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The stereotypical image of librarians in film is examined through a content analysis study

of thirty-five librarian characters in twenty films spanning the years 1921 to 2004.

Previous research into the stereotype of the librarian is reviewed, followed by an analysis

of the physical, environmental, and social characteristics of the librarian characters. The

results of the analysis show some evidence that the image of librarians in film has

changed over time.

Headings:

      Librarians in motion pictures

      Libraries in motion pictures

      Stereotypes of librarians

LIBRARIANS IN FILM: A CHANGING STEREOTYPE

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

A stereotype is a collection of "assumptions of what people are like" that is perpetuated in a culture through avenues such as the mass media (Henslin 106). Often a stereotype is associated with an occupation, which is an important part of a person's life since it "tells other people about the education that someone has had and about his or her economic position" (Prins and de Gier 9).

One such stereotype is that of the librarian—and it has not been pleasant one:

In the public psyche, a librarian is a woman of indeterminate age, who wears spectacles; a person with either a timorous disposition or an austere disposition, wearing a long-sleeved blouse buttoned to the neck; someone who loves silence, likes books, and suffers people. Librarians don't laugh. They are covered with a thin film of dust. They have pale skins, which, when touched (as if one ever could) might flake and prove to be reptilian scales. (Hall 345)

Since librarians are often concerned with how the librarian profession is perceived by the very public it is intended to serve and how that perception can negatively affect the profession and the library, it comes as no surprise that this librarian stereotype has been the topic of research and discussion within the field of library science for many years. Researchers like Gary Radford and Marie L. Radford have focused on the stereotype of the librarian that is held by the general public and by librarians themselves, looking at such things as how the stereotyped librarian looks and behaves; others like Gary Mason Church have focused on how the image is perpetuated in the media and its effect on how the viewing audiences come to see the librarian occupation and the library as a whole.

The depiction of librarians in film has been one particular area of study. Films have been a popular part of American culture since the early 1900s, depicting a number of different people and professions on the silver screen and likely depicting a number of stereotypes. For instance, the cold and curt Miss Anderson in *Citizen Kane* (1941) conforms to the negative librarian stereotype, as does Mary in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). In *It's a Wonderful Life*, Mary is a vibrant, happy woman when she is married to George Bailey; however, when she is without a husband, she is depicted as a meek librarian in glasses. Everyone who watched *It's a Wonderful Life* or *Citizen Kane* was exposed to the negative librarian stereotype.

However, stereotypes change over time, and this may be the case with the librarian stereotype. In the 1999 film *The Mummy* the audience is introduced to Evelyn Carnahan (played by Rachel Weisz), a librarian who goes on an adventure across Egypt, exploring an ancient city and finding all sorts of treasures while fighting off ancient mummies. This depiction of a librarian is far from that portrayed in *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Citizen Kane* and thus may be an indication that the librarian stereotype is changing.

This current study seeks to add to the body of research concerning the librarian stereotype. By looking at 20 films that span over 80 years, this study sets out to see how the image of the librarian has changed over time. If the image of the librarian has changed in film, it is possible that the stereotype is changing and that the general public (including library patrons) is beginning to see libraries and librarians in a new light.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It seems that librarians have always been concerned with their image. Perhaps this is because we recognize that "what people think of us not only limits our status and salaries, but also the growth of our profession and the funding and use of libraries" (Schuman 86).

A number of researchers have spent time investigating the image of the librarian in hopes of understanding how it comes into existence and how to combat its harmful effects. For instance, Gary Mason Church studied the librarian image by reviewing not only scholarly articles but also such media artifacts as newspaper articles that date back to the early 18th century. He points out that the impression of librarians held by people "originate from sources including direct interaction with librarians, hearsay, and media portrayals of librarians" (6). Combinations of these influences further reinforce the negative librarian image. They then go on to be held by not only the general public but by librarians themselves, thus becoming the librarian stereotype.

The most common characteristics associated with this librarian stereotype include: "an obsession with order, sexual repression, matronly appearance, dowdy dress, fussiness, dour facial expressions, and mono-syllabic speech" (Radford and Radford "Librarians and Party Girls…" 60). Radford and Radford also found that, in the media, a librarian character's duties tended to be limited to shelving and stamping books, as well as shushing, and occasionally "pushing carts of books around, pointing library users to

the stacks in a desultory fashion, or rebuking users for failure to follow library procedures" (60). This depiction of the librarian is not a welcoming one and does not let potential patrons see how librarians can help them find information (which is, after all, the primary purpose of the librarian profession). But this limited, negative image is not the only stereotype of librarians to be found in the literature.

In her article, Beth Posner argues that there are two contradictory images of librarians held by the public and by librarians themselves. One image is of librarians as "know-it-alls who can answer any question" (111). Patrons thus may be intimidated by librarians and afraid to ask librarians for help. The other image is that "library work requires little effort or intelligence and librarians must be prodded, pushed, or provided with a breadcrumb trail in order to track down even the most routine request" (112). In this case, patrons may see librarians as unhelpful and thus not seek them out when an information need arises.

A new stereotype has also emerged as more and more men have entered the field of library science. James V. Carmichael Jr. surveyed male librarians to see if there is a stereotype of the male librarian. Of the 482 librarians that responded, sixty percent agreed that there exists a male librarian stereotype (427). The characteristics that Carmichael found to be associated with the male librarian were: gay, unambitious, pathetic, dowdy appearance, and generally a "sad creature without social graces or skills who hides out in the profession because he cannot succeed in any other work" (430). This stereotype does not accurately reflect the true diversity found among male librarians, but such a stereotype can have an effect on how patrons and the librarian community see men in the library profession.

Examining how librarians are seen by the public and by each other can help us better understand the image problem of the librarian profession and thus help us to counteract it. One way to further our knowledge of the area is to analyze librarian characters depicted on film.

The Librarian in Film

The movie *Forbidden* (1932) was the first sound film to depict a librarian—and it wasn't a pleasant introduction of the profession into the sound film industry, as Ray and Brenda Tevis point out in their book The Image of Librarians in Cinema, 1917-1999:

> The depiction of librarians in sound films began quite ominously. Within the first three minutes of *Forbidden* (1932), two youngsters watching librarian Lulu Smith (Barbara Stanwyck) arrive for work yell at her from across the street, "Old lady foureyes! Old lady foureyes!" This opening salvo in the first sound film to feature a librarian, to a great extent, defines the image of librarians in sound films. (2)

Librarians would go on to appear in more than 200 sound motion pictures during the Twentieth Century. Tevis and Tevis examined the image of librarians in many of these films by analyzing the complete librarian character depicted, including personal attributes, socioeconomic status, and relationships with the opposite sex. They found that "the visual characteristics associated with the stereotypical image—age, eyeglasses, hairstyle (bun or baldness), and clothes—which began to appear in 1917 were displayed unabatedly in films released throughout the remainder of the century" (189). They also found that the occupational tasks performed by librarian characters remained relatively unchanged as well. These images of librarians in film thus significantly contributed to "the development and then to the continuation of the image, primarily because every generation during the century attended movie theaters in great numbers" (1). Other researchers have also studied librarians in film and have come to similar conclusions.

Stephen Walker and V. Lonnie Lawson also studied the ways in which librarian characters are portrayed in Hollywood films. They studied 30 films in order to "determine how librarians were stereotyped in Hollywood movies" (16). Specifically, they focused on gender, age, marital status, characterization, and film genre. They found that librarians in movies are "frequently female," and "likely to be introverted, unmarried, prim, shy, and young" (25-26). They also found that male librarians in the movies did not display "stereotypical macho characteristics of audacity, rebelliousness, and physical prowess" but instead displayed "mildness, civility, and intelligence" which coincides with the male stereotype studied by Carmichael (22).

William King, in his thesis "The Celluloid Librarian: The Portrayal of Librarians in Motion Pictures," studied seventeen films that spanned 45 years. He found that a librarian stereotype does exist in films, but that those in minor roles are more likely to fit the stereotype whereas main librarian characters tend to be more multi-faceted. Bari L. Helms, in his thesis, had similar findings. He studied thirteen films (spanning the years 1989 to 2005) to see if the portrayal of librarians is changing as the profession changes due to new technology and thus new occupational tasks. He found that while individual librarian characters have changed over the years, the depiction of the profession as a whole has remained constant, which continues to reinforce the librarian stereotype.

Other researchers have taken different approaches to the study of librarians in film. Gary P. Radford and Marie L. Radford, in their article "Libraries, Librarians, and the Discourse of Fear," use Michael Foucault's approach to discourse to analyze films and other modern popular cultural forms (novels and television shows) to analyze the representations of libraries and librarians. They analyzed the films *Party Girl*, *UHF*, *The*

Pagemaster, and *Sophie's Choice*. They came to the conclusion that, by looking at the films from the angle of Foucault's discourse of fear, the librarian is portrayed as "a fearsome figure" (313) that knows everything and is superior to those who ask questions. Such an image only reinforces the idea that patrons cannot turn to librarians for help in finding information.

In another article, Radford and Radford use a cultural studies approach to examine the librarian stereotype in the film *Party Girl*. They argue that "cultural texts (such as books, articles, films, television shows, commercials, music, and other media) are regarded as not simply reflecting history and society but as integral components in the making of history and society" (56). And so, by applying a cultural studies approach they offer a new lens through which to view the librarian stereotype. In their analysis of *Party Girl*, they found that the main character transforms from one cultural stereotype (the party girl) to another (the librarian) and exhibits characteristics of the librarian stereotype, including being "obsessed with order," using library jargon, and wearing "a black suit with bun and glasses" (65-66). And so, even when trying to paint the character as both a fun, party girl *and* a serious librarian, the film still feeds into the negative librarian stereotype.

In an attempt to add a new perspective to the field, Jeanine Williamson studied librarians in film through the lens of the Jungian/Myers-Briggs personality types. She took the sixteen personality types and applied them to films in which librarians are characters in order to see if they represent the actual personality types of real librarians. Williamson took a convenience sample of 28 films, viewed each film and took notes on the librarian characters' personality characteristics (she used previous knowledge of the

Myers-Briggs descriptions of the personality types to make best guesses as to the characters' personality types). Williamson found that four personality types were overrepresented in the films and three underrepresented in the films when compared to how often the personality types are found in real librarians, thus indicating that the films "fail to represent the rich variety of personality characteristics found in real librarians" (55). She also found that the films "appear to reinforce typical gender assumptions, with females portrayed as nurturing and gentle and males in a typical 'female' profession portrayed as having feminine traits" (54).

This current study seeks to add to the body of research surrounding librarians in film by looking at how the appearance, work environment, and general depiction of the librarian has changed over time.

METHODOLOGY

This study of the depiction of librarians in film uses content analysis. Content analysis is "the study of recorded human communications" (Babbie 314). These human communications can be in the form of cultural artifacts (such as books, newspapers, and films) which are "the products of individual activity, social organization, technology, and cultural patterns" (Reinharz 147). Thus, they are a reflection of how their creators view the world and also influence the way in which their audiences view the world. Since cultural artifacts are produced by people, for people, they are of interest to many researchers, including sociologists, historians, literary analysts, anthropologists, and archeologists (Reinharz 146). These researchers use content analysis to "study a set of objects (i.e., cultural artifacts) or events systematically by counting them or interpreting the themes contained in them" (Reinharz 146). The results of a content analysis can shed light on the way in which a culture views certain aspects and parts of itself, such as occupation.

Content analysis lends itself nicely to the analysis of librarian characters in films. Films are cultural artifacts that are found throughout American culture—their popularity started in the early 1900s, continues into the present, and will likely continue into the future. Content analysis allows a researcher to view a sample of films, record their characteristics, and then potentially find common thematic threads and characteristics that run through them. The commonalities can then be analyzed in an attempt to find

changes over time in the depiction of librarians and thus a potential change in the stereotype.

Sample

In this study, a purposive sample was drawn from the book *The Image of Librarians in Cinema, 1917 – 1999* by Ray and Brenda Tevis and also from an Internet search that found films depicting librarians. Due to the accessibility, only 20 films were used in the sample. The film release dates ranged from 1921 to 2004. At least one film from each decade was viewed in order to see if the depictions of librarians have changed over time. For a list of films viewed, see Appendix A.

The unit of analysis was each individual film; the unit of observation was the librarian character(s) in the film. For this study, a librarian character was any character explicitly said to be a librarian or any character working in a library setting and/or performing library tasks. This study mainly focused on films where the librarian character was either a main character in the film or played an important part in the film plot. If a film depicted more than one librarian character, each character was coded separately.

Study Method

The coder used two coding sheets for each film viewed: the Film Information Sheet and the Character Data Sheet. If a film depicted more than one librarian, a Film Information Sheet and a Character Data Sheet was used for each librarian character.

Before viewing the film, the coder used the Film Information Sheet (see Appendix B) and filled in the Film Title, Film Release Year, Director's Name, Producer's Name, and Writer's Name. If the Name and Sex of the librarian character in the film was

known, the coder filled out that information as well or filled it out later. After viewing the film, a brief Summary of the film was filled in.

While viewing the film, the coder used the Character Data Sheet. The questions on the character data sheet focused on three aspects of the character: his/her physical appearance, his/her work environment, and his/her romantic relationships. Questions about the film genre and about whether or not the character underwent a transformation were also asked.The questions related to the work environment were used to find patterns in films' depictions of where librarians work and what duties they perform. Questions related to Physical Appearance were used to find patterns in the physical depiction of librarians in the films. Relationship questions sought to find how librarians are depicted in regards to romantic relationships. Film genre data was collected to see if depictions differed according to genre. The coder also recorded any other information she felt was relevant to the analysis of the film, such as a particularly important scene or part of the dialogue.

Each film was viewed at least once. Once all the films had been viewed and the code sheets had been completed, the researcher compared the film coding sheets in order to compare the librarian characters.

RESULTS

A total of twenty films were viewed and thirty-five characters were coded. Forty-three percent (43%) of the characters (15 characters) played a major role in the film, 34% (12 characters) played a medium role, and 23% (8 characters) played a minor role. In this section, the results of the content analysis will be discussed. The first category studied was the film genre. Percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number.

Table 1. Film Genre

Genre	Number	Percentage
Drama	7	35%
Comedy	5	25%
Action	6	30%
Horror	1	5%
Other	1	5%

To determine what genre each of the twenty films fell under, the Internet Movie Database was consulted. If the database stated that a film fell under more than one genre, the researcher determined the primary genre under which the film would be coded. All fantasy and science fiction films were coded under Action. For example, according to the Internet Movie Database, the film *Brazil* falls under comedy, drama, fantasy, and science fiction. Since the film is set in a futuristic environment and since the plot is action-driven, the researcher coded to the film as Action. Most films fell under Drama (35%), followed by Action (30%), and Comedy (25%). One film fell under Horror and one under Other (this film was *The Music Man*, which is primarily a musical). Four of the five most

recently released films in the study (*The Librarian: Quest for the Spear*; *The Time Machine*; *The Mummy*; and *The Matrix*) fell under the Action genre while the oldest films in the study (*The Blot*; *No Man of Her Own*; and *Citizen Kane*) fell under the Drama genre. This shows a greater variety of films and storylines that librarians are being portrayed in.

Table 2. Sex of the Characters

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	13	37%
Female	22	63%

Of the 35 librarian characters portrayed in the films, 22 of them (63%) were female and only 13 (37%) were male, which appears to follow the stereotype that librarians are usually female. The earlier films were more likely to depict the librarian characters as female while the more recent films tended to depict both male and female librarians. Since the 1966 release of *You're A Big Boy Now* (which depicts 3 male librarian characters but only 1 female) there appears to have been an increase in the number of male librarians seen in films. *All the President's Men* (1976) depicts two male librarians at the Library of Congress but no female librarians are seen; *Brazil* (1985) shows all male librarians (called "officers" and who work for the Ministry of Information); and the three most recent releases (*The Librarian: Quest for the Spear*; *Queen of the Damned*; and *The Time Machine*) all include male librarians, as well.

Table 3. Age of the Characters

Age	Number	Percentage
Under 30	11	31%
30 to 50	22	63%
Over 50	2	6%

The majority of librarian characters in the films (63%) were between 30 and 50 years of age, which goes against Walker and Lawson's finding that librarians are often depicted as young. Only eleven characters were under 30 years of age. Only two characters out of the 35 that were coded were over 50 years of age. There did not appear to be a change over time in how old the librarian characters were depicted to be in the films. The earliest films, *The Blot* (1921) and *No Man of Her Own* (1932) depicted a female librarian under the age of 30 as did *Party Girl* (1995) and *Queen of the Damned* (2002). Librarians in the 30 to 50 age range appear throughout the decades in such films as *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Desk Set* (1957), *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* (1965), *All the President's Men* (1976), *Major League* (1989), *The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag* (1992), and *The Time Machine* (2002).

Table 4. Race/Ethnicity of the Characters

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Caucasian	31	89%
African American	4	11%
Hispanic/Latin	0	0%
Asian	0	0%
Other	0	0%

The vast majority of the characters (89%) were Caucasian, showing that there is perhaps a stereotype in the film industry that librarians are Caucasian. There were only four African American characters, appearing in three films: *All the President's Men* (1976), *Party Girl* (1995), and *The Time Machine* (2002). Since all librarian characters up to 1976 were Caucasian, this shows a small and fairly recent change in the depiction of librarians in film. However, minorities are still underrepresented in the depictions.

Table 5. Female Hairstyle

Female Hair Style	Number	Percentage
Bun	8	36%
No Bun	14	64%

One of the characteristics most associated with the female librarian stereotype is wearing the hair in a bun. However, only 8 female characters wore their hair in a bun at some point during the film while 14 never wore their hair in a bun. There has been a gradual decrease in the number of female librarians depicted with their hair in a bun—the earlier films more often contained this characteristic compared to later films. However, it is a characteristic that still remains—in the film *The Mummy* (which was released in 1999) shows the character of Evelyn Carnahan wearing her hair in a bun in her first scene of the film. However, as the film progresses, Evelyn wears her long hair down.

Table 6. Male Hairstyle

Male Hair Style	Number	Percentage
Completely Bald	1	8%
Partially Bald	2	15%
Not Bald	10	77%

Of the male librarians depicted in the films, most were not bald (77%). Only two characters were partially bald and only one was completely bald. This shows that balding may not be a characteristic of the male stereotype.

Table 7. Eyeglasses

Eyeglasses	Number	Percentage
Always wore glasses	3	9%
Sometimes wore glasses	11	31%
Never wore glasses	21	60%

Besides hairstyle, another characteristic that has long been associated with the librarian stereotype is eyeglasses. However, more than half of the characters (60%) never wore eyeglasses. Eleven characters (31%) wore eyeglasses at some point in the film (usually when in the library, performing tasks such as shelving books or reading), and only 3 characters (9%) were always seen wearing glasses. And although most characters did not wear eyeglasses, glasses are seen in films throughout the years, including *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Desk Set* (1957), *All the President's Men* (1976), *Major League* (1989), *The Mummy* (1999), and *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004), showing that there has not been a change in this stereotypic characteristic over the years.

Table 8. Type of Library

Library	Number	Percentage
Public	17	49%
Academic	0	0%
School	0	0%
Other	18	51%

Of the 35 characters in the study, 49% worked in a public library while 51% worked in other environments (including museums, research institutes, and other specialized settings). No characters were depicted working in an academic (college or university) library or in a school library, which is likely due to the restricted sample. There does appear to have been a change over time concerning what type of environments that the librarian characters have been shown working in. Librarians working in public libraries are seen throughout the years in such movies as *No Man of Her Own* (1932), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *The Music Man* (1962), *Major League* (1989), and *Party Girl* (1995). Librarians are also seen working in specialized environments throughout the years, including: a news library in *It Happened Tomorrow*

(1944), a corporate reference department in *Desk Set* (1957), a futuristic pirate ship
containing many computers and software programs in *The Matrix* (1999), and paranormal
research institute in *Queen of the Damned* (2002).

Table 9. Duties/Tasks Performed

Dutie/Task	Number	Percentage
Reference Work	12	34%
Circulation	5	14%
Cataloging	2	6%
Shelving Books	6	17%
Computer-related	3	9%
Research	6	17%
Stamping	3	9%
Other	3	9%

The task most often seen performed by the librarian characters was reference-
related work—12 of the 35 characters (34%) performed some sort of reference work in
the film. This is seen in such films as *Desk Set* (1957) when the four female librarian
characters (Bunny Watson, Ruthie Saylor, Peg Costello, and Sylvia Blair) answer
questions via the telephone, and in *The Matrix* (1999), in which the "operator" loads
software programs into the brains of the other characters when they are in need of
particular information. Other tasks included shelving books and research (each performed
by six of the 35 characters). The least performed task was cataloging (performed by only
two characters). Tasks in the "other" category included reading to children,
administrative work, and taking care of museum/archival materials. One change can be
seen in the computer-related task—the three characters that performed computer-related
work were in more recent films: *Brazil* (1985), *The Matrix* (1999), and *The Time
Machine* (2002). In fact, in *The Time Machine* (2002), the librarian character *was* a

computer. Interestingly, the three characters that performed computer-related tasks were all male characters.

Table 10. Marital Status

Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Single	18	51%
In A Relationship	2	6%
Married	3	9%
Separated	0	0%
Divorced	0	0%
Widowed	0	0%
Unable to Determine	12	34%

Of the 35 librarian characters, over half (51%) were depicted as single. Only three were married and only two were in a romantic relationship. There was not enough information to determine the marital status of twelve of the characters (these characters were usually those in minor or medium roles). The depiction of librarians as often single has not changed over time, showing little change in this stereotypic characteristic. Librarian characters in the earliest films—*The Blot* (1921) and *No Man of Her Own* (1932)—as well as the most recent films—*The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004) and *Queen of the Damned* (2002)—were single in the beginning but fell in love with another character by the end of the film.

Table 11. Character Falls in Love by End of Film

Falls in Love?	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	40%
No	21	60%

Although many of the librarian characters were depicted as single, 40% of the characters ended up falling in love with another character by the end of film. These librarian characters usually played major roles in the film and the love story was usually

an integral part of the plot. This romantic aspect of the librarian depiction has been found in films throughout the years, including: *The Blot* (1921), *No Man of Her Own* (1932), *Desk Set* (1957), *The Music Man* (1962), *You're A Big Boy Now* (1966), *Major League* (1989), *The Mummy* (1999), and *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004).

Table 12. Transformation

Transformation?	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	29%
No	25	71%

A transformation was considered any sort of major change in the physical depiction of the librarian character or a major change in his/her personality due to new experiences. Transformations could be seen in ten of the 35 characters. These characters all played major roles in the film. Transformations also tended to occur more often in more recent films. In the films *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004), *The Mummy* (1999), *The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag* (1992), and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991) the librarian characters transformed from stereotypical librarians into more daring, adventurous characters. In *Queen of the Damned* (2002) the librarian character becomes a vampire by the end of the film. In *Party Girl* (1995), the character of Mary transforms from a wild, party girl into an ambitious librarian. Earlier films, such as *The Blot* (1921), *No Man of Her Own* (1932), and *Desk Set* (1957), tended to depict librarian characters that did not seem to change at all throughout the film. This change is a positive one—depicting librarians as more rounded and more complex characters.

DISCUSSION

The librarian stereotype, as previous research has found, is that of a cold, single woman with her hair in a bun, wearing eyeglasses, having a matronly appearance and being sexually repressed (Tevis and Tevis, 189; Radford and Radford "Librarians and Party Girls…" 60). According to Tevis and Tevis, in their book <u>The Image of Librarians in Cinema, 1917 -1999</u>, this stereotype has remained unchanged in film for almost a century (60). However, this current study has found that, while some stereotypical characteristics have not changed, there is some evidence that the image of the librarian in film has begun to change.

Throughout the 20 films included in this study, there has been little change in the physical characteristics of librarians. Librarians were still depicted between the ages of 30 and 50, still wearing eyeglasses and still wearing buns. They were often depicted working in public libraries and other specialized settings. And most of the librarian characters that played major roles in the films began the films not in romantic relationships only to find love in the end.

However, there have been changes in other areas. First of all, the film genre depicting librarians has changed. In the earlier films, librarians were depicted primarily in dramas. However, over the years, librarians found their way into the comedies and more recently into the action films. In these action films, librarians are traveling the globe in search of ancient artifacts (*The Librarian: Quest for the Spear*), bringing Egyptian

mummies back to life (*The Mummy*), traveling through a futuristic world in an attempt to save it (*The Matrix*), and socializing with ancient vampires (*Queen of the Damned*). Librarians in the earlier films used in this study were never seen traveling the globe, nor fighting supernatural monsters or saving the world from destruction.

The study also found that there has been a change in the sex of the librarian characters. While almost all the librarians in the earlier films in the study were female, the presence of male librarians increased over time. *You're a Big Boy Now* (1966) and *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004) both have male librarians as their main characters. Male librarians have also made appearances in a number of films, including: *All the President's Men* (1976), *The Matrix* (1999), and *The Time Machine* (2002). This change in the sex of the librarian characters may be some evidence that the librarian stereotype is beginning to change.

There has also been a small change in the race/ethnicity of the librarian film characters. While all the librarians in the earlier films in the study were Caucasian, films depicting African American librarians began to appear in 1976 with *All the President's Men*. *Party Girl*, released in 1995, depicts two African American librarians and *The Time Machine* (2002) depicts an African American male librarian—the only librarian in the film. This change in the depiction of librarians could potentially help recruit more minorities to librarianship.

The duties performed by librarian characters have also changed slightly. In some of the later films used in the study, librarians were seen working with computers, which reflects how the tasks of librarians are changing in the real world. *Brazil* (1985) was the first film in the study to depict a librarian character using a computer; *The Matrix* (1999)

shows the character using only computers; and in *The Time Machine* (2002) the librarian

character was a computer. Interestingly, all the librarian characters shown using

computers were male—indicating that the male librarian stereotype may be changing

more than the female librarian stereotype. All the librarian characters shown using

computers were also not referred to as librarians but as an "officer," an "operator," or

simply a "computer." This hints at the possibility that librarians are still largely seen as

people who work with books and not computers even though much of the librarian

profession now involves computers. An analysis of a larger sample is needed to confirm

this.

Librarians in film also appear to be becoming more complex characters. In the

earlier films used in the study, like *The Blot* (1921), *No Man of Her Own* (1932), and

Desk Set (1957), the main characters did not appear to go under any major transformation

except for falling in love by the end of the film. However, in the more recent films, the

librarian characters go under great transformations during the film. In *The Gun in Betty

Lou's Handbag* (1992) the character of Betty Lou Perkins, a public librarian, feels that

"People think they know me but they don't. No one has any faith or confidence in me.

They think I can't do anything right." She therefore confesses to a murder she did not

commit in order to get others to pay attention to her—an act that changes her from a

meek, matronly-looking librarian to a fashionable, independent woman who goes to jail,

befriends criminals, and solves a crime. In *Queen of the Damned* (2002), Jessica "Jesse"

Reeves transforms from a paranormal researcher whose work is dismissed by her

colleagues into a daring young woman who ventures into an underground culture and

eventually gets turned into a vampire. In *The Mummy* (1999) and *The Librarian: Quest*

for the Spear (2004), the librarian characters begin as traditional librarians but then embark on adventures around the globe that transform them into adventurers. And in *Party Girl* (1995), the character of Mary begins as a wild and hip "party girl" but eventually becomes a young, hip, smart-mouthed librarian. These transformations depict librarians as rounded, complex people with adventures and personalities. This is a great change from the depiction of librarians in the earlier films, in which the librarians' personalities and lives remained relatively unchanged.

We are now left with the question as to why the depiction of librarians in film has changed—for which there can be any number of explanations. Perhaps, as we are now in the Information Age, librarians and other information professionals are starting to be seen as important components of adventure and discovery (such as in *The Mummy*). Or perhaps we are seeing an increase in male and African American librarians in film due to changing cultural attitudes regarding gender and race. However, due to the small sample size used in the current study, no conclusions can be drawn; more research into the image of librarians in film, as well as into the general stereotype of the librarian, is needed.

SUMMARY

In order to better understand and combat the librarian stereotype, images of librarians have been researched and discussed for decades. The discussion has surrounded how the librarian profession is perceived by the very public it is intended to serve and how that perception can affect the profession and the library—if librarians are viewed negatively, patrons may be less likely to use librarians or the library in general, which in turn can affect the amount of respect and funding that libraries receive.

Particular attention has been paid to how librarians are depicted in the media, including film. This study used content analysis to analyze a small sample of 35 librarian characters in 20 films. Content analysis is a method often employed by researchers studying cultural artifacts such as films, and thus enabled the study to focus in on how the image of librarians in film has changed over time.

The 20 films were released between the years 1921 and 2004. At least one film from each decade was viewed and analyzed. The physical appearance, work environment, and romantic relationships of the librarian characters were analyzed, as were any transformative experiences by the librarian characters.

Due to the small sample size, no conclusions can be made. The study found some evidence that some stereotypical characteristics, such as eyeglasses and hair buns, have changed little over the years. However, there is evidence that the librarian image in film has changed over time in regards to the sex and race of librarian characters, as well as to

the duties performed by the librarian characters. There is some evidence that the characters have become more complex over the years. The study also found that librarians originally appeared in films of the drama genre, but then made their way into comedies and recently into action films.

These changes in the image of librarians in film may be an indication that the librarian stereotype is changing. Hopefully, these results will shed light on, and encourage further research into, the portrayal of the librarian in the media so that librarians may understand how their patrons are viewing them and how they might promote a more positive image.

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APPENDIX A:
List of Films

All the President's Men (1976) – Based on actual events, *All the President's Men* is the story of Washington reporters Bob Woodward (played by Robert Redford) and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) who investigated the Watergate scandal. One scene takes place in the Library of Congress, where the two reporters encounter two librarians. Directed by Alan J. Pakula.

The Blot (1921) – Amelia Griggs (Claire Windsor), the daughter of a poor professor, works in the town's public library. Three men vie for her attention: the son of the wealthy next door neighbor, a young reverend, and a wealthy student of her father's. She ends up falling in love with her father's student. Directed by Lois Weber.

Brazil (1985) – Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce) works for a futuristic government called the Ministry of Information. While investigating a wrongful arrest, he meets the woman of his dreams and both end up being hunted by the government. Directed by Terry Gilliam.

Citizen Kane (1941) – A group of reporters investigate the last word ever spoken by the millionaire newspaper tycoon, Charles Foster Cane. One scene takes place in a library where the reporters encounter a stern female librarian. Directed by Orson Welles.

Desk Set (1957) -- Bunny Watson (Katharine Hepburn) is the head of the research department at the Federal Broadcasting Company. Richard Sumner (Spencer Tracy) is an engineer assigned to install a machine in the department that would threaten the jobs of Watson and her three co-workers. In the end, the machine fails while Watson and Sumner fall in love. Directed by Walter Lang.

The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag (1992) – Betty Lou (Penelope Ann Miller) is a librarian in a small town. In a frustrated attempt to get others to finally pay attention to her, she confesses to a murder she didn't commit. In the end, she helps her husband—a local police officer—solve the case. Directed by Allan Moyle.

It Happened Tomorrow (1944) – The ghost of news librarian Pop Benson (John Philliber) tells a newspaper reporter Larry Stevens (Dick Powell) about future events and advances the reporter's career until he predicts the reporter's death. Directed by René Clair.

It's a Wonderful Life (1946) – George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) contemplates suicide on Christmas Eve when he thinks his family's building and loan company is going to collapse. But an angel intervenes and shows him what life would be like without him. Without him, his wife Mary (Donna Reed) would end up being the town librarian. Directed by Frank Capra.

The Librarian: Quest for the Spear (2004) – Flynn Carsen (Noah Wyle) lands a job as a librarian at the Metropolitan Library, overseeing a special collection that includes such

artifacts as Excalibur and the Holy Grail. When the Serpent Brotherhood steals part of the Spear of Destiny, Carsen must defeat them in order to save the world. Directed by Peter Winther.

Major League (1989) – The Cleveland Indians are not the most successful baseball team. When the team's owner dies, his new wife wants the team to have low attendance at their games so she can move the team to Florida. But the team has other plans. One baseball player, Jake Taylor (Tom Berenger) has a romantic relationship with librarian Lynn Wells (Rene Russo). Directed by David S. Ward.

The Matrix (1999) – Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves) is a computer hacker who teams up with a group of rebels when he finds out that the world is not what it seems but is actually controlled by an evil cyber-intelligence. One of the rebels is Tank (Marcus Chong) who uploads software and information into the minds of the rebels in order to help them fight the evil agents. Directed by Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski.

The Mummy (1999) – Evelyn Carnahan (Rachel Weisz) is a librarian and Egyptologist who enlists the help of Rick O'Connell (Brendan Fraser) when she plans to uncover the lost Egyptian city of Hamunaptra. She accidentally wakes the dead priest Imhotep (Arnold Vosloo) from his tomb, which leads Carnahan and O'Connell on a number of adventures as they try to stop him. Directed by Stephen Sommers.

Music Man (1962) – Harold Hill (Robert Preston) is a con man who travels to River City posing as a professor who wants to help the town start a boys' marching band. His true intention is to take the people's money and leave town, but he ends up falling in love with the town librarian, Marian Paroo (Shirley Jones). Directed by Morton DaCosta.

No Man of Her Own (1932) – Babe Stewart (Clark Gable) makes his living by cheating at card games. But when he marries librarian Connie Randall (Carole Lombard) because she won a coin toss, she soon discovers his cheating scheme and urges him to change his ways. In the end, he turns himself in because he has fallen in love with Connie. Directed by Wesley Ruggles.

Party Girl (1995) – Mary (Parker Posey) is a free-spirited 24-year-old woman who likes nice clothes and throwing parties. But when she is arrested for throwing an illegal party, she calls her godmother to bail her out. In order to repay her godmother, she works a the public library, where she learns that she actually likes working in the library and wants to go to library school. Directed by Daisy von Scherler Mayer.

Queen of the Damned (2002) – Jesse Reeves (Marquerite Moreau) is a researcher for the Talamasca Society, a group that studies the paranormal. Her boss, a researcher named David Talbot (Paul McGann), lets her read the diary of the ancient vampire Lestat (Stuart Townsend) which leads her to track down the vampire. Unfortunately, Lestat has teamed up with the evil queen of the vampires, Akasha (Aaliyah). Directed by Michael Rymer.

Sleeping With the Enemy (1991) – Laura (Julia Roberts) is the wife of an abusive man (Patrick Bergin). She fakes her death in order to escape him and then changes her identity so she can start a new life. She works at a library before and after her escape. Directed by Joseph Ruben.

The Spy Who Came In from the Cold (1965) – Alec Leamus (Richard Burton) is a British spy that takes a job as a librarian in order to trap a double agent wanted by the British Secret Service. He falls in love with Nan Perry (Claire Bloom), a librarian and follower of the Communist Party. Directed by Martin Ritt.

The Time Machine (2002) – Alexander Hartdegen is an inventor intent on traveling back in time. After a series of mishaps, he travels thousands of years into the future to find that the world is a very different place in which humans are hunted. A computer called Vox (Orlando Bloom) acts a librarian, giving Hartdegen the information he needs. Based on the novel by H.G. Wells. Directed by Simon Wells.

You're a Big Boy Now (1966) – The coming-of-age story of Bernard Chanticleer (Peter Kastner) who works at the public library. He falls in love with go-go dancer Barbara Darling (Elizabeth Hartman), who leaves him for his coworker Raef del Grado (Tony Bill). After a series of mishaps, he ends up in jail but is bailed out by coworker Amy Partlett (Karen Black) who has fallen in love with him. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

APPENDIX B:
Film Data Sheet

Film Information

Film Title: _____

Film Release Year: _____

Film Genre:　( ) Drama
　　　　　　　( ) Comedy
　　　　　　　( ) Action
　　　　　　　( ) Horror
　　　　　　　( ) Other

Creative Control:

　　　　Director: _____

　　　　Producer: _____

　　　　Writer: _____

　　　　Main Cast: _____

　　　　　　　　　_____

　　　　　　　　　_____

　　　　　　　　　_____

　　　　　　　　　_____

Film Plot Summary:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Librarian Character Name:

_____

Character Sex:　( ) Female　　( ) Male

APPENDIX C:
Character Data Sheet

Librarian Character Name:

_____

Role: ( ) Minor   ( ) Medium   ( ) Major   ( ) Unable to Determine

Physical Description

Sex of the Character: ( ) Male   ( ) Female

Age of the Character: ( ) Under 30   ( ) 30 to 50   ( ) Over 50

Race/Ethnicity:
    ( ) Caucasian
    ( ) African American
    ( ) Hispanic/Latin
    ( ) Asian
    ( ) Other
    ( ) Unable to be determined

Female Hairstyle: ( ) Bun   ( ) No Bun

Male Hairstyle:
    ( ) Completely Bald
    ( ) Somewhat Bald
    ( ) Not Bald

Eyeglasses:
    ( ) Always wears glasses
    ( ) Sometimes wears glasses
    ( ) Never wears glasses

Work Environment

Type of Library:
    ( ) Public
    ( ) Academic
    ( ) School
    ( ) Other

Duties/Tasks Performed:
      ( ) Reference work
      ( ) Circulation
      ( ) Cataloging
      ( ) Shelving Books
      ( ) Computer-related
      ( ) Research
      ( ) Stamping books
      ( ) Other

Romantic Relationships

Marital Status:
      ( ) Single
      ( ) In a relationship
      ( ) Married
      ( ) Separated
      ( ) Divorced
      ( ) Widowed
      ( ) Unable to be determined

Character falls in love by end of film: ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Other

Does the character undergo a transformation during the film?   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

If yes, describe the transformation: _____
_____
_____

NOTES: _____
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX D:
Codebook

Film Information

Film Title: Fill in the complete title of the film.

Film Release Date: Fill in the year in which the film was first released.

Creative Control: This is the group of people responsible for the creation and production
of the film:
   a. Director: Fill in the name of the film's director.
   b. Producer: Fill in the name of the film's producer(s).
   c. Writer: Fill in the name of the screenwriter(s). If the movie is base on a
      book/novel, include the name of the author.

Film Genre: Indicate the genre under which the film falls under. Use the Internet Movie
   Database (www.imdb.com) to determine the genre. If more than one genre is
   listed, decide which genre best describes the film.

Film Plot Summary: Write a brief summary of the film's plot. Include main characters
   and main events.

Librarian Character Name: Pick out the librarian in the film and fill in their full name. If
   there is more than one librarian characters that play an important part in the plot,
   use multiple coding sheets (one for each librarian character).

Character Sex: Mark the appropriate sex of the character.

Character Data Sheet

Librarian Character Name: Fill in name of the librarian character that you are coding.
   This name should match the Librarian Character Name on the Film Information
   Coding Sheet.

Role: Indicate whether the librarian character plays a minor, medium, or major role in the
   film:
   a. Minor: The character has few lines (less than ten) and/or only makes a few
      appearances in the film.
   b. Medium: The character is not one of the main characters but does have more
      than ten lines of dialogue but does not appear in more than half the film.
   c. Major: The character is one of the main characters with a lot of dialogue and
      appears in more than half the film.
   d. Unable to determine: Mark this box if you are unable to determine what role
      the librarian character plays in the film.

Physical Description

Age: Indicate the age of the librarian character. If not explicitly stated, estimate the age.
   If you cannot determine the age, indicate that you are unable to determine.

Race/Ethnicity: Indicate the race/ethnicity of the librarian character.

Female Hairstyle: Indicate whether or not the female librarian character wears her hair in
   a bun.

Male Hairstyle: Indicate whether the male librarian character is completely bald,
   somewhat bald, or not bald.

Eyeglasses: Indicate if the librarian character always wears glasses, sometimes wears
glasses, or never wears glasses in the film.

Work Environment

Type of Library: Indicate what type of the library the character works in:

a. Public: The character works in a public library setting. Look for the words
   "public library," "county library," or "city library" on signs and in the library
   to help you determine if it is not explicitly stated.
b. Academic: The character works in a college or university library. If not
   explicitly stated, look for the words "college library" and "university water."
   Also look for characters that appear to be students or professors
c. School: The character works in a school library (grades K through 12). If not
   explicitly states, look for the words "school library" and look for library
   patrons that are very young and for teachers.
d. Other: If the character does not work in a public, academic, or school library,
   specify what type of the library he/she works in.

Duties/Tasks Performed: Indicate which tasks the librarian character performs in the film:

a. Reference: The character works at a reference desk, answering patrons'
   questions and helping them find books and other information.
b. Circulation: The character helps patrons check out books. Includes scanning
   and stamping books.
c. Cataloging: The character catalogs books. Includes bringing new books into
   the library and added them into the system.
d. Re-shelving books: The character collects books and places them on the
   shelves.
e. Computer-related tasks: The character works with computers. Includes
   helping patrons work with the computers, fixing computer problems, and
   using computers to perform other tasks.
f. Research: The character performs in-depth searches for information for a
   specific purpose. This information can be for their own purpose or for a
   patron's purpose.
g. Other: If the character performs other tasks that are important in the film plot,
   specify what tasks they performed.

Romantic Relationships

Marital Status: Indicate the character's marital status.

a. Single: The character is not dating any other character.
b. In a relationship: The character is dating another character.
c. Married: The character is married.
d. Separated: The character is married but does not live with spouse.
e. Divorced: The character was once married but has since divorced.
f. Widowed: The character was once married but the spouse is deceased.
g. Unable to determine.

Falls in love by end of film: Indicate whether or not the librarian character is romantically
involved with another character by the end of the film.

Other
Does the character undergo a transformation during the film?: Indicate whether or not the character has any major physical changes or has a change in personality/attitude due to experiences in the film.
If Yes, describe the transformation in the space provided.