

THE PORTRAYAL OF LIBRARIANS IN OBITUARIES AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Obituaries can reveal much about the way a profession is conceived and structured in the popular imagination. This article examines obituaries of librarians in the *New York Times* between 1977 and 2002 to determine how librarians were presented to the general public by a major newspaper. Although librarianship is a female-intensive profession, 63.4 percent of the obituaries chronicled the lives of male librarians. Although public and school librarians outnumber their academic counterparts, obituaries focused on academic librarians. Far from creating a stereotypical portrait of librarians as shy, dour, dowdy, and sheltered individuals, the emphasis on large-scale achievements in the obituaries produces an image of librarianship as a glamorous profession. Some librarians are presented as sleuths and detectives who amassed large collections. They contributed to the progress of scholarly research with extensive publications. Many others had connections to prominent people, making the most of these social networks in their work. Librarians were also players on the global stage, founding libraries abroad and developing international guidelines that led to institutional progress. Emphasis on large-scale accomplishment, however, tends to obscure the contributions of librarians who daily perform countless small and caring acts that, summed together, positively affect the lives of ordinary individuals.

Introduction

While it is doubtful that Jane Davies [1], Adolf Placzek [2], Dina Abramowicz [3], and Emily Reed [4] met in life, they shared common bonds in death. All four passed away in February–May 2000, and all four were

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more than eighty-five years old when they died. All four were also librarians, and it is because of their profession, or, rather, the contributions they made to it, that their obituaries appeared in the *New York Times* (*NYT*). Readers of *NYT* obituaries in early 2000 were thus presented with four images of librarianship in a relatively short period of time. What could they have deduced about librarianship from these, and other, obituaries of librarians? We begin with the idea that a set of obituaries contains valuable information about how societal groups and professions are constructed in the popular mind. As Janice Hume observes, “obituaries may help to distribute a type of ideology to their mass audiences” such that the inclusion or exclusion of “personal attributes, even virtues, of the deceased reflect changing ideas about what American society values about its individual citizens’ lives” [5, pp. 22–23].

Obituaries, especially *NYT* obituaries, are a genre unto themselves. Indeed, obituaries in the *NYT* were the subject of an exhibition entitled *Obituary* mounted at Wellesley College’s Davis Museum and Cultural Center in 2001. Designed by Joseph Bartscherer, *Obituary* consists of rows of low, rectangular Plexiglas stands, each serving as a repository for six issues of the *NYT* that carried an obituary on the front page. Starting with issues from 1990, the newspapers are placed flat atop each pedestal, inviting the viewer to read the obituary and look at its accompanying photograph. As Arthur Danto points out, the exhibit “resembles that of a cemetery. Copies of the *NYT* are laid out in orderly ranks, like headstones, and each of the front pages carries the death notice of some notable person. The viewer is thus transformed into a visitor, who peruses the obituaries with the kind of interest with which we read the epitaphs in a graveyard” [6, p. 35]. Danto notes how Bartscherer was particularly “struck by the obituarial photograph, and what was said by means of it, about what the life to which it belonged meant” [6, p. 37], as well as the often ironic juxtaposition of the obituarial text with other front-page headlines, stories, and pictures [7].³

Bartscherer’s exhibit also causes the viewer to consider the choices made in selecting whom to memorialize. While many newspapers announce the death of all local residents, the *New York Times* “is highly selective, listing about twenty-five local deaths a day, and identifying a handful of figures it considers sufficiently notable for a story on the inside obituary page and, with extreme stringency, for the front page of the paper” [7, p. 39]. Front-page obituaries are thus a marker that something very significant “about our world is explained,” and the placement of the obituary above or below the fold has the added effect of creating a hierarchy of the dead based on

3. One example of this is the “implicit humor in the pairing of a bird’s eye view of a Times Square detour with the obituary of astronaut Alan Shepard” [7, p. 39].

the roles they assumed in life. The standard for inclusion is “repute, rather than celebrity, with repute established by an individual’s contribution to change in his or her profession or in society” [7, p. 39]. In other words, they collectively reflect that profession, or, more precisely, how readers perceive and are informed about that profession. Which brings us back to Davies, Placzek, Abramowicz, and Reed. What portrait of librarianship emerges from their obituaries and the obituaries of other librarians?

Purpose

The present article performs a content analysis of *NYT* obituaries for librarians who died between 1977 and 2002. We examine these obituaries to understand how librarianship is portrayed through a textual genre geared to and read avidly by the general public. As Mark Singer observes, the appeal of obituaries has something to do with “the contemplation of a completed cycle of accomplishment or notoriety, concisely wrought” [8, p. 29]. We analyze each obituary for information about the working lives of librarians. Are they public, academic, school, government, or research librarians? Are they described as scholars, authorities, or something else? What are their most frequent contributions and accomplishments? Are there any common themes?

There are precedents for using obituaries to examine images of various professions and the way those portrayals reflect broader perceptions of professional groups. Christa Rodler, Erich Kirchler, and Erik Hölzl, in an examination of obituary notices in four German-language newspapers of men and women in leadership roles that had been written by the company or organization where the subject had worked, categorized all verbs, adjectives, and nouns according to a classification system of fifty-eight descriptive word categories, made a gender-based comparison of the frequency of descriptive word categories, and, using the opinion of experts in the field of human resource management, ranked these categories in terms of leadership styles and success [9]. Alan Marks and Tommy Piggee investigated obituaries in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, focusing on the relationship between a subject’s race, gender, and socioeconomic status and the length and diversity of content of the obituary, as well as the presence or absence of a photograph [10]. Richard Kinnier, Arlene Metha, Lydia Buki, and Patrick Rawa examined eleven years of obituaries from the *American Psychologist* to build a “demographic profile” of psychologists and their “general subculture” through “a ranking of the most frequently occurring value themes” [11, pp. 88–89].

Of course, as Stephen Moore recognizes in his analysis of the “sociological profile of the typical subject” of obituaries in *The Economist*, obituary

subjects “are seen and judged through an ideological lens, and then framed through an ideologically determined construction” [12, p. 496]. Obituaries of librarians in the *NYT* may thus manifest certain biases such as regionalism, American exceptionalism, and overrepresentation of professionals serving constituencies in New York, Boston, and Washington. While this study does look at how the profession of librarianship is constructed in a single publication, the purpose is not to deconstruct the ideological lens of the *NYT*, but to get a sense of what the reader of these obituaries learns about the professional life of librarians and how this reflects upon the profession as a whole [13, pp. 68–69]. The decision to use obituaries exclusively from the *NYT* stems from its prominence as a major national newspaper and its obituary selection criteria rather than the desire to say something about the newspaper itself. Nonetheless, we take into account Marks and Piggee’s observation that “there is considerable leeway in the content of what aspects of a person’s life will be emphasized” [10, p. 43]. Those emphasized aspects, especially when they are emphasized by a publication not geared to members of the profession itself, can reveal much about how the public understands librarianship.

The present study also tries to come to grips with some of the issues raised by Wayne Wiegand, who urged that much more attention be paid to the “connections between power and knowledge” that are prevalent in libraries and librarianship [14, p. 24], and the work of Douglas Raber, who suggested that librarians are, in Gramscian terms, “organic intellectuals,” defined as “organizers of capitalist hegemony and its culture [who] play central strategic and ideological roles in the superstructure that reproduces capitalist relations of production” [15, p. 44]. More specifically, it falls within the tradition of studies that examine representations of librarians in adult fiction [e.g., 16, 17], children’s fiction [18], films [e.g., 19, 20], comic books [21], or media in general [e.g., 22–24].

For example, Gary Radford and Marie Radford, using the insights of Michel Foucault about the structures of discourse, show that the librarian is often depicted in popular fiction as a “formidable gatekeeper between order and chaos” who, guarding against any disruption against “the sacred order of texts” in a cathedral-like setting by frequently subjecting patrons to humiliation and surveillance, is embedded within “a language and vocabulary” of fear [16, p. 299]. In a subsequent article, Marie Radford and Gary Radford use a cultural studies approach to explain the media stereotype of the female librarian in the film *Party Girl*, suggesting that Mary, the protagonist of the movie, is portrayed as being so “obsessed with order” that she has “now metamorphosed into an ‘other’ set apart from the normal person” [19, p. 64]—an other who instills fear and dependence in users by punctilious, rigorous attention to shelving protocols and the creation of classification systems that befuddle ordinary individuals. As befits a dis-

tinct media genre, obituaries have different codes and conventions than fiction or films. By closely examining obituaries, we can determine whether the type of repute enjoyed by librarians in fiction and films—the stereotypical picture of a shy, sheltered, dowdy, dour, librarian obsessed with order and silence—is perpetuated in another type of text.

Procedures

A search was conducted for *NYT* obituaries on LexisNexis using the search string “librarian and died and (obituar*)” and the date parameters January 1, 1977, to December 31, 2002. The search retrieved 333 documents. After eliminating “incidental librarians” [e.g., 25, p. B20], paid notices, and false hits, a total of 123 obituaries meeting the following two criteria were retained: the obituary subject was, by training or profession, a librarian and had spent the majority of his or her professional life working in a library, archives, or in a field directly associated with librarianship. These 123 obituaries chronicle the lives of seventy-eight men (63.4 percent) and forty-five women (36.6 percent). Content analysis was performed to identify common facts and work-related themes. Facts include the type of library where the subjects were employed and whether these individuals had held leadership positions, taught university-level courses, and/or had received specific accolades for their work. Obituary subjects who had worked in multiple types of institutions were placed within the category of library where they had made the greatest impact or contribution.⁴ Themes address the substance and the nature of the work librarians performed and their professional contributions. Personal anecdotes can also reveal much about a person, but because only thirteen obituaries (10.6 percent) contained such anecdotes, we do not discuss them here.

Results: Facts

As table 1 shows, fifty librarians (40.7 percent) had a primary affiliation with academic libraries, thirty-four (27.6 percent) with special libraries,

4. The obituary for Alfred Lane is an example of how our classificatory decisions were made. Although Lane was a librarian at Columbia University for forty years, his obituary concentrates on his efforts to create a library at the Writers' Room in New York, described as “a haven for novelists, historians, cookbook writers and anyone else able to prove seriousness about writing” [26, p. A27]. It makes only two brief references to his tenure at Columbia, with one of these references stating that he used his contacts at Columbia to acquire books for the Writers' Room. Accordingly, the type of library recorded for Lane's obituary was special, not academic.

TABLE 1
TYPE OF LIBRARY WHERE OBITUARY SUBJECTS PRIMARILY
WORKED

Type of Library	No. of Librarians (%)
Academic	50 (40.7)
Special	34 (27.6)
Public	23 (18.7)
Library of Congress/government	7 (5.7)
School	3 (2.4)
Not applicable	6 (4.9)

and twenty-three (18.7 percent) with public libraries. Seven individuals worked at the Library of Congress or another U.S. government-affiliated library such as the National Institutes of Health or the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Three were school librarians. Six individuals were members of library and information science faculty or editors of professional reviewing publications or scholarly journals. In one case, the deceased was a renowned preservationist who, after a brief tenure at the Library of the Boston Athenaeum, established an independent, nonprofit book preservation foundation [27].

Librarians worked in a wide array of subfields (see table 2). Within the three most frequently occurring types of libraries (academic, special, and public) there are eleven different areas of specialization ranging from media (e.g., libraries and archives at *Newsweek*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, CNN, etc.) to medicine (e.g., libraries in hospitals and pharmaceutical companies) to libraries dedicated to a specific culture such as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library (NYPL). Sixteen obituary subjects are associated with libraries or library departments focused on the visual or performing arts, including libraries at the Museum of Modern Art, the music division of the NYPL, the Dance Theater of Harlem, and the Avery Architectural Library at Columbia University. Eleven librarians were associated with rare books and manuscripts, nine each with history/literature and science/medicine, and eight with children's services or literature. Thirty-three librarians were identified in their obituaries as having worked at an academic library (twenty-six) or public library (seven) without further indication of the nature of the library or their work there. Twenty-five of this group were directors or administrators of entire library systems [e.g., 28, p. D25], including the Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and New York public libraries and university library systems at Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Illinois, Louisiana State, and Seton Hall.

Librarians are often remembered for prestigious accomplishments (see

TABLE 2
FOCUS OF LIBRARY OR DEPARTMENT WHERE LIBRARIAN WAS EMPLOYED

Focus	Academic	Special	Public	Total
The arts	4	9	3	16
Business	1	0	0	1
Children's services	0	0	8	8
History/literature	2	6	1	9
Law	3	1	0	4
Media	0	5	0	5
Rare books and manuscripts	6	4	1	11
Reference	2	0	1	3
Science/ medicine	3	6	0	9
Specific culture	1	2	2	5
Theology	2	1	0	3
No specification	26	0	7	33
Total	50	34	23	

table 3). In total, sixty-nine librarians (56.1 percent) held leadership roles at their institutions, as identified by such titles or verbs in the text or title of the obituary as administrat(or/ed), chief, coordinat(or/ed), dean, direct(or/ed), head(ed), led, and president [e.g., 29–34]. Sixty-two (50.4 percent) obituaries mention that their subjects were authors or editors. In some cases, authorship made these individuals renowned figures outside librarianship—a fact reflected in the headlines of their obituaries. For instance, the title of Philip Larkin's obituary refers to him as "Poet and Librarian" [35, p. B12]. The headline for children's librarian Eleanor Estes calls her a "children's book author," with most of the obituary devoted to prominent examples of her work, such as *The Moffats* and *The Hundred Dresses*, as well as the recognition that these books received [36, p. B8]. The headline for Dee Brown's obituary—"Author Who Revised Image of West"—neglects to say that he was a librarian at all; the reader waits until the second paragraph to learn that he was a librarian "who was writing books after his children had gone to bed" [37, p. A27].

Fifty-one librarians (41.5 percent) taught courses in undergraduate or graduate programs as either regular faculty members or visiting lecturers. While many of these individuals concurrently worked in academic libraries, others, such as Ethel Heins, editor of *The Horn Book*, worked as children's librarians in public systems [38]. Twenty-nine of the fifty-one professor-librarians taught in library and information studies departments, specializing in subfields such as library administration, bibliography, rare-books

TABLE 3
ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LIBRARIANS AS REPRESENTED IN
OBITUARIES

Accomplishments	No. of Librarians (<i>N</i> = 123)* (%)
Leadership positions	69 (56.1)
Authors or editors	62 (50.4)
Professors or visiting lecturers	51 (41.5)
Awards or honors	31 (25.2)
Firsts or milestones	9 (7.3)

* Numbers do not equal *N* = 123 and percentages do not equal 100 because some obituaries contain more than one theme.

librarianship, and reference services. Others taught in departments of literature (seven), history (six), music/music history (three), art history/architecture, urban studies, health sciences, and law (two each). In three cases, library science specializations intersect with another discipline. Jerome Edelstein, for example, combined collection development duties at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities with teaching history, literature, and rare-book librarianship at three universities, including Johns Hopkins and Brown [39, p. B7].

Thirty-one obituaries (25.2 percent) mention that the librarian had received at least one award or honor related to his or her work or area of expertise. Thirteen librarians were designated “emeritus” upon retirement, while two others were granted honorary doctorate degrees. Others had places or events named in their honor, as with Ruth Mortimer, a rare-books librarian at Smith College [40, p. D21]. In honor of Augusta Braxton Baker, “a spellbinding storyteller, editor, and former custodian of the children’s section at the New York Public Library,” Columbia University “established a yearly storytelling festival . . . called ‘A(ugusta) Baker’s Dozen’” [41, p. B13]. Six years later, she received a Distinguished Services Award from the children’s services division of the American Library Association (ALA). Thirteen librarians, including Baker, received awards from professional organizations, including the Association of College and Research Libraries’ Academic/Research Librarian of the Year and the Medical Library Association’s Marcia C. Noyes Award [42, p. B6]. Chester Lewis, a past director of the *NYT* archives and president of the Special Libraries Association, won both the Jack K. Burness Memorial Award for Distinguished Librarianship and “was elected to the association’s Hall of Fame” [31, p. B6]. Three librarians received such literary awards as the John Newbery Medal, the Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction (established by children’s literature expert Zena Sutherland [43]), and the Pulitzer Prize, won three times by Librarian of Congress and poet/playwright Ar-

TABLE 4
WORK-RELATED THEMES IN OBITUARIES

Theme	No. of Librarians (N = 123)* (%)
Contribution to a designated institution	42 (34.1)
Expertise/scholarship	29 (23.6)
International outreach	16 (13)
Consciousness-raising	14 (11.4)
Helpfulness	6 (4.9)
No themes	43 (35)

* Numbers do not equal N = 123 and percentages do not equal 100 because some obituaries contain more than one theme.

chibald MacLeish, who was also a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom [44].

Just as awards, honors, professorships, and leadership positions are marks of distinction, so is achieving some sort of “first” or milestone. Nine obituaries (7.3 percent) mention milestones in an individual’s professional life that simultaneously mark events or developments within a library or the profession itself. Florence Louise King “was a member of the first class of the Columbia University School of Library Science, graduating in 1927” [45, p. 21], while William Bontempo was the first employee of Gibbs and Cox, “the naval architecture firm that designed ocean liners and destroyers,” serving as architect William France Gibb’s librarian and staying with the firm for more than fifty years [46, p. D8]. Lola Szladits, “the renowned curator of the New York Public Library’s Berg Collection of English and American Literature,” was the first librarian to be profiled by *The New Yorker* [47, p. 30]. Smith College’s rare books librarian Mortimer “was the first woman to be elected president of the Bibliographical Society of America” in 1988 [40, p. D21]. In 1935, Jean Hutson, who became chief of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, was “the second black woman to graduate from Barnard [College]; the first was Zora Neale Hurston” [48, p. B18].

Results: Work-Related Themes

With regard to the professional and work-related contributions made by librarians during their careers, five themes emerged: contribution to a designated institution, expertise/scholarship, international outreach, consciousness-raising, and helpfulness (see table 4). Not all of the obituaries contained these themes, and some obituaries contained multiple themes.

Contribution to a Designated Institution

Forty-two librarians contributed in some way to their institutions, especially in the realm of collection development. Some obituaries, especially those of rare-books librarians, provide a veritable laundry list of books and manuscripts that entered a collection under the guidance of the obituary subject. Over a span of thirty-five years, Herbert Cahoon added to the Morgan Library collections “a draft in pencil of *The Little Prince* as well as drawings by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, . . . *Travels with Charley*, donated by its author, John Steinbeck, in 1962, and a missing volume of the journals of Thoreau found in 1956, completing a set that J. Pierpont Morgan had bought in 1909” [49, p. C26]. There was also the Mary Flagler Cary music collection, “which Mr. Cahoon said had been hidden away in Mrs. Cary’s Fifth Avenue apartment for years, [and] included copies of Brahms’s First Symphony and Beethoven’s ‘Ghost’ Trio” [49, p. C26].

The listing of acquired books and manuscripts complements, rather than overshadows, the contribution of the librarian in charge of the collection. The acquisitions process is transformed into a detective narrative, with the librarian as sleuth or strategist ingeniously masterminding the hunt for materials, thus revealing as much about the background, interests, and personalities of the obituary subjects as about the collections that resulted from their strategies. Kenneth Lohf, rare-books librarian at Columbia University, “searched bookstores and for very little money . . . was able to get first editions of *Brighton Rock*, *England Made Me* and *The Ministry of Fear*” [50, p. A13]. Later, he persuaded Columbia graduates who had entered the publishing business to donate books and other materials to the library. In this way, Bennett Cerf, the founder of Random House, “gave Columbia all his files, including thousands of letters from authors like William Faulkner, James Joyce, Sinclair Lewis and Eudora Welty, among others” [50, p. A13]. Szladits “scoured England to bargain for diaries and first editions; in this country, she cajoled American authors to think of the Berg first when parting with their papers. In the faintly discernible accent of her native Hungary, she was fond of joking, though without affectation, ‘Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets’” [47, p. 30].

The recounting of librarians’ methodologies and triumphs in collection building links their contributions to the importance, rarity, or, in some cases, the sheer number of the works acquired. Just as the prominence of a collection raises the status of the library, it also confers acclaim on the individual who helped build it—an idea supported by the number of times that collection development defines a librarian’s contribution to an institution. Consider the following statement about Philip Miller, former director of the New York Public Library’s music division: “He was instru-

mental in building its collections into one of the world's finest and largest repositories of recordings and music lore, second in this country only to that of the Library of Congress" [51, p. B19]. This description stresses not only the quality of the collection, but also quantity. Indeed, when the obituary subject worked at a more generalized library—as director of an academic library system, for example—the summary of collection development activities more readily calls to mind stock-trading volumes than it does the type of descriptive bibliography found in the obituaries of rare-books or special collections librarians. "Collections doubled" at Fordham University under the direction of Anne Murphy [52, p. B7], while Margaret Plumb increased the book collection at Hunter College "from 30,000 volumes to 250,000 during the 44 years she was there" [53, p. B6].

Obituaries also mention that librarians contributed to their institutions by leading them in new directions. In some cases, this type of contribution is again rooted in collection development. Rather than adding specific works to established collection areas, however, the librarian increased the scope of the collection by introducing new areas. During his five-year tenure at the Library of Congress, Archibald MacLeish "began a permanent film collection and instituted a Slavic collection" [44, p. A1]. Obituaries also refer to librarians implementing plans or systems that increased user access to collections, with the tools enlisted to deliver this access reflecting the era in which the librarian worked. As director from 1951 to 1969, Emerson Greenaway introduced bookmobiles to the Philadelphia public library system [54, p. D10], while New-York Historical Society director James Heslin in 1968 "revamped cataloguing procedures to make [the society's] collection more accessible to the public" [55, p. A21]. As the Heslin example suggests, the majority of the librarians whose obituaries are examined here implemented changes during the 1940s through the 1970s, when technologically driven systems were still experimental. To put the scope of these changes in perspective, the obituary for Chester Lewis, named the chief librarian of the *New York Times* in 1947, mentions that he "introduced microfilming to replace the large bound volumes of back issues of *The Times* and later became a director of the Microfilming Corporation of America" [31, p. B6]. Twenty-five years later, Douglas Bryant, director of Harvard University's library system from 1972 to 1979, "helped . . . create a computer-based catalogue of works to be made freely available to scholars. It later became the Research Libraries Group, a national consortium" [56, p. 54]. Analyzed chronologically, the obituaries recount the introduction and exploration of new technologies, thus linking the obituary subjects' own experiences to what are now established practices.

Of course, implementing changes, technological or otherwise, necessitates money. The obituaries of four librarians who worked in public library systems highlight their fiscal management in the face of adversity. Kenneth

Duchac, director of the Brooklyn Public Library for sixteen years, “led the library through the difficult days of the city’s fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s. Despite severe budget cutbacks, he was credited with keeping every branch library in Brooklyn open” [57, p. 31]. As head of the Schomburg Center, Hutson “fought for financing, and lobbied the State Legislature for money” through numerous trips to the state capitol at Albany where she spoke to many members “who had never seen a black woman up in front of them at the legislature” [48, p. B18].

Librarians are also remembered for creating new libraries. Alfred Lane was instrumental in building the Writers’ Room Library in Manhattan, volunteering to be its first librarian at a time when it owned only “one book: a dogeared dictionary” [26, p. A27]. At his retirement in 2001, he left “a \$25,000 contribution for the room’s endowment fund” and a collecting legacy of “3,000 books geared to writers’ interests” that he had made with “hardly any expense, using his contacts in the book world from a 40-year career as a librarian at Columbia University” [26, p. A27]. Phyllis Newman Rubinton founded one of the first mental-health resources library for clinic patients at New York Hospital’s Payne Whitney Clinic [58, p. A20]. Gordon Stein, identified as the man “Who Exposed Hoaxes” because he had “read and written so widely and collected so many books [about] the varieties of spiritual and other hoaxes that have been perpetuated over the centuries, sometimes innocently by those who mistake the wind for ghosts, sometimes fraudulently by con artists pretending to communicate with the dead,” was enlisted by the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism and the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal to create the Center for Inquiry Library [59, p. 47]. After retiring from his job as State Librarian for New York in 1974, Charles Gosnell, a Mason who had attained “the 33d degree, the highest rank of Scottish Rite Masonry” and had been named “Grand Master for New York in 1968,” became “the main spirit” behind the creation of the Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Masonic Library, one of the largest Masonic libraries in the world [60, p. 8].

Expertise/Scholarship

Twenty-nine obituaries mention expertise or scholarship. Here, the focus shifts from the role of librarians in developing a renowned and valuable collection to the portrayal of the librarians themselves as renowned and valued resources based on their knowledge of various subject areas. At the same time, the idea of making a contribution broadens from a specific institution to the wider realm of scholarship or general inquiry. A librarian’s expertise in a given subject area is conveyed through descriptions

that appear in the headline or text of the obituary—specialist, authority, scholar—and by praise from the librarian’s peers and colleagues. For example, Donald Gallup, former curator of the Yale Collection of American Literature, is extolled as being “the premier bibliographer for both [T. S.] Eliot and Ezra Pound, specializing in finding the first appearances of their work and documenting their creativity” [61, p. 48]. Librarians displayed their expertise in a wide variety of subjects, ranging from architecture, photography, and Maine genealogy to medicine, Americana, and the *Gutenberg Bible*. The breadth and specificity of this knowledge also varies. While Jack Dalton is identified simply as an “Authority in Library Studies” [62, p. 31], Maurice Tauber, also cited as a “Library Authority,” is described more specifically as “one of America’s authorities on cataloguing, classification and technical processes” [63, p. B6]. Both were part of Columbia University’s School of Library Services, where Dalton served as dean from 1950 to 1970 and Tauber was the Melvil Dewey Professor of Library Service from 1954 to 1972.

Sometimes the expertise of librarians did not coincide with the focus of the institutions where they worked. In these cases, authority stems from self-motivation, as opposed to the more typical circumstances of formal education, specific professional training, and employment. Paul Magriel, who is introduced as “an art collector, connoisseur, and former tour guide at the Metropolitan Museum of Art” [64, p. B12], was also the American School of Ballet’s librarian, a curator at the Museum of Modern Art’s dance archives, and an editor of the publication *Dance Index*. Despite his professional affiliation with the world of dance, he was “an authority on Italian Renaissance bronzes,” which formed part of his extensive and eclectic art collections that were “exhibited in more than 84 American museums and galleries” [64, p. B12]. Jane Davies, described as “a tiny woman with a quiet but commanding presence” who worked at the general reference desk at Columbia University, was a self-taught and “independent” architectural scholar and historian who became the “pre-eminent authority” on the work of architect A. J. Davis [1, p. A13]. “With no more than her interest and a librarian’s salary,” Davies also became a knowledgeable and “an important collector of Davis’s prints, drawings and Gothic-style furniture,” so much so that “some of the pieces are now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art” [1, p. A13].

Expertise is also frequently correlated with a large body of scholarship, with obituaries discussing both the librarian’s productivity and the status it confers—the idea underlying the citation in Davies’s obituary that she is “the person who published the most articles on A. J. Davis” [1, p. A13]. The same holds true for Maurice Tauber, the “cataloguing, classification and technical processes” expert whose “prolific writings—his bibliography, published in 1973, lists more than 500 works by or about him—were in-

strumental in establishing his reputation as one of America's authorities" on these subjects [63, p. B6]. Other types of publication that bestow expertise are scholarly works within specific subject areas that became seminal or standard texts and catalogs or bibliographies related to a library collection. Bernard Karpel, director of the Museum of Modern Art library, "began the practice of including extensive bibliographies in art exhibition catalogues" [65, p. A24]. Mortimer's "detailed catalogues of . . . 16th-century French and Italian books at Harvard University's Houghton Library" are referred to as "standard reference works in the field" [40, p. D21]. But not all such "standard reference works" focus on books or librarianship—a reflection of the breadth of librarian expertise. In addition to over six hundred articles and catalog essays, Beaumont Newhall published, between 1937 and 1982, five revised and expanded editions of the "groundbreaking" and "pre-eminent" *The History of Photography, 1839 to the Present* [66, p. 27].

Other librarians applied their specialized knowledge in reviews and articles in both professional journals and popular media, including the *Washington Evening Star*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *New Republic*, and WNYC radio. Baker, the noted "storytelling expert" who "enchant[ed] children and their parents alike," was the host of the weekly radio show *World of Children's Literature* in the 1970s, storyteller in residence at the University of South Carolina, and coauthor of *Storytelling: Art and Technique* [41, p. B13]. Barbara Rollock followed in Baker's footsteps, becoming the voice of *World of Children's Literature* in the 1980s. She also wrote such well-received books as *Black Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books* and *Public Library Services for Children* [30, p. B7].

For some scholar-librarians, it was the act of discovery, rather than a resulting publication, that commands the most attention. Robert Henderson, described as a "Librarian and Sport Expert," worked for forty-two years at the main reading room of the New York Public Library and was librarian of the city's Racquet and Tennis Club for fifty-nine years, but is primarily remembered for his 1939 monograph asserting that Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball at Cooperstown [67, p. 26]. Instead, Henderson argued, "Washington's men played the game at Valley Forge . . . [and] that as far back as the early 1700's, a clergyman in England had chastised members of his congregation for playing something very much like baseball on the Sabbath" [67, p. D26]. Four years after he provided additional evidence for his thesis in *Ball, Bat and Bishop, the Origin of Ball Games* (1947), the *Official Encyclopedia of Baseball* "capitulated and embraced" Henderson's views [67, p. D26].

In other obituaries, the discoveries center on unearthing manuscripts by well-known literary figures. Gallup, the expert on Eliot and Pound, not only published bibliographies of these writers, but also "confirmed the

discovery of the long-lost manuscript of Eliot's "Waste Land" in 1968, providing "analysis that made the identification definitive" [61, p. 48]. Charles Mann, Jr., introduced as "a sleuth of the unpublished Hemingway and the keeper of rare books at Pennsylvania State University," coproduced *The Hemingway Manuscripts*, a bibliography of Hemingway's unpublished works that introduced readers to the previously unknown novel *Jimmy Breen*, the short story "Summer People," "believed to be the first Nick Adams tale," and a ten-page letter from F. Scott Fitzgerald, "which offered a critique of *The Sun Also Rises*" [68, p. 36]. In sum, just as the prestige and extent of a library collection reflects a librarian's accomplishments, the descriptions of works authored or edited by librarians serve as a backdrop for, and evidence of, their expertise.

International Outreach

Sixteen librarians participated in international outreach efforts, assisting with library development, or consulting on library-related issues, outside the United States. Often, third-party organizations were the stimulus behind such efforts; sometimes it was the individual reputation of the librarian that was the key factor. After his tenure as Librarian of Congress in 1944, MacLeish served both as Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs, "a post in which he helped plan Unesco," and as "chairman of the American delegation to [Unesco's] first conference in 1946 and an executive member of its general council" [44, p. A1]. Luther Evans, Librarian of Congress from 1945 to 1953, held the title of director-general of Unesco from 1953 to 1958 and "was especially active in the preparation of the draft of the Universal Copyright Convention" [69, p. B6].

MacLeish and Evans belong to the first generation of globally active librarians represented in the examined obituaries, setting the stage for others by developing the infrastructure and policies of Unesco. Their contemporaries conducted Unesco surveys, directed the ALA's International Relations office, and took part in an ALA delegation that traveled to the Soviet Union in 1964. Keyes DeWitt Metcalf, a director of Harvard University's libraries until his retirement in 1955, "joined Archibald MacLeish and other librarians to organize a program under which many thousand of books were shipped from overseas for use in research in American libraries" after World War II [70, p. B5]. Arthur Eric Gropp, director of the Columbus Memorial Library of the Organization of American States from 1950 to 1968 and a strong proponent of closer ties between the United States and Latin America, helped to found (and direct) the Biblioteca Aritigas-Washington in Montevideo, Uruguay. In addition, he made "a comprehensive survey of libraries and archives in Central America and the

West Indies" [71, p. B13]. Diana Vincent-Daviss, who was both a law professor and law librarian at Yale University, "was a consultant to more than a dozen law libraries, including libraries in Chile, which she assisted under a grant from the United States Agency for International Development" [72, p. D22]. Neil Ratliff, director of the University of Maryland's music library and a renowned expert in Greek music, "was awarded a Fulbright grant . . . to establish a music library for the recently built Athens Concert Hall" [29, p. B7]. And, because of Jean Hutson's indefatigable work at the Schomburg Center in assembling African art and Haitian historical material, persuading her childhood friend Langston Hughes "to donate a portion of his papers to the center," and publishing the *Dictionary Catalogue of the Schomburg Collection* (which was microfilmed and thus made available to libraries throughout the world), she was asked by President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana to "help in building an Africana collection at the University of Ghana" in 1964 [48, p. B18].

Consciousness-Raising

Fourteen librarians were remembered for raising public or professional consciousness on issues whose impact transcends the walls of any one institution or organization. In addition to the issue of copyright, Evans also "was among the leaders in the fight against censorship of library holdings," heading "a conference of publishers and librarians in the drafting of a widely distributed statement titled 'Freedom to Read'" [69, p. B6]. Sharon Anne Hogan, University of Illinois at Chicago provost and founding editor of the foremost journal devoted to bibliographic instruction topics, *Research Strategies*, also "championed copyright, free speech, and privacy rights" in testimony before congressional committees [73, p. A11]. And, in 1959, Emily Reed refused to pull a children's book entitled *The Rabbits' Wedding*—targeted by segregationists for its purported depiction of interracial marriage through the connubial bliss of a black- and a white-furred rabbit—from the shelves of the Alabama Public Library Service Division, a solitary yet influential act that ultimately resulted in local branch libraries having access to the work [4]. Librarians also addressed the issue of access to materials—and the specific types of materials available—outside the context of censorship. At the broadest level, Robert Bingham Downs, a former dean of library administration at the University of Illinois, "spent his career opposing limits on the circulation of books" [74, p. D23]. Jacqueline Eubanks, a librarian at Brooklyn College who stressed the importance of collecting Africana and Caribbean materials, developed and edited *Alternatives in Print*, "an international catalog of books, pamphlets, periodical and audio-visual material not easily found in mainstream reference works"

[75, p. B10]. Hutson's efforts in disseminating knowledge about the extensive holdings of the Schomburg catalyzed both national and international awareness of the rich cultural heritage of African-Americans. And William Moffett opened the Huntington Library's collection of three thousand photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls "to all qualified scholars, not just those approved by the international team of editors that had so long limited access to a chosen few" [76, p. B8].

Other librarians emphasized raising the general quality of library services for diverse populations. After retiring as dean of Columbia's School of Library Services, Jack Dalton "directed the Library Development Center, which advocates better library services for the disabled and disadvantaged" [62, p. 31]. Gosnell, who helped found the Masonic Library in Manhattan, "attracted national attention in the early 1950's when, as State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner of Health and Education in New York, he conducted studies showing that the country's public libraries were in a deplorable state and that the majority of college and university libraries were suffering from neglect" [60, p. 8]. Mary Virginia Gaver was the champion of "the cause of school libraries in America" because she "helped develop national school library standards . . . and headed a \$1.1 million campaign promoting their adoption nationwide and creating eight model libraries" [77, p. A18]. For Gaver, professional accomplishment was intertwined with personal biography: "Growing up in the cotton mill town of Schoolfield, Va., she accompanied her mother, a teacher, as she went door-to-door collecting \$100 to start a school library. Mill company executives matched the donations. Decades later, [she] summarized what she saw as her mission in the title of the pamphlet she wrote: 'Every Child Needs a School Library'" [77, p. A18].

Still others addressed the role of librarians in providing better service and, ultimately, the very nature of librarianship. Thomas Fleming, Jr., was "an early advocate of medical librarian training"—a position that he not only promoted, but also embodied in his own career path at Columbia University [78, p. B7]. Named "head librarian at the medical school" in 1937, he was successively "a library science professor in 1948, chief of Biological Sciences Libraries in 1949 and a medical school professor in 1950" before retiring in 1972 [78, p. B7]. Hogan was a key figure in guiding "the country's libraries into the electronic age," specifically through her role as "a national leader in getting libraries to function as information retrieval systems" and as an innovator of bibliographic instruction programs about the Internet [73, p. A11].

As the career of Zena Sutherland illustrates, the nature of librarianship can also be changed by individuals who did not primarily work in a library, but nevertheless were librarians by training. In the process of reviewing "about 30,000 titles" as editor of *The Bulletin* of the Center for Children's

Books from 1958 to 1985, she not only became a “stalwart supporter of books that addressed a range of problems and issues that some still find shocking,” but also developed a “critical rather than sugary descriptive” approach to reviewing because she “accepted children as real and aware individuals and their books as real literature” [43, p. B18]. Among the reviews that the obituary cites are two works by Maurice Sendak: “In 1963 the psychologically incisive picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* . . . was controversial in the way it depicted a child’s temper tantrum. Mrs. Sutherland found it ‘most imaginative and unusual.’ Her 1970 review of Mr. Sendak’s *In the Night Kitchen* serenely sailed past little Mickey’s brief nudity, which so disturbed other reviewers, and described the book as an ‘engaging fantasy’” [43, p. B18]. Sutherland similarly gave a favorable and balanced review to *I’ll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* by John Donovan, “a 1969 novel for young adults that introduced homosexuality as a theme” [43, p. B18].

Three individuals raised the public’s consciousness about issues outside the typically defined realm of librarianship. In addition to her duties as a Yale law professor and librarian, Vincent-Daviss was a deputy director of the Orville H. Schell Jr. Center for International Human Rights, which “promotes research and assists lawyers and organizations concerned about preserving individual rights and freedoms and acts as a clearing house for information” [72, p. D22]. MacLeish used poetry to express his views on a variety of contemporary sociopolitical issues, including his stance “against the McCarthyism of the 1950’s, against military involvement in Southeast Asia, against the anti-Communist concepts of the cold war and against the Americanization of the world” [44, p. A1]. Many of librarian Dee Brown’s twenty-nine books, including *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, drew attention to the wrongful portrayal of Native Americans in U.S. history and acted as a counterbalance to Eurocentric and Hollywood interpretations of the conquest of the American West [37, p. A27]. As his obituary notes, the “racism and wanton carelessness of whites and the betrayals and killings they perpetrated were relentless themes for Mr. Brown”—themes that had not “entered the public consciousness” [37, p. A27].

Helpfulness

Whether by building a library collection, overseeing an institution’s expansion, sharing expertise through published work, or drawing attention to important issues, librarians acted in ways that provided assistance to library users in the abstract and to scholarship or society as a whole. But only six obituaries describe librarians helping individual patrons and colleagues through direct interaction, including an uncanny ability for ref-

erence work. For instance, Alfred Lane “specialized in answering writers’ obscure questions, from how to correspond with federal prisoners to who paid for Alice Liddell, the Alice of *Alice in Wonderland*, to come from London to Columbia University to accept an honorary degree” [26, p. A27]. Lane himself is quoted as saying “I bamboozled some people into thinking that I knew everything under the sun” [26, p. A27]. Adolf Placzek, “a distinguished historian, editor, and preservationist” who served as director of the Avery Architectural Library for twenty years and edited architectural history treatises, is described as “a resource par excellence for preservationists and architects. . . . He inevitably knew the answer to their questions and inevitably had something illuminating to add” [2, p. C31]. Dina Abramowicz, head librarian at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research who had a “mind [that] was a mental card catalog”⁵ and was “flintlike in her insistence upon historical and linguistic accuracy,” is remembered for unearthing obscure materials “for scholars like Irving Howe and novelists like Leon Uris as well as for thousands of ordinary people trying to research their family histories” [3, p. 39]. Because of her “firsthand and encyclopaedic knowledge of the lost Yiddish world of Eastern Europe,” she identified hidden resources for historians like George Kennan. When Kennan was looking for material “on a 19th century convert to Christianity, she led him not only to the entry in the library’s precious Russian-Jewish encyclopedia but also to a scarce book in Yiddish about Jewish apostates” [3, p. B39]. She also gamely fielded “inquiries from journalists and writers who liked to season their prose with a word or two of Yiddish [and who] relied on [her] as their authority for the transliterated spelling of words like bobe (grandmother) and yichus (pedigree)” [3, p. 39].

Patrons also relied on Elizabeth Cornelia Hall, described as “an indispensable reference work” in her capacity both as director of the New York Botanical Garden library and as the person answering the phone at the garden’s plant-information service [79, p. A19]. Like Abramowicz, Hall not only helped scholars and writers—“America’s leading garden writers and horticulturalists”—but also the average green-thumbed or all-thumbs gardener, “dispensing advice on dubious mushrooms and sympathy to people with terminal plants” [79, p. A19]. This advice was often remembered for its quirkiness: “Once, when a caller asked how she might kill a tree without her husband’s knowledge, Miss Hall replied, ‘Well, you could kill your husband first’” [79, p. A19].

5. This comparison to an iconic, if semi-extinct, tool of the trade is emphasized by the obituarial photograph, which shows Abramowicz “dainty in an old world way” [3, p. 39] sandwiched between a bank of card catalog drawers in the background and piles of books and prominently labeled microform boxes in the foreground.

Not all of the librarians' helpfulness derived solely from knowing the right answers. Helen Adams Masten, a children's librarian "who read to children at the New York Public Library" from 1922 to 1960, "received hundreds of grateful letters from city children and adults on her retirement" [80, p. B5]. The role of Charlotte Green, who was "the most indispensable nonlawyer" for sixty years as librarian and claims negotiator at a New York law firm, is described by a coworker as follows: "She had to keep track of all the books, all the new laws that came out. She had to know authors, tax laws and so on. She catalogued everything. We adored her. She was a very kind person. We had a lot of office boys and girls and she taught them a great deal—about the firm and about life. Courtesy. Manners. That's the way Charlotte was" [81, p. B1]. And one of the lawyers in the firm recalls the following anecdote: "Mr. Leaman, whose father had been head of the law firm's real estate department, recalled meeting Miss Green on a trip to the office as a boy in the 1920's. She gave him paper clips to play with, and he remembered her when he became a lawyer at the firm in 1940. Even then, he said, she was 'the nerve center of the office'" [81, p. B1]. Accordingly, helpfulness derives as much from personal interactions with colleagues and patrons as it does from professional acumen. In other words, it is not simply knowing the answers or doing a job well that defines helpfulness in this context, but also something more essentially linked to the librarian as a unique individual—something that makes that person who he or she is.

An Overall Portrait of Librarianship

What, then, constitutes the "obituary pantheon" of librarians in the *New York Times*? Most obviously, librarianship is construed as a male profession, with 63.4 percent of memorialized librarians being men. One explanation for this may be patriarchy: many of the librarians had careers between 1930 and 1980, a period when men enjoyed privileged professional status. Still, this runs counter to the gender balance among librarians in the United States, where women were 85.7 percent of all librarians [82, p. 381], 64.3 percent of academic librarians [83], 57 percent of academic library directors [84], and 65 percent of public library directors [84]. Just as clearly librarianship is forcefully associated with the academic world in *NYT* obituaries, with 40.7 percent of obituary subjects working at academic libraries, while only 18.7 and 2.4 percent worked in public and school libraries, respectively. The reality is quite different. Academic librarians are only 18.2 percent of all librarians in the United States, while public

and school librarians are 21.7 and 48.8 percent of the total number, respectively [85].⁶

More important, the five themes identified in table 4 reveal a great deal about the scale of changes that librarians have effected. At the conceptual level, change can come either quickly or incrementally, and can be large or small. These sets of distinctions are independent of the scale of the impact of the change. Small-scale change can ultimately have an enormous impact on a group of individuals or even society in general, just as large-scale changes can have little or no impact on its target groups. While *NYT* obituaries imply that the changes made possible by librarians have had a large impact on one or more groups of individuals, the nature and scope of the changes themselves are varied. Consider the discrepancies between the changes implemented by Bryant, director of Harvard University's library system from 1972 to 1979 [56]; Sutherland, editor of *The Bulletin* of the Center for Children's Books from 1958 to 1985 [43]; and Matsen [80]. Bryant implemented a shared electronic catalog that evolved into the Research Libraries Group—a change that can be characterized both at inception and completion as large-scale. The innovations of Sutherland and Matsen—"a different approach to reviewing children's literature" [43, p. B18] and the decision to begin reading to children at the NYPL [80, p. B5], respectively—also had enormous positive consequences, but they began with two individuals acting alone in a small-scale way, taking it upon themselves to alter their own individual approach to professional practice.

While all the changes had large-scale impact, most of the librarians portrayed in the *NYT* obituary pages initiated changes that, from the outset, were more on the scale of the actions taken by Bryant than those of Sutherland and Masten. While this is not particularly surprising in terms of themes such as "international outreach" and "consciousness-raising," the focus on the large-scale—akin to the more amorphous concept of "greatness"—can also be detected in other themes. Obituaries citing a librarian's expertise or scholarship often define these qualities in terms of the volume of the individual's published output. As well, the size of the collections that librarians helped develop is linked in the obituaries to the size or importance of the librarian's contribution. In other cases, the librarian's role in collection development is tied to the prestige of particular acquisitions rather than the size of the collection. Yet here, too, there is a connection with size—specifically, to the extent of the librarian's contacts. While collection development in the realm of rare-books and similarly specialized libraries is often presented in terms of sleuthing and discovery,

6. The exact figures for the number of librarians in the United States in academic libraries is 24,815; in public libraries 29,519; in school libraries 66,471; and in special libraries 15,307. Total employed librarians is 136,112.

the collecting ingenuity ascribed to some librarians is predicated on networking. Karpel, director of the Museum of Modern Art from 1942 to 1973, “used many innovative means to increase the library’s collection, such as borrowing rare manuscripts including Futurist manifestos, Dada pamphlets and avant-garde art magazines and recording them on microfilm” [65, p. A24]. But he also “built up the book collection by making use of an extensive range of personal contacts that he maintained not only with books collectors and dealers around the world, but also with artists” involved in these movements [65, p. A24]. Other examples of networking are common. Philip Miller, cited for numerous contributions to the music division of the NYPL, was “ubiquitous as a commentator, arranger or presenter at library concerts, music exhibitions and countless events with rare recordings or opera stars” [51, p. B19]. Another music librarian and producer, Lawrence Jay Taylor, “was music librarian for Liza Minnelli, Chita Rivera, Roberta Peters, and other artists” [86, p. B5].

Far from creating a stereotypical portrait of librarians as shy, sheltered, dour, or dowdy individuals, the emphasis on large-scale matters in *NYT* obituaries produces an image of librarianship as a glamorous profession. Like Karpel, Miller, and Taylor, many of the librarians had connections to prominent people, and they made the most of these social networks. Like Lane, Lohf, and Szladits, they are situated within the discourse of sleuthing and discovery. Librarians were also players on a global stage, founding libraries abroad, bringing many salient issues to the attention of the world community, and developing international guidelines that led to institutional progress. In sum, the librarians memorialized by the *NYT* thought big, instigating changes that would outlast their own tenure at a particular institution—most likely an academic one—and in many cases connecting institutions through technological advances. They also wrote big, producing hundreds of scholarly articles or seminal books in various academic fields.

At the same time, the opportunity to work on a large scale and assume a glamorous professional role can be connected, for example, to the fact that 56.1 percent of obituary subjects held leadership roles (table 3). After all, it is easier to instigate large-scale changes when assuming a large role in the day-to-day management of an institution. Similarly, the type of library where they worked affects the type of changes librarians can institute. As table 2 shows, a large proportion of memorialized librarians worked in academic or special libraries or library departments focused on the arts or on rare books and manuscripts. Just as the opportunity to institute large-scale changes increases in leadership positions, working in a rare-books or art library increases the opportunity to do the type of sleuthing—tracking down a prized document, for example, or unearthing an undiscovered manuscript—that both creates an aura of intrigue around the librarian

and allows him or her to make use of important contacts. A comparatively low percentage of obituary subjects was employed at public libraries, where such opportunities might be less plentiful. Yet, even within the category of public libraries, many obituary subjects were affiliated with prominent departments and collections, such as the Schomburg and the Berg, and, as in the case of Miller, directed large-scale projects that resulted in a high profile for both library and librarian.

The emphasis on large-scale projects carried out by intrepid, well-connected, and globe-trotting upper-management individuals (a majority of whom were male) brings us back to the question of librarian stereotypes. As Radford and Radford have shown, negative stereotypes of librarians—among which are matronly appearance, dowdy dress, fussiness, obsession with order, and “predominant activities” such as “shelving, stamping, and shushing” [19, p. 60]—are typically associated with female librarians. Yet, to judge from the *NYT* obituaries, librarianship is a glamorous profession that offers individuals a fulfilling, exciting, worldly, and eventful career. Why is there a disjunction between these two images of librarianship—a relatively negative image that is perpetuated by reference to female practitioners and a relatively positive image that is typically associated with male (mostly academic) practitioners? On one level, it could be a question of gender. As Daria Carle and Susan Anthes demonstrated, the visual images on the covers and within the textual matter of major library journals such as *American Libraries* and *Library Journal* do not reflect the gender ratio of the profession, overrepresenting men and underrepresenting women [87]. In a recent ALA report, evidence was presented that “though most library directors are women, the percentage of directors who are men exceeds the percentage of librarians who are men” and the annual average salaries of male directors (public and academic libraries combined) exceed the salaries of female directors by almost \$7,000 [84]. Librarianship as a profession has a long tradition of being ambivalent about and valuing justly the contributions of women. The question of negative and positive stereotypes may be viewed as part of this dynamic.

But this identified disjunction could also be linked with what Wiegand has called the nexus “between power and knowledge” [14, p. 24]. As discussed above, the types of libraries where the memorialized librarians worked and the types of subjects they concerned themselves with could, in general, be characterized as belonging to the world of serious academic scholarship. Wiegand notes, in a survey of the history of American librarianship, that “services designed to improve access to the information desired by scientists and academics were more valued than services designed to improve access to the information contained in reading materials desired by housewives and children”—a situation that had something to do with the fact that such patrons “had more political, social, and economic

clout than a black child or a female romance novel reader" [14, pp. 9–10]. Wiegand here was writing specifically about the period 1918–45, but his insights transfer readily into the world of librarianship portrayed in *NYT* obituaries. For the most part, the world of these librarians is "big" librarianship catering to the needs of scholars and scientists engaged in serious research. Librarians are presented as valued and influential contributors to the progress and realization of scholarly research. They make important discoveries themselves, circulate within a wide network of friends and colleagues, contribute to the influence and prestige of large research libraries and large causes in the United States, and are instrumental in the growth of libraries internationally. And, it is worth noting, many women participate in this world of "big" librarianship and are portrayed in a positive light. In one sense, librarians—both male and female—who thought, wrote, and acted "big" may be seen as "organic intellectuals," defined by Raber as people who "offer a potentially progressive and transforming service, but . . . in a context that preserves their self-interest and liberal identity within the capitalist hegemony" [15, p. 50]. In other words, they represent "a dominant professional imperative [that] systematically privileged some library purposes and audiences to the exclusion of others" [15, p. 46]. It is therefore not that surprising that they are portrayed in a positive light, and that librarianship appears as an exciting profession.

While the argument could be made that the rhetorical construction of librarianship as a glamorous profession is a welcome change from popular negative stereotypes, at least one problematic issue arises in connection with this positive portrayal. There are relatively few obituaries that portray librarians who, like Masten and Green, were not directors of prominent libraries or published authors or experts in special fields, yet were conscientious librarians who went about their jobs and are remembered for the ways in which they helped ordinary people, especially children, on a daily basis. From an ideological perspective, these librarians form part of what Raber identifies as the "transgressors"—individuals who are "immersed in the dominant culture and depend on that culture for their social position" [15, p. 45], but who, at the same time, do not fit within the parameters of "big" librarianship. There are, of course, numerous librarians of whom it could be said that they contributed to "small" librarianship—that is, they recommended the perfect novel or poetry book, quietly helped find just the right piece of information, thoughtfully inquired about a senior citizen's health, bandaged a child's bruised knee after storytime, or cared for the plants on library windowsills that provided a welcome and necessary beauty for lonely, depressed, or homeless individuals. But if this type of librarian is remembered at all, it is typically through a negative gendered portrait that emphasizes obsession with order, dowdiness, and such stereotypical acts as "shelving, stamping, and shush-

ing" [19, p. 60]. There seems to be very little middle space or will to define librarianship in a positive way as an amalgam of small and caring acts that, summed together, positively affect the lives of ordinary and marginalized individuals. While perhaps not as glamorous as the lives led and the contributions made by their counterparts in "big" libraries, there is "a history in every life" [81, p. B1]. Without the histories of librarians whose idea of "big" did not match the reigning paradigms of "big," there is a danger of forgetting that small-scale acts can lead to great changes, and that these small-scale acts of helpfulness and care can have as great an impact as large-scale plans and actions.

There is also the danger of having a bifurcated view of librarianship: positive images of male-dominated "big" librarianship—what Roma Harris [88, p. 19] labels the expert model—and negative images of female-intensive "small" librarianship—what Harris calls the service model whose guiding principle is helpfulness [88, p. 19]. One consequence of this is that, in an attempt to enhance the overall image of the profession, undue emphasis has been placed on moving librarianship in directions that lead to positive assessments and images—for example, what Wiegand terms "library expertise, and big library institutions" [14, p. 23] as well as a focus on managerial prowess and ever-faster, ever-bigger information technology systems—and a concomitant neglect of those aspects of librarianship that focus on small daily acts that assume extraordinary meaning in the lives of countless patrons. As librarianship has moved toward the "male model of professionalism" [88, p. 20]—"big" librarianship—in an attempt to overcome a lack of esteem [88, p. 21] and as it eviscerates the idea of "library" from definitions of what it is that its practitioners do, it also downplays essential aspects of its service and care-based ethic. From one perspective, it is as if librarians decided that the traditional service and care-based ethic—instead of systemic devaluation of woman's work—was the central reason for the persistence of negative librarian stereotypes. Thus, the logic went, if they moved away from this ethic, they would also shed negative stereotypes and fashion for themselves a new vibrant and sexy image—an image somehow connected with male models of authoritative professionalism and encapsulated in the notion of the information (science) professional. Indeed, that is one reason why the debate in 2003 about the Nancy Pearl "shushing" librarian action figure was so virulent: some saw it as a way to emphasize the values of "small" librarianship, especially the joys of recommending good books to patrons; others saw it as "setting the profession back 30 years" [89, 90]. Yet, as Katherine Adams suggests, embracing negative stereotypes of librarians can be liberating, since it allows librarians "to understand what is at stake in the stereotype as well as to appreciate mechanisms for subverting the stereotype to their own ends" [91, p. 298]. In many ways, then, the collective portrait of librarians in

NYT obituaries at the end of the twentieth century mirrors the fractures and fissures bedeviling librarianship as it enters the twenty-first century. On the one hand, the obituaries show a glamorous and exciting side of “big” librarianship; on the other, they minimize the importance of helpfulness—“small” librarianship—as an integral aspect of library-based work.

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