity and masculinity circulate within these works by considering the interactions librarians have with other characters, the ways they are visualized (dressed/described), and the messages – the truth claims – made in these interactions.

## Rose: A Sample Analysis

To illustrate the data analysis process presented in this dissertation, I offer an analysis of two scenes that feature the librarian/archivist “Rose” from *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* (Barnathan & Aidoo, 2014). Played by Andrea Martin, Rose (Figure 3) is actually an archivist (as noted in the final credits).<sup>9</sup> However, “Archivists are rarely portrayed in film and television. When they are, they’re often called librarians, or they function like an amalgam of archivist and librarian” (University of Washington, 2017, para 1). Perhaps not surprisingly, the conflation of library and archive spaces is also not uncommon (Buckley, 2008). Therefore, this analysis considers the treatment of Rose similar to that of librarians in this analysis. This sample exemplifies the visual-verbal relationship of discourse, incorporating visual images *and* dialogue. My analysis is specifically broken down using Rose’s (2012) guiding questions to illustrate how they can be effective in visual-verbal analysis.

---

<sup>9</sup> Unlike a librarian, an archivist is focused on the acquisition and preservation of primary rather than published documents. These items use different standards and practices. While sharing some similarities, archivists and librarians serve different groups and require different forms of education. The Society for American Archivists (<https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/archivist>) defines archivist as “an individual responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to records of enduring value, according to the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context.”



Figure 3: Librarian/Archivist "Rose" in *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* (2014). Despite the presence of a computer, she is surrounded by mid-20th century technology in the form of a typewriter, rolodex, card catalogues

Eighteen minutes into the film, Larry Daley, played by Ben Stiller, purposefully enters the Museum of Natural History in New York City. The movie then transitions to the first library/archives scene which opens with a full-screen image of an active game of Candy Crush, accompanied by its light-hearted sound effects. Immediately, the scene pans out to an image of Rose playing the game at her desk on a flat screen monitor, enthusiastically talking to the game while clicking and moving her mouse in play. She is seated at an "L" shaped desk that is covered in various work and personal items including an owl figurine, a shell, a mouse and keyboard, a monitor, a typewriter, a rolodex, and book stamps. In the backdrop is a large oak card catalogue.

Rose: [fully engrossed in her game] Yeah get some...get some! That's it [under her breath and over the sounds of the game].

Larry: Hi! I'm Larry Daley, the head of the Night Program.

Rose: [her head turns and she pushes back from the computer, arms immediately crossing] I know who you are, you're the security guard.

Larry: Yeah, also head of the Night Program. I'm doing some research and I'm wondering if you can help me out.

Rose: [arms crossed, mockingly]. Mmm... Night guard doing research [raises hands to face, using a patronizing tone] Ooo la la! *Reeee*-search.

Larry: Yeah. Uh, I'm just looking for anything you might have on the Tablet of Ahkmenrah.

Rose: [arms crossed on her desk and without hesitation] Centre aisle. Halfway down. Stack on your left [resumes her game of Candy Crush].

Larry: Great.

This scene unfolds through a third-person limited point of view, showing us each character, in mid-shot as they engage in dialogue. This allows us to see most of their upper bodies including the detail of their dress. Rose has short dark hair, cut to her mid-ear, big round glasses, and, dressed in two shades of grey, there is nothing colourful about her. Even after Larry enters the space, Rose only turns her attention from the game, pulling back from the screen and turning to Larry, when he utters a polite "Hi." Immediately, Rose crosses her arms as she turns towards him, eyeing him with a frown.

As they face one another, Larry and Rose are separated by the side of her desk that features an old typewriter. Although Rose must look up at Larry who stands, hands at his side, expectantly before her, she is clearly in charge as she sizes him up before speaking. She does not get up from her desk and remains seated, preferring to call out directions to the materials he seeks rather than getting up to show him where to go. While the camera is focused on the characters, the setting clearly marks it as a library/archives. Its demarcation as an archives is unclear as both libraries and archives have historically used card catalogue cabinets and contain books, both appearing in the background of this scene.

In another related scene, after some time has passed, Larry is shown from a distance, sitting alone at a table in the library/archives. The table and chairs are heavy oak and are nestled in the aisle between rows of stacks (shelves) containing books. The items Larry studies at the table are clearly primary documents that look nothing like the items contained on the shelves around him. The camera zooms in on Larry and the documents he is silently examining. When Rose approaches Larry, the camera zooms out to frame them both within the shot, accommodating their ensuing dialogue. In this moment, it is clear that Rose is wearing a knee length, grey skirt. Holding a coffee cup and some kind of food item, she sits down at his table, unfolds a napkin on the table and prepares to eat while she strikes up a much friendlier conversation.

Rose: So, what makes you so curious about the tablet?

Larry: Oh, just a...just a hobby. Kind of an interest of mine. [looking at an old photo] I wish I could talk to these guys.

Rose: Well you can't –

Larry: Yeah –

Rose: – 'cause they're dead.

Larry: Right. [pointing to the photo] Look. Look at that one. He looks like a kid, huh?

Rose: [taking the picture and running her hand along the image] Hm. [with a fond look, emits a longing sigh]

Larry: You didn't know him, did you?

Rose: CJ Fredricks. He worked here [hands back the photo].

Larry: He worked here?

Rose: Yeah, when he grew up.

Larry: No.

Rose: Yeah! He was a Night Guard. Same as you.

Larry: Wait a minute. CJ.... CJ... Cecil Fredricks?

Rose: Sexiest night guard we ever had. Present company included. Boy could that man move.

*What is made visible/invisible through images/texts?*

Similar to many other popular culture representations of librarians/archivists, Rose is not a principle character in the movie. The purpose of her role is to help advance the plot as the lead, Larry, tries to solve the puzzle associated with a mysterious Ahkmenrah tablet. In many ways, Rose is rather unremarkable and forgettable as a character in the film. A white woman in her fifties, her clothes are the same unremarkable grey as the cabinetry of the stacks and floors around her. Blending in with the austere and environment, she is colourless and "stale". She fails to "do" femininity well in her drab attire and her unhelpful and snarky attitude. Larry's friendly and sincere request for help, is met with her unlikeable demeanour. This creates a mild comedic

tension because there is no need for Rose's querulousness since she is not doing any meaningful work

Laden with relics from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Rose's workspace features a desk, a Rolodex, card catalogue cabinets, a typewriter, and a large carousel of book stamps. Her desk is worn, darkly stained oak and her chair, like her desk, is something from the 1960s or 1970s. Only her flat screen monitor, prominently displaying the game Candy Crush (released in 2012) hints at present day. This visually constructs librarianship as an archaic occupation – so much so that there is nothing much to do but while away the hours playing a video game popular with women.<sup>10</sup> While materials contained in archives/libraries may be old, modern tools are necessary to manage their preservation and it is notable that there is an absence of the kinds of technology (e.g. scanners and printers) and the space to conduct this work (surfaces for receiving, organizing, and preserving materials) is not visible.

The “entrance” to the library/archives is a narrow, unornamented elevator, suggesting that the space of the library/archives is functional and for private use. Rose's desk is located immediately next to the elevator. This conveniently situates her as a kind of gatekeeper, as no one can pass through this space without her notice. There are no signs indicating where the characters are but the stacks of books and other documents, marked with location signs, defines the space fairly clearly to the viewer. There is no one else in the archives/library when Larry greets Rose, intensifying a feeling of isolation strongly associated with archives (Buckley, 2008).

The actual work of a librarian/archivist is also invisible in this scene. Rather than use the tools (like the computer and the card catalogue) that surround her, Rose is magically able to recall *exactly* where the information regarding Larry's request is. This creates a feeling that Rose was just waiting for Larry and his precise question to come through the elevator doors. This is a poignant reminder of the historical evolution of librarianship and the way such work is portrayed as something that requires little education, relying, instead, on assumptions that women are ideally suited to librarianship

---

<sup>10</sup> According to *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/6-billion-for-candy-crush-highlights-the-importance-of-female-mobile-gamers-50236>) 62% of Candy Crush players are women.

because service is an extension of domestic work. Rose is not shown engaged in other library/archival work that might include collection maintenance, digitization, program development, or preservation. Any professional capacity her character may have had is further subverted by her lack of interest in actually showing Larry where the information he requires is located. She does not bother to get up from her desk to show Larry, instead calling out directions and then resuming her game. Rose's cranky and peevish behaviour reifies messages that the value of women librarians is connected to how well they enact their femininity. When they do not do this well, they are portrayed as laughable and irrelevant. Rose's character provides some comic relief while Larry conducts research necessary in advancing the plot.

*How is social difference produced in the visual-verbal representations found within image/texts?*

The interaction between Rose and Larry reveals two significant themes of social difference that produces meaning about Rose's occupation. The first theme relates to Rose discursively positioned as professional "expert" and the second is the undermining of this expertise by linking her role to her heterosexual desire. While Rose's sexual objectification of another character is used to provide comedic relief, it does not meaningfully contribute to the advancement of the story but does reduce Rose from her position as professional gatekeeper to just a heterosexual woman.

The interplay between these two events is significant in how Rose is constructed as a librarian/archivist because they call upon normative discourses about gender, especially femininity. Initially, Rose establishes herself as the expert on access to cultural information (i.e. museum/artifact history) and library/archival knowledge (how such culture is organized, preserved, and located) in what she says and how she acts towards Larry. By using mocking language, tone, and body language, (i.e. crossing her arms and making hand gestures when she says, "Ooo la la! Reeee-search"), Rose positions herself as superior to Larry. She is the lone guardian of important collections and he is merely a security guard.

Her lofty status is, however, suddenly curtailed when the movie cuts to Rose walking casually towards Larry, (who now sits alone at a table, surrounded by shelves of books), absorbed in an examination of an old photograph. Rose, carrying a coffee cup



and snack sits down at the table and asks Larry, as she unfolds a napkin, "So, what makes you so curious about the tablet?" This sudden curiosity in Larry greatly contradicts her earlier performance as a distanced and "patronizing guardian". What truly undermines her claim as a professional expert, however, is her sudden display of longing for the man in the picture, Cecil. She expresses romantic/sexual desire for him, "Sexiest night guard we ever had. Present company included. Boy could that man move." After she says this, the camera turns to focus on Larry who, through his male gaze, regards Rose thoughtfully as he connects the pieces of his Ahkmenrah puzzle. Larry reveals nothing personal to her, including his sexual interests, making her revelation seem out of place and inappropriate. It is in this moment that Rose's heterosexual femininity establishes her as nothing more than an older woman longing for a man in the past and not a professionally-minded archivist/librarian. Discourses of femininity establish Rose as a static character whose key role is to do little more than support the interests of the main male protagonist by enabling him to make a necessary discovery to move the story along.

*How does the visual-verbal representations found within images/texts relate to others within the selections themselves? To other selections?*

A broader reading of the movie reveals that Rose provides a contrast to a wide range of adventurous characters within the film. Museum exhibits come to life and Larry, as the night guard, engages in fantastic adventures with them. Even Larry's predecessor, Cecil Fredrick (the character in the old photograph) was involved in the actual discovery (and subsequent appropriation) of the Ahkmenrah tablet. This further establishes Rose as little more than a lonely gatekeeper whose librarianship/archival skills were essentially useless. She is contained, in solitude, within the private space of the library/archives, playing video games while the predominantly male cast embarks on a wild adventure.

Rose's disgruntled and lack-luster characterization takes on similar aspects seen in other librarian characters in popular culture including Mary, the old-maid librarian in the 1946 movie *It's a Wonderful Life* and the cranky gatekeepers in movies like *Name of the Rose* (1986) and *Party Girl* (1995). Like other representations of librarians/archivists, visual references to the past, such as card catalogues and book stamps, undermine more contemporary interpretations of what these professionals do in their work. Indeed,

the value of her work is closely knit with the past which fits well in a movie about historical artifacts – Rose is a kind of artifact, too.

*When looking at the composition of the images/texts, how are they seen by audiences?*

In addition to creating a sense of aloneness through the library/archive setting, Rose appears to be in limbo, playing a video game while waiting for someone in need to emerge from the elevator. Ironically, when this actually happens, she greets her guest with mild contempt, looking both irritated at having her game interrupted and behaving patronizingly to Larry when he indicates he is performing some research. The camera, situated behind Rose, captures Larry as he ventures out of the elevator and walks towards Rose's desk where she is still absorbed in her game. As she turns to face him, the camera switches to an angle behind Larry to focus on Rose and her initial surly frown. The desk and the antiquated typewriter it supports function as a barrier between the two characters. Remaining seated, Rose's crossed arms and unsmiling face contrast with Larry's open, questioning stance. Switching camera perspective to show both characters in the frame, Rose is positioned in front of a backdrop of all of the library/archival tools, constructing her, in an ironic twist, as a kind of "security guard". Even though viewers understand that Larry is a security guard at the museum, his secret and magical relationship with the museum's exhibits, makes him something much more special. This knowledge only further magnifies Rose's limited role as gatekeeper. Furthermore, when she mocks him for doing research, "Mmm... Night guard doing research ... Ooo la la! Reeee-search," she exhibits the kind of "peevish" behaviour early 20<sup>th</sup> century library leaders used in sexist descriptions of women librarians, recirculating historically gendered messages about women librarians.

At no time in the movie does Larry attempt to learn about the tablet using the Internet, even though other characters were using it earlier in the movie. Instead, Larry seeks out the library/archives for his information, lending the information he finds there a certain credibility. Having transitioned from an architecturally captivating shot of the outside of the museum, Larry's interactions with Rose are confined to the indoor space of the library/archives. The contrast in environments creates a distinct sense of dullness and solitude. Furthermore, the presence of old library relics (i.e. card catalogue, typewriter, etc.) conjures up librarianship's past. The elevator that opens to the library/archives acts as a kind of time machine, taking him into a past where knowledge

is sacred and secure and where library/archives have “authenticating power” (Duranti, 2007). There is no print signage saying “library” or “archives” and no mention of this immediately before, during, or after the scene, leaving audiences to infer what this place is and Rose’s specific role within it. This contributes to the conflation of librarian and archivist because the nuances of the work performed and the real variation in who performs such work in real-life is absent. For instance, the prevalence of “stacks” filled with books misrepresents archives. Archives typically contain shelves full of plain boxes marked only with accession and/or box numbers that house primary sources like personal or corporate documents (e.g. letters, diaries, meeting notes, photographs). Also, unlike this scene, collection storage is usually deliberately separated from researcher and processing spaces. This, when combined with a visual emphasis on books, further adds to the librarian/archivist confusion for audiences.

Larry’s initial exchange with Rose clearly establishes Larry as an intruder who is trespassing on her territory. After Larry enters and introduces himself to Rose, she makes it clear that she holds more knowledge and power than Larry. This is clear in both her demeanour but also when she responds to his introduction with a nod and, “I know who you are.” She does not make any effort to introduce herself. This “power” is later destabilized, however, when her conversation with Larry over an old photograph reveals her to be simply a woman attracted to Cecil. Her role reinforces the notion of librarianship and archivist belonging to the domain of women (specifically white women) but her role also suggests discourses of normative femininity through order, control, and distaste for disruption. Despite the presence of a computer, she is hardly relevant to the modern world. Her character’s authority is ultimately undermined by the site of the library itself as nothing more than an orderly, but benign, collection of materials and outdated tools (e.g. the rolodex). Discourses of normative femininity position her as a character who must be contained.

Rose’s (2012) questions for analysing visual-verbal texts like *Night at the Museum* allow me to attend to issues of how discourses of gender and librarianship work to make certain meanings “true”. Paired with a feminist poststructural perspective, the social construction of gender and of librarianship as women’s work becomes clear. These scenes reveal the contradictory nature of discourses of gender. In particular, although Rose is constructed as someone in control – a gatekeeping expert – her authority is curtailed by her interest in a meaningless videogame. Discourses of

femininity that relate idle/trivial interests to women work together with her display of sexual longing for Cecil, rescript her as a heterosexual woman. Through discourses of normative femininity, these scenes teach the viewer that women, like Rose, who fail to gain/retain the attention of a man, fail to perform heterosexual femininity properly and are destined to work at professions, like librarianship, for a living.

## **Limitations of the Study**

As a deconstructive reading of selected materials, the results of this study can not be broadly generalized. The materials chosen for this study are limited, focusing on works produced in English from the United States that can be accessed by audiences of all ages. Consistent with visual discourse analysis, there is no single prescriptive model of what constitutes acceptable “data” and, as such, selections are dependent on my worldview and perspective. This dissertation does not address discourses, like that of multiculturalism and race, as part of interconnected systems of power and oppression (intersectionality) but remains specifically focused on discourses of gender and femininity. Largely focused on fictionalized cultural products, this work does not interview or interact with actual librarians or ask people about their readings of librarian representations.

## **Situating Myself / My Positionality**

This study is informed by my experiences as a cisgender woman, a librarian, and an educator who has spent twenty years working within North American library and information studies (LIS) culture. In the spirit of Dorothy Smith’s (1987) assertion that “we are not doing a science that can be treated in abstraction from the rest of society” (p. 9), my work is inspired by feminist scholars who have laboured to expose systems of domination and oppression so that all may benefit. Working for fifteen years as an instructor/professor in a library and information technology program has made me acutely aware of the ongoing struggles faced by library workers – of all types. I am witnessing an alarming trend in the deskilling of labour in my profession and I believe that this is, in part, informed by the historical development of the field and its ongoing status issues in broader culture.

Working with cultural products is at the core of library work so it seems natural for me to use such products as a focus of my research. I believe that language is fundamental to the formation of ideas and meaning and “where actual and possible forms of social organization...are defined and contested” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). I am also convinced that the social formations that organize what we believe, what we do, how we act, and how we think about ourselves are political in that they can be resisted. This belief is important to the shape of this study because I maintain that it is only by uncovering the discursive discourses that organize our understanding of librarianship that problematic images of librarians can be shaken loose, contested, and overturned.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlines how I analyze representations of gender and librarianship in popular cultural texts. Guided by theories of feminist poststructuralism and Rose’s (2012) visual discourse analysis methods, this chapter lays out analytical questions I use to conduct my study and offers a sample of analysis from a popular cultural text. This chapter has outlined my process for carefully selecting a dynamic range of visual-verbal materials that draw from formats that acknowledges the flow, and permeability, of media between different audiences and ages. I describe what samples for analysis I have chosen for this project and why they have been chosen. This chapter articulates how this project is organized theoretically and methodologically, and how I intended to analyze deep-seated cultural assumptions about librarianship as “women’s work”.

## Chapter 4. Gatekeeping Librarians

*"May I help you?" Lou asked with a pinch of frown.*

*"This is a library. Shhh! Quiet down!"*

*...*

*"Unless you be quiet ...and listen up too..."*

*NO PIRATES ALLOWED!" said Library Lou.*

*SQUAWK! Igor squawked with a blow-me-down glare.*

*Then Library Lou boldly added – "So there!"*

*-- Rhonda Gowler, No Pirates Allowed Said Library Lou, 2013*

### Introduction

This chapter explores images of librarians in picture books as an example of cultural texts that both adults and children interact with, serving as sites where meaning about librarianship is made. Informed by my research questions, I consider what kinds of messages about librarianship are formulated in these texts, how discourses of femininity circulate in these works, and how the representations appearing in them produce (and possibly resist) gender stereotypes.

Unlike other efforts that analyze librarians in children's materials, I explore what is (in)visible as a way of revealing discursive messages about gender framed within stories that are silly, whimsical, and fantastic. This differs from other related research by problematizing representations that may not be obviously negative (e.g. evil, mean, or unfriendly) but emphasize ways of being that reinforce assumptions about women and the work they perform. For example, Yontz's (2002) inventory of children's literature considers the increasing characterizations of librarians that are supportive, service oriented, and caring as a positive cultural development. However, the gendered assumptions that establish "good" librarians in such ways warrants further interrogation because, as Chapter 2 reveals, being supportive or caring does not necessarily mean being valued in broader culture.

Animals appear in overwhelming numbers in children's literature, with particular frequency in works for young children. According to developmental psychologist Gail Melson (2013), children's books are used to provide "'vicarious' views of nature" (p. 98) to mitigate the ongoing reduction in children's exposure to real wild animals. Serving as "adult mediated contexts" (Melson, 2013, p. 98), children's books with animal characters

“refract human experience through an animal prism” (Melson, 2013, p. 144). Contemporary children’s books about libraries and librarians are no exception, incorporating a tremendous range of creatures that serve as “stand-ins” for human children and librarians. Similar to the broader array of children’s books that incorporate animal characters, books about librarians use animals to “explore aspects of childhood experiences, such as the expression of appetites, the desire for power, and the desire to understand the world” (Hale, 2015, p. 188). Non-human creatures like giraffes, mice and bats, commonly represent children who have library/librarian encounters. Examples include *Library Mouse* (Kirk, 2007), *Bats at the Library* (Leis, 2008), and *Library Lily* (Shields, 2011). Although their ages are often ambiguous, these beasts are often portrayed as child-like, appearing impulsive, affectionate, questioning, fearful, silly, and fun-loving. For example, the bats in Brian Lies’ *Bats at the Library* (2008) joyfully frolic in a library, playing games, reading, and randomly photocopying books. These anthropomorphized animals often serve as child-surrogates, behaving in ways that readers can easily relate to but are depersonalized by their animal “otherness”. Ursula Le Guin (2004) argues that the allure of animal characters may also be embedded in a need for people, increasingly abstracted from the natural world, to connect with that world through literature. She contends that “it is that animal otherness, that strangeness, older and greater than ourselves, that we must join, or rejoin, if we want to stay sane and stay alive” (Le Guin, 2004, p. 30). Whether animals speak to a deeper biophilic need or are merely helpful constructions for building narratives for children, they are prevalent in children’s picture books.

In this chapter I analyze three English picture books<sup>11</sup> for children published between 2006 and 2016 that feature librarians as central characters. While many fictional works, including the ones previously mentioned, allude to libraries and feature non-human characters, they do not feature librarians.<sup>12</sup> To understand the gendered

---

<sup>11</sup> Picture books rarely use page numbers. As such, this dissertation will not include page numbers in in-text references. However, due to their relatively short length, locating referenced sections is not difficult.

<sup>12</sup> Additional examples include a mix of girl-animal stories like *Maisy Goes to the Library* (Cousins, 2005), *D.W.’s Library Card* (Brown, 2001), *Beatrice Doesn’t Want To* (Numeroff, 2008) and boy-animal tales like *Splat the Cat and the Late Library Book* (Scotton, 2013), and *A Library Book for Bear* by (Becker, 2014). These examples emphasize the importance of accessing books and the pleasure of reading.

construction of librarianship within the context of animal stories in picture books, I analyze three examples that highlight a female librarian in conflict with male protagonists as central characters in *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudsen (2006), *Winston the Book Wolf* by Marni McGee (2006), and *Do not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* by Julie Gassman (2016).

These works highlight rather limited imaginings of women librarians who are unpleasant because they try so hard to control who uses library spaces, highlighting a need for “good” behaviour in gendered confrontations with library patrons who are children. Whether it is a boy and his dragon or a hungry wolf, males find themselves confronting female librarians who seek to limit library entry to those who are properly socialized to be there because they can be non-disruptive. Despite appearing in-charge, the librarians in these works exercise little flexibility. Embodying stereotypical traits of masculinity in the form of impulsivity and/or insensitivity, these creatures are considered a risk to the care of library books and library order. The librarians are focused on the potential threats these beasts pose and demonstrate little interest in getting to know or understand their would-be patrons.

The librarians represent stewards of the library who oversee who/what is permitted into the library, acting much like possessive custodians or “policemen” (Attebury, 2010; Seale, 2008). In these picture book examples, these librarians are similar to one another in that they embody a kind of “respectable femininity” (Fernando & Cohen, 2013) in which they wear clothing that is conservative, yet clearly feminine (e.g. skirts and blouses) but is also modest and bland. This modest attire, spanning across all three books, can be seen suppressing forms of individual expression, appearing as forms of a “librarian uniform” that contrasts with the, often outrageous, appearances of contentious library visitors. All of these librarians appear as rational and authoritative adults who initially confront the “troublesome” male beasts with hands on hips, arms crossed and/or standing at library entrances, or sitting officiously at desks.

In addition to these visual arrangements that frame an understanding of librarianship, there is also what is *invisible*. These stories show librarian workplaces defined by illustrations featuring books and desks. These tales sentimentalize libraries through the portrayal of neatly organized library stacks (shelves), filled with colourful books, appealing children’s areas, and minimal traces of modern library technology,



including computers, monitors, printers, and self-checkout machines. Two samples even depict the library book stamp, an artifact of 20<sup>th</sup> century libraries. This dated reference to library equipment speaks more to the conception of the library in the minds of authors and adult caregivers/readers than contemporary children. This is an important reminder that although these works are written for children, they are mediated through the lens of the adult.

## Raucous Dragons

Even when library spaces include realistic references to library work, librarians continue to act in stereotypical ways. For example, *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* (2016) by Julie Gassman and illustrated by Andy Elkerton is a picture book featuring a gatekeeping woman librarian who successfully prevents a boy from bringing his pet dragon into the library. Various vignettes feature different children, white and of colour, with their blue, yellow, green, and red pet dragons. The illustrations are saturated with the bright and bold use of colour. Providing a “thoughtfully diverse cast” (Kirkus, 2016, para. 1), the illustrations present a somewhat varied range of characters, including a boy in a wheelchair. While there is only one visual depiction of a female dragon, differentiated from others by its long eyelashes, the librarian’s comments reference both male and female dragons through the use of “he” and “she” pronouns. The boy, featured as the main protagonist, appears to be around the age of a six or seven-year old and has a male dragon companion.<sup>13</sup> The incorporation of people of different race, ability, age, and gender are used in the formation of playful scenes that illustrate the reasons why a dragon is an impossible creature for a library.

As a person of colour, the librarian in this book offers a greater consideration of racial diversity but her stereotypically conservative attire does little to interrupt normative discourses of femininity in librarianship. Figure 4, below, presents the double page spread of the boy and the librarian’s initial encounter. Unlike the relaxed and more

---

<sup>13</sup> There is one instance where the boy-protagonist’s dragon was referred to as a “her”. Correspondence with the author confirms that this is a printing error and the intended gender is intended to be male (J. Gassman, personal communication, August 2, 2017).

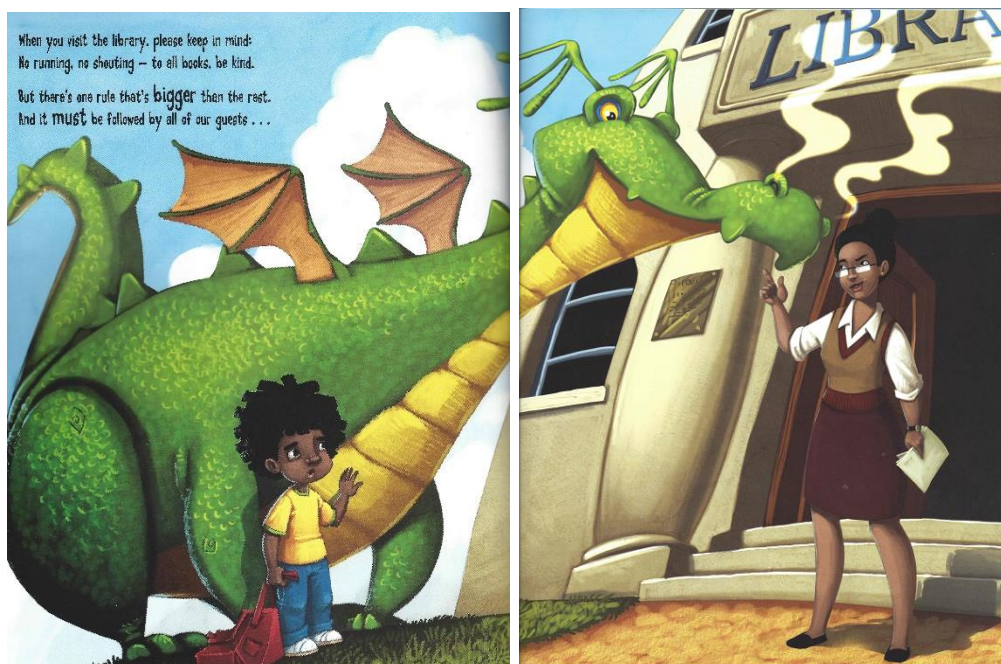


Figure 4: Librarian challenging a boy's dragon from entering the library. From *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* by Julie Gassman and illustrated by Andy Elkerton (2016).

colourful garb of other library visitors, the librarian dresses in shades of brown, wearing a sweater vest, knee-length skirt and unremarkable black shoes. Lacking luster, the librarian's garb plays into other well-circulated images of the old-maid/no-fun/spinster librarian. Indeed, her style of dress and manner actually reinforces other images of white librarian women. In the opening scene of the book, the librarian stands at the foot of the library steps, legs set in a challenging stance as she asserts her power as gatekeeper. Looking over the top of her glasses, she points an admonishing finger at the tame and rather goofy-looking dragon as she denies him entry. The little boy, another person of colour, stands with one hand on his companion, a dragon, looking up at the stern image of the librarian. His look bears an innocent but almost anxious expression, with his mouth open and his eyes wide. This innocence is subtly intensified in the way he holds the strap of his book bag, dragging the bag like a security blanket. His vulnerability arouses reader sympathy in the presence of the stern-faced librarian. Ironically, the boy's goofy-looking dragon, denaturalized from its roots as a fierce mythological beast, is not the boy's source of anxiety. It is the librarian. Looking at the dragon but speaking with authority to the boy she says:

When you visit the library, please keep in mind:  
No running, no shouting – to all books be kind.

But there's one rule that bigger than the rest.  
And it must be followed by all of our guests...  
DO NOT BRING YOUR DRAGON TO THE LIBRARY. (Gassman, 2016)

Unwanted by the librarian, the dragon, a symbol of wildness and ferocity, serves as Other who risks disrupting order and social civility as a non-human. The theme of belonging and being an appropriate library patron is explored through this dragon surrogate. Although appearing friendly and benign, the dragon is judged by what it is and it is the boy who must confront the sentry-like librarian on behalf of his friend. This librarian conveys messages that access to libraries is difficult and is predicated in meeting certain criteria that is associated with white middle-class values of social acceptability.

Paradoxically, even though the book illustrates a diverse range of patrons in the library, the idea of inclusivity is undermined by the librarian's refusal to admit dragons. The library is not, in fact, open to all. Although they appear friendly, dragons are also over-enthusiastic, clumsy, and impulsive. Their inability to regulate these behaviours makes them unacceptable guests in the eye of the librarian, sending a conflicting message about difference. People of varied appearances can use the library but their behaviour must conform to the librarian's expectations. For example, eyes closed in apparent rapture, a dragon sweeps people and objects off the ground as it moves to music in a story time. However, the dragon's joy is completely discounted because it threatens the order of the library, constructing a message that pleasure is secondary to order and it must be contained. The dragons' exuberance and enthusiasm for books fails to satisfy the librarian who judges them to "have no grace," and, by taking up too much room, are "rude beast[s]." The dragons are visually depicted as creating chaos out of their innocent enthusiasm for being in the library. Messages of acceptance are limited to visual difference, making inclusivity something that is only "skin deep". The dragons highlight the limits of the librarian as a figure who can support literacy and information access. The librarian is unable (and/or unwilling) to address difference, becoming, instead, just another barrier.

The librarian only appears in this particular work as someone who must protect the library collection (of books) from harm. This is similar to Radford and Radford's (1997) claim that many representations of libraries and librarians reinforce notions that "the *ideal library* is one that is never used or disrupted" (p. 256). While seemingly

interested in helping the young boy, the librarian is unwilling/unable to accommodate the dragon. “A dragon in the library? It simply can’t be.” Despite her expressed sympathy for the dragon, admitting that just because it is a dragon, it should not “miss the library treasures” she firmly blocks its access. Although she has the power to deny library entry, she is powerless to rearrange the rules. Instead, she suggests the young boy help his fiery friend himself. This inability to adjust the rules for her visitor brings forth aspects of librarianship’s gendered past where loyalty/devotion to the work was believed to impede women librarians’ means of adapting to change.

The librarian’s “solution” for the boy is to suggest that the boy obtain a library card so that he can take books out on behalf of his dragon, “if you use your card often, you will soon see...That you never have to bring your dragon to the library.” In addition to the word “never” being emphasized, the phrase indicates that avoiding the library is somehow a *good* thing for the dragon and the boy. This is a coercive solution, requiring the young boy to act as a library patron-surrogate for his fire-breathing companion. The boy must sacrifice his own enjoyment of the library because he is not allowed to bring his companion. While the librarian cares about helping the boy, she is disinterested in the needs of the dragon, suggesting that librarians can only accept “so much” difference. This diminishes the role of the librarian as anything more than a gatekeeper who is interested in maintaining order at the expense of creating more inclusive spaces or helping the dragon in library socialization. Instead, the book ends with all of the children and their dragons sitting outside of the library, reading happily. Figure 5, appearing below, shows how the library looms in the background with the ironic sign, “Honalee Free Library”; free only to some.



Figure 5: Dragons are not permitted entry into the library so children must read with their dragons outside. From *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* by Julie Gassman and illustrated by Andy Elkerton (2016).

The dragons in this tale serve as important proxies for difficult library patrons, allowing the author to use these tame, humorous, and volatile creatures to demarcate the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable “library” behaviour. The book is filled with comical “what if” scenarios where dragons get so excited they disrupt the natural order of the library by accidentally setting fire to books, crowding out children during story time, and knocking over shelves. The librarian judges their child-like and uncivilized behaviour as something that cannot be tamed. Determining who/what should have access to the library is part of a “gatekeeping” activity that librarians and LIS scholars (Bell, 2009; Lutz, 2005; Radford & Radford, 2001; Squires, 2014) suggest is tied to the library practice of managing resources and deciding what information is made accessible to society. In the case of *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* (Gassman, 2016), determining who/what may participate in library activities is clearly established as the librarian’s central role. This role asserts her as an enforcer of values that are rooted

in discourses of acceptability. Despite the presence of diverse-looking characters, the suggestion of inclusiveness is compromised by the overarching theme that dragons, as figures who can violate orderliness, even if unintentional, have no place in a library – a library that is firmly embedded in white middle-class history. Ironically, dragons are typically associated with power and their companionship with the children in the story could have an empowering effect on young readers. However, this is subverted by the boy's failure to convince the librarian to help him. Behind the librarian's soft smile and referring to the little boy as her "kind friend", she is immovable.

## **Hungry Wolf**

The gatekeeping librarian stereotype surfaces in another contemporary work, *Winston the Book Wolf* (2006), written by Marni McGee and illustrated by Ian Beck. This fractured version of *Little Red Riding Hood* uses fairy tale tropes to construct and subvert messages about rules and obedience (Cahill, 2010). Unwanted, the wolf devises a scheme to gain access to the library and fools the grandmotherly librarian by changing his identity, including his apparent gender, in a way that is so successful that he is able to take an active role in library work by becoming a storyteller.

Hungry for words, Winston the Wolf voraciously eats the pages of books. To satisfy his appetite, he purposefully marches to the library where he immediately encounters a sign that says "No Wolves Allowed," as seen in Figure 6.



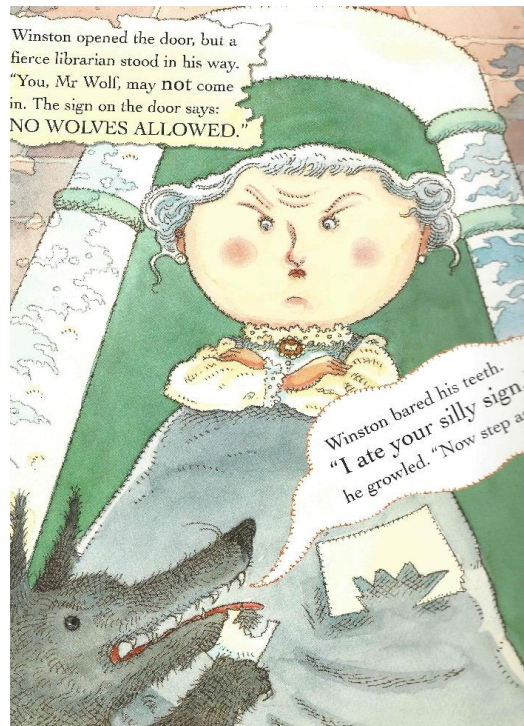


Figure 6: The librarian denies wolf entry to the library From *Winston the Book Wolf* by Marni McGee and illustrated by Ian Beck (2006).

Undeterred, Winston eats the sign and confronts a grey-haired librarian who stands, arms crossed, in the doorway of the library. This vignette captures the archetypical image of the imposing gatekeeping librarian, revealing a tight-lipped, scowling, middle-aged woman whose body fills the library entrance as she looms over Winston stating, “You, Mr. Wolf, may not come in. The sign on the door says NO WOLVES ALLOWED.” Holding up a chewed piece of paper and displaying his sharp teeth, Winston petulantly responds with a growl, “I ate your silly sign...Now step aside.” However, the scene’s low-point perspective emphasizes the librarian’s physical dominance over Winston and ultimately undermines his attempt to challenge her with his wolfish ferocity

Winston becomes a surrogate for the child, situated before the librarian in a manner that is similar to the experience of every small child who must gaze upwards towards much larger adults. Capturing the relations of power between adult and child, this scene illustrates how “animal characters are the raw material” (Melson, 2009, p. 151) that assist children in constructing a sense of self and serve to “project our deepest fears, wishes, and conflicts” (Melson, 2009, p. 145). As the Other, Winston relies on an adult for his participation in the world and, specifically, access to the social and civil space of a library.

The wolf, an animal frequently depicted as cagey, ferocious, and crafty, is also wild (Mitts-Smith, 2010). Similar to many other wolf images in children's stories, Winston is depicted with an elongated snout that emphasizes his sharp teeth and prominent tongue. His mouth renders a "visible manifestation of his predatory nature, synonymous with danger.... reminding us of his primary intention" (Mitts-Smith, 2010, p. 27) – to eat. Winston is unmistakably male, wearing a red vest and blue pants and referred to in the text as he/him. When he confronts the librarian at the door, his human attire is not visible and his tenuous hold on human civility slips away, exposing his true wild-beast nature. Standing between Winston and the library, this librarian challenges Winston's lack of domesticity and his insatiable desire to eat words and pages from books by denying him entry to the library. The librarian determines that Winston, a wild beast, has no place in a library.

Befriended by an onlooker, a girl with a red hooded jacket named Rosie, Winston is coached on how to devour books with his eyes rather than his teeth. This process has a kind of civilizing effect on Winston, taming his wildness by socializing him to the "appropriate" use of books. This suggests that females (the librarian and Rosie) can tame masculinity. However, even as he becomes civilized, his animal identity continues to be a barrier as Rosie points out: "You know they will bar the door. The rule says, NO WOLVES ALLOWED! You know that means you." In keeping with the wolf image of a schemer, Rosie's declaration inspires Winston to find a way to sneak into the library so that he can consume books (now with his eyes rather than his teeth). Using Rosie's grandmother's clothes, he returns to the library disguised as an old lady. Similar to other wolf stories, Winston's scheme plays "upon the absurdity of cross-species, as well as cross-gender dressing" (Mitts-Smith, 2010, p. 33), creating a "caricature of the feminine" (Mitts-Smith, 2010, p. 33). This distortion of femininity extends beyond the feminine, generally, to mock the domineering librarian whom he ultimately deceives. His feminine disguise suggests that "the female and the feminine are less threatening, gentler, weaker and perhaps even more civilized than the male and the masculine" (Mitts-Smith, 2010, p. 34). Rosie assists Winston in fooling the grey-haired librarian into believing Winston is "Granny Winston" who will gladly "read at Story Time." This gendered arrangement, in which a girl vouches for the male wolf, exposes an ironic assumption that, by virtue of being a girl and a human, Rosie is inherently trustworthy. Winston needs a girl to help "conquer" the librarian.



In the scene where this deception plays out, the librarian sits behind a desk that is topped with a prominent book stamp, a small stack of books, and library cards. The prominent use of the library stamp recirculates antiquated imagery about librarians' "tools of the trade" and suggests notions of librarianship are stuck in time. Contemporary children are unlikely to relate to the stamp. There are hints that even the library itself is a relic of the past, when Winston "breaths in the musty-dusty smell of books." Traditional tools like the book stamp represent order and control that the librarian uses to exert her authority. However, her gullibility and her irrelevance to modern life destabilize her authority. Being easily conned by Rosie and the wolf and allowing a complete stranger to work as a story teller, highlights the librarian's lack of professional judgement and simplifies messages about what it "takes" to do librarian work.

By dressing as a woman, and seen in the Figure 7, Winston earns the trust of the librarian to gain library entry and secures himself a respectable place in the library.



Figure 7 : The wolf, now known as "Granny Winston" becomes the Story Lady. From *Winston the Book Wolf* by Marni McGee and illustrated by Ian Beck (2006).

The wolf's disguise, both comical and unconvincing, is a kind of inside joke between the author and the implied reader. In one of the final scenes of the book, Winston sits in a wingback chair before a group of children, reading *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee,

2006). He is dressed in a frilly rose-covered dress, round glasses, high heeled shoes and large brimmed hat that is adorned in roses. A sign sits at the base of the chair that says “the story lady” and the librarian, sitting at the back, watches with a pleased look, hands folded in her lap over a book – a reminder of her strong connection to libraries-as-book-collections. By presenting himself as another matronly woman, the wolf’s ability to gain legitimacy as a “story lady” reifies assumptions that library work requires neither skill nor education. Winston’s transformation from a self-centred, impertinent, and, even, violent creature to “the Story Lady”, suggests that service work is how one becomes “acceptable”. Having transformed his gender, this scene also sends messages about library work being something that only women perform.

Unable to act as himself, the wolf must temper his aggression and his masculinity to become something familiar to the librarian and the children he reads to; something feminine and nurturing. Denied entry as a wolf who openly expresses impulsivity as a male (reinforced by his red vest and blue pants), Winston must alter his gendered appearance to become something/one that is more library-appropriate; something/one who more closely resembles the librarian. Winston learns to control and redirect his appetite in a manner that conveys important meaning around the kinds of behaviours and patrons that are permissible in a library. Although the librarian, serving as the library steward and gatekeeper, has the power to grant and deny library entry, it is not difficult to fool her and, in so doing, undermine her power. Indeed, Winston’s successful deception is celebrated as another joke as he reads his own book (*Winston the Book Wolf*) in his loose disguise.

The librarian’s image is important in establishing meaning around who is acceptable to work in a library. In this modern reimagining of a fairy tale, *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006) reifies notions that librarians are older, bossy women who are primarily concerned about controlling access to library spaces and collections as gatekeepers. Librarians are constructed as rather flat, doing little more than stamping books, monitoring library space, and reading books to children. Unable to be himself, the male wolf must be “Granny Winston”. The wolf, an animal that is often characterized as ferocious and crafty, is not only made a more “appropriate” library user by learning to read and masking his masculinity but he can then also be a library *worker*. The story also reifies reading and books as a feminine behaviour. As his friend and ally, Rosie is an as an important modifier for Winston. By showing him how to be a good library

patron, teaching him to read and channel his beastly inclinations, Rosie helps Winston suppress his nature, buttressing traditional and discursive messages about library behaviour as both a patron and as a worker. The wolf, an animal often characterized as male, hungry and clever, uses his cunning, with the help of an equally astute girl, to deceive a librarian and insert himself into a seemingly vital role as a children's storyteller, without any training or education. Similar to *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* (Gassman, 2016), *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006) constructs libraries as spaces unfriendly to boys and Others (often disguised as animals) where librarians determine who may enter and who may participate in library activities, as regulatory figures. Conforming to library rules takes precedence over issues of difference, silencing possibilities for other imaginings of libraries and librarians, including their gender.

## Helpful but Loud

This pattern is, to some extent, repeated in another recent picture book, *Library Lion* written by Michell Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (2009). Adorned with warm and highly detailed water colour illustrations, *The New York Times* bestselling picture book, *Library Lion*, features a fully grown maned lion that discovers that so long as he follows the rules, he is welcome to visit the public library. Unlike the other texts analyzed in this chapter, this work offers a more detailed and expansive sense of a public library by including scenes filled with books, furniture, people of different ages and colour, library stacks, and, even, seating areas with antiquated computers. Unlike the lion, who gives children rides and offers himself as a cushion, the two key library staff, Miss Merriweather and Mr. McBee, are generally not shown interacting with the public when they perform their work. Rather, they are mostly shown sitting at desks or interacting with one another, discussing the application of library rules, working with papers, or shelving. The lion's child-like manner allies him with the other children and as the narrative follows his helpful and endearing activities, the reader is encouraged to also take on his perspective. The lion becomes a kind of bridge between the world of the adults and the children. By helping the library staff perform their work (like shelving and dusting), the lion makes library work less abstract, performing tasks that, when performed by the lion, seem fun and interesting. Similar to the messages in *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006), library work is something that even a beast can easily perform.

Other meanings are also recycled in this work, including references to libraries of the past. In the opening scene, Mr. McBee is leaning over a tall circulation desk stamping a little girl's books. Despite the presence of a computer monitor and barcode scanner, the use of the book stamp demonstrates a persistent allusion to library tools of the past. Library work continues to be linked to a prevailing narrative centring on the care and management of books. However, unlike the other texts in this analysis, the illustrations are particularly specific and informative, providing detailed interior views of the library, revealing a children's area, library stacks, seating areas with computers populated with grown-ups, and, even, Mr. McBee pushing a book cart. These depictions allude to wider library activities but remain in the backdrop as unexplored/unexposed possibilities. What the grown-ups are doing at the library tables in the background, for instance, is inconsequential to the excitement that circulates around the lion and his interactions with the library staff and children.

Unlike the other works examined here, it is a male library employee, Mr. McBee, who initially challenges the lion. In addition to his "bookish" appearance (because reading is assumed to be "a girly kind of thing" (Nodelman, 2002, p. 12)), Mr. McBee's feminization is fueled by his own fixation on rules. Adorned in a cardigan, bow tie, and glasses, Mr. McBee runs to the head librarian, Miss Merriweather, to report the presence of the lion because "she was very particular about rule breaking" (Knudsen, 2006). Rules, particularly being quiet, are important to Mr. McBee, and when the lion roars, Mr. McBee gasps, "You're not being quiet! ...You're breaking the rules!" (Knudsen, 2006). Library rules, administered by the head librarian, organize more than the collection; they determine who/what can enter the library, rationalizing even the irrational (i.e. a lion in a library) so completely that library visitors do not respond to the lion with fear, only confusion because "there weren't any rules about lions in the library" (Knudsen, 2006).

The lion struggles to contain his wildness and roars loudly in disappointment when story hour ends. Highlighted in the scene shown in Figure 8 and following this uncivil display, the librarian, who stands taller than everyone, looks sternly before the shame-faced lion. Here, the visual-verbal discourses of the authority of humans over



Figure 8: Miss Merriweather confronts the Lion. From *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (2006).

animals and librarians over children are reinforced. Similar to Winston in *Winston the Book Wolf* (Mcgee, 2006), it is a female librarian who confronts a wild male beast to maintain library orderliness, to educate the animal into civility. This “beast” however, is tame and child-like, impulsive but ultimately deferential to authority. Encouraging the reader to take on the lion’s perspective, this scene calls attention to the struggle to “fit in” to the library. The lion’s desires are similar to those of the children it is surrounded by, and it seeks inclusion and participation. Positioned among the children, the lion appears as one of them. While gazing up at the displeased librarian, two little girls touch the lion protectively, with one defensively embracing the lion and the other with her hand possessively on its body. Other children stand around the librarian, also watching expectantly. The affectionate positioning of the two little girls as they touch the lion generates reader sympathy for the lion. In this moment, the children are the lion’s allies, wielding their affection in a manner that positions the librarian as enemy of childishness. The little girl makes a case for the lion asking, “If he promises to be quiet, can he come back for story hour tomorrow?” Girls are peacemakers. Despite breaking the silence and the rules with his roar, the librarian’s authority is challenged based on an appeal to her feelings because she is, ultimately, a loving woman.

Although the perspective in this scene clearly emphasizes Miss Merriweather's authority, over both the children and the lion, this power is mitigated by the little girl who successfully convinces the librarian to grant the lion a second chance. Just as Rosie helps Winston in *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006), this little girl's advocacy hints at underlying assumptions that girls are more trustworthy/legitimate library patrons than boys. Contrary to girls, boys are stereotyped to dislike reading, seeing it as something meant for girls (Brown, Lamb, & Tappan, 2009). When a boy makes an endearing plea for a beastly friend as seen in *Do Not Bring Your Dragon to the Library* (Gassman, 2016), he is unsuccessful. These seemingly subtle exchanges with librarians convey important ideas about librarians, the way they respond to difference, and whose voice is heard.

Although lions are frequently characterized as stately and proud, this lion is more like child, serving as the "animal body" to communicate human values to children, including those relating to the importance of becoming better socialized and "learning to read (Nodelman, 2002). For example, demonstrating he can follow rules, the lion settles into the library, attending story times and even helping in library activities like dusting, shelving, and licking "all the envelopes for the overdue notices" (Knudsen, 2006). He becomes an acceptable presence in the library because he can demonstrate a willingness to be helpful and follow rules. Similar to Winston in *Winston the Book Wolf* (Mcgee, 2006), the lion is tamed by the librarian, learning to abide by her rules and help with her work. This aspect of the lion's domestication is imbued with messages about the importance of being helpful, responsible, and respectful towards books. Rules are understood to be so important that when the lion breaches the "no roaring" rule to call for help, it voluntarily and unquestioningly leaves the library in self-banishment.

Following the lion's self-imposed expulsion, the narrative continues to unfold in a way that illustrates the gendered spaces that contain these characters. Miss Merriweather is unable to take charge of the situation despite the fact that she is in-charge, and she ineffectually peers sadly out her office window. Reverting to normative feminine behaviour, Miss Merriweather sacrifices her own happiness so that the rules are upheld. Although Mr. McBee works within the feminine space of the library, under Miss Merriweather's authority, it is only Mr. McBee who appears to have sufficient agency to act. Observing her despondency, Mr. McBee takes control of the matter and rescues the librarian-lion relationship. He leaves the library, seeks out the lion, and

encourages it to return by suggesting that the lion's rule infraction is forgivable because he had tried to help a friend in need. Mr. McBee becomes a kind of quiet hero who saves the despondent Miss Merriweather from her own powerlessness.

Figure 9 is a scene that reveals how Miss Merriweather's authority is further subverted. When the lion finally returns to the library, she abandons her business-like demeanour, throwing herself into an affectionate embrace with the lion. She is surrounded by children and adult onlookers, including Mr. McBee, who, interestingly, observes the scene from a distance with his hands behind his back. He retains his self-possession while Miss Merriweather sheds her usual professional "control" in this intimate and caring display of friendship, because, as the accompanying text indicates, "sometimes there was a good reason to break the rules" (Knudsen, 2009). Despite her initially distant demeanour and concern for rule-following, the lion remediates Miss Merriweather and she is revealed to ultimately be just another caring woman.

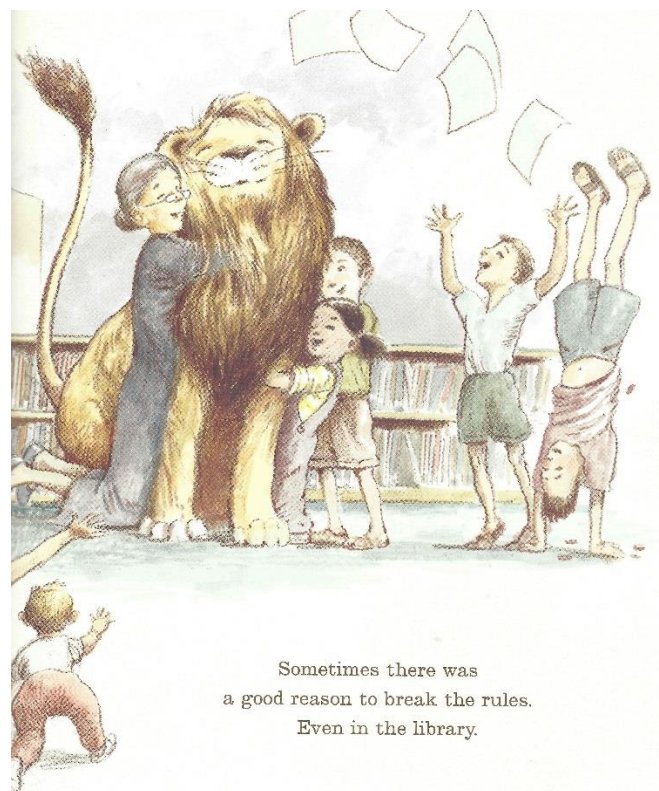


Figure 9: Miss Merriweather reunited with the Library Lion. From *Library Lion* by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (2006).

## Summary

All of these animal-confronting librarians in these modern picture books depict the librarian in very similar ways. Librarians are women who continue to appear as matronly and bland middle-aged women whose work is neither sophisticated nor particularly helpful. Concerned with maintaining order by vetting those who enter the library, librarians serve as gatekeepers who, in the case of *Library Lion* (Knudsen, 2009) and *Winston the Book Wolf* (McGee, 2006), can be cajoled or fooled into admitting the unwanted. They are unwanted because these beasts represent disorderliness, not malice. They are threatening because they have not been socialized to be in the library, much like young children who must learn the “rules” of library etiquette. All of these works illustrate gendered relationships between librarians and beasts. Like stereotypical boys, these creatures are noisy and messy, making them inappropriate library patrons. It is the librarian and her rule-abiding ways who is to blame for excluding boys/beasts from the library. Girls help beasts gain permission to be in libraries; boys do not. These samples illustrate, quite powerfully, how librarian images sustain assumptions that librarians are guardians of books and library spaces who, obsessed with maintaining order and upholding rules, are willing to dismiss creatures because they are assumed to pose a risk to the orderliness of libraries. Discursive discourses of femininity continue to be normalized in the way librarians look and in the way their authority is constrained by their caring nature, their lack of agency, and/or their intolerance for “boy” behaviours. In fact, these librarians are hostile towards rowdy masculinities represented through the animal. Through the adult-mediated context of picture books, parents and other caregivers use picture books to familiarize children with notions about what libraries are like and who work within them (Dockett, Perry, & Whitton, 2010). The samples used in this analysis illustrate the powerful and often veiled ways text and image work in concert to produce meanings that shape notions of what librarianship is “about” in modern North American culture. Chapter 5 considers the meaning behind the appearance of male librarian representations by turning to two specific novels for older children that feature evil librarians who seek to conquer the world.



## Chapter 5. Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians

*The library is the worst group of people ever assembled in history. They're mean, conniving, rude, and extremely well read, which makes them very dangerous"*

—Leslie, *Parks and Recreation*, 2011

### Introduction

As I discussed in Chapter 4, stereotypical representations of women librarians surface in popular texts for young children. In this chapter, I specifically focus on representations of men librarians appearing in works for older children. Michelle Peresie and Linda Alexander (2005) and Elaine Yontz's (2002) works underscore the limited movement in children's literature towards broader, more inclusive images of those who can participate in librarianship, including men. Questioning this lack of diverse representations of librarians, Jenny Samuelsson (2012) argues "that the profession of librarian leaves boys [out] cold and doesn't do much more for girls" (p. 22) making it necessary to interrogate and offer alternatives to prevailing stereotypes to reshape cultural norms so "children have the opportunity to become what they want to be" (p. 22). Although the stereotypes of librarians are not the same for men and women, gender is implicated in all of their discursive constructions.

Fiction for older readers and teens is another important site for theorizing the construction of librarianship as a profession (Heylman, 1975; Kitchen, 2000; Maynard & McKenna, 2005; Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Yontz, 2002). Contrary to images of authoritarian and gatekeeping librarians in children's picture books, some librarians appearing in works for older children and teens take an interesting turn, becoming much more peculiar. For example, Jarrett Krosoczka's (2009) *Lunch Lady and the League of Librarians*, Eoin Colfer's (2004) *The Legend of Spud Murphy*, and Mr. Ambrose in the television animation series *Bob's Burgers* (Bouchard, 2011) present librarians who behave oddly and even, in the case of the *Lunch Lady*, villainous. Unlike works for younger children, messages about controlling, feminine/motherly librarians are replaced with more bizarre characters, contorted by their occupation to be threatening (as in *The Legend of Spud Murphy*), evil (*Lunch Lady and the League of Librarians*), or eccentric like Mr. Ambrose in *Bob's Burgers*. The librarian image is greatly complicated in works

for these older audiences but they continue to speak to anxieties about librarians and their work as professionals that limit imaginings of who can use libraries but also who can participate in the profession.

I analyze two popular novels, the middle grade novel *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians*, written by Brandon Sanderson and illustrated by Hayley Lazo (2007)<sup>14</sup> and the young adult novel *Evil Librarian* (2014) by Michelle Knudsen. I focus specifically on how male librarians that appear in both of these contemporary works reflect and, possibly, interrupt other imaginings of librarianship as women's work. Both novels incorporate male librarians as significant characters in their narratives, providing rich sources for visual-verbal analysis. In both works, the male librarians operate as evil antagonists whose goals are embedded in world domination and personal power (Simone, 2015).

## Villainous Rulers

*Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) is a children's fantasy novel written from the perspective of Alcatraz Smedry, a lonely, accident-prone, "troubled" child, who receives a mysterious package (a bag of sand) on his thirteenth birthday. This package unleashes an incredibly fast-paced adventure in which Alcatraz discovers that he possesses a very powerful talent (breaking things), and that he also belongs to a lineage of powerful Oculators led by his paternal grandfather. "Evil Librarians" rule the world in this novel by using misinformation to control the Hushlands (the world as seen by the reader). Libraries exist to entice people so that they willingly expose themselves to misinformation that is carefully constructed to protect the true identity of librarians as members of a powerful cult. His veil of ignorance lifted, Alcatraz, somewhat arrogantly, hopes to "anchor you in reality" (Sanderson, 2007, p. 58) through this book's revelations about the "real world." Librarians seek to control the people of the world through misinformation and are willing to kill and torture those who stand in their

---

<sup>14</sup> 2012 Sunshine State Young Readers Award Nominee (Florida, US), 2012 Nēnē Award Nominee (Hawai'i), 2010 Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award Nominee, 2007 Whitney Awards. In 2010 it was chosen to be the Langley Book of the Year, a text chosen annually by librarians and educators. Global sales for the *Alcatraz vs. the Evil Librarians* series is around 250,000 copies (J. Blime, personal communication, December 5, 2016). There are currently five books in the *Alcatraz* series.

way. The male librarians that Alcatraz meets in the novel are villains. They are bullies, liars, and magicians who wield magical instruments and talents for the purpose of world domination and control. *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) recycles gendered assumptions about librarians and library work, particularly through the characterizations of male librarian Radrian Blackburn and his thugs.

Despite the premise that librarians in the novel, men and women, are powerful gatekeepers, their actual power flows through a gendered hierarchical structure. The power that they wield through their nefarious activities is carefully controlled through the cult's gendered internal organization, one that mirrors the North American library profession itself and the pattern of placing men in senior administrative positions (DeLong, 2013; Harris, 1992; Ingles, et al., 2005; Ivy, 1985; Voelck, 2003). Despite the fact that eighty per cent of Canadian library workers are women "men are still more likely to become senior administrators" (Ingles, et al., 2005, p. 48). Kathleen DeLong (2013) suggests that "the pace of change and acceptance of women in leadership roles continues to be slow, perhaps even slackening" (p. 69). Radrian Blackburn's image (Figure 10) as librarian-tyrant reifies messages that men, particularly in librarianship, remain in charge.

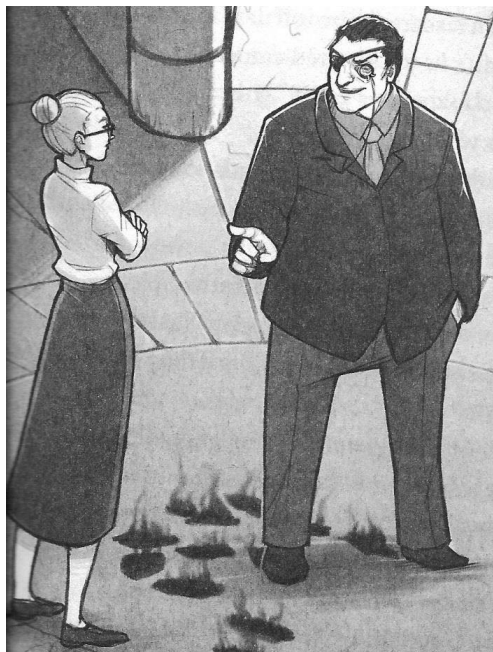


Figure 10: Dark Oculator, Radrian Blackburn talking with Ms. Fletcher (p. 257). From *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* by Brandon Sanderson, illustrations by Hayley Lazo (2007).

Radrian Blackburn's role as leader re-inscribes Heidi Blackburn's (2015a) assessment that "both the public and the [library] profession expect men will have administrative roles in libraries" (p. 89). The teachings of the "The Scrivener", also known as Biblioden, instruct librarians to contain and control information and the world's magical realities to ensure that his unifying vision of order is maintained and magic remains hidden from the general populace. Among his librarian followers are a number of librarian factions. Radrian Blackburn, leader of the Dark Oculator faction is likened to a super librarian. His authority as the local leader is derived from his access to powerful magic. Blackburn uses male librarian "thugs" as guards and henchmen who carry out the grisly work of hunting down and capturing/killing librarian resisters.

Vaguely referred to as women, other anonymous librarians work with the public behind "checkout counters". Ms. Fletcher, disguised earlier in the novel as Alcatraz's social worker, is the only clearly illustrated female librarian in the novel and she serves Blackburn as a librarian operative who coordinates activities to advance Blackburn's interests. Both the guards and Ms. Fletcher are accountable to Blackburn, operating under his edicts for control. Ironically, while Ms. Fletcher uses her skills to ensure that the world conforms to The Scrivener's mandate, she becomes a conforming subject. She must contain her personal desires and interests (she is later revealed to be Alcatraz's mother, for example) to serve her male boss. These depictions of Ms. Fletcher, Blackburn, and the library thugs are sites where hegemonic masculinity is represented in relation to other masculinities and femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This is made "visible" through both Alcatraz's descriptions throughout and Lazo's black and white illustrations.

The novel's visual depictions work with the text to establish meaning in the characters. For example, Lazo's illustrations reveal an orientation towards librarians (and other characters) to be rather nondescript white people. All of the librarians wear eyeglasses (these also serve as magical aids for the Oculators). This provides a key marker of the librarian "uniform," making the evil librarians more easily identifiable in the illustrations. These figures show little individuality or uniqueness; however, a delineation exists that marks the different roles of men and women librarians. In particular, aside from Blackburn, male librarians appear as "thugs" or guards that protect the library; Ms. Fletcher, the only fully characterized female librarian, interfaces with the unsuspecting public.

The strong visual messages in Lazo's drawings also emphasize Blackburn's physical and supernatural strengths, sustaining notions of hegemonic masculinity. These depictions ensure that Blackburn is understood to be a man of power. Lazo presents Blackburn as a large cisgender male who wears a Western-style suit that reinforces his role as a powerful leader. Alcatraz describes Blackburn as "a hefty man in a dark business suit with a black shirt and red power tie" (Sanderson, 2007, p. 155). Resembling the mountain he is named for, Blackburn's physical size and clothing reinforce his status as librarian "in charge". Further, his large and imposing figure parallels the library itself as something that is far larger and threatening than its public façade. Radford and Radford (2001) argue that library buildings embody important messages by appearing as "overbearing and overwhelming" (p. 309) places and Blackburn embodies this in his equally formidable and domineering bearing as leader. His brutality and ambition are symbolized by the eye-patch he wears, having cut out one of his eyes to enhance his magical powers. Blackburn is ruthlessly willing to self-mutilate, "they say he put out his own eye to increase the power focused through his single remaining one" (Sanderson, 2007, p. 155). This deformity symbolizes a kind of warping of the soul (Donnelly, 2016) that establishes Blackburn as someone deviant and frightening. Grandpa Smedry acknowledges that Blackburn is willing to torture and to kill Alcatraz and his support team so that he can amass knowledge to "conquer the rest of the Free Kingdoms" (Sanderson, 2007, p. 261).

Deep in conversation with Ms. Fletcher, the illustration featured in Figure 10 exposes Blackburn's powerful and masculine character. Confronted by Ms. Fletcher, Blackburn's bearing is confident and in control, smiling with one hand comfortably in his pocket, the other hand pointing at Ms. Fletcher as she stands before him, her arms crossed in resistance. His role calls on masculinized understandings of power and authority that do not offer more nuanced views of the role of male librarians or of library organization. Blackburn's image supports male librarian stereotypes who serve as "an authoritative, masculine figure to act as a gatekeeper...and to conquer irrationality" (Mirza & Seale, 2011, p. 145) and champion the male librarian as administrator, leader, and other roles that are perceived to be associated with masculine duties (Gordon, 2004; Record & Green, 2008). While his image challenges other male librarian representations, including those that depict them as lacking intellectual rigor, effeminate, socially awkward, etc. (Blackwell, 2015; Carmichael, 1992, 1995; Dickson, 2002),

Blackburn's character does little to shake loose shallow and gendered assumptions about librarians and the work they perform.

Both image and text illustrate how Ms. Fletcher downplays her own femininity (in her dress and emotional control) and is able to confidently challenge Blackburn in conversation. Blackburn's rule is made clear when he expresses his displeasure with Ms. Fletcher for allowing Alcatraz to slip through his grasp, "when my people are sloppy, it makes *me* look incompetent. I'm not very fond of that." Blackburn and Ms. Fletcher's characters reassert discursive and dominant gendered assumptions about the role of men librarians. Blackburn's relationship with Ms. Fletcher makes visible the way gendered roles are constructed in children's narratives and, more specifically narratives about contemporary librarians.

*Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) relies on the "gay and/or effeminate" (Carmichael, 1992) male librarian stereotype through librarian "thugs" who carry out the Dark Oculator's orders. Figure 11 provides readers with Hayley Lazo's illustration of one such thug. These male librarian guards, who are extremely

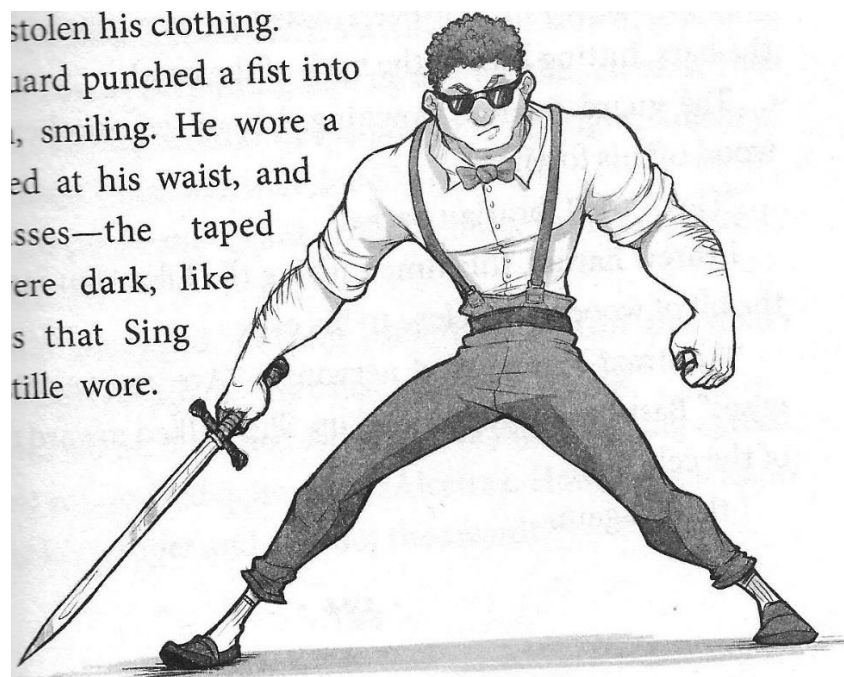


Figure 11: Librarian Guard (p. 193). From *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* by Brandon Sanderson, illustrations by Hayley Lazo (2007).

muscled, sport short hair, wear pants, suspenders, along with pink shirts and bow ties. Trapped in a cell, Alcatraz observes that one of the male librarian guards “wore the clothing one might have expected of a Librarian – unfashionable suspenders pulled tight over a buttoned pink shirt, matched by a slightly darker pink bow tie. His glasses even had a bit of tape on them” (Sanderson, 2007, p. 193). Alcatraz goes on to admit that it was only the guard’s size that deviated from what he expected of a librarian dungeon guard. While these librarian “thugs” are described as large and muscular; “It was like a bodybuilder supersoldier had beaten up an unfortunate nerd and – for some inconceivable reason – stolen his clothing” (Sanderson, 2007, p. 193), their physical toughness is undercut by their tight pink and nerdy clothing. When Alcatraz admits that he expects the librarian guard to wear pink, he speaks to the prevailing assumption that male librarians are effeminate nerds. The connection between “gayness” and men in the library profession reinforces this occupation as “women’s work”. The image of the “thug” in Figure 11 is integrated into the text of the book, similar to other images peppered throughout the novel.

While the evil librarian guards and their “buffed” appearance are meant to be humorous, the use of pink is a gendered social code (Koller 2008). Librarianship has been classified as a “pink collar” profession, similar to teaching, nursing and other jobs “dominated by women, and ... considered to bring with them less social status and pay than other jobs [requiring comparable education]” (Gaines, 2014, p. 85).

As librarians, these thugs adopt a role that reflects “assumptions of the ‘appropriate’ positioning of men ... in the workplace” (Simpson, 2004, p. 363). Rather than interact with the public, these all-male, bulky thugs (described on one occasion as “beefy”) serve as guards and enforcers, protecting and physically controlling others. However, they never prove themselves to be particularly effective in this role and Alcatraz and his cohorts repeatedly escape their clutches. Simultaneously, their pink bow ties and shirts highlight the profession’s strong connection to femininity, pointing to social anxieties around “the powerful stigmas associated with ... homosexual status” (Simpson, 2004, p. 365). These anxieties are managed, in part, through homophobia, an essential component in organizing heterosexual masculinity (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). While these thugs are, on the one hand, tasked with a kind of policing/militaristic role associated with normative hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), their appearance and ineffectiveness undermine this construction of masculinity. Indeed,

their pink clothing ties directly to descriptions of librarianship as a “pink collar” profession.

In addition, the novel further reasserts male librarian stereotypes through references to nerdiness. While the “nerd” has been associated with the “know-it-all” image of librarians who are characterized as “bookish”, fussy, and controlling (Blackburn, 2015a, 2015b; Lutz, 2005; Posner, 2003; Shaffer & Casey, 2012), it is also a gendered term that frequently calls upon assumptions about masculinity. Alcatraz’s description of the evil male librarian as “nerd” supports Lori Kendall’s (2011) argument that, “most depictions continue to reinscribe the nerd as marginalized and undesirable” (p. 506). Rather than subvert or destabilize the gender order, Alcatraz’s understanding of the male librarian “de-legitimizes alternative versions of masculinity” (Kehler, 2009, p. 200). Aside from their “nerdy” look, there is no indication that these librarian thugs perform any intellectual work associated with librarianship. Their work appears to be restricted to enforcement at the behest of their librarian boss, Radrian Blackburn. James Carmichael’s (1992) study of male librarians’ professional status and stereotypes indicates that men who are not in leadership/administrative roles “are apt to be considered weak, unambitious, or inferior specimens of men.” Despite their bulky appearance, Radrian Blackburn’s effeminately dressed and rather mindless thugs do little to overturn these images. *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) is one of only a few works for young people that significantly references male librarians, expressing gendered notions about librarianship that remain problematic and limited. Analysis of this novel provides valuable insight into the ongoing struggle over what it means to be called a “librarian” and the implications this may have for youth who are in the process of formulating ideas about the world around them.

## **Demonic and Diabolical**

Appealing to an older audience, Michelle Knudsen’s (2014) young adult novel, *Evil Librarian* presents a very different imagining of the male librarian, one that is “hot”, demonic, and educated. Winning the 2015 Sid Fleischman Award for Humor, *Evil Librarian*<sup>15</sup> (2014) is a best-selling young adult genre-bending novel that combines high-

---

<sup>15</sup> Also noted in YALSA’s 2015 Best Books for Young Adults.



school romance, horror, fantasy and humour. Unlike other works examined in this study, there are no images. Concealed as a normal, if not “hot” man, Mr. Gabriel takes up residence as the new librarian in Cynthia (Cyn) Rothschild’s school. However, Cyn’s contemporary American middle-class high school existence is thrown into chaos when she discovers that the new and very attractive school librarian, Mr. Gabriel, is a demon that uses his powers to emotionally enslave her best friend, Annie and control much of the school population. Passionate about saving her friend and mysteriously unaffected by his creepy abilities, Cyn overcomes her fears to confront this villain by recruiting the help of her classmate and crush, Ryan Halsey. Mr. Gabriel’s passion for musical theatre and his desire to see the school performance of *Sweeney Todd* buys Cyn and her friends some time to find a way to vanquish this demon. The novel tamely and playfully dances around the fringe of monster erotica when this adult librarian uses his powers to coerce an under-age student to become his love-slave/consort.

On the surface, Mr. Gabriel is a familiar-looking, white middle-class male who works in a support role as a librarian at the school. Unlike the thugs in *Alcatraz*, Mr. Gabriel is a heart throb that even Cyn, alert to his creepiness, struggles with. His demonic power, including his charm and ability to tap into feminine lust can inspire “breathless words or flushed faces or shining eyes” (Knusden, 2014, p. 7) that makes him the object of teen-girl desire. Part of the horror in this novel centres on Mr. Gabriel’s concealment of his predatory monstrosity that is disturbing and titillating. The process of redrawing boundaries between the natural and the unnatural is a way of exposing discursive social constructions (Pulliam, 2014), including those relating to the meaning of librarianship and its construction as a woman’s occupation where sexuality, ambition, and control are unacceptable.

Mr. Gabriel’s evil nature is firmly established when he reveals his inhuman, demonic form to Cyn and unabashedly admits to her that he seeks to control and harm humans in his pursuit to claim the throne of the underworld. He kills people with bloody violence and sucks the life-essence out of students and teachers to build his strength. The library serves as a supernatural gateway to the underworld and Mr. Gabriel’s role as a librarian conveniently provides him with unhindered access to an unsuspecting school population of victims.

Unlike other representations of male librarians that include being a “fuddy-duddy” or possessing a kind of “bookishness and social awkwardness” (Mirza & Seale, 2011, p. 136), Mr. Gabriel is confident, socially adept, and does not live vicariously through the library’s books. When Cyn first meets him, she describes him to be “a young, and yes, okay, a very attractive man” who is “just a nice-looking guy in dark jeans and a white button-down shirt. He could almost pass for a student” (Knusden, 2014, p. 10). This image is starkly contrasted by his other, more horrifying form, possessing “large bat-like wings,” “twisty black horns,” and eyes that “are impossible black holes of nothing” (Knusden, 2014, p. 76). The dichotomy between what Mr. Gabriel should be (a man) with what he is (a monster) denaturalizes social norms around his gender and his relationship to students. Mr. Gabriel abuses his role as loco parentis by preying on students to serve his own dark interests. He not only converses with students about their sexuality and infatuations, but he also sees students as sexual objects, particularly Annie, “I couldn’t resist her innocence. She’s pure. Unsullied...I don’t mean virginal, although that’s a nice bonus, of course” (Knusden, 2014, p. 176). Mr. Gabriel is a monster, in part, because he violates the social code that school librarians (and teachers) should never have sexual relations with their charges. This imagining of a librarian disrupts other male librarian stereotypes by presenting a character who is a sexual being that is both selfish and harmful. Mr. Gabriel uses his position as a librarian, his sex-appeal, and his powers to subjugate students (and some teachers). Unlike other male librarian characters who have been described as helpful and scholarly, such as Flynn Carsen from the television series, *Librarians* and Rupert Giles from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or socially awkward like Wayne Leung in the television series *Mr. D.*, Mr. Gabriel is a self-confident predator who exploits the innocence and desire of his victim, Annie, and viciously threatens Cyn:

If you do anything else to annoy me, if you try to tell anyone, if you try to explain to one more person what is happening, raise even the tiniest bit of suspicion, I will kill both of your families, all of your teachers, all of your friends, and a few other random people for good measure.’ He smiles just a little, apparently at the thought of all that killing. (Knusden, 2014, p. 180)

As a result, Mr. Gabriel is a character who *refuses* the stereotypical male librarian as a socially awkward, effeminate male. Rather, he is controlling like the Dark Oculator, Radrian Blackburn – although Mr. Gabriel is far more wicked because he engages in sexual subjugation and mind control. In both examples, only male deviant bodies would

consider working in a female dominated profession. Mr. Gabriel is a “source of danger to women” (Pulliam, 2014, p. 27) that uses his paranormal powers to target student’s bodies, and, most specifically, Annie’s body to “form the girl into a compliant young woman who accepts her subordination” (Pulliam, 2014, p. 27). Unlike his predecessor, who would “help you find whatever you needed for your paper or project or weekend reading” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 4), Mr. Gabriel uses his position as librarian to access victims. Mr. Gabriel turns away from the image of a male librarian who has compromised his “identity and status as a man” (Dickinson, 2002, p. 105), using his sexuality and his appearance to leverage his power over others.

Mr. Gabriel’s masculinity is embodied in his heterosexual appeal, his willingness to inflict pain/harm on anyone he chooses, and his ability to mesmerize his victims that Cyn describes as “more than just evil, soul-sucking, people killing, demon-villain type stuff. This is sick, messed-up, serial-killer, borderline pedophile, criminal insanity of the most disgusting and appalling kind” (p. 178). When Cyn and Ryan catch Mr. Gabriel devouring a body in the library, Cyn asks herself:

Whose blood is that? Where did it come from? There is blood on the floor, too, I realize. A lot of it. There is so much that I think there cannot be very much left at all inside whomever it came out of” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 75).

Mr. Gabriel, almost public in his display of violence, is a deliberate, calculating, and, ultimately, gruesome figure.

While such violence is despicable and frightening, Mr. Gabriel crosses a particularly heinous line in sexual deviation when he takes Annie to be his demon-consort in the underworld. Drawing from the older and more established Gothic tradition, this construction of evil speaks to the “dark fantasy, paranormal romance and horror fiction” (Pulliam, 2014, p. 18) that is also seen in young adult novels like Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight*. Mr. Gabriel recycles the familiar image of a vampire who presents as a white, handsome, male shapeshifter (Wisker, 2016) who “feeds” on the young, chooses a mate who is especially “pure” and unsullied, and who offers his victim (Annie) eternal love and power that serves as a parody of the horror genre. Mr. Gabriel can manipulate students’ perceptions so that they see him as irresistible, “beyond just attractive: movie-star gorgeous, almost breathtaking, like ... suddenly seeing him on his best hair day ever in the most flattering light possible” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 11). Mr. Gabriel preys on

Annie's sexual/spiritual vulnerabilities, reifying his heteronormative masculinity. Mr. Gabriel's monstrousness draws on the construct of the vampire, producing sexuality through Annie's "virginal" body (Halberstam, 1995) and reshaping her to also become a demon who is subordinate to him but also with power of her own. Although this normative characterization of a male villain is critical to the dominant narrative of Cyn's fight against evil, it also counters prevailing assumptions that male librarians are "socially awkward, antisocial, very quiet/introverted, intellectual/know-it-all, prudish/uptight, and not good at communicating" (Blackwell, 2015a, p. 86). However, this push against other male librarian representations is only fully possible when space is also made to explore what it is that librarians *do* in their work.

Various characters in *The Evil Librarian* (2014), including Cyn, provide insights into the ways librarians are generally perceived, suggesting a more complex understanding of both the work they perform and the education they receive, compared with other works including *Alcatraz vs the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007). Drawing on gendered assumptions about librarians as helpful women, the novel begins with Cyn's confession that "that the new librarian would be something like the old librarian. Who was a perfectly nice-seeming middle-aged woman" (Knudsen, 2014, p. 7). Cyn's expectation for a mature, and somewhat benign, woman intensifies Mr. Gabriel's contradictory representation as youthful, attractive, and malevolent. Later, when trying to dismiss her growing anxiety about Mr. Gabriel, Cyn calls upon those earlier assumptions of librarianship as a helpful and non-threatening profession, telling herself, "he's just a librarian. I am not afraid of a *librarian*, for chrissakes" (Knudsen, 2014, p. 38). For Cyn, the sheer absurdity that a librarian could be something to fear is what she uses to reassure herself. This humorous self-talk calls on broader assumptions that librarians are ultimately benign and harmless.

The gendered construction of librarianship resurfaces in another instance when Cyn tries to raise the alarm about Mr. Gabriel with her classmates, Leticia and Diane. Rather than convincing her friends of his sinister character, they are amused, preferring to see the good-looking male librarian as an object of sexual fantasy. Leticia asks, "Is he a *naughty* librarian? Has he been reading aloud from the sexy parts of the books or something?" (Knudsen, 2014, p. 60). This depiction is a play on the far more prevalent female "sexy librarian" image, who, "inhibited by library decorum" (Squires, 2014, p. 111) seeks to be freed of sexual repression, thus becoming an object of desire. By

constructing Mr. Gabriel as a sexy and potentially deviant librarian, the gendered imagining of the repressed woman librarian is renegotiated. This playful gender reversal, however, continues to rely on the “stale old confines of heterosexuality” (Wisker, 2016, p. 186). The deviant librarian remains within binary understandings of gender as male/female without further exploration into other transgressive identities and activities.

Unlike many other narratives in children’s and adult media, including that of *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2014), *Evil Librarian* (Knudsen, 2014) pushes against more common librarian representations by highlighting librarian education, providing Mr. Gabriel with greater professional validation. This is an interesting turn from many popular works that are notably silent about librarian education, characterizing librarians as members of a vocation rather than members of a profession. As an educated professional, Mr. Gabriel counters the feminine clutches of librarianship by having professional credentials that suggest core knowledge and authority. Cyn alludes to Mr. Gabriel’s education fairly accurately in her initial encounter with him where she takes in his youthful appearance and the “weight” of his words, “he must be right out of library college, or wherever young librarians go to learn about library...Those library school courses must really be something” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 10). Later, when Cyn tries to expose Mr. Gabriel as other-worldly to her ornery Italian teacher, De Luca, she is shut-down by his snide response:

“That’s what you came to talk to me about?”

“He’s not a real librarian – “

“Not a real librarian! De Luca’s voice is scathingly sarcastic. “My God, that *is* bad! Did he forge his MLS documents then? How could we have let this happen?” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 127)

Not only is De Luca familiar with the specific degree associated with librarianship, but he also links this credential to Mr. Gabriel’s professional legitimacy.

Despite his demonic nature and dark pursuits, Mr. Gabriel appears to also be familiar with the actual work of being a high-school librarian. Frequently drawn to the library out of concern and suspicion for her friend Annie who works as a library monitor, Cyn observes Mr. Gabriel engaged in library-related work including a presentation to students of the Dewey Decimal System. On one occasion, Cyn bursts into the library and sees that “a completely human-looking Mr. Gabriel is standing in front of a screen

displaying examples of proper MLA citation style” (Knudsen, 2014, p. 104). While Mr. Gabriel’s work is not unusual for a librarian, it is unusual to highlight a male librarian teaching like any other school teacher rather than more typical images of gatekeeping bookworms. Mr. Gabriel is clearly engaged in instructional work that is common in school library settings and his apparent knowledge suggests that he really is a librarian. Mr. Gabriel appears helpful and instructive to students as a librarian while simultaneously engaging in activities that are wicked and anything but helpful. As such, Mr. Gabriel, the monster, is the “negative identity” (Halberstam, 1996, p. 22) of Mr. Gabriel, the librarian. Not only does Mr. Gabriel effectively perform his librarian duties but he also depends on this performance in order to covertly carry out his alternate diabolical agenda. In addition to exploits assumptions about the banality of librarianship, he is able to exploit the ineffectual male librarian image. This representation reconfigures other male librarian images by presenting a professionally competent male who has a thirst for power and is anything but “good”.

Michelle Knudsen’s (2014) *Evil Librarian* provides a rich reimagining of the male librarian while Brandon Sanderson’s *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* (Sanderson, 2007) binds images of male librarians to femininity in ways that recirculates stereotypes and recycles gendered assumptions about the field more broadly. While neither work unmasks white privilege or ethnicity in their narratives, a concern for those interested in the “unbearable whiteness of librarianship” (Bourg, 2014, title), the evil male librarian does provide an interesting turn from more prevalent female representations of librarians. As such, the male librarian image offers a site of analysis that brings the gendered perception of librarianship into deeper focus and offers greater insight into the construction of work that is frequently relegated to the realm of women.

## Summary

These two books are exceptions to the notable absence of male librarian figures in children’s literature and popular culture. This silence says a great deal about the problems of librarianship and its gendered roots as a profession. Indeed, without more extensive imaginings of male librarians, problematic stereotypes may continue to circulate and impact who choose to enter the field. For example, Dickinson (2002) observes that “the stereotypes of male librarians as “effeminate misfit[s]” and “weak and non-masculine” played an even larger role in turning men away from academic

librarianship” (p. 106) than prestige and salary. The gendered terrain that informs this profession and the ways it is represented in such popular culture examples, continues to inform its social standing in broader culture. Struggling over the male librarian image is an important undertaking if there is to be any hope for prospective librarians to occupy wider cultural spheres while also accepting a wider range of identities within the profession.

## Chapter 6. Loveless-frumps, Spinsters and Oversexed Librarians

*Troy: Why does being a librarian make her even hotter?*

*Abed: They're keepers of knowledge. She holds the answers to all our questions, like 'Will you marry me?' and 'Why are there still libraries?'*

*Troy: I wanna be a book. She could pick me up...flip through my pages...make sure no one drew wieners in me...*

–Community, “Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century Romanticism”, 2011,

### Introduction

Chapter 4 and 5 call attention to the paucity of male librarian representations and the abundance of female librarian stereotypes in contemporary literature for children and young adults. To attend to this gap, this chapter analyzes the visual-verbal texts of two very recent works that appear in North American popular culture. I first analyze the ongoing image of the loveless frump/spinster librarian as it appears in a made-for-television-movie *A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015), then moving to a study of the oversexed librarian image that appears in the YouTube comedy sketch *Librarian Ann Withers* (Studio C, 2013). By exploring the discourses of femininity that circulate in these works, I provide a “way in” to the processes that shape knowledge of what a librarian is. Femininity, in particular, circulates as a powerful discourse throughout these samples, constructing notions of librarianship that speak to the stereotypes of the frump, the spinster, and the oversexed librarian. Nonetheless, these stereotypes are sometimes challenged in ways that suggest librarians can also be personable, intelligent, interesting, and independent. Moving beyond assumptions that viewers/readers unproblematically and passively absorb what they see as truth, it may be possible to understand how discursive representations of femininity continue to point to ongoing and often contradictory struggles of who a 21st century librarian can be.



## Loveless Frumps and Spinsters

My visual discourse analysis of *A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015), and *Librarian Ann Withers* (Studio C, 2013) demonstrates the visual-verbal construction of the oversexed, and/or loveless frumpy spinster in works intended for older audiences. This analysis exposes how these images capture some of the tensions involved in women managing their heterosexuality. These representations indicate that women must negotiate their heterosexual appeal without appearing either “dried up” or too sexually aggressive. What it means to actually be a librarian is hidden from view within these characterizations, exposing a persistent misunderstanding about the nature of library work that has material consequences. Abigail Luthmann (2007) suggests stereotypes “may act as a powerful deterrent to library use” (p. 776). Nicole Pagowsky and Erica Defrain (2014) point out stereotypes “can seriously impact the work we do and the respect we are afforded” (para 9). For Roma Harris (1992), library work and its ongoing devaluation is based on assumptions “that women’s work can be done by anyone because it requires little in the way of special skills” (p. 28). Her work specifically points to the ways service work, performed by women, is not valued because it is construed as being work that can be done by anyone. Service work is understood to be something that comes “naturally” to women, thus not requiring a specialized knowledge base and academic rigour common to more “esteemed” professions like medicine and law. Even though service work cannot be performed by anyone, discourses of femininity conflate care-taking with service. Thus, while some representations, like that of the independent and intellectual librarian, may offer a site of resistance to the frump, the spinster, and the oversexed misfit, they may not dislodge the underlying discourses of femininity that organize librarianship as “women’s work”.

*A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015) is an adult-oriented, made-for-television-movie that aired in 2015 on various networks. The mystery takes place in a small community, Lawrenceton, Georgia in the United States. This television adaptation based on the novel of the same name is written by mystery writer Charlaine Harris, and features librarian Aurora, “Roe”, Teagarden. Aurora, a member of the “Real Murders” true crime hobby club, applies her amateur sleuthing skills by trying to solve a murder when she discovers a human skull in the home of her deceased benefactor, Jane Engle (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Librarian, Jane, discussing spinsterhood with Aurora. From *A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015).

Interpreting a hole in the skull to be a sign of violence, Aurora sets out to find both the body and the person responsible for this presumed murder. The narrative is centrally focused on Aurora as she puzzles out the mystery in various settings around town that includes her workplace, the local public library.

The movie is widely distributed, having been released on the Hallmark Movies and Mysteries Channel, the Hallmark Channel, and the W Network and is now set to be distributed in the United Kingdom (TVWise, 2015). As a made-for-television movie, *A Bone to Pick* is a “romantic” drama that relies on intimate conversations between characters to build the plot. Although the plot is driven by a mystery, Aurora’s friendships and love life operate as underlying themes in the movie, providing mechanisms to build out Aurora’s character. The distinctly “cozy” feel of the movie is created through the use of tight frames, shallow/soft lens focus, warm colours within scenes and in the clean and modern dress and presentation of characters. The atmosphere of romance is reinforced through the non-diegetic stringed instrumental music that sets the mood and scene transitions throughout. All of these visual/auditory features underscore the gendered presentation of the film that privilege normative discourses of femininity.

Aurora and her library colleagues provide examples of “modern day” librarians who illustrate the embedded and discursive power of femininity in the structuring of representations of library work. Aurora serves as an intelligent and independent representation of a librarian, Lillian, her colleague, embodies the loveless frump, and

Jane, Aurora's mentor, is the spinster. The complex interactions, dialogue, and appearances of these characters demonstrate the fault lines between these tropes and the underlying struggle to contain the image of the librarian that is inherently tied to notions of femininity. *A Bone to Pick*, sets the ideal of femininity firmly within a white, heteronormative cultural milieu.

This context is highly visible. Among the many characters, only three are non-white, playing very minor roles. Heterosexuality is the norm in this movie. Without exception, characters are presented as cisgender. Romantic relationships are laid out solely between man/woman, including the parallel narrative of Aurora's "need" for a male love interest. Men and women follow clearly delineated gender lines in their dress (men wear collared shirts, slacks, and suits and women wear dresses, tops, skirts, and pants that accentuate women's figures). Characters adopt feminine and masculine orientations, including these forms of dress, in service to the romance associated with heterosexual desire. Aurora, for example, is pressured by her mother to improve her dress so that she can find a "suitable man". Situated within this context, Aurora and her librarian colleagues provide examples of how the adoption/resistance of feminine codes impact representations of librarians.

The characterizations of the librarians in *A Bone to Pick* is reflected in LIS literature, particularly the depictions of librarians as white, female, and single (Adams, 2000; Attebury, 2010; Carmichael, 1992; Luthmann, 2007; Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Tevis & Tevis, 2005; Yontz, 2002). This literature points out one of the more notable librarian "images", namely that of the "loveless-frump" (Adams, 2000; Bobrovitz, & Griebel, 2001; Jennings, 2016; Seale, 2008). This frump is often described as a kind of sexless, aged woman "hiding behind her spectacles and surrounded by her books" (Adams, 2000, p. 288). While the love life of Lillian, who works in the library with Aurora, is never made clear, she embodies many of the characteristics of the frump.

Lillian's image is established early on, appearing within the first six minutes of the movie. The close-up image in Figure 13, featuring Lillian, highlights her appearance quite clearly.



Figure 13: Lillian the librarian: “the loveless frump”. From *A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* (Bure, Head, & Wood, 2015).

Although Lillian’s role is minor, her image is powerfully stereotypical. Unlike most characters in this movie, Lillian does not exhibit any fashion sense; her clothes are bland and shapeless and her hair is pulled tightly back away from her face. Her rust-brown cardigan covers a floral blouse buttoned, conservatively, right to its top and her skirt is grey, fitted to the knee, and formless. Her look is completed with “sensible” black shoes and round “bookish” glasses. It is her humourless expression, however, that cements her look. On no occasion does Lillian ever soften her unapproachable, “dour” expression. Contrasted with the more fashionable dress and styling of other characters, Lillian’s look does not conform to what is understood as attractive and suggests that she not available for heterosexual consumption. Indeed, she becomes a “sexless” extension of the library as a building.

Lillian exists only within the construct of the Lawrenceton Public Library as a flat, indifferent character who is preoccupied with following rules in order to satisfy the off-screen “boss”, Mr. Crowley. Her fussiness and concern for order and rules is evidenced later in the movie when she deliberately corrects Aurora’s shelving while chatting, “I don’t think Mr. Crowley will be pleased to see one of his own on the front page of the newspaper. Stumbling over human remains. It’s unseemly [pause] and unsanitary. I hope you make good use of disinfectant.” Librarianship’s historically gendered past emerge through Lillian’s crabby demeanour which resembles the “peevisishness” and fixation on the trivial described in Herbert Putnam’s 1912 address mentioned in Chapter 2. Not only does Lillian diminish the significance of Aurora’s discovery (human remains),

concerned only with how this will look to the boss, Lillian also rejects the role of being a helper-supporter to Aurora. This cold treatment of others is visible in another scene with a child, where Lillian takes up a similar, uncaring position:

Lillian: [Approaches a child, looking lost. She scrunches her face] Spit it out, what do you want?

Jared [Child]: Um. Can Miss. Teagarden help me?

Lillian: [eyerolls and exhales loudly]

[Close up of Aurora sitting at a computer at the information desk. There is a knowing smile on her face]

Lillian's body language is both impatient and unwelcoming and when Jared asks for Aurora, Lillian quickly turns away, allowing Jared to turn to Aurora for help:

Aurora: [walking up to the boy] Do you need a book Jared?

Jared: Yes. [Looking toward Lillian] She's mean.

Aurora: [Leans over conspiratorially] Meaner than a snake with a sunburn.

Jared: [grins]

By agreeing with Jared and making a joke of Lillian's demeanour, Aurora's character stands in contrast to Lillian, who refuses to act in more feminine (nurturing) ways. Aurora and Jared are "in" on the secret that Lillian's failure to "care" is something laughable and counter to what is expected of a woman librarian. Aurora invites Jared to "other" Lillian, granting him permission to mock her.

Denaturalizing such images reveals discourses of femininity that embody implicit and explicit messages of gender (Marshall, 2004) that construct notions of what "normal" librarians are and the work they perform. In this example, Lillian is the epitome of a modern and ill-natured frump who does not manage the codes of femininity well. The "library work" that Lillian performs is not seen as intellectual or, even, service oriented. Lillian fully rejects the mothering/caring work that is widely documented to be at the profession's core (Garrison, 1979; Harris, 1992; Maack, 1997). Lillian serves as a warning "about the power of the library system, showing what happens when one becomes controlled by its rules, "women become less than themselves, losing their humanity, their empathy, their sexuality" (Gaines, 2014, p. 87).

Aurora, who works side-by-side with Lillian in the library, is constructed very differently. Aurora appears thoughtful, perceptive, and pretty. Unlike Lillian, Aurora exhibits friendliness and warmth and her clothes are fitted, coordinated, and fashionable. When Aurora helps the child Jared, she leans in close to him, listening with intent and concern in a way that further shapes her nurturing and personable image. Viewers follow Aurora's lived experiences at home, on a date, at a Real Murders club meeting, and in her investigations around town, creating a richer texture and connection to her character. As a result, Aurora is seen to have a "life" that is in stark contrast to Lillian whose life, in the subtext of her characterization and text, has only the library. Further, the predictable and mundane work that both Aurora and Lillian perform in the library is juxtaposed with Aurora's more exciting and, somewhat subversive, activities as a sleuth and her dating life. Her actions outside of the library assist in creating a character that rises "above" the loveless-frump image. Indeed, Aurora's work in the library becomes another mechanism for her to perform her work as an amateur detective. This is noted when she uses her computer to look up information for the case and, later, when she follows up on a hunch to question a patron about her son's whereabouts. Library work appears as a sidebar to her more interesting activities, leaving Lillian to carry the flame of "true" library work. Aurora's role as a librarian is diminished in favour of her role as sleuth. Because of this, the loveless-frump stereotype is reified in Lillian rather than subverted in Aurora. Aurora is exceptional, not typical.

Aurora and Lillian exercise different forms of femininity that position Aurora in a positive light (she is attractive, caring, and able to navigate social situations well) and Lillian in the more negative light (she fails to care/mother, performs task-oriented work, and is unattractive). Radford and Radford (2001) argue that "the value of the positive representation is always determined by its departure from the negative" (p. 325). In this example, the sociohistorical context of librarianship, and the meaning it bears as a feminized profession (Coleman, 2014; Garrison, 1979; Harris, 1992; Hildebrand, 2000; Ilett, 2003; Keer & Carlos, 2014; Maack, 1985, 2002) cannot be overturned by Aurora. Thus, her representation fails to unseat social practices that define more entrenched representations of librarians and the discourses of femininity that underlie them. This includes the ways women look and the nature of the work that they perform.

To serve as the movie's heroine, Aurora "depends on strategies of reversal, contrast, and struggle" (Tolmie, 2006, p.146). To be extraordinary, Aurora must be

surrounded by the ordinary. For example, Aurora's deviation from the "typical" librarian is revealed in a conversation with her former colleague, Jane Engle, where they discuss Aurora's Master's degree.

Aurora: I think I am the only librarian in the state that has it. [A thesis in true crime literature for her master's degree]

Jane: Huh, that wasn't a specialty of library science in my day.

Aurora: Oh, it's still not officially. I think I am the only librarian in the state who has it.

This not only establishes Aurora as an educated woman, but also reveals her exceptionalism as the only librarian in the state that is likely to have a Master's of Library Science thesis in true crime literature. It is unusual for the educational requirements of librarians to be referenced in popular culture (Posner, 2003; Seale, 2008) and even more unusual for there to be some mention of a thesis. Although Jane's response suggests that she, too, has had some form of library education, Aurora's intellectual interest and ability is clearly established as being unique, even among her peers. Her thesis is not even focused on library work but on something that has more popular interest. Because Aurora's degree supports her sleuthing work rather than her professional work, messages about the intellectual and educational requirements required in librarianship are made irrelevant.

Aurora is both spirited and competent but she is also subject to concerns about her decision to remain single. This parallel narrative and her anxiety around becoming a "spinster librarian" is another strategy in establishing Aurora as the remarkable heroine. This narrative is set up early in the movie when Aurora meets with Jane Engle, a retired librarian who had, at one time, worked with Aurora in the library. The scene, captured in the image presented in Figure 12, features Jane, the epitome of a spinster.

Jane has short iron grey hair (long hair acts as a Western sign of sex appeal), wears cardigan sweaters and walks with a cane. Although she admits to no longer driving and lives alone, Jane's dialogue reveals that she is well read (making reference books she has read with great understanding) and is sensitive to sexism that plays out in murder cases confiding in Aurora that, "men just cannot bring themselves to believe that a woman has the constitution to kill." However, Jane dies early and unexpectedly in the movie, leaving few other details about her character that could complicate the "spinster

librarian” trope. Jane is, however, very influential in setting up Aurora’s financial independence (she leaves Aurora a healthy estate) and in establishing Aurora’s fears of becoming “spinster”. The stigma of being old and single leads to a certain, visible form of anxiety in Aurora that manifests in her expression when, after an animated discussion about resources relating to their shared true crime interests, Jane changes the conversation, “You remind me of me at your age. You don’t like it when I say that. You think it means you’ll end up like me, a spinster librarian, with nothing but dusty mysteries to keep me company”. Facing away from Jane, Aurora, responds to Jane’s comment with a silent “knowing” look that confirms Jane’s observation. This anxiety about spinsterhood reappears later that evening when Aurora’s friend Sally visits Aurora to inform her of Jane’s unexpected death:

Sally: Have you heard about Jane Engle?

Aurora: Oh, yeah, I saw her today. She said it again, “You remind me of me,” and talking about how it’s not so bad to end up a spinster librarian –

Sally: Aurora –

Aurora: All I could think about was, maybe I should have married Arthur but, nah, I wasn’t in love with him.

Aurora questions her decision to not be with Arthur as she struggles with a pressure to “settle” with a man in response to apprehension around being single. Having “said it again,” Jane has clearly made earlier attempts to comfort Aurora, reinforcing the social significance of being seen as female, old, and single. The hegemonic heteronormative values that prioritize marriage over personal and professional independence diminish Jane and Aurora as curious, intelligent and educated women.

This struggle is not surprising because, as Lahad and Hazan (2014) argue, “single women are situated in relation to and as against the married/single binary and are construed as figures of profound disparity. These sets of assumptions become ever more unforgiving as single women age” (p. 129). Despite Aurora being an intelligent professional, she feels pressure to be with a man. This struggle, however, is complicated by her unorthodox interest in solving crimes – an activity that is not condoned by her best friend, Sally, or her mother. Later in the movie, during the height of her amateur investigations, she goes on a date with a minister. Although she appears to enjoy his company, she is distracted with her case, failing to conform to dating norms by being



jumpy and preoccupied. Thus, in spite of her apprehension of becoming a spinster librarian, Aurora is determined to act autonomously to serve her own interests. The risks are embodied in both Jane and Lillian who represent two possible “default” constructions of the old maid librarian that Aurora strains to resist; Lillian, as a peer, and Jane, as a possible future.

## The Oversexed Librarian

The “oversexed” single librarian is a departure from the rather virtuous spinster trope represented in Jane Engle. In his review of librarians in fiction, Burns (1998) points to such distorting representations of librarians, describing them as “professional-virgin sharp-tongued desiccated sex-starved spinster[s]” (p. 1). Examining librarian stereotypes in young adult literature, such as *A Heart Divided* by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld (2005) *Painted Devil* by Michael Bedard (1994) and *Can’t Get There from Here* by Todd Strasser (2012), Peresie and Alexander (2005) contend that the appearance of traits like that of sexual “anxiety” in librarian representations, contribute to limiting the reader’s understanding of librarians and the work they perform. Indeed, it appears that these works can never entirely break free, continuing, instead, to circle back to these long-standing characterizations. The example of “Librarian Ann Withers” illustrates the ongoing use of the oversexed librarian as another stereotype used to contain the image and meanings of the librarian.

Librarian Ann Withers (Figure 14) is a recurring character on a family friendly sketch comedy program called Studio C that is broadcast by Bingham Young Television that focuses on “family-oriented programming that encourages viewers to ‘see the good in the world’” (BYUTV, About). The program spans numerous cable, satellite and Internet networks, reaching more that 53 million viewers and over one million YouTube subscribers.

Ann Withers is a central character in short (less than five minute) vignettes where she finds herself in different social settings. In this particular sample, the scene opens with an establishing long shot of the exterior of a well-lit institutional building. This perspective quickly switches to an interior view of shelves of books and a table with two chairs. The remainder of the scene features waist shots and close-ups of the characters, situating the viewer firmly into their conversation. Two young males, whose bags and

casual dress establish their role as students, enter the library, seeking a book, when they are approached by librarian Ann Withers. Visually, Ann's "librarian" look is exaggerated. She wears a patterned turtleneck, a nametag, and pants that are pulled high on her waist accentuating a "bulge" around her midsection. She wears reading glasses around her neck and her straight and unremarkable brown hair is pulled back away from her face in a low bun. Her mannerisms are an important aspect to her comedic appearance and her exaggerated hand movements, style of walk, and husky voice highlight her coarse mannerisms. She holds her hands limply at chest level, making her appear eager and ready to reach and touch those near her. She walks with her pelvis thrust outwards and while she is not masculine in appearance, she fails to embody an appealing feminine style that is meant to be amusing. The skit coordinates Ann's comical appearance and behaviour with the use of several double entendres. It is assumed that viewers are familiar with the titles of several Western literary classics that Ann uses to create various puns:

Ann Withers: [Sidling up to the young man, Matthew] Have you read *Dante's Inferno*?

Matthew: No.

Ann: Hmmm mmmm [emits a moan-like sound]

Matthew: Ok – [tries to create some distance between himself and Ann]

Ann: [Follows Matthew and enters his physical space]. You know, Matthew, this library is a *Secret Garden* for all who enter.

Matthew: Ahhh...I see what you did there. That's clever.

Ann: But for anybody experiencing *Pride and Prejudice*, you might find happiness with *Little Women* [Ann moves suggestively into Matthew's space].

Matthew: [Looking uncomfortable and seeking an escape] Actually, I'm not really into romance novels.

Ann: Mmmm... so you have a ...[breathless voice] *Heart of Darkness*.

Matthew: I wouldn't say that or, at least, not the way you said it.

In this dialogue, Ann is aggressively invading Matthew's personal space, leaning suggestively into him, looking up and batting her eyelids. She punctuates the dialogue with inarticulate sounds that suggest some kind of pleasurable groan of longing/lust.

Combined with her awkward demeanour, these sounds come off as creepy because she violates heterosexual norms by “trying too hard” to garner the young man’s attention. Ann is the pursuer and her aggression speaks to masculine rather than feminine norms of sexual interplay. Ann is completely oblivious to Matthew’s body language, following him around the room with book title suggestions, while he tries to widen the space between them. Laughter erupts from the studio audience on each occasion that Matthew unsuccessfully tries to escape Ann’s presence. We are supposed to be amused at Matthew’s discomfort.

Adams (2000, p. 292) argues that parodying the loveless, frumpy, old maid stereotype of the librarian exposes and develops alternate meanings of the librarian image but this is a risky undertaking. For viewers to “get the joke”, they must draw on existing discourses, including discourses of femininity that draw on the discursive “coded references” (Smith, 1990a, p. 181) that make viewers actual participants in the visual-verbal text. In the case of the Ann Withers, her attire, mannerisms and dialogue parody the female form of a librarian with her bland and unfashionable choice in clothing, chained eyeglasses, tied back hair, familiarity with book titles, and her focus on “helping” her patrons. This is a contradictory representation that relies on a lack of heterosexual attractiveness *and* (aggressive) sexual desire. Ann’s dress, while feminine, “misses the mark” in terms of being attractive. She presents as awkward in both her appearance and demeanour. Further, the clear discomfort of the other characters underscores her social awkwardness and lack of physical appeal.

In the scene captured below (Figure 14) Ann is contrasted against two, seemingly ordinary cisgender men who are repulsed by Ann and her sexual advances.



Figure 14: Ann Withers “helping” a library patron. From Ann Withers the librarian (Studio C, 2013).

While it is possible that mocking Ann is subverting the stereotype of the librarian through parody, this skit is neither produced by librarians nor specifically directed to librarians. This opens up the possibility that the trope of the sexually predatory and unattractive librarian (she is excess) is actually reified in the absence of new meanings and representations.

Although the ridiculousness of Ann’s characterization may, indeed, be funny, the historicity of librarianship goes unchallenged. Ann’s work as a librarian is limited to her peculiar, sexually charged attempts to provide reader’s advisory. The greater details and complexities of library work are not only absent, they are made irrelevant. In order to “get the joke” of Ann’s character, the sketch relies on the viewer’s assumption that library work is lonely and unfulfilling.

Ann’s comical sexual aggression is contrasted with the disinterest and, even, revulsion of the men that appear in this sketch. Ann unwittingly fails to accomplish a look and manner that appeals to her male counterparts, a key element of this parody. Within the discursive frame of femininity, women do not pursue, they are pursued. Ann’s predatory failure and the repulsed reactions of those she pursues is all part of essentializing play that makes Ann unusual and, even abnormal, as a woman.

Ann’s improper and excessive interest in Matthew also highlights assumptions around librarians needing sexual attention because they are so, “typically”, alone. Ann is a key example of Grant Burns’ (1998) reference to the “sex-starved spinster” (p. 1) that reinforces notions that librarians are perpetually and unwillingly single because they are

awkward and unattractive. As indicated in Chapter 2, such assumptions can be traced back to the intensification of women in the profession during late 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Examining the historical development of the profession, both LIS historians Dee Garrison (1979) and Jody Newmeyer (1976) conclude that “librarianship was really a kind of extension of the ‘domesticity and the guardianship of culture’ to which the nineteenth century ‘myth of women’s sphere’ consigned the gentle sex” (p. 45). Similar to teachers, there was an underlying assumption that “any pretty female worth her mettle would eventually want to get married and give up her career” (McReynolds, 1985, p. 29). The earlier example of Aurora’s script also rearticulates this for a modern audience. Such claims established limits for women and the possibility for them to engage in careers that are fulfilling in their own right. Thus, to get the joke of the Ann Withers sketch, viewers must call on the assumption that a librarian would naturally want to find a male, because her work as a librarian is not enough for her to be satisfied.

The discomfort that Ann’s sexual predation generates in the other characters also speaks to broader anxieties about women who perform “caring” work and ways sexual aggression can threaten “normative sex/gender systems” (Cavanagh, 2007. p. 7). Gretchen Keer and Andrew Carlos (2014) point out that ideals around nurturing “fit easily into what became the feminized (also called helping) professions” (p.75) and when Ann, who on the one hand, is supposed to be helping patrons turns to pursuing them, she disrupts this social norm. Librarians are meant to be supportive, caring, and helpful, not predatory and not overtly sexual. This transpires at the very beginning of the sketch as soon as the two male characters enter the library:

Matthew: [Addressing his friend] Say what you will about the smell and service, they have the best selection in the state.

Friend: Let’s get your book and let’s get out of here.

Ann: [Swooping in from off screen] Need help finding your books?

Matthew: Ah, yes. Do you work here?

Ann: Yes. I am Ann [pronounced Enn] Withers.

Ann establishes herself as the helpful librarian, ready to support the needs of her visitors. However, her helpful countenance is quickly overtaken by her more aggressive/suggestive behaviour:

Matthew: Yes, well, I'm just looking for a book to write a report on.

Ann: Mmmmm [emits a groan-like sound] books. Must get your heart racing...just thinking about it.

Matthew: What? [shrinking away from Ann]

Ann: It's like finding a new friend [dramatic pause] ... or more. [Breathlessly peering up at Matthew]

Friend: [Looks disgusted] I'm going to go.

Matthew: No, you can't go! You're my ride!

Friend: Was your ride [looks disgustedly at Ann] ...Was. [Friend leaves and Matthew looks after him, dismayed]

Ann: [Pushing up against Matthew, looking up at him] So, what are you looking for?

Matthew: Ah, actually, I'm not really sure.

Ann: Mmmm...classics?

Matthew: [Walking across the room] Ah, what about this book over here?

Ann: [Races up closely behind Matthew] Oh, yes!

Matthew: [Startled and looking repulsed at Ann] Oh my...

Ann's "helpfulness" becomes the premise of making advances towards Matthew. The laughter of the studio audience follows Ann's advances and Matthew's clear expressions of discomfort. Although service is clearly at the heart of Ann's professional role in this scene, she quickly fails to meet this expectation when her patron, uneasy, quickly tries to find a quick solution (book) so that he can escape her presence. We are expected to find humour in Ann's combined failure to perform her service work and perform as an appealing feminine subject. Mostafa Abedinifard (2016) suggests, humour guards norms, in this case those of heteronormativity and gender roles, by cautioning viewers that stepping outside of such norms may result in ridicule. Further, this humour relies upon discursive and historically established assumptions about library work as nurturing/caring with librarians as cisgender and single. Alternate imaginings of librarians and their work remain unexplored.

## Summary

The examples presented in this chapter reveal how normative discourses of heterosexual femininity circulate within contemporary visual-verbal texts that attempt to define the appropriate heterosexual behaviours of women librarians through familiar characters, including the oversexed, the frump, and the spinster librarian. Imagining other possibilities for librarians in visual-verbal texts is limited in these works because they recycle familiar discourses of femininity that have historically defined librarianship as women's work. Aurora's on-screen colleague Lillian embodies the sour, unappealing old-maid librarian, confined to the library, offering no new imaginings of librarianship while Jane, Aurora's benefactor, serves as a reminder that a long career in librarianship can end in solitude. The character of Aurora, librarian-by-day and sleuth-after-hours, does offer one possibility for an alternate image of librarian, but the romantic subplot of the movie serves to emphasize her anxiety around spinsterhood that partially undermines the option. Ann Withers, desperate for male attention, fails to perform as an effective service-oriented librarian and as an appealing woman. All of these characters reinforce aspects of femininity that limit possibilities for what it means to be a real librarian. These representations continue to reinforce underlying discourses of femininity that organize librarianship as "women's work". This work, as noted in this analysis and analyses in Chapter 4 and 5, expose the ongoing relationship between librarianship's current representations and its historical roots. Chapter 7, will examine how contemporary representations appearing in bio/autobiographical works push against this to present more authentic stories of librarians.

## Chapter 7. Activist Librarians

### Reconceptualizing Image

To complicate these entrenched images and narratives, I focus in this chapter on auto/biographical representations of librarians in books written for the child and in social media by and for practicing librarians. Drawing from lived experiences, biographical picture books offer one possibility for reorganizing these familiar scripts and images of librarians. I am especially interested in this chapter in biographical texts about activist librarians. I begin with picture books for children featuring biographical stories of librarians and then move to women's self representations that appear in a print book of library-patron encounters and a Tumblr site that curates self-submitted librarian photographs.

Numerous biographies exist of women librarians working to promote social equity through literacy education and access to information, including *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (Houston, 2011), *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), and *Write to Me: Letters from Japanese American Children to the Librarian They Left Behind* (Grady, 2018), *Miss Moore thought otherwise: How Anne Carroll Moore created libraries for children* (Pinborough, 2013) and *Tomás and the Library Lady* (Mora, 1997). In this chapter, I closely analyze two of these works, *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (Houston, 2011), and *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* (Winter, 2005). These nonfiction texts each feature an activist librarian who counters the normative fictional representations so familiar in popular culture and analyzed in earlier chapters of this dissertation. I conclude the chapter with an examination of self-representational projects from contemporary librarians on social media. These works reimagine the field and push against assumptions that diminish the meaning and impact of service work and its associations with femininity. Such autobiographical web projects include *Tattooed Librarians* (<http://tattooedlibrariansandarchivists.tumblr.com>), *Librarian Wardrobe: Breaking and Embracing the Librarian Stereotype* (<http://librarianwardrobe.com/>), *Librarian by Day* (<https://librarianbyday.net/>) and *I Work at a Public Library* (<http://iworkatapubliclibrary.com>) as sites of resistance where librarians, like the authors of the children's biographies, challenge, through their own experiences and images, familiar representations of librarians and library work. I specifically focus on the Tumblr



site *This is What a Librarian Looks Like* (<https://looklikelibraryscience.tumblr.com/>) where librarians are able to submit images and descriptions of themselves in any context they choose. The existence of such sites illustrates ongoing struggles in constructing meaning around what it means to be a librarian.

## **Everyday Heroes: Activist Librarians in Biographies for Children**

In contrast to representations in popular culture, activist librarians are often the subject of biographical children's picture books and are often written by non-librarians who have a strong and positive connection to books and libraries. Pat Mora, author of *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997), for example, advocates for literacy and information services that support diverse American communities. Other authors, like Cynthia Grady of *Write to Me* (2018), are librarians. As such, these authors create biographical books for children that commemorate the contributions made by real librarians. These are feminist works in that they characterize and celebrate women who participate and have influence in the world as highly believable and complex individuals. These representations potentially shake loose more dominant views of librarians. As feminist picture book biographies that are part of a larger archive of images, I turn, in this section, to *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* written and illustrated by Barbara Winter (2005) and *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* written by Gloria Houston and illustrated by Susan Condie Lamb (2011).

Celebrated author and artist Jeanette Winter (2005) shares the true story of Alia Muhammad Baker, an Iraqi librarian who saves 30,000 volumes of the Basra library from the violence of war in *The Librarian of Basra*. Winner of the American Library Association's Notable Book Award, this book is favourably reviewed in *Kirkus* and *School Library Journal* and librarian Alia Baker is described in *The New York Times* as a "cultural hero" (Lipson, 2005, p. E3). However, this book has also been subject to racist challenges in a few US school districts for its portrayal of violence and its references to Islamic culture, including Duval County in Florida and New York school districts (McCabe, 2016; Marshall University Libraries, 2016).

Published in English by an American author/illustrator, this work interrupts aspects of dominant western images of librarians as simply gatekeeping or old-maid

figures confined to their library spaces by featuring a female librarian, Alia Muhammad Baker, who defies her government to protect her town's precious library collection. Baker is celebrated as a librarian who takes matters into her own hands and risks her life doing so. Winter's (2005) illustrations capture an Iraqi landscape that links Middle-Eastern architecture and skylines with images of conflict (e.g. the library being burned to the ground) and resistance (e.g. Alia and a male driver hauling library books away in a truck through war-torn streets). The illustrations combine the use of bright blocks of colour, little shading, and a shallow depth of field to produce flat rather than realistic images that generate a visual portrayal of events that is more surreal than graphic, tempering the harsh realities of war and violence. Contrary to other picture books examined in this dissertation, there are no children. Consequently, Baker's engagement with the adult community detaches her from the role of mother or caretaker. This work serves as a unique example; it is a picture book for children, however it is neither about children nor features children.

Unlike the fictionalized gatekeeping librarians in Chapter 4 who act to socialize children about how to behave in libraries, Baker is an activist who works to protect the treasures of the library to preserve her people's cultural heritage from the ravages of war. Rather than just a place for children, *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) establishes the library as "a meeting place for all who love books" and also a space where the community "discuss matters of the world and matters of the spirit" (Winter, 2005) as a place for adults. In the image below (Figure 15), adult members of the neighbourhood gather in the library and discuss impending war, engaged with and surrounded by books.



Figure 15: With her patrons, Baker is shown in the rear centre with a green dress. From *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* by Jeanette Winter (2005).

The library is presented as a social space for organizing that is facilitated by Baker, who is also featured as an active adult participant. While books are “more precious to her [Baker] than mountains of gold” (Winter, 2005), the library is also established as a public space where ideas are shared, including talk of war. Not only do libraries exist to provide access to knowledge, Winter’s (2005) carefully chosen words suggest that libraries provide a forum for public dialogue and engagement.

Like other works written for children that depict librarians, *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) features a librarian who is caretaker of a collection. Indeed, Winter (2005) goes so far as to write that the library of Basra is “her [Baker’s] library.” However, Baker is not a librarian who is focused on serving the interests of children. Baker’s work is embedded in the adult culture of the library. When war inevitably arrives in Basra and the governor refuses to help protect the library, Baker must take “matters into her own hands” (Winter, 2005). Avoiding government, she surreptitiously relocates the library’s

materials into the homes and businesses of people in her neighbourhood. The visual depictions that highlight the violence of war (e.g. tanks firing their guns, buildings on fire, and the presence of armed military personnel) highlight the perilous nature of Baker's actions. Despite such risks, Baker coopts the support of her neighbours and convinces them to provide safe harbour for parts of the library's collection. Baker's actions shift the construction of librarianship from stories about the love of reading, the importance of literacy, and libraries as nurturing safe spaces to a narrative about social activism and cultural struggle.

Baker's ability to resist is constrained by the willingness of those around her to assist. In the very moment that Baker acts to fight the destruction of the library's books she is also dependent on the help of the men around her for aid. For example, she asks her male friend, Anis Muhammad, "can you help me save the books?" (Winter, 2005). She does not function in a directive manner, instead seeking cooperation. Even though she cannot act alone to protect the library, Baker's claims power by taking action, asking for help, and successfully protecting the library's materials. While these efforts may be seen as self-sacrificing (a behaviour often linked to service work), Baker's determination and hope enable her to counter the inevitability of the library's destruction.

As a work of nonfiction, *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) edges its way into Western popular culture as an alternative narrative about the ways in which librarians work. Despite a persistent message that Alia is the guardian/protector of books (from war and destruction rather than unruly children), the tale offers other messages about librarianship as an occupation that can embody social and political resistance and that does not cater to children. The story provides readers with access to important counter-meanings about librarianship and women. The *Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) points out how a biographical popular text can complicate more hegemonic librarian narratives by featuring a non-white woman from the "Global South" and her efforts to protect her community's access to knowledge as a form of activism.

Activism is the subject of Gloria Houston's (2011) *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile*. In this book, library access is redefined through the use of a locally-supported bookmobile. The library as "place" is reconfigured as a mobile service so that people, too poor to have a brick-and-mortar library, can access information and reading materials. By uncoupling librarianship from the library as "place," this story reveals the

practice of librarianship as supporting social mobility through the promotion and support of literacy. *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (2011) is a story about a woman activist whose library career takes an unexpected turn when she moves to a farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Driven by her own passion for books and reading, Miss Dorothy finds a way to carry on her work as a librarian in spite of scarce resources. Susan Condie Lamb's watercolour illustrations are soft and nostalgic, depicting pastoral landscapes that reviewer Hope Morrison (2011) describes as offering "bountiful impressions of the natural setting" (p. 280) and *Publisher's Weekly* (2011) summarizes as "bucolic." Characters, like the "brown-eyed boy named Ben," embody a kind of "sweet" sentimentality that runs throughout the work.

Miss Dorothy's character is a complex representation of a female librarian who exerts independence, determination, and action while also deferring to her husband's wishes and the goodwill of the region's inhabitants to succeed as a librarian. The story begins sometime in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Miss Dorothy as a young girl who "loved books and loved people" (Houston, 2011). Deciding to become a librarian, young Dorothy is a picture of confidence, standing confidently in her denim coveralls by a makeshift bookcase where she shares books with other children. Miss Dorothy is portrayed as a studious young woman who pursues an education at Radcliffe College and, later, attends library school to learn "all the things a good librarian should know" (Houston, 2011).

As an adult, Miss Dorothy struggles with the complexities associated with compromise, having opted for a life that doesn't offer a clear pathway for her career. After falling in love and marrying, Dorothy initially gives up her dream of working in the "fine red brick library" (Houston, 2011) in town because her husband wants "to move to a farm in a land she had only seen on maps" (Houston, 2011). In this new place that lacks a formal space to practice as a librarian, Miss Dorothy focuses on more domestic pursuits, tending a garden, exchanging food with neighbours, and reading vociferously. Dissatisfied, she is depicted sitting on the floor, among her many books, contemplating the problem of having no library in which she can conduct her work. Compelled to take action, Miss Dorothy leads a meeting with other readers in her area, advocating for some kind of a library. Serving as the catalyst for bringing library services to this small rural region, she is selected by "all the friends who liked to read," (Houston, 2011) to become a bookmobile librarian.

Activism is implicit in Miss Dorothy's work. Houston (2011) describes Miss Dorothy in an afterword as "one of the brightest spots" in the lives of those residing in this area. Her efforts empower those who dwell in the rural regions of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and by supporting their reading interests, Miss Dorothy brings the world to her economically disadvantaged community. After identifying needs and interests, she delivers books to schools, businesses, and private homes, filling a gap in access to literature and information as a way of supporting literacy. Figure 16 underscores the solitary nature of Miss Dorothy's work, in a scene where she journeys, alone, to see the elderly widow, Mrs. Maumey.



Figure 16: Making a winter delivery of reading materials to the elderly Mrs. Maumey. From *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* by Gloria Houston and illustrations by Susan Condie Lamb (2011).

The red long underwear hanging on the line that once belonged to Mrs. Maumey's husband is a signal to Miss Dorothy that Mrs. Maumey needs Miss Dorothy's services. Not only does this poignantly reveal the intimate connection Miss Dorothy shares with her patrons, it highlights the creative and dedicated ways she works with her community. Working within a rural and impoverished territory in the Appalachians, Miss Dorothy brings, as one character writes, "the world to our door" (Houston, 2011). Grown-up Ben, a boy Miss Dorothy is shown to actively help with selecting materials, writes to her as an

adult, saying, “you showed me the world through books, and now I have gone to see it for myself” (Houston, 2011).

Despite the paucity of her library’s collection, Miss Dorothy’s work requires her to know the people she serves well enough to connect them with the materials that have meaning to them. Her outreach work is valued because it changes lives. Supplying Ben with books about adventure and the world, he later becomes a pilot. Confined to a wheelchair and unable to go to school, a little girl named Barbara is later shown in her graduation robes, holding a diploma. It is through Miss Dorothy’s efforts that her patrons learn to “read the world and the word” (Freire, 1985, p. 20) – to contextualize their reading and learning in ways that empower them to pursue their goals, like graduating from high school or becoming a pilot. In an afterword, Houston (2011) describes Miss Dorothy as “one of my heroes as a child,” suggesting that Miss Dorothy’s work was something beyond the simple provision of reading material, offering ways of demystifying ways of the world.

As the “torchbearers for equal access to information,” (Meadows, 2008, p. 151), bookmobile services have been in operation for more than a century, continuing a practice of mitigating forms of structural inequality by offering access to materials and services in communities that are too poor to have permanent infrastructure. Although these mobile libraries are still present in North America (660 in the United States (ALA, 2017) and several more in Canada), they also exist in countries like Uganda, Thailand, and China, delivering books, programming, and technology services on bicycles, boats, cars and, even, animals (Meadows, 2008; Moore, Elkins, & Boelens, 2017). Presently, bookmobiles continue to be used for such purposes, particularly in regions where access to libraries is poor and/or literacy rates are low (Meadows, 2008; Moore, Elkins, & Boelens, 2017). The Appalachians, where Miss Dorothy’s story takes place, is a poignant example of an area that has to experienced some of the most significant forms of poverty and illiteracy in the United States (FAHE).

Unlike works explored in Chapter 4 where librarians are guardians of spaces and collections, Miss Dorothy’s efforts in reaching out to people and providing access to information subverts these other representations by highlighting the empowering effects of public outreach. Her work is focused on her extensive travel to provide books to people “whenever and wherever she happened to be” (Houston, 2011). Miss Dorothy is

able to move beyond the walls of the library and, although she is still bound to the collection, her work requires her to actively meet people where they are in order to provide access to information. The nature of Miss Dorothy's work highlights a period in North American librarianship when library services were still expanding, often into rural communities, through the bookmobile. This was partly due to the introduction of the *Library Services Act* in 1956, which promoted the expansion of library services to rural regions of the United States. This was also a time when the field was turning more deliberately to "science" as a way of pursuing professionalization. Falling outside of this professionalizing movement, Miss Dorothy's work is highly independent and directly responsive to the interests and needs of those around her. She is not subject to more established forms of administrative or institutional control that occur in more formal library environments, allowing her significant agency in her daily work.

Despite her autonomy, Miss Dorothy struggles with the work of running a bookmobile at times. For example, when heavy rains flood her route and her vehicle is stranded in the muck, she bemoans, "I thought I would be a real librarian" (Houston, 2011). As Miss Dorothy wrestles with the physicality of delivering materials across expansive areas, she laments that her work is not bound to a more permanent manifestation of a library. Ironically, in the very moment that Miss Dorothy practices "real" librarianship through community outreach, she questions her validity as a librarian because her work is not taking place within a library. Even when the town donates a building to be used as a library, she is not fully satisfied and sighs, "It will have to do" (Houston, 2011). However, the impact of her work is clear. For example, a letter from a former library patron assures Miss Dorothy, "Although you were never in charge of a fine brick library like the one in your hometown, you are a real librarian" (Houston, 2011). For her readers, being a "real" librarian is about providing materials and supporting literacy in ways that allows this small rural population to participate more fully in the wider world. While Miss Dorothy presents as a cisgender white woman, her story does offer powerful messages about librarianship as a calling that is deeply imbued with a commitment to providing opportunities for people to become literate and socially mobile, particularly in poor North American communities.

The stories of *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (2011) and the *Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) serve as important examples of activist librarians that challenge many of the fictional representations discussed in earlier chapters. Such images are



much needed to assist in the revisualization of librarians and their work. Drawing on the rich experience of real people, these particular biographical accounts, written for children, centre on the struggles of librarians performing their work rather than on specific relationships with children. Written by non-librarians, the authors of these works have produced feminist accounts that acknowledge the influential work of real women. These stories veer away from didactic tales meant to educate children about library behaviour to offer alternative views of what it is to do librarianship as something more active and political. *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005) and *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* (Houston, 2011) reveal librarianship as work that is inherently political.

## **Something to Say About Themselves: Talk Backing Back**

Although children's literature is one space where librarian auto/biographical accounts appear, messages about what it means to be a librarian are also framed within broader forums for older audiences. Within the field it is not uncommon for LIS scholars and practitioners to attribute the public perception of librarians, in part, to the ways librarians manage their own image (Balling, Henrichsen, & Skouvig, 2008; Gall, 2010; Jaćimović, & Petrović, 2014; Jennings, 2016; Kneale, 2009; Luthman, 2007; Tevis & Tevis, 2005). Yet, within such discussions, there are diverse views on the extent to which this is even possible. For example, while librarian Eric Jennings (2016) argues "we as a profession need to get over it [stereotypes] and ourselves" (p. 93), others, like DeFrain et al. (2016), invite librarians "to take more active roles in critically examining our work, our images, and our biases ... to continue to build these communities and create more to reshape the stereotypes and form a more inclusive profession for us all" (p. 218-219). Katherine Adams (2000) suggests that librarians express agency by deliberately reworking stereotypes through parody and mimicry to shift problematic representations like the "old-maid" into something more favorable to disarm the "power dynamic that created them in the first place" (p. 292). This "talk-back" is a way librarians challenge normative popular culture representations as a form of resistance in the production of knowledge.

The Internet and social media provide new opportunities "for librarians, individually or in small groups, to put forth a different image of the librarian" (Stevens, 2001, p. 62). This "talk back" takes place on various platforms including books, blogs, and other web applications like Tumblr. This is done consciously to celebrate, lament

and, even, reshape librarian images. While some, like LIS scholar and long-time librarian and educator, Joan Weihs (2016) believe that this has enabled librarians and academics to beat back “the challenge of people who believe libraries are not a worthwhile expenditure in the age of the Internet and e-books” (p. 10), it is also an effort to dig into questions about the value of librarians as professionals.

On blogs and website projects including *I work at a public library* (<http://iworkatapubliclibrary.com>), *Librarian by Day* (<https://librarianbyday.net/>), *Tattooed Librarians* (<http://tattooedlibrariansandarchivists.tumblr.com>), *Librarian Wardrobe: Breaking and Embracing the Librarian Stereotype* (<http://librarianwardrobe.com/>), *Librarian.net* (<http://www.librarian.net>), and *This is What a Librarian Looks Like* (<https://lookslikelibraryscience.tumblr.com/>)<sup>16</sup> librarians rework and challenge familiar images in popular culture. Some of these resources offer insight into how librarians attempt to dislodge stereotypical views of their work while others directly challenge stereotypical representations of librarian with alternative visuals of real librarians who show off their tattoos, brightly coloured hair, and, even, costumes. Sites like *This is What a Librarian Looks Like*, *Librarian by Day* and *Tattooed Librarians* request self-submissions from actual librarians as a way to challenge more totalizing views of librarians and offer spaces where contradictory images and subject positions can exist.

Other autobiographical materials, like librarian Gina Sheridan’s *I Work at a Public Library* (2014)<sup>17</sup>, are stories about librarian work encounters with the public.<sup>18</sup> By highlighting her experiences of the everyday and her interactions with library patrons, Sheridan (2014) began her project as a website (<http://iworkatapubliclibrary.com/>). Her writing reveals aspects of the emotional labour associated with service work, including

---

<sup>16</sup> A recent photojournalistic book titled *This is What a Librarian Looks Like* by Kyle Cassidy (2017) features brief personal accounts of active American librarians as a way of paying tribute to their work. There has been some controversy that the title and spirit of the work was lifted from an older project of the same name that is curated by women Bobbi Newman and Erin Downey Howerton. For Newman (2017), Cassidy’s book title is a disappointment and she writes, “To see a for-profit, exclusive book appropriate the name is heartbreaking” (para. 3). This reaction illustrates the contested space of librarianship that is negotiated by both librarians and non-librarians and the platforms used to bring alternative narratives into the milieu of popular culture.

<sup>17</sup> According to the author, sales reached 11,400 copies in December of 2016. (G. Sheridan, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

<sup>18</sup> Another example is Rosalind Warren, author of *Our Bodies, Our Shelves: A Collection of Library Humor* (2015).

dealing with unpleasant, difficult, and unusual people. In particular, Sheridan illustrates a facet of affective labour that is closely associated with femininity and requires librarians to induce or suppress “emotions in order to produce in others the feelings of safety, confidence, and well-being.” (Oksala, 2016, p. 291). In one entry titled “Book, The Elusive,” Sheridan (2014) writes:

MAN: Do you guys ever have book sales?

ME: We have a standing sale. The table is right over there.

MAN: Oh, I’ve already looked over there. There’s this book that I have been looking for for years. I can never find it at the library or garage sales or thrift stores.

ME: What is the title?

MAN: [leering] Braille Sex

ME: ---

MAN: --

ME: May I wait on someone else now?

MAN: I was just kidding. (p.44)

As part of information service work, librarians engage in reference interviews where they navigate conversations with patrons through questioning. In this excerpt, the man takes advantage of this practice to lead the librarian into his “joke”. Instead of directly confronting the man’s behaviour, the librarian asks for permission to end the exchange by serving someone else. Not only does this selection reveal the kinds of difficult situations librarians face in their work, but it also highlights the ways that interactions with the public can be harassing and sexist.

In an entry named “W, A Through,” Sheridan provides another peek into the daily frustrations of dealing with difficult behaviour in frontline service work:

I was at the checkout desk when two incredibly drunk men approached.

MAN 1: We’d like to reserve all the movies A through W.

ME: Well, that’s not really how it works. You can make a list of movies you want and we can order them for you.

MAN 2: Yeah, okay, A through W.

ME: That's not a thing. (p. 75)

Sheridan (2014) describes this exchange in the context of communication problems and suggests that this can be combatted with a “killer poker face” (p. 73). She illustrates that responding to ridiculous requests from inebriated patrons is just all in a day's work. While Sheridan's work may not re-write broader, hegemonic views about librarianship they can offer insight into how some choose to engage in the struggle. By illustrating that the library work is sometimes exasperating, repetitive, and unappreciated, Sheridan uses traditional print to bring to life the daily challenges of this work.

In a free and open-submission web project, *This is What a Librarian Looks Like*, (<http://looklikelibraryscience.tumblr.com>), librarians Bobbi L. Newman and Erin Downey Howerton host images of librarians “doing what they [love]” (Newman, 2017). These images consist of candid self-submitted photos and descriptions from library workers around the world. Figures 17 and 18 feature two examples from this site.



I'm an Archivist and Head of Cataloging in Buffalo, NY. I've been a librarian for 18 years. This photo was taken in 2000, while I was helping build the world's largest digital library, the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library (<https://industrydocuments.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/>), 14 million items from formerly secret tobacco company files.

Figure 17: A self portrait of a librarian from Buffalo, New York, describing her work in exposing secret Tobacco industry documents. From Looklikelibraryscience.com.



This is a Librarian at the Women's  
March in DC.

[www.deahreads.wordpress.com](http://www.deahreads.wordpress.com)

Figure 18: A self portrait of Deah, a librarian from Virginia participating in the 2017 Women's March in Washington, DC. From Looklikelibraryscience.com.

Inspired by the “This is what a scientist looks like,” a web project designed to “change the perception of who and what a scientist is or isn’t” (<http://looklikescience.tumblr.com/>), Newman and Howerton’s site features images and descriptions of library workers in everyday contexts, working in their libraries and enjoying life outside of libraries. Without careful curation or editing, Newman and Howerton’s effort to give voice to the multifarious and complex lives of librarians by offering a platform in which librarians show themselves as they wish to be seen.

Examining some of the submissions appearing on this site, reveals an array of photographs and brief autobiographical notes that represent an incredibly diverse range of library workers from around the world. While there are submissions from men and people of colour, the submissions are largely of able-bodied white women from the United States. This speaks to the overwhelming number of white cisgender women in the field and the limitations of an English-language project. The choices these librarians make in their image selections say a great deal about what messages they seek to convey about themselves. For example, the librarian appearing in Figure 17 voluntarily

and publicly mentions her work with an anti-tobacco non-profit and the University of California San Francisco's library's "Truth Tobacco Industry" collection in a caption below her photo.

Coinciding with her message about her work, this same New York librarian has uploaded a self-portrait that constructs her as a "resistor". In her photo (Figure 17), she stares into the distance, wearing a simple t-shirt that says "Librarian." The symbol for anarchy replaces the first "a" in "Librarian." Posting this entry in 2016 and having selected an image that was taken in 2000 (a time when this picture was most likely produced on film), suggests that this librarian put careful thought into her submission. Her t-shirt further informs us of her interest in librarianship as something that resists coercive or repressive regimes. Combined with her written description that pointedly discloses her participation in a disruptive project to liberate secret information held by tobacco companies, this librarian deliberately positions herself as an anarchist activist. The background of the photograph is neutral, she is not surrounded by books or card catalogues and, in so doing, she dislodges herself from narratives of librarians and images of them.

In fact, many of the posts on this site, feature librarians in a range of non-library contexts including the protesting librarian shown in Figure 18. This librarian has opted to reveal herself as a participant in the 2017 Women's March. Holding a poster of the civil rights activist Ida B. Wells, she positions herself as someone who actively participates in social resistance in a highly visible way. Both women in these examples provide images of themselves that uncouple them from physical library spaces and books, instead, conveying messages of resistance and political activism. Similar to the biographical picture books examined earlier, these visual narratives complicate librarian images by telling stories about people who work at making information accessible. Through these auto/biographical works, some of the challenges and concerns that librarians face are revealed to broader audiences. Though many of these images are of predominantly white women, pointing, perhaps, to diversity issues within the field, these platforms present opportunities for other voices to emerge.

## Summary

The samples examined in this chapter reveal that some facets of librarianship, like social activism, can be uncovered in biographical and autobiographical media. These works resist other, often fictionalized, accounts in popular media that convey other highly visible and negative messages about the profession. The voluntary autobiographical submissions by everyday library workers offers an interesting space to challenge idealized norms, including those of heterosexual femininity. However, if the field of librarianship lacks diversity in areas like ability, race, age, and gender, even these projects can be constrained in the scope of their disruption. Chapter 8 considers the findings and contributions of this study in relation to the “image problem” defined in Chapter 1 and offers suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 8. Discussion**

### **Introduction**

Returning to librarianship's roots and issues with its professional image and status, this chapter will consider how the educative effects of popular culture, known as public pedagogy, work with the theoretical framework of poststructural feminism to conduct a visual discourse analysis in addressing my original research questions. I will discuss my findings, their limits, and their implications for LIS, educators, scholars, and practitioners, while also contemplating how this study contributes to the broader feminist efforts in addressing social inequity and inequality. I also suggest areas for further research and make a call to action for creators of popular media that assumes that the social relations, uncovered in projects such as this, can be linked back to actual, material forms of action.

### **Revisiting Librarianship's "Image Problem"**

As a feminist project that unveils the social practices that perpetuate sexism and discrimination, this study builds on and advances the legacy of many other feminist educators and scholars. Engaging in evolving feminist poststructural analytical approaches that consider discourse as a fundamental element in the construction of knowledge has enabled me to question the persistence of troubling popular culture references to librarians. This undertaking rejects the narrative that librarians are to blame for their difficulties with professional status by revealing how contemporary messages about their labour, constructed through popular media, are gendered, often relegating their work as "women's work" that is deeply embedded in the field's past. This has changed little throughout the duration of this project and one does not have to look far to see that the devaluation of work associated with women and, more specifically, librarians continues. For example, Vancouver librarian Lindsey Krabbenhoft (2018) recently blogged her concern over how library understaffing prompts the use of "library outreach volunteers" that undermines the value of librarianship. As a children's librarian, she laments, "sometimes it feels like someone hears us singing 'Roly Poly' and our credibility goes out the door" (para 6). In a similar observation, children's librarian and scholar Tess Prendergast (2014) remarks, "the use of volunteers sends the message



that actual paid children's staff of all levels (librarians, library technicians and library assistants) are superfluous" (para 3). I hold that while this problem appears within the profession of librarianship, it is actually a problem for broader culture because these messages are created by and targeted towards audiences in broader society and are a continuation of gendered assumptions about work and women that are rooted in history.

As noted in my review of the literature in Chapter 2, early 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian and American women higher education scholars laid important groundwork for contemporary feminist educators who continue to raise concerns about the inequities faced by women in the labour force. They reveal how these inequities are, in part, derived from discourses of femininity that situate women as caregivers who are ideally suited to affective labour associated with the domestic realm. Through a poststructuralist analytical lens, some of these scholars, like Judith Butler (2002), Chris Weedon (1997) and Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b), advocate for change by digging into the social practices that organize knowledge and power. I link this to librarianship by documenting how its gendered history lends itself to the analytical approaches developed by feminist higher education scholars as a way of understanding how librarianship continues to wrestle with its professional status. In particular, I highlight literature that exposes how the education programs that evolved throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the absence of substantive LIS feminist scholarship, fueled scientized/managerialized views about LIS curricula to attract more men to the field.

There is little evidence in LIS published literature to suggest that efforts to "professionalize" have been successful, with much literature lamenting over the field's ongoing status problems, including how the field is often negatively represented in popular culture. LIS literature features numerous studies that are particularly focused on variations of old-maids, unfriendly, and unpleasant women stereotypes. Responding to Hannigan's (1994) call to reinsert women into LIS history and inspired by the extensive work of feminist higher education scholars, my review looks to literature that considers how gender and femininity, both socially constructed, circulate as discourses that continue to construct meaning about librarianship. These constructions manifest in the everyday of popular culture, an informal but educative site where people see representations and derive meaning about librarians including what they wear, the spaces they inhabit, and what they do. Smith (1993) argues that the relations of power that shape the experiences of subjects are "abstracted" from them through the use of

mediated texts. However, these texts – these diverse visual-verbal narratives – become organizing practices that intersect with lived experience and the world they are drawn from. Thus, there is great merit in a study of the visual-verbal narratives that construct “truth”; drawing on existing assumptions and reformulating others. It is in this locus of meaning-making that the public perception of librarians and their “image problem” is established.

## Discussion of Findings

In response to this problem and informed by images noted in the LIS literature, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are organized based on the recurring themes of old-maids/frumps, gatekeepers, and evil male librarians. Framed by these themes, my analyses were grounded in three central research questions, (1) What do these messages reveal about librarianship, gender, and professional identity (2) What discourses of femininity and masculinity circulate in popular cultural texts about librarians (3) In what ways do these discursive visual-verbal representations of librarians produce and resist gender stereotypes about librarianship as “women’s work”? Applying these questions to an analysis that used a range of contemporary U.S. popular culture fictional works shows that the social value of librarianship is often undermined by out of date characterizations. Furthermore, even when these representations do not rely on stereotypes like the “old-maid”, the underlying discourses of femininity, masculinity, and gender at play in this media still perpetuate librarianship as work that is irrelevant to everyday life, doing little to “elevate” the social status of the field. Idealized white heterosexual femininity operates throughout many of these representations and is only rebuffed through some examples of librarian auto/biographical media. In such examples, librarians are revealed to be more complex visual-verbal representations who perform work that has little to do with mothering and is focused on activities like supporting literacy, protesting in social movements, and making information accessible to the public.

This project affirms that the production of librarianship in popular media is unmistakably gendered. Further, this gendering establishes librarianship as work performed by women who have significant connections to mothering. This has deep roots in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century views about the domestic sphere and the value and importance of women’s work at that time. Gatekeeping women librarians appearing in works for very young children are examples of what Perry Nodelman (2002) coins

“maternal works” where larger-than-life and seemingly “wild” characters that gatekeeping librarians, concerned with admitting the “right” kind of library patron, view as unwelcome. Nodelman argues that this is a pervasive phenomenon in children’s literature where stories venerate “the kinds of boys that mother might most easily love – good, safe, nonrowdy boys who do not break rules and cause maternal anxiety” (p. 11).

Although works for older audiences shift from overt displays of mothering, there is a continued reliance on an assumption that this what librarians do. This is woven into the range of materials examined in this study. Librarian Ann Withers’ inability to control her desire, thus rejecting the mothering role, is precisely what makes her comically awkward and repulsive. Radrian Blackburn and Mr. Gabriel are particularly evil because they do not care about their patrons, they want to dominate them and, even, hurt them. In fact, by using his sex appeal to serve his nefarious ends, Mr. Gabriel is particularly diabolical. Lillian is unlikeable because she, too, fails to mother, showing no interest in helping a young patron and acting, instead, like a cantankerous outcast. The persistent and gendered view that the default librarian is responsible for the care of young people underscores the very shallow ways librarians continue, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to be characterized in popular media. Even when a librarian is featured as a main character in a movie, like Aurora Teagarden, her characterization fails to break free of gendered representations, including her rather outdated fear of spinsterhood. This fear, and the characterization of the other single librarians around her, resurface idealized discourses of femininity (e.g. attractiveness and marriageability as a form of success for women) that goes completely unchallenged. Helpful in understanding the roots of librarianship’s “image problem”, these narratives are, nevertheless, troubling.

This concern is derived from two major recurring themes uncovered in my analysis of fictional visual-verbal narratives of librarians (1) contemporary images of librarians are often located in the past, and (2) representations of librarians remain largely white, cisgender, heteronormative women. Disappointingly, these findings support previous work (e.g. Gaines; 2013; Lutz, 2005; Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014) that also suggest that gendered stereotypes are deeply rooted in western popular culture. Reinscribing white, heteronormative visual-verbal representations of librarians through the landscape of texts and other media forms is a problem because the way people read and talk about femininity, gender, race, class, etc. affect how it is sustained in the real, material world. For instance, the recycling of messages that locate librarianship in the

past where women toiled with idealized, white femininity as they sought out paid work in the public sphere, educates audiences to consider librarianship as culturally irrelevant. Even when librarians are portrayed as men their masculinity either butts up against what is understood to be the norm – femininity revealed in the caring/uncaring woman – or is repositioned as homosexual/effeminate/bookishness that work to support hegemonic masculine ideals.

There is hope, however. Auto/biographical projects offer an important disruptive space for new and shifted narratives of librarians. In the struggle over meaning that takes place in discourse, these auto/biographical stories subvert dominant messages and assumptions about librarianship that are often difficult to otherwise detect by those who may know little about librarianship. They feature real people taking action against forms of oppression and social disadvantage that complicate other problematic representations of librarians. These works offer new ways of thinking about librarians through stories of real, multidimensional people.

## **Contributions of the Study**

Within the context of higher education, the development of library and information studies programs, and the view that popular culture is a form of public pedagogy, this small study tackles the construction of “librarian” in mainstream media sources to better understand how discourses of femininity work in the construction of librarianship and the struggle for professional status. More broadly, this study points to the way women, and the work they perform, continue to be devalued through cultural forms that are anything but neutral. In fact, the examples explored here reveal how women librarians are *othered* in relation to men through a persistent emphasis of femininity that is often fixated on aspects of mothering and attractiveness. These messages are harmful because, as Gaines (2014) eloquently states:

Assuming that only women can “mother” or nurture is denying the real contributions of men, while continuing to propagate harmful stereotypes. Caring is a task that can be carried out by anyone, regardless of gender, and it takes real skill, not just a specific body type. Tackling this problem will change not only how we view librarianship but how we view all caring professions. (p. 102)

Caring work is devalued because it is women who are associated with such work. Contrary to the work celebrated in more marginal auto/biographical narratives, these messages work to silence diverse and meaningful contributions made by librarians, including their work in supporting literacy and access to information. While this suggests that self-blame over image is neither helpful nor productive, resistance that is informed by the field's gendered history and its ongoing construction can better equip librarians to face the discrimination that they face and also that which many in their communities also face.

Autobiographical forms provide librarians with an interesting and potentially feminist platform to express their own voice and, possibly, interrupt stereotypes. By offering alternative viewpoints like those expressed in *This is What a Librarian Looks Like* Tumblr site, librarians have an opportunity to provide more authentic accounts of the work they perform and to actively "talk back" to librarian stereotypes, without relying on others, outside of the field, to do this for them. This kind of work can raise the self-consciousness of the profession to assist those both in the field or considering entry into the field to think critically about the problems that influence librarianship's status in broader society. It may also be possible to construct more genuine images of librarians in children's works if those works are less focused on children and their "socialization" to libraries and librarians. Such totalizing and simplistic approaches to library work are likely to reinforce rather than disrupt problematic stereotypes for children.

Not only are the findings helpful in turning the "image problem" away from the profession's self-blame, they highlight a powerful silence in the Canadian chronicles of librarianship. The selection process used in this study reveals the hegemony of American popular materials in the English-speaking/reading world. This, combined with the paltry availability of Canadian narratives featuring librarians, suggests that Canadians have limited opportunities to learn something about librarianship through other cultural lenses, including their own. This reveals an important opportunity for Canadian creators to write-in new narratives about librarianship that may enrich the cultural milieu that audiences, of all ages, can experience. Furthermore, the limited resources focused on the historical development of librarianship in Canada suggests that there is a terrific silence in how the unique experiences and voices of Canadian librarians have unfolded.

This study reinserts gender and femininity as important organizing practices that shape the profession. Doing so, provides a sample of scholarship to other LIS scholars that illustrates how narratives of librarians appearing in popular materials assist in explaining the very material problems of the profession, exposing the underlying discourses that organize the material world. Further, in complicating the idea of stereotypes by considering portrayals of librarians as visual-verbal representations, I offer a new approach in thinking about how meaning is produced in popular media.

LIS educators may also benefit from this work which serves as an example of how assignments and other projects in undergraduate and graduate education might be fashioned around the application of critical media literacy as an analytical framework. This may assist in efforts to better understand the cultural significance of the works that librarians collect, organize, catalogue, and disseminate for their communities. Offering assignments that consider library practice as something that can embody “a more self-aware, introspective approach” (Quinn, 2007, p. 14) might assist students in thinking about the nature of their work and ask critical questions about representations of librarians across media texts. Possible questions in such analyses can include:

Who created this message?

What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

How might different people understand this message differently from me?

What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?

Why is this message being sent? (Center for Media Literacy, 2009)

If students of LIS programs are given such opportunities to contemplate representations of librarians, it can help new practitioners to avoid feelings of frustration and personal responsibility when they encounter the problematic ways society treats them. Furthermore, such assignments may work to further empower these new professionals to see their image as part of the politics of meaning, that is potentially transgressive, contradictory and unstable. Critical reflections on image might also offer those managing LIS program recruitment to consider the influence of media on who seeks out such programs.

## Directions for Future Research

As this project reveals, images of white women dominate popular representations of librarians. Intersectional feminist research is needed to both locate and analyze more diverse, complex representations of librarians and to interrogate whiteness as a racialized category that intersects with sexuality, class, age, and so on (e.g. Lew and Yousefi's (2017) *Feminists Among Us*). Works like web-based projects produced by real librarians attend to intersectionality, such as the *We Here* (<https://www.instagram.com/librarieswehere/>) Instagram project that features and supports librarians and archivists of colour. Incorporating intersectional feminisms can offer more complex analyses of librarians and their work. The incredible wealth of ever-expanding popular media also means that there are many emerging formats and forums available for study in which both non-librarians and librarians continue to construct, challenge, and play with the librarian image.

Assuming that popular culture is part of the “public pedagogy of everyday life” (Luke, 1996, p. 7) that construct cultural meaning and values, studying the decisions and attitudes of people is an important facet in developing a more comprehensive understanding of how librarianship is more broadly viewed. Examining the way people directly interact and construct meaning with popular media may then serve as another interesting direction for future LIS research. Such work might, for example, offer greater insight into how individuals make choices about entering the field of LIS.

## Personal Reflection

This educational process has forever altered my perception of the world by pulling back the curtain of my lived experiences and exposing the underlying machinery that shapes our lives. I attribute much of my growth to the work of many feminist scholars who have provided me with a new, and ever-expanding, lexicon that has unlocked new parts of my mind – parts that were frustrated by experiences I couldn't fully put in to words. Looking back on my own education, I was taught by mostly men in my undergraduate years as a history major, who never mentioned feminism or even gender as a consideration in historical analyses. Even though there were many more women teaching in my LIS degree program, the classroom was void of feminist discussions. While confident that I was entitled to the same opportunities as men, I

never had an adequate toolkit to describe the gendered circumstances that I confronted at work or in my personal life. I was prone to attributing the injustices I experienced or witnessed to isolated incidents and bad behaviour, even though these never seemed to truly explain the patterns and pervasiveness of such events. I experienced a growing inner restlessness during the first years of my career and I became more openly critical of the problems my students and colleagues were experiencing, without feeling fully equipped to tease out their root causes. The readings, classroom work, and writing processes embodied in this degree have honed my critical thinking skills and turned my attention to the profoundly deep and, often, moving work of feminist education scholars and the much more limited (but hopefully growing) body of feminist LIS scholars.

Unfortunately, this experience has also revealed that not much has changed in how gender is addressed in LIS scholarship and in Canadian library education programs. For example, faculty in some of the largest Canadian LIS programs are disproportionately male<sup>19</sup> and sociological topics like gender and race are largely invisible on course syllabi. There is also an absence of courses relating to service work, with great preference for courses focusing on management and business. This works at making the history of librarianship as a “women’s profession” invisible and, more troubling, fails to prepare new librarians with an honest discussion of how they may be treated as professionals. Service work remains a key component to library work and yet it is not highlighted in library education programs. While other aspects of librarianship, like collection development and information management are important, they function within the gendered realm of librarianship and its ties to service work.

Through the support and guidance of my professors, I have learned to embrace my partiality and my experiences as a daughter, wife, mother, teacher, librarian, and white cisgender woman. I have learned that who I am cannot be divorced from my scholarship and this, in fact, enriches it. I have become highly wary of scholarship that does not acknowledge partiality and I have become far more critical of work that does not acknowledge inequity, bias, and power relations. This has forever altered my teaching practice, for I now see teaching as a political act. Supported by my academic

---

<sup>19</sup> A scan of institutional full-time faculty pages reveals that the University of British Columbia’s iSchool is 38% male, the University of Toronto is 56% male, the University of Alberta is 57% male.



freedom, I am able to use my own educational experiences to guide my students into questioning their experiences and assumptions, helping them to identify their own privilege and oppression so that they, too, might feel a greater sense of personal empowerment when they venture into library work. This is particularly poignant for many of the students that I face because so many of them are mature women who have returned to school having experienced divorce, poverty, discrimination, loss, and all of the other many complications associated with adulthood.

I returned to school with a very ambitious and practical plan. I thought that I would use my education as a vehicle to operationalize recommendations for a national accreditation program that I had developed. Concerned about the many problems of low status and compensation for library technicians, I turned to accreditation as a solution, believing that more clearly articulated standards would help define roles. During my coursework, however, I began to see that the problems that I was trying to confront were products of much larger and ubiquitous social problems associated with race, gender, and class. I fully admit that my effort to improve the plight of library workers played into discourses of professionalization that I now understand to be highly problematic. I shudder to think that my effort to improve the plight of library workers might have actually had the opposite affect by playing into the very systems that have diminished the field's value. I also realize that had my LIS education encompassed more critical feminist theory and more conversations about its gendered history, I would have approached the problems of the field differently.

When I began my Ed. D studies, I was immediately introduced the work of Michel Foucault, which opened an entirely new domain of research and study to me. I was excited by the prospect of looking beyond the positivistic methods/methodologies used in LIS and heartened by work that looked at the social world as something that was not inevitable but something instable and potentially transgressive. With higher education the central focus of my course work, I turned my attention to leadership and leadership education in LIS programs. I was particularly curious about the ways leaders in librarianship are educated to lead in their graduate education and how this process may be gendered. I pursued this in my comprehensive exams and I was dismayed at how the field's highly gendered history seemed invisible in much of the LIS literature.

At this time, I was wading through the works of feminists like Judith Butler, Chris Weedon, and Dorothy Smith. I was moved by their passion and their tenacity to confront gender issues at a time when doing so was contentious and even risky. When I turned to LIS scholarship, I discovered that much of the feminist research was conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, after which progress seemed to slow. I was dismayed that a profession that is so incredibly female could be so silent on issues of gender! This pushed me to turn, more deliberately, to feminist concerns when I contemplated the shape and direction of my own dissertation.

Focused as this study is, I am very proud of my contribution. I have learned much about myself through this journey but I have also learned an enormous amount about the profession of librarianship, the power of visual-verbal texts, feminism, higher education, and the ongoing need for people to have voice in their own lives. This education has provided me with the tools and confidence to confront discrimination, be more sensitive to difference, more compassionate towards my students, and more courageous in expressing my views.

## Conclusion

I own a Nancy Pearl librarian action figure which comes with “shushing” action.<sup>20</sup> I hate it and I love it. Below, is a photo of my doll, still contained in its original package.

---

<sup>20</sup> Toy company Archie McPhee has sold more than 50,000 of these dolls which are now discontinued (N. Pearl, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

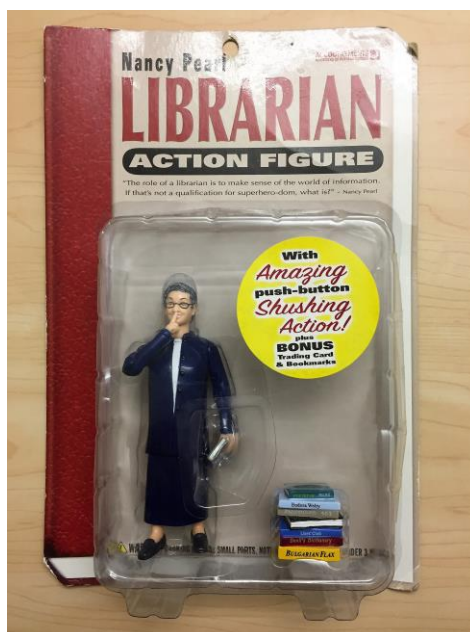


Figure 19: My edition of the Nancy Pearl action figure

Nancy Pearl is a physical embodiment of the librarian stereotype that features a white woman in a plain skirt and jacket, greyish hair in a bun, glasses and an arm that, when activated by a button on the back, swings up to her face in an unmistakable “shush”. I love it because it reminds me of all of the times people have teased me about what I do for a living while knowing that I am NOTHING like that doll. In addition, my librarian friends have posed it in comical library situations, playing with image by making their own narratives. I hate it because it reminds me that there are lots of people outside of librarianship who really believe that shushing is all librarians do. Nancy Pearl is actually a real librarian who modeled for the doll. She is well loved in her Seattle community and has had a role on public radio doing book reviews for many years. Unlike her plastic statue, she is undoubtedly an interesting and multifaceted woman. As seen in my dissertation, representations of librarians are more than just images or descriptions. They contain meaning and, through their actions, make more meaning that teaches audiences something about librarianship but also something about gender.

This discourse analysis of modern American librarian representations, inspired by feminist theorists and education scholars, reasserts the importance of women in the construction of librarianship. This is important to all genders because such work invites readers to consider how the underlying assumptions about the world contribute to the profession’s material problems of status and recognition. Librarians are not to blame for their status issues because librarians do not decide what they are worth and why they

are/are not valued. Aligning with more masculinized practices as a way of improving their societal “value”, undermines the value of the work many librarians perform. Further, as Harris (1992) points out, “attempts to relabel library work as something else ... is, essentially wrongheaded (and, indeed, may be construed as sexist) (p. 164). In other words, librarians who reorganize and rebrand their work may unintentionally risk undermining the very service work on which the profession is based and contribute to the devaluation of “women’s work”.

By empowering students in LIS programs to think about the social landscape and their role within it, they may discover new ways to confront the social problems that inform their own workplaces and the lives of those they work to support. As a profession that is deeply shaped by working with communities, librarianship has an obligation to turn to its own gendered history and development as it evolves in the face of new problems and challenges. There is also great space for more Canadian librarian voices. Although there is no indication that popular culture references are changing quickly or dramatically, librarians have the benefit of being deeply and widely connected to their communities where conversations about the value of service work and the value of women can occur.



Figure 20: Author Selfie: This is what a librarian looks like.

## References

- Abedinifard, M. (2016). Ridicule, gender hegemony, and the disciplinary function of mainstream gender humour. *Social Semiotics*, 26(3), 234-249. doi: 10.1080/10350330.2015.1134817
- Adams, K. C. (2000). Loveless frump as hip and sexy party girl: A re-evaluation of the old-maid stereotype. *Library Quarterly*, 70(3), 287-301. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4309439>
- ALA-APA. (2011). *Library workers: facts and figures*. Retrieved from <http://ala-apa.org/files/2012/03/Library-Workers-2011.pdf>
- Allan, E. (2010). Feminist poststructuralism meets policy analysis. In E. Allan, S. Iverson, & R. Ropers-Huiman (Eds.) *Reconstructing Policy in Higher Education* (pp. 11-35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- American Library Association. (2017). National Bookmobile Day 2017 – Bookmobiles at a glance. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/olos/nbdhome>
- Apple, M. (1985). Teaching and women's work: A comparative historical and ideological analysis. *Teachers College Record* 86(3), 455-7.
- Arant, W., & Benefiel, C.R. (Eds.). (2002). *The image and role of the librarian*. New York: Routledge.
- Attebury, R.I. (2010). Perceptions of a profession: Librarians and stereotypes in online videos. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. (October). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/433>
- Axelrod, P. (1989). *Youth, university and Canadian society: Essays in the school history of higher education*. Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press. Retrieved from <https://books-scholarsportal-info>
- Badovinac, B., & Južnič, P. (2011). Aspects of representation of library and information science. *New Library World*, 112(7-8), 293-312.
- Bartlett, J. A. (2014). Coming to terms with librarian stereotypes and self-Image. *Library Leadership & Management*, 29(1), 1-5.
- Barnathan, M., & Aidoo, B. (Producers). Levy, S. (Director). (2014). *Night at the museum: Secret of the tomb* [Motion picture]. United States: Twentieth Century Fox.

- Baxter, M. (2014). *Stereotype or archetype? The librarian in popular culture*. (Master's thesis). Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Retrieved from <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:3d0192fc-bb11-4bef-8832-dfbd65cef26b>
- Blackburn, H. (2015a). Factors that influence male Millennials to become professional librarians (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/crisslibfacpub/13/>
- Blackburn, H. (2015b). Gender stereotypes male librarians face today. *Library Worklife: HR E-News for Today's Leaders*, 12(9). Retrieved from <http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/past-issues/volume-12-no-9-september-2015/>
- Blackmore, J. (1999). *Troubling women: Feminism, leadership and educational change*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Bobrovitz, J., & Griebel, R. (2001). Still mousy after all these years the image of the librarian in the 21st century. *Felicitier*, 47(5), 260-263.
- Bouchard, L., Dauterive, J., Jacobson, S., Molyneux, E., Molyneux, W., Schlesinger, H., Smith, N., Schroeder, J. (Writers). (2011). *Bob's Burgers* [Television series]. Los Angeles, CA: Fox Broadcasting.
- Bourg, C. (2014, March 3). The unbearable whiteness of librarianship [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://chrisbourg.wordpress.com/2014/03/03/the-unbearable-whiteness-of-librarianship/>
- Brand, B. (1996). Pratt Institute Library School: The perils of professionalization. In S. Hildenbrand (Ed.) *Reclaiming the American library past, writing the women in* (pp. 251-278). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.
- Brown, L.M., Lamb, S., & Tappan, M.B. (2009). *Packaging boyhood: Saving our sons from superheroes, slackers, and other media stereotypes*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Brown, T. (2011). Using film in teaching and learning about changing societies. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 30(2), 233-247. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/02601370.2010.547615>
- Buckley, K. (2008). The truth is in the red files: An overview of archives in popular culture. *Archivaria: The Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists*, 66, 95-123. Retrieved from <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13187/14453>
- Burdick, J., & Sandlin, J. A. (2013). Learning, becoming, and the unknowable: Conceptualizations, mechanisms, and process in public pedagogy literature. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 142-177. doi:10.1111/curi.12001

- Bure, C., Head, J., & Wood, M. (Producers) & Wood, M. (Director). (2015). *A bone to pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery* [Motion picture]. United States: Muse Entertainment Enterprises.
- Burns, G. (1998). *Librarians in fiction: A critical bibliography*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Butler, J. (2002). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* [Ebook]. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com>
- BYUTV. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from <http://www.byutv.org/about>
- Cadmus F. (2011). Things in common: Challenges of the 19th and 21st century librarians" (2011). *Librarian Scholarship Series. Paper 8*, 193-209.. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylss/8>
- Cahill, Susan (2010). Through the looking glass: Fairy-tale cinema and the spectacle of femininity in *Stardust* and *The Brothers Grimm*. *Marvels & Tales*, 24(1), 57-67. Retrieved from Project MUSE.
- Carmichael, J. V. (1992). The male librarian and the feminine image: A survey of stereotype, status, and gender perceptions. *Library & Information Science Research*, 14(4), 411-446. Retrieved from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.457.5892&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Carmichael, J. V. (1995). The gay librarian: A comparative analysis of attitudes towards professional gender issues. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 30(2), 11-57
- Cassin, M. (2004). Gender and herding cats: women and men in academic administration. In M. Reimer (Ed.) *Inside corporate U: Women in the academy speak out* (153-173). Toronto: Sumach Press.
- CAUT. (2014, May). *CAUT Educational Review*. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Retrieved from [https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-education-review-2017-05\\_0.pdf](https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-education-review-2017-05_0.pdf)
- Cavanagh, S. (2007). *Sexing the teacher: School sex scandals and queer pedagogies*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Center for Media Literacy. (2009). *CML medialit kit: CML's five key questions and core concepts(Q/Tips) for consumers and producers*. Retrieved from [http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/QTIPS%20CHART\\_0.pdf](http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/QTIPS%20CHART_0.pdf)



- Chambers, N., Kashefpakdel, E., Rehill, J., & Percy, C. (2018). *Drawing the future: Exploring the career aspirations of primary school children from around the world*. London, UK: Education and Employers. Retrieved from <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DrawingTheFuture.pdf>
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K., McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785-810. doi:10.1086/669608
- Coates, K. (2004). *Looking glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, desire, and subjectivity in children's literature*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Coleman, S. J. (2014). Eminently suited to girls and women: The numerical feminization of public librarianship in England 1914-31. *Library & Information History*, 30(3), 195-209.
- Connell, R.W. (2000). *The men and the boys*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Connell, R.W., & Messerschmidt, J. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640853>
- Conway, J. K. (1974). Perspectives on the history of women's education in the United States. *History of Education Quarterly*, 14(1), 1-12. doi: 10.2307/367602
- Critlib. (2014, September 23). Identity and gendered/intersectional status stereotypes. *Critlib: Critical Librarianship: In real life & on the twitters*. Retrieved from <http://critlib.org/identity-and-genderedintersectional-status-stereotypes/>
- Davis-Kendrick, Kaetrena D. (2009) The African American male librarian: Motivational factors in choosing a career in library and information science. *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian*, 28(1-2), 23-52. doi: 10.1080/01639260902862066
- Davis, M. E. (1991). The Portrayal of librarianship in literature intended for children, preschool through third grade (Master's thesis). University of Wyoming, Laramie
- DeCandido, G. A. (1999). Bibliographic good vs. evil in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *American Libraries*, 30(8), 44-47. Retrieved from: <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/>
- DeFrain, E., Hathcock, A., Masland, T., Pagowsky, N., Pho, A., Rigby, M., & Roberto, K. R. (2016). Reader response. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 23(2), 217-220. doi: 10.1080/10691316.2016.1188609
- Delong, K. (2013). Career advancement and writing about women librarians: A literature review. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 8(1), 59-75.

- Department for Professional Employees. (2018). Library workers: Facts & figures. Retrieved from [http://dpeaflcio.org/programs-publications/issue-fact-sheets/library-workers-facts-figures/#\\_ednref25](http://dpeaflcio.org/programs-publications/issue-fact-sheets/library-workers-facts-figures/#_ednref25).
- Dewey, M. (1979). Women in libraries: How they are handicapped. In K. Weibel, K. Heim, & D. Ellsworth (Eds.) *The roles of women in librarianship 1876-1976: The entry, advancement, and struggle for equalization in one profession* (pp. 10-12). Phoenix, AZ: Orynx Press.
- Dickinson, T. E. (2002). Looking at the Male Librarian Stereotype. *Reference Librarian*, 78, 97-110. Doi: 10.1300/J120v37n78\_07
- Donnelly, C. C. (2016). Re-visioning negative archetypes of disability and deformity in fantasy: Wicked, Maleficent, and Game of Thrones. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 36(4). doi:10.18061/dsq.v36i4.5313
- Dockett, S., Perry, B., & Whitton, D. (2010). What will my teacher be like? Picture storybooks about starting school. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(3), 33-41.
- Duranti, L. (2007). Archives as place. *Archives & Social Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 1, 445-466. Retrieved from [https://archivo.cartagena.es/doc/Archivos\\_Social\\_Studies/Vol1\\_n0/07-duranti\\_archives.pdf](https://archivo.cartagena.es/doc/Archivos_Social_Studies/Vol1_n0/07-duranti_archives.pdf)
- Eisenmann, L. (2018). Building the new scholarship of women's higher educational history, 1965–1985. In M. Nash (Eds) *Women's Higher Education in the United States. Historical Studies in Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: [https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1057/978-1-137-59084-8\\_12](https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1057/978-1-137-59084-8_12)
- Eisenmann, L. (2016). "Honorary men" and incidental students: Women in post-World War II American higher education. In L. Panayotidis & P. Stortz (Eds.) *Women in Higher Education, 1850-1970* (pp. 251-274). New York, NY: Routledge.
- England, P., & Herbert, M. (1993). The pay of men in "female" occupations: Is comparable worth for only women? In C. Williams (Ed.) *Doing "women's work: Men in nontraditional occupations* (pp. 28-48). Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- FAHE (n.d.). *Appalachian poverty*. Retrieved from <https://fahe.org/appalachian-poverty/>
- Falconer, R. (2009). *The crossover novel: Contemporary children's fiction and its adult readership*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fernando, D.W.A., & Cohen, L. (2013). Respectable femininity and career agency: Exploring Paradoxical Imperatives. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 21(2), 149-164. Doi: 0.1111/gwao.12027

- Fisher, R., Harris, A., & Jarvis, C. (2008). *Education in popular culture: Telling tales on teachers and learners*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1985). Reading the world and reading the word: An interview with Paulo Freire. *Language Arts*, 62(1), 15-21. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/41405241>
- Gaines, A. (2014). That's women's work: Pink collar professions, gender, and the librarian stereotype. In N. Pagowsky & M. Rigby (Eds.), *The librarian stereotype: Deconstructing perceptions and presentations of information work* (pp. 85-130). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association.
- Gall, D. (2010). Librarian like a rock star: Using your personal brand to promote your services and reach distant user. *Journal of Library Administration*, 50(5-6), 628–637. doi: doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2012.707952
- Garrison, D. (1979). The tender technicians: The feminization of public librarianship, 1876-1905). In K. Weibel, K. Heim & D. Ellsworth (Eds.), *The Role of Women in Librarianship 1876-1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession* (pp.201-221). Phoenix, AZ: Orynx Press.
- Gassman, J. (2016). *Do not bring your dragon to the library*. North Mankato, MN: Capstone Young Readers.
- Girmscheid, L., & Schwartz, M. (2014, July 3). Payday: LJ Salary Survey. *Library Journal*. Retrieved from <https://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/07/careers/payday-lj-salary-survey-2014>
- Giroux, H. & Simon, R. (1989a). Popular culture as a pedagogy of pleasure and meaning. In H. Giroux and R. Simon (Eds.), *Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life* (pp. 1-29). New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, H. & Simon, R. (1989b). Schooling, popular culture, and a pedagogy of possibility. In H. Giroux and R. Simon (Eds.), *Popular culture, schooling, and everyday life* (pp.219-235), New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, H. (1994). *Disturbing pleasures: Learning popular culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. (2003). Public Pedagogy and the politics of resistance: Notes on a critical theory of educational struggle. *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 35(1), 5-16. doi: 10.1111/1469-5812.00002
- Glazer-Raymo, J. (1999). *Shattering the myths: Women in academe*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Glazer-Raymo, J. (2008). *Unfinished agendas: New and continuing gender challenges in higher education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gordon, R. S. (2004). The men among us. *Library Journal*, 129(11), 49.
- Gray, S. W. (2012). Locating librarianship's identity in its historical roots of professional philosophies: Towards a radical new identity for librarians of today (and tomorrow). *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions* 39(1) 37–44. doi: 10.1177/0340035212472946
- Griffith, A., & Smith, D.E. (2005). *Mothering for schooling*. New York : RoutledgeFalmer.
- Halberstam, J. (1995). *Skin shows: Gothic horror and the technology of monsters*. London: Duke University Press.
- Hale, E. (2015). Reading animals in Margaret Mahy's poems, picture books, and stories for younger readers. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 39(2), 186-203. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2015.0019>
- Hall, S. (2001). The spectacle of the 'Other'. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. Yates (Eds.). *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Hannigan, J. A. (1994). A feminist standpoint for library and information science. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 35(4), 297-319. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40323024>
- Harris, R. (1992). *Librarianship: The erosion of a woman's profession*. Norwood, NJ: Alex Publishing.
- Harris, R. (1993). Gender power and the dangerous pursuit of professionalism. *American Libraries*, 24(9) 874-876.
- Henderson, D. (2004). University of Toronto Faculty of Information Studies. *ELAN: Ex Libris Association Newsletter*. 9-13. Retrieved from [https://www.exlibris.ca/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=wiki:newsletters:elan\\_special\\_summer\\_2004.pdf](https://www.exlibris.ca/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=wiki:newsletters:elan_special_summer_2004.pdf)
- Hendrickson, F. (2017). *Ancient Libraries and Renaissance Humanism: The De Bibliothecis of Justus Lipsius*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Heylman, K. M. (1975). Librarians in juvenile literature. *School Library Journal*, 21(9), 25-28. Retrieved from <http://www.slj.com/>
- Hildenbrand, S. (Ed). (1996). *Reclaiming the American library past, writing the women in*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.
- Hildenbrand, S. (1999). The information age vs. gender equity. *Library Journal*, 124(7), 44-47. Retrieved from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com>

- Hildenbrand, S. (2000). Library Feminism and library women's history: Activism and scholarship, equity and culture. *Libraries and Culture*, 35(1), 51-65.
- Houston, G. (2011). *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Image. (2009). *Oxford English dictionary* [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]. Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com>
- Ingles, E.B., De Long, K., Humphrey, C., & Sivak, A. (2005). *The future of human resources in Canadian libraries*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Library Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs/8RsFutureofHRLibraries.pdf>
- Iverson, S.V. (2011). Glass ceilings and sticky floors: Women and advancement in higher education. In J.L. Martin (Ed.). *Women as Leaders in Education: Succeeding Despite Inequity, Discrimination, and Other Challenges* (pp. 79–106). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Iverson, S.V. (2010). Producing diversity: A policy discourse analysis of diversity action plans. In E. Allan, S. Iverson, & R. Ropers-Huiman (Eds.) *Reconstructing Policy in Higher Education* (pp. 11-35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ivy, B. (1985). Identity, power, and hiring in a feminized profession. *Library Trends*, 34, 291-307
- Jaćimović, J., & Petrović, R. (2014). Stereotypes of librarians in the general public, in popular culture and scientific literature of the librarianship. *Infotheca*, 15(1), 56a-66a.
- Jacobs, C. E. (2016). Developing the “oppositional gaze”: Using critical media pedagogy and black feminist thought to promote black girls’ identity development. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 225–238.
- Jaeger, P. T., Bertot, J.C., & Subramaniam, M. (2013). Preparing Future Librarians to Effectively Serve Their Communities. *Library Quarterly*, 83(3), 243-248. Retrieved from <https://web-a-ebscohost-com>
- Jaeger, P. T., Bertot, J.C., Kodama, C.M., Katz, S.M., & Decoster, E.J. (2011). Describing and measuring the value of public libraries: The growth of the Internet and the evolution of library value. *First Monday*, 16(11). Retrieved from <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3765/3074>
- Jennings, E. (2016). The librarian stereotype: How librarians are damaging their image and profession. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 23(1), 93-100. doi: 10.1080.106913162016.1134241
- Jubas, K., Taber, N., & Brown, T. (Eds.) (2015). *Popular culture as pedagogy: Research in the field of Adult Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publications.

- Kandiuk, M. (2014). Promoting racial and ethnic diversity among Canadian academic librarians. *College and Research Libraries*, 75(4), 492-556. doi:10.5860/crl.75.4.492
- Keer, G., & Carlos, A. (2014). The stereotype stereotype: Our obsession with librarian representation. In N. Pagowsky & M. Rigby, M. (Eds), *The librarian stereotype: Deconstructing perceptions and presentations of information work* (pp.63-83). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, ALA.
- Kehler, M. (2009). Boys friendships, and knowing "It wouldn't be unreasonable to assume I am gay". In W. Martino, M. Kehler, & M. Weaver-Hightower (Eds.), *The Problem with Boys' Education*, (198-223). New York: Routledge.
- Kendall, L. (2011). "White and Nerdy": Computers, race, and the nerd stereotype. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 44(3), 505-524. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00846.x
- Kimmel, M. S., & M. Mahler. (2003). Adolescent masculinity, homophobia, and violence: Random school shootings, 1982-2001. *American Behavioral Scientist* 46(10), 1439-58.
- Kirkus Reviews. (2016, May 4). [Review of the book *Do not bring your dragon to the library* by Julie Gassman]. Retrieved from <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/julie-gassman/do-not-bring-your-dragon-to-the-library/>
- Kitchen, B. (2000). Librarian's image in children's fiction. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ERIC. (ERIC Number: EJ413630).
- KitKat. (2017, June 9) Library break [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/308707749443143536/>
- Knudsen, M. (2006). *Library lion*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press
- Knudsen, M. (2014). *Evil librarian*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Kneale, R. (2009). *You don't look like a librarian: Shattering stereotypes and creating positive new images in the internet age*. Medford, N.J.: Information Today Inc.
- Koller, V. (2008). Not just a colour: Pink as a gender and sexuality marker in visual communication. *Visual Communication*, 7(4), 395-423. doi: 10.1177/1470357208096209
- Krabbenhof, L. (2018, June 8). Community outreach and the devaluation of children's librarians [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://jbrary.com/>
- Koss, M. (2015). Diversity in contemporary picture books: A content analysis. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 41(1), 32-42. Retrieved from <https://literature-proquest-com>

- Le Guin, U. K. (2004). Cheek by jowl Animals in children's literature. *Children & Libraries. The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 2(2), 20-30.
- Lee, A. (1994). Gender and text in educational research. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 21(3), p. 25-46.
- Lew, S., & Yousefi, B. (Eds.). (2017). *The Feminists Among Us: Resistance and Advocacy in Library Leadership*. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.
- Lindsay, M. (2011). [Review of the book: *You don't look like a librarian: Shattering stereotypes and creating positive new images in the Internet age* by Ruth Kneale]. *Library Review*, 60(4), 348-350. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1108/00242531111127910>
- Lipson, E. (2005, March 17). Iraqi librarian becomes cultural hero in 2 children's picture books. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca>
- Luke, C. (Ed.). (1996). *Feminisms and pedagogies of everyday life*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Luthmann, A. (2007). Librarians, professionalism and image: Stereotype and reality. *Library Review*, 56(9), 773-780. doi: 10.1108/00242530710831211
- Lutz, C. A. (2005). *From old maids to action heroes: Librarians and the meanings of librarian stereotypes* (Master's thesis, University of Maryland). Retrieved from <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/2670/umi-umd-2587.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Lynch, M. (1999). Library directors: Gender and salary (1999). ALA Office for Research Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/research/librarystaffstats/diversity/libdirectors>
- Maack, M.N. (1985). Comparative methodology as a means for assessing the impact of feminization and professionalization on librarianship. *Libri: International Journal of Libraries and International Services*, 17(1), 5-16.
- Maack, M.N. (1997). Toward a new model of the information professions: Embracing empowerment. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 38(4), 283-302. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/40324190>
- Maack, M.N. (2002). Documenting one hundred twenty years of writing on women's entry, advancement, and struggle for equalization in librarianship. *Library Quarterly*, 72(2), 241-246. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com>.
- Majid, S., & Haider, A. (2008). Image problem even haunts hi-tech libraries Stereotypes associated with library information professionals in Singapore. *Aslib Proceedings*, 60(3), 229-41. doi: 10.1108/00012530810879105

- Marshall, E. (2004). Stripping the wolf: Rethinking representation of gender and sexuality in children's literature. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(3), 256-270. doi:10.1598/RRQ.39.3.1
- Marshall, E. (2016). Monstrous schoolteachers women educators in popular cultural texts. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(3), 460-477. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2015.1111919
- Marshall University Libraries. (2016, July 26). Banned books. Retrieved from <http://www.marshall.edu/LIBRARY/bannedbooks/books/librarianofbasra.asp>
- Maynard, S., and McKenna, F. (2005). Mother Goose, Spud Murphy and the Librarian Knights: Representations of librarians and their libraries in modern children's fiction. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 37(3), 119-129. doi: 10.1177/0961000605057475
- McCabe, C. (2016, July 15). Children's book prompt calls for censorship in Florida. Comic Book Legal Defence Fund. Retrieved from <http://cbldef.org/2015/07/childrens-books-prompt-calls-for-censorship-in-new-york/>
- McDonough, P. (2009). Television and beyond a kid's eye view. *Nielsen*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/television-and-beyond-a-kids-eye-view.html>
- McGee, M. (2006). *Winston the Book Wolf*. London: Bloomsbury Children's Books.
- McNally, P. (2004). McGill University: Graduate school of library and information studies. *ELAN: Ex Libris Association Newsletter*. 3-7. Retrieved from [https://www.exlibris.ca/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=wiki:newsletters:elan\\_special\\_summer\\_2004.pdf](https://www.exlibris.ca/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=wiki:newsletters:elan_special_summer_2004.pdf)
- McReynolds, R. (1985). A heritage dismissed. *Library Journal*, 110(18), 25-31.
- Meadows, J. (2008). Bookmobiles: Providing equitable service to all. In D. Charbanneau (Ed.) *Global information inequalities: Bridging the information gap* (pp. 151-156). Cambridge, UK: Chandos.
- Melson, G. F. (2009). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Melson, G. F. (2013). Children and wild animals. In P. J. Kahn, P. H. Hasbach, P. J. Kahn, P. H. Hasbach (Eds.), *The rediscovery of the wild* (pp. 93-117). Cambridge, MA, US: The MIT Press.
- Middleton, S. (1999). Feeling blue, seeing red, and turning fifty. In L.K Christian-Smith & K.S. Kellor (Eds.) *Everyday knowledge and uncommon truths* (pp. 191-218). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.



- Midkiff, B. (2015). Exploring women faculty's experiences and perceptions in higher education: The effects of feminism. *Gender & Education*, 27(4), 376-390. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2015.1028902>
- Mills, S. (2004). *Discourse: The new critical idiom*. New York: Routledge.
- Mirza, H. S. (2015). Decolonizing higher education: Black feminism and the intersectionality of race and gender. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 7/8, 1-12. <https://doaj-org>.
- Mirza, R., & Seale, M. (2011). Watchers, punks and dashing Heroes: Representations of male librarians in Generation X mass culture. In M.K. Wallace, R. Tolley-Stokes, & E.S. Estep (Eds.), *The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity* (pp. 134-147) [electronic book]. McFarland and Co.
- Mitts-Smith, D. (2010). *Picturing the wolf in children's literature*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Monroe, S.S. (2012.) A world of words and wisdom: Exploring the global community of libraries and remarkable librarians in children's literature. *Childhood Education*, 88(2), 108-113. doi:10.1080/00094056.2012.662127
- Moore, J., Elkins, A., & Boelens, H. (2017). Libraries on the move: By land, by sea, and by air. *International Association of School Librarianship. Selected Papers from the ...Annual Conference*, 203-211. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com>
- Morrison, H. (2011). Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile (Review). *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, 64(6), 279-280.
- Morrison, E., Rudd, E. & Nerad. (2011). Onto, up, off the academic faculty ladder: The gendered effects of family on career transitions for a cohort of Social Science Ph.D.s. *The Review of Higher Education* 34(4), 525–553. doi:10.1353/rhe.2011.0017.
- Newman, B.L. (2017, June 5). This is what a librarian looks like [Blog post]. *Librarian by Day*. Retrieved from <https://librarianbyday.net/2017/06/05/this-is-what-a-librarian-looks-like-2/>
- Newman, B.L., & Howerton, E.D. (n.d.). *This is what a librarian looks like* [Tumblr]. Retrieved from <https://lookslivelibraryscience.tumblr.com/>
- Newmeyer, J. (1976). The image problem of the librarian: Femininity and social control. *Journal of Library History*, 11(1), 44-67.
- Nodelman, P. (2002). Making boys appear: The masculinity of children's fiction. In J. Stephens (Ed.), *Ways of being male: Representing masculinities in children's literature and film* (pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Notten, N., Kraaykamp, G., & Konig, R. P. (2012). Family media matters: Unraveling the intergenerational transmission of reading and television tastes. *Sociological Perspectives*, 55(4), 683-706. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sop.2012.55.4.683>
- Oksala, J. (2016). Affective labor and feminist politics. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 41(2), 281-303. doi: doi.org/10.1086/682920
- Pagowsky, N., & DeFrain, E. (2014, June 3). Ice ice baby: Are librarian stereotypes freezing us out of instruction?. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. Retrieved from <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/ice-ice-baby-2/>.
- Pagowsky, N., & Rigby, M. (2014). Contextualizing ourselves: The identity politics of the librarian stereotype. In N. Pagowsky & M. Rigby (Eds.), *The librarian stereotype: Deconstructing perceptions and presentations of information work* (pp.1-38). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, ALA.
- Pawley, C. (2005). Gorman's gauntlet: Gender and crying wolf. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 46(4), 304-311. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/40323910>
- Patton, L. D., Crenshaw, K., Haynes, C., & Watson, T. N. (2016). Why we can't wait: (Re)examining the opportunities and challenges for black women and girls in education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 194-198.
- Peresie, M., & Alexander, L.B. (2005). Librarian stereotypes in young adult literature. *Young Adult Library Services*, 4(1), 24-31. Retrieved from <http://www.yalsa.ala.org/yals/>
- Perkins, L. (2017). The black female professoriate at Howard University: 1926-1977. In M. Nash (Eds) *Women's Higher Education in the United States. Historical Studies in Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: [https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1057/978-1-137-59084-8\\_12](https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1057/978-1-137-59084-8_12)
- Pinborough, J. (2013). *Miss Moore thought otherwise: How Anne Carroll Moore created libraries for children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Piper, P.S., & Collamer, B.E. (2001). Male librarians: Men in a feminized profession. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 27(5), 406-411. doi: 10.1016/S0099-1333(01)00226-9
- Pompper, D. (2016). *Rhetoric of femininity: Female body image, media, and gender role stress/conflict*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Posner, B. (2003). Know-it-all librarians. *Reference Librarian*, 37(78), 111-129. doi: 10.1300/J120v37n78\_08

- Poulin, E. (2008). A whole new world of freaks and geeks: Libraries and librarians on YouTube. *Libres: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 18(2). 1-11. Retrieved from [http://libres-ejournal.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Vol18\\_I2\\_Poulin\\_FINAL.pdf](http://libres-ejournal.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Vol18_I2_Poulin_FINAL.pdf)
- Prendergast, T. (2014, August 27). The new “volunteer-delivered” storytime...not so much... [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://inclusiveearlyliteracy.wordpress.com/2014/08/27/the-new-volunteer-delivered-storytime-not-so-much>
- Publisher's Weekly* (2011). [Review of the book *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile* by Gloria Houston]. Retrieved from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-06-029155-6>
- Pulliam, J. (2014). *Monstrous bodies: Feminine power in young adult horror fiction*. Jefferson NC, US: McFarland. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca>
- Putnam, H. (1979). The prospect: An address before a graduating class of women. In K. Weibel, K. Heim, & D. Ellsworth (Eds.) *The roles of women in librarianship 1876-1976: The entry, advancement, and struggle for equalization in one profession* (pp. 56-66). Phoenix, AZ: Orynx Press.
- Quinn, B. (2007). Cognitive and affective processes in collection development. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 51(1), 5-15.
- Quinn, M. E. (2014). *Historical dictionary of librarianship*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Radford, M.L. (2010, May 21). Librarian stereotypes, alive & well, alas. *Librarian Garden* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://librarygarden.net/author/mradford/>
- Radford, M.L., & Radford, G. (1997). Power, knowledge, and fear feminism, Foucault, and the stereotype of the female librarian. *Library Quarterly*, 67(3), 250-266. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/lq/current>
- Radford, G., & Radford, M.L. (2001). Libraries, librarians and the discourse of fear. *Library Quarterly*, 71(3), 299-329. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/lq/current>
- Radford G., Radford, M.L., & Alpert, M. (2015). Slavoj Žižek, Rex Libris, and the Traumatic Real: Representations of the library in a modern comic book series. *Journal of Documentation*, 71(6), p. 1265-288. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JD-08-2014-0116>
- Record, A., & Green, R (2008) Examining gender issues and trends in library management from the male perspective. *Library Administration and Management*, 22(4), 193-198.

- Revitt, E., Schrader, A., & Kaufman, A. (2016). 2016 Census of Canadian academic librarians user guide and results summary. Toronto, ON: Canadian Association of University Librarians. Retrieved from [https://capalibrarians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Census\\_summary\\_and\\_user\\_guide\\_December\\_16\\_2016.pdf](https://capalibrarians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Census_summary_and_user_guide_December_16_2016.pdf)
- Robinson, L.T.K. (2006). Curmudgeons and Dragons: A content analysis of the Australian print media's portrayal of the information profession 2000 to 2004. *Libres: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 16(2), 1-19.
- Rogers, R. (2004). An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (pp.1-18). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rose, G. (2012). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Reese, D. (2016, March 23). Eric Jennings, Sherman Alexie, and damaging perceptions about alcohol use amongst native peoples [Web log post]. *American Indians in Children's Literature*, Retrieved from <http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2016/03/eric-jennings-sherman-alexie-and.html>
- Samuelsson, J. (2012). Too few male librarians or lack of diversity?. *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*, 45(3), 22-23. Retrieved from <http://ebscohost.com>
- Sanderson, B. (2007). *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates.
- Sandlin, J. A., O'Malley, M. P., & Burdick, J. (2011). Mapping the complexity of public pedagogy scholarship: 1894–2010. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(3), 338–375.
- Sandlin, J.J., Shultz, B. & Burdick J. (2010). Understanding, mapping, and exploring the terrain of public pedagogy. In J.J Sandlin, B. Shultz, & J. Burdick (Eds.), *The handbook of public pedagogy: Education and learning beyond schooling* (pp. 1-9). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sandlin, J. J., Wright, R. R., & Clark, C. (2013). Reexamining Theories of Adult Learning and Adult Development Through the Lenses of Public Pedagogy. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(1), 3-23. doi: 10.1177/0741713611415836
- Seale, M. (2008). Old maids, policeman, and social rejects: Mass media representations and public perceptions of librarians. *Electronic Journal of Academic & Special Librarianship*, 9(1), 1-8. Retrieved from [http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v09n01/seale\\_m01.html](http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v09n01/seale_m01.html)

- Shaffer, C., & Casey, O. (2012) Behind the glasses and beneath the bun portrayals of librarians in popular cinema and a guide for developing a collection. *Collection Building*, 32(2), 39-45. doi: 10.1108/01604951311322002
- Shaw, L. (2010). Representations of librarianship in the UK press. *Aslib Proceedings*, 62(6), 554-569. doi: 10.1108/00012531011089676
- Sheridan, G. (2014). *I work at a public library: A collection of crazy stories from the stacks*. Avon, MA: Adams Media.
- Simone, L. P. (2015). *Beyond demons and darkness: A genealogy of evil in American fantasy literature for young adults since 1950* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com>.
- Simpson, R. (2004). Masculinity at work. *Work Employment & Society*, 18(2), 349-368. Doi: 10.1177/09500172004042773
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, D.E. (1990a). *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, D.E. (1990b). *Texts, facts, and femininity: Exploring the relations of ruling*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, D. E. (1993). *Texts, facts, and femininity: Exploring relations of ruling*. London: Routledge.
- Snoek-Brown, J. (n.d.). Reel librarians [Blog]. Retrieved from <https://reel-librarians.com/>
- Storey, J. (2015). *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Squires, D.D. (2014). From sensuous to sexy: The librarian in post-censorship print pornography. In N. Pagowsky & M. Rigby, M. (Eds), *The librarian stereotype: Deconstructing perceptions and presentations of information work* (pp.111-129). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, ALA.
- Staiko, K. (2000). *The Great Libraries: From Antiquity to the Renaissance*. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press.
- Stauffer, S. M. (2014). The intelligent, thoughtful personality: Librarianship as a process of identity formation. *Library and Information History*, 30(4), 254-272. doi: 10.1179/1758348914Z.00000000067

- Stauffer, S. M. (2016). The work calls for men: The social construction of professionalism and professional education for librarianship. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 57(4), 311-324. doi:10.12783/issn.2328-2967/57/4/5
- Stevens, N. D. (1996). Books about us for kids. *American Libraries*, 27(9), 52-53.
- Stevens, N.D. (2001). The last librarian. *American Libraries*, 32(9), 60-64.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/i25646052>
- Storey, J. (2015). *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). London, UK: Routledge.
- Studio C. (April 15, 2013). *Season 2, Episode 3: Ann "The Librarian" Withers* [Video file]. United States: Utv. Retrieved from  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8ap6QT3aC4>
- Suarez, M.F., Woudhuysen, S.J., & Woudhuysen, H.R. (Eds.). (2010). *The Oxford companion to the book* [Ebook]. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com>
- Swigger, K. (2010). *The MLS Project: an assessment after sixty years*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Tevis, R., & Tevis, B. (2005). *The image of librarians in cinema, 1917-1999*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Tewell, E. (2014). "Punk-ass book jockeys": Library anxiety in the television programs Community and Parks and Recreation. *Library Philosophy and Practice* [e-journal]. Paper 1060. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1060>
- Tisdell, E. J., & Thompson, P. M. (2007). 'Seeing from a different angle': The role of pop culture in teaching for diversity and critical media. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(6), 651-673. doi: 10.1080/02601370701711349
- Tolmie, J. (2006). Medievalism and the fantasy heroine. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(2), 145-158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589230600720042>
- TVWise. (September 16, 2015). *Channel 5, Movies 24 Take UK Rights to 'The Aurora Teagarden Mysteries' & 'The Gourmet Detective Mysteries'* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.tvwise.co.uk/tag/the-aurora-teagarden-mysteries/>
- University of Washington Student Archivists – Student Chapter. (2017, October 17). Badass archivists in television and movies: A really short list [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://archivesmonth.blogspot.com/2013/10/badass-archivists-in-television-and.html>

- Vassilakaki, E., & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, V. (2014). Identifying the prevailing images in library and information science profession: Is the landscape changing? *New Library World*, 115(7/8), 355-375.
- Vesper, V. (1994). *The image of the librarian in murder mysteries in the twentieth century*. Middle Tennessee State University, Michigan. ERIC Document ED385284.
- Voelck, J. (2003). Directive and connective: Gender-based differences in the management styles of academic library managers. *Libraries and the Academy*, 3(3), 393-418.
- Walkerdine, V. (1990). *School girl fictions*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Wannamaker, A. (2006). Reading in the gaps and lacks (de)constructing masculinity in Louis Sachar's *Holes*. *Children's Literature in Education*, 37(1), 15-33. doi: 10.1007/s10583-005-9452-4
- Weibel, K. (1979). Towards a feminist profession. In K. Weibel, K. Heim, & D. Ellsworth (Eds.) *The roles of women in librarianship 1876-1976: The entry, advancement, and struggle for equalization in one profession* (pp. 286-293). Phoenix, AZ: Orynx Press.
- Quinn, B. (2007). Cognitive and affective processes in collection development. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 51(1), 5-15.
- Weibel, K., Heim, K., & Ellsworth, D. (Eds.). (1979). *The roles of women in librarianship 1876-1976: The entry, advancement, and struggle for equalization in one profession*. Phoenix, AZ: Orynx Press.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Weihs, J. (2016). A long term view of librarian stereotypes. *Technicalities*, 36(2), 7-10. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com>
- Weiler, K. (1988). *Women teaching for change: Gender, class & power*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Wells, J. (2013). The female librarian in film: Has the image changed in 60 years? *iSchool Student Research Journal*, 3(2), Article 2. Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/slissrj>
- White, A. (2012). *Not your ordinary librarian: Debunking the popular perceptions of librarians*. Oxford, UK: Chandos Publishing.
- Williams, C. (Ed.). (1993). *Doing "women's work": Men in nontraditional occupations*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.

- Williamson, C. C. (1923). *Training for library service: A report prepared for the Carnegie Corporation of New York*. New York. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/trainingforlibra011790mbp>
- Winter, J. (2005) *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*. Orlando: Harcourt.
- Wisker, G. (2016). Vampire Kisses. *Contemporary women's gothic fiction: Carnival, hauntings and vampire kisses*. Palgrave Macmillan [ebook]. doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-30349-3\_8
- Wolf, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2008). Choice and discourse in faculty careers: Feminist perspectives on work and family. In J. Glazer-Raymo (Ed.) *Unfinished agendas: New and continuing gender challenges in higher education* (pp. 253-272). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wright, R.R. (2010). Unmasking hegemony with The Avengers: Television entertainment as public pedagogy. In J.J Sandlin, B. Shultz, & J. Burdick (Eds.), *The handbook of public pedagogy: Education and learning beyond schooling* (pp. 139-150). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wright, R. R. & Sandlin, J. A. (2009). Popular culture, public pedagogy and perspective transformation: The Avengers and adult learning in living rooms. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(4), 533-55. doi: 10.1080/02601370903031389
- Yeagley, B. (1999). Shelving, stamping, and shushing: Librarians in the movies. (Master's thesis). Kent State University. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED435392).
- Yontz, E. (2002). Librarians in children's literature, 1909-2000. *Reference Librarian*, (78), 85-96. doi: 10.1300/J120v37n78\_06



## Appendix A.

### Annotated Bibliography of Selected Texts for Analysis

#### Theme 1: Gatekeeping Librarians

Gassman, J., & Elkerton, A. (Illustrator). (2016). *Do not bring your dragon to the library*. North Mankato, MN: Capstone Young Readers.

In this colourfully illustrated tale, a boy attempts to bring his dragon to the library but his encounter with the librarian dispels him of this notion.

Knudsen, M., & Hawkes, K. (Illustrator). (2006). *Library Lion*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

A lion ventures into a public library where he challenges the librarian and her assistant to consider the “rules” for his presence in the library.

McGee, M., & Beck, I. (Illustrator). (2006). *Winston the Book Wolf*. London: Bloomsbury Children's Books.

With an insatiable appetite for eating words, Wolf finds himself barred at the library steps by the formidable and disapproving librarian. With the help of a young girl, Rose, he is able to channel his hunger into reading and, dressing up as a woman, he is able to fool the librarian into entering the library.

#### Theme 2: Villainous Rulers: Evil Male Librarians

Knudsen, M. (2014). *Evil librarian*. New York: Candlewick.

Cynthia (Cyn) Rothchild is caught up in a terrifying (and titillating) adventure when her high school friends and teachers begin to disappear or become mesmerized by some power wielded by the new school librarian, Mr. Gabriel. Immune to his powers, it is up to Cyn to confront him in order to save her best friend and the school from his diabolical ambitions.

Sanderson, B. & Lazo, H. (Illustrator). (2007). *Alcatraz versus the evil librarians*. Toronto: Scholastic.

On Alcatraz Smedry's thirteenth birthday he receives a mysterious package that hurls him into a fast-paced adventure where he discovers that there is a hidden world of evil librarians. With the help of his grandfather and a rag-tag team of new friends, Alcatraz must confront Radrian Blackburn, one particularly evil librarian mastermind, who seeks world domination.

### **Theme 3: Loveless-frumps, Spinsters, and Oversexed Librarians**

Bure, C., Head, J., & Wood, M. (Producers) & Wood, M. (Director). (2015). *A bone to pick: An Aurora Teagarden mystery* [Motion picture]. United States: Muse Entertainment Enterprises.

Inspired by the book series that began in the 1990s by Charlaine Harris, this made-for-television movie is part of a series that is still in production. The lead character, Aurora Teagarden, is a librarian at the local public library and an amateur sleuth. Throughout the movie, Aurora contemplates her marital status, fearing her fate may lead her spinsterhood. The work also incorporates scenes in a library and presents two additional library characters for analysis.

Studio C. (April 15, 2013). *Season 2, Episode 3: Ann "The Librarian" Withers* [Video file]. United States: UTV. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8ap6QT3aC4>

This short YouTube sketch features a Studio C recurring character, Ann Withers, who plays with the "naughty" librarian image and whose peculiar look and behaviour undermines her femininity, making her comical and ridiculous.

### **Theme 4: Activist Librarians**

Winter, J. (2005) *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*. Orlando: Harcourt.

This is the true story of an Iranian librarian, Alia Muhammad Baker, who saves her community's library collection from the full ravages of war by hiding books in the homes and businesses of people in her town.

Houston, G. (2011). *Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile*. New York, NY: Harper.

Inspired by her own experiences as a child, Houston shares a story of Miss Dorothy, a librarian who operated a bookmobile among several communities in Blue Ridge Mountains in the United States during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Newman, B.L., & Howerton, E.D. (n.d.). *This is what a librarian looks like* [Tumblr]. Retrieved from <https://lookslivelibraryscience.tumblr.com/>

A Tumblr site dedicated to self-submitted images and descriptive captions of librarians from around the world.

Sheridan, G. (2014). *I work at a public library: A collection of crazy stories from the stacks*. Avon, MA: Adams Media.

A humorous collection of brief librarian – patron encounters written from the perspective of the librarian.

## Appendix B.

### Bibliography Featuring Librarians and Libraries

The following materials are contemporary examples of works featuring librarians and libraries that have been highlighted in this dissertation.

- Ambaum, G. & Barnes, B. (2002-2018). *Unshelved* [Comic strip]. Retrieved from <http://www.unshelved.com/>
- Bailey, L. (2017). *The tiny hero of Ferny Creek Library*. Toronto: Tundra Books.
- Barnathan, M., & Aidoo, B. (Producers). Levy, S. (Director). (2014). *Night at the museum: Secret of the tomb* [Motion picture]. United States: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Becker, B. (2014). *A library book for bear*. Somerville: Candlewick Press.
- Bedard, M. (1994). *Painted Devil*. New York: Atheneum.
- Beinhart, L. (2004). *The Librarian*. New York: Nation Books.
- Bennett, C., & J. Gottesfeld. (2005). *A Heart Divided*. New York: Laurel Leaf.
- Bouchard, L. (Producer). (2011-2018). *Bob's burgers* [Television Series]. United States: Bento Box Entertainment.
- Birckmayer, H. (Producer), & von Scherler Mayer (Director). (1995). *Party Girl*. United States: Party Productions.
- Brown, M. T. (2001). *D.W.'s library card*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Cassidy, K. (2017). *This is what a librarian looks like: A celebration of libraries, communities, and access to information*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal.
- Colfer, E. (2004). *The legend of Spud Murphy*. New York, NY: Miramax Books.
- Cousins, L. (2005). *Maisy goes to the library*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Davies, G. (Producer). (1997-2003). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [Television series]. Twentieth Century Fox.
- Dee, G. (Producer). (2012-2017). *Mr. D* [Television Series]. Canada: Canadian Broadcasting Company.

- Docter, P. (Producer). (2013). *Monsters university* [Motion picture]. United States: Walt Disney Pictures.
- Estevez, E. (Producer & Director). (2018). *The public* [Motion picture]. United States: Hammerstone Studios.
- Gardner, D., & Wechsler, N. (Producers), & Schwentke, R. (Director). (2009). *The time traveler's wife* [Motion picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.
- Greenspan, A., & Greenstone, P. (Producers), & Illsey, M. (Director). (2003). *Bookies*. United States: Gemini Film.
- Goldfarb, P., Hamilton, G., Shurmann, K., & , Westerkamp, J. (Producers) & Winther, P. (Director). (2004) *The librarian: Quest for the spear* [Motion Picture]. United States: TNT.
- González, L. (2008). *The storyteller's candle / La velita de los cuentos*. San Fransisco: Children's Book Press.
- Grady, C. (2018). *Write to Me: Letters from Japanese American Children to the Librarian They Left Behind*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Greene, R. G. (2013). *No pirates allowed! Said Library Lou*. Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press.
- Kapnek, E. (Writer) & Gates, T. (Director). (2011). *Ron and Tammy* (Season 3, episode 14) [Television series episode]. In G. Daniels, H. Klein, M. Sackett & D. Miner (Producers), *Parks and Recreation*. United States: Deedle-Dee Productions.
- Kirk, D. (2007). *Library Mouse*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- Krosczka, J. J. (2009). *Lunch lady and the league of librarians*. New York: Alfred. A. Knopf.
- Leis, B. (2008). *Bats in the library*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Mora, P. (1997). *Tomás and the library lady*. New York: Dragonfly.
- Numeroff, L.J. (2008). *Beatrice doesn't want to*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press
- Pinborough, J. (2013). *Miss Moore thought otherwise: How Anne Carroll Moore created libraries for children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Ruurs, M. (2005). *My librarian is a camel: How books are brought to children around the world*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Rogers, J. (Writer), & Winther, P. (2004 -2018). *The librarians* [Television series]. United States: Electric Entertainment.

Scotton, R. (2016). *Splat the cat and the late library book*. New York: HarperFestival.

Strasser, T. (2012). *Can't Get There from Here*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, J. (2005). *Rex Libris: #1 I, librarian*. San José, CA: Slave Labour Graphics.

Warren, R. (2015). *Our bodies, our shelves: A collection of library humor*. Fairview Village, PA: HumorOutcasts Press.