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a journal of library history

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# *Libraries & Culture*

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## **Autonomy and Accommodation: Houston's Colored Carnegie Library, 1907–1922**

*Cheryl Knott Malone*

Denied the use of the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, African American leaders organized their own public library in a high school in 1909. Working through native Houstonian Emmett J. Scott and his boss Booker T. Washington, local black Houstonians secured a construction grant from the Carnegie Corporation. By the time the Colored Carnegie Library building was completed in 1913, they had negotiated with the City of Houston for the right of an all-black board of trustees to govern the library. Eight years later, the city disbanded the board and downgraded the library to a branch of the Houston Public Library system. The experience of founding and administering the institution nevertheless represented an act of resistance on the part of Houston's African American activists, who turned a Jim Crow library into an opportunity for autonomy.

Ernest Ollington Smith, soon after graduating from Fisk University, moved to Houston to become principal of an elementary school in 1904, the same year the city's magnificent new Carnegie library building opened. Smith would later recall that he and a handful of like-minded black educators attempted to use the new Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, but the staff turned them away. In response, Smith and his colleagues founded their own public library, secured a Carnegie grant for a building, and convinced the city to allow an all-black board of trustees to have autonomous control over collections and services when their Carnegie building opened in 1913. But eight years later the city disbanded the board and transformed the library into a racially segregated branch of the existing municipal library system.<sup>1</sup>

Buildings constructed for the use of African Americans, including library branches, have been "part of a ritual of memory, struggle, and hope," as Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball have put it.<sup>2</sup> Yet historians have tended to ignore the establishment of early twentieth-century libraries for African Americans. They have focused instead on a variety of other segregated facilities and institutions that C. Vann Woodward identified in the 1950s as ranging from "all forms of public transportation, to sports and recreations, to hospitals, orphanages,

prisons, and asylums, and ultimately to funeral homes, morgues, and cemeteries.”<sup>3</sup>

Educators in the field of library and information science and working librarians engaged in historical research have paid more attention to the impact of racism on library development.<sup>4</sup> But only detailed studies of particular cases can reveal the “rituals of memory, struggle and hope” rehearsed while establishing public libraries that conformed to the southern model of racial segregation as it existed in the early twentieth century.

The process of creating and constructing Houston’s Colored Carnegie Library offers a way to explore the rituals of race relations enacted in one New South city soon after the turn of the century. With the involvement of African American activists, the contests over library funding, location, and governance typical in many communities also shaped what it meant to be black in an increasingly urbanized and segregated literate culture.<sup>5</sup> African Americans intent on building a library for black Houstonians moved beyond the lobbying of local white librarians and city officials to a national strategy that involved both Booker T. Washington and Andrew Carnegie. In so doing, black Houstonians proclaimed themselves actors in the civic and cultural politics that influenced their city, the services it provided, and its built environment.

### **Houston’s New Library for Whites**

The history of the Colored Carnegie Library began with the opening of the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library. In the 1890s white clubwomen began agitating successfully for expanded library services and an improved collection at the private Houston Lyceum. In 1899 they stepped up their efforts, convincing the mayor and the city council to appropriate \$2,400 annually for library maintenance. Later that year they wrote to Andrew Carnegie, who agreed to give \$50,000 for a building if the city would increase its annual appropriation to \$4,000. The city agreed, and white clubwomen proceeded to raise almost \$8,000 in donations to purchase a site for the building at the corner of McKinney Avenue and Travis Street.

One of the rewards of their direct involvement in the project was the appointment of clubwomen Belle Sherman (Mrs. W. E.) Kendall and Elizabeth L. Fitzsimmons (Mrs. H. F.) Ring to the new public library’s nine-member governing board. Both Kendall and Ring were members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Daughters of the American Revolution, and married to prominent attorneys. The president of the governing board from 1900 to 1908, and again from 1915 until he died in 1924, was Henry Havelock Dickson. Involved in the

Houston Business League, the Houston Country Club, and the Lyceum, Dickson helped secure Carnegie's gift and was instrumental in the hiring of Julia Ideson as librarian in 1903.<sup>6</sup>

The board over which Dickson presided, and on which Kendall and Ring served, committed itself to the provision of a free public library for all Houstonians.<sup>7</sup> But it soon became clear that their policy was more restricted in practice, in keeping with local developments. Between 1875 and 1930, library policies and practices supported the growing separation of white and black Houstonians.<sup>8</sup> Sometime in 1907, several African-American educators attempted to use the Carnegie library. The staff informed them that black residents had never tried such a thing before and referred the matter to the board of trustees, who agreed verbally to provide library services for blacks. After a year of waiting for further action, high school principal E. O. Smith, Gregory School principal William E. Miller, postal clerk Leonard Henry Spivey, and high school teachers Richard G. Lockett and Walter L. D. Johnson, Sr., created a voluntary association dedicated to founding a library for Houston's African Americans.<sup>9</sup>

The group's leader, Ernest Ollington Smith, grew up in Alabama, graduated from Fisk University in 1903, and served briefly as principal of a school in Goliad, Texas, before moving to Houston in 1904, where he had taken a position as principal of Hollywood School. From 1908 until 1926, he served as principal of Booker T. Washington School in the First Ward. William Miller was a fellow educator. Born in Belton, Texas, in 1871, he worked in his teens for a white man who later sent him to Prairie View State College. From 1901 until 1926, he served as principal of Gregory Elementary School. Lockett was a native Houstonian born in 1882. He graduated from Atlanta University in 1905 and returned to Houston where he taught in the high school for blacks, as did Walter Johnson. The only board member not in the education field was Leonard Spivey. He had attended Tillotson College and worked at a grocery store in Austin for two years before taking a job at a store in Houston in 1901. In 1903 he became a postal carrier.<sup>10</sup>

The men approached several important white men for written endorsements of the idea of a library for blacks. Among the whites willing to support the project were attorney Presley K. Ewing, whose wife had worked to create the white library as a member of the Ladies Reading Club; P. W. Horn, who supervised Smith, Lockett, and Johnson as superintendent of schools and who served on the library board; and Postmaster Seth Strong, who supervised Spivey.<sup>11</sup> Confident he had the backing of white men supportive of the public library movement, Smith wrote directly to the head of the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, Julia Ideson.

Ideson was not a native Houstonian. In 1892, when she was twelve, her family had moved from Hastings, Nebraska, where her father owned a bookstore, to Houston, where he worked in one. Mr. Ideson soon turned to real estate and apparently did well in Houston's growing economy, for he was able to send his daughter to the University of Texas where she completed the first program in library science offered there.<sup>12</sup> Ideson had been head of the Houston library for five years when Smith wrote to her in September of 1908 to ask for a five-minute-long meeting during which he hoped to get her support and advice.<sup>13</sup> A month later, when he had received no reply, he wrote again, using a number of rhetorical devices that indicated his position as a southern black man writing to a white woman for a favor. His letter opened deferentially:

We have reason to think that you may be enough interested in my people to listen to their cry for the crumbs which fall from your table. If I am mistaken in this, however, charge me with credulity rather than audacity.<sup>14</sup>

Reiterating that public library space and collections were not available to the city's black residents, Ideson noted again the endorsements of several respected white men by name. Superintendent Horn understood the need, especially among schoolchildren, for library books and magazines and story hours. The others approved of Smith's efforts because, he wrote, "they feel we ought to be encouraged in interesting our people in anything which will make them less idle, less criminal, and more industrious, peaceful and law-abiding citizens."<sup>15</sup> Such wording may have reflected both Smith's own class biases as a member of the black professional elite as well as an understanding of whites' negative stereotypes of African Americans.

Ideson did meet briefly with a small group and advised them to ask the mayor directly for the city's assistance. The city had recently instituted a commission form of government, and Mayor H. Baldwin Rice enjoyed the power of the executive office which made it necessary for interest groups to lobby him directly. Born into one of Houston's wealthiest families and married to a woman who supported the activities of the public library, Rice represented one New South perspective on race relations. He understood the advantages of African Americans participating in the city's economic progress, but at the same time wanted them to do so in their own separate sphere. During their meeting with Rice, Smith and his cohorts extracted a promise of \$500 per year to fund a library for African-American Houstonians.<sup>16</sup>

Aware of the mayor's funding offer, the public library board in its meeting of 20 October 1908, considered Smith's request for a library.

They passed a motion “that if the colored people would secure the use of suitable rooms, and attendants, the library would donat [sic] one hundred dollars, and such duplicates as could be spared.”<sup>17</sup> Ten days later Smith called a meeting of Houston’s black residents at the United Brotherhood of Friendship Hall, explained the white board’s offer, and officially formed what he considered a temporary organization with himself as chairman and Walter Johnson as secretary. Smith appointed a Committee of Seven on “ways and means” which included Professor James Codwell, editor at the Western Star Publishing Company; the Rev. N. P. Pullum, a businessman and pastor of Houston’s Friendship Baptist Church who had raised \$25,000 for a new church building; and the Rev. F. L. Lights, leader of both Antioch Baptist Church and the Orgen Banking Company. Also involved was realtor J. B. Bell. Smith, Johnson, and Spivey also served on the committee, and at the motion of Pullum, Smith added Mrs. J. V. Lewis and Mrs. C. A. Scott.<sup>18</sup> The ways and means committee diversified the library’s support group beyond the field of educators to include members of Houston’s African-American elite in the often combined endeavors of business and religion.

### **A Branch for Blacks**

Superintendent Horn approved the use of available space at the African-American high school for three years, and on 1 March 1909, the city appropriation of \$300 for a librarian and \$200 for books began. At the library board meeting on 9 March 1909, Ideson reported that Smith had raised \$100 for books and another \$100 in pledges, and had secured space in the colored high school where bookshelves had been installed. The board then approved the expenditure of the earlier promised \$100.<sup>19</sup> A week later an African-American woman by the name of Emma Myers began her employment as librarian of the Negro branch at \$25 per month. Ideson arranged for her to spend two mornings a week at the main library to process books for her branch, and so the two librarians could keep each other informed of developments at their respective libraries.

In preparation of the branch’s opening on 5 May, Ideson sent three white female staff members to the high school for half a day to catalog and shelve books. The branch opened with 356 books, about three-quarters of which had been weeded from the white library’s collection: 144 volumes of adult fiction, 106 volumes of juvenile fiction, 72 volumes of adult nonfiction, and 34 volumes of juvenile nonfiction.<sup>20</sup> From May 1909 until April 1913, it operated as a branch of the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library with the city appropriating \$500 to the white library board to fund the Colored Branch.

Black Houstonians had their library, but it was in a temporary space and operating with only a short-term commitment of funds. The advantage of seeking a gift from Andrew Carnegie for a solid brick building was his requirement that the city receiving the gift agree to provide maintenance funds, usually amounting to about ten percent of the gift. In response to a letter from Smith recounting efforts to found the library, Washington wrote James Bertram, Andrew Carnegie's assistant, that Houston's Negroes were ready to secure a library building grant for themselves.<sup>21</sup> Apparently unbeknownst to Washington, however, the branch was not quite as stable as its supporters would have liked. Fundraising efforts had lagged while Smith was on an extended visit to Chicago; the ways and means committee raised fewer than \$75 of the \$200 Smith had promised from black Houstonians. Ideson wrote to Smith that she had already ordered \$200 worth of books and had had to use part of the city's \$500 "donation" to pay for them. She told him not to expect any more assistance until his group had raised the full amount promised.<sup>22</sup>

Smith needed help, and he decided that a board the same size as the white library's board, with nine trustees and with the official approval of the white board, would be a more powerful instrument for progress. Early in 1910 Smith wrote to the library board suggesting that the trustees appoint a committee recommended by Ideson to oversee the Colored Branch. Smith was apparently not satisfied with working through Myers, who served as a go-between for her white supervisor and her black trustees. He also worried that factionalism within the association might affect the outcome when it was time to elect officers. As Smith rather delicately put it in a letter to Ideson, "you could appoint practically the same persons whereas if left to an election there might be an undesirable change."<sup>23</sup> Ideson's trustees instructed her to find out who the association's officers were and how they were appointed. During their next board meeting, the trustees approved what they called a "governing committee" of persons suggested by Smith. Ideson recommended a year-long term beginning 1 March 1910, listing Smith as chairman along with Leonard Spivey, W. L. D. Johnson, R. C. Lockett, the Rev. W. H. Logan, Nat Henderson, Mrs. J. M. Johnson, Mrs. M. Baker, Mrs. J. B. Bell, and R. T. Andrews. Logan did not serve, nor did Mrs. Johnson, Baker, and Bell. Three decades later, Smith recalled that the original five-member group of trustees included Spivey, Lockett, Miller, W. L. D. Johnson, and himself, and that the board expanded to nine members including J. B. Bell, Andy Parr, John M. Adkins, and Nat Q. Henderson in 1910.<sup>24</sup>

Adkins was a messenger for the federal courts in Houston and was able to ask the white attorneys he knew for legal advice on behalf of the board; Henderson was principal of Bruce Elementary School. Bell and

Parr were real estate dealers. With the addition of Bell, whose wife had served on Smith's ways and means committee, the library project gained a crucial ally. Early in 1910, Booker T. Washington had led selected members of his National Negro Business League to a meeting at Carnegie's home. Bell was among the delegation. A couple of months after his visit to Carnegie's home, Bell visited Mayor Rice, whom he knew personally, and secured a written commitment indicating the city would provide annual maintenance for a library for blacks. Bell included it in a letter he wrote to Bertram asking that Carnegie fund a building. Bertram then informed Mayor Rice that Carnegie would give \$15,000 for the building. Smith managed to raise \$500 as a down payment for a lot on the corner of Robin and Frederick owned by St. James Lodge No. 6 of the United Brotherhood of Friendship. This placed the library in the heart of the Fourth Ward, which by 1910 had the largest African-American concentration in Houston, 38 percent black. Overall, 26.6 percent of the population of Houston was black. The library would be across from Antioch Baptist Church on Robin Street and close to the high school on the corner of San Felipe and Frederick. Bell, who had negotiated the purchase, agreed to lend the remaining \$1,000 to pay for the \$1,500 site.<sup>25</sup>

The Colored Carnegie Library Association solidified its position in March of 1911, by passing bylaws requiring monthly board meetings; annual elections of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer; and five standing committees for rules and regulations, administration, finance, building and grounds, and books and periodicals. The bylaws also required the trustees to appoint a librarian, who reported to them. When the bylaws went into effect, the group incorporated as the Colored Carnegie Library Association, and its charter listed the nine members of the board as Smith, Miller, Adkins, Bell, Johnson, Spivey, Lockett, Parr, and Henderson. The corporation, decreed to exist for a duration of fifty years and listed as its assets the building site, publications, and gifts totaling \$20,000.<sup>26</sup>

The board further stabilized its role in the fall of 1911, when Washington arrived in Houston on 27 September for a speaking engagement. Bell hosted a dinner at his home for Washington and his entourage and invited guests (all black), including *Texas Freeman* editor C. N. Love; David Abner, president of Conroe College in Houston and a real estate dealer; F. L. Lights, Antioch's pastor; Frederick William Gross, president of Houston College and grand secretary of the United Brothers of Friendship of Texas and of its savings and loan function; Organ Banking Co. cashier George W. Jenkins; and realtor J. Leon Jones.<sup>27</sup> Next, surgeon Benjamin Jessie Covington, a graduate of Meharry Medical College in Nashville and a trustee of Bethel Baptist Church, hosted a reception at his home for the Washington party and the trustees of the Colored

Carnegie Library as formal recognition of the key role Washington and his secretary, native Houstonian Emmett J. Scott, had played in acquiring the library building.<sup>28</sup>

That night, Scott, Smith, and Washington addressed an audience of about five thousand black and two thousand white people packed into the City Auditorium. Knowing that Bell was still waiting to be paid back his \$1,000 loan for the site, Smith took advantage of the opportunity to exhort his listeners to contribute money to the endeavor. After summarizing the history of the movement for a library for Houston Negroes, he said:

Are you so burdened with self and self-interest that you can not do your share in building up an institution which shall benefit your children and benefit generations unborn? I have never yet said that we could not get this money from white men. I believe we can raise it ourselves and so I have said that I thought we would feel more manly and enjoy this library better if we built it ourselves, but if necessary I shall swallow my pride and put my hat under my arm and ask the white men to give us the thousand dollars to build the library which 25,000 shiftless negroes [sic] could not raise. But let no one get the idea that the library will not be built because his bigotry or miserliness prevents him from cooperating with the movement.<sup>29</sup>

Thus construed as both a project and a test of black manhood, the library took on a symbolic meaning that went beyond the utility of its collections and services; here was something African Americans had organized, struggled for, and accomplished. The manliness of the project constructed the library as a triumph, however partial, over racism as black elites made common cause with white elites to help uplift the race.<sup>30</sup> Aware that their words were reaching influential whites as well as blacks, the three speakers at Washington's Houston appearance linked the creation of a racially segregated library to the Washingtonian philosophy of self-help and self-reliance, conceding their new public space as a social arena where the races would not mix. At the same time, as Scott noted, it was a municipal service not "purely social" but one concerned with "the moral and material well being of this our common section," and, as such, deserving of white support. On a day-to-day basis, Smith's group needed the cooperation of the local white elite, but the connection of black Houstonians through Scott to Washington and through Washington to Carnegie elevated their status. Houston's white leaders no doubt registered the message that their African-American neighbors

were real men who had the interest and assistance of two internationally known figures, one black and one white.

The involvement of the most famous and influential black man in the country no doubt smoothed the way for the donation of Carnegie dollars and reassured leading white citizens of the seemingly inherent conservatism of a separate library for blacks. But it did not lessen the conflicts over the design and construction of the building, common in so many communities receiving Carnegie libraries. The board secured a Washington, D. C., architect, William Sidney Pittman, Washington's son-in-law. Pittman had won the contract on the Carnegie library building for the Colored State Normal School in his hometown of Montgomery, Alabama, in 1910.<sup>31</sup> However, his plans for Houston's library building did not meet with Bertram's approval. Bertram considered the grand entrance Pittman had designed a waste of space in a small building and urged him to draw new plans that would allow for larger reading rooms on either side of the central circulation desk. In January of 1912, Pittman and Bertram were still wrangling over the matter.<sup>32</sup> Mayor Rice had never received Bertram's guide describing library floor plans routinely sent to all Carnegie grant recipients. Pittman had designed the building without the guidelines, and the New Jersey bank in charge of disbursing Carnegie's funds balked at doing so until the plans were approved. Scott wrote to the bank in late December claiming that all conditions had been met and wondering when the money would be released.<sup>33</sup> The building finally opened officially on 11 April 1913, with 3,500 to 4,000 volumes but without chairs in its 210-seat basement auditorium.<sup>34</sup> Bertram apparently won the battle over the size of the entry, for the *Houston Chronicle* reported that upon ascending the steps "one enters a minature [sic] foyer and thence a tiny hall."<sup>35</sup>

The board also clashed over the selection of a librarian. Emma Myers served from 8 March 1909, until 15 October 1911, when she resigned to move to California.<sup>36</sup> Mrs. J. V. (Pauline) Lewis had taken her place temporarily, but Smith felt that Lewis neglected her work, and the board decided to recruit for the position without inviting her to apply. In August 1912, Lewis took the hint and resigned, and the board members then began to argue over which of the applicants, including Lewis herself, to hire. Urging the board to hire only the most competent person, Ideson administered a test to three candidates, Pinky Henderson, Annie Edwards, and Pauline Lewis, and asked School Superintendent Horn to grade them. He suggested asking Emma Myers to come back from California to take the position, but she declined.<sup>37</sup> His second choice was Annie Edwards, but Smith had already told Ideson he opposed Mrs. Edwards because "She has a young baby and a disagreeable husband. I do

not see how she could possibly give us the best service."<sup>38</sup> Smith instead began negotiating with Bessie Osborne, whom he described as "a splendid young woman," a college graduate, and a teacher earning \$70 per month. The *Houston Chronicle* described her merely as a "graduate of the Colored High School."<sup>39</sup> The white library board and Ideson recommended to the African-American board Bessie Osborne as first choice, citing as her chief qualification her "freedom from family ties which would seem to assure undivided attention for the Library and her youthfulness which assures greater adaptability."<sup>40</sup> Smith used the white librarian and her board to his advantage in ensuring that his candidate would be chosen.

Although the white library's staff provided apprenticeship training for its librarians, the Colored Carnegie board apparently did not ask for such training for their new librarian.<sup>41</sup> The board hired Bessie Osborne on condition that she would travel to Louisville for an apprenticeship with Thomas Fountain Blue, head librarian of Louisville's Western Colored Branch since its establishment in 1905. Blue had instigated training classes to prepare black women for work at his library and at other segregated branches that opened in the South. On 8 March 1913, the director of the Louisville Free Public Library, George T. Settle, reported to Ideson that Osborne's training included actual work in all departments and he assured her, "you have not made any mistake in your selection of the young woman and I feel sure that the Board will be amply repaid for any expense incurred in sending her to Louisville."<sup>42</sup> A couple of weeks later he wrote again, apparently in response to a pointed inquiry from Ideson. This time he reported that Osborne seemed a bit slow but suggested that she would improve over time with close supervision.<sup>43</sup> Osborne reported to Smith that "I have visited the main branch often and have been treated royally."<sup>44</sup>

### **A Segregated Building and Separate Governance**

With the grand opening of the African-American building only a month away, the white library board moved that two of its members, "find the conditions attached to the Carnegie gift to the Colored Library and the city's acceptance of same so that the Board could know its legal position in regard to to negro [sic] board and library."<sup>45</sup> At the next meeting, the board heard a report that both the mayor and the city attorney had agreed that their "understanding with the Negro Library Board had been that they should administer their Library independently of the Public Library Board and should be answerable directly to the city."<sup>46</sup> A couple of months later, Smith asked Ideson for whatever

remained of the city's \$500 annual appropriation and she responded with a letter detailing the accounts and a check for just over \$122. In closing she wrote:

Your Library is now independent of this Library in all respects. It therefore seems unnecessary to call it a branch of this Library and I think it would be advisable for you to adopt some official name such as Colored Carnegie Library that would not designate it as a branch since it is not so in fact.<sup>47</sup>

The city's allotment of \$1,500 for the African-American library fell far short of the library's needs during its first year in the new Carnegie building. On the library's first anniversary, African-American teacher Charles F. Smith wrote an account of the library for the *Houston Post*, based in part on Bessie Osborne's first annual report to Mayor Ben Campbell. More than eleven thousand visits to the reading rooms and more than one hundred meetings in the basement auditorium had taken place. Of the 1,760 registered readers, most were "porters, nurses, cooks and working girls and boys." But, Smith wrote, "The greatest drawback to the institution is the inability to procure many readable books. The appropriations are not large enough to meet the current expense and provide funds for books."<sup>48</sup>

The library board agreed with Smith's assessment. At the end of the first year in the Carnegie building, Treasurer Bell submitted his financial report to the city. Board president Smith also addressed the mayor and city council on the subject of the library's finances, which he stated were inadequate. He pointed out that the \$125 monthly barely covered staff salaries and utilities. He also noted that "Unlike the other city buildings we have had to assume all responsibility for repairs," as well as furnishing the basement auditorium with two-hundred chairs and purchasing shelves and tables for the library. In fact, the city's appropriation for the first year fell short of actual expenses by almost \$1,100, but, in keeping with the board's desire to demonstrate their self-reliance, they had organized a fundraising picnic which had netted about half that amount.<sup>49</sup> Despite the board's request for an increase, the city again earmarked the promised \$1,500 the second year. The library held benefit picnics again in 1914 and 1915, but Bessie Osborne recorded that they were failures and reported no income from them.<sup>50</sup>

On 1 June 1915, the city's appropriation increased to \$200 per month. Of that, \$50 went to librarian Bessie Osborne, \$20 to her assistant Mabel Westmoreland, and \$30 to the janitor John Route. The library spent \$20 to \$25 a month on electricity, telephone service, and, in the winter, coal.

The total usually came to around \$125, without books or periodicals. Once the allotment increased in 1915, more outlays for books appear in the records.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, Julia Ideson advocated the takeover of the black library. As early as December 1910, she had written to William F. Yust, head of the Louisville Free Public Library, to ask about governance of the library's Western Colored Branch. He assured her that allowing two boards to exist would be a waste of taxpayers' money; he also assumed that the one board would be all white.<sup>52</sup> In an undated memo to white library board president Dickson, Ideson outlined the position the board should take regarding the branch, noting, "We are not seeking to have the Mayor invest us with any authority if he does not see fit." But she called into question the advisability of having a separate board and expressed frustration that she had no official position from which to "be of any assistance to those members of the Library staff and Board who are sincerely and intelligently desirous of having an effective Library." Asserting that "the Colored Library as at present administered is not productive of much service or credit in the community," she suggested that the library institute an accurate system of bookkeeping and that the city audit the library's accounts periodically.<sup>53</sup> In 1918, Ideson took her case to the mayor and he replied that after an audit of the Colored Carnegie Library's accounts, he would decide whether to retain the separate board.<sup>54</sup> Nothing happened, however, partly because Ideson left the country to work in the American Library Association's War Service.

### **An End to Autonomy**

Upon her return from Europe, Ideson realized that Houston's library appropriation had not grown with the rapidly increasing population. Consequently, early in 1921, Ideson orchestrated the passage of a levy of two-and-a-half cents per one-hundred-dollar valuation to support the library. When the measure passed on 9 February 1921, the library's income amounted to \$42,021.78, almost double the prior commitment.<sup>55</sup>

On 14 February 1921, Ideson wrote to each board member regarding the budget for 1921, apparently in preparation for the March board meeting. After discussing the library's budget and the new tax levy in some detail, she wrote:

The tax levy is for all libraries in the City and will, therefore, include the colored library. The colored library has not, for a number of years, been administered by the Trustees of this library. It would seem a more advisable arrangement that it should be, just as the colored schools are managed by one School Board.<sup>56</sup>

On 8 March the board passed a motion that its Finance Committee discuss with the mayor and city council the proportion of funds that should be earmarked for the black branch.<sup>57</sup> The Finance Committee wrote to Mayor A. E. Amerman on 9 April outlining its understanding that the city had already allotted \$4,000 to the colored library, leaving \$38,000 for the white library, including two planned new branches for whites. The committee urged the city to downgrade the Colored Carnegie Library to a branch whose allocation would go to the white board for disbursement. They also conceded, "We would be glad to have the Board of colored trustees continue to function as an advisory committee."<sup>58</sup>

The city did disband the black library governing board, and the library reverted to a branch of the Houston Public Library as it had been when it first opened in the high school in 1909.<sup>59</sup> An Atlanta University graduate student interviewed Walter Johnson in the early 1960s regarding that change, and he expressed frustration that no African Americans were appointed to the single board. The all-white board did appoint Ernest O. Smith, John M. Adkins, Walter L. D. Johnson, R. G. Lockett, and Nat Q. Henderson to a "consultation committee," but Johnson reported that it soon ceased to exist.<sup>60</sup> As late as 1933, however, a Negro Committee headed by Smith continued to function, although Johnson was not a member.<sup>61</sup>

No records provide full documentation for the final move to eliminate the separate African-American board, but the context within which the transition took place is suggestive. Race relations had deteriorated during and after World War I, and with the waning influence of accommodationism after Washington's death in 1915, Black Houstonians began to turn to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for leadership.<sup>62</sup> Activism to slow the continued degradation of their voting rights and to protect themselves against official and unofficial sources of violence during and after World War I distracted Houston's black leaders. Given the choice of concentrating their resources on fighting for civil rights or for retaining control of a small library, African-American activists made the only decision they could have made.

Additionally, the library profession itself was against the idea of a separate African-American board and some opposed even an advisory committee. In 1913, George T. Settle, director of the Louisville Free Public Library, advised Ideson that "the Colored Branch Library should not be controlled by a separate board, as one board can better manage the entire system and do so more economically and efficiently than two."<sup>63</sup> The results of a questionnaire to public libraries in early 1922 indicated that almost none had an African-American person on the governing board and only two of the ninety-eight respondents, Savannah and

Charlotte, had separate boards. Roanoke had a black advisory committee but it provided advice only about the African-American branch and not about library policies in general. Atlanta reported: "We tried having an advisory committee from the colored people, but as they did not confine their activities to advice, we disposed of them."<sup>64</sup> Ideson, a regular attendee at American Library Association meetings, having lost the branch once, was intent on getting it back, probably for personal as well as professional reasons. If personal pride was at work, so was a professional commitment to bureaucratic efficiency and consolidation.

"[P]art of a ritual of memory, struggle, and hope," the Colored Carnegie Library served as a new urban venue in which blacks and whites negotiated their beliefs about race and rights. Over the course of their struggle, it became clear that the legal and customary practice of segregation would extend even to the public library, undermining its much-proclaimed "free to all" philosophy. Nevertheless, the construction of a library for African Americans, even though it was not equal to the library for whites, represented an improvement over the lack of collections and services that came before.<sup>65</sup> The Colored Carnegie Library represented both the expansion of segregationist practice and the provision of services previously denied African Americans. Comprehending this duality, Houston's African-American library leaders sought to control their institution within the larger system they could not control. In a quiet but undeniable act of resistance, they maneuvered themselves into a self-governing body whose very existence challenged the underlying function of Jim Crow, the symbol of African-Americans' inferior status in a white-dominated world. Ernest Ollington Smith and his board of trustees accommodated themselves to the culture of segregation, but in asserting their desire for self-governance they had forced whites to accommodate them as well, at least for a time. The result was not a test of the system of segregation so much as an elaboration of its ironic possibilities.

## Notes

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1. This is a summary of events detailed and documented more fully in this article, based on my reading of primary sources in the Houston Public Library Collection at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (hereafter cited as HPLC) and in the microfilmed records relating to public library building grants available from the Carnegie Corporation Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University, New York (hereafter cited as Carnegie Archives). See Cheryl Knott Malone, "Accommodating Access: 'Colored' Carnegie Libraries, 1905-1925." (Ph. D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1996), especially 107-158.

2. Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," in *The New African American Urban History*, eds. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996), 84.

3. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 8. Among the works investigating specific institutions and services as they developed under Jim Crow are James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1990); Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1990); Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Robert E. Weems, Jr., *Black Business in the Black Metropolis: The Chicago Metropolitan Assurance Company, 1925-1985* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and Roberta Hughes Wright and Wilbur B. Hughes III, *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1996).

4. Examples include Lorna Peterson, "Alternative Perspectives in Library and Information Science: Issues of Race," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 37 (Spring 1996): 163-174; Robert Sidney Martin and Orvin Lee Shiflett, "Hampton, Fisk, and Atlanta: The Foundations, the American Library Association, and Library Education for Blacks, 1925-1941," *Libraries & Culture* 31:2 (Spring 1996): 299-325; James V. Carmichael, "Tommie Dora Barker and Southern Librarianship," (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1987), 11-12, 70-77; Rosemary Ruhig Du Mont, "Race and American Librarianship: Attitudes of the Library Profession," *Journal of Library History* 21:3 (Summer 1986): 488-509; E. J. Josey, *The Black Librarian in America* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970); and Eliza Atkins Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library: A Study of the Government and Administration of Public Library Service to Negroes in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941).

5. The public library as contested terrain open to various interpretations and uses is a theme in Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), xxvii, and especially 64-159, and in Robert Sidney Martin, ed., *Carnegie Denied: Communities Rejecting Carnegie Library Construction Grants, 1898-1925*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993). My thinking about "what it meant to be black" is influenced by the discussion of African Americans' periodic reinvention of the "New Negro" metaphor against the backdrop of the dominant culture's caricatures of African-American aspirations to literacy, education, and intellectual achievement discussed in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 150-155.

6. Orin Walker Hatch, *Lyceum to Library: A Chapter In The Cultural History of Houston* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1965), 43–48; 57–59; 61–62.

7. *Ibid.*, 48.

8. David G. McComb, *Houston: A History*, rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 107–114; Cary D. Wintz, “Black Business in Houston, 1910–1930,” *Essays in Economic and Business History* 10 (1992): 30–31; Thomas C. Mackey, “Thelma Denton and Associates: Houston’s Red Light Reservation and a Question of Jim Crow,” *Houston Review* 14 (1992): 139.

9. [E. O. Smith], Untitled Speech, 2–3, Box 8, HPLC. Although unsigned, this document is in the same handwriting present in Smith’s signed letters elsewhere in the collection. No date is provided on the document, but the text begins, “Dr. Washington, visiting friends, and fellow citizens” and makes references to Booker T. Washington’s presence and to the roles he and his secretary played in securing the Carnegie grant. The speech offers the only evidence I found of African-American Houstonians being refused service at the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, but it is convincing since the speech was intended for an audience that Smith must have known would include some of the whites implicated in his memoir of discrimination.

10. A. W. Jackson, *A Sure Foundation* (Houston: n. p., n. d.), 94–95, 180–182, 739–740; Emmett J. Scott, *Red Book of Houston* (Houston: Sotex Pub. Co., 1915), 91, 158.

11. Hatch, *Lyceum to Library*, 43.

12. Mary Brown McSwain, “Julia Bedford Ideson, Houston Librarian, 1880–1945,” (Master’s Report, The University of Texas, 1966), 5–6.

13. E. O. Smith to Julia Ideson, 9 September 1908, Box 8, Houston Public Library Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center; hereafter cited as HPLC.

14. Smith to Ideson, 6 October 1908, Box 8, HPLC.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Harold L. Platt, *City Building in the New South: The Growth of Public Services in Houston, Texas, 1830–1910* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 202–211; E. O. Smith, “Library History,” typescript of a speech, [1939], [1–2], Box 8, HPLC.

17. Houston Public Library Board Meeting Minutes, 20 October 1908, Minutes Book, HPLC.

18. Minutes of Meeting of Colored Carnegie Library Association, 30 October 1908, Box 8, HPLC; “Negroes Want Library,” unidentified newspaper clipping, Box 8, HPLC; Scott, *Red Book*, 153; Cary D. Wintz, “Blacks,” in *The Ethnic Groups of Houston*, ed. Fred R. von der Mehden (Houston: Rice University Studies, 1984), 19, 23, 29.

19. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 9 March 1909, Minutes Book, HPLC.

20. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 8 June 1909, Minutes Book, HPLC.

21. Smith, “Library History,” [1–2]; Booker T. Washington to James Bertram, 13 November 1909, R. 14, Carnegie Archives.

22. Ideson to Smith, 20 November 1909, Box 8; Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 18 November 1909, and 8 March 1910, Minutes Book; both, HPLC.

23. Smith to Ideson, 1 January [1910], HPLC.

24. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 11 January 1910, Minutes Book; Smith to Ideson, 1 January [1910], Box 8; Ideson to

Smith, 9 February 1910, Box 8; Smith, "Library History," [1,3]; *Constitution and By-Laws: Colored Carnegie Library*, (n. p., n. d.), 4, Box 8; all, HPLC; Scott *Red Book*, 30.

25. *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race* (Montgomery, Ala.: National Publishing Co., 1919), 321; Jackson, *Sure Foundation*, 261–262, 750; Wintz, "Blacks," 22, 27, 29; Scott, *Red Book*, 17, 83, 91; J. B. Bell to James Bertram, 8 April 1910, Bertram to Rice, 10 June 1910, R. 14, Carnegie Archives.

26. *Constitution and By-Laws*, 6–16.

27. Horace D. Slatter, "An Account of Washington's Tour of Texas," *Tuskegee Student*, 23 (14 October 1911), 1–4, reprinted in Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds. *The Booker T. Washington Papers*. Vol. 11, 1911–12. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 335, 342–343.

28. *Ibid.* ; Scott, *Red Book*, 153.

29. [Smith], Untitled Speech, 14–16.

30. Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," in *The New African American Urban History*, 206–207.

31. Harrison Mosley Ethridge, "The Black Architects of Washington, D. C., 1900–Present" (D. A. diss., Catholic University of America, 1979), 31.

32. James Bertram to Mayor Rice, 12 December 1911; Bertram to W. Sidney Pittman, 8 January 1912; both, R. 14, Carnegie Archives.

33. H. B. Rice to R. A. Franks, 30 June 1911; J. B. Bell to E. J. Scott, 20 December 1911; Scott to Franks, 23 December 1911; all, R. 14, Carnegie Archives.

34. Sidney W. Pittman, architectural drawings of Colored Carnegie Library, Architecture Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

35. "Dedication Exercises at Colored Carnegie Library," *Houston Chronicle*, undated clipping, Box 8, HPLC.

36. Emma Myers to Ideson, 14 January 1912, Box 8, HPLC.

37. Smith to Ideson, 10 August 1912; Ideson to Smith, 12 August 1912; Pauline Lewis to the Board of Trustees, Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, Colored Branch, 14 August 1912; Ideson to P. W. Horn, 29 August 1912; Horn to Ideson, 3 September 1912; Myers to Ideson, 12 September 1912; all, Box 8, HPLC.

38. Smith to Ideson, 24 August 1912, Box 8, HPLC.

39. Smith to Ideson, n. d. ; and "Dedication Exercises at Colored Carnegie Library," *Houston Chronicle* clipping, n. d. ; both, Box 8, HPLC.

40. Ideson to the Board of Trustees, n. d., Box 8, HPLC.

41. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 13 April 1909, Minutes Book, HPLC.

42. George T. Settle to Ideson, 8 March 1913, Box 8, HPLC.

43. Settle to Ideson, 24 March 1913, Box 8, HPLC.

44. Quoted by Smith to Ideson, 3 February 1913, Box 8, HPLC.

45. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 11 March 1913, Minutes Book, HPLC.

46. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 8 April 1913, Minutes Book, HPLC.

47. Smith to Ideson, 24 July 1913; Ideson to Smith, 31 July 1913; both, Box 8, HPLC.

48. Charles F. Smith, "Negro Boy Contributed Most Books," *Houston Post*, 19 April 1914, Box 8, HPLC.

49. Memorandum to the Honorable Ben Campbell, Mayor, and Commissioners of the City of Houston, Box 8, HPLC. Although unsigned and undated, internal evidence indicates it was written in May 1914 by E. O. Smith.

50. Bessie B. Osborne, "Report Sent Carnegie Corporation by Colored Carnegie Library." 26 October 1915, Box 8, HPLC.

51. "Annual Report of J. B. Bell, Treasurer, Colored Carnegie Library," *City Book of Houston*. (Houston: The City, 1916).

52. William F. Yust to Julia Ideson, 8 December 1910, Box 8, HPLC.

53. Ideson to Henry Havelock Dickson, n. d., Box 8, HPLC.

54. Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Board Meeting Minutes, 8 October 1918, Minutes Book, HPLC.

55. McSwain, "Ideson," 49–50.

56. Ideson to individual members of the Houston Public Library Board, 14 February 1921, Box 8, HPLC.

57. Houston Public Library Board Meeting Minutes, 8 March 1921, Minutes Book, HPLC.

58. Finance Committee to A. E. Amerman, 9 April 1921, Box 8, HPLC.

59. "City Centralizes Library Control," *Houston Press*, 12 April 1921, clipping in Houston Public Library Scrapbook, 1921, HPLC.

60. Fayrene Neuman Mays, "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Houston, Texas, 1907–1962," (Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, 1964), 24.

61. "The Report of the Colored Carnegie Branch for the Month of July 1933," *Houston Public Library Monthly Reports, 1931–1933* (bound volume), HPLC.

62. Robert V. Haynes, *A Night of Violence: The Houston Riot of 1917* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 306–307; Wintz, "Blacks," 30–32. For a discussion of Houston newspaperman Cliff Richardson's blending of the philosophies of Washington, Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey, see Howard Beeth, "A Black Elite Agenda in the Urban South: The Call for Political Change and Racial Economic Solidarity in Houston During the 1920s." *Essays in Economic and Business History* 10 (1992): 41–55. The library itself played a part in fostering interest in black activism; in 1920 the library was the site for a meeting to discuss "Shall the Houston Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. Die for lack of Interest," "Important Notice," Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library Scrapbook, 1919–1920, HPLC.

63. Settle to Ideson, 24 March 1913, Box 8, HPLC.

64. "Work with Negroes Round Table," *Papers and Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the American Library Association held at Detroit, Michigan, June 26–July 1, 1922*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1922), 362–363.

65. My assertions here allude to a long-standing discussion among historians of the U. S. South sparked by C. Vann Woodward's essays regarding the fluidity of immediate post-bellum race relations hardening into the rigidity of segregation by the turn of the century and Howard Rabinowitz's response, which characterized segregated services as a kind of middle era between exclusion and integration. See C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 7–8, and Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 331–332. Woodward discusses some of the work and criticism inspired by *Strange Career* in *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 234–264; and *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 81–99. Related books and articles, both supporting and refuting the Woodward thesis are discussed in Howard N. Rabinowitz, "More Than the Woodward Thesis: Assessing *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*," *Journal of American History* 75 (December 1988), 842–856; and C. Vann Woodward, "Strange Career Critics: Long May They Persevere," *Journal of American History* 75 (December 1988), 857–868.

# **“The Greatest Morale Factor Next to the Red Army”: Books and Libraries in American and British Prisoners of War Camps in Germany During World War II**

*David Shavit*

The demand for books in American and British prisoners of war (POW) camps in Germany during World War II was insatiable. Libraries, both lending and reference, were established in almost all the camps. In addition, there was a considerable number of privately held books. This article details ways in which books were supplied to the camp libraries and to individuals POWs, the size and conditions of the libraries, and the books read by POWs. It emphasizes the importance of the library in the camps as a morale factor.

Prisoners of war shall be allowed to receive shipments of books individually, which may be subject to censorship. Representatives of the protecting Powers and duly recognized and authorized aid societies may send books and collections of books to the libraries of prisoners' camps. The transmission of these shipments to libraries may not be delayed under the pretext of censorship difficulties.

Convention of July 27, 1929, Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Article 39<sup>1</sup>

## **Prisoners of War**

Some 95,000 American and 135,000 British and Commonwealth servicemen were incarcerated in prisoners of war (POW) camps in Germany during World War II. The prisoners were held in some fifty German POW camps, of several types. These included the Stalag (= *Stammlager*, permanent camps for noncommissioned officers and enlisted men), Stalag Luft (= *Luftwaffestammlager*, permanent camps for air force personnel), and *Oflag* (= *Offizierslager*, permanent officers' camps). American POWs were found in many of the POW camps, but the majority of camps contained only a few Americans. In some camps (Stalags II-B, III-B, IV-B, XVII-B, Luft I,

Luft III, and Luft IV), however, the number of American POWs ran into the thousands. Germany in general followed the 1929 Geneva Convention in the treatment of American and British servicemen in POW camps. POWs were not to be individually confined, and the food served them should have been equal to that served to German troops. The convention forbade work of any kind for officer prisoners and non-commissioned officer prisoners were only supposed to do supervisory work, but private soldiers could be made to work, provided the work was not connected with the war effort.<sup>2</sup>

The most urgent problems for POWs were obtaining sufficient food, warm clothing, minimum health care, and adequate shelter. While life for POWs who were interned in German camps was mainly composed of boredom, frustration, hunger, cold, and occasional bouts of real danger, their existence was not, remarked one ex-POW, "absurdly grim."<sup>3</sup>

Although fictional portrayals of POWs have invariably focused on the excitement generated by attempted escapes, gloomy resignation and stifling boredom more typically characterized a prisoner's daily existence. Rather than undertaking unrealistic and potentially dangerous escapes, it was far more sensible for the prisoner to stay focused on his immediate environment and try to counter its negative effects. Keeping busy was all-important, either through recreational, cultural, or educational activities or by just communicating with one's friends.<sup>4</sup>

### **Agencies Supplying Books**

In the beginning of the Second World War, the International Red Cross Committee (IRC) in Geneva became involved in providing books to prisoners of war and to civilian internees. While the number of POWs was small, the IRC had taken upon itself to send books to the German camps. In spring 1940, however, this was no longer practicable, and the IRC began to coordinate this type of relief through various religious and lay organizations which had already been active on their own. The IRC presided over an Advisory Committee on Reading Matter for Prisoners of War, which centralized the activities of six organizations and to which the appropriate requests for books from POW camps were forwarded. The organizations were the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA), the International Bureau of Education, the Ecumenical Commission for Assistance to Prisoners of War, the European Student Relief Fund, the International Federation of Library Associations, and the Swiss Catholic Mission for Prisoners of War.<sup>5</sup>

In the late autumn of 1940, the Indoor Recreations Section of the Prisoners of War Department of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem was established and accepted the responsibility for regular consignments of books. (The section was initially named the Fiction and Games Section, but was later renamed the Indoor Recreations, Books, Games and Music Section.) It began the task of providing books for the establishment of camp libraries and trying to satisfy all tastes.<sup>6</sup> By December 1941, the Indoor Recreations Section had sent over 71,000 volumes. Between October 1940, and March 1945, the Indoor Recreations section sent directly to POW camps or to the reserve at Geneva more than 239,500 volumes for POW libraries.<sup>7</sup>

The branch of the Indoor Recreations Section that dealt with educational books had been in operation since the early days of the war. It was later expanded into a separate section called the Educational Books Section. By the end of May 1942, 69,400 educational books had been sent to POW camps.<sup>8</sup>

To meet the needs of newly formed camps without undue delay, a stock of 50,000 reserved and unreserved books in the English language was built up in Geneva, and many volumes requested by POWs were supplied more quickly from this source. "Request" forms were sent to the camps, on which prisoners gave some indication of their previous academic backgrounds, subjects that they wished to study, and books that they required to do so. When requests were received by the Educational Books Section, the books were ordered, packed and sent on to the POWs, who were separately notified and required to return an acknowledgment card. When the prisoner finished with these books, they were placed in the central camp library by the prisoner concerned.<sup>9</sup>

As camp libraries became active, a continuous flow of requests reached the Education Book Section. It was not always easy to satisfy these requests. A considerable number of new publications came under censorship restrictions. There was also a general shortage of books in the United Kingdom, which made supplies difficult to maintain. Some well-known and popular titles were almost unprocurable; others were available only in insufficient quantities.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1939, the World's Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association, a neutral organization with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, established the War Prisoners Aid, in order to satisfy the recreational, educational, and moral needs of war prisoners. The American War Prisoners Aid of the Young Men's Christian Association became the major agency for acquiring books and sending them to POW camps in Germany. (The American National Red Cross decided to leave the field of educational, recreational, and spiritual welfare to the YMCA.)

In its preliminary summary report of its activities during the war, the War Prisoners Aid stated that it was no accident that the first shipment to a POW camp from the War Prisoners Aid in Geneva consisted of books. Books were the first and most important requirement in helping fight boredom, in occupying and often improving one's mind; they immediately came to the mind of anyone who wanted to help men in confinement. Following the first shipment, an ever increasing, yet ever inadequate, flow of books went to the camps.<sup>11</sup>

Neutral YMCA officials from Geneva also received permission to visit POW camps and talk with the prisoners in order to determine what more could be done. From these reports and from prisoners' letters, it was learned that there was a great need for books for the professional man, the student, and the artisan.

In spring 1942 the World's Committee of the YMCA founded the "Men of Science—Prisoners of War" Service. This special service was developed to provide books for prisoners who wished to study and those who wanted to begin or to continue projects of serious study and research. Hundreds of librarians, university professors, and certain business corporations in the United States and Canada helped to locate, and frequently to donate, books especially requested by such individuals. Authors, publishers, libraries and friends were generous in their donations of books as well as money to be used for book purchases.<sup>12</sup>

It is not easy to ascertain the exact number of books sent by the War Prisoners Aid to American prisoners of war. One record states that the YMCA sent 1,280,146 books to American POWs in Europe during World War II. Herbert G. Sisson, member of the Information Services of the War Prisoners Aid, reported that 98,962 popular books and textbooks were shipped to Geneva in 1943 by the War Prisoners Aid. In addition, 51,00 Bibles or parts of the Bible, supplied by the American Bible Society, were also shipped to Geneva.

In general reading alone, American prisoners in Germany received 41,030 books from Geneva in 1944 and 96,945 books in the first six months of 1945.<sup>13</sup> On 13 January 1945, *Publishers Weekly* reported that 522,345 books were sent to Allied prisoners of war in Germany through the War Prisoners Aid during 1943, and a million books were sent in 1944. About 900,000 copies of the Armed Services Editions were purchased by the U.S. Army and donated to the War Prisoners Aid.<sup>14</sup>

The Geneva office reported that during 1944, the last full year of operation, 108,682 books were shipped to American POW camps. It included 41,030 books termed "general reading," and 26,682 termed "circulating library," as well as 19,602 religious books, and 14,117 general education books.

A typical library of 1,050 volumes, prepared for a unit of 200 American prisoners in Germany, would contain 600 fiction and general reading books; 150 textbooks; 25 biographies; 50 books on history and travel; 100 on vocations, professions and trades; 50 on science and medicine; 50 on religion; and 25 on poetry and art.<sup>15</sup>

Thousands of books were purchased outright by the YMCA using funds donated by the American people, largely through the National War Fund. (Publishers were very generous with discounts). The Victory Book Campaign, sponsored by the American Library Association, American Red Cross, and U.S.O. set aside 45,051 new and clean books for prisoners of war. The *Infantry Journal* provided a large number of popular books, as well as a consignment of new reference books for POW camp libraries. Other books were donated by various individuals and agencies.<sup>16</sup>

Families and individuals could also send books to prisoners of war in Germany, but only new books. No used books could be sent. Book orders had to be placed with a book seller or publisher who had to mail the books. The purchaser was not allowed to wrap or mail the books.

The American Red Cross, in its *Prisoners of War Bulletin*, provided guidelines to prisoners' relatives and friends. It was possible to send, directly from a bookseller, sixty pounds of books a year, at the rate of five pounds a month. Only one parcel of books, weighing no more than five pounds, could be forwarded each thirty days, by the Censor's Office in New York, to any one prisoner of war.

Responding to the question as to what books would interest a prisoner most, the *Bulletin* stated:

Any book that is sufficiently well written, and that has enough body and content and purpose to hold the reader to the world the author is describing. A prisoner of war lives in monotonous and drab surroundings, but through books he can escape into another world. His intellect, his imagination, or his emotions are stimulated by what he reads. Even books that he read before may be enjoyable, not only for their content but for their reminders of the times and places where he has read them in his old, free days. If your prisoner is a voracious reader, the Pocket Library reprints are much lighter in weight, and you could therefore send many more books in a 5-pound package. They are also less expensive. These reprints have a wide choice, from Shakespeare and Homer through Mark Twain, Thornton Wilder, Jack London, Raphael Sabatini, John P. Marquand, and Daphne de Maurier, to mention only a few. Books published in these small, light-weight editions are apt to be good reading because they have already

survived the test of a first publishing. They are also almost all prewar, and so avoid censorship problems.<sup>17</sup>

In Canada, families of POWs were given a list of government-authorized firms through which they could order books. They would send in the order, and the books would be sent by these firms directly to the POWs, so that the families had to rely on the integrity of the businessmen with whom they were dealing, since they would never see the books. Unfortunately, some booksellers took advantage of this situation. A Canadian flying officer in Stalag Luft III reported that his mother and father sent him a parcel of books, “and the books turned out to be things like *Nancy So-and-So and Her School Girlfriends at Something-or-Other Tech*. I mean crap that you wouldn’t ever read. Took them just terrible.”<sup>18</sup> Some of the books received from the YMCA were characteristic of the kind of books that people had probably cleaned out of their attics and given to the YMCA to pass along to POWs.

### **Censorship**

“For many prisoners, the most exciting moment of the month was when they heard the casual remark: ‘Oh, Smith, your name’s on the list—book parcel.’” The contents of the weekly food parcel and the quarterly clothing parcel did not vary much. Books, therefore, became the great standby and a means of escape from the confinement of the barbed wire.<sup>19</sup>

Martin A. Smith, Prisoner in Stalag IV, recalled:

January 3rd [1945] was a red letter day for me when my first package arrived from my parents back in New Jersey. Hurriedly ripping off the tattered wrappings, I found four books inside. Two were language texts, one German, the other Spanish. In addition, there was a volume of Shakespeare’s plays and a biography, *Good Night, Sweet Prince*, the story of the life of the famous actor, John Barrymore. Any reading material sent to us was, of course, thoroughly inspected by German as well as American censors but these four books were surely non-controversial and had no doubt easily passed muster. They were a most welcome present that guaranteed me many hours of reading to help pass the time. Probably much better for me than cigarettes or edibles would have been—food for the mind rather than the body.<sup>20</sup>

Two sets of censors had to be satisfied. All books (new and used) were subject to rigid censorship control and had to conform to censorship

requirements. The United States Office of Censorship prohibited the sending of all magazines and newspapers regardless of date of publication. In addition, books containing the following material were also prohibited: navigational charts, plans, and wharf and dock maps or parts thereof; meteorological charts; charts of currents; navigational reference books, including sailing instructions; lists of lights; lists of wireless signals; tide tables; distance tables; nautical and air almanacs, directories and calendars, and supplements thereto; information of any nature relative to ports, harbors, anchorages, and inland waterways; military, naval, and air force subjects; chemistry; espionage; explosives; geography and map making; lithography; politics; weapons and armament; wireless and radio; enemy propaganda; any subject, which may be considered doubtful or of a technical or scientific nature, including patents, inventions, and discoveries.<sup>21</sup> Few scientific books published later than November 1941 passed by the American censors. All books had to have neither pencil or ink markings in them, nor labels or bookplates. In Great Britain, every volume had to pass through the Educational Books Section, where each mark and map was removed before the book was shipped to Germany.

The books also had to pass the restrictions imposed by the German censor. A whole set of regulations, some standard throughout the Reich and others varying from camp to camp, had to be observed. Parcels sent by relatives were stored in the camp and censored there. If the books were approved, they were then issued to the prisoner. The Germans did not permit books written by or including material by Jewish authors, émigrés from Germany or German-occupied countries and certain other authors to enter POW camps. A single poem by a Jew in an anthology was sufficient to prevent the book's arrival.

A librarian in a large camp for officers reported on the "large and annoying gaps where the British or German censors had intervened, but this was mainly confined to the history shelves." He found it interesting that H. L. A. Fisher's *History of Europe* was forbidden by the Germans not for the chapter on Nazi Germany, but because of the first sentence of the Introduction. ("We Europeans are the children of Hellas".) The banned list was extraordinarily thorough, but had some delightful omissions: John Buchan's war novels, such as *Greenmantle* and *Mr. Standfast* were forbidden, but the omnibus *Adventures of Richard Hannay* remained untouched; the American novelist Winston Churchill was of course banned in toto, but *My Early Life* by Winston Spencer Churchill was not attributed to the then Prime Minister and was let in. Other gems on the black list were the *Golden Treasury* (because the editor, Francis Turner Palgrave, was a Jew) and *Scouting for Boys* (because the Boy Scouts were, of course, part of the British Secret Service). Spinoza's *Ethics* was banned on racial, *Gil Blas* on patriotic, and *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* by James Hadley

Chase on moral grounds. However, there were usually ways of evading the censorship, but the only banned work that that librarian never succeeded in obtaining was the most curious of all, the English translation of *Mein Kampf*.<sup>22</sup>

Books dealing with sensitive questions such as totalitarianism, freedom, democracy, and liberty were sometimes returned by the German authorities. Any criticism, open or implied, of Hitler or the Nazis, especially when the war was still young, caused the German censors to ban the particular book, sometimes even the whole consignment. For example, a book from a Penguin paperback series was found to be objectionable because it featured an advertisement on the back cover of a British Tommy with a fixed bayonet chasing a cartoon figure of Hitler. Not only that book, but the whole series was forbidden. This was especially unfortunate as this particular paperback series was a large mass printing in England and was suitable for sending to camps because of the light weight and the numerous varied subjects with which the books dealt.<sup>23</sup>

The selection and delivery of books were far from perfect. Prisoners were eagerly on hand in Stalag III-B when some fifteen cases of books arrived, only to discover upon opening the boxes that they were all filled with the same volume: A. J. Cronin's *The Keys of the Kingdom*, "a depressing story of tragedy, torture, famine, and plague."<sup>24</sup> In addition to books, the War Prisoners Aid shipped from Sweden wood for making bookcases, as well as repair and binding material.<sup>25</sup>

### **Camp Libraries**

The World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association reported that the demand for books was insatiable and was never fully met. In some camps, libraries with as many as 25,000 to 40,000 volumes were organized, with card catalogues and penalties for the misuse of a book.<sup>26</sup>

In June 1944 the education director of War Prisoners Aid reported that in a typical British or American POW camp, one would discover a considerable number of privately owned books and, often, a lending and reference library. Although many of the enlisted men were scattered in work detachments where only a few books for evening reading were available, in some of the larger camps of Allied prisoners there were as many as 50,000 or even 100,000 volumes, counting both library and privately owned books.<sup>27</sup>

Stalag II-B, the largest ground force enlisted men's camp and the largest POW camp in Germany, was situated near the small town of Hammerstein, in Pomerania. On 30 December, 1944, it had 7,087 American POWs. A letter from Stalag II-B, dated 22 August 1943, reported

that they had a lot of library books and “a swell library,” which contained 5,000 books.<sup>28</sup>

Stalag III-B, located in Fürstenburg on the Oder River, in Brandenburg, was another large camp for ground force enlisted men. On 30 December 1944, it contained 4,646 American POWs. A representative of the European Student Relief Fund who visited Stalag III-B reported that the camp library was a model of neatness and efficiency. The book-lending system guaranteed the most profitable use of the study material. The library increased from 200 books (donated by the commandant) to over 6,000 (many from the Swedish-led European Student Relief Fund).<sup>29</sup> A large and fairly good camp library was also located in Stalag VIII-B, in Lamsdorf, Upper Silesia.<sup>30</sup>

Stalag XVII-B in Gneixendorf, Austria, contained 4,175 American Air Corps noncommissioned personnel on 1 November 1944. A prisoner in this stalag wrote:

The opening of our small library was a real shot in the arms for now we could slip away from this prison. It was only a mental escape but it still allowed us to break free from our internment.<sup>31</sup>

POWs felt fortunate to have a well organized library, with volunteers checking books in and out “as done in a regular library.” The library became a very popular spot, and more than once all the novels were checked out. That meant waiting and double-checking everything to find if a book that one had not read had returned. In a letter dated 19 January 1944, the author wrote:

Our library at present is in full operation. The fiction library is worked on check-out basis, occupies one-quarter of a barrack, and has a bookbinding project in conjunction with it. The technical library reserves its books for reference only.<sup>32</sup>

When the initial group of American ground force officers arrived in Oflag 64 (initially Oflag XXI-B) in June 1943, the preceding group of English officers had left a small library of some 250 well-worn English titles. The library was soon supplemented by American titles by the YMCA. A letter from the librarian of Oflag XXI-B, dated 30 June 1943, reported:

At this camp we have established quite a library and I have been made librarian, a very pleasant job. I am learning to appreciate good books and most important how to take care of them. The British gave us all the books we have now, and we hope more will be

sent. Our books, mostly fiction, number about 700 now and there are at least that many more to be censored.

The “white house” in Oflag 64 served as the German headquarters and as the quarters area for the senior allied officer and his staff. The library was in the attic of the white house, and the prisoners used the back stairs (the front staircase was for the German officers). Traffic up and down the steps must have intrigued German security because they suddenly began a systematic search for whatever clandestine activity was going on. The searches drew blanks and soon the prisoners were tramping up and down the steps again. In October 1944, the library had 6,000 volumes. By the war’s end, there were 7,000 books in the Oflag 64 library, mostly used fiction. The librarian figured that, on the average, each POW took out and read one book every three days. The sought-after books had a “reserve list” glued inside their covers, and the officers’ names were marked-off as they returned the books to the library.<sup>33</sup>

As a rule, a bindery was attached to the library and several POWs performed bookbinding and book repair. Because all the books, old and new, had been machine-bound, and were never intended for the unusual non-stop reading and handling, the glue and stitching deteriorated, causing sections of the books to fall apart and the cover to come off. Even the new and extremely popular American books began to fall apart after ten to twenty readings, and had to be rebound.<sup>34</sup>

Stalag Luft I was an American Air Corps Officer POW camp, near the village of Barth in Pomerania. On 12 December 1944, it had 4,780 American POWs. It held an initial library of over 1,500 books, thanks to the British POWs who were transferred out to other camps and left the books behind. A report from October 1944 stated that the library was fairly large and contained varied types of literature.<sup>35</sup>

Stalag Luft III was located near the small town of Sagan in Silesia. By 27 January 1945, it had 6,844 American POWs and was made up of several compounds. Each compound had at least two libraries, one for reference material and one that served as a general lending library for works of fiction and nonfiction. The libraries were a necessary component of the education program, but their overall importance was even greater. The fiction library especially was “probably the greatest morale factor in the camp next to the Red Army.” From the very beginning, the POWs of Center Compound had reading material to keep them informed and occupied. The British gave the American POWs several hundred of their old novels and a reference library of about 200 volumes. The library was a clean place capable of seating about 80 men. A standard library procedure for shelving, lending, and cataloging the books was established. All the help, about two dozen or so men, were volunteers. The card index

was made of nondescript cardboard. The reading was done on homemade tables illuminated by two 60-watt bulbs where there should have been a dozen. The fiction library eventually contained about 2,000 books. These circulated completely every ten days. The most highly demanded books by order of importance were: (1), well-worn popular novels; (2), detective fiction; (3), western fiction; (4), travel; and (5) biography. In addition to the regular lending library there were about 5,000 or 6,000 privately owned books, which were used as much as those in the library. The reference and technical library had about 400 to 500 volumes that were in great demand. These books were not allowed out of the reading room and were treated with great care.

It was a wonderful place for the high-strung and the studious *Kriegie* alike to spend many quiet hours in peace and concentration. Right after morning roll call there would be a mad rush for the best seats and the best books.<sup>36</sup>

American magazines were also available in the reference library and were eagerly read and reread. The issues most frequently received in the American compounds included *National Geographic*, *McCall's*, *Yale Review*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New Yorker*. Some Swiss movie magazines, and several German pictorial reviews were also received. They fell apart quickly. The Swiss movie magazines were extremely popular since they carried pictures of familiar American bathing beauties and movie queens. German pictorial magazines were also sent into the camp. The magazines were usually paid for out of communal funds. The prisoners also received the German papers printed in English for the POWs, and were said to be grateful to get them, because they supplemented meager rations of toilet paper and "only in such a role were they acceptable."<sup>37</sup>

Library book titles and the quantities of books in Stalag Luft III varied from time to time, but the holdings were impressive by prison camp standards. Within the first year after the camp opened, prisoners in the East and Center compounds alone had access to 8,500 volumes, about two-thirds of which were literary works and one-third scientific works. Not included in these figures are some 20,000 volumes that the prisoners had received in personal parcels and circulated among themselves. Many of the books which arrived in personal parcels were willingly passed around or donated to the libraries after the recipient had read them. A breakdown by category indicates that the lending library of the Center Compound once held a total of 1,944 volumes: 1,128 works of general fiction, 75 westerns, 342 detective novels, 28 biographies, and 371 miscellaneous books. The reference libraries contained fewer books, averaging

about 500 volumes in each compound. In addition, many of the books in the American compounds' reference libraries were British and of lesser value to the Americans. The reference libraries, however, were used extensively. Students had to share many textbooks for their course work, and the rooms were usually larger than those that housed the lending libraries and therefore provided one of the few places where the prisoners could study and keep warm in the winter. The reference library in Center Compound was generally full from ten o'clock in the morning until ten at night. Unfortunately, the libraries, like the rest of the camp, lacked sufficient lighting. The conditions of the books worsened because of frequent use and the absence of repair materials. It was noted in Center Compound that the more popular novels began to show signs of wear after about thirty or forty readings, and from that point onward deteriorated rapidly. This was a serious problem. Records kept by the libraries in Center Compound indicated that books changed hands about every ten days.<sup>38</sup>

While the libraries consisted of two rooms, the only entry to the inner room was through the outer. At certain times, when both rooms were full of readers, the inner room was vacated to make room for a meeting of the escape committee.

Those forced to leave the inner room were streaming through the connecting door, muttering discontentedly and clutching their books and papers as they looked hopelessly around for somewhere to sit. There was a great noise of shuffling boots and dropped books, and the readers already established in the outer room looked up and clicked disapproval with their tongues. A man leaning against the wall with a copy of *The Golden Bough* in his hand, screwed up his eyebrows in disgust. 'These bloody escapers,' he said loudly.<sup>39</sup>

Stalag Luft IV was located near the small village of Kiefheider in Pomerania. On 31 December 1944, it had 8,652 American POWs. For a long time there were no books in the camp. Once they began to arrive, a limited library was set up in the compound in part of Barracks Number 1. Both nonfiction and fiction books became available. The fiction books were usually paperbound Armed Forces Editions, published by the Council on Books in Wartime. While reading was a favorite pastime for the POWs, reading material was scarce and lighting at night poor. The only illumination was one 25 or 40 watt bulb on a cord, dropped from the ceiling in the center of each room. The light was barely sufficient for reading even for the perfect eyes of airmen. Some of the POWs supplemented the light with homemade lamps. They took small wicks cut from

a GI belt and inserted them into cans of margarine for lamps. The shortage of books made it necessary for the prisoners to sign up on a long waiting list. Each prisoner had to wait his turn. If he missed his turn for some reason or other, he had to sign up again and go to the end of the line.<sup>40</sup>

Even in small work detachments, library books were often available. Special efforts were made to reach the labor detachments through a system of portable book boxes. Many small work detachments were served by *Wanderbüchereien* ("Wandering Books"), library boxes containing about 50 books each, which were circulated among the detachments. They were kept in each detachment for a three-week period. A POW was in charge of the library. It was his responsibility to see that all detachments that belonged under his main camp were served as well as possible.<sup>41</sup>

Libraries, as would be expected, were always the busiest center of any POW camp. "It must be understood that our entire library changes hands every ten days, due to the enormous interest in reading," a letter from an American airmen's camp in Germany stated. One prison camp librarian reported that he was issuing 876 volumes per day. Another one reported that, of 800 books in his library, almost every one was read each week.<sup>42</sup>

When books were scarce, as they were at one point in Stag Luft IV-B, some prisoners held onto the books that they checked out of the library and failed to return them. The problem became so bad that on 21 November 1944, the library was closed and all books were recalled. The library was kept closed for several days, long enough to locate all the books and to force their return.<sup>43</sup> A Canadian flight officer in Stalag Luft III recalled: "I remember when *Lady Chatterley's Lover* came into our room, it came in units of ten pages, and you'd read ten and pass them along."<sup>44</sup>

## **Books and Readers**

To my mind the most important morale factor in camp was the library. There was an abundance of classics—Shakespeare, Thackeray, Bronte, Swift, Dickens, Twain and Conrad—and an assortment of mysteries as well as countless dull and unreadable autobiographies, mostly about English Peers of the nineteenth century. Books about philosophy and theology were much in demand and there was a small selection. Each officer was allowed to take one book a week from the library, but by interchanging with roommates and friends it was possible to read as many as ten books a week. During my stay I read 212 books.<sup>45</sup>

“It will hardly surprise you when I say that one of the first lessons of captivity is the value of books, and a new realization of how dependent most of us have become on their ministrations,” wrote the Reverend David Read soon after returning from Germany.<sup>46</sup> He continued,

To try to estimate the part played by books in the ordinary run of settled prison-life is not altogether easy, for naturally it varied with the camp. But it was remarkable that solid reading could be done, and it would be fair to say that a great many officers acquired the taste of serious reading for the first time in their lives.<sup>47</sup>

The establishment of satisfactory libraries meant the return to more normal conditions. The old division appeared between those for whom books were an essential and those for whom they were just a pleasant occasional relaxation. As the years went by, the demand for fiction dropped. At first, the bulk of the consignments sent by the British Red Cross to the POWs was made up of the escapist genre, but it soon became clear from the prisoners' own requests that this form of literature did not suffice. The British Red Cross reported that prisoners whose interest had at first been confined to detective novels, progressed by way of English classics, biographies, belles lettres, and travel, to abstruse works on psychology, writings on comparative religion, and philosophy. There were soon many POWs who never read a novel, unless it was one of the classics. History and biography were in constant demand.<sup>48</sup> Many people did not read much, but as books became more plentiful in the camps, there was a great deal of serious study by men who previously had only read for amusement.<sup>49</sup>

Robert Kee, a British POW in Stalag Luft III, wrote later:

As clearly as any incident of those years I remember the books which I read. We could not have lived without books. They were the only sure support, the one true comfort. When food was short, clothing scarce, blocks overcrowded and underheated, and news bad, there were always books. In reading one had a pleasure of which, like sleep, one could never be deprived. I remember the books which I read in that time with great love.

This personal quality of books was their greatest worth. Every prisoner suffered from cycles of depression, more frequent but almost as regular as the changing seasons. With some people the effect was just numbing: the man would lie on his bed all day like a piece of dead wood. With others it brought a violent distress of spirit often visible in faces for days on end.

And undoubtedly the most satisfactory reading of all was poetry. Always the most directly relevant to a charged state of mind, even though it wasn't always modern, it was thus the most comforting and the most healing. If anthologies ever needed any justification they received it for me at least during those years. Under such conditions one could not afford to despise what was well known. One needed it too much for its own sake.<sup>50</sup>

And Kee continued:

I remember the books which I read in that time with a great love. I think of novels: all Hardy, *Adam Bede*, *Tristram Shandy*, *The New-comers*, *Henry Esmond*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, *Sentimental Education* and many others, but every sort of reading was happiness. As supply was limited, and controlled by censorship, reading was conventional, but one soon discovered that it would be possible to spend a life-time reading books which were not obscure and still not exhaust everything that was worthwhile.

I even remember books I disliked with affection. During the worst period for external conditions of the whole three years the only book I could get hold of (and then only putting my name down on a wishing list) was Somerset Maugham's enormous *Of Human Bondage*. I read it, literally hungrily, for four days, stopping only for the daily half pint of soup and four slices of bread, and sleep. I did not think it a good book, but I shall always be grateful to it.

There were many copies of plays in the camps. Among those which gave me the greatest pleasure I remember the whole of Shakespeare, Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.<sup>51</sup>

Another prisoner in Stalag Luft III wrote in his diary:

*August 1, 1944.* No, the trick is to keep yourself busy. Keep doing anything to have an object to be accomplished, even if that object is only the construction of a tin plate. There are other things too, this is the first chance many of us have had in years (me included) to do any serious reading, catch up on ourselves mentally. And, thanks to the Red Cross and the YMCA, we have a pretty fair library here, containing some 2000 volumes of all kinds.

*September 11, 1944.* Our reference library contains some 1200 volumes. Most heavily read being books on Math, Business, History, in that order.

*October 30, 1944.* Writing this in the camp library, which has been made out of an end of one of our two cookhouses, the only really warm spot I've been able to find. Weather has turned cold in the last four days, bitterly cold under the dull gray of these unfriendly skies, and it seems impossible to deal up or heat up our barracks.

So I, and as many others as can crowd in—have taken to spending a good part of the day in the library. It's salutary, too. In the period of the past year, with the cooperation of the YMCA and the omnipresent Red Cross, we have built up a considerable list of reference works, including some volumes on journalism. So I keep warm, and try to learn a few things about my professions, hereto matter of practical experience to me, rather than theory. Only thing that bothers me greatly is the strain on my eyes, I find I'm reading constantly in bad light, for lack of anything else to do.

*December 10, 1944.* Continuing my program of self-education, however haphazard it may seem, I've been reading biographies. Currently, Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin*. Will do some reading on Rousseau next, prompted by a recent reference to his teachings (in print) which made it immediately apparent that I know almost nothing about him.

*December 23, 1944.* My reading program progresses. I've almost finished the Old Testament; have finished *Franklin*, *Jeb Stuart*, *Paul Revere*, and a biography of Jacob Riis, and am now well into Arthur Train's *From the District Attorney's Office*. A pretty catholic collection, but interesting.

*January 13, 1945.* Add to my list of books read: Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex*, Fast's *Citizen Tom Paine*, H. B. Baker's *Juarez*, a growing and most catholic collection.<sup>52</sup>

A prisoner in Stalag XVII-B recorded that reading became a passion for him and many of the other POWs. He was reading everything he could get his hands on, including mysteries and westerns. He had never read western stories before, but he could not get enough of these novels. Even law books became interesting since he was taking a business law course. Everything he read was fascinating and each book catapulted him away from his surroundings.<sup>53</sup>

Kenneth W. Simmons, who was also a prisoner in Stalag Luft III, remembered:

During the second and third weeks of November, full scale winter reached Sagan, and packed the snow a foot and a half deep. We were confined more and more to the barracks, and daytime winter

activities continued to grow. Most of the members of my combine spent their time reading. There were many *Kriegies* who would read a new book every day.

There were some books that could not be checked out of the library, and I spent as much time in the library as I did in the combine. I devoted many hours each day to reading books of all types. The more I read the greater the desire I had to read. I spent several days studying the works of Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Samuel Johnson. I became so interested in Johnson's works that I read Boswell's *Life of Johnson* from cover to cover. I also read biographies of Henry Clay, Lincoln, Napoleon, and Henry the VIII, and I read *Mein Kampf*. I read, too, several popular novels and, believe it or not, a history called *Economic Life in Europe*.<sup>54</sup>

*The Oflag 64 Item*, the newspaper of Oflag 64, often reported on library activities. On 1 December 1943, one of the headlines read: "*Kriegies* Are Bookworms, Survey Says." The article stated that more than 100 books daily were being digested, or about one per man every three days. Historical novels of Early America were the most popular reading, led by Walter Edmunds' *Drums Along the Mohawk*, while James Truslow Adams's *Epic of America* topped the non-fiction list. Perry Mason, Philo Vance, and Ellery Queen were the fictional "dicks" with the largest followings. In March 1944, Lloyd C. Douglas's *The Robe* headed Oflag's best-seller list. Douglas was "head and shoulders" above all others as the most popular author in camp, according to the librarian. It was the most read book in camp; five copies were in continuous circulation and yet it had the longest waiting list. Authors from Shakespeare to Sherwood were represented in the drama section. There were 50 collections of poems from Dante to Carl Sandburg, 200 biographies, 150 travel books, several histories of art, and more than 1,900 fiction novels. On 1 August 1944, the librarian reported that the books most in demand were fiction with themes that Will Hays did not read. Will Hays was the first "czar" of the motion picture industry (from 1922 until 1945) who directed the motion picture censoring operation. The two novels that topped the most popular list for the longest time were *Kitty Foyle* and *Random Harvest*. However, *The Robe* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* were the most read, and *The Americanization of Edward Bok* was the most popular autobiography. Travel books and stories of canoe and sailboat trips were also extremely popular.

By 1 January 1945, the library had 7,000 volumes and catered to the varied reading tastes of the prisoners. More than 250 books were withdrawn each day. The most popular section was fiction, with well-patronized sections of travel, essays, biography, verse, drama, psychology, art, religion, sciences, history, and languages. The most popular works

were on a “reserve” list, such as Kenneth Roberts’s *Arundel*, Samuel Hopkins Adams’s *Canal Town*, and Douglas Freeman’s *Lee’s Lieutenants*.<sup>55</sup>

David Westheimer, another prisoner in Stalag Luft III, recalled that he read *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Return of the Native*, *Henry Esmond*, Joinville’s *Chronicles of the Crusades*, *A Mind That Found Itself*, and G. U. Ellis’s *There Goes the Queen*, a novel for some reason particularly appealing to POWs. When not improving his mind with serious works, he read every detective novel he could get his hands on.<sup>56</sup>

Books were the best escape. You vanished into whatever world was theirs and hours fled by. On the South Compound library shelves, I found some of the old Literary Guild selections I’d read in my big brother’s easy chair when I was a boy. The library was divided into two sections, one for reference, the other for lending. The lending library was the smaller of the two, an eight-man room lined with shelves full of fiction, nonfiction and poetry . . . The reference library filled two adjoining eight-man rooms, one of them fitted with packing-case armchairs and settees. There was a fairly good selection of textbooks and technical works on history, banking, law, chemistry, math, foreign languages, and literature but nothing on map making, radio, navigation, or any other subject that might prove useful in escape and evasion.

I read to kill time and for entertainment, mysteries and other light novels, but I also read books I thought I might never turn to outside the bag [slang for being in POW camp]. Some of those I found hard going but others brought unexpected pleasure. I’d already developed a crush on Dickens with *Dombey and Son* and now I had *David Copperfield* and *The Pickwick Papers*. I discovered Thackeray, too. *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Yellowplush Papers*, *The Great Hogarty Diamond* and *Canterbury Tales* and Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, *The Compleat Angler*, *Tom Jones*, *Roderick Random*, *Moby Dick*, *Lord Jim*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *A Passage to India*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Madame Bovary*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Penguin Island*, *Growth of the Soil*. The only novel I started and didn’t finish was George Meredith’s *The Egoist*. Too mannered for a lowbrow no matter how bored.<sup>57</sup>

It is impossible to overestimate the psychological value of the entertainment facilities. They made life bearable for many lonesome POWs. If it had not been for the unstinted aid and generosity of the Red Cross, prisoners felt that their lives would have been much more difficult. As it was, it made their confinement tolerable.<sup>58</sup>

Three observations would best summarize the importance of libraries, books, and reading to prisoners of war. At the conclusion of the war, the U.S. War Department's Military Intelligence Service reported that reading was the greatest activity of prisoners of war. The report stated: "Of all the recreations, reading seemed to take the first place. Many officers availed themselves of numerous text books to improve their knowledge on various subjects." Arthur A. Durand, in his secret history of Stalag Luft III, wrote: "The effect of serious reading that well-selected camp libraries made possible, though neither obvious nor measurable, cannot otherwise than ultimately be of great benefit to many individual ex-prisoners, and indirectly to the communities in which they live." And Major General Delmar T. Spivey, who was a prisoner in Stalag Luft III, wrote similarly:

Many people do not read much, but if they were deprived of all reading material they would suffer greatly. I am sure that thousands of books in our library were responsible for providing constructive, mind-saving diversion from the mental fortunes of POW life.<sup>59</sup>

American and British prisoners' worst enemy was usually boredom. One of the most important activities which overcame this enemy was reading. The American and British peoples, through the various agencies which undertook the task of providing POWs with books, made it possible for prisoners to obtain books which were so necessary and useful. It helped the prisoners to occupy their time and keep their mental capacity. When the American and British POWs left the prisoners of war camps, approximately 1 million books were left behind.

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# Patricia Spereman and the Beginning of Canadian Public Library Work with Children

*Lynne (E. F.) McKechnie*

Patricia Spereman of the Sarnia Public Library in Sarnia, Ontario, was likely the first children's librarian in Canada. During her tenure (1904–1908), Sarnia Public Library demonstrated five elements characteristic of basic public library services for children: (1) a separate juvenile book collection; (2) a separate facility; (3) specialized staff; (4) reader services such as story hours; and (5) cooperation with other community agencies.

## Introduction

Undoubtedly the major historical figure in the development of Canada's children's library services was Lillian Smith. Smith, born in London, Ontario, began her work at Toronto Public Library in 1912 after attending the Training School for Children's Librarians in Pittsburgh (1910–1911) and working with Anne Carroll Moore in the New York Public Library for about a year.<sup>1</sup> The 1933 Ridington survey of library conditions in Canada notes that "Toronto had the first separate library for boys and girls."<sup>2</sup> This is true if one defines a separate library as a separate building, but not if one considers other criteria as well.

An early Canadian monograph, *The Library, the School and the Child* (1917), by J. Emery,<sup>3</sup> attributes the earliest work with children to Patricia Spereman of the Sarnia Public Library beginning in 1904. Emery's work, although containing a bibliography, is unreferenced. More recent works by John Wiseman (1989)<sup>4</sup> and Lorne Bruce (1994)<sup>5</sup> on the history of Ontario public libraries also designate Spereman as the earliest Ontario worker in this field. Wiseman and Bruce depend largely on the annual reports of the Inspector of Public Libraries of the Ontario Department of Education for this information.

Patricia Spereman has been forgotten, but her work merits recognition. An examination of the development of library services for children in Sarnia provides a single but valuable view of the emergence of this area of public library work in Canada in the early twentieth century.

## **Patricia Spereman and Sarnia Public Library**

Sarnia Public Library still holds the minutes<sup>6</sup> of board meetings from its incorporation as a free public library under the provisions of the 1895 *Ontario Public Library Act*. The board held its first meeting on 2 February 1900, and one month later hired librarian William Sweet. The library opened in rented downtown rooms on Saturday, 23 June 1900. The board meeting minutes show circulation figures for juvenile books (see Figure 3), indicating the library already held some children's materials.

In January 1902, the board applied for and received a \$15,000 Carnegie grant for a new city-owned public library building. Dedicated on 27 November and opened for business on 1 December 1903, the building was the fourth Carnegie library to be completed in Ontario.<sup>7</sup> In 1906 an additional \$5,000 of Carnegie money enabled the stack area to be extended. A photograph of the new library (Figure 1)<sup>8</sup> and a floor plan clearly indicating a separate children's reading room (Figure 2)<sup>9</sup> were printed in the 1906 annual report of T. W. H. Leavitt, the Inspector of Public Libraries for the Department of Education in the Province of Ontario.

The Children's room contains all books for juveniles on shelves around the walls. These books may be taken for reading in the room without the intervention of any attendant, or, if desired for home use, a book is taken to the Librarian's counter and charged against the borrower. In the Children's room the chairs and tables are graduated in size so as to accommodate children of all ages. The walls are hung with pictures and the tables are supplied with magazines and periodicals.<sup>10</sup>

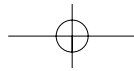
Patricia Spereman began work as Assistant Librarian on 1 February 1904, earning yearly one hundred and fifty dollars. Her father, James Spereman, was the library board's secretary treasurer, a position he occupied from 1900 until his death in 1908.

The board approved free access to the book stacks on 8 April 1904, although it directed that "the Librarian and Assistant be requested to use their discretion when children or others desire admission to the stack room."<sup>11</sup> At the 10 June 1904, meeting of the board "it was moved & seconded by Messrs. Gurd and MacAdams that Miss Spereman, in addition to her duties as Assistant Librarian be asked to give special attention to the Juvenile Department of the Library."<sup>12</sup> The motion carried and Canada may have gained its first designated children's librarian.

Patricia Spereman received at least some training in library work with children. Inspector Leavitt in his 1906 annual report cited a letter from Norman Gurd, a Sarnia Public Library Board member, who wrote that



Figure 1. Sarnia Public Library, circa 1905. Source: T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and School Institutions, etc.," in Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, for the Year 1906, (Toronto: Cameron, 1907), 292.



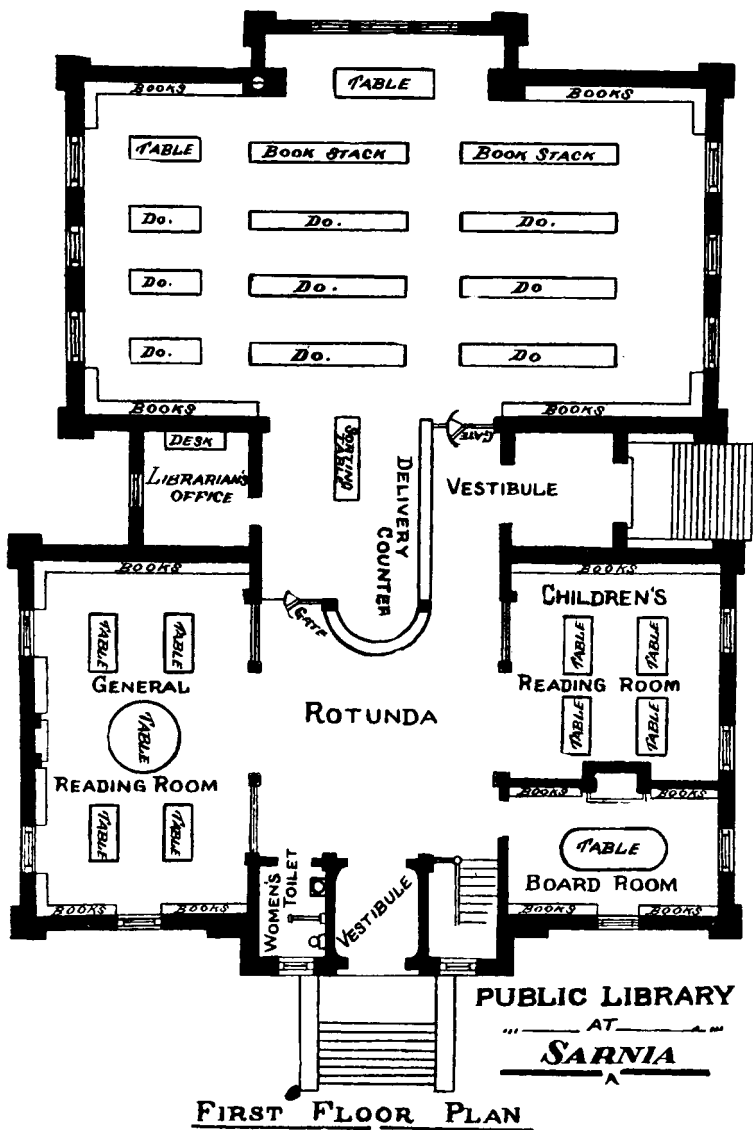


Figure 2. Main floor, Sarnia Public Library, circa 1905. Source: T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, etc.," in Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, for the Year 1906, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1907), 293.

Miss Spereman, the assistant librarian, began to make a study of the needs of the children. We provided books and pamphlets on children's work for her to read, and she also visited the children's department in the Port Huron [Michigan, USA] Library, which is a large library administered according to modern ideas, and got many valuable hints.<sup>13</sup>

The Port Huron Public Library has no records of this interaction.<sup>14</sup> Shortly after Patricia Spereman's death in 1946, Angus Mowat (then Inspector of Public Libraries) wrote an obituary for the *Ontario Library Review* in which he noted that soon after the construction of the new Carnegie building in Sarnia and "seeing the great advantage of professional training, she took a year at Pratt, returning to Sarnia P. L. to organize what I believe to have been the first children's department in an Ontario library."<sup>15</sup>

The Pratt Institute was the first North American library school to offer training in children's services.<sup>16</sup> If Patricia Spereman attended Pratt she would have studied with Anne Carroll Moore, "Lecturer on library methods for children, and children's books."<sup>17</sup> Moore, supervisor of the children's department of the New York Public Library, was a notable pioneer in early American library work with children. At Pratt Spereman would have also learned library history, book selection, cataloguing, classification, and indexing. Spereman's attendance at Pratt is not confirmed in any of the other sources consulted during this research. A year-long gap for training at Pratt is not evident in either her activities at Sarnia Public Library or her later work with the provincial Department of Education. It is unlikely that Miss Spereman received formal professional education at this time.

The number of juvenile books as a proportion of total books circulated increased steadily under Miss Spereman's tenure at Sarnia Public Library from 1904 until April 1908, when she left to work at the provincial Department of Education (Figure 3).<sup>18</sup>

A story hour was initiated by 1906. Inspector Leavitt's report for that year indicates that "Up to the present I have but one report showing that the story hour has been adopted in a Public Library in the Province."<sup>19</sup> Leavitt's report then quotes from a letter written by Norman Gurd who noted that:

The children's story hour is a very recent development, and is the most forward step we have taken. The story hour to-day on "Child Life in Russia" was attended by eighty-four children, and at the conclusion of the talk the children took practically all the books on Russia we had in the library. The children attending range in age

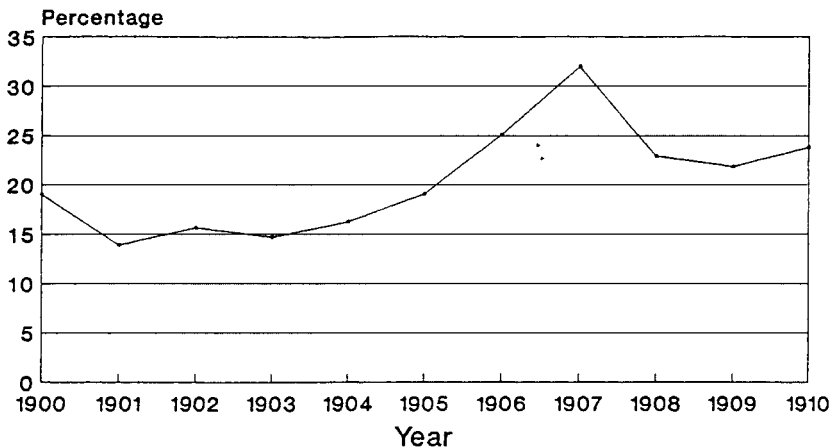


Figure 3. Juvenile proportion, Mean monthly circulation, Sarnia Public Library

from kindergarten to those of sixteen and seventeen. The story hour also gives the librarian an opportunity to speak to the children about the care of books, behaviour while in the library, and also keeps her in friendly touch with the children. They are asked for suggestions as to the subjects for future story hours. These talks are very informal, and the children appear to be perfectly at home and ask questions freely. The blackboard is used for lists of books touching on the subject under discussion. Illustrated books bearing on the subject are brought down to the auditorium and shown to the children.<sup>20</sup>

The existence of the story hour is confirmed by a notice published 10 January 1907 in the *Sarnia Daily Observer* about an upcoming session: "A Children's Story Hour will be held at the public library on Saturday afternoon from two to three o'clock, commencing next Saturday afternoon, Jan. 12th."<sup>21</sup>

The library also worked cooperatively with the schools. "The policy of the Board has not been to send out Travelling Libraries to the schools, but rather to bring the children to the Library."<sup>22</sup> Students were assigned reading lists prepared from library holdings by teachers who also suggested titles for the library to purchase.

In May 1906 the Dewey Decimal system of classification was adopted and the librarian from Port Huron came to train the staff in its application. In 1907 Sarnia Public Library, at the request of the Department of Education, assembled two model children's collections based on titles held at Sarnia. These were introduced and exhibited at the 1907 annual

meeting of the Ontario Library Association and then circulated as part of the province's new Travelling Libraries scheme.<sup>23</sup>

At its 13 December 1907, meeting the library board acceded to a request received from the provincial Inspector of Public Libraries

asking the Board if it would be possible to secure the services of Miss Spereman for two or three months during the summer for the purpose of sending her to other libraries to instruct librarians and others in the principles and practices of Modern Cataloguing and institute a Story Hour for the children. The Education Department to pay her salary and expenses.<sup>24</sup>

Miss Spereman was gone by May 1908<sup>25</sup> and, despite at least one request by the board,<sup>26</sup> never did return to her position at Sarnia Public Library. The circulation of children's books decreased and the mention of children and services for them virtually disappeared in ensuing board minutes.

### **Patricia Spereman and the Department of Education**

A careful examination of the evidence<sup>27</sup> suggests that Miss Spereman's appointment to the library division staff of the Ontario Department of Education was, at least at the beginning, related more to children's work than to cataloguing, classification, or other library tasks. Leavitt's report for 1908 states: "Recognizing the vital importance of children's work in Public Libraries the Minister of Education secured the services of Miss Patricia Spereman, children's librarian of the Sarnia library."<sup>28</sup>

An American journal, *Public Libraries*, included the following under the heading "A feature of library work in Ontario—":

Special interest is taken in the work that the libraries do for children and for young persons. The Department of Education of Ontario has appointed an organizer of children's work, who will visit various libraries for the purpose of inaugurating work of various kinds for the children. This organizer will be provided with traveling [*sic*] libraries for children, collections of pictures and other library attractions for young people. Where the library has made no special provision for children, the organizer is expected to open a children's department by collecting in one place in the library all the material suitable for the work with children, talking to the young people about books and instructing someone to carry it on after her departure.<sup>29</sup>

Fortunately Miss Spereman also contributed to the department's annual reports, writing the sections on "Children's Libraries." During 1908 she visited seventeen libraries in the province.<sup>30</sup> Whenever possible she organized the children's department and gave story hours.<sup>31</sup> She also classified collections and bound and repaired books. The work continued through 1909 although book binding and repair were removed from her duties as being too heavy for a woman. In 1909 the report identified Spereman as a Children's Librarian; by 1910, although she continued with the children's work, the report identified her as an Official Cataloguer. Cataloguing and classification occupied an increasing proportion of her time so that by 1916, when W. O. Carson became Inspector of Public Libraries, these tasks predominated.

Patricia Spereman was both a student and an instructor at the first Ontario Summer Library School held in Toronto in 1911 (Figure 4).<sup>32</sup> She corrected students' catalogue card exercises. She also, along with Bessie Staton of Toronto, taught the sessions on children's work. As a student, Miss Spereman finished eleventh in a class of twenty-three. While she was an instructor in several subsequent summer schools, it was in the area of cataloguing and classification. Children's work was taught by Bessie Staton in 1912 and Toronto's Lillian Smith in 1913. Beginning in 1912, Spereman also lectured on classification and card catalogues at the Library Institutes, small regionally based workshops which had been offered by the Department since 1907.

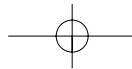
Patricia Spereman remained with the Department of Education until her death in 1946 when she was in charge of the Travelling Libraries. Her work had gradually moved away from its emphasis on children's services.

### **The Ontario Library Association**

The Ontario Library Association (OLA)<sup>33</sup> was founded in 1900 and played an important role in the early development of the province's libraries. At its seventeenth annual meeting in April 1917, the "Round Table of Librarians interested in work among Boys and Girls" was established and met annually, in one form or another, thereafter. Prior to this children's work was discussed at most annual conferences and was the theme of the 1913 conference. Patricia Spereman gave a major paper on "Library Work for Children" at the 1908 conference. She attended subsequent conferences but did not lead sessions on children's work again. In 1911 Miss Jessie C. Potter, B.A., Dundas opened the conference with "Library Work With Children." At the 1913 conference Lillian Smith gave the first presentation under the main conference theme "Boys and Girls and the Public Library," followed by speakers from Toronto, Fort William, Sarnia, and Brooklyn, N.Y.



Figure 4. Staff and students of the first Summer Library School in Toronto, 1911. Left to right. Top row: Miss Thibaudeau, Miss McCrae, Miss Collinson, Miss Anderson, Inspector Nursey, Miss Scott, Mr. DelaFosse, Miss Detwiler, Dr. Horning, Miss Jamieson, Mrs. Clarke, Miss Stauffer. Center row: Miss McEvers, Miss Batters, Miss Spereman, Miss Kopp, Miss Dunham, Miss Bain, Miss Ward, Miss Banting. Front row: Miss Black, Miss Rice, Miss Hamly, Miss Gardiner, Miss Reid, Miss Watson, Miss Carroll. Source: Walter R. Nursey, "Appendix V—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, etc.," in Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, For the Year of 1911, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1912), 355.



The records of the OLA's conferences are also interesting in that they reveal the role and participation of library trustees in the development of children's services. Sarnia Public Library Board members held executive offices with the OLA's Board every year from 1905 until 1921, with the exception of 1910. Two board members served as president of the OLA, Norman Gurd in 1907 and 1908, and D. M. Grant in 1920.

Gurd served on an OLA-appointed Commission on Children's Books which produced a list of about one thousand recommended titles, printed and distributed by the Department of Education in 1906. As Spereman was already working in Sarnia, she probably assisted him in the preparation of this list. Gurd's 1907 presidential address emphasizes the importance of library work with children.

Let us begin, therefore with the child in the kindergarten and make our children's library a training school for readers. With a large children's library covering every department of literature, we may develop in the child some dormant faculty which may determine his lifework, and vastly enhance his future usefulness to the community.<sup>34</sup>

Gurd also was the author of *The Story of Tecumseh*, the second volume of the Canadian Heroes Series for children which was published by the OLA in 1911.<sup>35</sup> Walter Nursey, Inspector of Public Libraries from 1909 until 1915, wrote the first book in the series, *The Story of Isaac Brock*, issued in 1908.<sup>36</sup>

James Spereman's death was noted in the OLA proceedings for 1909. It had also been acknowledged in Leavitt's 1908 report as follows

His work, though local in character, was eminently practical and valuable. He was one of the few library workers instrumental in establishing the children's department in the Sarnia library; a movement whose influence has been widespread and in harmony with the spirit of his times.<sup>37</sup>

James Spereman attended OLA conferences regularly although, beyond a short presentation on how to buy books which he read in 1908, he seemed to be a quiet participant.

Although Nursey's address to the 1913 meeting of the OLA, "The Trustee and the Children's Department," emphasizes the policy making and leadership we associate with library boards today, it is clear that trustees did some of the actual work themselves. At least in Sarnia, they selected and even wrote books for the children's department.

The OLA expressed itself clearly on many issues related to children's work. At its 1907 conference, the membership voted affirmatively on the question: "Should an extra grant be given to Public Libraries for children's work, circulation of children's books and quality of circulation and special work for children?"<sup>38</sup> This never became part of the provincial grant structure, but Miss Sperean was appointed within one year to do similar work at no cost to the libraries she visited.

In his 1907 presidential address, Gurd expressed concerns about restricted shelf access and age limits for children, commonly twelve to fourteen years: "The open shelf is with many a scoffing and a by-word. Children are driven from the library by the absurd age limit."<sup>39</sup> In 1909 it was moved and carried "that this Association endorse the plan of open access and the establishment of children's reading rooms wherever feasible."<sup>40</sup> These issues were also addressed in Leavitt's annual reports. New public library legislation in 1909 required library boards to obtain permission from the Minister of Education before restricting access or setting age limits.<sup>41</sup>

## Discussion

Public library services for children emerged in Great Britain after passage of the first Public Libraries Act of 1850.<sup>42</sup> The first example of a tax-supported library service for youth occurred in Manchester in 1862. Unfortunately the British legislation limited the level of tax support, and library services for children were restricted to relatively few, scattered locations until the rate restriction was removed by the new Public Libraries Act of 1919. This limited and late development as well as the substantial geographic separation meant that even though Canada was part of the British Commonwealth, public library work with children in Britain had little influence in Canadian contexts.

American library work with children began with scattered village or town libraries founded by philanthropists like Caleb Bingham (Salisbury, Connecticut 1803) and Ebenezer Learned (West Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1807).<sup>43</sup> Sunday school and school district libraries followed. In 1876 the American Library Association (ALA) was founded. William Fletcher in his chapter on "Public Libraries and the Young" in the 1876 Report of the Federal Office of Education on *Public Libraries of the United States of America*, decried the lack of services for children and youth.<sup>44</sup> From 1876 until the founding of the Children's Service Division of the ALA at its annual conference in 1900 held in Montreal, children's library services developed rapidly, particularly, in the northeastern United States. Harriet Long attributes this to increasing support for public education and concern for child welfare stemming from the conditions

created by increased industrialization, immigration, and urbanization.<sup>45</sup> Fanette Thomas's doctoral research supports the premise that five elements emerged at the end of the nineteenth century which formed the basis of public library service to children: a separate book collection, a separate facility, specialized staff, reader services (such as story hours and book clubs), and cooperation with other community agencies.<sup>46</sup> Early twentieth-century Canadian librarians largely agreed with Thomas. The following appeared in the "Canadian Library Notes" column of the February 1904 issue of *Public Libraries*:

Much discussion has taken place during the past year or so, among Canadian libraries, as to the desirability or otherwise of making special provisions for children in public libraries. In the sense of the large and fully organized children's departments of United States libraries, no such thing as special provision yet exists in the dominion; that is to say, there are no rooms specially constructed and set apart for children; no fittings or furniture particularly adapted to their needs; no library attendants whose special duty is to look after the wants of the little people; and except to a limited extent, no attempt to provide a special, carefully selected and classified juvenile library, with its own catalogs.<sup>47</sup>

The evidence indicates that Sarnia Public Library demonstrated all of Thomas's elements of children's services by 1906. It is probably also true that Sarnia was the first library in Ontario to do so.<sup>48</sup> Although public library development generally occurred earlier in Ontario than in other parts of Canada, more research is needed before we can determine whether or not another children's department was established elsewhere in the country prior to Sarnia's.

The influence of the United States is clear. By 1900 the Americans had developed a model of children's services which could be emulated by Canadian libraries. The interchange of ideas between Canada and the United States was fluid in 1900. Canadians attended American conferences, participated in American library associations, read American library journals, traveled to the United States for training, and asked Americans to speak at their conferences and training sessions. This is certainly true for Patricia Spereman. Sarnia Public Library subscribed to *Library Journal*.<sup>49</sup> Spereman may have been trained at Pratt and definitely went to Port Huron for information on children's libraries. After beginning work with the province, she regularly attended OLA conferences<sup>50</sup> (which often featured American speakers) and at least once went to an ALA conference (Ottawa 1912).<sup>51</sup> Spereman would have had access to ideas discussed at earlier conferences through the attendance of Sarnia

board members, including her own father. The earliest free standing, city-owned public library buildings in Canada were largely Carnegie buildings. With the Carnegie dollars came Carnegie foundation ideas, which by this time in American libraries included a separate children's area as a common feature in all but the smallest buildings for the smallest communities.<sup>52</sup> It is probably more than coincidence that at least one example of early Canadian children's services developed in a community located on the border with the United States.

In some ways the Canadian experience was different. Growth of children's services was more rapid and probably more uniform in Ontario. Ontario libraries could utilize and extend already existing American work. While early American library legislation and professional training were often linked to individual institutions, provincial legislation provided a common basis for public library development in Ontario. Both the OLA and the library division of the Department of Education worked hard to implement progressive service standards. The Department of Education could and did provide Miss Spereman as a consultant who traveled through the province setting up children's departments. It also provided the earliest training sessions in children's services through its institutes and summer library schools.

## Notes

I wish to thank Dr. Janet H. Fyfe, Professor Emerita, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Western Ontario, for the encouragement and direction she provided for this project.

The major primary sources consulted include the minutes of the Sarnia Public Library Board meetings, February 1900–January 1911; microfilmed back issues of the *Sarnia Daily Observer*, indexed by the Sarnia Public Library (1900 to 1909); proceedings of the Ontario Library Association, 1900–1925; annual reports of the Inspector of Public Libraries of the Department of Education (Ontario), 1900–1920; and issues of *Library Journal* and *Public Libraries*, 1900–1915. Sarnia Public Library holds no further records from this period. Current holdings of the Ontario provincial archives of the library office of the Department of Education for this time contain little relevant material.

1. Margaret E. Johnston, "Lillian H. Smith," *Horn Book* 58 (June 1982): 325–332.

2. John Ridington, *Libraries in Canada: a Study of Library Conditions and Needs* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), 50.

3. J. W. Emery, *The Library, the School and the Child* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1917).

4. John A. Wiseman, "Temples of Democracy: A History of Public Library Development in Ontario, 1880–1920." (Ph.D. diss., Loughborough University of Technology, 1989).

5. Lorne Bruce, *Free for All: The Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850–1930* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994).

6. Information about transactions of the Board of the Sarnia Public Library, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Minutes of Meetings of the Sarnia Public Library Board, 1900–1910, Sarnia Public Library.

7. Margaret Beckman, Stephen Langmead and John Black, *The Best Gift: A Record of the Carnegie Libraries in Ontario*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984), 31.

8. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," in *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, For the Year 1906* (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1907), 292.

9. *Ibid.*, 293.

10. *Ibid.*, 224.

11. Minutes of the Meeting of the Sarnia Public Library Board, 8 April 1904, Sarnia Public Library, 201.

12. Minutes of the Meeting of the Sarnia Public Library Board, 10 June 1904, Sarnia Public Library, 205.

13. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," 219.

14. A letter dated 15 May 1991 signed Barbara King, Reference Librarian, St. Clair County Library System notes that "I have checked the Port Huron Public Library Board minutes from 1902–1905 and didn't find any mention of Patricia Spereman or details of the children's library" and "I also checked the clipping files on the Port Huron Public Library, but did not find any mention of Patricia Spereman or details on library service to children at that period."

15. Angus Mowat, "Patricia Spereman," *Ontario Library Review* 30 (November 1946): 349.

16. Two sources provided the information presented here on the Pratt Institute: *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, s.v. "The Pratt Institute Graduate School of Library and Information Science," by Nasser Sharify; and "Circular of information, School of Library Training, Pratt Institute, 1907–1908," Brooklyn, New York.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Mean monthly circulation was calculated from monthly circulation figures reported in Board meeting minutes. No circulation was recorded for several months. In most cases this relates to times the library was closed for construction or renovation (January–May 1900; November 1903; July–December 1906); sometimes circulation simply was not recorded (June–August 1907; March–April 1909) or juvenile circulation was not separated from the total (June–August 1910).

19. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," 218.

20. *Ibid.*, 220.

21. "Town Topics," *Sarnia Daily Observer*, 10 January 1907, 5.

22. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," 225.

23. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Travelling Libraries," in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Library Association held at Toronto, April 1st and 2nd, 1907* (Toronto: Department of Education, Ontario, 1908), 19.

24. Minutes of the Meeting of the Sarnia Public Library Board, 13 December 1907, Sarnia Public Library, 25.

25. Payment of salaries was regularly noted in board meeting minutes. May 1908 is the first month that Patricia Spereman's name did not appear on the payroll.

26. The board meeting minutes include the following motion:

Moved by Messrs. Grant and Milne that application be made to the Education Dept. for the services of Miss Spereman for one month if it has decided to continue to employ her for a longer period, in order to complete the cataloguing and other matters, and if the Department is not employing her that our own Board secure her services at once for this work.  
Carried.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Sarnia Public Library Board, 10 January 1909, Sarnia Public Library, 67.

27. Unless otherwise specified this information is taken from the annual reports of the Inspectors of Public Libraries from 1900 to 1920 which were included as appendices in the annual reports of the Department of Education for the province of Ontario.

28. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," in *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, For the Year 1907*, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1908), 138.

29. "A Feature of Library Work in Ontario," *Public Libraries* 13 (June 1908): 215.

30. These were located in Brantford, Wallaceburg, Windsor, Orangeville, Gorrie, Goderich, Wingham, Warton, Brampton, Streetsville, Palmerston, Markdale, Richmond Hill, Niagara Falls, Simcoe, Galt, and Ingersoll. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," in *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, For the Year of 1908*, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1909), 139–141.

31. Spereman conducted sixteen story hours in the above-mentioned locations attended by 2,560 children. *Ibid.*

32. Walter R. Nursey, "Appendix V—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," in *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, For the Year of 1911*, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1912), 555.

33. Information about the Ontario Library Association, unless otherwise specified, is taken from *The Ontario Library Association: an Historical Sketch 1900–1925*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1926) and *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Library Association*, (Toronto: Department of Education, Ontario) from 1907 to 1918.

34. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Library Association held at Toronto, April 1st and 2nd, 1907*, (Toronto: Department of Education, Ontario, 1908), 9.

35. Walter R. Nursey, "Appendix V—Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," 1911, 557.

36. T. W. H. Leavitt, "Appendix H—Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," 1908, 138.

37. *Ibid.*, 172.

38. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Library Association . . . 1907*, 37.

39. *Ibid.*, 7.

40. *The Ontario Library Association: an Historical Sketch*, 152.

41. *Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Ninth Annual Meeting at the Canadian Institute, Toronto April 12th and 13th, 1909*, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1909), 75.

42. For an overview of the history of library services for children in Great Britain, see the work of Alec Ellis, *Library Services for Young People in England and Wales, 1830–1970*, (Oxford: Pergamon, 1971) and "Public Library Services for Young People, 1862–1972," *Library Association Record* 88 (February 1986): 81–2.

43. Major secondary sources for the history of public library work with children in the United States include Sara Innis Fenwick, "Library Service to

Children and Young People," *Library Trends* 25 (July 1976): 329–360; Harriet G. Long, *Public Library Service to Children: Foundation and Development*, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1969); Manuel D. Lopez, "Childrens [sic] Libraries: Nineteen [sic] Century American Origins," *Journal of Library History* 11 (October 1976): 316–42; Shelley G. McNamara, "Early Public Library Work with Children," *Top of the News* 43 (Fall 1986): 59–72; Frances Clarke Sayers, "The American Origins of Public Library Work with Children," *Library Trends* 12 (July 1963): 6–13; Fanette H. Thomas, "The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library, 1875–1906" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982); and Kay E. Vandergrift, "Female Advocacy and Harmonious Voices: A History of Public Library Services and Publishing for Children in the United States," *Library Trends* 44 (1996): 683–718.

44. William I. Fletcher, "Public Libraries and the Young," in U.S. Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States of America. Special Report. Part. 1*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876).

45. Harriet G. Long, *Public Library Service to Children*.

46. Fanette H. Thomas, "The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library."

47. "Canadian Library Notes," *Public Libraries* 9 (February 1904): 94.

48. Norman Gurd's presidential address at the 1907 OLA conference included the following:

The Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries for 1906 is a most valuable document, and marks an era of library work in Ontario . . . Twenty-five of the leading Ontario libraries give a detailed description of their work. From this we learn that only six libraries have a children's room, six only have abolished the age limit, which debars children from the use of books, and only thirteen have open shelves. Only two libraries, Lindsay and Sarnia, have a children's room, no age limit and open shelves.

This appeared in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Library Association, 1907, 7*. At this time, as documented earlier, only Sarnia had a story hour.

49. Receipt of journals was noted in Sarnia Public Library's Board meeting minutes and regularly included *Library Journal*.

50. Spereman's attendance is noted at OLA Conference proceedings from 1908 until at least 1915.

51. Miss Spereman reported on the Ottawa ALA conference in Walter R. Nursey's, "Appendix V—Public Libraries, Literacy and Scientific Institutions, Etc.," in *Report of the Minister of Education Province of Ontario, For the Year 1912*, (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1913), 636–637.

52. Descriptions, photographs, and plans for new buildings were often included in the annual reports of the provincial Inspector of Public Libraries. *The Best Gift: a Record of the Carnegie Libraries in Ontario* by Margaret Beckman, Stephen Langmead, and John Black (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984) notes that not all the buildings included in the annual reports were built as is or at all. However, these documents can give us a rough idea of how many of the new Carnegie buildings in Ontario included a separate children's room or area. Of the fifty-two Carnegie library buildings mentioned in the reports from 1903 to 1913, at least twenty-nine had a separate children's area. Sarnia was the fourth of the first ten Carnegie libraries to open in Ontario between September, 1903 and August, 1904. Of these ten libraries, six had separate children's areas.

# Notes & Essays

## UNPACKING: WALTER BENJAMIN AND HIS LIBRARY

*Joseph D. Lewandowski*

It is widely acknowledged that Walter Benjamin was not only a singular philosopher but also the most important and innovative literary critic and essayist in twentieth-century Germany. What is perhaps less well-known is that Benjamin was an accomplished and passionate bibliophile, collecting everything from German literature (especially Baroque), theology, fairy tales, and antiquarian children's books. Such a collection: the magic of children's books alongside the mosaic occultism of those Baroque texts and the metaphysics of the theological ones! Benjamin himself was wont to describe his book acquisitions in unabashedly enthusiastic and historical terms, as in his 1925 letter to Gershom Scholem, where he describes his "epochal" purchase of Von dem Werder's 1624 text, *Der deutsche Tasso von Paris*. In the course of Walter Benjamin's short and wandering life, books were, along with his Paul Klee painting *Angelus Novus*, his most beloved possessions. Benjamin referred to his love of books as his "bibliomania." Even when broke, virtually homeless, and in poor health, he spent what money he had on books.

Thus it is not surprising that, in late 1931, Benjamin took the occasion to write a brief and wonderful essay entitled "Unpacking My Library—A Talk on Collecting." At that time Benjamin, having nearly two years earlier concluded his separation from his wife, Dora, with a divorce, and having left his Berlin-Grunewald residence, was in fact moving into his own partially furnished apartment. Around him stood—in crates, piles and stacks—roughly 2,000 books! One can only imagine such a sight: the melancholy dialectician and author painstakingly unpacking crate after crate, sorting through book after book, long into the night. Why was Benjamin, who seems to have had, at best, only strained and awkward personal relationships, so enamored of his books? And why record the experience of "unpacking" them? Theodor Adorno and Gershom Scholem, two of those few people who knew Benjamin, though in very different registers, suggest that one of the peculiar things about this man was that his existence and his work were inextricably entwined. In his

essay, "Benjamin the Letter Writer," Adorno opens with the suggestion that "Walter Benjamin the person was from the very beginning so completely the medium of his work . . . that anything one might call 'immediacy of life' was refracted" (1994, xvii). And Scholem says that,

Behind many of Benjamin's writings stand personal, indeed most personal, experiences which by projection into the objects of his works disappeared or were put into code, so that the outsider could not recognize them or at least could do no more than suspect their presence. (1976, 202)

Hence on the one hand, *Benjamin the person as medium of his work*; on the other hand, *Benjamin's work as encrypted medium of his person*. Such is the dialectical process at work, I want to suggest, in "Unpacking My Library"; so much so, in fact, that as Benjamin "unpacks" his library we see, encoded, Benjamin unpacking himself and his work.

## II

"I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am" (Benjamin 1968, 59). The declarative and satisfactory tone is simple and unmistakable here—*this* is what I am doing, yes, indeed. And there is a pleasure and immediate presence in such a simple saying and doing. "After two years of darkness," Benjamin and his books are reunited in this rather impoverished and strange apartment—the one he will inhabit, alone—with its "air saturated with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper" (1968, 59). But such an immediately satisfying and careful account of this reunion is not really to the author's point; instead, these descriptions are the ornaments of something more interesting and profound. For what we in fact have here is an "invitation," an invitation to glimpse and perhaps understand, not what books are here or how much they are worth, nor how they shall be arranged, but rather the genuine collector, Walter Benjamin, who now lives here, among these books. Indeed, Benjamin says that when this genuine collector speaks to us about unpacking his library we discover that "on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking only about himself" (1968, 59).

What, then, does he say? At least three interconnected responses emerge. First, Benjamin's "Unpacking My Library" tells us about the dialectical tension of the life of the collector that he in fact was. The poles of such a dialectic are disorder and order (1968, 60). In the latter lies the mild boredom of bourgeois existence—shelved books, standing at attention like soldiers of knowledge as the collector marches "up and down their ranks to pass them in review" (1968, 59). Thus subjectified,

the ordered world of the collector locks individual units into discrete rows, catalogued and numbered and periodized. But a genuine collector knows that there is a strange disorder, even magic, here as well. These books are not yet shelved—this is not really, at least not yet, as Benjamin relates to us in this text's immediately present tense, a library. And books are, after all, the repositories of language—that special medium Benjamin, some fifteen years earlier in his essay “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” characterized as a magical “symbol of the non-communicable” (1978, 331). Thus in the former lies enchantment. Benjamin says very clearly that such a magical disorder is dialectically involved with order:

The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them . . . The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership—for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a *magic encyclopedia*. (1978, 60)

What better dialectical image of order and disorder than a magic encyclopedia: the rational bourgeois order of things known and knowable as form; the magical and stubborn resistance of those things in language—their “non-communicability”—as content. A “real library,” Benjamin argues a few pages later, “is always somewhat impenetrable” (1978, 63). Magic fills and overflows the space of encyclopedic order. But only a “true collector” sees this. Such a collector was Walter Benjamin. One can even picture Benjamin, as he himself described the collector, handling his books: “As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired. So much for the magical side of the collector—his old-age image,” (1968, 61) says Benjamin, and in so doing discloses that peculiar experience he must have undergone as an “inspired” metaphysical seer trapped in the body and life of a damaged bourgeois existence.

Second, this “old-age” image of the seer is shot through with a “child-like element” (1968, 61). What the collector—what Benjamin, what his work—sees in old books, tattered bindings, and frayed pages is not use value or commodities but the old and the new. Benjamin writes, “I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth. This is the childlike element which in a collector mingles with the element of old age” (1968, 61). Benjamin, of course, had a special intellectual affinity for children and child's play. Mimesis, for example, is characterized in “On the Mimetic Faculty” (1933) as moments of unfettered child's play: when children “play” train, they

don't simply imitate a train, they become one. Children and their behavior were for Benjamin the repositories of an alternative relation to the world—they become trains and windmills, they collect forgotten and ignored phenomena, they name “dead” objects. According to Benjamin, such an alternative world-view accomplishes a kind of renewal and rescue—children retrieve objects and stimulate life in a frozen cultural modernity; they re-enchant, albeit momentarily, a disenchanting world. Benjamin suggests as much when he says:

For children can accomplish the renewal of existence in a hundred unending ways. Among children, collecting is only one process of renewal; other processes are the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals—the whole range of child-like modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names. (1968, 61)

And it is precisely in collecting as a child-like “mode of acquisition” that a genuine collector emerges: “To renew the old world—that is the collector’s deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things” (1968, 61). Thus collecting demands an orientation to the world of things that is always threatened: ensnared in the body and life of the bourgeois, trapped in the “old,” mature world of adulthood, the “child-like element” that leads the collector to rescue dead objects is akin to a rather bad category mistake. In a disenchanting world, books are to be sold, counted, divided, known; not phenomenally experienced, seen, related to via mimicry, intimately undergone. Genuine collecting for Benjamin, we might say, is a kind of acquisition that is motivated by “immaturity.”

Yet there is still more here, for Benjamin’s reflections on collecting are not reducible to a child-like naiveté or uncritical faith in the non-theorizable purity of child’s play. Personal libraries are, after all, enabled and limited by economic principles of market value, strategies of exchange and commodification of private property. The collector of books in Benjamin’s sense, however, is not the holder of commodities so much as he is the custodian of the historical reservoirs of memories. The third encryption, then, is a very different account of ownership. The collector’s ownership of books is not, for Benjamin, a manifestation of alienated nature or reification but “the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects” (1968, 67). “Collectors are the physiognomists of the world of objects,” Benjamin maintains (1968, 60). What makes book ownership an intimate relation to the world of things is that peculiar anamnestic dimension to collecting that outstrips any notion of a library as the bourgeois ownership of commodities in a world of getting and spending. Though, to be sure, Benjamin knew his library contained commodities.

He was in fact not averse to selling his books when he needed money or to make a profit; he had valuable first edition texts. Anamnesis is a solidaristic form of historical remembrance or mindfulness. When individuals collect old and outworn phenomena they actualize an anamnestic possibility because they rescue devalued objects from one historical fate—a consignment to the trash heap of historical progress—and offer them another historical fate; they allow the natural history of estranged and decayed books to show itself in new ways and become recognizable anamnastically. In books the owner of commodities redeems the remembrances of things half-forgotten. In fact, these books are themselves objective constellations of a dynamic past—“not thoughts but images, memories” (1968, 67). Such images disclose themselves precisely not as dead objects or antiquated historical truths but as *memories that escape involuntarily*: “Once you have approached the mountains of cases in order to mine the books from them . . . what memories crowd in upon you! Nothing highlights the fascination of unpacking more clearly than the difficulty of stopping this activity” (1968, 66). The collector who unpacks his old books and restores his library does not simply “own” or memorialize the past but also disrupts the present: his collecting and re-collecting make immediately visible and relevant, against his will, what was forgotten, past, or dead.

And what is made visible here, for Benjamin, as evening falls on this December night? A montage of the past contained in his mother’s childhood albums. The last two crates contain books that would not belong in most libraries—they are not really books but “book-like”; merely, as Benjamin says,

Two albums with stick-in pictures which my mother pasted in as a child and which I inherited. They are the seeds of a collection of children’s books which is growing steadily even today . . . There is no living library that does not harbor a number of booklike creations from fringe areas. (1968, 66)

Benjamin does not describe the contents of these pictures, for that would be to miss his central point, namely, that for the collector the past is living, discontinuous, and incomplete, and shows itself in fragmented, montage form in the oddities of personal libraries. These albums, for example, were never commodities—they had no market value—and yet they most certainly do belong here, and must be unpacked, even at this late hour. For this library is alive with remembrances, remembrances which are not tucked away but interrupt, and *transmit* themselves. A mother’s childhood album contains the fragmented dreams, hopes, and broken promises not merely of a personal history but of an epoch now

lost and redeemable only in her son's re-collection. Thus Benjamin turns an occasion for a critique of the commodity character of the object and private, bourgeois ownership into another account of objects and their owners. Genuine private collectors are re-collectors; in them ownership becomes historically concrete and *humane*, whereas public ownership destroys the intimacy and history Benjamin so carefully unpacked in his library. There may very well be dialectic at work here, but it is not that of the historical materialist. It is, rather, the fusion of Benjamin the person (a collector of books) and the medium of his work (that anamnestic solidarity with objects that shows books to be the repositories of a *past worth rescuing*). Small wonder, then, that Benjamin was so happy to unpack his library, for, in so doing, this man retrieved an undamaged past and at the same time managed to turn his own damaged present into a book—unpacked, yes, but not read, not really decoded.

### III

Walter Benjamin was a traveler, oftentimes by personal choice, just as often out of necessity. He was at home nowhere and, like the worldly critic he was, equally at home everywhere. Such a transient life served a peculiar function: it inevitably detached him from the world of human relations and at the same time coupled him to the world of things, especially books, but also other odd materials, such as high quality paper and fine fountain pens, toys, puppets and gadgets of all kinds, and unique architectural structures, such as one-way streets or the nineteenth-century arcades of Paris. In some profound sense, Benjamin's unique connection to objects allowed him to see that his kind of intimate relation to things was already out of date and perishing in modernity. He admitted as much at the close of "Unpacking My Library," "I do know that the time is running out for the type that I am discussing here . . . Only in extinction is the collector comprehended" (1968, 67). How to read such a quintessential Benjaminian admission? Heroic melancholia. The owl of Minerva flies at dusk. We arrive too late. Or perhaps one needs here to recall the Klee painting Benjamin was so fond of: the catastrophic storm of progress catches the collector in its path and blasts him out of existence.

But on this particular night that was not what occurred. The collector does not succumb to the storm of progressive history; he does not die—though he may be dying. Nor does he succumb to the inertia of melancholia. Instead, something remarkable happens. In the course of this text, Benjamin has constructed a shelter, a home, for the collector—for himself—in a world that threatens him. The shelter is in fact the library of books. But the code is not thereby fully revealed. Listen to Benjamin

as he confronted his last half-emptied book crate long after midnight in that messy Berlin apartment:

Ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him [the collector]; it is he who lives in them. So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting. (1968, 67)

There is simple, child-like magic here, in its purest Benjaminian form. A day and night's worth of unpacking is also a day and night's worth of montage-like assembling: "I have made a house right here, before your very eyes, for him—that genuine collector I have been telling you about" says Benjamin. Only the building blocks are books—and have been so from the very first satisfaction-filled line, "I am unpacking my library. Yes I am." The past has been collected and re-collected. Now, finally, it is time to rest, perhaps even sleep. But there is no longer a corporeal collector—a subject, a person—here to whom sleep beckons. There are only books. Walter Benjamin—the "genuine collector" and the man who has been telling us about collecting—has dissolved in his own work. Such a dissolution is not "only fitting," it was in Benjamin's case inexorable.

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## **THE IGBO IN DIASPORA: THE BINDING FORCE OF INFORMATION**

*Amusi Odi*

### **Introduction**

In a carefully documented study published in 1974, Alex Inkeles and David S. Smith singled out the Jews of Eastern Europe, the Swiss Protestants, the Parsis of India and the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria for achievement motivation.<sup>1</sup>

The Igbo have been brought to the limelight of world significance especially since they fought and lost in a brutal civil war that spanned three years (1967–1970). We must understand the Igbo as we never understood them before Inkeles and Smith's seminal study. Yet it is hard to understand a people who can be incontinently moved by materialism. On the record the Igbo have established themselves as a struggling, living conflict of extremes. Their history seems to have more jarring blacks and whites and less comfortable shadings than that of any other ethnic group on the African continent. Judged from the outside, the Igbo have acted almost like a puzzling case in a mental hospital, alternating periods of long and moody solitude with violent destructive energy. The Igbo student who devoted a significant portion of time to Christian fellowship in the seventies was quite possibly the same person who fought ferociously with a heightened sense of ethnic identification and who, perhaps deliberately, fostered an attitude of self-assertiveness and disregard for the sanctity of life, his own as well as that of others. In January 1970, in the space of a few hours, the fury seemed to vanish with the defeat. The Igbo returned to their villages and stood by docilely to await the pleasure of their conquerors.

But it is unfair to write of the Igbo in terms of a caricature; for all their achievement motivation and their republican inclination (*Igbo enwe eze*, the Igbo are Kingless) they are the most unified, the most stubborn, and perhaps have one of the most eccentric of national cultures. The Igbo can be called industrious, brave, and practical-minded but no amount of characterization can well describe them if one does not first understand the premises of their society, the ethos that makes it different from others, in short their cosmology. I have already sketched this in an earlier publication<sup>2</sup> and it is not considered necessary to repeat it here. The reader is kindly referred to that publication. Here we need only mention the Igbo tendency toward adventure.

## The Igbo in Dispersion

Part of the Igbo way of life is their tendency to adventure; the Igbo are one of the most restless of people, and the most travelled. It is no accident that, while they put up in the Igbo homeland with housing that other Nigerian ethnic groups would regard as a disgrace, they make sure that their automobiles are as efficient as they possibly can be.

The Igbo love of country has always been a curiously general affair, almost an abstract one. Few Igbo have that passionate attachment to a particular soil, a particular locality or region, that is common among other African ethnic groups. The Igbo have a regional literature, it is true, but it is rather a tribute to the passing of genuine regionalism than an expression of it, and they have no literature comparable to the Yoruba literature of country and village, the loving study of the field and wall and brook, the curious histories of village ceremonies or *Owa mbe* (Yoruba) and *Sara* (Housa). The affections of an Igbo have more to do with the social and political system than with the soil inhabited. This may be because of the Igbo proverb that dictates that the man whose attachments converge upon a particular spot on earth is miserable if removed from it; but give an Igbo his institutions and he cares little where you place him. Thus Simon Ottenberg, an American anthropologist who spent twenty years among the Igbo, writes "an Igbo's country is his understanding; he carries it with him wherever he goes, whether he emigrates north to the Housas or West to the Yorubas, his home is wherever he finds minds congenial to his own."<sup>3</sup> One can say of the Igbo love of adventure that instead of fragmenting the nation, it diffuses nationalism; instead of contributing to particularism, it encourages the generalization of patriotism and loyalty. This sense of adventure is accentuated by economic opportunism.

## Igbo Capitalism

The Igbo are among the most dispersed in Africa and perhaps even in the world. Their sense of adventure and the ease with which they seize economic opportunities make them easy prey among their hosts—this is what fosters in them a deep sense of community loyalty. It is true that the Igbo at the time of Nigeria's political independence in 1960 were over-represented in certain areas of lucrative commercial activity. For example, the Igbo formed only 1 percent of the population of Northern Nigeria, but controlled 11 percent of its real estate brokerage, 25 percent of its retail trade, 30 percent of the clothing trade, and 79 percent of department stores.

A 1960 commercial topography of Nigerian cities would show zones of homogeneous experience; thus we had Hausa quarters, Yoruba quarters, and Igbo quarters. Certain “quarters” gather reputation for heartless capitalism and their associated social pathology, and consequently they objectify the fantasy of the dreadful enclosure. As the rationalization of urban life continues, boundaries enclose some lives more tightly, isolating and making them more alien and obscure, inspiring illusions about them, making them more vulnerable.

Urban myths, in the manner of all mythology, are based on projections, social or psychological, which are efforts of the mind, concealed from awareness, to externalize something that originates from within. A projection makes a person, place, or thing represent a process, disposition or emotion that the mind refuses to own or cannot explain. Scapegoating is the most familiar kind of projection, by which some people find other persons with dramatically different social identities to stand for feelings or acts too painful, wicked, or inconsistent to claim for themselves.

Some urban myths do claim victims. Just as an individual, in psychological acts of projection, disassociates from unwanted feelings, a group can preserve a sense of virtue and comfort by disowning some social processes and by making some other group represent collective experiences that nobody wants. The consequences of these myths have been admirably discussed by E.V. Waters in a procedure he calls “blaming the victim.”<sup>4</sup> Certain people take the rap for troubles that begin far beyond the boundaries of their lives.

In Nigeria around 1961 and after, mass drift from rural to urban centres brought new combinations of people, transforming these milieux and giving them names that were spread and sped by the wings of fantasy. According to the stereotype, Igbo quarters were loci in which cut-throat capitalists drifted together in a kind of behavioural sink, producing urban capsules of depraved financiers so highly concentrated that the ordinary resources of the body social could not control them. The press kept alive the sense of danger and contamination associated with *Sabon geri* (“strangers’ quarters” as Igbo quarters are called in Hausa).

The Igbo then, partly for their commercial enterprise and partly for intellectual reasons, were frequently resented. They were often subjected to window smashing and physical assault, sometimes culminating in murder. In its economic aspect anti-Igbo feeling was a defensive reaction by the lower middle class—artisans, shopkeepers, and traders—to the advent of full-blown “Igbo capitalism.” For the Igbo were agents of change, promoting free trade, commercial publicity, installment payments, and the sale of ready-made goods. They intruded between producers and consumers and breached the monopoly of specialized shops (run mainly by Lebanese merchants), ranging from second-hand stalls to

department stores. In fact they prefigured the 1980s' trend in Nigeria toward urbanization and white-collar specialization, a trend which the rest of Nigeria was to follow decades later.

Intellectually anti-Igbo feeling was a reaction against such features as Igbo rationalism and enlightened self-interest linked to an atavistic penchant for aggressive ethnicity.

### **The Binding Force of Information**

It is clear from the above sketch that what the Igbo most desired at the time of Nigeria's political independence—free trade among the regions, free competition, and free association—was denied by reason of what they represented. And in an existence permanently suffused with struggle, the survival of a group whom the chain of generations links inextricably with its ancestors as well as with its descendants, is not a minuscule event. Back home in the Igbo homeland, the Igbo leaders strove to redirect the psychic energies of a public disoriented by the rise of nationalism and mass society towards their perceived tribal duty and primeval custom. For they appeared to have realized that, as William Dean Howard wrote in the 1890s “. . . the struggle for life has changed from a free fight to an encounter of disciplined forces and the free fighters that are left get ground to pieces.”<sup>5</sup> Thus to strengthen the inner cohesion of their kith and kin, both at home and abroad, the Igbo leaders, apparently overcome by nostalgic atavism, resorted to the ancient practice of village square meetings. At these meetings matters affecting the security and welfare of the community were fully discussed. And since it was becoming apparent that the existing political order might break down with consequent social strife, several traditional modes of information communication were revived. Significant among them were the following:

#### *(a) The Wooden Drum*

There are several varieties of wooden drums: there is the *Ikoro* (a large hollow trunk of a tree) which is kept in the village square and beaten only in time of dire emergency, usually by a person versed in its reverberating intricacies. Its sound can reach a distance of up to twenty kilometers. Anyone hearing the sound of *Ikoro* will usually rush to the village square to enquire about what is happening.

A second variety of wooden drum is called *ekwe*; it is similar to *ikoro* but much smaller in size. It is used to summon male members of the community to a meeting or, depending upon its sound, to announce the presence of strangers in the community.

*(b) Town Criers*

Every Igbo village has one or two criers, depending upon its size. The town crier goes round the village, usually late at night and early in the morning, to shout his message. He usually draws the attention of the people by beating a hollow metal gong known as *ogele*; once the shrill sound of the gong pierces the still night, the community listens for the coming message.

*(c) Burn Fire.*

The use of burn fire was particularly frequent during the civil war period. A community would build a small hut on a prominence (such as a hill top) in which combustible material, such as dried wood or grass, was packed. The hut was set alight and allowed to burn freely in a time of emergency. To ensure that the correct message was transmitted, two devices were adopted: the first allowed the fire to burn freely, the red flame showing up against the night sky. This would signify that enemies were right in the village and that every able-bodied person must arm oneself and report immediately to the village square.

The second was that the red flame was stifled, usually with green leaves which allowed only the smoke to be visible. This would signify the presence of danger some distance away from the community. An immediate response would not be required but everybody must be on guard. The hut was usually rebuilt the next morning.

*(d) Egbe Cham (Den Gun)*

*Egbe Cham* is used for only one purpose—war. When a village council deems it necessary to take a warlike measure, even if it is in time of peace, it authorizes a town crier to declare a state of emergency. This is done by firing from a tree top a locally constructed fire arm loaded with smokey gunpowder. The young men's response is usually immediate—they arm themselves and report at the village square for emergency service.

*(e) The Talking Drum*

The "talking" drum is a hollow wooden construction, one end of which is sealed with animal skin. It is used only in ceremonial occasions. A significant aspect of the drum is that it can describe vividly an event that either took place or is about to take place without the drummer uttering a word. It is particularly useful in a mixed audience where the drummer

does not want everyone to share his message. In such an audience speeches are made by employing elaborate forms of Igbo proverb.<sup>6</sup> Among the Igbo, maturity is measured by the ability to communicate with proverbs and the excessive directness of speech is regarded as ineptitude in the use of words.

It should be emphasized that these modes of information dissemination are effective mainly in the village, that is, among peasant populations with deep kinship ties from generations of inbreeding. In the pre-civil war years, this was largely the case with the Igbo in Nigeria. It was thus relatively easy for the Igbo using their traditional information dissemination methods to warn their members of impending danger and even to organize the mass evacuation of women and children from threatened zones. So complete in some cases were the evacuations that advancing federal forces, on entering an Igbo village, experienced a block about accepting the evidence of their own senses. This success led to calls for the revival of Igbo culture in the information sphere.

### **Cultural Revitalization**

In January 1970 the war ended the way it started, almost abruptly. There was a general relief that the country was once again united, but this feeling of unity was only an illusion. The old contradictions survived behind the image of a people reconciled. A welter of motives underlay the surge of rejoicing, personal, and patriotic wishful thinking; revolutionary impulses, antisocial rebellions, dreams of hegemony, and always, the yearning of adventurous spirits to break out of the routine of the prevailing social order.

It was at this time that Joel Anyim<sup>7</sup> published his seminal paper in which he called for a fundamental review of library practice in a transitional society such as that of the Igbo. He argued that a librarian could no longer stand before the people, giving them mathematically and logically impregnable postulates about the methods of information gathering, analysis, storage, and dissemination without taking into account the material needs of his clientele. In an apparent reference to the civil war, Anyim argued that recent history had shown that the Igbo could only overcome the machinations of their enemy by recourse to their traditional modes of information dissemination. He did not advocate scrapping librarianship altogether; he only called for fundamental shifts in key areas of library practice so that the profession would be sufficiently mindful of the susceptibilities of the final information consumer. Calling for a remodelling of the library in the pattern of the village square, Anyim declared: "I consider it very wrong to run our libraries as if our clientele were a reading public."<sup>8</sup>

Soon Anyim's words were echoed by other cultural revitalization librarians who were quick to remind their readers of the recent achievements of the traditional Igbo information system. Adolphe Amadi, for instance, called on Igbo leaders not to allow their culture and idealism in the information sphere to succumb to the united materialism of Europe and America.<sup>9</sup> Iwuji reminded his readers that western librarianship tended to cut the individual off from social and cultural bearing,<sup>10</sup> and an Anglican minister attacked those who thought that social problems could be solved by books, books, and more books as "men to whom books had become a substitute deity in a secularized amoral world."<sup>11</sup>

### Reactions

Shortly after the publication of Anyim's paper, there were reverberations from all strata of society. There were strong reactions from both Igbo and non-Igbo intellectuals. The recently established *New Nigerian* newspaper referred to it as "the bombast of an intellectual who is all too conscious of his impotence."<sup>12</sup> *The Daily Times*, in an acrid editorial comment concluded that Anyim's attack on Western Librarianship "exemplified the lack of grip upon reality characteristic of socially alienated intellectuals."<sup>13</sup> Even the maverick Marxist sociologist, Ikenna Nzimiro, who bestraddled the traditional and the modern, thought that cultural revitalization librarianship "reflected the more diseased side of the Igbo psyche."<sup>14</sup> The public bewilderment was articulated in the *New Nigerian* of 6 August 1972, which described Anyim, with an acuteness born of hatred, as "a gushing advocate of the irrational with an obsession about culture and idealism."<sup>15</sup>

The questions that naturally come to mind are: Why is it that Joel Anyim, who absorbed librarianship, and formal Western education generally, with the eagerness of a suffocating man breathing oxygen, advocated the traditional mode of information dissemination system so readily? How was it that the Igbo scholars who were distinguished by their wealth of tactical ideas and optimistic attitude so easily became atavistic in the information sphere?

Answers to these questions must be sought from the prevailing tendencies at the time. The spirit of a time is larger than any philosophy. Only a mind that has learned nothing from the misfortunes of those times will fail to recognize that a powerful tendency of the age culminated in Anyim, a tendency that dominated the library profession in Nigeria during the seventies. It is also clear that Anyim had been by no means without his share of the small disappointments and humiliations so often experienced by men of letters who, elated by provincial

applause, venture to display their powers before the fastidious critics of a larger city. For he had acquired a high local reputation for eloquence and literature just before he moved to the former temporary capital of Biafra. Perhaps the origins of the cultural revitalization movement in the emotions of a disappointed people were all too apparent. For the first time the Igbo as an ethnic entity had a glimpse of what awaited it; the basic pessimism of the elite minority had become the mood of the entire community. But the real tragedy of the cultural revitalization movement is that its cultural insight was so much larger than its professional intelligence. Within their hearts, conservatively oriented librarians, deeply entangled in their romantic backwardness, fought a hopeless struggle with the present. One can also add that the Igbo acquiescence to cultural revitalization in the library sphere reflected the inconsistencies of thought and action forced on all people by a time of rapid social change.

## **Conclusion**

The gifted historian of ideas, A.O. Lovejoy, astutely observed that every idea is associated with, or generates, a set of sentiments which those subscribing to the idea could only dimly sense. Lovejoy called this "the metaphysical pathos of ideas," a pathos which is exemplified in any description of the nature of things, any characterization of the world to which one belongs, in terms which, like the words of a poem, evoke through their associations and through a sort of empathy which they engender, a congenial mood or tone of feeling.

As a result, a commitment to an idea often occurs by a process other than the one which its proponents believe, and it is usually more consequential than they realize. A commitment to an idea may be made because the idea is congruent with the mood or deep sentiments of its adherents, rather than because it has been cerebrally inspected and found valid. This is as true for the rigorous analysis of library and information science as it is for the more lucid metaphor of fictive literature, for each has its own silent appeal and its own metaphysical pathos.

Furthermore, those who have committed themselves to an idea almost always get more than they have bargained for. We do not make a commercial contract with an idea in which we agree to accept only the consignment of intellectual goods which has been expressly ordered; usually we also take the metaphysical pathos in which the idea comes packaged. In the end, the idea reinforces or induces in its adherent a subtle alteration in the structure of sentiments through which the world is viewed.

So, too, it is with the idea of traditional culture. Paradoxically, some of the very ideas which promise to make traditional information systems

more intelligible and more amenable to their cultural environment are infused with an intangible metaphysical pathos which insinuates, even in the very midst of new discoveries in information science, that all is lost. For the metaphysical pathos of much of the traditional information system is that of pessimism and fatalism.

It is the pathos of pessimism, rather than the compulsion of rigorous analysis, that leads to the assumption that western librarianship has stacked the deck against traditional culture. Wrapping themselves in the shrouds of pre-colonial Africa, some culturally sensitive librarians appear to be bent on resurrecting a dismal era. Instead of telling us how modern information systems might be made to accommodate traditional cultural values, they blame colonialism. Instead of explaining how librarians can be eclectic in their approach to transitional societies, they paint a rosy glow of nostalgia. Instead of helping to cure the disease of underdevelopment in the information sphere, they suggest that we are deluded, or more politely, incurably romantic, for hoping to control it. And instead of assuming responsibility as realistic information clinicians, by striving to further western information potentialities in transitional societies, many African librarians have become morticians, all too eager to bury one's hopes.

Those to whom cultural revitalization librarianship appealed were people with a strong but directionless craving for a return to the glorious past. They scarcely understood, or misread, the new anti-traditional codes of value, new social forces rising from the bottom of African society.

Their doctrine of a minimum dose of westernization was bound to fail because it flew in the face of a truth to which anti-colonial, conservatively oriented librarians were blind; this truth was that any civilization, any way of life, is an indivisible whole in which all the parts are bound together and are interdependent. The secret of the success of librarianship and information science in the West cannot be found without also taking into account the whole mind and soul of the Western society of the day. The truth is that Western librarianship has always been one facet of the Western way of life. Hence an alien society that tries to acquire the art without also attempting to live the life is bound to fail to master the art. Conversely, an Igbo, a Yoruba, or a Fulani who did succeed professionally up to the normal Western standard could achieve this only by acquiring much more of the Western civilization than was to be found in textbooks and newspapers. It is the failure to appreciate this principle that has given the cultural revitalization movement its particularly distressing note. Anyim, as has been pointed out earlier, was distinguished by a wealth of tactical ideas and optimistic attitude, yet he had the misfortune to be on the side which later Nigerian library historians

were to judge the wrong one, certainly the losing one. Intellectual fashions change, and perhaps, who knows, their time may come again.

## Notes

1. Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 5.
2. Amusi Odi, "Library and Information Dissemination in a Traditional Society: The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria." *International Information and Library Review*, 25 (1993): 1-9.
3. Simon Ottenberg quoted in *The West African Pilot*, 2 Sept. 1973, 5.
4. E.V. Waters, "Dreadful Enclosures: Detoxifying an Urban Myth," in Peter Worsley, ed., *Problems of Modern Society: A Sociological Perspective*, 2nd. ed., (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981), 141.
5. Quoted by C. Wright Mills, *The White Collar Takes Over in Windows On the Past* (New York, Society of American Historians, 1953), 128.
6. For a systematic documentation of this procedure, see Angela N. Alimole, "Information Dissemination in Local Government Areas: A case of Ahiazu Local Government," (Okigwe, Imo State University, School of Social Sciences), unpublished undergraduate project in library and information science, (Aug. 1987).
7. Joel C. Anyim; "Public Libraries as Cultural Centres," *Nigerian Libraries*, 8 (1972): 16-19.
8. *Ibid.*, 16.
9. Adolphe O. Amadi; *African Libraries, Western Tradition and Colonial Brainwashing* (London, Scarecrow, 1981).
10. H.O.M. Iwuji, "Librarianship in a Non-Literary Society," paper presented at the Library Week of the Library Science Students Association (Imo State University, Okigwe, 1984).
11. Rev. G. Kalu; "Libraries, Culture and Social Development," paper presented at the Library Week of the Library Science Students Association (Imo State University, Okigwe, 1984).
12. *New Nigerian*, Editorial Comment, (12 June 1972), 2.
13. *Daily Times* (18 June 1974), 6.
14. Ikenna Nzimiro, "Public Library and our National Development," *Morning Post* (2 Aug. 1974), 7.
15. *New Nigerian* (6 Aug. 1972), 3.

## **LIBRARIES WITHOUT WALLS OR ARCHITECTURAL FANTASIES: A TURN-OF-THE-MILLENNIUM DILEMMA**

*Hermina G. B. Anghelescu*

“What is the purpose of rebuilding [the library of] Alexandria, this absolute symbol of knowledge . . . ?” asks Michel Melot in his excellent Introduction to the volume titled in English, *New Alexandrias: Great Library Construction Sites in the World* (7). In an era when information crosses the boundaryless cyberspace in seconds, nations around the world continue to erect sumptuous library edifices, “solidly anchored in the ground.” This paradox marks the turn-of-the-millennium on the library scene. By closely examining fifteen of the most prominent new libraries in the world, Melot’s admirable volume analyzes the latest trends and developments in the library science field with a forecast for the future.

The last decade of the second millennium has witnessed the contradiction, or maybe the coincidence, that the advent of the Internet, the creation of the WorldWide Web, and the emergence of large-scale digitization projects overlapped with the construction of new homes for two of the world’s richest libraries: the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Similarly, many other countries have heightened their efforts to have new national, academic, or public libraries built. Their symbolic significance is the survival of the book into the next millennium despite the new concepts of “paperless society” and “libraries without walls.” All of these libraries were built to serve both as sanctuaries for books and as research and information centers. They are “physical places” where “the permanence of knowledge” is the supreme leitmotif.

Melot explains the “belief in the unity of the library” and the struggle to preserve its collections intact by drawing the following parallel:

In Latin countries, let’s say of Catholic tradition, the reaction [to maintain libraries] is even stronger, since libraries have for a long time stood for and will continue to represent the unique patrimony, almost sacred, a place for history. While in the United States and in the Northern countries, let’s quickly call them countries of Protestant tradition, libraries are primarily civil institutions, mostly operational. (26)

This dichotomy is reflected in the architectural design of various recently built libraries: some center around the museum function (display of old

treasures), while others focus on the functional aspect (quick access to information).

Melot's Introduction is an exemplary study in comparative and international librarianship. The author masterfully guides the reader through different time periods and various global regions, pointing out the social, cultural, political, and economic peculiarities. He depicts a wide panorama of developments in librarianship, highlighting prominent institutions not only from the countries covered in individual chapters but also from other geographical regions, such as Canada, the United States, Sweden, Switzerland, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Russia, Germany, South Africa, Morocco, and Lebanon.

The cities where the libraries are located make up in alphabetical order the fifteen chapters of *Nouvelles Alexandries: Les grands chantiers de bibliothèques dans le monde*. It is just a coincidence the opening chapter is dedicated to the Alexandria library—the oldest and most enigmatic one. The chapter has two parts: one covering the old, extinct library, and the other devoted to the new construction site.

Jean Sirinelli in "The Ancient Library in Alexandria" considers the attempt to reconstruct the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a "symbolic resurrection of the myth" (45), which surrounds like an aura the ancient and mysterious library. The new library will serve as a bridge between the Arab-Muslim and Western cultures. The author traces the obscure history of the ancient library and presents its acquisition policies and its collections, relying on sources from the classic period.

Jean-Marie Arnoult and Jan Meissner in "The New Library in Alexandria" elaborate on the scope and mission of the new building, which is meant to serve not only as a library but also as a conference center and as a museum. In addition, the site will host the International School of Information Sciences. Under UNESCO auspices the project serves as a "reinvention" of the old library. The external wall of the circular building will bear characters from all writings in the world.

The National Library of Algeria, inaugurated in 1994, and still in great need of books, strives to represent the symbol of modern Algerian society. Marc Sagaert presents the triple vocation of the library as protector of the national cultural heritage, information center, and research center in a variety of domains: from political sciences to history, from languages and literatures to religion and civilization of the Arab world.

Martine Darrobers introduces the black granite "Diamond"—the Royal and University Library in Copenhagen—which will bring together under one roof the rich collections of Denmark's Royal Library and those of Copenhagen University Library. The academic dimension of the Royal Library is not seen as a mere incorporation of the university's collections but as a new facet added to its complex activities. The Copenhagen

University Library was founded in 1482, three years after the university was established; the Royal Library was founded in 1653 and served as a personal library to King Frederick III. The unification of these major Danish libraries symbolizes the modernization of these two institutions to serve better the general public and the student population.

Jacques Keriguy writes about the Sheik Anta Diop University Library in Dakar, Senegal. Since its foundation in 1950, the Dakar University was endowed with a library that consisted primarily of collections existing in different university departments. It was only in 1965 that these collections were transferred to a library *per se*, a building which two decades later became obsolete. At present a new library is being erected with international support. The university authorities are proud of the unique identity of the new institution which will become “a converging point for all of the members of the scientific and academic community in the search for information and knowledge” (123). At the same time, the library stands for a bridge linking the past to the present, a symbol for the ever-increasing population of the African continent.

“Juma Al-Majid Center for Culture and Heritage” by Jean-Marie Arnoult and Jan Meissner presents the philanthropic work of a Saudi Arabian industrialist, who decided to make his 300,000-volume personal library available to the public and to finance the construction project which was placed under UNESCO auspices. The new building, an elegant illustration of Islamic architecture, will have the capacity to store 1.5 million volumes, 50,000 manuscripts, 4,000 maps, 200,000 volumes from private collections, and 2,400 periodicals. In addition, it will provide online access to electronic full-text and bibliographic databases.

The fourth most important library in Germany, after Munich, Berlin, and Frankfurt, the Lower Saxony State University Library in Göttingen opened its doors in 1992, and “perfectly illustrates the exemplary German library system,” as Marie-Françoise Bisbrouck notes in her article (149). The building is located “in the heart” of the Letters and Human Sciences complex, thus ensuring the close ties of the university and the old city which has hosted the university for two and a half centuries. The focus of the project is the library’s clientele who need to fulfill their information needs almost as soon as they arrive at the library. The internal architecture was designed so that all public-related services will be easily accessible to users.

The City Library of The Hague, inaugurated in 1995, is one of eight libraries opened during the 1980s and early 1990s in the Netherlands. Didier Guilbaud discusses the “ten commandments” of the library. It is intended to be flexible, compact, accessible, extensible, diverse, well organized, comfortable, in harmony with the environment, safe, and economical—all these gravitating around the community’s needs.

Christine Deschamps wrote the article on the huge British Library in London, the construction of which paralleled the building operations of the French national library. The history of the famous institution is detailed along with the evolution of the new project. The nine reading rooms—three for sciences, two for letters, one for rare books and music, one for manuscripts, one for maps, and one for Oriental and Indian collections—were designed with the researcher's "intellectual comfort" in mind. The library also has facilities specially planned for various events, such as an auditorium with several annexes and exhibition halls. The author minutely describes the storage areas (120 linear miles of compact shelving), the environmental control systems (temperature, humidity, light, and security), and the furniture both for the users and the staff. The online catalog provides access through multiple access points to five different databases: British Library Catalogue, SRIS Current Catalogue, Human and Social Sciences Current Catalogue, and Current Music Catalogue (CMC). Three other catalogs will soon be added: Maps and Manuscripts, Catalogue of Newspapers, and a catalog which will ensure access to the collections of the Document Supply Centre in Boston Spa. The users will be able to order the documents they need right from any of the terminals. The Automatic Book Retrieval System (ABRS) will locate the documents and will send them to the reading room via the Mechanized Book Handling System (MBHS). The Readers Admission System (RAS) will automatically check the readers' identity and their good standing. As for the costs of the British Library endeavor, it seems to be the most expensive building in Great Britain, at 164 million pounds.

The Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL) situated in the heart of Manhattan, was opened in May 1996 as an annex to the centennial New York Public Library. Marie-Pierre Dillenseger describes it as "the concretization of a dream of quick and easy access to a wide array of up-to-date information, with no regard of medium or location" (259). The two years after the inauguration of the library will play a major role in the evaluation of this project and of the issues that research libraries face at the end of the twentieth century. The state-of-the-art technical equipment of this library makes it a gateway to electronic resources throughout the world. Practically, from a technical standpoint, there are no borders to the resources of this library. However, the librarians' challenge consists in organizing, for quick retrieval purposes, the infinite universe of knowledge available via the Internet.

Jacqueline Leroy is the author of the chapter covering the Bibliothèque Nationale de France—the legacy of the former French President, François Mitterrand—"ambitious in its objectives, audacious in its conception, original in its approach, and difficult in its achievement"

(262). The author explores from historical, social, and cultural perspectives the French concepts of public, academic, and national libraries along with the evolution of the polemic idea of the need for a new national library. The project was perceived as part of “an urban development plan, [meant] to fill in an empty space” in the Tolbiac region in East Paris, where the Bibliothèque de France will “display its amplitude through the four open books [the four towers], new landmarks of the Capital city” (270–271). Leroy analyzes details regarding the architecture: towers, esplanade, and interior garden; the materials used: concrete, glass, wood, and metal; the technical equipment: heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, security, and automated document retrieval system; and the furniture for the storage, reading, and work areas. The integrated automation system allows access to three categories of services: the online library catalog, the technical services (cataloging, collection development, and preservation), and the administration (finances and human resources). The library expects to have three categories of users: “the curious public” (estimated 4,500 people daily), the researchers involved in professional study, such as specialists and doctoral students (also estimated at 4,500 people daily), and scholars conducting research which requires access to special collections and materials from the national patrimony (estimated 3,000 people daily). The latter two categories will have access to reading rooms specially designed to meet their needs. Non-Parisian scholars will be able to reserve a seat in the reading room via Minitel (an enhanced feature of the French phone system). The activities organized in the auditorium and the exhibition halls will contribute to the diversification of the “French intellectual landscape” (294) by displaying significant works from France’s rich national heritage. The old and the new Bibliothèque nationale will complement each other: the old locale situated on Rue Richelieu will remain “rather patrimonial” while the new one will be “rather documentary” (264).

The National Library of the People’s Republic of China, situated in an avant-garde area of Beijing (Peking), opened in 1987, and hosts sixteen million new items (40 percent in Chinese and 60 percent in foreign languages), while the ancient documents, the “millenary treasures,” continue to be kept in the old Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City. Christophe Comentale investigates the library’s development in pre- and post-communist China. It has multiple roles, among which are to serve both as a national and as a research library “promoting socialist culture and practices” (303). It is also a “national reservoir of books,” open both to Chinese and foreign scholars who can conduct research in thirty reading rooms (301). The library, acting as a national bibliographic agency, is actively involved in international projects.

The San Francisco Public Library “demonstrates the Americans’ confidence in public reading as an essential service to the community,” according to François Reiner and Michel Melot (317). The library uses all of the electronic resources in order to directly reach its constituencies. The history of the project is intertwined with the efforts in raising the necessary funds, and with the portrayal of San Francisco’s political, social, and cultural landscape. The authors detail the characteristics of the collections on each of the five floors of the building along with the particular services offered in each area. “It is obvious that the heart of the library is an integrated system” (338) both for the library staff (413 terminals) and for the general public (250 terminals).

The National Central Library of Taiwan, situated in Taipei, reflects the evolution of other recently built libraries in the area, and its future will be integrated into China’s general library development. Christophe Comentale outlines the history of the library’s rare book collections, some of them having been temporarily sheltered at the Library of Congress during the Sino-Japanese War, and repatriated in 1966. Before moving into the new building, opened in 1986, the library outgrew several other locales. One of the major goals of the library is its integration into the international cooperation programs through an elaborate international exchange agenda with a million institutions throughout the world, and the promotion of its Center for Chinese Studies in order to attract an increasing number of sinologues to research its special and rare book collections that embody four thousand years of history.

The National Library of Estonia in Tallinn opened in 1993 and became “the most active cultural nucleus of the country, the symbol of its long history and its new independence” (361). Ivi Eenmaa and Catherine Suard describe it as a project close to the history of the Estonian nation. Known as the Public State Library of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia during the communist era, the library acquired its real identity as a national library in 1988. In addition, it was attributed a parliamentary library role stipulated by an act of 1994. At present the library is confronted with all of the difficulties encountered by similar institutions in ex-Soviet republics, the crucial one being the implementation of an automated system.

The Waseda University Library in Tokyo is the largest academic library in Japan, and it consists of the main central library plus thirty-three branch libraries placed in schools and colleges throughout the campus. The library was built exclusively with private money, and it stands for a revolution from many perspectives. The opening of the closed stacks to free access, the adoption of a new classification system (Nihon Decimal Classification), the modernization of the physical layout of the reading rooms, and the implementation of a new automation

system (WINE-Waseda University Information Network System) are only a few examples.

*Nouvelles Alexandries: Les grands chantiers de bibliothèques dans le monde* is abundantly illustrated with color and black-and-white photos and architectural plans, showing different stages of the construction process and focusing on specific architectural details. The various architectures, some very audacious, mirror the particularities of the region where the library is located, along with the architects' desire to take the library buildings out of their traditional shoe-box shape as mere containers of books and to transpose them into a modern vision ready to confront the next millennium.

The volume is characterized by a genuine conceptual unity: the chapters are extremely balanced, and they follow a similar pattern, which provides historical background, description of the collections, presentation of the building highlighting its audacious architectural features, technical equipment, and user categories. Each chapter is followed by a list of further readings ("orientation bibliographique") including works in different languages. There are chapters which have inserts that furnish supplementary data in conjunction with certain specific topics (e.g., organization charts of various libraries, statistical figures regarding collections, special programs and services). A very detailed table of contents at the end of the volume is very welcome, but it cannot be used *in lieu* of an index that would have turned this volume into an impeccable work. A pendant in English of this excellent work would be very much appreciated in non-French speaking parts of the world.

## Reference

Melot, Michel, ed. *Nouvelles Alexandries: Les grands chantiers de bibliothèques dans le monde*. Paris: Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1996. 416 pp. 750 F. ISBN 2-7654-0619-7.

SCHMULOWITZ COLLECTION  
OF WIT AND HUMOR



A Gift to the San Francisco Public Library  
from Nat Schmulowitz

**THE COVER**

A jester figured on a bookplate would suggest books of a merry disposition, and a jester is just what the San Francisco Public Library has provided for the 3 1/2- by 4 1/2-inch bookplate of the Schmulowitz Collection of Wit and Humor. Nat Schmulowitz (1889–1966), attorney and bibliophile, initiated this collection for the library on an appropriate date, 1 April 1947, by donating 93 books from his personal collection of literature on humor, wit, jest, anecdote, and the psychology of laughter, wit, and humor. He also donated \$500, a tidy sum then, to the library for the development of the collection, but his own fascination with the books kept him adding to it himself. Frances K. Langpaap, retired head of cataloging, wrote in her reminiscences of Schmulowitz that she recalled him saying “It’s a disease! My spare moments are completely filled with reading catalogues and sending orders. It’s a wonderful, wonderful disease!” He bought books, pamphlets, and journals from dealers all over the world; a comprehensive collection was his goal.

Bookplate courtesy of San Francisco Public Library

The *Catalog of the Schmulowitz Collection of Wit and Humor*, published in 1962, listed 11,200 titles, and the 1977 *Supplement One* added 3,100 more. These two catalogs record several centuries of intriguing titles such as *Anecdotes of the Learned Pig* or *Earthworms Through the Ages* as well as titles clearly related to the 1990s, such as *A Skeptic's Political Dictionary and Handbook for the Disenchanted*. The Schmulowitz Collection contains many titles relating to Nat Schmulowitz's own profession, such as *The Lawyer in History, Literature, and Humor*. A practicing lawyer in San Francisco, Schmulowitz specialized in probate and corporate law. Nevertheless, his most famous case was probably the successful defense of Roscoe ("Fatty") Arbuckle, the famous movie comedian, for the murder of a movie starlet. Schmulowitz published in legal journals, and was a highly successful lawyer, but humor prevailed, even in the naming of his country home, "Smilin Thru," in Saratoga, California.

In 1963 William L. Ramirez, then Principal Librarian of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, wrote that Schmulowitz edited and published five volumes of *Anecdota SCOWAH*, the American Journal of World Folklore, in addition to his legal writings and presentations.<sup>1</sup> The five volumes of *Anecdota SCOWAH* are historical studies on humor published as keepsakes for Roxburghe Club members. The first issue, published in a run of 250 by the Grabhorn Press, featured epitaphs. The text of one of the more subtle pieces of humor reads:

Here lies Jane Smith, Wife of Thomas Smith, Marble Cutter.  
This monument was erected by her husband as a tribute to her  
memory and a specimen of his work. Monuments of this same style  
are two hundred and fifty dollars.

Schmulowitz was an active library supporter even before he donated his humor books. He was a member of the Library Commission of San Francisco for seven years and its president in 1944. He spoke about the Friends of the Library for the California Library Association and again in 1951 about his own collection. On 30 November 1950, when the San Francisco Public Library opened a special room to house the wit and humor collection, Schmulowitz spoke about his decision to present his books to the library.

I reflected upon the fun and pleasure which had been experienced in the acquisition of these jest books, and how selfish it was to keep them in a home library . . . How much better it would be if the whole community could somehow enjoy these books.

Although he appears solemn in photographs in the collection archives, Schmulowitz clearly had a delightful sense of the droll because he went

on to relate how he dozed off and found his room swarming with books—one of which spoke to him. The books insisted on speaking for themselves at the dedication ceremony. Schmulowitz said,

Suddenly, there was a commotion. Prefaces, title pages, tables of contents, indexes, leaves and gag-lines seemed to be floating through the air, accompanied by laughter in all of its infinite varieties, and then suddenly they seemed to coalesce into the jest books from which they had come.

He reports that he awoke to find that the books had left him with “an unusual manuscript,” a message in their handwriting. This message about the value of books and humor he proceeded to share with his audience that day.

Apparently others found the books unruly, too, for shortly after that dedication ceremony an 18 December radio broadcast of “This is San Francisco” highlighted the difficulty of housing humor books in a public library with No Silence rules!

At his death in 1966, Nat Schmulowitz endowed the collection’s acquisitions fund. His sister Kay Schmulowitz continued to support the collection during her lifetime and gave an additional endowment at her death. The wit and humor collection currently has over 20,000 volumes, spans four centuries, and now includes the twentieth century. Its books are written in over thirty-five languages and dialects. It is also part of the San Francisco Public Library’s Book Arts & Special Collections Center, formed in 1964. The Center continues to grow and provide an important research center for a number of special collections, large and small. Among these is the 9,000-volume collection on the history of books and printing which was initiated with the gift of the personal collection of the noted printer Robert Grabhorn, the 800 examples of modern calligraphy in the Richard Harrison Collection of Calligraphy and Lettering, and the 250 volumes of Anthony Boucher’s Sherlock Holmes collection. The Center’s collections all provide remarkable resources. However, only the Schmulowitz Collection of Wit and Humor can proclaim with a grin that stand-up comedians consulting the collection for material are among its “researchers.”

*Judith A. Overmier, University of Oklahoma*

## Notes

1. William L. Ramirez in his 1963 article about the Schmulowitz Collection published in *The Folklorist and Folk Music Archivist*.

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# *Book Reviews*

*The DDC, the Universe of Knowledge, and the Post-Modern Library.* By Francis L. Miksa. Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1998. vii, 99 pp. \$20.00 paperback. ISBN 0-910608-64-4.

This volume represents an expanded version of Francis Miksa's presentation at the Fourth International ISKO Conference, in Washington, July 1996. In just under a hundred pages four themes are explored: a summary history of the Dewey Decimal Classification, the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century thought within which it was created, its development, especially since the 1920s and assimilation of later classification theory, and finally a proposed alternate use for the scheme as the twenty-first century approaches.

Although there was much interest in the classification of knowledge in the nineteenth century, it is not until the twentieth century that a theory of classification for library use really emerged. Dewey was essentially a pragmatist and a businessman. Miksa suggests that he was a nineteenth-century Bill Gates in that his invention was the equivalent of an 1870s DOS or Netscape—it did something that nothing else had done before.

The 1940s are identified as the turning point in the transition from pragmatism to pure theory and a brief assessment is made of the contributions of Richardson, Bliss, Sayers, and Ranganathan to the development of this theoretical basis, tracing the influence of each on the other. Of these, Ranganathan made by far the greatest contribution, but nevertheless his work did have negative aspects, not the least of which was his part in the promotion of the atomization of subjects that has taken place since World War II, resulting in the lack of attention to the more complex structure of the whole. This can also be detected in the structure (or non-structure) of many degree programs in our modern universities.

The end result has been the recognition among classification theorists from the 1960s onward and especially by the Classification Research Group, of both the validity as an object of study and the complexity of the universe of knowledge. The twentieth century has also seen a closer definition of the purpose of library classification and the move from viewing it as an interesting and educational map of knowledge to a tool to assist in the urgent retrieval of documents. The third important factor in twentieth century development is the operational technique of faceting.

The various themes explored are tied together in Miksa's final section where he assesses its impact upon the Dewey Decimal Classification. The 1950s are identified as a crucial period, and the publication of the fifteenth edition is seen as a turning-point. This edition broke ranks with the tight control exercised by the editors appointed by Dewey himself, and although it was to prove disastrous as a scheme for practical application, it provided the means for the subsequent developments in the past six editions, where the classification has gradually absorbed a greater degree of faceting and a much improved basic subject analysis. From that date, principally under Custer's editorship, the scheme has been transformed from a nineteenth-century survival into a modern system. This has happened gradually, but persistently, through editions from the sixteenth to the twenty-first. But there remain false assumptions—not least that there exists one

perfect system—this is true only for the individual, since each person is unique in his or her approach to information, so at best a library classification has to be a compromise. Miksa recognizes this, but it is still not a universally accepted view among classification theorists. The existence of DDC has also led to the false assumption that all classifications must be hierarchical. He pleads with those responsible for the scheme to reject these assumptions.

In the post-modern age what emerges is a situation in which every individual will have access to information at his or her fingertips literally, rather than needing to use a traditional library—Miksa sees this as a situation creating two new laws to add to Ranganathan's five laws:

*Every person his or her own library.*  
*Every library its own user.*

Happily, he does not forecast the demise of the public library, at least in the near future. The post-modern approach, as he interprets it, dictates that there is no right way—just many different ways. This philosophical approach, combined with the reality of the individual being placed in a situation in which he or she can create and access a personal library, without the traditional limitations of space, has many serious implications for the future viability of the DDC. It means a need will arise for the development of mechanisms that can easily accommodate a whole range of different approaches, facilitated simply by pressing a key. This will mean that the system itself will have to become more malleable, and also move towards standard notations for a concept, irrespective of the context in which it occurs. This is something that the UDC has also been moving towards. He predicts a bright future for Dewey, but only if it can adapt itself to the 21st century.

The book encapsulates a range of themes, from the historical to the prophetic, and relates an absorbing and thought-provoking essay. Nevertheless, one or two errors of fact remain—Vickery, although one of the founding members of the Classification Research Group and indisputably a major figure in the development of classification theory in the late 1950s, is not a “principal” member of the group and indeed has probably only attended a couple of its meetings in the past thirty-five years (35). Linguistics might justifiably be added to the list of disciplines that study classification (49). The volume would have benefited from careful proof-reading and the correct spelling of names, such as Croydon for Croyden and Croyton, misspelled throughout the manuscript (61).

But these are minor blemishes in a tome that provides an enjoyable and informative evening's read for both the modern librarian and the post-modern information manager, as well as a valuable source of background material for any student of classification.

*I. C. McIlwaine, University College, London*

*Manuscripts of the Bible: Greek Bibles in the British Library* (revised edition). Edited by T. S. Pattie. London: The British Library, 1995. 48 pp. £4.95. ISBN 0-7123-0403-7.

Two of the most famous manuscripts of the Bible were, until the fall of 1998, housed and displayed in the British Museum in London. The relocation of these and many other famous old texts of Western Civilization to the new British

Library on St. Pancras marked the end of an era. Millions of tourists had trooped for decades to the dimly-lit, walnut-paneled Room 30 to see legendary manuscripts up close and personal. Two of them were the fourth-century *Codex Sinaiticus* and the fifth-century *Codex Alexandrinus*.

T. S. Pattie, Curator of The British Library's Manuscript Collections, has outlined the story of these two fascinating codices in his *Manuscripts of the Bible*, a 1995 revision of a 1979 work. In addition to a chapter on each of the manuscripts, Pattie has offered additional chapters entitled, "Why Study Ancient Bibles?," "Fragments of Uncial Manuscripts," "Aids to Readers," and "Lectionaries." This small forty-eight-page paperback is well researched, well written, accessible to scholar and laity alike. It is beautifully illustrated with several full-color photographs. The sixth-century *Purple Gospels* and the seventh-century *Eusebian Canon Tables* have been stunningly reproduced.

The opening chapter explores the reasons for examining old Bibles in the first place. Here Pattie enumerates the many problems ancient texts offer, especially with errors that create inconsistencies between them, "it is very difficult to copy exactly as anyone who has done any proof-reading will know" (3). Many readers are unaware of the fact that some 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament or parts of it exist, which form the basis for the many translations of the Bible we read today. Pattie outlines this modern scholarly dilemma and points out that *Sinaiticus* and *Alexandrinus* are two of the few complete Bibles extant today.

Pattie's re-telling of the German scholar Tischendorf's discovery of *Sinaiticus* at St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai in the mid-1800s is singularly worth the price of the book. Constantine von Tischendorf was a real Indiana Jones character whose story of removing the old manuscript (the present-day monks believe he stole it!) from the fortress built by Justinian in the sixth-century C.E. and taking it to the Czar of Russia, and its subsequent sale by the Bolsheviks to the British Museum in 1933 for £100,000, reads like a modern-day novel. The value of this old vellum-skinned document is inestimable as is the *Codex Alexandrinus*, whose route from Constantinople in 1627 to the British Museum was equally perilous and fraught with danger. Both manuscripts barely escaped being consumed by flames, ironically the latter in a place called Ashburnham House in 1730.

Until they were recently moved to the new British Library, to the dismay of the British Museum's proud gallery warders, both manuscripts were displayed in a large glass-enclosed wooden box, the top, beveled at an angle, like an architect's drawing table. Although *Sinaiticus* and *Alexandrinus* dominate the bulk of the book, fragments of uncial manuscripts, lectionaries, and psalters are also outlined as prizes housed at the British Library. There are more psalters here than any other book of the *Septuagint*, which is the Old Testament in Greek.

Pattie's book offers the reader interesting tidbits, like the fact that until the early 1200s there were no chapter headings in Bibles. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, added those. Until 1551, there were no verses in Bibles. The author also examines "two principles adopted by textual critics: the earliest manuscripts are more valuable than the later ones and the shorter text is preferable to the longer text" (15). Pattie also describes the process of erasing and reusing vellum skin pages, which creates the twice-written manuscript called a palimpsest.

In summary, *Manuscripts of the Bible* suggests that the study of ancient Bibles helps the modern world come as close as possible to the original words, "and also watch the changes that reflected the views of the people who used it in successive

centuries" (47). T. S. Pattie has achieved his purpose by offering the reader a peek into the ancient world of old books and manuscripts.

*William J. Carl III, First Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas*

*The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200.* By C. Stephen Jaeger. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. xvi, 515 pp. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-8122-3246-1.

*Women & Literature in Britain, 1150–1500.* Edited by Carol M. Meale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 17). x, 223 pp. \$54.95. ISBN 0-521-40018-X.

The two reviewed works perform an archeologist's task by piecing together with scrupulous care the fragmentary evidence collected from a variety of sites. While a sizable body of literature on monastic schools and medieval universities exists, little has been written about the cathedral schools in western continental Europe, on which C. Stephen Jaeger has produced his monumental and far-reaching study. *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* reconstructs education in cathedral schools by gleaning information from the small number of texts linked to them: biographies of teachers and students, correspondence, obscure Latin poetry which was the preferred literary form, and works rewritten by masters, such as Marbod of Rennes's late eleventh-century adaptation of the eighth-century *Life of Licinius*.

After an introductory chapter describing the educational programs at Carolingian monasteries and cathedral schools, Jaeger carefully marshals evidence for his thesis that learning at cathedral institutions represented a break from these models and a return to the classical *cultus virtutum*, which in fact had prevailed at the Carolingian court. The new education harked back to Cicero and Seneca; its principal aim was to inculcate *civiles mores* so as to form men suitable for service at imperial and ecclesiastical courts. At the heart of cathedral learning was the personal relationship of pupil to teacher, who served as a charismatic model. The well-educated individual was distinguished by elegant bearing and conduct, personal dignity, and *gravitas*; inner and outer life were in perfect harmony; and individual virtue radiated outward, as it were, to suffuse society with friendship and peace. (Interestingly enough, women were not excluded from the ideal, as is evident from Isolde's education in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Isolde* and the sculptural portraits of the Wise Virgins on the Strassburg Cathedral.)

Jaeger follows this fascinating reconstruction of cathedral school education with a double coda. He first marks the rather abrupt demise of the cathedral schools with the rise of the new text-based learning and its concomitant emphasis on rational inquiry as opposed to the personal authority of the teacher, as poignantly demonstrated by Abelard's humiliation of his former masters, William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon. The second coda sketches different modes of survival of the educational ideal of the *cultus virtutum*, first through the twelfth century at the celebrated abbey school of St. Victor right outside of Paris, in the moral philosophy of Bernard of Clairvaux and in the writings of the twelfth-century humanists (Hugh of St. Victor, Thierry of Chartres, John of Salisbury, Bernard Silvester, and Alain of Lille). Jaeger then traces the social transformation of the ideal at twelfth-century courts and in the writings of

authors such as Wace, Benoît de Saint-Maure, Chrétien de Troyes, Gottfried von Strassburg, and Andreas Capellanus, where the woman, analogous to the cathedral master, serves as guide to the knightly learner. Jaeger's study thus concludes with an intriguing argument supporting the realists in the courtly love controversy: if courtly love is indeed seen as the survival of a code of conduct that was centuries in the making, why should we presume it was a merely literary construction?

The essays in the valuable collection *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, demonstrate the range and depth of feminist scholarship on female literacy for the period. The essays range from Anglo-Norman romances, hagiography, literature for recluses, Julian of Norwich and female spirituality, to book ownership in late medieval England and poetry in medieval Wales. Like anthropologists, the authors introduce us to pieces of evidence which destabilize unexamined assumptions about the meaning of authorship or the significance of literacy for admission to reading culture in a society where oral reading circles existed.

Meale's central questions are set in her introduction: What was women's access to a written culture and to what extent, if any, could they "use that culture for their own ends, independent of the male authority by which it was sanctioned"? (1) To gain access to these questions, the critics in this volume use a variety of techniques which at times mark the relative depth of feminist scholarship in their sub-fields. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan in "Women and their poetry in medieval Wales" produces a groundbreaking survey of women's participation in the production of poetry in medieval Wales. She observes of a field "in its infancy" that "no attempt was made until the mid 1980s even to list the women poets active before 1800" (183), an observation that recapitulates the energizing discovery of early modern feminist critics twenty years ago. Judith Weiss, in triangulating her evidence, uses techniques common to feminist scholarship in early periods. She sets internal evidence of the representation of formidable female characters in fourteen Anglo-Norman romances within the context of the general erosion of the rights of married women in post-Conquest England and the historical circumstances of particular female patrons to suggest that these powerful women influenced literary portrayals. Similarly, Felicity Riddy's provocative essay, "Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture" analyzes the Prioress's tale from the perspective of the "only surviving fourteenth-century English analogue" which appears in the Vernon manuscript, a codex designed for both display and public reading, probably to a female audience. Arguing that the Prioress stands as a metonym for a certain kind of female readership (106), Riddy traces a particular form of female piety through a pattern of book giving by women and then uses Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* as "a surviving voice from within it and a subjectivity shaped by it" (111). Setting Julian's shifting subjectivity and the oral element of Julian's prose to point toward "the tradition of the speech community to which she belonged" (113), Riddy exposes Chaucer's failure to capture "the inwardness of th[at] feminine sub-culture" (117) in the Prioress.

Two outstanding essays in the volume draw on and assemble a wide range of research on readership, gift-giving, patronage, ownership, annotation, and internal evidence, and provide exemplary models for ways of discovering female agency in readership. Carol Meale's own essay ". . . alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England" uses women's wills and annotations to trace book ownership, to tease out networks of

familial and regional affiliations, and to document the eclecticism of women's reading interests. Julia Boffey asks "What kinds and standards of literacy did medieval women possess?" (159). She initiates her analysis with a reminder of the enormous losses produced by women's participation in oral transmission. She considers the imponderables of the amanuensis in continental spiritual texts, Julian of Norwich's meditations, Margery Kempe's dictation, and the dictation of letters. Boffey warns of the dangers of hasty assumptions about the gender that lies behind a female persona in anonymous poems through her assessment of female production of women's songs in the Findern manuscript. She registers scrupulously and elegantly the jagged losses and struggles toward memorialization in letters by women and makes most clear that any transparent assumptions about the union of a woman's hand on a pen, despite the productivity of a Christine de Pizan, must be broken apart. Women's composition, the organization and oral production of a work, does not presuppose a woman's hand on the pen. Nor does an expression of strong emotion point necessarily to a female author.

Traditionally, medieval studies have drawn on a variety of perspectives. Both Meale's *Women & Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* and Jaeger's *Envy of Angels* demonstrate the continuing vitality and energy of interdisciplinary methodologies in the field.

*Karen Robertson and Christine M. Reno, Vassar College*

*Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship.* Edited by Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. ix, 347 pp. \$45.00. ISBN 0-8122-3396-4.

Only five essays appear in this hefty collection; most use as a point of departure just 105 lines of William Langland's long, frequently revised fourteenth-century social and allegorical poem, *Piers Plowman*. In these lines, found midway only in the final or "C" text, the narrator defends himself before Reason and Conscience, who interrogate him for his dubious, itinerant life and livelihood; here too, as it seems to many of the scholars writing here, the author defends and defines from within his vast and rich poem, addressing various contemporary readers of his previous versions. Derek Pearsall's thoughtful opening translation of this "defense" passage (printed facing the lines from Pearsall's own, lightly edited C-text edition) thus offers a unifying prelude to these otherwise diversely pointed essays, which are also more or less collectively engaged in considering the historical circumstances and ideological positioning of the author, and his own strategic positioning of his work as an ongoing labor.

Justice's introduction emphasizes that these essays take *Piers Plowman* criticism away from "modernist" (one might more simply say New Critical) separations of the poet from the poem, and towards an approach stressing the process and socially located nature of the poet's lifelong work of writing and rewriting. These claims are a valuable reminder of how much Langland's literary enterprise is best appreciated as an occasional, socially situated and responsive, and rapidly superpersonal activity: all the evidence we have shows how quickly the work mutated, in every scribe's hands as well as its author's. Justice's polemical distinction, though, is overdrawn: cultural or historical contextualizing is a traditional part of *Piers Plowman* scholarship; purely formal readings have never built

much of a bastion against context around this poem. But Justice and Kerby-Fulton deserve credit for a collection that is exemplary in many ways for future criticism of the poem.

Here, for example, are seminal and front-line discussions of how the poem was a process. In his introduction Justice offers shrewd, brief comments on an intermediary “version” between B and C (but already as Justice was going to press this was noted and more fully discussed by Ralph Hanna, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 203-43], and subsequently by Sean Taylor, “The Lost Revision of *Piers Plowman B*,” [*Yearbook of Langland Studies* 11, 1997], pp. 97-134). Kerby-Fulton’s essay intriguingly suggests that the poet’s well-known use of a corrupt, scribal B text to make the C revision indicates his conscious acceptance of the public version of his poem; Anne Middleton’s monumental essay includes an excellent, intricate discussion of how the “defense” passage and other C-text additions and revisions fundamentally alter the poem’s overall formal symmetries and its consequent presentations of completeness and self-sufficient authority.

Beyond examinations of the poem’s form, rhetoric, and ideological positionings, these essays are notable for the deep swathes they carve through thickets of fourteenth-century religious, civic, and legal history to situate the poet’s labor, offering many important new formulations of that history. This is as much “old” as “new” historicism, and in that sense (although the labels are strictly mine) these essays are typical of the simultaneous multiple horizons of inquiry found in *Piers* criticism in recent years, and likely to seem necessary for the foreseeable future. Indeed, most of the scholars here are even more involved than usual in advancing and elaborating specific historical claims about the poem’s moments of production, its immediate readership, and its author’s ideological loyalties, as well as with extrapolating the poet’s responses to the situations they posit.

In general, the precise claims contextualizing the poet’s work can bear less weight than the investigations of the contexts as such and the elaborations of the poem’s development. But all of the contextualizing claims are plausible and well argued. Thus Ralph Hanna excavates a rich array of information on late-medieval hermit regulations to chart the hermits’ simultaneous freedom from traditional institutions and new regulatory ensnarement, and to locate the narrator (famously introduced “in the habit of a hermit”), and less decisively the author, as caught in this cultural paradox, in which the search for an eremitic life seeking truth, free from institutions and their textual sanctions, leads only to further efforts to create public authorization for and regulation of such a vocation. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton suggestively uses recent Renaissance critics’ concept of a “bibliographic ego” to discuss the gradations of a poetic narrator’s referential claims on an “external authorial figure,” and to propose that the “defense” is such an authorial figure’s address to a community of contemporaries and unbeneficed clerks, but also to the ranks of civil servants, lawyers, and professional scribes clustered in London’s Pater Noster Row (who, be it noted, frequently embraced Chaucer as one of their own, but only obliquely if at all included William Langland and his work; however eager Kerby-Fulton’s argument shows him to address them, they are hardly on record as addressing *him*—if Kerby-Fulton is right, this is an icy silence, spanning Langland’s career, that should be contemplated).

Lawrence Clopper discusses the poem’s critique of friars to locate the poem’s purposes not in anti-mendicant polemic, but in radical, pro-mendicant Franciscan polemic—a context in which Clopper is expert—so that the poem is designed

to remind Franciscan readers of the ideal of holy hermit and vagrant that “Langland’s persona” constantly travesties, and that Langland himself presumably more sincerely upholds. This argument now appears in fuller form in Clopper’s book, *“Songes of Rechelesnesse”: Langland and the Franciscans* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), but shorn of the essay’s consideration of one passage in the poem that is especially recalcitrant to the claim for a Franciscan orientation: Langland’s peculiar statement that Jesus was born “with no friars present,” “in a Burgeises place, of Bethlem the best.” In the essay, Clopper bravely compares this passage to Franciscan biblical commentaries which note that Jesus was born in a humble place, and he reads Langland’s words against this background to mean the opposite of what they seem—Langland’s “place” must refer to the open square (*platea*) of a medieval town, not a rich bourgeois dwelling; therefore Langland’s Jesus, like the Franciscans’, must be a mendicant, not (as he here seems) an example of the baselessness of mendicant claims. If so, the layers of irony in Langland’s statement appear too thick for certainty on this point. Yet Clopper’s broader evidence of the poem’s contact with a radical Franciscan agenda is too pervasive to dismiss.

Pearsall alone writes about the social tensions in the poem without making a claim for the author’s specific social location or specific ideological loyalties or targets; indeed, in what serves as a salutary comment on the difficulties of how we link the poem to any context, Pearsall explores the poem’s persistent evasions of its one sure and central context, both internal and external: London. The City’s mercantile ethos was, he implies, simply too rawly antithetical to the poet’s moral register, however satiric and perceptive he might be, for him to contemplate it directly, and Pearsall adroitly shows how the poet shunts such civic elements progressively into mere metaphor.

Finally, Middleton presents a 109-page monograph on the ideological layers and context of the reissuance of the Statute of Laborers of 1388 and the “defense” in the C text as a response and exploitation of this legislation. The “defense” both uses and critiques the terms of the Statute, she claims, and it also offers itself as the “charter” for the unique ethical and social authority of the rest of the poem. Middleton goes on to argue that the narrator’s overt conflict here with secular authority strategically hides the poem’s more truly radical (and, in the context of Lollardy, more dangerous) nature: its increasingly self-sanctioned religious authority, outside of traditional affiliations.

Middleton’s work here and elsewhere is among the most poetically illuminating and methodologically sophisticated treatment of *Piers Plowman* that has ever been written. This essay’s value lies both in its evocation of the atmosphere in which the 1388 Statute appeared, and in brilliant and intricate observations on Langland’s changing word-usage and rhetoric of temporality, and his ideologically fraught redefinitions of his past and present poetic endeavors. But the essay’s overall claim depends, like most of the essays here, on a specific connection to historical circumstance that may be disputed or looked at differently (Clopper does so here, pp. 157-58). Indeed, considered together as the collection invites, all of the essays here betray a tentativeness in capturing the poet at work, not because of any improbabilities in their massive, carefully documented evidence and careful readings of the poem, but because of the complex if not irreconcilable differences in their conclusions about Langland’s labor.

It seems increasingly axiomatic that there is hardly a context in the period to which Langland or his poem can *not* be imagined to have some kind of relationship. But if the brief “defense” passage of the poem allows all of these claims—

if Langland's narrator, even Langland himself, is simultaneously hermit, Franciscan, associate of civil servants like Chaucer, detailed manipulator of legislation, yet uneasy evader of London *realia*—how can we understand the elephant—the working poet or the written work—as a whole? This collection is a handbook of some of the best current strategies and resources for tackling the nature of the social interactions and contemporary meanings that are clearly pre-eminent in this poet's endeavor. But appreciating the poem's vast, elusive, and frequently changing combination of vocational, social, and ideological purposes and responses remains—to adapt Pearsall's remark on Langland's relation to London—an intriguing problem that the collection does not solve. In this sense, the collection brilliantly succeeds in inviting more work of the intimately contextual kind and at the high standards that it displays.

*Andrew Galloway, Cornell University*

*Images and Texts: Their Production and Distribution in the 18th & 19th Centuries.* Edited by Peter Isaac and Barry McKay. Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies and New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 1997. xiv, 188 pp. \$42.50. ISBN 1-884718-37X.

*Images and Texts* is an edited volume of papers presented at the fourteenth annual seminar on the history of the provincial book trade, held at Higham Hall near Bassenthwaite in Cumbria. The study of the provincial book trade in Britain has attracted growing research interest, and these articles offer unique and detailed examinations of many aspects of the provincial book trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that have been previously unexplored.

A wide range of topics are represented. The lives of ordinary booksellers are examined in Martin Holmes's "Samuel Gamidge: Bookseller in Worcester (c. 1755–1777)" and Barry McKay's "Three Cumbrian Chapbook Printers: the Dunns of Whitehaven, Ann Bell, & Anthony Soulbey of Penrith." Cumbria is also the focus of John Gavin's examination of bookclubs and educational institutes in "Cumbrian Literary Institutions: Cartmel & Furness to 1900." John Morris's "Scottish Ballads and Chapbooks" closely examines several ballads, and Iain Beavan details the relationship between a press and a printer's union in "Aberdeen University Press and the Scottish Typographical Association: an Uneasy Early Relationship." Philip Henry Jones looks at Welsh publishing in "A Golden Age Reappraised: Welsh-Language Publishing in the Nineteenth Century"; in "Words with Pictures: Welsh Images & Images of Wales in the Popular Press," Peter Lord explores the stereotype of the Welsh perpetuated by the English press and the role of the Welsh press in reinvigorating Welsh culture. "Northamptonshire Newspapers, 1720–1900" by Diana Dixon surveys the newspapers produced in the district and Brenda Scragg offers "Some Sources for Manchester Printing in the Nineteenth Century."

Anthologies of conference papers are a problematic genre, the diversity of their offerings both a strength and a weakness. These articles call attention to the extent of broadsheet production, ephemeral jobbing, and chapbook hawking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Articles that concentrate on one ordinary bookseller, such as Holmes' article, or that examine the political background of publications from one region, as in Lord's study of Welsh stereotypes, give a complex picture more realistic than what a tidier group of essays would

provide. Some of the authors, particularly Beavin, raise difficult, important issues, like the problematic definition of “provincial” in a nineteenth-century business world in which towns and cities are already closely linked.

The downside of diversity is a lack of coherence; the quality also varies. The editors hope the collection avoids a frequent shortcoming of studies of the provincial book-trade, that of too little interpretation. Their success on this score is only partial. Articles vary widely in approach and levels of theoretical analysis. Some articles are very narrow in scope; though valuable for their detail, they may frustrate readers hoping for a more general or theoretical analysis of the provincial book trade.

Although this volume cannot offer a comprehensive summary of the provincial book trade, it adds significant detail and welcome breadth to a growing literature on the expansion and diversification of British publishing.

*Georgen Gilliam, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

*Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840–1920.* By Sandra Haarsager. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. xiii, 427 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-8061-3001-6.

When we think of a women’s club, we envision genteel ladies in frilly dresses sitting around a table talking about literature and art. This picture may be accurate about women’s clubs in their early years. However, as Sandra Haarsager’s detailing of women’s clubs in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho between 1840 and 1920 makes clear, later the conversations—and the group’s actions—often turned toward the political.

Women’s clubs were a major force in the lives of many women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially those women who were educated and of the middle and upper classes. However, according to Haarsager, the majority of historians writing on the American West have focused on political and economic structures in such ways that women and women’s roles remain unexplored (7). She also states that studies of women’s clubs have tended to underestimate the diversity of clubs and discount them as the activities of elite groups (9–10). In contradiction to this, it is one of Haarsager’s main theses that women’s clubs played a far greater role in the politics of the region than previous studies have acknowledged. By giving women the opportunity to act in the public realm, they provided a training ground for women’s political activities.

The common pattern, as she outlines it, was for a women’s club to transfer its focus from self-improvement to civic improvement by encouraging legislation consistent with the prevailing conception of women as guardians of morality. These political activities often included lobbying for legislation of child labor laws, welfare, temperance, and suffrage. According to Haarsager, there is a distinct difference between this kind of public empowerment and feminism: “For all their accomplishments . . . club women would not have considered themselves what we now label feminists, with their attention to gender-based constructions like patriarchy and women’s rights. That model was far too selfish and too removed from ‘womanly’ ideals for behavior and standards to be acceptable to most of these women, at least during the period of this study. Suffrage and rights were often a means to an end for these women, and they were less interested in

upending than in altering systems” (331). This contrasts with Anne Firor Scott’s depiction of women’s volunteer organizations during the nineteenth century as feminism masked by ladyhood (330-331). Haarsager does not neglect race and class in the analysis of the club movement. She details several African-American clubs and explores issues of racism throughout the book.

Haarsager details many communities in which women’s clubs were instrumental in establishing libraries, both traveling and stationary, many of which were the founding collections of major libraries. The mission of many of these clubs was to use the library as a way to educate working classes and immigrants in the practices of good citizenship. “Hierarchies in taste and stratification of cultural production” (176) were enforced by choosing reading materials deemed “the good, the true, and the beautiful” (165).

Haarsager makes a good argument that women’s clubs are a neglected part of the history of the West, and by extension the rest of the country. However, there is a lack of statistical information about how many of the clubs in this region actually followed her outlined pattern of increasing political activity. Reading Haarsager, it would seem that very few clubs remained elitist organizations without political focus. In her efforts to present a view of women’s club activities that is more complex and respectful than those of previous studies, she herself comes treacherously close to underestimating the diversity within those groups.

Despite this, Haarsager’s work provides an in-depth look at the circumstances surrounding club formation and the influences they had on public policy, making the book useful to anyone interested in the activities of women and the history of libraries in the Northwest.

## References

Ann Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

*Georgen Gilliam, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

*Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1870-1920*. By Gretchen R. Galbraith. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997. vii, 184 pp. \$39.95. ISBN 0-312-12143-1.

The title swept me away. I was struck by the nuances of “reading lives” and intrigued by the notion of “reconstructing childhood, books, and schools.” With my own interests in how texts of books enter texts of lives, I was eager to read on, to experience, in Eudora Welty’s words about her own early reading, “a sweet devouring.”

My momentum slowed as I proceeded. This is a dense though slender volume where intensive reading of extensive sources is required. The introduction speaks of a literacy crisis in the late nineteenth century, in which all facets of education and print culture conjoined or conflicted. The author outlines a three-part structure: part 1 covers autobiographical memoirs of childhood lived between 1860-1914, which includes family, education, and literary experiences; part 2 focuses on the role of children’s literature, which includes the reviewing and reception of children’s books, a history of the periodical *Little Folks*, and a discussion of the works and careers of Andrew Lang and Edith Nesbit; and part 3 reviews the

debate over elementary education in London, which includes battles over curriculum, physical conditions, and reading evaluation. The scope is grandiose, with some generalized topics and some highly specialized subjects, all wed in one work.

The book is indeed ambitious in its attempt to weave various disciplinary histories of childhood in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain. Children's literature, history of education, and history of reading are distinct subject areas that are normatively known without cross-reference. As scholars become more influenced by cultural studies and approaches like new historicism, a richer, fuller picture is desired. While she does cite a few historians whose work raises similar ideological issues on the concept of childhood, I would like to have read about the theorists or critical approaches that most influenced this study—the larger framework of the history of the book, print culture, and cultural criticism.

Her thesis, as she articulates it, centers on literacy and its interrelationship with “social practices, institutions, and power structures” (3). At the close of the first and the last chapters, she seeks to make connections to our own political debates over childhood and its literature, to an age where, in both Britain and the United States, the state's role in children's education is still problematic. I see this as her major thrust: the politics of literacy, in which her sections on educational controversies in Britain solidly fit, and the literary discussions seem marginal to the major issue at play. If the sections on *Little Folks* magazine and the works of Andrew Lang and E. Nesbit are part of the picture, which she intends, she needs to make her case more convincingly. I waited until the end for a final summation, in which the disparate parts would converge. Actually, there is no conclusion, only a brief “Postscript, 1996.”

I also found wanting any mention of libraries. How could they not be envisioned as part of the power structures and institutions that construct literacy? By the 1870s, the movement toward “free public libraries” was in its infancy, school libraries (for those who could attend) were rudimentary, circulating libraries and subscription libraries were in their prime, and purposeful service to children was just beginning. If the author is interested in the heat of political battles over educational issues, there would be plenty of fuel in the battles to subsidize and support public libraries. Influential librarians like James Duff Brown, Stanley Jast, and Ernest Savage campaigned long and hard, and the institutional history of the Library Association (founded in 1877) would reveal much discourse on the most appropriate literature and library service for children. Excluding this history leaves an empty place at the table.

The book's strength is in its conception (however flawed), uniting children's literature and school politics in conveying the condition of literacy over a fifty-year span of British modern history. The scholarship behind the work is impressive; the voluminous notes reveal prodigious reading of primary source materials. Her emphasis on class is much needed. The revelations of childhood and reading autobiographies are most compelling, especially considering the difficulty of access. The chapter on reviewing of children's books is intent on exposing ideological concerns over selection and censorship but slights the strong advocacy role of reviewers, who, I believe, were more generative than conservative in their effects; the picture is complicated.

While I wrestle with *Reading Lives*, I appreciate its riches and will return to its reading, wanting more.

Anne Lundin, University of Wisconsin-Madison

*Research and the Manuscript Tradition*. By Frank G. Burke. Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, and Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1997. x, 310 pp. \$47.00 hardcover. ISBN 0-8108-3368-4.

Frank Burke, a leading American archivist since the 1960s and author of some pivotal essays in that decade and the two subsequent ones on the use of automation, professional cooperation, and research and theory, has written an engaging book on the nature of evidence in archives and historical manuscripts, the evolution of archival finding aids, the acquisition and appraisal of historical manuscripts and archives, the nature of technology uses in and challenges to the archival community, issues concerning archival arrangement and description, the use and misuse of deeds of gift, security and access approaches in archival repositories, legal and ethical dilemmas, changes in personal communications in our modern electronic age, and the implications for archivists and researchers. If that sounds ambitious, it is indeed a large task; in fact, there are many more topics considered than this group. But the scope of the book is not what makes it somewhat of a disappointment, even if the author's enthusiasm, experience, and expertise does engage the reader.

The most obvious problem with this book may be its aim. Burke notes that it is a "professional reflection on using manuscripts for research, practical advice on administering manuscript and archival collections and institutions, and is based on what was learned during more than twenty years of teaching a course on manuscripts administration" (x). If you are expecting that this might be a formal presentation of course notes, then you are certainly correct—although this, in itself, is not a particular problem, given that the archival profession needs in-depth monographs (not basic manuals) considering such matters as Burke takes on here. His contention that it is "aimed" at "researchers rather than at budding archivists" (x) may be more a marketing strategy than a real objective. There is far too much *not* described at length or *even* taken for granted that undermines this purpose. His contention that the book is "a tour behind the scenes of a manuscript repository" (x) might be more accurate, but how many researchers really want such a tour anyway? Most researchers want better access systems and better services, and they may be far too busy to really care about knowing what archivists or manuscripts researchers are doing behind the reference desk or out of sight from the search room. So, Burke tries to do too much, although he has certainly written a book that can be used in teaching "budding archivists," despite his statement that this is *not* his intention.

However, if someone is going to use *Research and the Manuscript Tradition* as a course reading, or if the intrepid researcher drags this volume to the beach in order to fine-tune his or her research skills, then it is imperative that one understand the tradition itself that this volume represents. This volume builds on the archival philosophy best described by T. R. Schellenberg a half-century ago, especially in the separation of archives from personal historical manuscripts, and it is a fine statement of how archivists approached most matters a generation or two ago. However, archival concepts are being transformed and new methodologies formed; whether Burke has captured what most archivists and manuscripts curators do or not can be debated, but he certainly has not written a book that reflects the diversity of issues, concerns, approaches, and activities of the modern archival profession.

The difficulty in reading his book takes us right to the heart of how he views archives and manuscripts. Burke, for example, argues that "corporate records are produced to document an activity of the corporation, either to explain, advertise,

justify, or prove those activities. Such documents have intrinsically long-lasting value because the corporation is not confined by physical age.” Looking at non-corporate records, he writes that “many personal papers, conversely, are produced for the moment” (10–11). One might argue that a large portion of corporate records are also produced for momentary uses, but the more difficult matter may be that personal papers—diaries without question, but also even check books—are created for long-term purposes. The vast, recent literature on public and societal memory and the history of literacy, for instance, has re-framed how we might approach such personal papers or records. Later, when Burke states that “individuals creating and keeping their own papers have no imperative to impose upon them except for their own convenience” (98), one is left wondering whose papers he is considering. More recent debates, such as the one in Australia about the relationship between electronic records management and the acquisition of personal papers, have suggested that there are many external requirements on how and why personal papers are managed and that the distinctions made by Schellenberg or the English archival theorist Hilary Jenkinson between manuscripts and archives are inadequate or false.

Other such problems emerge in a reading of this volume. Burke contends that many researchers do not understand the concept of the records series, provenance, archival finding aids, or even handwritten documents. This suggests another, more essential, problem—researchers *should* be experts about evidence and hence records and recordkeeping systems. This is doubly important in our postmodern Information Age, where we have often lost sight of evidence or even records as a source of evidence. In other words, what researchers might better need is a behind the scenes tour about records and recordkeeping systems, not an archives or historical manuscripts repository. Then, Burke suggests that archivists “bring . . . evidence [found in records] to the present” and leave “interpretations” to others (65), a questionable statement suggesting that archivists do not indulge in interpretation. Unless they see themselves as nothing more than passive clerks (and even clerks are not passive!) accepting whatever one might give them, most archivists could not be described this way. Even Burke himself does not believe this when he writes that “personal papers more often require the interposition of the curatorial staff, which generally does not follow a professional standard, but instead organizes papers to reflect the subject’s life and to facilitate researcher access” (157), a highly *interpretive* process it would seem.

I have stressed some theoretical quibbles with this volume. There are problems that others might see as even more distracting. Burke seems to avoid any discussion of the past twenty years of standardization in archival description, contending the opposite in fact—that there are no common standards or systems. The author also ignores any consideration of user studies, within and without the archival field, that would directly address *how* researchers use archives and historical manuscripts. It is also difficult, at times, to figure out where one might expect to find a given topic. The volume meanders and the index does not always compensate for this. Even the final bibliography is incomplete in that it is not compatible with the chapter endnotes.

All this aside, archivists should still read *Research and the Manuscript Tradition* because it *does* engage them in re-thinking their assumptions and practices. While this book will be more valuable for archivists than researchers, I suspect even the latter would be better off the next time they visit an archives for having read it.

*Richard J. Cox, University of Pittsburgh*

*Free Books for All: The Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850–1930.* By Lorne Bruce. Toronto: Dundurn Press Ltd., 1994. xix, 347 pp. \$34.99. ISBN 1-55002-205-9.

Lorne Bruce's *Free Books for All: The Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850–1930* chronicles and analyzes the history of the public library movement in Ontario from 1850 to 1930. It is the story of how public libraries became important cultural institutions and how local governments recognized it was their role to provide for them. This idea arose in Victorian Canada where it was recognized that public libraries were useful agents in the continual improvement of society and extended through the 1930s as urban local governments, which grew along side the communities they administered and thus changed in purpose, strongly supported the idea of free public libraries.

Considering what a wide swath the movement cut, this is a lot of territory to cover and Bruce wisely sets out three specific and manageable goals for the book, namely, "to render a factual account of what the movement achieved; to use the actual writings and words of the men and women who participated; and to illustrate its phases as much as possible" (v). In all three goals Bruce finds success.

The emphasis is definitely on the people who promoted, shaped, and advanced the work of public libraries in the province. Bruce's in-depth grasp of the literature of the times allows him to illustrate, develop, and enliven many of his points with quotes capturing the thinking of newspaper editors, government officials, ministers, politicians, and publishers, to name but a few of the individuals cited. That he consistently identifies these individuals by profession, political affiliation, and office adds greatly to the context of the book. As he quotes from a wide-ranging variety of documents, including government documents, newspaper articles, sermons, and personal correspondence, he contributes significantly to the breadth of the narrative.

In addition to the text, Bruce has compiled a sizable quantity of tables, graphs, and maps that contain a great deal of material. A number are reproduced from government reports and other public documents, but others are compilations from a variety of sources. All include valuable data and are important additions to the volume. Also, thirty-two pages of illustrations contain reprints of cartoons, reproductions of floor plans, and photos of individuals, groups, and buildings. The last category particularly brings an additional dimension to the book; pictures of librarians personalize the story while the shots of libraries, both interior and exterior, make the narrative more real. The lengthy bibliography is in itself an important contribution to the field. Its length (fourteen pages of primary documents and five of secondary sources) suggests that it is close to exhaustive.

*Free Books for All* is an important book for all those involved with Canadian library history, no matter what their specialty. It is also recommended for scholars involved with the history of public libraries elsewhere, especially in the U.S. and Britain, because the differences and similarities that emerge can lead to thought-provoking reflection. It is a very accessible book for all library historians, including those not well versed in Canadian culture. Few are the references to intrinsically Canadian matters, such as Clear Grits, which are not accompanied by clear, concise explanations.

Bruce's book will be of interest to social and cultural historians as well; however, its relevance to them is not as strong as it would have been if Bruce had given more attention to his secondary goal which is "to examine interconnections with other contemporary societal developments in a national and international

setting” (v). He goes on to write “this book, in part, is a study of evolving Canadian nationalism” but there are disappointingly few references to the development of a Canadian identity which one could argue related closely to the growth of public libraries. Finally, chapter 2 is an excellent brief description of the evolution of libraries in Britain and the United States between 1875 and 1900 and their influence on the development of libraries in Ontario. However, the chapter stands apart from the rest of the book. Bruce would have considerably increased the scope, usefulness, and interest of his book if he had included a similar chapter on library development during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

However, *Free Books for All* remains a tremendous achievement reflecting tenacity of purpose, meticulous and voluminous research, and considerable writing and organizational skill. It is a singular achievement which firmly establishes public library development as a research front in Canadian library history. It takes a landmark book to establish such a focus, and Bruce’s book is definitely such a work. Library historians will, after an initial reading, return to it again and again because of the outstanding richness of detail it contains. It will also serve as a jumping-off point for the future investigation of other topics, including librarianship as a profession, library education, and library methods on which Bruce can, by necessity, only touch lightly upon.

*Elizabeth Hanson, Indiana University Libraries*

*Libraries and Life in a Changing World: The Metcalfe Years, 1920–1970.* Edited by W. Boyd Rayward. Sydney: University of New South Wales School of Information, Library & Archive Studies, 1993. ix, 230 pp. \$26.00. ISBN 0-7334-0014-0.

These are the papers from the fifth Australian Library History Forum held at the University of New South Wales in November 1992. They are in honor of John Wallace Metcalfe (1901–1982) who throughout his professional library career in Australia was in Boyd Rayward’s words “generally considered to be the most important Australian librarian of his generation.” (A case might be made for the importance of Andrew D. Osborn but his career, which began in Australia was largely in the U.S. and Canada although he did have a short, spectacular return to Australia at the end of the 1950s.) But of Metcalfe’s importance to Australian librarianship there can be no question. He was the guiding force behind the Free Library Movement which established the public library system in New South Wales and had a nation-wide influence. A leader in the foundation of what is now the Australian Library and Information Association, Metcalfe was the first editor of its *Journal*. He was also greatly involved in library education through the examination system, centered on the professional association in the pre-accreditation days before library schools in academic institutions were founded in Australia. The first library school in Australia, known today as the State Library of New South Wales, was established by him, and he served as its director from 1942 until he left in 1959 to head the first university-based library school at the University of New South Wales. He was also a prolific contributor to the popular and library press. His particular interest was in classification and cataloging with particular emphasis on subject access, where he was an ardent advocate for his points of view—points of view that were often difficult at times to follow in his writing style which bordered on the “stream of consciousness” approach with its

allusions and diversions. (His editor at Scarecrow Press, Eric Moon, found him the most difficult and stimulating writer he ever edited.) Two of the contributors to this Forum, Ross Harvey and Alan Walker, debate the value of Metcalfe's contribution to Subject Access in their chapters.

Other contributions centering on Metcalfe are Boyd Rayward's assessment of his visits overseas as well as his contributions to the Australian profession; his Australian contributions are further examined by Jean Whyte; and David Jones looks at Metcalfe in connection with his relationship to W.H. Ifould, director of the State Library of New South Wales from 1912 to 1942 where Metcalfe was appointed in 1923, succeeding Ifould in 1942. The remaining essays discuss different aspects of Australian library history in which Metcalfe played either a supporting role or was an influence on events under discussion. They look at Parliamentary libraries, the classic report on Australian libraries (1935) by Ralph Munn of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, assisted by Ernest R. Pitt of the State Library of Victoria, and how it was received by the popular press of the day. The report was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Maxine Rochester looks at the effect of the subsequent grants made by CCNY to further Australian library development. Alison Gregg offers a case study of how indirectly Metcalfe and the Free Library Movement had an influence in Western Australia. The last three essays look at different aspects of book publishing and book collecting in Australia of the period.

All in all, these essays are well written and together offer a fascinating account of librarianship in Australia over the fifty key years in its development. They form another worthy tribute to the influence which John Wallace Metcalfe had on so many people and events in Australia.

*Norman Horrocks, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia*

*Instruction and Amusement: Papers from the Sixth Australian Library History Forum.* Edited by B. J. McMullin. (Monash Occasional Papers in Librarianship, Record-keeping and Bibliography, No. 8). Melbourne, Australia: Ancora Press, 1996. vii, 203 pp. \$40.00. ISBN 0-86862-022.

Twelve papers in four sections of three constitute this Forum held at the Monash University Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records on 1 November 1995, the home of the publisher, Ancora Press.

The first three are case studies of Mechanics' Institutes—one in Western Australia, and two in Victoria. These Institutes or Schools of Arts or Literary Institutes existed in Australia from 1827 onwards. The name varied but the purposes were broadly the same; they offered both "Instruction and Amusement" in the form of libraries, continuing education centers, and early technical education alongside vocal and theatrical presentations, fetes and the ubiquitous billiards (i.e. pool) tables. What enabled them to flourish for over a hundred years? Were they encouraged by the upper and middle class to "control" the workers or were they sought by the workers as a means of entering the middle class? Jan Partridge in her Western Australian study of the origins of the Swan River Mechanics Institute favors the latter interpretation. The two Victorian case studies by Donald Baker (on the Sandhurst Mechanics' Institute) focus on the administrative and operational history of the Institutes before they gave way to public libraries in the now accepted mode of tax supported institutions.

The second group of three looks first at education for librarianship in South Australia from 1944 to 1994. In it Maureen Keane traces the history from the first courses offered at the State Library of South Australia in 1944 to the university courses of fifty years later. It is a useful compilation which warrants similar studies for the other States. Maxine Rochester tells of the introduction of information science in Australian library school teaching in the 1970s and early 1980s. The third essay by Peter Mansfield interprets education in a completely different way from the other two. He looks at the old controversy of whether providing fiction was a waste of public money or "the reading of novels would eventually lead the patrons to an enjoyment of higher forms of literature." His study is based on the experience of public libraries in Victoria in the 19th century whose libraries mirrored the British public libraries of the period in providing popular novels with no literary pretensions. That the concerns he describes were widespread in Australia at the time was evident in a paper on this very topic—one of thirteen presented at the First Australasian Library Conference held in Melbourne in 1896, a reference he doesn't cite.

Three Biographical essays form the next section. Jim Badger examines the life of his father, Colin Badger, one of the very influential lay persons in the campaign for the establishment of public libraries after the publication of the Munn—Pitt Report of 1935. Two very different University of Melbourne librarians—Leigh Scott and Axel Lodewycks—covering 1926 to 1973 are dealt with by Lucy Edwards (Scott) and James Kilpatrick (Lodewycks). Both essays are restricted in their focus—for Scott on the years 1926–1945 and Lodewycks on 1968–1973, but offer some interesting comments on the professional and political conflicts still faced today by academic librarians.

The last three essays under the heading "Other Institutions" do not match the "Instruction and Amusement" of the title. Coralie Jenkin's history of the library of Congregational College of Victoria; Dorothy Rooney on the development of the Central Catholic Library, Adelaide; and Norm Turnross on libraries in the prisons in 19th century Victoria, form an eclectic mix though. And Turnross supplies an interesting note to end on when quoting from the 1859 annual report of the Inspector-General of the Penal Department of Victoria, who wrote that "the prisoners at Pentridge could make use of an ample supply of moral and instructive works which could add to their mental culture or pass for harmless amusement in time which would otherwise be taken up by depraved and contaminating conversation." Maybe this is the origin of the No Talking rule in libraries!

*Norman Horrocks, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia*

*Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and School of Art in Australia.* Edited by Philip C. Candy and John Laurent. Adelaide, Australia: Auslib Press, 1994. ii, 413 pp. \$48.00. ISBN 1-875145-25-7.

In Britain and North America Mechanics' Institutes are commonly regarded as nineteenth century forerunners of what later became locally tax-supported public libraries. These Institutes had a role as adult education centers but their later involvement in this area in higher education is less featured in library history. In Australia, where the development of locally tax-supported public libraries did not really start to flourish nationwide until the 1940s and 1950s the institutes had a much longer life than in Britain and North America. Known variously as

Mechanics' Institutes' Schools of Art, or Literary Institutes, they offered not only subscription library services for borrowers but also served as community centers. As community centers they were often the focus of their town's cultural, social and educational life for a century or more.

Dr. Philip Candy, Professor of Higher Education at the Queensland University of Technology, and Dr. John Laurent of the Faculty of Science and Technology at Griffith University in Queensland have brought together this collection of essays, to which they contribute, on the rich heritage of Australia's institutes. The story starts with the establishment of the first institute in 1827 and emphasizes their contributions for the next hundred years before their decline became obvious, although some lingered longer. This is no systematic account of their existence but rather a series of essays looking at the contributions they made over the years. There is at least one essay on each state and enough indication is provided to show that, despite similar names and origins, there were significant differences in the manner in which these institutes developed. The small communities they served, the isolation from other communities, also small in population, the state governments' granting of subsidies to the institute libraries, which while not over-generous was nonetheless welcome, and the local pride in a local institution of their own may all have been contributing factors to the institutes' life.

Candy and Laurent declare that they and their contributors are attempting "to rescue the institutes from their undeserved oblivion, to draw attention to the richness of their history, and to celebrate the enormous but largely unheralded contribution which, individually and collectively, they have made to our cultural heritage." This compilation does this and pays attention also to the many still surviving buildings whose existence aroused their initial interest in the topic—from a cultural perspective of the buildings themselves as well as what they contained.

*Norman Horrocks, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia*

*Academic Duty.* By Donald Kennedy. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. viii, 310 pp. \$29.95 hardcover. ISBN 0674-002-29.

The author is a thoughtful, knowledgeable person, broadly experienced in the ways of the academy, and as objective as any human being can be. He also has some experience as an academic administrator and in an important federal government post of a couple of years duration. He undertook the task of bringing evenhandedness to issues of consequence to post twelfth-grade education. For example, he matches academic freedom and academic duty (responsibility) with good effect. Donald Kennedy makes good use of the attributes noted above to provide useful insights into the sometimes perplexing and frustrating problems of higher education.

The nature of the issues and the basis for their existence and complexity are clearly expounded. Solutions are suggested for some, indicated for others, and for still others there is either nothing or simply hand-waving. This is not an indictment; it is simply a statement, since some issues may well be intractable.

Kennedy writes clearly, tracking the rise of the major problems well. He shows how the tensions developed in the research universities as well as in those institutions that strive for this level of attainment. If in these institutions it comes down to "teaching or research", a major transition may be required.

This is certainly not the author's conclusion but it is an easy extrapolation. The author in fact reflects the feeling of many of his academic colleagues with,

their administrations are being forced to cut back on support staff and other expenditures that facilitate teaching—thus, in effect, making teaching loads heavier. Meanwhile, the public, which looks to higher education primarily for teaching, is beginning to express concern and even mistrust over the university's attention to its primary mission. (30, 1, 10)

Nevertheless the tension is clearly stated.

Despite such differences in specific responsibilities, it is clear that a single issue, division of labor between teaching and research, is affecting the quality of life for many in the professoriate. This has always been a central issue for faculty in the research university, but increasingly it has become an issue even in liberal arts colleges of the second or third rank, as the competition among institutions becomes more intense and as faculty aspiration encounters, an environment of increasing economic scarcity. (25, 1, 7)

As an aside, one possible outcome would be a separation of the two functions. This is not necessarily a desirable result since there is real value in having active scholars demonstrate the thought processes to the intellectual neophytes. The transition may come about because of sheer numbers opting for a college experience plus the increasing use of the Internet as a means of providing some of the college courses.

Kennedy's book may well contain all of the known problems of research-involved universities. It does have a better view of these than of the other post twelfth-grade institutions. It makes no pretense of looking closely at issues of concern to two- and four-year colleges.

Chapter 5, "To Serve the University," is one which should be read particularly by those in the academy. It describes the fiduciary responsibility of boards and managers. It points out that there are sometimes compelling reasons for decisions which may be unpopular on campus. Of course, it is true that reasons may sometimes simply be excuses, but the reality of limitation is critically important.

Kennedy uses numerous anecdotes and scenarios to illustrate issues, and they are very effective in making his points. He tries throughout to establish the fact that there is more than one force contending on each issue. Also, he makes it clear that in most (all?) cases there is no absolute and correct answer. The book is well worth reading by those who wish to know more about the intricacies of the research university, and by some of those who think they do.

*Norman Hackerman, University of Texas at Austin*

*Our Joyce: From Outcast to Icon.* By Joseph Kelly. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. x, 287 pp. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-292-74331-9.

On 20 July 1998, *The New York Times* ran a feature story entitled "Ulysses at Top As Panel Picks 100 Best Novels." To the surprise of many culture watchers, that story, about a list compiled by the editorial board of the Modern Library, spawned

a month-long deluge of comments, editorials, op-ed pieces, and follow-up stories in newspapers and periodicals all over the country.

How did James Joyce come to garner the top rank amid so much ink? Joseph Kelly's interesting new book goes a long way toward giving an answer. Kelly synthesizes a large body of historical evidence from published sources, from library archives, and from interviews and correspondence with a constellation of major American Joyce scholars. The later chapters of the book make use of archival sources, such as the Morris Ernst papers in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, the Richard Ellmann Papers in the McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa, a private collection of unpublished correspondence between Stanislaus Joyce and Ellsworth Mason about the making of the Ellmann biography of Joyce, and uncatalogued papers in the offices of the *James Joyce Quarterly* at Tulsa. That brief list of original sources could be seen as shorthand for another story, one beyond the scope of *Our Joyce* or this review: the story of the migration of major archives of twentieth-century literature and culture, during the past forty years, to libraries and collections in the Southwest.

As a reception study, *Our Joyce* concerns itself with the sociology of the text—how the times (roughly 1880 to the present) and circumstances (Irish culture and politics, international avant-garde movements in literature and the arts, social trends in the inter-war years, and more recent developments in American academe) brought about the formation of a literary reputation. By directing “attention to the social character of a literary work throughout its entire life” (2), Kelly shows how “the social context of the work changes with each new publication. The readership changes. The historical context surrounding a work changes.” (5–6)

In a preliminary chapter the author gives “an accurate version of Joyce's intentions” (9). In Kelly's version Joyce is a political—as opposed to cultural—nationalist, aligning himself with emergent middle-class Catholic Dublin, and intent, in his fictions, on an “overt criticism of social institutions” (39). In subsequent chapters *Our Joyce* moves through “four episodes in the history of Joyce's reputation” (8). First the modernist Joyce of the wartime and post-war avant-garde: disengaged, international, and universalized, in cahoots with (or appropriated by) Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot; a genius of the modern movement, and a classic, as the reputation develops. Then the scandalous and erotic Joyce of the twenties and thirties, beset by comstockery and by crusaders against obscenity, and only finally legalized through the efforts of Morris Ernst in the epochal 1933 case of “The United States of America v. One Book Called *Ulysses*.” The biographical Joyce follows in the fifties, as the reputation metamorphoses with Richard Ellmann's biography, Cold-War liberalism, and the ascendancy of the American professoriate. Finally “*Our Joyce*” commands center stage: a congeries of institutional entities including *Modern Fiction Studies* and the *James Joyce Quarterly* (the most prominent and long-lived of a handful of specialized journals devoted to Joyce studies), the International James Joyce Foundation and its biennial symposia, and the critical editions of Joyce's works, by which the “academy's assumption of authority over Joyce and his work” (204) becomes complete and the “Joyce Industry” rules.

Because of “the iconoclastic nature of [the] argument” (ix) of *Our Joyce*, and because of its compelling and provocative treatment of the history of James Joyce's reputation, Kelly's book should receive wide notice; its lesson, that “all representations of Joyce are attempts to garner authority over his work” (5), has wider applicability, beyond the world of Joyce studies and of academe.

*Willard Goodwin, Austin, Texas*

## **Library of Congress to Host International Conference on National Libraries on 23–27 October 2000**

As part of the commemoration of its bicentennial in the year 2000, the Library of Congress will host a conference, “National Libraries: Interpreting the Past, Sharing the Future,” on 23–27 October 2000. The co-chairs are Winston Tabb, Associate Librarian for Library Services, and John Y. Cole, Director of the Center for the Book. Co-sponsors include the American Library Association’s Library History Round Table, and the National Libraries Section and the Library History Round Table of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

The conference planning committee welcomes proposals for individual papers dealing with the role of national libraries—or a single library—within a national or international cultural context. The conference will include papers about the history of national libraries as well as their role today and in the future. Papers may deal with any geographic area or chronological period. Individuals interested in presenting papers should send a two-page proposal with a brief curriculum vitae by 1 December 1998 to John Y. Cole, Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20540-4920; telephone (202) 707-5221; fax (202) 707-0269; e-mail [jcole@loc.gov](mailto:jcole@loc.gov).

The conference has been designated “Library History Seminar X,” continuing a tradition of library history seminars held approximately every five years in cooperation with the American Library Association’s Library History Round Table and the journal *Libraries & Culture*. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress participates in library history seminars as part of its mission to encourage the study of the role of books, reading, and libraries. For information about the Center for the Book’s program, visit its site on the World Wide Web at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/>.