

THE CULTURAL ORIGINS OF  
YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANSHIP, 1876-1900

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## **Abstract**

Public library youth services developed during the period from 1876 to 1900, in the context of late 19<sup>th</sup> century beliefs about the importance of childhood and the power of reading. This dissertation analyzes the cultural forces that influenced the negotiation and growth of the development of public library services to children. A number of preceding but more transient forms of library services in such institutions as Sunday Schools and young men's associations informed librarians' discussions in 1876, when they first began addressing the needs of children in professional writings. Early models of youth services emphasized the authority of teachers, limiting children's borrowing to those materials that augmented school lessons. By the late 1880s, librarians began providing direct, personal service to children, formalizing their own expertise and authority by making lists of approved books for young readers. Librarians were influenced by Progressive Era movements including the kindergarten, settlement house, child study, and home libraries movements to further expand their offerings for children by exploring new ways of attracting and capturing children's interest. Public library youth services began in the 1890s to include games, picture collections, story hours, and reading clubs. By 1900, these developments were formalized in training programs for children's librarians and the formation of a national organization of professional children's librarians within the American Library Association. These findings about cultural origins of youth services librarianship shed new light on how this specialty developed, and they offer a vantage point from which to reassess contemporary youth services in public libraries as a product of late 19<sup>th</sup> century debates about the importance of reading as an influence on children's characters.

*For Ben*

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## **Dissertation Introduction**

### **Introduction: Cultural Context**

In 1900, at the newly founded Pittsburgh Carnegie Training School for Children's Librarians, five speakers from major social movements were invited to address the first class of trainees. These speakers were: Susan Blow of the kindergarten movement; Jane Addams of the settlement house movement; John Dewey from the fields of education and philosophy; urban poverty reformer Jacob Riis; and Ernest Seton Thompson, naturalist and children's author who was instrumental in the founding of the Boy Scouts of America.<sup>1</sup> From their first professional training, children's librarians were connected to social reform movements through the breadth of interests these speakers represented. Understanding public library services to youth requires understanding the genesis of these services in a cultural milieu of social reform in the late nineteenth century.

The cultural origins of children's librarianship shed light on the historical connection between children and reading. In nineteenth century America, reading was considered a central part of life. It was commonly understood that one's choice of what to read shaped one's character, and thus could lead to personal elevation or ruin. Good books on topics such as history, biography, and travel were believed to offer the best information for a voting man or a woman whose reading influenced the reading choices of brothers, sons, and fathers. Choice of reading materials was crucial for children, who were seen as especially malleable and subject to the influence of those around them. It was believed that the right reading material would shape children's character growth in good directions, so that they would become good citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians* (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh,[1900]).

The history of the emergence of children's librarianship offers a clear window on the development of a middle-class American concept of childhood as a time period in which character is shaped by, among other forces, reading experiences. As librarians in this period began to provide library services tailored for children, their work both mirrored and furthered new conceptions of childhood as a distinct time of life requiring special attention. These librarians were influenced by cultural institutions that preceded the public libraries in providing library service to children and by social movements that gained momentum near the turn of the century. As demonstrated by the lecturers from many social reform movements who contributed to the opening year of the Pittsburgh Carnegie Training School for Children's Librarians, leaders from many movements and institutions came together by the turn of the century over their concern for children and their reading.

**Scope: Children's Librarianship, 1876-1900**

This dissertation analyzes the development of public library youth services from 1876 to 1900 and the social and cultural forces that shaped the negotiation and growth of these services. During this period, librarians defined their professional responsibility to children and created the specialty of children's librarianship. A dynamic process of negotiation characterized the emergence of professional children's librarianship. In the late nineteenth century, the question facing public libraries was whether they should have any role in providing children with services such as allowing them to borrow books or come into the library building to read. Some librarians, like William Fletcher (1844-1917) as early as 1876 argued that children should be allowed full access to the resources of the public library. His paper appeared in the first major national report on public

libraries which was published by the U.S. Bureau of Education. However, his optimistic statement was far from the last word on the subject.

Over the course of the next few decades, some librarians would argue that library services should be tied to children's school work, and their reading guided by their teachers. Others would argue that librarians needed to take a firm hand in guiding children's reading, but disagreed as to the best methods for influencing children who, after all, were voluntarily spending their time in libraries. Additionally, there were ongoing debates about which books were best for children, which raised such questions as whether fiction was appropriate, which genres were best, and which authors wrote appropriate books for children.

These questions were important because after 1852, when the Boston Public Library was established, the movement to create public libraries in cities and towns in the United States was gaining momentum. In 1876, librarians founded their professional association, the American Library Association (ALA). Also in 1876, Melvil Dewey (1851-1931) edited the first issue of the periodical *Library Journal*, and, as mentioned above, the U. S. Bureau of Education published the first national report to collect information about public libraries, titled *Public Libraries in the United States of America*. They created the rudiments of a profession based on the provision of access to carefully chosen collections of reading materials and the provision of a range of emergent services based on these collections. In effect they were establishing as their professional jurisdiction the proper guidance of the reading of citizens in their communities.

After 1876, as public librarians were taking as their field of work the reading of all adult citizens and most public libraries limited their services exclusively to adults and

children over the age of about 14, arguments about what they might do for impressionable youth began to pepper the pages of their professional writings. Only a handful of libraries were founded specifically for children or included children among their clientele before 1876.<sup>2</sup> However, by 1900, public librarians had enlarged their field of work to include the reading of all citizens, regardless of age. By this time most public libraries had begun to offer services to children. Many had not only special collections for them but also special rooms or other spaces dedicated to children's use. In 1900, as mentioned above, the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library Training School for Children's Librarians was founded, and would go on to be the premier training institution for children's librarians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1900, two other librarian training programs, in Brooklyn, New York, and Albany, New York, had also begun to offer training for work with children in libraries. Moreover, 1900 was an auspicious year for the emergence of children's librarianship as a professional specialty because that year librarians founded an official Section for Children's Librarians within the ALA.

### **Definitions**

Public library youth services are library services created for young people. This study distinguishes between those services accidentally provided to the young and those intentionally created for them. Early public libraries may have provided unintentional benefits to children through their adult services, when older family members borrowed books from the public library, for example, these books were probably read by the

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<sup>2</sup> Jesse Hauk Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855* (Chicago,: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949), 156-175.

children in those households.<sup>3</sup> Such instances are outside of the scope of the present work.

Instead, this study examines those services deliberately created for youth by librarians. The phrase “public library youth services” indicates services created before there were formal positions or training programs for children’s librarians. However, both phrases, public library youth services and children’s librarianship, indicate the formal work done by public libraries for children, and the latter phrase came into common use among librarians in the time leading up to opening of training programs, during the 1890s.

The nature and intended effects of these services changed over time. In her dissertation on the genesis of children’s services in public libraries, Fannette Thomas argues that they are characterized by specialized collections, spaces, personnel, techniques of service, and the development of inter-agency cooperation focused on children.<sup>4</sup> The first four aspects constitute useful categories for describing what librarians did for children. Thomas implies in her examination of inter-agency cooperation that once librarians had established youth services inside libraries, they then began to look outward to cooperate with other agencies. As this dissertation demonstrates, Thomas oversimplifies what was a complex process. In fact, librarians were always connected to the cultural developments around them.

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<sup>3</sup> Christine Pawley, *Reading on the Middle Border : The Culture of Print in Late Nineteenth-Century Osage, Iowa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 100-101.

<sup>4</sup> Fannette H. Thomas, "The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library : 1875-1906," xiii, 357 leaves.

## Research Questions

A central theme of this dissertation is that developments in public library youth services were from the start connected to the larger cultural context in which libraries were situated. A close look at these connections raises the following questions: How did the emergence of children's librarianship reflect larger cultural changes in the United States from 1876-1900? What social forces converged to influence the development of librarianship so that public librarians began accept the idea that they had responsibilities for providing services to children? How were librarians persuaded to take up work with children? In what ways and for what reasons were children seen as a special clientele, requiring services distinctive from those provided for adults?

As mentioned above, librarians both reflected and contributed to an emerging view in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of childhood as an important time of life when children were considered immensely impressionable, and childhood as the period in which a person's character was formed. While this view of childhood is now predominant, it was at the time novel and profoundly affected institutional arrangements for the welfare of children. Moreover, the work of librarians for adults in public libraries was based on the belief that reading exerted a powerful social and personal force, and that reading the right books had the power to change for the better the social world one individual at a time. Belief in the importance of childhood and belief in the power of reading, came together in the work of children's librarians. A number of questions are raised by this convergence. To what extent does the history of children's librarianship offer an important window on the history of ideas about children and reading? In what ways are those ideas inflected by class, in particular by the middle-class ideal of

childhood as a time of protection and education? How was the emergence of children's librarianship in public libraries related to the development of cooperation between libraries and other institutions for children, particularly public schools?

The ideas of public librarians about the best books and the techniques they evolved for reaching children were negotiated actively through professional discussions and publications in the period under discussion in this dissertation. Starting in 1900, these ideas were formalized into the body of knowledge that constituted the coursework in training programs for children's librarians. These observations raise such questions as: What books did librarians recommend for children, and why? How did librarians distinguish their work with children from the work of other professionals, including teachers, and from the work done by other social movements concerned with children in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? What were the defining elements of work with children, as it was taught to the first formally trained children's librarians?

Moreover, during this time period, librarianship was becoming a more female-intensive profession. The first national reports to address what public libraries were—and should be—doing for children were created by women. In fact, children's librarianship rapidly became a specialty populated almost exclusively by women. These issues raise questions such as: How did trends in the gender of the librarians working with children change over time? What factors led to the extreme feminization of children's librarianship? How was this trend influenced by related gender trends in other institutions, such as schools, where most superintendents were male but most classroom teachers were female?

These are not the only questions that will be addressed by the present work, but they represent many of the major cultural issues at play in the formation of children's librarianship.

### **Histories of Youth Services Librarianship, 1876-1900**

There are a few existing histories of youth services librarianship, and they have necessarily touched on the people or events that were central to the creation of the specialty. For example, in the dissertation mentioned above, Fannette Thomas lists and summarizes many of the publications towards the formalization of youth services, but she does not analyze the meanings of these documents. Thomas also provides a useful framework for understanding the elements that constituted the professional jurisdiction of children's librarians, as mentioned above. However, she does not analyze the social meanings of the professional events and publications that led to the genesis of children's librarianship. These events and publications are difficult to understand without reference to their late 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural context, when great power was attributed to reading and new emphasis was being placed on childhood as an important time of life.

A few biographies offer another useful source for understanding aspects of the development of children's librarianship. Sybille Jagusch documents the lives of two women whose energy drove aspects of this development, Caroline M. Hewins (1846-1926) and Anne Carroll Moore (1871-1961). Jagusch contributes to a better understanding of Hewins' contributions as creator of many kinds of youth services work that shaped the professional specialty, including the series of Reading of the Young

reports that Hewins inaugurated and that are discussed below.<sup>5</sup> Jagusch also emphasizes the importance of Hewins' role as a mentor in the life of Moore. Several other biographical studies have highlighted Moore's passionate and persuasive work with book publishers and others, and in promoting the importance of books providing a rich aesthetic experiences for children.<sup>6</sup> Jagusch emphasizes the particular motivations, philosophies, and accomplishments of her subjects. She does not situate the emergence of youth services in a social and cultural context of reform or analyze the dynamic process of negotiating what libraries should do for children. A study that analyzes the connection of librarians' work to larger ideas about reading and children in their historical context is needed to understand how children's librarianship came to be.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Histories from the often disparate fields of libraries and librarianship, schools and education, and the history of childhood provide relevant background for the present work. From the history of libraries and librarianship, Jesse Shera's study of the origins of public libraries in the United States contributes a rich understanding of the complexity of the many causal factors that contributed to the emergence of public libraries in the United States. Similarly, Sidney H. Ditzion's work on the history of public libraries emphasizes the social factors that contributed to public library success. These early works by Shera

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<sup>5</sup> Sybille A. Jagusch, "First among Equals, Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore : Foundations of Library Work with Children," 130-131.

<sup>6</sup> M. Bush, "New England Book Women: Their Increasing Influence," *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spring, 1996), 719-735; Anne H. Lundin, "Anne Carroll Moore (1871-1961): 'I Have Spun Out a Long Thread.'" In *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In*, ed. Suzanne Hildenbrand (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1996), 187-204; Frances Clarke Sayers, *Anne Carroll Moore; a Biography*, [1st ] ed. (New York,: Atheneum, 1972), xiv, 303; K. E. Vandergrift, "Female Advocacy and Harmonious Voices: A History of Public Library Services and Publishing for Children in the United States," *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spr, 1996), 683-718.

and Ditzion provide approaches to understanding the cultural context of the public library as it emerged and evolved.

Dee Garrison in a much later study also describes the emergence of public librarianship in its cultural context, but now taking into account such factors as gender and class. Her analysis of the class origins of early library leaders makes an important contribution to situating their work within the socio-economic landscape of 19<sup>th</sup> century America.<sup>7</sup> Her book *Apostles of Culture* also offers useful insights into the development of the “missionary” convictions of librarians about the importance of education as a moral force.<sup>8</sup> However, Garrison is misleading in her discussion of the development of youth services in public libraries. She concluded that the feminization of librarianship led to the marginalization of the public library in society, and she attributed much of this marginalization to children’s librarians and their work with children:

Originally conceived and theoretically maintained as an educational institution, the children’s department was, in fact, even by the turn of the century mainly a provider of recreational reading for preadolescents. Misgivings over the nature of library service to children were rarely expressed, however. Most often, sentimentality overruled any attempt at a realistic assessment of the work being accomplished in the children’s department. The romantic air of enthusiastic tenderness so prominent even today in any discussion of children in the library is in sharp contrast to the more normal tendency of librarians to indulge in self-criticism in every other phase of library work. This incongruity becomes more understandable when it is remembered that the children’s section of the library was created and shaped by women librarians. Here, as in no other area, library women were free to express, unchallenged, their self-image. Because their activities did not exceed the Victorian stereotype of the female, their endeavors remained substantially unquestioned and unexamined by male library leaders.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture : The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 16-35.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 36-63.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 180.

As others have argued, Garrison presents assumptions without evidence about the effects of feminization.<sup>10</sup> She also presents no evidence to support her claims that work with children was sentimental, romantic, or represented stereotypical expectations of women. Garrison cites few sources from before 1900, so her understanding of the roles of male library leaders and the women who worked as librarians and became library leaders prior to this time is limited. Perhaps the most glaring omission in Garrison's study is that it overlooks the historical context in which children's librarians emerged as a time when many groups as well as librarians were concerned for the well-being of children. Finally, Garrison ignores the emergence of new understandings of the importance of childhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This dissertation attempts to reclaim for study the overlooked and undervalued work of the librarians, many of them women, who founded youth services. Eight women in particular contributed to this emerging field by creating a series of reports which were foundational to the formalization of children's librarianship. These reports, the Reading of the Young reports, were issued from 1882 to 1898 and were based on questionnaires designed to discover what libraries were doing to guide children's reading, and the reports will be discussed in more detail below. The fact that the women who created this series of reports were among the earliest librarians to use basic survey techniques to

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<sup>10</sup> Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Women in Library History: From the Politics of Library History to the History of Library Politics" In *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In*, ed. Suzanne Hildenbrand (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1996), 1-24; Barbara Elizabeth Brand, "Sex-Typing in Education for Librarianship: 1870-1920" In *The Status of Women in Librarianship* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1983), 29-49; Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Revision Versus Reality: Women in the History of the Public Library Movement" In *The Status of Women in Librarianship*, ed. Kathleen M. Heim (New York, NY: Neal-Schuman, 1983), 7-28; Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Some Theoretical Considerations on Women in Library History," *Journal of Library History Philosophy and Comparative Librarianship* 18, no. 4 (1983), 382-390.

ascertain what was being done in libraries demonstrates that their work was systematic and required hard evidence. These women were not merely sentimental.

Women alone did not found youth services, although children's librarians were almost exclusively women by the year 1900. After that time, it is true that women so dominated the field of work with children that, as Christine Jenkins wrote, "...the study of youth services librarianship is essentially the study of women."<sup>11</sup> However, before that time, and especially during the 1870s and 1880s, the leadership and a large proportion of the library work force were men.<sup>12</sup> At this time, male librarians also contributed to the development of youth services. In fact, to understand how youth services emerged in a complex cultural context of institutions for children and new understandings of childhood, it is necessary to examine the writings and works of librarians of both genders.

It has been argued that in many histories of libraries and librarianship, the contributions of men have been recorded while those of women have been omitted, overlooked, or discounted.<sup>13</sup> The combination of the lower prestige of women relative to men and the tendency to trivialize children relative to adults have led to library historians largely ignoring the development of what is thus the doubly devalued area of youth services. This study is based in the theoretical perspective of gendered history, an

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<sup>11</sup> C. A. Jenkins, "Women of ALA Youth Services and Professional Jurisdiction: Of Nightingales, Newberies, Realism, and the Right Books, 1937-1945," *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spring 1996, 1996), 815.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Niles Maack, "Gender, Culture, and the Transformation of American Librarianship, 1890-1920," *Libraries & Culture* 33, no. 1 (Winter, 1998), 51-61, <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790e183771395b86e5aa85768c ff4fe7af0878b52f9192e7eef4c8254a11585df021&fmt=C>; Joanne E. Passett, "Men in a Feminized Profession: The Male Librarian, 1887-1921," *Libraries & Culture* 28, no. 4 (1993), 385-402.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen M. Heim, *The Status of Women in Librarianship: Historical, Sociological, and Economic Issues* (New York, N.Y.: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1983), xi, 483; Suzanne Hildenbrand, *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Pub., 1996), xii, 324.

approach to historical research that aims to understand the contributions of men and women, acknowledging the historical context of gender inequality without making the contributions of either group invisible. Suzanne Hildenbrand describes the need for more gendered histories of librarianship: "...[T]here is no possibility of an accurate library history without an examination of the place of men as well as that of women within librarianship."<sup>14</sup>

However, women and men were not the only actors in the development of youth services. The children whom they served, and their needs and preferences, were also important in determining how these services emerged. The study of the history of childhood has typically been informed by debates about the role of children in families, usually focusing on the extent to which and how children were perceived, valued, or loved by their parents. Phillippe Aries' 1962 assertion, that parents in the past were unsentimental and even indifferent toward the deaths of their young children, sparked enormous scholarly interest.<sup>15</sup> While other historians have found evidence both to support and contradict Aries' conclusions, questions about parent-child relations have typically dominated the field.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation examines children in social settings in addition to the family, specifically the civic setting of the public library. The attitudes of professional librarians as they negotiated and debated their responsibility for contributing to the well-being of children provide a revealing look at how children were viewed in public places in the past. In a few instances in the Reading of the Young reports,

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<sup>14</sup> Hildenbrand, *Women in Library History: From the Politics of Library History to the History of Library Politics*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Phillippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood; a Social History of Family* (Knopf, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd DeMause, *The History of Childhood* (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 450. Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children : Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge Cambridgehire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 334.

mentioned above, we are able to catch glimpses of the children themselves and to hear some of their own words that reveal aspects of their own perspectives and attitudes, an area of expanding interest in historical work about childhood.<sup>17</sup> This approach is more generally that of the “bottom-up” history that seeks to find ways of reaching the essentially inarticulate masses in the lower strata of various societies, who leave behind them little in the way of formal records.<sup>18</sup>

By drawing upon historical scholarship about the social role of libraries, professional gender roles, beliefs about the power of reading, and the history of childhood, I aim to analyze the origins of youth services in public libraries as Shera wrote:

Complex social agencies do not arise in response to a single influence; the dogma of simple causation is an easy and ever threatening fallacy. It cannot be said that the public library began on a specific date, at a certain town, as the result of a particular cause. A multiplicity of forces, accumulating over a long period of time, converged to shape this new library form.<sup>19</sup>

The same complexity of approach is required to understand the development of youth services within public libraries.

### **The Reading of the Young Reports**

The dynamic process of negotiating the appropriate role of the public library in serving children took place through publications, at conferences, and in many more conversations that are now lost to us. Among the extant documents is a series of questionnaire-based articles collectively described here as the Reading of the Young

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<sup>17</sup> Harvey J. Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), xiii, 426.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*; Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), xi, 445.

<sup>19</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 200.

reports.<sup>20</sup> These reports were written in the 1880s and 1890s, and they provide a particularly rich source for understanding national trends in librarianship as youth services work developed. The series was inaugurated at the 1882 ALA conference at which Caroline Hewins presented the first report. She included excerpts from librarians' replies to a single simple survey question: "What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?" This was the first of eight Reading of the Young reports, all based on similar surveys though of increasing sophistication and complexity, and all were created by women librarians.<sup>21</sup>

These reports constitute a largely unexamined source for historical evidence of the professional and contextual issues that informed the creation of library service to children. Each of the eight reports gives presents information about how libraries were (or were not) providing materials and services for children, and taken as a group they allow us to document the changes taking place over the two decades that lead to the first formal training for children's librarians.<sup>22</sup> In their introductions or conclusions to the reports, their authors articulated their own rationales for why libraries should serve children and what librarians' primary responsibilities to children should be. They also provided excerpts from the responses to the questionnaire that gave the views of other librarians on these issues. The Reading of the Young reports offer details about a range of views about such issues as the importance of children's reading, which books

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<sup>20</sup> The titles of the reports differed slightly, including such variants as "Yearly Report on the Reading of the Young" in 1885, "Reading for the Young" in 1889, and "Report on Reading for the Young" in 1890. However, Hewins in her 1893 and 1898 reports made it clear that these eight reports were created to be a single series.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix A for an overview of the reports, and Appendix B for the contents of the questionnaires used to generate each report.

<sup>22</sup> Reports were issued in the years 1882, 1883, 1885, 1889, 1890, 1893, 1894, and 1898. The 1893 report, delivered at the World's Congress of Librarians at the Chicago World's Fair, gave an overview of the previous reports and described them as a connected series of reports.

librarians recommended and why, and how these ideas changed from the 1880s to the 1890s. As a result, the reports provide an unusually detailed view of the process by which public library youth services were created.

In a few instances, scholars have mentioned the Reading of the Young reports as early surveys of youth services work. As mentioned above, Sybille Jagusch describes the reports as among the accomplishments of Caroline Hewins, who created the first report and created three out of the eight in the series.<sup>23</sup> Although a few scholars correctly cite the reports as a series of eight, others have mistakenly identified individual reports as isolated articles.<sup>24</sup> In her biography of Anne Carroll Moore, for example, Frances Clark Sayers mentions two of the reports, but does not appear to be aware of the entire series.<sup>25</sup> Margaret Bush quotes from Hewins' 1882 report, but neglects to mention that this was the first of a series of reports.<sup>26</sup> Kay Vandergrift mentions the 1894 report as contributing to the process of formalizing children's librarianship by setting a "kind of standard against which those establishing libraries for young people could measure their work."<sup>27</sup> However, neither Bush nor Vandergrift situates the one report they each cite as one of a series. The highly structured report of 1898 would provide a better example for the argument that Vandergrift is making, as will be discussed in chapter five.

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<sup>23</sup> Jagusch, *First among Equals, Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore : Foundations of Library Work with Children*, 130-131.

<sup>24</sup> Clara O. Jackson, "Service to Urban Children" In *A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada*, eds. Sidney L. Jackson, Eleanor B. Herling and E. J. Josey (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1976), 20-78; Anne H. Lundin, "The Pedagogical Context of Women in Children's Services and Literature Scholarship," *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spring, 1996), 840-850b; Harriet Geneva Long, *Public Library Service to Children; Foundation and Development* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1969), v, 162.

<sup>25</sup> Sayers, *Anne Carroll Moore; a Biography*, ix.

<sup>26</sup> Bush, *New England Book Women: Their Increasing Influence*, 719-735.

<sup>27</sup> Vandergrift, *Female Advocacy and Harmonious Voices: A History of Public Library Services and Publishing for Children in the United States*, 692.

The Reading of the Young reports are not our only source for understanding the wide range of ideas and purposes librarians promoted, discussed, and experimented with as they developed children's librarianship, although they are particularly important. Other sources include contemporary articles in *Library Journal*, such as Caroline Hewins' series of "Literature for the Young" columns published throughout 1883; published lists of recommended books for children, including Hewins' 1882 list *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*; proceedings of the National Educational Association conferences; articles from the journal *Public Libraries*, which began publication in 1896; and writings from popular magazines and other sources that addressed children's reading in the period from 1876 to 1900. However, the Reading of the Young reports constituted the only series of ongoing publications that gathered local detail of practices on a national scope. To understand the content of these reports, and in particular the rationale of librarians for their work with children, it is crucial to have a sense of how childhood was understood in 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

### **Childhood in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Childhood as a stage of life was defined differently in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from today. The words to describe children, though familiar to contemporary ears, had different implications. For instance, "infancy" referred to "the years of maternal control over the child," generally up to age 6. "Young children" referred to those between the age of 6 and the ages of 12 to 16. Those between the ages of 12 or 13 and 18 to as late as 25 were referred to as "young men" or "young people." The terms "childhood" and

“youth” had the broadest meanings, indicating the time from birth to the age of about 18 to 21, the legal ages of majority in various states.<sup>28</sup>

In poorer families, young people of 12 to 16 years old were expected to contribute to the household income through paid work. This was particularly true of boys, but also applied to girls in many working class families. After this point, their transition to adulthood was not immediate but still gradual. They worked alongside adults on farms or in factories and passed from the “dependence” of young children to “semidependence.” During this period of semidependence, it was customary that young people would give their incomes to their parents, whether they were living at home or elsewhere, in order to help support their family and repay the cost of their upbringing.<sup>29</sup>

19<sup>th</sup> century conceptions of age division were also looser than modern divisions, in part because there were far fewer institutional markers that reinforced the significance of attaining a particular age. For instance, children’s schooling commenced at some point after they had reached the age of 6. Most public schools did not yet have standardized entrance ages nor were there mandatory attendance laws. Like public libraries, public schools were expanding and developing their modern form during this period. In a still predominately rural population, schools were often one-room schoolhouses, where children of many ages studied together, and instruction was based on reading level, not year of birth. Public schools primarily served children “between the

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 11-14, 47.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 29-31.

ages of six and fourteen, which was considered the optimal time to form young people's character and help them to internalize moral restraints."<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, the ages at which a child would leave home, begin work, or enter a profession, were indefinite, although many working-class children started work at the ages of 12 to 14, as mentioned above. While some children left home to begin work, others worked in the family home. Girls were expected to help with homemaking work, from sewing to gardening and cooking, while boys were expected to contribute to farm work or the family business. Young people that we now think of as teenagers often did the work of adults. The age at which such transitions took place was typically determined by financial and family circumstances, not solely by the attainment of the age of legal majority.<sup>31</sup>

Harvey Graff argues that the ways of moving from childhood to adulthood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were more diverse than at anytime before or since. There were differences based in economic class; middle-class children were mothered, schooled, and protected while working class children were sent to work with little education or protection. Differences of geography also affected the process of growing up, and there were dramatic contrasts between the farmwork required of children in older agrarian environments and the industrial work of newer urban settings, particularly in the Northeast. With industrialization and the growth of cities, there were more young people growing up in urban settings, and this raised widely held fears that the influences of the city streets would corrupt them. While young men had previously transitioned to adulthood through apprenticeships in which they learned a craft or trade, now young men

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<sup>30</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 91.

<sup>31</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 29-31.

and women were often sent into factory work with little or no training beyond what basic education they could acquire by the ages of 12 to 14.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to diverse ways of growing up based in differences of class and geography, racial differences also affected the process of how children grew to be adults. For example, many Native American children were forced into “Indian Schools” and stripped of their culture in attempts to forcibly assimilate them into white society. These children faced hardships of isolation, social dislocation, and extreme poverty in the wake of their “education.”<sup>33</sup> In the south, some aspects of life had changed dramatically for many African-American children with the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. However, these children faced grueling economic hardships, endemic racism, and the power of former masters who could force those under 21 into “apprenticeships” which sometimes differed from slavery only in name.<sup>34</sup>

There were also differences of experience among children due to their nationality, which was frequently seen as constituting a “racial” difference.<sup>35</sup> The first major wave of immigrants to the United States came from Ireland in the period just prior to the Civil War. From 1876 to 1900, immigrants arrived from many countries, bringing languages, customs, and cultural expectations about growing up that were sometimes in direct conflict with the cultural settings of the urban areas in which they settled.<sup>36</sup> Children in

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<sup>32</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, xi, 445; Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing Up in America*, xiii, 426.

<sup>33</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 170-171; LeRoy Ashby, *Endangered Children : Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York London: Twayne Pub. ; Prentice Hall International, 1997), 98-99.

<sup>34</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 113-117.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color : European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), x, 338 [14] of plates.

<sup>36</sup> Graff, *Conflicting Paths : Growing Up in America*, xiii, 426.

such families had to navigate the complexities of often conflicting expectations about how they should act and what they should believe.<sup>37</sup>

In white middle-class families, there were strong distinctions in expectations of boys versus girls. Adult gender roles were strictly differentiated, with men out at work and women in the home. With the roles of men and women in families divided into public and private spheres, children too were expected to grow into their roles in one or the other of these spheres. Girls were brought up to fulfill their future roles as wives to husbands and mothers to children, while boys were expected to become breadwinners to support their future families.<sup>38</sup>

### **Changing Ideas of Childhood**

Attitudes about children began to change in middle-class American society from 1876 to 1900. Childhood began to be seen as an extended period during which a child was educated and experienced slow maturation through a series of stages.<sup>39</sup> In the Colonial period of American history, Puritan notions of children as tainted by “original sin,” and therefore requiring great discipline and training to be purified if they were to become God-fearing adults, held sway with educators and parents. These notions gave way in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the belief that children were innocents, needing education and protection from the corrupting adult world.<sup>40</sup> In this period, children were

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Julie A. Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America : Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism* (New York Brighton, Sussex: Schocken Books ; Harvester Press, 1982), 108.

<sup>39</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 75-93.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

coming to be valued for their own sake, not only for what income they could produce or for the adults they would become.<sup>41</sup>

These views of childhood were influenced by 18<sup>th</sup> century Western European ideas from the Romantic Era, a period in which children's natural innocence was celebrated in poetry and art. The philosophies of John Locke and Jean-Jacque Rousseau were particularly important in influencing the changing understanding of the nature of children and childhood. In his 1684 *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke explored the idea that a child was born "tabula rasa," or a blank slate, without any innate tendency toward good or bad. The child's disposition would thus be shaped by his or her education and training, not by his or her inherent nature.<sup>42</sup> In his 1762 *Emile, ou de l'education (Emile, or On Education)*, Rousseau went further than Locke, arguing that children were in fact born with a natural propensity toward goodness: "...the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart."<sup>43</sup> Corruption, then, was understood as a force that was introduced by the outside world, the world of adults, and a force from which children needed protection.

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century America, the middle-class notion of childhood that arose emphasized the Lockean idea that children's characters developed as a result of the influences in their environments. While adults' characters were viewed as more or less fixed, children were malleable, subject to the influence of their surroundings. New ideas about evolution that stemmed from popular interpretations of Charles Darwin's ideas of

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<sup>41</sup> Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child : The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), xvi, 277.

<sup>42</sup> John Locke and others, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education : And, of the Conduct of the Understanding* [Some thoughts concerning education.] (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1996), 227.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (La Haye: , 1762).

evolution contributed to this view of children. Darwin's theory of species evolution emphasized the contrast between inborn traits and environmental influences. In 1877, Darwin published *A Biographical Sketch of an Infant*. This recorded his attempts to determine "which of his son's behaviors were instinctual and which were the product of nurture."<sup>44</sup> His ideas were interpreted by the renowned social and political theorist Herbert Spencer, who suggested that children's environments were crucial to determining who they would grow to be.<sup>45</sup> The nurturing influences in a child's environment from this point of view were considered to be of paramount importance in determining his or her later character.

### **Middle-Class Protected Childhood**

Several other factors contributed to the growing tendency to view childhood as a period of protection. First, the Civil War had affected many children who served as soldiers or who lost parents to the war.<sup>46</sup> Unprecedented numbers of orphanages and asylums were founded to care for bereaved, orphaned, or half-orphaned children.<sup>47</sup> Historian Michael Shapiro suggests that one aspect of the aftermath of the Civil War was that adults were inspired to reclaim the lost innocence of their childhood through a resurgence of interest in board games and toys.<sup>48</sup> After seeing the toll that the war had taken on children and families, reformers grew increasingly concerned with finding ways to ensure that children need never experience the battlefield and that as many orphaned

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<sup>44</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Kieran Egan, *Getting it Wrong from the Beginning : Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), x, 204.

<sup>46</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 120-125.

<sup>47</sup> Kenneth Cmiel, *A Home of Another Kind : One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12-13.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Steven Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 68.

children as possible would be given safe homes in orphanages.<sup>49</sup> Some reformers pointed out that animals were afforded more basic protections than children, and they created the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children 1875 and began to work to pass laws to protect children from “abuse, exploitation, and neglect.”<sup>50</sup>

Another factor that made the protection of children easier was the shrinking size of families. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a typical mother bore seven to ten children. That number shrank to five children by 1850 and three by 1900. As families had fewer children, they were able to invest more time and resources in raising each child.<sup>51</sup> This led to the prolonging of childhood dependency on the family and is also related to extending the period of schooling.<sup>52</sup>

The rise of an idealized notion of childhood corresponded with an increased reverence for motherhood, both of which have been described as part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “cult of domesticity” or “cult of true womanhood.”<sup>53</sup> Just as many Americans began to celebrate the playfulness and emotional openness of children as signs of their innocence, they began to extol the kindness and emotional nurturing of motherhood that allowed these childish traits to flourish. Motherhood was lauded as women’s highest work, because it involved nurturing young hearts and minds. Women’s education at the college level was increasing in this period, justified in part by the idea that mothers were the

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<sup>49</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 120.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 156; Judith A. Dulberger, “Mother Donit Fore the Best” : *Correspondence of a Nineteenth-Century Orphan Asylum*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 1-21.

<sup>51</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 75-83.

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions : The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 230; Nancy Falik Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood : "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 225.

child's first teachers, and educated mothers would raise educated sons of the republic, who would go on to vote for the best leaders for the nation.<sup>54</sup>

However, in reality, many mothers could not spend their days with their children because they had to work to sustain their families economically. Many poor and working-class parents needed their children to work as well. These economic differences led to two different and competing visions of children as "useful" to families through their labor or as "protected" from the adult world to prolong their innocence. Middle class parents were increasingly able to provide their children with "a sheltered childhood, free from work responsibilities and devoted to education and play." Working-class, immigrant, and farming parents needed their children to contribute economically to their households, while middle-class families increasingly emphasized the sentimental value of children.<sup>55</sup>

### **Institutions of Childhood**

Middle-class reformers, accepting the idea of childhood as a period marked by special needs that required special kinds of care and services, began to establish institutions that treated children separately from adults. The list is long and the institutions various. It includes, for example, public schools, orphanages, and Sunday schools. These institutions were sponsored by adult organizations such as Children's Aid Societies, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and many others which provided financial support and volunteer help.

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child : The Changing Social Value of Children*, xvi, 277.

Congregate institutions for children were designed to segregate children from corrupting, adult influences and “provide them with the order and discipline that their families lacked.”<sup>56</sup> Orphanages, reform schools, and temporary asylums provided homes for children who were in danger in the eyes of reform groups. Some of these children were saved from starvation by the charity offered by such Christian organizations. Other children were taken directly from the streets to foster-care placements, with only minimal opportunities to see their biological families.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the most influential child-centered institutions formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were tax-supported public schools. In New England in the 1840s, educational reform efforts led by Massachusetts legislator Horace Mann and others were able to establish state support for the “common school,” later known as the public school.<sup>58</sup> Mann argued that public schools increased opportunity through the provision of education. This made “social mobility” possible, and he promoted the teaching of “morality and citizenship” in schools to prepare children for their place in society.<sup>59</sup> The idea of universal education meshed well with the ideals of American democracy. To be a member of an “informed electorate” in an era increasingly dominated by the printed word required knowing how to read, which required schooling, Mann argued. By 1860, the success of these arguments was manifest in the public school systems that had been founded in the majority of states.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 156; Ashby, *Endangered Children : Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History*, 17-34.

<sup>57</sup> Cmiel, *A Home of another Kind : One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare*, 9-36

<sup>58</sup> Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *The Transformation of the School : Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 8-10.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 16

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 13

It took time for public schooling to spread to all parts of the United States and to all populations of children. Public schooling was slower to develop in the South than in the North, and took much longer to be offered to African-American children in the South than to white children. In contrast, the North and parts of the Midwest and far West had public schools relatively quickly.<sup>61</sup> By 1850, approximately 60% of children nineteen or younger were enrolled in schools in the state of New York; In Massachusetts, 80% of children from towns of under 2,500 people were enrolled in schools at about this time.<sup>62</sup> By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, universal public education was well on its way to becoming an institutional reality across the United States.<sup>63</sup>

During the period of the Progressive Era, from approximately 1890 to 1920, a number of new reform movements built bureaucratic and professional institutions to address social problems, chief among them those devoted to the welfare of children. Among these new institutions were kindergartens, which aimed to provide education to children under the age of six. Settlement houses in their mission to bring “culture” to poor families in urban settings often necessitated some practical involvement with the children of those families. A number of previously established reform groups also created new organizational forms of work with children. For example, the Children’s Aid Society in Boston created a network of home libraries, which consisted of sets of books and volunteers that distributed those books to homes in poor neighborhoods.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> David B. Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue : Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 31.

<sup>63</sup> Cremin, *The Transformation of the School : Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, 10, 13, 18

<sup>64</sup> Fannette H. Thomas, "Home Libraries {i.e. Extension Collections}: A Look into the Past of Children's Services," *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 6 (Fall, 1992), 41-50,

The 19<sup>th</sup> century middle-class notion of childhood emphasized the child's "fragility, malleability, and corruptibility."<sup>65</sup> Of these, the most important was the child's malleability in response to his or her environment. What easier element of the environment to modify than the books and magazines that were placed in their hands? Adults focused on shaping the development of the young human organism in part by molding their reading habits, which were believed to have positive effects on their character, education, and opportunity. The idea that reading had an important impact on children's development led to libraries being established in many of the institutions mentioned above.

### **Reading and Character**

As beliefs about the power of reading encountered new ideas of childhood vulnerability, public librarians found that they needed to assess what effects their collections would have on children, and in particular on the development of their characters. "Character" is here used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sense to mean the kind of person a child could grow to be in a moral and ethical sense. In the most basic terms, children could become good citizens or criminals, depending on the environment in which they grew and the influences they encountered during childhood. Currently, concern over character has been revived in the form of "character education" programs for children in

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<http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790e183771395b86e5aaadb5b5bd24984027b691d5f69b1d4d0505716c6018bf241e&fmt=C>.

<sup>65</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 76.

schools, albeit without the strong emphasis on the impact of reading choices that was part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century context.<sup>66</sup>

Ideas about the character-corrupting power of reading were promulgated by obscenity reformer Anthony Comstock, who in 1873 founded the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. From the beginning of his reform efforts, Comstock emphasized the threat that obscenity posed to children by encouraging both criminal and sexual behavior.<sup>67</sup> In 1883, he published a book full of stories about innocent children who had “fallen” from respectable households into lives of crime, influenced by dangerous books and magazines. Comstock liked to point out that even “loving parents” could be responsible for their children's corruption if they gave their children too much freedom and “did not appreciate the dangers of reading adventure novels.”<sup>68</sup>

The power of reading was considered so great that it had the potential to swing the growth of an individual's character growth in one direction or another, shaping a boy to be a good or bad member of society, a successful tradesman or a thief. Girls might become good wives and mothers or lose their virtue and become prostitutes, and these outcomes were believed to be in part attributable to the stories they read in childhood. As Melvil Dewey wrote in the inaugural issue of *Library Journal* in 1876, “...the largest influence over the people is the printed page.”<sup>69</sup>

The availability of the printed page to children was also increasing during this period, as more and more books for children were being published. Librarians noted that

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<sup>66</sup> The websites [www.character.com](http://www.character.com) and [www.goodcharacter.com](http://www.goodcharacter.com) provide overviews of two popular character education programs.

<sup>67</sup> Nicola Kay Beisel, *Imperiled Innocents : Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 57.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> Melvil Dewey, "The Profession," *Library Journal* 1, no. 1 (1876), 5.

“[t]he remarkable development of ‘juvenile literature’” was a sign of “the growing importance of this portion of the community [children] in the eyes of book producers.”<sup>70</sup> Exact publishing figures for children’s books are difficult to determine, since publishers did not separate their offerings by age groups and some books were intended for both children and adults. However, records from the book review journal *Publisher’s Weekly* indicate that there were a growing number of children’s titles published yearly throughout this time period.<sup>71</sup> The numbers of children’s books being published increased during the period under discussion. For example, in 1880, 270 new juvenile books appeared, and by 1900, this number had increased to 482.<sup>72</sup>

However, as more books and magazines became available to children, some critics expressed fearful reservations about what they described as the “deluge of children’s books” being published.<sup>73</sup> How would concerned adults be sure that the materials being written for children were appropriate and not harmful to young minds? Librarians who were establishing a role in shaping the reading habits of communities began to take an interest in the idea of whether they should provide books for children and, if so, which books they should collect from the many available titles. A few public librarians began envisioning what they could do for children in 1876. The topic of the nature of childhood continued to arise in librarians’ professional conferences and publications, as they debated how libraries could effectively guide children’s reading.

Some librarians experimented with providing resources to help with children’s education

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<sup>70</sup> William Fletcher, “Public Libraries and the Young” In *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management*, ed. U. S. Bureau of Education (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Bureau of Education, 1876), 412.

<sup>71</sup> John William Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1972), 675-697.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 675.

<sup>73</sup> Esther Jane Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1965), 13-25.

in schools. Like schools, libraries were often described as a democratizing force, which allowed poor families access to the same books owned by middle-class or wealthy families and so allowed the poor to have access to the educational opportunities that these books represented. Some public librarians argued that schooling was merely the introduction to learning that needed to be continued through self-education, and that schooling was meant to prepare children “for the far greater work of educating themselves.”<sup>74</sup> In light of these ideas, some librarians began to experiment with offering services directly to children.

The history of public library service to children from 1876 to 1900 is particularly interesting because of these changes in ideas about the character of childhood and the importance of children’s reading. Before 1890, much of the professional discussion revolved around which books were most harmful to children and how libraries could avoid contributing to the bad influences to which children were exposed through the reading of cheaply available story papers and dime novels. During the 1890s, new ideas about children’s learning began to influence how librarians began to evaluate which books were best for children. Librarians during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century began offering children stories and fictional works that engaged their imaginations as well as recreational activities for them in libraries.

## **Chapter Overview**

This dissertation is organized chronologically in two sections to reflect the major changes that occurred around the year 1890. Chapters one through four cover the years

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<sup>74</sup> Melvil Dewey, "The Public Library and the Public Schools," *Library Journal* 1, no. 12 (August, 1877), 437.

1876 to 1889, when some librarians began to articulate their reasons for wanting to provide services to children, established institutional connections with schools, and gathered evidence that libraries had something of value to offer children. Chapters five and six cover the period from 1890 to 1900, when a new array of social movements took up the question of what caretaking responsibilities American society had for its children, and libraries began to dramatically expand the scope of their offerings of reading materials and activities for children.

More specifically, chapter one introduces institutions other than public libraries that provided library services to young people prior to 1876. These institutions included school districts, reform schools, orphanages, young men's associations, and Sunday School libraries. Some of the institutions were religious and others were secular; some were more focused on protecting children from corrupting influences, while others aimed to prepare the young to inhabit the adult world through education. The purposes of these institutions in providing books to children varied, but they all believed they could influence children's character development, and they all employed libraries among their means of doing so. Some developments in the history of youth services in public libraries can be traced back to the influence of the libraries in these institutions. The fact that many institutions serving children used libraries suggests how significant reading was presumed to be as a force that helped to form children's characters.

Chapter two analyzes the ways that public librarians articulated their responsibilities to children in writings and conference presentations from 1876 to 1879, from the founding year of librarians' professional organization, the American Library Association (ALA), to the 1879 ALA conference which was held specifically to discuss

the topic of what libraries should provide to children. These writings show the beginnings of public librarians' discussions of what public libraries should do for children. The dynamic process of professional negotiation of the role of the public library in serving children both reflected and contributed to the evolution of cultural ideas about reading and its effects on children's characters, most notably through highlighting the negative effects of certain kinds of books.

Common or public schools constituted another important group of institutions that addressed children and reading in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chapter three analyzes the establishment of public library services to children through schools from 1876 to 1889, a time when many librarians reached children through their teachers, by providing materials to augment school textbooks. Before 1879, most public libraries were described as institutions that offered educational opportunities for adults, after school was finished.<sup>75</sup> As public librarians began to lend books to schools, make special presentations about books in the schools and the public library, their efforts established the usefulness of public library services to schools. The success of these efforts served to cement the idea that public libraries were educational institutions, and therefore useful not only to adults but also to children, at least in the context of schools. Not all cooperative efforts were successful, in part because female librarians had difficulty in convincing male school administrators to implement various cooperative schemes. By the late 1880s, librarians had begun to develop services for children in the public library that were not directly associated with children's school work.

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<sup>75</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 308; Sidney Herbert Ditzion, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture; a Social History of the American Public Library Movement in New England and the Middle States from 1850 to 1900* (Chicago,: American Library Association, 1947), x, 263.

Chapter four examines the materials that were recommended for children and why. Discussions of which books were best often addressed the effects that librarians expected children's reading to have on their intellectual and character development. These discussions reflected the beliefs of librarians in the importance of reading in helping to shape children's characters. For example, many librarians in the 1880s worried that children reading fiction would develop an unrealistic sense of what was possible and so be disappointed and dissatisfied with adult realities. Children were encouraged to read stories that set good moral examples or that focused their attention on history or scientific facts about the natural world. Librarians frequently recommended nature, history, and sometimes biography, all "true" books, to children. This chapter examines these recommendations of "true" materials over fictional works, and librarians' expectations of the outcomes that "true" reading would produce in shaping children's characters.

The period from 1890 to 1900 was marked by a tremendous upsurge of interest in childhood across American society, as people in many social movements began to take interest in childhood as a special time of life with special needs. Chapter five looks at a few of the many Progressive Era social movements concerned with childhood.

Librarians borrowed from the activities of these movements, many of them led by women like Susan Blow and Jane Addams, as the librarians sought to expand their services. The social movements for child welfare that were most influential in the history of youth services in public libraries were the kindergarten, child study, settlement house, and home libraries movements. The first three were national in scope, and their influence was not limited to librarianship alone but was felt in many aspects of society, from

schools to urban tenements. The fourth, the home libraries movement, began as a local effort of the Children's Aid Society in Boston, and was brought to national prominence within the field of librarianship by public librarians who borrowed and adapted its methods. All of these groups were creating programs of service to children that promoted middle-class values about childhood to poor and immigrant populations.

Chapter six examines the special techniques of service that librarians developed for work with children to attract them to reading. While in the period before 1890 there had been a few lectures or library clubs for children, in the 1890s libraries across the country established systematically these and other activities. In these new services there was an emphasis on new kinds of visual displays and the use of picture collections which were appealing and useful for young children who were not yet fluent readers. They also included group experiences for children in the form of storytelling and regular story hours which were to become central to children's librarianship. Many reading clubs as well as what were called "library league" clubs were established to engage the interest of children in reading and to include them in stewardship of the library. The development of public library services to children is a story of the creation of special techniques of work with children that directed their reading by engaging their imaginations.

## Chapter 1: Libraries for Children Before 1876

“...[W]e shall assume, what few will presume to dispute, that the largest influence over the people is the printed page.”  
-Melvil Dewey<sup>76</sup>

### Introduction

Most public librarians in 1876 saw their libraries as part of the adult world, and not meant for children. Public library policies typically forbid admittance and borrowing privileges to those under 12 to 14, so that many children could not use public libraries until their working years had begun. There were a few exceptional public libraries that were founded as collections for children. In fact, several of the first libraries that can correctly be called “public,” in that they were supported by ongoing contributions from municipal governments, were founded for the benefit of young people. In his history of the foundation of public libraries, Jesse Shera identifies the first three public libraries to meet this economic criterion founded in the United States; all three were created as juvenile collections for the children of their towns. They were: the Bingham Public Library for Youth, founded in 1803 in Salisbury, Connecticut; the juvenile library at Lexington, Massachusetts, founded in 1827; and the Peterborough Town Library founded in 1834, which incorporated an earlier town Juvenile Library into its structure.<sup>77</sup> These institutions were by far the exception, and children were excluded from libraries as a rule.

Most public libraries in 1876 targeted adult readers. Public librarians argued that schooling was merely the introduction to learning, meant to prepare people “for the far greater work of educating themselves,” which they could accomplish through the use of

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<sup>76</sup> Dewey, *The Profession*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 158-169.

public library collections.<sup>78</sup> Public libraries were, in this sense, analogous to “higher-class schools” for those adults with the motivation to pursue self-education.<sup>79</sup> Once basic schooling was through, libraries provided the means for adults to continue their education.

In the United States, the widespread success of the public library as a cultural institution can be traced back to the year 1852 which marked the founding of Boston Public Library.<sup>80</sup> However, public libraries emerged in a context of other institutions. Before there were public libraries, there were other kinds of libraries that served the reading needs and desires of the American public. Social libraries, circulating libraries, shared book collections at coffeehouses, and other literary collectives rented books to the public or shared them among themselves. Proprietors of small businesses would often include a circulating library among their other wares and enterprises, allowing the borrowing of books for a small fee.<sup>81</sup> Social libraries were founded among groups of people to expand upon their private libraries, allowing them access to more books than they could afford individually.<sup>82</sup>

By 1876, public libraries were a stable institutional form. Public library services for adults were well on their way to being a staple of American society, as public libraries became a familiar institutional form and public librarians organized their first professional society. In many cases, the functions of the myriad book-provision services

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<sup>78</sup> Dewey, *The Public Library and the Public Schools*, 437.

<sup>79</sup> Wright, William H. K., "On the Best Means of Promoting the Free Library Movement in Small Towns and Villages," *Library Journal* 2, no. 3 and 4 (November-December 1877, 1877), 119-125.

<sup>80</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 308.

<sup>81</sup> David Kaser, *A Book for a Sixpence : The Circulating Library in American*, Vol. 14 (Pittsburgh: Beta Phi Mu, 1980), 194.

<sup>82</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 57.

of earlier years were taken over by the public library. Public libraries were influenced by the objectives of these earlier, more historically transient institutions that provided library services to adults.

In the same way, services to youth in public libraries emerged in an historical context of library services in emerging institutions for children. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, changing ideas of the importance of childhood as a stage of life both inspired and were reinforced by congregate institutions for children. Historian Steven Mintz describes the formation of such protective institutions where children were kept “segregated from adult society.”<sup>83</sup> Such congregate institutions were created “to separate children from the corruptions of the public world and provide them with the order and discipline their families lacked.”<sup>84</sup>

Institutions of this sort dramatically expanded during this period, including public schools, reform schools, orphan asylums, Sunday Schools, and young men’s associations. Children lived in reform schools, orphanages, and asylums, segregated from adults to protect them from exposure to adults in poor-houses or on the streets. Sunday Schools and public schools were created to address children living in their family homes, providing education in reading and writing as well as moral education in Christian values. Young men’s associations worked to bolster the morality of young men in the process of separating from their families, seeking work and encountering new dangers urban industrial settings. In many of these institutions, libraries for the young were established as one of the tools used to educate children. Libraries within these institutions were established to further the character-building goals of these institutions by enriching the

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<sup>83</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 135.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 156.

protective educational environments they had established for children. The fact that institutions established libraries in an attempt to direct children's reading to certain kinds of good books reflects the common belief in the power of reading at this time.

This chapter examines the libraries in congregate institutions for children that were established before 1876, when public librarians began to address the reading of children. Institutions for children loaned books to children in a context of the growing belief that the young had special needs, and should be given special services to meet those needs. Each of these institutions has its own history; some have been written while others have yet to be given historical treatment. In all cases, the role of reading within these institutions constitutes a rich area for further research, much of which is beyond the scope of the present work. However, the provision of such libraries in congregate institutions for children reflects beliefs of this period in the power of reading.

### **Libraries in Reform Schools**

While prisons incarcerated adults convicted of crimes, children convicted of crimes were separated from adults, and housed in special reformatories, or reform schools, for the young. As their name implies, their central purpose was to “re-form” the characters of young criminals by attempting to “arrest vicious youth on the road to prison and train[ing] them to become worthy members of society.”<sup>85</sup> “On the road to prison” did not always mean that they had been convicted of crimes. Many inmates were incarcerated by parents who “felt incapable of controlling disobedient daughters.”<sup>86</sup> There were separate reform schools for boys and girls, all intended to prevent social

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<sup>85</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America* (Washington, Dc.; , 1876), 226-229.

<sup>86</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 161.

problems by removing children from corrupting influences and teaching them moral behavior in an orderly environment.<sup>87</sup> The creation of these institutions represents the spread of a middle-class ideal of protected childhood, although in this case children were being “protected” from their own “corrupting” families and urban neighborhoods through relocation to reform school.

The 1879 report *Public Libraries in the United States of America* listed 56 reform schools, with an aggregate number of over 110,000 inmates who had been housed there at some time since they were founded. The average age of inmates was about 12 years old. After their incarceration, 75% of the children were appraised by reformatory officers as “successfully reformed.”<sup>88</sup> There were libraries in at least 40 of these reform schools. The largest library was in the New York House of Refuge, which contained over 4,000 volumes and had housed 14,275 inmates in the previous 47 years since its opening. Many reformatories had much smaller library collections. Reformatory officers reported “unvarying testimony” about the benefits derived from “libraries and reading rooms.”<sup>89</sup> That these officers provided libraries for young inmates demonstrates their belief that reading was considered a powerful tool for influencing the character development of the young. Unfortunately, little is known about the selection or content of collections in reform school libraries. The question of which books were considered best for reforming the young awaits further research.

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> S. R. Warren and S. N. Clark, "Libraries in Prisons and Reformatories" In *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, ed. U. S. Bureau of Education, Vol. Part 1 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1876), 227.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

## Orphanage and Asylum Libraries

Children also lived in congregate institutions such as orphanages, asylums, or residential schools for children with various kinds of disadvantages or disabilities. Orphanages grew tremendously in the latter third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due in part to the numbers of orphans needing homes that grew in the wake of the Civil War, when many soldiers' children were left without parents.<sup>90</sup> Many children were left with only one parent too destitute to provide for their care, and there were half-orphan asylums established for the benefit of these struggling families.<sup>91</sup> Asylums were meant, as they name implies, to provide temporary shelter for children from working-class families that were in crisis. The intention of asylums was to provide help in time of trouble in order to keep remaining family members together.<sup>92</sup> Other kinds of residential institutions were created for children who had particular disabilities or problems, including children who were "deaf and dumb and the blind," "the insane," and "other unfortunates."<sup>93</sup> Sometimes deaf or blind children were housed in special institutions for their needs and education, such as the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston and the Deaf Mute College in Washington, D. C.<sup>94</sup>

In 1876, there were at least 52 libraries in such "asylums for orphans and others."<sup>95</sup> Funding for institutions came from state or city governments and from private

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<sup>90</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 132.

<sup>91</sup> Cmiel, *A Home of Another Kind : One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare*, 243.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, 1-36.

<sup>93</sup> United States. Office of Education., "School and Asylum Libraries" In *Public Libraries in the United States of America, Part 1, 1876 Report*, Vol. 1 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library Science, 1876), 58-59 .

<sup>94</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, 59.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 59.

donations, although the majority came from private philanthropy.<sup>96</sup> The fact that administrators of these institutions used some portion of their monies to provide libraries shows the significance of reading for the education of all children. Further research is needed to reveal what these collections contained. The inclusion of libraries in institutions that stood in for children's families demonstrates that access to good books and instilling the habit of reading were important factors in raising children well.

### **School District Libraries**

Libraries for children were also established as part of school districts, which provided public schooling to children who attended congregate institutions during the day or some part of the day, but lived at home with their parents. Children generally began school at about the age of 6 and left school by the age of 14, although some were younger or older.<sup>97</sup> While some urban schools had begun to implement standardization and separation of children by grade level, many rural schools had not yet developed standardized age admissions.<sup>98</sup> School district libraries were located in schools, and administered by boards of education, although who was responsible for their direct administrative oversight varied due to difference in state legislation and local practices.<sup>99</sup>

The earliest state legislation enabling the creation of school district libraries was passed in New York in 1835. By 1876, 21 states had legislation allowing school district libraries, but in most places school district libraries were failing. There were several reasons for these problems, including mismanagement of funds, the competition from and

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<sup>96</sup> Cmiel, *A Home of another Kind : One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare*, 12

<sup>97</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 20-21.

<sup>98</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 135 The development of schools and their relation to public libraries is addressed more thoroughly in chapter 3.

<sup>99</sup> Sidney Herbert Ditzion, "The District-School Library, 1835-55," *Library Quarterly* 10, no. October (October, 1940), 552-564.

success of public libraries, and the lack of trained administrators to run these libraries. For instance, most legislation that allowed the levying of taxes for these libraries made few stipulations about how the money was to be managed and the school district held accountable. Money appropriated for school libraries was spent on other projects, and in some places the numbers of books in these libraries dwindled yearly, despite ongoing yearly appropriations for book purchases.<sup>100</sup> There were also “defects and frequent changes in legislation” which made it difficult to establish a successful school district library. The most disturbing factor in their failures was not the problems of legislation, but the “incompetence and indifference in the administration of the law” indicated by disappearing books and book funds.<sup>101</sup>

In some states, including Massachusetts, by 1876 the school district libraries had already been superseded by well-managed “free town libraries” (public libraries).<sup>102</sup> As compared with the successes of public libraries, some blamed the failures of school district libraries on the lack of trained librarians working in schools to administrate funds or the collections purchased with those funds. Because of inconsistent and unclear legislation, school districts lacked any consistent blueprint for providing services. They had no incentive to hire professional librarians, even though librarians were rapidly professionalizing their work in other settings.

Nevertheless, these libraries did give some children greater access to books for the varying periods of time that they operated effectively. A few of these libraries went on to become the basis of public libraries, such as the St. Louis Public School Library

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<sup>100</sup> United States. Office of Education., *School and Asylum Libraries*, 41.

<sup>101</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, 38.

<sup>102</sup> United States. Office of Education., *School and Asylum Libraries*, 42.

which was founded in 1865, and in 1894 became the St. Louis Public Library.<sup>103</sup>

Although their names are similar, school district libraries were more akin to public libraries, and were only minimally related to contemporary school libraries through being housed in schools in rural areas.<sup>104</sup> The demise of New York's school district library system in about 1887 marked the failure of school district libraries as an organizational strategy for providing the public with reading materials.

Although school district libraries ultimately failed, for the period of their existence their purpose was to further the purposes of the public schools in all aspects of education for children by giving children access to more materials than their school textbooks alone. Among these purposes was influencing children's characters.<sup>105</sup> In schools, as in other congregate institutions, libraries were one of many tools used to shape the characters of the young and encourage their moral as well as intellectual growth. To this end, selection in school-district libraries centered around purchases of "libraries" or set of books from approved publishers, including the American Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge.<sup>106</sup> Other worthwhile books included "'right' biographical writings" and histories which "would lead the young American along an exemplary path of good citizenship and point out the best direction to take in critical situations."<sup>107</sup>

Excluded in many places was "the literature of the unreal," or most fictional stories,

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<sup>103</sup> M. A. Kimball, "Youth Services at St. Louis Public Library, 1909-1933: A Narrative Case Study" (Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), 37-51.

<sup>104</sup> Patricia Pond, "The American Association of School Librarians: The Origins and Development of a National Professional Association for School Librarians, 1896-1951" ), 84-86.

<sup>105</sup> Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue : Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*, VII, 312; Cremin, *The Transformation of the School : Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, xi, 387, xxiv.

<sup>106</sup> Ditzion, *The District-School Library, 1835-55*, 566.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, 570-571.

which were believed to be so disconnected from “practical perspective” that these books “rendered the mind incapable of wrestling with reality.”<sup>108</sup> Actual collection contents may or may not have reflected these ideals, but this question awaits further research.

### **Young Men’s Association Libraries**

As cities grew and factories multiplied, more young men moved from rural areas to urban areas to find work. The former apprenticeship systems were breaking down; young men were no longer trained in a particular trade with a master who nurtured their craft and served as a role-model for the transition into adult life. Fewer young men had the close supervision of older men as mentors to guide their development.<sup>109</sup> Many were alone in big cities, with no social ties beyond their factory jobs. Young men’s associations were founded to help educate these socially adrift youth and to create a measure of stability for them in a newly mobile society.<sup>110</sup> These kinds of institutions included Young Men’s Christian Associations (YMCAs), “lyceums, young men’s associations, mechanics’ institutions, and mercantile libraries.”<sup>111</sup>

Their purposes were multiple, depending on their location and the religious or secular foci of their founders. Some were financed by factory owners to provide some form of education for their workers. Others were created by donations from local communities to provide general education in the evenings. In general, these institutions

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, 567.

<sup>109</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 138-139.

<sup>110</sup> Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum : Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 275; Cephas Brainerd, "The Libraries of Young Men's Christian Associations" In *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, ed. U. S. Bureau of Education (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1876), 386-388; F. B. Perkins, "Young Men's Mercantile Libraries" In *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, ed. U. S. Bureau of Education (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1876), 378-385; Charles Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 818.

<sup>111</sup> Perkins, *Young Men's Mercantile Libraries*, 379.

were intended to provide an institutional anchor to foster the intellectual and moral growth of the young on their way to adulthood. They offered resources and social activities designed to “help young men navigate the difficult transition away from home during the teen years and the increasing choices, opportunities, and possible roadblocks they faced.”<sup>112</sup> These institutions also provided educational opportunities for young men who couldn’t afford to attend private academies, precursors to American high schools. They allowed young men to obtain “a general higher education” and information about “proper conduct” to help them succeed in their careers.<sup>113</sup> They served to replace the personal mentoring of masters who had formerly trained apprentices, thereby helping young men to lead moral lives.<sup>114</sup> For those young men from the ages of about 14 to their early 20s who lived in communities that had such institutions, young men’s associations were an important place for educational resources and support. Books and other reading materials were considered so powerful that they could serve as one form of substitution for the guidance of personal mentors as young men grew into adulthood.

Secular young men’s associations offered spaces for evening gatherings as well as instructional entertainment through lectures, evening schools, and libraries well stocked with advice books and self-help manuals.<sup>115</sup> They charged members a small fee, and were generally run by boards of youths who also comprised the main audience for these institutions. A number of the “more important” libraries located in these related institutions were listed in the 1876 report *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, including: 15 mercantile libraries, 12 young men’s associations, 21

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<sup>112</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 138.

<sup>113</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, 381.

<sup>114</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 138-139.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 138.

atheneums, and 15 mechanics' and apprentices' libraries.<sup>116</sup> Their collections consisted of educational materials. In mercantile or mechanics' associations, the emphasis was on books that gave applied knowledge of science to help with their trades.<sup>117</sup> Libraries in other young men's institutions were comprised similarly of sources of practical knowledge.

Young Men's Christian Associations had explicitly religious purposes, but were otherwise similar to other young men's associations. The purpose of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs) was to encourage "the moral, mental, and social elevation of those who come within their reach," particularly through promoting Bible study.<sup>118</sup> Their libraries consisted of Bibles and other books that provided "the means for Bible study," and the Christian "portion of their collections [was] always in advance of the other."<sup>119</sup> However, they also provided secular newspapers, magazines, and books of "history, arts and sciences, and biography."<sup>120</sup> The larger purpose of the YMCA evolved in the 1870s to encompass general "character-building activities" extending beyond Bible study, which explains the secular content of their collections.<sup>121</sup> In 1876, YMCA libraries were located in 12 states from New Jersey to California, although most were situated in the Northeast United States.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, 378-385.

<sup>117</sup> Sidney Herbert Ditzion, "Mechanics' and Mercantile Libraries" In *Reader in American Library History*, ed. Michael H. Harris (Washington, D. C.: Microcard Editions, 1971), 73-74.

<sup>118</sup> Brainerd, *The Libraries of Young Men's Christian Associations*, 386.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 387.

<sup>120</sup> Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, 194-195.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 194, 200.

<sup>122</sup> Brainerd, *The Libraries of Young Men's Christian Associations*, 386-388.

These institutions arose during the spread of industrialization and declined when public schooling was extended to include high schools for older children.<sup>123</sup> They were negatively impacted by increasing numbers of public libraries that did not charge fees for using their collections. By 1876, young men's institutions were having trouble sustaining themselves economically. Subscription fees were down, attendance at lectures had decreased, and the administration was unstable due to the "rapidly changing boards" of directors comprised of "mere youths."<sup>124</sup> Public libraries had already begun to take over some of these social functions, particularly in industrial communities, where they emphasized their role as "higher education" for those who had none in their youth.<sup>125</sup> In fact, one contributor to the 1876 report *Public Libraries in the United States of America* suggested that these libraries should consider converting from fee-based social libraries to tax-based public libraries. As was the case with some school district libraries, some young men's library collections constituted the basis of what later became public libraries.<sup>126</sup>

Some historians emphasize the legacy of these young men's institutions in adult education.<sup>127</sup> It is clear that most served male youth above the age of about 12. However, the young men targeted were between childhood and adulthood. They occupied the nineteenth century status of "youths," and many were well below the age of legal

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<sup>123</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 175.

<sup>124</sup> United States. Office of Education., *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, 382.

<sup>125</sup> Ditzion, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture; a Social History of the American Public Library Movement in New England and the Middle States from 1850 to 1900*, 117-119.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 80

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

majority at 21, when they would have full legal rights as adults.<sup>128</sup> Libraries in these institutions were intended to both educate and mold the characters of young people who, like younger children, were seen as vulnerable to the corrupting influences of urban life. The collections of these libraries expressed the democratic belief that access to practical knowledge would stimulate self-education, thereby uplifting and informing the young men who would become the electorate.

### **Sunday School Libraries**

Young women and girls were not excluded from all of the growing congregate institutions for the young. They were strong participants in Sunday Schools, which offered borrowing privileges from libraries as well as once-a-week education for the young. The Sunday School idea was imported from England to the United States in 1791, which marked the founding of the Sunday-School Society of Philadelphia. Although the exact origins of the Sunday School were debated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea is most often attributed to philanthropic printer Robert Raikes of Gloucester, England, who, in 1780 or 1781, opened a free school on Sundays to teach the children of the poor to read and provide religious education to children.

As the idea spread to and throughout the United States, Sunday Schools were associated with many denominations of Protestant churches. The American Sunday School Union was created in 1824, although for the most part Sunday Schools remained under local control and divided by denomination. Unlike English Sunday Schools which served only the poor, American Sunday Schools favored intermingling students of

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<sup>128</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 11-30,31 These rights varied from state to state; some allowed voting by younger men. However, by the age of 21, a young man was legally able to enter into contracts and, if trained, practice such professions as law or medicine.

working- and middle-class families, and they provided instruction and religious education to children regardless of class.<sup>129</sup> Sunday Schools were ostensibly open to people of all ages, but in fact they were most heavily attended by children, and eventually most Sunday Schools catered to children below the ages of 14. For some children who lived in places in the United States where public schools had not yet been established, Sunday Schools, which met for an hour on Sundays, were their only institutional source of instruction in reading and writing.

Prior to the creation of Sunday Schools, religious education had consisted primarily of memorization of “Biblical passages, catechisms, and hymns.”<sup>130</sup> Sunday School education included some memorization, but also introduced discussions and questions that arose spontaneously from children. Children were meant not only to internalize the words of scripture, but also to internalize the precepts of good behavior that would be the foundation of building good character. Sunday school education was meant in part to give the child “possession of the inner resources and disciplined habits necessary to steer a true course in a hostile world.”<sup>131</sup> Libraries in Sunday Schools provided books as one of several means to “nurture them [children] in the Christian life.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School : The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 13; Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright, *The Big Little School; Sunday Child of American Protestantism*, [1st ] ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), xiii, 108; F. Allen Briggs, "The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century," *Library Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April, 1961), 166-177; Alice B. Cushman, "A Nineteenth Century Plan for Reading," *Horn Book* 33, no. 1 (February, 1957), 61-71; Alice B. Cushman, "A Nineteenth Century Plan for Reading, Part II," *Horn Book* 33, no. 2 (April, 1957), 159-183; A. E. Dunning, *The Sunday-School Library* (New York: F. Leypoldt, 1884), 105; Elizabeth Louisa Foote and Martha Thorne Wheeler, *The Librarian of the Sunday School; a Manual* (New York; Cincinnati: Eaton & Mains; Curts & Jennings, 1897), 86.

<sup>130</sup> Boylan, *Sunday School : The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880*, 138-139.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 139.

<sup>132</sup> Dunning, *The Sunday-School Library*, 21.

At first, books were used as textbooks for the school or presented to scholars as awards for attendance, conduct, and other achievements. Over time, most Sunday Schools ceased giving books as awards and began instead amassing these award materials into small circulating libraries from which school attendees could borrow a volume per week. Children were instead rewarded with the privilege of borrowing a book, which was more cost-efficient for the Sunday School since they retained ownership of the books.<sup>133</sup> Reading was believed to have great influence over the young, and so books were one important way to “inform, indoctrinate, and convert” Sunday School attendees.<sup>134</sup>

By 1870, the United States Census recorded 33,580 Sunday School libraries with a total of 8,346,153 volumes.<sup>135</sup> The average size of a Sunday School library was around 200-300 books, quite small relative to most public libraries.<sup>136</sup> The collections of Sunday School libraries consisted of religious tracts, primers, and periodicals, many of them published by the flourishing American Tract Society, founded just after the American Sunday School Union, in 1825.<sup>137</sup> They also published doctrinal publications specific to each Protestant denomination, for their Sunday Schools.<sup>138</sup> Many of the stories encouraged piety by presenting children with threatening images of youthful repentance

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<sup>133</sup> Briggs, *The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century*, 64.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 167.

<sup>135</sup> Frank Keller Walter, "A Poor but Respectable Relation--the Sunday School Library," *Library Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (July, 1942), 736.

<sup>136</sup> Briggs, *The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century*, 72.

<sup>137</sup> Walter, *A Poor but Respectable Relation--the Sunday School Library*, 733.

<sup>138</sup> Briggs, *The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century*, 66; Dunning, *The Sunday-School Library*, 1-8; Walter, *A Poor but Respectable Relation--the Sunday School Library*, 732-733.

and death. Death was a consistent theme in Sunday School literature, whether “the untimely death of the young or the picturesque death of the old.”<sup>139</sup>

Before Sunday Schools, the Protestant tradition had emphasized a singular conversion experience, a sort of epiphany in which the child accepted Christ and in that moment became a Christian. The Sunday School emphasis on religious education and “Christian nurture” was a religious version of the secular, middle-class ideal of protected time of childhood devoted to education. Like other reformers concerned about children, Sunday School teachers absorbed cultural ideas derived from Locke, Rousseau, and, in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were influenced by social applications of Darwin’s theory of evolution. These ideas coalesced in that each placed great emphasis on controlling the child’s environment to assure his or her proper growth. They hoped that children might absorb Christianity from their homes and Sunday Schools so thoroughly that they would always understand themselves as Christian, rather than having a dramatic conversion experience.<sup>140</sup> Through “Christian nurture,” children were given the moral training that would inform their behavior throughout their adult lives.

The Sunday School library provided books to be part of this character training. The library was considered an “effective aid to the church in converting souls and building up Christian character.”<sup>141</sup> Sunday School libraries also facilitated the extension of religious education beyond the sabbath by loaning books that could be read in the other six days of the week. However, access to libraries was highly circumscribed; children were often not allowed to see or select reading themselves, but instead books

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<sup>139</sup> Briggs, *The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century*, 174.

<sup>140</sup> Boylan, *Sunday School : The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880*, 147.

<sup>141</sup> Dunning, *The Sunday-School Library*, 3.

were often selected for children by volunteer librarians. These librarians were “unsalaried,” with only their “‘spare time’ to devote to the work.”<sup>142</sup> Sometimes children were allowed to peruse the library catalog, and so choose from this list one book to borrow for the week. Book borrowing was not allowed to “interrupt the classes during study or exercise,” and Sunday School librarians were admonished “not to get books into the hands of scholars before the close of the school; and not to allow either teachers or scholars to visit the library during the session of the school.”<sup>143</sup>

Although they were successful and widespread, Sunday School libraries were not a nationally united force. They were separated by denomination and geography, and the national American Sunday School Union had only limited influence over local practices. Nevertheless, Sunday School libraries were highly influential in helping to cement a vision of reading as connected to building children’s characters. Some have argued that their supply of books whetted the appetites of the American populace for the creation of public libraries.<sup>144</sup> Sunday School libraries were at least 50 years ahead of public libraries in targeting children’s reading as an important influence in determining the kinds of adults children would grow to be.

### **Towards Public Library Youth Services**

Libraries serving children in institutional settings before 1876 helped to inform the practices that public libraries gradually established for serving youth from 1876 to 1902. These earlier libraries influenced how children’s reading was understood at the time when public libraries were emerging. Reading was considered central to building

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<sup>142</sup> Foote and Wheeler, *The Librarian of the Sunday School; a Manual*, 72.

<sup>143</sup> Dunning, *The Sunday-School Library*, 76.

<sup>144</sup> Walter, *A Poor but Respectable Relation--the Sunday School Library*, 751.

intellect and character, and these institutions both expressed and reinforced the belief that books had impact, for good or evil, on who children would grow to be. If the largest influence over the people was the printed page, as Melvil Dewey wrote, then those most subject to its influence were children.<sup>145</sup>

The sheer numbers of institutions that engaged with the reading of the young by providing libraries shows that reading was an important tool in reaching children. In most of these institutions, reading was a secondary goal, an effective means to larger ends of intellectual growth or character formation. Sunday Schools, with their educational mission of teaching reading, were closest to providing libraries as a primary goal, although their collections were limited and children's access was carefully circumscribed. These institutions were established as part of movements for the intellectual and moral education, religious instruction, and protection of children.

The creation of public library service for children emerged as a result of considerable debate within the nascent profession of librarianship. These movements and institutions for children formed a background for the debates that characterized the emergence of public library services to children. The public library was becoming a widely diffused institution for adults, supported by stable tax bases and cemented as a necessary institution in a democracy, in which the electorate required information and the ideals of meritocracy required democratic access to knowledge. Libraries for children in other institutions informed the debates that public librarians engaged in from 1876 on regarding the social responsibility of the public library for children, including its mission as an educational institution, its appropriate relationship to public schools, and the degree

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<sup>145</sup> Dewey, *The Profession*, 5.

to which public librarians could or should take a role guiding the reading of the young.

## Chapter 2: Early Public Library Service to Children

“The character is very largely formed by the books read and not read.”  
-Kate Gannett Wells<sup>146</sup>

### Introduction

The year 1876 was an important year in the history of libraries and professional librarianship. Librarians formed a professional organization, the American Library Association (ALA). The periodical *Library Journal* was first published that year, and quickly became the major professional journal for librarians. An important foundational document for the study of libraries and librarianship, titled *Public Libraries in the United States of America* was published by U. S. Bureau of Education. Its authors systematically canvassed public libraries, defined to mean any library open to the public. Contents of the document included statistical information about kinds, types, and sizes of libraries as well as papers from prominent librarians describing the goals, objectives, and challenges of the profession.

There were several articles in this volume containing information about various institutions for children that had libraries that were open to the public, such as reform school libraries and Young Men’s Association libraries. There were also two papers by librarians William I. Fletcher and J. P. Quincy that took up questions of how public libraries might serve children. In the opening sentence of his article “Public libraries and the Young,” librarian William I. Fletcher asked: “What shall the public library do for the young and how?”<sup>147</sup> His paper was punctuated with similarly direct questions about the purpose of the public library for children, although he did not always provide answers.

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<sup>146</sup> Kate Gannett Wells, "The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October 1879, 1879), 327.

<sup>147</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 412.

His article is significant in that it identified many of the major themes and substantive questions that public librarians would continue to wrestle with in considering children as an audience for their services. From 1876 to 1879 there were sporadic articles published in *Library Journal* that took up issues related to children.

These issues culminated in the 1879 ALA conference, for which “Fiction and the Reading of School Children” was the theme. This conference was the first national opportunity for librarians to discuss what public libraries should do for children. The conference proceedings were published in detail in *Library Journal*, and these papers and discussion records provide a rich source for analyzing the attitudes and major arguments of public librarians regarding children. Issues raised at the conference included the question of which group was primarily responsible for children’s reading: teachers or parents. Librarians did not yet have enough practical experience serving children, due to restrictive age limits, to allow them to claim such authority for themselves. However, they were situated well to help teachers, parents, and contribute their own guidance in public libraries. Conference papers also addressed the purposes that public libraries could fulfill through service to children, such as cultivating intellectual growth, fostering “mental strength,” and promoting good taste in reading choices.

The conference brought together many voices, including public librarians and others interested in the education, protection, and well-being of children. Speakers were from a range of professions including librarianship, teaching, ministry, children’s book authors, and from reform movements, including Sunday Schools. There was one woman who spoke as a prominent Bostonian and mother. Relative to the professional librarians who comprised the majority of speakers at preceding ALA conferences and those in the

following two decades, the speakers at the 1879 conference were a much more diverse group. When librarians took up the question of children's reading, they invited experts from many other fields and included women, who had not previously presented at ALA conferences. The diversity of perspectives brought together is significant because it demonstrates that librarians looked outside of their own profession to deal with what was still a problematic issue for them. They drew upon the special expertise of a broad group of interested people to help them examine issues of children's library use. The blurring of professional boundaries at this time around the topic of children also emphasizes the relevance of broad social and cultural context in understanding the development of library youth services at this time.

Underlying these conversations from 1876 through 1879 about library service to children was the shared understanding that reading had real effects on children. Librarians and others consistently evinced the belief that the right books would have uplifting effects on children's characters, while the wrong ones could have devastating consequences. These conversations also reflect experiments in children's services and evolving negotiations about what forms library service to children should take. Public librarians replicated some aspects of the work of libraries in earlier institutions as discussed in the previous chapter, but they were also beginning to create forms of service specific to the public library. The process of negotiation was ongoing, but librarians from 1876 to 1879 began to articulate what they believed they could potentially do for children, how children should be allowed to use libraries, and what responsibilities, if any, public libraries had to children.

## **“Public Libraries and the Young” by William I. Fletcher**

William I. Fletcher, one of the leading figures in the early years of American librarianship, is perhaps best remembered for his co-editorship, with Frederick Poole, of *Poole’s Index to Periodical Literature*. He also contributed numerous articles in professional library literature and other non-library periodicals during his professional career.<sup>148</sup> One of these was the 1876 article mentioned above, published in the report *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, and titled “Public Libraries and the Young,” in which Fletcher wrote a coherent and substantive discussion of the issues facing public libraries as they considered providing service to the young. Fletcher took the position that children should be included among the patrons of public libraries, with full access equal to that of adults. He argued against a number of commonly held justifications for their exclusion, stressing the importance of children’s intellectual curiosity and thirst for knowledge, regardless of age.<sup>149</sup> The heart of his argument against age limits was presented as a rhetorical question: “Who will presume to set the age at which a child may first be stirred with the beginnings of a healthy intellectual appetite on getting a taste of the strong meat of good literature?”<sup>150</sup>

When writing this article, Fletcher may have been remembering his own childhood experiences. As an enthusiastic 7-year-old reader, Fletcher visited the Boston Atheneum with his father, and was awed by this premier collection of books, which was open only to members. Later, when young Fletcher came back alone, he was unceremoniously ousted from the building, because unaccompanied children were not

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<sup>148</sup> George Sylvan Bobinski, "William Isaac Fletcher, an Early American Library Leader," *Journal of Library History Philosophy and Comparative Librarianship* 5, no. 2 (1970), 101-118.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid*; Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 412-418.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, 414.

allowed.<sup>151</sup> Like the Boston Athenaeum, many libraries, public and private, had similar policies that excluded children under the ages of about 12 to 14 from their collections, lending services, and even their buildings. In 1876, Fletcher confirmed that these forbidding limits persisted, writing: "...most libraries fix a certain age, as twelve or fourteen, below which candidates for admission are ineligible."<sup>152</sup> Fletcher argued that the "right solution" to the question of age limits on admission was for public libraries to have "no restriction whatever as to age."<sup>153</sup> It would be close to twenty years before his vision became reality, but this article was an important first step in stating the case for abolishing age limits.

Fletcher was particularly concerned with those children who were precocious in their development, and argued that the library should be a resource for satisfying their natural "craving" for learning. Too often children's learning was discouraged because of their age, and Fletcher described this as a human tragedy: "The lack of appreciation of youthful demands for culture is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the world's comprehending not the light which comes into it."<sup>154</sup>

These views opposed a commonly held idea that children's precocious learning should be discouraged, lest it harm their health. Fletcher described this "common notion:" "Some will be found to advocate the exclusion of such searchers for knowledge on the ground that precocious tastes should be repressed in the interests of physical health."<sup>155</sup> The idea that precocious learning could be physically damaging to children

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<sup>151</sup> Bobinski, *William Isaac Fletcher, an Early American Library Leader*, 101.

<sup>152</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 412.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 412.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, 413.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 413.

stemmed from several sources, including the influence of medical and educational reformers who had argued since the 1830s that precocity was a disease, cured by taking away children's books and making them play or work outside. In another example of this concept of damaging precocity in children's fiction, *Little Men* by Louisa May Alcott features a character who is mentally "blank" because of a father who pushed him to unnatural precocity, "stuffed like a goose" with facts.<sup>156</sup> These ideas had been confirmed by Francis Galton in an 1869 book, *Hereditary Genius*, which asserted a link between "genius and nervous instability." Galton argued that many adult geniuses later had mental problems, and observed that many of these geniuses had been precocious children. He concluded that precocity was a precursor to "insanity, especially moral insanity."<sup>157</sup> Public libraries, with their growing collections of books, could be seen as a threat to children's health because they providing large quantities of reading materials which could encourage the development of precocious readers who were in danger of driving themselves mad with reading.

Fletcher's arguments about what the public library could provide for children only make sense when they are understood as opposing these common presumptions about precocity. He wrote that libraries, with their large collections of books, were no threat and could in fact be a source of help for the health of bright children. Fletcher wrote: "...[N]othing will be so likely to conduce to the health and physical well being of a person with strong mental cravings as the satisfaction of those cravings."<sup>158</sup> The public

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<sup>156</sup> Louisa May Alcott, *Little Men* (Boston: , 1882).

<sup>157</sup> Joseph F. Kett, "Curing the Disease of Precocity" In *Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family*, ed. John Demos, Vol. 84 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 184.

<sup>158</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 413.

library did children a disservice, Fletcher argued, when it essentially enforced a “dead level of intellectual attainments for all persons below a certain age.”<sup>159</sup> Instead, Fletcher argued that public libraries could help children by providing access to materials that would aid in the development of their intellects. In fact, reservations about the damaging effects of precocity were losing their authority in light of the widespread acceptance of public schooling for children.<sup>160</sup> Precocity looked less like a potential threat when many children were being provided at school with primers and other reading materials and demonstrated no physical ill effects, moral depravity, or mental instability.

In addition to arguing for the abolition of age limits, Fletcher emphasized that the library should help children’s learning processes in two ways: by cultivating their intellectual growth and by cultivating culture, or good taste. The public library helped children attain intellectual growth by furnishing the resources for self-education. Learning how to educate oneself through reading was accepted as a key to success in adult life. Fletcher argued that “the man in any walk of life who has early formed good habits of reading, is the one who will magnify his calling, and occupy the highest positions in it.”<sup>161</sup> Fletcher asserted, through another of his rhetorical questions, that public libraries could foster the intellectual growth of future social leaders. He asked: “How can the public library do more for the intellectual culture of the whole community than by setting forward in their careers those who will be the teachers and leaders of their

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 413.

<sup>160</sup> Cremin, *The Transformation of the School : Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, 3-89

<sup>161</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 414.

generation?”<sup>162</sup> In effect he was saying that democratic access to the public library was one means of assuring fairness in a society based on meritocracy.

He was reflecting the 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that equal access to educational opportunity was valuable because it gave all children the opportunity to make what they could of it, each according to his or her potential. Access to knowledge was framed as a democratizing force in the community, allowing poorer children to overcome cultural “disadvantages” of their social class:

...[T]o the thousands of young people in whose homes there is none of the atmosphere of culture or of the appliances for it, the public library ought to furnish the means of keeping pace intellectually with the more favored children of homes where good books abound and their subtle influence extends even to those who are too young to read and understand them.<sup>163</sup>

Reading had the power to allow rich and poor children alike access to the opportunities for self-education which could lead to attaining a higher station in life.

According to Fletcher, the benefits of providing library service to children were social as well as individual, and had to do with a range of social values that he referred to as “the atmosphere of culture.” He wrote that, through providing books, public libraries could influence the “intellectual culture” of the community and lead to the acquisition of taste. “Culture” referred to a complex conglomeration of class-based aspects of ways of living and behaving, which included social graces and “good taste.” Through exposure to a middle-class ideal of good taste in reading materials, such as great works of literature,

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<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, 412-413.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, 414-415.

the public library could offer experiences that would impart “culture” to those who had none in their own homes.<sup>164</sup>

Although public libraries were intended to be democratic, allowing access to all, the ability to rise in the world was inherently linked to middle-class attitudes, behaviors, and values. As Fletcher put it, a “bent towards culture” would help the young by raising them “above the work-a-day world which will demand so large a share of their time and strength.”<sup>165</sup> After children reached the ages of 12 to 14, their working years began, and their “opportunities for culture” would be “slight,” so Fletcher argued that it was best to reach them as young as possible.<sup>166</sup>

Fletcher and his contemporaries used the word “culture” as both a noun and a verb. “Culture” meant works of great literature that were believed to elevate taste, as well as “to culture” or cultivate children so that they would have the good taste necessary to appreciate those works. According to Fletcher’s colleague Melvil Dewey, for example, good taste assured that people would continue to prefer books of similar quality, and “inoculate” them against the bad. Culturing children by guiding their reading into the “right channels” functioned as a kind of inoculation against bad taste and bad living.<sup>167</sup> Fletcher and Dewey, like so many of their contemporaries, believed that “higher” reading would keep children from pursuing “lower” reading as well “lower” paths in life.

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<sup>164</sup> In the coming decades, this belief in the positive influence of good homes would be seen in the decoration of children’s rooms, but at this time no such spaces for children had yet been created in public libraries. For more on children’s room décor, see Abigail Ayres Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 201-216.

<sup>165</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 414.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, 414.

<sup>167</sup> Dewey, *The Public Library and the Public Schools*, 439.

Since not all reading was “right” for imparting intellectual growth and good culture, the second half of Fletcher’s paper was devoted to attempting to describe which books were best for children’s intellect and culture. He asked: “What shall the library furnish to this class [children] in order to meet its wants?”<sup>168</sup> He tried to articulate criteria for choosing good books by emphasizing the effects that books were believed to have on their readers. Fletcher wrote that children “should receive from the library that which will do them good.”<sup>169</sup> By “good” he meant that books should be “instructive and stimulating to the better nature,” not merely “amusing or entertaining and harmless.”<sup>170</sup> Good books “must have something positively good about them,” Fletcher wrote. He praised a handful of authors, including T. W. Higginson, Peter Parley, Jacob Abbott, Walter Aimwell, and Elijah Kellogg as being among those who had “devoted their talents, not to the amusement, but to the instruction and culture of youth.”<sup>171</sup>

In addressing the question “What are good juvenile books?” Fletcher did not give any more instances than the works of the five authors above and the precept he advanced that good books were defined by the good effects they had on children’s characters.<sup>172</sup> Instead, he went on to make his case primarily by identifying the features of bad juvenile books. As with books considered good for public libraries collections, bad books were also evaluated in terms of their assumed effects on young readers. Instead of encouraging intellectual growth, bad books were “merely amusing.” Instead of imparting culture and the middle-class values of good character and good morals that it entailed,

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<sup>168</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 415.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, 416.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*

bad books contained immoral role models. For Fletcher and others, the behavior of characters in stories would by imitation be translated directly into children's behavior.

Fletcher considered as particularly pernicious those "deceptive" books, which appeared to profess excellent morals but actually showed characters engaged in improper behavior:

Many of the most popular juveniles, while running over with excellent 'morals,' are unwholesome food for the young, for the reason that they are essentially untrue. That is, they give false views of life, making it consist, if it be worth living, of a series of adventures, hair-breadth escapes; encounters with tyrannical schoolmasters and unnatural parents; sea voyages in which the green hand commands a ship and defeats a mutiny out of sheer smartness; rides of runaway locomotives, strokes of good luck, and a persistent turning up of things just when they are wanted,--all of which is calculated in the long run to lead away the young imagination and impart discontent with the common lot of an uneventful life.<sup>173</sup>

Although he named no particular books, he was almost certainly referring to the works of Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, and other adventure writers whose books were extremely popular at the time. These adventure books featured exciting stories, sometimes described as "sensational," which depicted young heroes emerging triumphant from unlikely situations. They achieved amazing feats and were rewarded with riches, fame, glory, or all of the above. Given his assumption of imitation, Fletcher's concern was essentially that children would believe the fiction they were reading, and try to imitate the adventures of the characters involved. The failure of the children to recreate such fabulous adventures, he believed, would make them disappointed and discontented with their humdrum existences. They would crave imaginative adventure above all else, both in their reading and in their own daily lives. Again, this demonstrates the depth of the 19<sup>th</sup> century belief in the power of reading to affect behavior.

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<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, 417.

In order to have the best benefits of reading, Fletcher also put forward the position that reading should be undertaken in the right way. He argued that attaining knowledge through reading shouldn't be made too easy; he saw "danger" in "the ease and smoothness of the royal road to knowledge" provided by juvenile books, because he feared they were not sufficiently challenging. Fletcher warned that children who exclusively read "juveniles," books written for a child audience, might not develop the "power and muscle of mind" gained only by struggling to read more advanced texts.<sup>174</sup> Building mental strength required reading that would "exercise" the mind, which meant graduated levels of difficulty in reading. Fletcher feared that "by supplying mental food in the form fit for mere children, they [juvenile books] postpone the attainment of a taste for the strong meat of real literature...."<sup>175</sup> What was needed was a program of reading increasingly difficult books in order to foster intellectual growth. The idea of a reading "ladder" that led from easier books to more difficult books became an important issue in the following decade.<sup>176</sup>

Fletcher's article is important in identifying themes that would form the bones of subsequent discussions of what librarians should provide to children. Librarians were to be invested with the power to determine what materials were to be made available to the public, and this was not a trivial power. Good reading had the power to level class differences; to bring success in business and life; and to affect the formation of the individual's character, for good or bad. Fletcher had framed the criteria for determining whether a book was good or bad in terms of its effects on children. The issues Fletcher

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<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, 416-417.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 417.

<sup>176</sup> C. S. Ross, "Metaphors of Reading," *Journal of Library History Philosophy and Comparative Librarianship* 22, no. 2 (Spr, 1987), 147-163.

raised about this, including the possible abolition of age limits and objections related to precocity and mental harm would continue to be discussed as other librarians grappled with the problem of which books should be collected and why. Fletcher had described the goals of library service to children as cultivating intellect, providing opportunities for culture, and teaching them how to read so as to build their mental strength, and librarians would continue to debate the relative importance of these goals.

Other historical scholarship on youth services librarianship mentions Fletcher's article, but these works emphasize the continuities of his arguments with the current state of public library youth services. Fletcher was remarkably early in advocating the abolition of age limits and describing children's natural curiosity as the best guide for their reading. By 1900, these ideas had been completely accepted by public librarians serving youth. In other scholarship about the history of youth services, those of Fletcher's ideas which are no longer familiar to contemporary youth services librarians, such as his objections to concerns over precocity and the harmful effects of "untrue" adventure books and the "false views" they promoted, have been downplayed. For instance, historians Harriet Long and Fannette Thomas each mention only Fletcher's ideas about abolishing age limits and describe him as an early advocate of services to youth.<sup>177</sup> Historian Sybille Jagusch describes Fletcher's ideas about age and gives a partial overview of his opinions about good books for children, but does not touch upon his arguments about precocity.<sup>178</sup>

Without careful attention to the cultural assumptions about children and reading that

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<sup>177</sup> Long, *Public Library Service to Children; Foundation and Development*, 80-81; Thomas, *The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library : 1875-1906*, 48-49.

<sup>178</sup> Jagusch, *First among Equals, Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore : Foundations of Library Work with Children*, 55-59.

informed public librarians' choices in this early period, we cannot fully understand what they believed and how these beliefs influenced what they tried to do.

Fletcher was not the only contributor to address the topic of young people in the 1876 U. S. Bureau of Education report, although his was the only article that took public libraries and what they should do for the young as its primary subject. There were several other articles in the report that mentioned children, including a few descriptive accounts of other libraries in institutions for young people, such as YMCAs and reform schools, that are referenced in the previous chapter.<sup>179</sup> These articles did not address questions of whether public libraries should serve the young or what books they should select to meet their needs. However, there was another article in the report which expanded upon Fletcher's ideas of the possible effects of reading on the young.

#### **“Free Libraries” by J. P. Quincy**

An article by Josiah P. Quincy (1859-1919) on “Free Libraries” offers further insight into some of the presumed harmful effects of reading immoral books and magazines. Most of the article was devoted to Quincy's opinions about which books public libraries should purchase for their collections. Despite the fact that many of these libraries were not open to the young, he nevertheless included concerns about reading that could cause harm to the young in his criteria for selecting books. It is not clear why he includes these elements in his discussion, although one might speculate that children were able to gain access to public library books through older siblings or parents who were eligible for library cards. On the other hand, it may have been another

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<sup>179</sup> Brainerd, *The Libraries of Young Men's Christian Associations*, 386-388; Perkins, *Young Men's Mercantile Libraries*, 378-385; United States. Office of Education., *School and Asylum Libraries*, 38-59; Warren and Clark, *Libraries in Prisons and Reformatories*, 218-229.

manifestation of middle-class ideals of protecting children from the larger world. For whatever reason, Quincy particularly emphasized children's vulnerability as he described the dangers of bad reading.

For instance, Quincy described the case of a “boy murderer” who attributed his own criminal behavior to the reading of “dime novels” which contained scenes of “scalping and deeds of violence.”<sup>180</sup> Testimony of this sort by young criminals may have been no more than youthful attempts to evade personal responsibility by drawing on ideas about the power attributed to reading. As Quincy’s description demonstrates, it was a reasonably successful strategy for deflecting blame, as children exposed to such descriptions of violence were presumed to be in danger of committing violent and bloody acts themselves.

Quincy also objected to “prevalent romantic literature,” by which he meant both sensational adventure novels and novels that depicted courtship and romance between men and women. He cited the opinions of physicians, who testified to the “enervating influence” of these books, which were “a fruitful cause of evil to youth of both sexes.”<sup>181</sup> He is referring in this veiled way to the Victorian-era fear that exposure to sexually stimulating stories would lead the young to engage in sexual activity. As much to be feared as sexual intercourse, with its reproductive consequences, was masturbation, which was believed to lead to insanity by draining away physical, moral, and spiritual energy.<sup>182</sup> In both cases of bad reading that Quincy describes, dime novels and romantic

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<sup>180</sup> J. P. Quincy, “Free Libraries” In *Public Libraries in the United States of America*, ed. U. S. Bureau of Education, Vol. 1 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library Science, 1876), 396.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 393.

<sup>182</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 134-135.

stories, the emphasis was on the possibility that youthful readers might be influenced to commit acts of murder or to engage in sexual behavior.

Quincy's comments on children's reading were narrower in focus than Fletcher's, but they raised more serious issues about the consequences of reading. Instead, Quincy hoped that public libraries would provide only the most wholesome reading, and he provided a sample of some of the grave consequences if they did not to strengthen his case. Both of these articles present a theme that librarians' conversations would grapple with repeatedly: whether certain kinds of reading had specific harmful effects and how libraries could behave responsibly towards the young if they did. The seriousness of the consequences described by Quincy lent urgency to the question of what libraries should provide to children.

### **1876 to 1879: Articles and Editorials in Library Journal**

The conversation about what the public library should do for children continued during the three years between the 1876 publication of the document *Public Libraries in the United States of America* and the 1879 ALA conference. There were a number of articles that echoed the themes that Fletcher and Quincy had raised in 1876, expressing concerns about the vulnerability of children to the influence of the printed page and questioning the age limits that libraries set against children's use. One article by librarian H. A. Homes (1812-1887), titled "The Selection of Books for Popular Libraries," is interesting in showing the influence of libraries in other institutions created for children on public librarianship. While Homes was concerned with how public libraries should best select books for adults, he raised the possibility that public libraries might borrow a

custom of Sunday School libraries, by establishing committees to decide which books to collect.<sup>183</sup>

There were also a few new substantive themes raised during these three years. One new theme was the analogy of the public library with the public school. What the school provided for the young, librarians such as Melvil Dewey argued, the public library provided for adults. Adults were analogous to pupils, who needed to be taught what to read, and librarians were analogous to teachers.<sup>184</sup> This argument was invoked to justify the levying of compulsory taxes to pay for libraries. As librarian William H. K. Wright argued, the state required the collection of taxes for the purposes of funding schools, and libraries were “but higher class schools.” Wright wrote:

Would it be an extraordinary stretch of liberality if the State, after training the children for a few years in these elementary schools, were to supplement that training by assisting the progress of these higher educational establishments, when, by the force of circumstances, the children are compelled to leave those schools?<sup>185</sup>

For the most part, discussions of this issue had less to do with actual children and more to do with the justification of tax support for public libraries. While Wright argued that school graduates should not be left without any educational support, he did not argue that public libraries should play a concurrent role in the lives of school children.<sup>186</sup>

However, in this period a few librarians were engaging in practical experiments in providing some limited forms of library services to schools. Charles Francis Adams was actually a trustee of the Quincy Public Library (Massachusetts) in 1877 when he wrote a

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<sup>183</sup> H. A. Homes, "The Selection of Books for Popular Libraries," *Library Journal* 3, no. 2 (April 1878, 1878), 51.

<sup>184</sup> Dewey, *The Profession*, 5-6.

<sup>185</sup> Wright, William H. K., *On the Best Means of Promoting the Free Library Movement in Small Towns and Villages*, 123-124.

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, 124.

paper titled “The Public Library and the Public Schools,” in which he argued that there was a pressing need to teach children to educate themselves through reading. Quincy described the limits of the public schools thus:

But we teach children to read; we do not teach them *how* to read. That, the one all-important thing—the great connecting link between school and education and self-education, between means and end—that one link we make no effort to supply.<sup>187</sup>

He pleaded with teachers to take up this charge, and make efforts to use the public library for the benefit of their students and guide them in their reading. He hoped that the public library would “become a more living element than it now is in our school system—its complement, in fact.”<sup>188</sup>

This paper is significant because Adams articulates a vision for complementary social roles of the public school and public library. The teacher would teach reading as a means to self-education and guide children to the public library, and the public library would supply the materials for subsequent self-education. To illustrate his point, he described an experiment taking place in Quincy, where the trustees had adopted a new policy that allowed teachers to take a number of books and circulate them to scholars in their classrooms, making the school “practically a branch library.” He observed that the trustees of the Quincy Public Library had pledged to supply “all the books you [teachers] will call for.”<sup>189</sup>

Another instance of cooperation emerging between the public library and the public school was provided by the Providence Public Library. When it opened in 1878,

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<sup>187</sup> Adams, Charles Francis, Jr., “The Public Library and the Public Schools,” *Library Journal* 1, no. 12 (August 1877, 1877), 438.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*, 441.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*

an announcement stated that the library had “the hearty co-operation” of the “teachers in the public schools” and the “parents of school-children” in supervising children’s use of the library. Librarians instructed children to use the library “for purposes of reference and research.”<sup>190</sup>

Librarian William Foster (1851-1930) of Providence Public Library, in a tellingly titled article, “On Aimless Reading and Its Correction,” gave ample attention to the question of how children could be impressed with “correct habits” of reading. Foster praised “the growing tendency to cooperation between the public library and the public school” as a development “emphatically to be encouraged.” He gave his reason that the public library should be interested in children thus:

The children of to-day are the adult readers of a few years from now and if they are to prove more intelligent in their habits of reading, they must be acquainted with the right use of books while they are still school children, and are forming their habits for life.<sup>191</sup>

Foster did not describe any practical efforts to lend books to schools or children.

Nevertheless, he spoke as the head librarian of a new public library and had made the subject of children’s reading a central element of his statement of the responsibility of the public library in guiding the reading of its public. Foster made it clear that children should be considered part of that public.

There was also one small announcement published in *Library Journal* in 1878 that heralded the beginning of enormous changes in the evaluation of books for children, although its impact was not immediately felt. The Hartford Library Association in Connecticut announced the publication of the *Hartford Library Association Bulletin*, to

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<sup>190</sup> Unattributed, "The Providence Public Library," *Library Journal* 3, no. 1 (March, 1878), 25-26.

<sup>191</sup> William E. Foster, "On Aimless Reading and Its Correction," *Library Journal* 4, no. 3 (March 31, 1879), 80.

be edited by Caroline Hewins, librarian. She announced that this new bulletin would offer suggestions for “good books for boys and girls” and that the librarians would “gladly co-operate with fathers and mothers in the choice of children’s books.” In this brief announcement, she echoed the concern that Fletcher and Quincy expressed about harmful kinds of reading, but she named names of the evil doers, citing specific authors and publications, the *Jack Harkaway* books by Bracebridge Hemyng for example, the *Police News* periodical, and a few books with sensational sounding titles like *The Murderer and the Fortune-Teller*. These books, Hewins wrote, “are not in the Library, and will not be.” The significance of this announcement was that it marked the first of Hewins’ efforts to recommend specific books for children, and constitutes an early example of a librarian claiming to have the knowledge necessary to determine which books children should read.<sup>192</sup> Hewins was later to become nationally known as a recommender and selector of books for children.

### **1879 ALA Conference: A Focus on Children**

The 1879 ALA conference was important because it constituted the first national opportunity for professional public librarians to discuss in person what they believed their role should be in serving children. The papers that were given and discussions that took place in response to these papers revealed the attitudes, beliefs, and enormous potentials that surrounded the topic of what public libraries could do for children. The issues so far raised were now being clearly brought into the open for discussion not only by librarians but by others from groups concerned with child welfare also. This then is a particularly

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<sup>192</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Hartford (Conn.) Library Assoc. Bulletin," *Library Journal* 3, no. 10 (December, 1878), 376.

important and rich discussion that marks a significant step in the struggle to decide what it is that public libraries should do for children in regards to their reading.

The topic of the conference was “Fiction in Libraries and the Reading of Children.”<sup>193</sup> The substance of the discussions of fiction rarely touched on adult readers, and when it did they were always described in relation to child readers. Even the two papers which did not reference children or schools in their titles (“Fiction in Public Libraries and Educational Catalogues” and “Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries”) were imbued with arguments about children’s well-being throughout.

### **Conference Speakers**

The speakers at this conference were unusual in that for the first time at an ALA conference women presented papers. At the two previous ALA conferences, all speakers were male.<sup>194</sup> Mary Bean (1840-1920), librarian of Brookline, MA, and Kate Gannett Wells (1838-1911) each read her own paper, while a paper by Martha Brooks of the Unitarian Ladies’ Commission on Sunday School Books was read by Rev. E. E. Hale.<sup>195</sup> Of the three women, only Bean was a professional librarian. Martha Brooks represented Sunday School libraries, and Kate Gannett Wells spoke as a parent, addressing mothers’ responsibilities for their children’s reading.

Gender-based differences in power appear to have affected the substance of what was presented at the conference. Library work with children would eventually become a

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<sup>193</sup> R. R. Bowker and Melvil Dewey, "Fiction in Libraries and the Reading of Children (Issue Introduction)," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 317-319.

<sup>194</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand, *The Politics of an Emerging Profession : The American Library Association, 1876-1917* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 19. Caroline Hewins was the first woman to speak at an ALA conference in a discussion forum. She asked a brief question at the 1877 ALA conference.

<sup>195</sup> No reason for this is given in the proceedings. There is no indication as to whether Brooks herself was absent, or whether she asked Hale to read for her out of shyness or deference to the predominately male composition of the conference audience.

domain in which female librarians predominated, but in 1879 as the profession struggled with what its role should be with respect to children, customary constraints on women limited their participation at this germinal conference. For example, all three of the papers by women were substantially shorter than the rest, which were written by men, and one of the women's papers, as mentioned above, was read by a man. No reason was given for why Hale spoke rather than Brooks herself, though a possible explanation is that Brooks was a woman, and therefore was less empowered to speak. There is evidence from other professional groups of the time, particularly in the field of education, that women were less likely to speak publicly than men.<sup>196</sup>

This was also a remarkable conference because there were significant numbers of speakers who were not professional public librarians. Of the eleven speakers, only four were librarians. The rest came from social groups ranging from mothers to ministers who shared an interest in the reading of children. The public librarians were Mary Bean of Brookline, Massachusetts, mentioned above; William Foster (1851-1930) of Providence, Rhode Island; Samuel Swett Green (1837-1918) of Worcester, Massachusetts; and Mellen Chamberlain (1820-1900), superintendent of Boston Public Library. Presenters from non-librarian professions included a school master, Robert C. Metcalf of the Wells School; a minister and author of books for children, T. W. Higginson (1823-1911); a professor and lecturer on how to read properly, William P. Atkinson; minister James Freeman Clark (1810-1888); one library trustee, Charles Francis Adams (1835-1915); and the two women mentioned above, Kate Gannet Wells, a parent; and the silent Martha Brooks representing Sunday School libraries. Debates over what was proper for children

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<sup>196</sup> Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue : Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*, 63-67

were thus not limited to the world of libraries, and in choosing to invite such varied perspectives, conference organizers laid the groundwork for exchanges between different groups and agencies interested in child welfare as they debated and developed services to children.

### **Conference Themes**

A number of themes emerged in the papers presented. Some involved debates about which people or agencies should take primary responsibility for guiding children's reading. Various speakers argued that this authority should rest with parents, teachers, or schools. At this time, no suggestion was made that librarians should have primary responsibility for directing children's reading, although many speakers described ways that librarians could productively contribute to this work.

One speaker, Kate Gannett Wells, declared that parents were the only ones responsible for children's reading, although she also said that most parents needed to be educated to take this responsibility seriously. She argued that public libraries should have a limited role, which was to make books available for parents to peruse and to set up systems by which parents could control their children's borrowing. Wells hoped that public librarians would enforce parental rules forbidding their children from borrowing fiction or novels. She suggested that mothers should create lists of books to be used by public libraries in their collection development for children.<sup>197</sup> Wells' arguments reflect the middle-class ideal of childhood as a protected time and the special importance of mothers in protecting their children from corrupting influences from the larger world.

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<sup>197</sup> Wells, *The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young*, 328.

Several other speakers emphasized the authority of the school in guiding children's reading; librarian William Foster proposed that his cooperative work with the Providence, Rhode Island, schools described in his paper could be used as a model for others to follow.<sup>198</sup> Robert Metcalf spoke from the perspective of teachers in describing what kinds of assistance the public library should offer to schools.<sup>199</sup> In both cases, the speakers emphasized that library collections could help teachers by offering more extensive information and research opportunities than those limited materials available in school textbooks. For example, Foster emphasized that textbooks might awaken a pupil's interest, but public library books could offer "fuller and more adequate discussion" of many topics.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, Metcalf described how the public library could offer assistance to schools by providing books that were both instructive and appealing.<sup>201</sup>

Foster also argued that teachers should have the primary responsibility for guiding children's reading, because, unlike librarians, they were able to provide personal assistance to all the children in their classes. He reasoned that the smaller numbers of librarians would limit their influence over children's reading, whereas larger numbers of teachers would allow for greater influence.<sup>202</sup> This vision of teachers as primary guides for children's reading informed much of the discussion of cooperation between schools and libraries throughout the next decade, as discussed in greater detail in chapter 3. The contributions by Foster, Metcalf, and a third paper by Samuel Swett Green, discussed separately below, confirmed the nascent idea that public libraries should cooperate with

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<sup>198</sup> William E. Foster, "The School and the Library; Their Mutual Relation," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 319-326.

<sup>199</sup> Robert C. Metcalf, "Reading in the Public Schools," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 343-345.

<sup>200</sup> Foster, *The School and the Library; their Mutual Relation*, 319.

<sup>201</sup> Metcalf, *Reading in the Public Schools*, 357.

<sup>202</sup> Foster, *The School and the Library; their Mutual Relation*, 320.

public schools and teachers by providing their students with interesting and informative books.

Other common conference themes involved what the library itself could contribute in the form of borrowing policies and book selection. Some speakers suggested that the best public libraries could do for children was to provide carefully limited access to books, restricting children's borrowing in both kind and amount. Both Wells and Bean suggested that the borrowing of books should be limited in number, to prevent children's being too distracted from their school work by reading.<sup>203</sup> In two papers, discussed in detail below, Bean and Brooks also emphasized that children should be restricted to only the best reading.

Brooks' paper on "Sunday School Libraries," Bean's paper "The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the Use of Juvenile Fiction," and the paper by Samuel Swett Green of Worcester, Massachusetts, on "Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries" warrant more detailed exploration because of the subsequent importance of the issues that they raised in librarians' professional discussions. Each of these papers raised issues regarding the values that should inform library service to children and the practices that would best express those values. Three particular themes that emerged from these papers as important to librarians' subsequent discussions were the importance of careful selection of books for children, the cooperation of libraries with schools, and whether social class differences were relevant in determining the best reading for children.

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<sup>203</sup> Mary A. Bean, "The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the use of Juvenile Fiction," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 (September-October, 1879), 342; Wells, *The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young*, 342.

## Brooks' "Sunday School Libraries"

Brooks' paper on "Sunday School Libraries" introduced the work of her Sunday school committee in selecting the books to be acquired by Unitarian Sunday School libraries. She described the three basic criteria that her committee used for evaluating good books for children, which were that good books should be interesting, look interesting, and present moral content appropriate to the age of the audience.<sup>204</sup> Within the professional writings of librarians, this is the first articulation of a set of criteria for children's book selection. This short list is significant not only because it is the first, and therefore suggests that Sunday school libraries were well ahead of public libraries in developing such broadly applicable criteria, but also because it takes into account children's own preferences.

Brooks further asserted that appeal to different ages of children had to be taken into account when selecting books. In her experience, differences in children's ages corresponded with differences in which books appealed to them, particularly in regards to the presentation of moral content. While "little children" enjoyed books with an "obvious moral" and young people "of sixteen or seventeen" would read books about self improvement, Brooks argued that those children "between ten and sixteen, boys especially," resisted books that were explicitly written to improve their characters.<sup>205</sup> This created a dilemma for Sunday School libraries, which Brooks described succinctly:

Shall we content ourselves with putting on the shelves good books which the children will *not* read, or shall we yield to the demand, and supply exciting and

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<sup>204</sup> Martha H. Brooks, "Sunday School Libraries," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 340.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*

unnatural stories, trusting that some other influence will counteract the effect of such reading? (emphasis in original)<sup>206</sup>

By “exciting and unnatural” stories, Brooks referred to the same sorts of popular adventure books which had concerned Fletcher and Quincy in their papers for the 1876 report, three years earlier. Her Sunday School libraries addressed this problem of appeal by providing interesting but “real life” stories of adventure, so that young readers would “not need to seek for fictitious adventure.”<sup>207</sup> They purchased books of exploration, travel, and natural science, and Brooks noted that these genres contained enough “adventure” to appeal to children, calling them “all-sufficient food” for the child’s “natural love for the marvelous.”<sup>208</sup>

Public librarians and others represented at this conference had reason to be interested in the Sunday School libraries, not least of which was the great success of these libraries nationally. Brooks described a strategy of providing engaging nonfiction to displace sensational fiction. Many public librarians would embrace a similar approach in the coming decade, as will be discussed in chapter four. Brooks’ paper is significant because it articulated a set of selection criteria, noted the importance of appeal, and put forth a possible goal for public library service to children in the idea that children’s interest in bad books could be displaced with freely available library books selected for appropriate content and appeal.

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<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, 341.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*

### **Bean’s “The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the Use of Juvenile Fiction”**

In her paper, public librarian Mary Bean of Brookline, Massachusetts, articulated fears that public libraries were causing problems by offering children indiscriminate borrowing of books. She described the failure, at Brookline, of more lenient measures such the “personal influence” of librarians and “furnishing separate catalogues for school children” to curb their voracious appetites for reading. Bean argued that in order to assure that children would not harm themselves through reading too much, libraries needed to change the contents of the collections and place restrictions on the numbers of books children could borrow.<sup>209</sup>

Bean’s paper was important because it suggested, from a negative perspective, that public libraries had to take into account how their services affected children’s lives. She argued that public librarians should not only pay attention to the books that were borrowed, but also to the consequences of reading those books. One effect of children’s reading too many books, Bean argued, was that it could cause children to experience “inattention, want of application, distaste for study, and unretentive memories.” Bean wrote:

They read to-day and forget to-morrow—and they study in much the same way. Is it not easy to see that this mental process, repeated day by day, is not going to produce a generation of thinkers or workers but rather of thoughtless drones?<sup>210</sup>

She argued that the best solution was the practice of placing special restrictions on children’s borrowing privileges, so that they could only borrow one book at a time, and were therefore more likely to absorb it carefully and thoroughly. Bean’s statements echoed the 1876 paper by William Fletcher, who also argued that children had to read in

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<sup>209</sup> Bean, *The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the use of Juvenile Fiction*, 343.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, 342.

the right way to build “power and muscle of mind.”<sup>211</sup> Both librarians’ arguments reflected the 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural understanding that reading had to be done in the right way if it was to be beneficial and not harmful.

Bean also suggested that librarians needed to be mindful of how their services might cause harm to children by distracting them from other obligations. She argued that an important consequence of children’s unlimited reading was that it distracted them from school work. She recounted a conversation with one teacher who declared that “her greatest bane in school was library books” and that she “frequently wished there was not a public library within fifty miles of her school room!” Bean emphasized the gravity of the implications of this teacher’s opinion, writing: “Think of the condition of things which could force such words from an exceptionally faithful and successful teacher—herself a lover of books.”<sup>212</sup> Bean also expressed concern that parents and teachers would forbid children the use of the public library entirely if librarians ignored such consequences of public library services.<sup>213</sup>

Bean argued, in essence, that public libraries had a responsibility not only to consider what they offered to children, but to take into account the larger social effects of their offerings. She recommended a central practical precaution in writing that public libraries should “*lessen the quantity and improve the quality*” of books loaned to children (emphasis in original).<sup>214</sup> She implied that collections should be selected judiciously (although, unlike Brooks, she gave no specific selection criteria) and that children should be restricted in their borrowing to a limited number of books, well below the one book

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<sup>211</sup> Fletcher, *Public Libraries and the Young*, 461-417.

<sup>212</sup> Bean, *The Evil of Unlimited Freedom in the use of Juvenile Fiction*, 342.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*

per day which was typical of many children. Bean argued that it was in public libraries' interests to restrict book borrowing by children as well, because perfect freedom of borrowing books led to indifference to the value of books. She described instances of vandalism to prove her point.<sup>215</sup>

Bean argued that considering the negative or positive consequences of services to children was crucial for public libraries, so that they did not inadvertently contribute to social problems. In another paper, teacher Robert C. Metcalf stated this concern succinctly, expressing his hope that “the public library can be made a great public benefit rather than what it too frequently is—a great public nuisance.”<sup>216</sup> Over the course of the next decade, public librarians would continue to debate the issues that Bean raised in her paper, including both the specific question of whether children's borrowing should be restricted for their own protection and the larger question of what the consequences were of public library use in the lives of children. By framing the problems that libraries could cause, such as disrupting children's schoolwork, Bean's paper implied that school work was central to children's well-being. She did not go so far as to suggest developing some form of cooperation with schools, but the value she placed on children's school work above pleasure reading was clear.

### **Green's “Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries”**

Another paper contributor, Samuel Swett Green, did take that next step, and, like his colleagues Foster and Metcalf mentioned above, called for public libraries to develop methods of cooperating with schools so that library collections would be put into the

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<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Metcalf, *Reading in the Public Schools*, 344.

service of educating children in classrooms. Green's paper was among the longer papers at the conference, and it covered several significant issues related to children's reading and libraries. In addition to his suggestions about school cooperation, he offered a vision of how libraries should tailor their selection to specific audiences, which he related to the social class of the borrowers. Both of these issues would recur in librarians' discussions over the course of the following decade.

Green took up the topic of cooperation with schools, offering ideas for how to shape library practices to facilitate that cooperation. Green promoted the practice of making schools serve as "depositories of books belonging to towns and cities," and said that "every head of a school" should "become an assistant librarian," circulating books to pupils within the school building. He also noted that, in his own library in Worcester, Massachusetts, teachers understood that library resources could help foster their pupils' education, and that teachers sent their "scholars in very large numbers to the librarian."<sup>217</sup>

With this paper, Green was also beginning to establish his role as a leading figure in debates over what responsibilities public libraries had to fulfill their educational mission by extending services to children via public schools. He brought together major voices in these debates, giving citations for a number of publications that he suggested teachers should read to inform themselves of how public library collections could be used in their classroom teaching.<sup>218</sup> These citations were likely the first steps toward a book that Green would publish a few years later, in 1883, which brought together a number of essays written by Foster, Metcalf, Charles Frances Adams (another conference speaker),

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<sup>217</sup> Samuel Swett Green, "Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October 1879, 1879), 353-354.

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, 353-354.

and himself on the subject of *Libraries and Schools*.<sup>219</sup> Green's paper at the 1879 conference marks the beginning of his contributions to the emerging field of public library services to youth through schools, the effects of which were documented in debates that took place among librarians throughout the 1880s.

Green's paper was significant for a second reason as well, in that he argued for distinctions in provision of library services based on distinctions among the groups of people receiving those services. Green distinguished between "different classes of citizens." He argued that higher-class citizens would be satisfied without sensational books and therefore did not need them, while lower-class citizens required them. He argued that "such persons" would read only sensational books, and indeed could not be induced to read at all unless given a "considerable proportion of exciting stories" in their public libraries.<sup>220</sup> Green wrote:

There are many uneducated boys who need sensational stories. [...] There are classes in the community of grown-up persons and of children who require exciting stories if they are to read at all [...] It is certainly better for certain classes of persons to read exciting stories than to be doing what they would be doing if not reading. [...] They will thus be saved from idleness and vice.<sup>221</sup>

Green's position was that there were benefits to inducing people to read something rather than nothing. In cases where class divisions aligned with geography, Green envisioned a branch library that would serve "such wards as need highly spiced literature," or the lower-class neighborhoods. Main libraries would therefore be preserved without much sensational fiction, and Green hoped that thereby "other readers" (presumably higher-class readers) would "be kept from wasting their time in reading books which, although

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<sup>219</sup> Samuel Swett Green and others, *Libraries and Schools* (New York: F. Leypoldt, 1883), 126.

<sup>220</sup> Green, *Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries*, 349-350.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, 348-349.

civilizing in the case of some readers, are not good enough for them.”<sup>222</sup> Green named no particular income level that determined class differences, although he did mention that towns and neighborhoods where a “great shoe-shop or cotton factory” was located might be places where people would need sensational literature.

### **Classes of Readers and Good Taste**

The distinctions Green made between kinds of people and their reading requirements were unpalatable to some librarians. At the conference, T. W. Higginson challenged Green’s assertions and argued that social distinctions did not make “such an enormous difference” between readers, especially child readers.<sup>223</sup> Other challenges to Green’s class-based distinctions were published in issues of *Library Journal* in the following year. However, Green’s arguments are significant because he brought a new element into the discussion of what books were “good” or “bad.” According to Green, determining the right kind of book was not only a matter of the content of the book, but also involved knowing something about the person who would be reading that book. In other words, whether a book was “good” or “bad” depended in part upon the reader, not just on abstract evaluation criteria.

Even if they agreed that class differences were a factor in determining what reading was best, not all speakers agreed with Green’s conclusions about what sort of books should be provided to the lower classes. For instance, Kate Gannett Wells spoke about the particularly harmful effects of trashy reading in “tenements” where the poor lived:

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<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, 349-350.

<sup>223</sup> T. W. Higginson, "Address of T. W. Higginson," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 357.

Many a girl's sentimentality or foolish marriage, and many a boy's rash venture in cattle ranches or uneasiness in the harness of slight but regular salary, is owing to books that fed early feeble indications of a tendency to future evil. [...] The children of the poor suffer from their parents' want of education in more ways than the drawing out of an injurious book from a library. Such suffering is the limitation against which they strive, and in which striving we should all help them to our utmost as individuals, or as an institution, by offering them something better.<sup>224</sup>

Wells also conveyed common biases regarding race as well as class when she wrote of the danger inherent in the situation of the "poor little Irish maid" who "likes to hear of the crimes of the rich." Such assumptions about race and class were common, especially in the case of the Irish, who faced harsh discrimination as immigrants to the U. S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wells argued that "educated people" would need to lead the way as parents in selecting the best books for the young.<sup>225</sup> In other words, Wells both feared that bad books had the worst effects among the poor, and asserted that the best solutions to the problems would need to come from those of a "better" class.

In another instance, speaker Charles Francis Adams argued that the "laborer's son" and the "professor's son" needed different sorts of library catalogs, with information about books that appealed to each group. Adams suggested that the catalogs he had seen appealed primarily to the "highly precocious children" of the professors who prepared such catalogs. There were important differences between these groups of children, Adams argued, much like "that between plants grown in sheltered places and cared for, and those left to struggle up from crevices in the north face of rocky exposures."<sup>226</sup> Implicit to this argument was the notion that upper- and middle-class parents provided

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<sup>224</sup> Wells, *The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young*, 327, 329.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, 327-329.

<sup>226</sup> Adams, Charles Francis, Jr., "Fiction in Public Libraries and Educational Catalogues," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October 1879, 1879), 332.

the right kind of nurturance through protecting their children, and that lower class parents were negligent or ignorant of their duties.

Arguments put forth by Green and others at the 1879 ALA conference about class were permeated with one other significant concept: that of “good taste” in reading materials, a concept closely related to the idea of “good culture” that Fletcher referenced in his 1876 paper. Librarians shared the idea that good reading had good, “improving,” or “uplifting” effects on readers, and that readers could be encouraged to read better books. Green argued that good books could be “improving” to the “taste” of those who had grown up without them, and that “the taste of many persons does improve.”<sup>227</sup> Green believed that, if they were first led to read books at all, many people could be led to read better books. Green and other conference participants used the word “taste” to express a number of loosely related values about reading. “Taste” referred to readers’ preferences for certain genres of books, such as books of history, science, biography, or sensational fiction. Books that encouraged “good taste” were those that were serious, substantive, and intellectually sophisticated.

“Taste” also referred to the idea that readers became habituated to particular kinds of reading, and thereafter expressed preference for more of that kind. Too much of the wrong kind of reading was believed to imprint children with a “taste” for that sort of reading, thereby keeping them forever reading bad books. The idea of improving taste would have the opposite effect, causing children to prefer more good books.<sup>228</sup>

Conference speaker Martha Brooks stated this principle succinctly, saying “a taste for the

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<sup>227</sup> Green, *Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries*, 349.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid*; Metcalf, *Reading in the Public Schools*, 343-345; William P. Atkinson, "Address of Prof. Wm. P. Atkinson," *Library Journal* 4, no. 9 & 10 (September-October, 1879), 359-362; Wells, *The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young*, 325-330.

best is the surest safeguard against the bad.”<sup>229</sup> Speaker Metcalf echoed this sentiment, arguing that the best way to destroy a taste for the bad was to cultivate a taste for the good.<sup>230</sup> The idea that children’s taste was malleable was related to the idea that children were themselves exceptionally malleable beings.

Other scholarship has explored the common use, during this time period, of metaphors of “eating” and “climbing a ladder” in librarians’ professional discussions regarding the loose bundle of concepts related to “culture” and reading “taste.”<sup>231</sup> These metaphors, one involving moving “up” from a lower, less desirable state to a higher, more desirable state and the other involving proper “digestion” of ideas, were both related to Green’s argument that different classes of readers had different needs. Issues of how class identity intersected with proper reading persisted as a theme in debates over children’s services. Green’s particular idea, that lower-class people should have access to sensational reading, would be turned on its head in discussions of public library youth services in the coming years. Instead, librarians followed the arguments put forth by Wells, that sensational reading was worst for those children not living in a middle-class home, attending school regularly, and generally experiencing a protected childhood.<sup>232</sup> Throughout the 1880s, librarians’ discussions would reflect the sense that poorer children were in more danger from reading sensational stories than middle-class children.

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<sup>229</sup> Brooks, *Sunday School Libraries*, 341.

<sup>230</sup> Metcalf, *Reading in the Public Schools*, 344.

<sup>231</sup> Ross, *Metaphors of Reading*, 147-163.

<sup>232</sup> Wells, *The Responsibility of Parents in the Selection of Reading for the Young*, 327-329.

## **Conclusion: Good Books, Good Taste, Good Character**

Children's reading taste was important because reading the right books was widely believed to be a crucial component of the formation of character. Ultimately, the educational goals of public libraries were bound up with these concepts of "taste" and class, which were in turn connected to beliefs about the power of reading to create better citizens. All of the efforts that public librarians and others described at the 1879 conference were aimed toward helping children grow up to be good citizens. The common belief was that, to this end, children's reading needed to be of the kind and amount that would build character. Speaker Kate Gannett Wells articulated this concept most succinctly when she stated that "character is very largely formed by the books read and not read."<sup>233</sup> Thus the role of the public library in furnishing children with books affected the larger social world not only in the present, but also in the future, as those same children became adults.

From 1876 to 1879, public librarians began to describe how the public library could serve the young. They agreed that children's reading was an important factor in their growth and character development, and they wrote and spoke about how the public library could promote good reading to children. They discussed and referred to the complex cluster of 19<sup>th</sup> century values that related good reading to good taste and good character. Many librarians agreed that a judiciously selected course of reading consisting of high-quality books would cultivate intellectual strength, formulate good taste, and lead to the creation of good citizens. However, they debated who had the authority to best insure that children engaged in good reading. Debates over who should be responsible

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<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, 327.

for guiding children's reading would intensify in the 1880s, especially regarding whether this work was part of the professional jurisdiction of teachers or librarians.

## Chapter 3: Schools and Public Libraries

“Teachers and librarians must meet [...] as co-educators; as men and women having at heart the common object of adding to the facilities of education available for the benefit of children.”

-Samuel Swett Green<sup>234</sup>

### Introduction

During the late 1870s and early 1880s, many public librarians had already taken up the cry that public libraries were the natural extension of public schools. However, in order to assure that libraries would fulfill this role, many librarians argued that children needed training in the proper use of the library while they were still in school so that they could use libraries effectively after graduation. In order to reach children, librarians developed strategies to supplement and facilitate the learning of children in schools. Schools had textbooks that comprised most, and in some cases all, of their curricular materials. As part of the public library’s broad commitment to the community, schools as part of the community required special public library services. Public librarians provided resources for teachers, lectures for school classes, and materials to supplement the relatively meager information available through textbooks. Arrangements for schools to borrow books from public libraries had a double effect: they strengthened awareness in schools of the potential of the public library, and they established the utility of public library services for schools.

This chapter explores the relationships public libraries established with schools from 1879 to 1889. A group of documents written in this decade provides a series of pictures of how the relationship between public libraries and schools was being described

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<sup>234</sup> Hannah P. James, "Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young," *Library Journal* 10, no. 8 (August, 1885), 287.

and invented. These include a series of reports on the Reading of the Young, as mentioned in the introduction, the first of which was the 1882 report by Caroline Hewins, titled “Yearly Report on Boys’ and Girls’ Reading.” The next year saw the publication of three more important documents: Samuel Swett Green’s “Report on Libraries and Schools,” presented at the 1883 ALA conference; the second in the series of Reading of the Young reports, which was also presented at the 1883 ALA conference and written by Mary Bean of Brookline, Massachusetts; and a book edited by Green titled *Libraries and Schools*, which brought together essays on the importance and methods of public library service to schools. In 1885, Hannah James (1835-1903) wrote the third of the Reading of the Young report, which indicated substantial growth in the numbers of libraries attempting to implement some form of service to schools. An important source for understanding how professional educators viewed librarians’ efforts are the conference proceedings of the National Educational Association (NEA), particularly records from the 1881, 1885, and 1887 NEA conferences. Finally, in 1889, Mary Sargent (?-1910) wrote the fourth Reading of the Young report, which again documented, among other youth services developments, the state of librarians’ efforts to work with schools. There are certainly other documents that touched on the topic of school and library relations, but those discussed here are important because, taken together, they provide a picture of the substantive changes over the course of a decade as awareness of the potential of public libraries to aid schools increased, as public librarians created strategies for implementing various kinds of services to schools, and finally as service to schools became one of a range of ways that public librarians served youth.

## Public Libraries and Schools

Public librarians during the 1880s were infused with what some have called a “missionary spirit” in their zeal to spread public library services across the U. S. As public librarians sought to extend their public service, they attempted to include the special needs of schools in the provision they made for their communities.<sup>235</sup> The vision of an expanded role for public libraries, as a cooperative institution with schools, dominated discussions of public library service to the young by the mid-1880s. Evidence of the effectiveness of cooperation with schools in these reports fueled public librarians’ motivation to further extend their services to the young, by showing the potential for public libraries to expand their mission to assist teaching and learning in schools and how these ends might be accomplished.

As early as 1880, librarians already had some models of cooperative process or arrangements, reflected in the work of Green and Foster presented in 1879, as mentioned in the previous chapter. William Foster from Providence, Rhode Island, argued that there was a need for cooperation between public school officials and public librarians, and that establishing it required that each group be familiar with the others’ values in order to make a solid foundation for cooperation. Foster also proposed some methods for engaging the pupils’ interest and directing children to good books in relation to their school work.<sup>236</sup> Samuel Swett Green’s paper devoted a few pages to describing his

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<sup>235</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 237-242.

<sup>236</sup> Foster, *The School and the Library; their Mutual Relation*, 319-325.

cooperation with schools in Worcester, Massachusetts, through the lending of books to teachers, who then in turn lent them out to students.<sup>237</sup>

The respective professional roles of teachers and librarians were being debated and formed during this time, as were the public roles of schools and libraries. Teachers, who were already busy with their work in classrooms and school houses, were not always able or willing to cooperate with librarians. Public librarians were in some cases able to document the effectiveness of their efforts in guiding children's reading and increasing the circulation of materials to children in aid of their studies, but nonetheless school officials did not always share enthusiasm for the experimental services offered to them. Over time, public librarians chafed at their role as mere "adjunct" to the public schools. These tensions over professional roles centered on the issue of which group, teachers or librarians, would have main authority over what children should read.

During the decade of the 1880s, children's librarianship emerged as a major component of public librarianship, and discussion of the values and practices of providing services to youth through schools were central to this emergence. Public librarians were negotiating what the roles of the public library might most effectively and typically be, given their current understanding of its structure and functions as a cultural institution. Demonstrating that public libraries could be useful to schools was one of many ways that public librarians provided evidence for the larger assertion that libraries served a social function as educational institutions. In the early 1880s, public librarians began to explore how their objectives, roles, and definitions might be aligned with those of schools. Public schools were better established than public libraries in the United

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<sup>237</sup> Green, *Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries*, 353-355.

States by 1879. For the public library to provide effective service to children, public librarians had to work out a way of operating in harmony with schools.

### **The State of Public Schools**

Public schooling was widespread and successful in the United States by 1860.<sup>238</sup> Many public schools had been established following the efforts of educational reformers in the 1840s, and so were still relatively new institutions. The organization of public schools was continuing to emerge in some places and evolve in others. The schools were far from the standardized, age-graded, hierarchical institutions of today. Rural schools were usually one-room schoolhouses which children attended as the agricultural cycles allowed. Urban schools were slowly becoming age-graded systems, with male principals and superintendents but, in most cases, female teachers. Most urban and rural schools went up only to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, not to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade as in contemporary times. Children were not all able to attend school, often because the economic need of their families forced them to work instead.

Schooling was not uniform across the United States; northeastern states like Massachusetts provided some schooling for over 80% of children, while in places in the South far fewer children had access to public schools.<sup>239</sup> Other factors also affected the establishment of school systems and whether or how often children could attend. Poor children in industrialized cities often could not afford to attend school because their families needed their wages.<sup>240</sup> In agrarian communities, schooling was disrupted by

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<sup>238</sup> Cremin, *The Transformation of the School : Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, 13.

<sup>239</sup> Carl F. Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), xxi, 349.

<sup>240</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 90-93.

seasonal cycles of planting and harvest.<sup>241</sup> White children had more opportunities for schooling than children of other races; many African American children had limited access to schooling if they had any at all, and many Native American children were taken to Indian Schools that stripped them of their land, property, and culture.<sup>242</sup>

The development of a standardized system of public education was still underway during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, public schools had been established in many places and were an increasingly accepted part of American social organization. In fact, despite the geographic, economic, and ethnic diversity of the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that a large number of children had remarkably similar schooling experiences across the nation. Schools were rigidly ordered and disciplined. Children learned spelling, reading, writing, and math through recitation or drills from predominately female teachers, and they were obedient to the teacher's authority.<sup>243</sup> For the purpose of this study, what is most important about public schools is that they had been established as the defining institution of childhood in the United States by the time of the 1879 ALA conference. If public librarians wished to serve children, they in some way had to address public schools. How they began to do this is reflected in a number of sources that provide indications of the way a coherent, if still often variable, set of strategies began to emerge in the decade of the 1880s.

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<sup>241</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 18-21 Ashby, *Endangered Children : Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History*, 98-99.

<sup>242</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 113-117.

<sup>243</sup> Priscilla Ferguson Clement, *Growing Pains : Children in the Industrial Age, 1850-1890* (New York; London: Twayne Publishers; Prentice Hall International, 1997), 86-91.

## 1882 Reading of the Young Report

Caroline Hewins of Hartford, Connecticut, inaugurated the series of Reading of the Young reports in 1882. For the first report, she distributed a questionnaire consisting of one simple question to 25 of her fellow librarians: “What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?” The report itself was comprised of Hewins’ introduction, replies to her questionnaire, and a concluding section that summarized themes in the replies. The result was presented at the American Library Association 1882 conference and published in *Library Journal*.

The answers she received were varied, but among the information she gathered was evidence that there were experiments in a number of libraries involving schools. For example, Green reported in 1882 that he was developing a new aspect of his work with schools by providing not only “collateral reading” books to supplement instruction, but also books for reading during times of leisure in school.<sup>244</sup> Other librarians had begun their own efforts to provide children and teachers with interesting materials relevant to children’s lessons. In Boston, public librarians described helping school children with finding reading for their compositions and books that paralleled their studies. These librarians also successfully solicited the assistance of some teachers in selecting books related to pupils’ studies of “history, biography, travel, and natural science.”<sup>245</sup> From Brookline, Massachusetts, Mary Bean reported that the public library had created a

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<sup>244</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading," *Library Journal* 23, no. 8 (1882), 182-183.

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*, 183-184.

“school finding-list,” and that teachers had noted that this list was used extensively by the children to select books.<sup>246</sup>

As an indication of their willingness to support schools, two public libraries answered Hewins’ query by replying that they had modified their borrowing policies to allow teachers and school officials to have library cards for educational purposes. In Middletown, Connecticut, the public library instituted special borrowing privileges for teachers, who were allowed to take books that related to topics of class study and to keep them for an extended time.<sup>247</sup> In Providence, William Foster extended similar privileges to teachers, including private schools and local colleges as well as public schools.<sup>248</sup>

However, at issue in this report (and in the later reports as well) was whether the public librarian had the authority to guide children’s reading. Hewins argued that public librarians should take as their professional responsibility the guiding of children’s reading precisely because neither parents nor teachers provided proper guidance as to what children were reading. Of course, parents and teachers lacked the librarians’ specialized knowledge of books. Hewins lamented that schools were graduating “young men and women with little knowledge of books except text-books and poor novels.”<sup>249</sup> Public libraries offered children the opportunity to learn about books as well as from books, and Hewins believed librarians had a professional obligation to assure that children were educated about good reading.

Many librarians also mentioned that they directed children’s reading because no one else was directing children’s reading or educating them about books. Several replies

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<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

<sup>247</sup> *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*, 185.

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

to Hewins' questionnaire bemoaned the lack of enthusiasm on the part of teachers, either because the teachers themselves were "not *great* readers" (emphasis in original) or because they were "mortal and human" and considered "duty done when the day's session is over." These comments suggested that some librarians believed that teachers did not put enough effort into guiding children's reading.<sup>250</sup>

One particularly colorful comment in the report lamented the ignorance of parents regarding the impact of large amounts of reading on children. This librarian wrote that too much undirected reading could be a detriment to children's learning, and "instead of turning out to be prodigies of learning, these library gluttons [were] far more likely to become prodigious idiots."<sup>251</sup> Because neither teachers nor parents were taking charge of children's reading systematically, Hewins argued in her conclusion to the report that public librarians had to intervene and directly educate children about books.

### **Green's 1883 "Report on Libraries and Schools"**

The next year, in 1883, Samuel Swett Green presented a report on libraries and schools at the ALA conference. Green's ideas had influence in part because he was an influential figure in public librarianship, having been active in ALA from its inception.<sup>252</sup> His efforts to extend library work to schools in Worcester, Massachusetts, began in 1879. Unlike the Reading of the Young reports, which were based on information gathered from various librarians, Green's report was based on his practices and experiences in

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<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>252</sup> Wiegand, *The Politics of an Emerging Profession : The American Library Association, 1876-1917*, 57-58.

Worcester, Massachusetts.<sup>253</sup> In this 1883 “Report on Libraries and Schools,” Green presented his work at Worcester as a model of school and library cooperation which he hoped would be replicated elsewhere.

He emphasized the importance of formal connections between the officials of schools and libraries. The basic approach that Green advocated for creating institutional cooperation was to “make the acquaintance of the superintendent of schools, and of the teachers, and offer freely to aid them in the furtherance of any of their projects.”<sup>254</sup> In his cooperative scheme, school work was to be the primary motivator for children’s use of the public library.

This put the teacher, as creator of school lessons, as the person primarily responsible for guiding children’s reading towards particular types of content, such as history, geography, or English literature. Public librarians could assist by teaching children the right use of books or by selecting books for them, but topics of study were chosen by teachers. For instance, Green distributed books to each of the pupils when class visits were made to the library, and he reported that he would also personally intervene to “change a scholar’s book” if he deemed another more appropriate, but that more often he would show them how to use the books they had.<sup>255</sup> Green’s work in guiding children’s book selection and use was in service of the teacher’s goals for the pupils. The implication of Green’s report was that the authority to guide children’s reading rested primarily in the hands of teachers, and only secondarily with librarians as they assisted children in meeting the requirements of their teachers.

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<sup>253</sup> Robert Kendall Shaw and American Library Association, *Samuel Swett Green* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1926), 42-44.

<sup>254</sup> Green and others, *Libraries and Schools*, 230.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*, 232.

## 1883 Reading of the Young Report

Mary A. Bean of Brookline, Massachusetts, sent out a questionnaire and compiled responses to create the 1883 “Report on the Reading of the Young,” which, like all the Reading of the Young reports, was presented at an ALA conference. In fact, Bean’s presentation was given at the same conference as Green’s paper discussed above. Bean also had in common with Green that she been one of the speakers at the 1879 ALA conference. However, while Green had addressed school and library cooperation specifically, Bean’s report addressed the more general question of how libraries should engage with the reading of the young.

Bean’s 1883 report was so permeated with mentions of school-library cooperation that, in her introduction, she apologized for the overlap of content, writing that “juvenile reading is so closely allied to that of the cooperation of the schools and library that I must be pardoned if I trench somewhat upon that ground.”<sup>256</sup> Of the 25 libraries that replied to the questionnaire, eight mentioned cooperation with schools, and some gave great detail about the plans they had for cooperation.

Some libraries followed Green’s model, considering the teacher to be the central guide for children’s reading. For example, Green himself reported that teachers were successfully introducing children to good reading materials at his library.<sup>257</sup> Foster similarly reported that teachers were taking an active role in their pupils’ library use by accompanying them to the library, stopping by to give help to students doing homework,

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<sup>256</sup> Mary A. Bean, "Report on Reading of the Young," *Library Journal* 8, no. 9-10 (September-October, 1883), 217.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*, 222

and even meeting with students who had formed their own reading group at the library.<sup>258</sup> Replies from Boston and Gloversville also mentioned that some teachers brought their classes to the library for training in the use of books.<sup>259</sup> Librarians in Chicago, Boston, Burlington (VT), Hartford (CT), Watertown (MA), and Gloversville (NY) reported that their library policies allowed teachers to borrow books for the use of pupils in their classrooms, a practice described in earlier writings by Green.<sup>260</sup> In other words, there was evidence that at least some librarians found teachers willing and able to cooperate, in contrast to the concerns expressed in the 1882 report.

In several replies to the 1883 questionnaire, librarians implied that teachers were primarily responsible for teaching children how to use books. This included teaching children both how to read and how to learn from the knowledge in books.<sup>261</sup> For instance, writing from Boston, library assistant Miss Jenkins defined the professional roles of the librarian and the teacher in this way: “The librarian can provide and recommend the books, and induce the child to take them, but the teacher must do his or her part, and teach *how* to read and profit by the reading.”<sup>262</sup> The librarians’ selection of books was secondary to the work of the teacher, who was primarily responsible for assuring that children were learning to read correctly.

However, a few replies emphasized the importance of the professional expertise of the librarian. For example, one librarian reported that, at the Fletcher Free Library in Fletcher, Vermont, public librarians chose books for children and teachers that were sent

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<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, 220.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, 221, 226.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, 217, 218, 219, 220-221, 223-224, 226.

<sup>261</sup> *ibid.*, 219, 225.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, 219.

in “baskets” to the schools. This procedure emphasized the authority of librarians in guiding children’s reading because they were the ones who chose the books to be sent to teachers and pupils in schools. The trustees of the Fletcher Free Library described the concerns expressed to them by others that the librarian had too much authority in this case, and was “becoming the Superintendent of schools.”<sup>263</sup> However, the trustees dismissed these fears, emphasizing that children were benefiting from these efforts. This demonstrates that elevating the librarian’s authority over that of the teacher, and potentially over that of superintendents, was met with at least some discomfort.

Others methods of providing schools with books also emphasized the public librarians’ expertise. Some public librarians presented their knowledge of books appropriate for the young through formal talks on books to children. In Hartford, for example, Hewins gave talks to pupils from a girls’ school on which books to read, with a list that they could copy.<sup>264</sup> In Boston, “Miss Jenkins” read aloud to classes in public and private schools and gave similar talks to pupils about books. Librarians in Boston claimed that positive effects of their book talks and other book promotion efforts were observed in the “graduating examinations of several of the classes.”<sup>265</sup> In Chicago, William F. Poole gave talks on Saturday mornings to classes brought by their teachers to the public library, instructing children in how to “acquire the habits of investigating subjects for themselves.”<sup>266</sup> These talks were prototypes of the practice of book talking in which children’s librarians still engage today. These practices demonstrate that public librarians were asserting an instructive role alongside teachers.

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<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, 219-220.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, 217-218.

Efforts to cooperate with teachers were not always successful, and some public librarians continued to question teachers' commitment to teaching children what to read. Bean emphasized these doubts in her conclusion to the 1883 report, arguing that most teachers had "not yet developed the enthusiasm necessary for effectual work with their pupils in this direction." She characterized those teachers who were involved with their pupils' reading as "exceptional cases" that gave "rare promise of what may be done."<sup>267</sup> Bean invoked the metaphor of a military campaign to describe the ways librarians had to work to persuade others of the importance of the reading of the young: "[L]ibrarians must therefore continue to carry the war into the enemy's camp, and by their very intrepidity enlist parents and teachers to their standard until the day is won."<sup>268</sup> This statement reflects the intensity of Bean's conviction, shared by others who responded to her 1883 questionnaire, that public librarians had a professional obligation to convince others, particularly teachers but also parents, that children's reading was an important aspect of their education.

### **Green's 1883 Libraries and Schools**

In 1883, Samuel Swett Green edited a book he described as a "handy little volume" titled *Libraries and Schools*.<sup>269</sup> This book was distributed for free to librarians, school-boards, and teachers to promote the idea of cooperation between public libraries and schools. The fact that this book, Green's report on libraries and schools, and the report on the Reading of the Young by Bean, were all published in 1883 suggests that the

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<sup>267</sup> *ibid.*, 227.

<sup>268</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> Green and others, *Libraries and Schools*, 3.

subject of what libraries should do for children was receiving a new level of attention in the professional discussions of librarians.

In this book, Green gathered together papers written by four men who had been involved with school and library cooperation to make an edited compilation of six essays. Foster and Green each contributed two essays, and the two other essays were contributed by Charles Frances Adams and Robert C. Metcalf. Adams and Metcalf had been speakers at the 1879 ALA conference on fiction and the reading of school children. The writers represented different professional roles: Foster and Green were librarians, Adams was a library trustee, and Metcalf was a teacher. Most of the papers had been presented elsewhere; for example, Green included an extract from his report on “Aids and Guides for Readers” which he had presented at the 1882 ALA conference. Several of the papers in the volume had been read to teachers’ groups, as a means of inspiring cooperation between schools and public libraries. One paper by Green had been presented at a meeting of the American Social Science Association in 1880, which suggests some of these issues of inter-institutional connection were of interest to audiences outside of the field of librarianship.<sup>270</sup>

Overall, the essays conveyed the same point of view about teachers having primary authority to direct children’s reading that Green had expounded in his 1883 report. Public libraries were to fulfill their educational mission by serving teachers, principals, and superintendents, and through them pupils in schools. The title of Metcalf’s essay, “The Public Library as Auxilliary to the Public Schools,” accurately captures the vision promoted throughout these essays of the institutional relationship

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<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

between public schools and public libraries. According to these writings, the role of the public library was to serve the young through assisting the schools that they attended.

Most of the essays provided justification for establishing institutional cooperation between libraries and schools and an account of practical means of starting and sustaining these services to schools. One frequently mentioned justification was that public libraries should extend the educational mission of the schools beyond the point of graduation, into the lives of adults. However, several essays emphasized that accomplishing this mission required that teachers train children in the use of the library. It was not enough merely to make libraries available with no training in their use; teaching the public to use the public library would allow the public library to sustain life-long relevance as means to self-education for adult citizens. The best way of doing this was through the institution where the public was already being taught, the public school. As William Foster wrote, "...the great end of all school education is to make the people able to educate themselves."<sup>271</sup> Through library service to schools, teachers would have the ability to help children establish "good reading habits" when they were young enough to absorb these habits and keep them for life.

Public librarians also guided teachers and their classes in the use of materials. Foster described the role of the public library as "not merely furnishing the material for the reading of the public, but also, so far as possible, indicating the method of reading and study."<sup>272</sup> School children needed special assistance, Foster argued, including resources such as printed catalogs with annotations and special subject lists. Three of the papers contributed to this volume had been read to teachers' groups in Quincy

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<sup>271</sup> *ibid.*, 96.

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

(Massachusetts), Boston, and Providence (Rhode Island), as librarians strove to guide teachers as to how best to use library materials with their classes, to encourage the development of young intellects.

Green's edited volume of essays provided philosophical justification for the work of public libraries as supplements to public schools and gave some concrete methods of working with teachers for the intellectual benefit of their pupils. Fostering intellectual growth was to be seen as a means of creating better citizens. Foster described this function of the school as "a conserving force of the state."<sup>273</sup> Books of ancient and contemporary history found in public libraries offered the means for citizens to inform themselves about the histories of past governments. Armed with this knowledge, they would be able to participate meaningfully in the democratic process of electing public officials. As Foster wrote, books of history, "supplemented by the living interest and conscientious influence of the teacher, go far towards training up in the future a generation of intelligent and patriotic citizens."<sup>274</sup> Working with schools, public libraries helped to encourage the intellectual development of boys who would become voting men (women did not attain universal suffrage in the United States until 1920). Because of his influence, Green's vision of libraries as supplemental to schools defined much of the dialogue among public librarians about library work with children in the early 1880s.

### **1885 Reading of the Young Report**

Hannah James of the Newton (Massachusetts) Free Library compiled the third in the series of Reading of the Young reports. She addressed her questionnaire to "all the

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<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, 100.

<sup>274</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

Public Libraries of the United States, containing over 4,000 volumes” in order to make her report as comprehensive as possible. James sent 125 letters out, and received 75 replies. This was a large number of responses compared to the first two reports in the series, which received 25 replies each. James described the content of her questionnaire in the report thus:

The circular requested information upon the connection of the libraries with schools; their methods of influencing the young in their selection of books for home reading; as to whether lists of books for the young had been prepared, and requested copies of the lists, if printed.<sup>275</sup>

James situated the topic of “connection of the libraries with schools” as central to questions about the reading of the young.

Librarians’ replies gave evidence of many new connections between libraries and schools. A large number of questionnaire respondents—64 replies out of 75, or just over 85% of the total number of replies—mentioned connections with schools, teachers, or pupils in regards to school work. These responses suggest how actively public librarians were embracing the tasks of making connections with schools, teachers, and children. Many of the replies to James’ questionnaire, 41 out of 75, came from the state of Massachusetts. It is perhaps not surprising that so many replies to a questionnaire that solicited information on public library cooperation with schools came from libraries in Massachusetts and other northeastern states where public schooling was well established. Massachusetts, home state of famous educational reformer Horace Mann, led the nation in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the development of a system of public education.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 278.

<sup>276</sup> Kaestle and Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts*, 3-4.

Many instances of successful cooperative efforts were along the lines that Green had described, in that librarians created relationships with school leaders to create cooperative plans which teachers were directed to implement. For instance, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the librarian requested the school superintendent “to devise some plan by which the schools might derive more benefit from the library,” in part because the librarian lacked professional time to devote to establishing such a plan.<sup>277</sup> In a number of cases it was reported that superintendents had initiated cooperation with libraries by creating book lists for children and teachers in their schools.<sup>278</sup>

However, in other locales librarians reported that they had reached teachers or children without going through the school district hierarchy. For example, in Lynn, Massachusetts, no special connection was established with the schools, but the public library had “very close relations with them through the teachers and the individual pupils.”<sup>279</sup> Many other librarians similarly reported that they had no formal connections between the school and library, but that they were happy to assist school children, and frequently provided informal help for pupils and teachers.<sup>280</sup> It is not clear why cooperation with school officials was not actively explored in such cases. One possible explanation lies in gendered power relationships. Teaching had become a predominately female occupation, while heads of school districts were generally male. This pattern was also true of most public librarians; the head librarians were men, while many of the library staff were women. In a few cases, women were head librarians, such as Caroline Hewins in Hartford, Connecticut, and Mary Bean in Brookline, Massachusetts. It is

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<sup>277</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 284.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, 282-283, 284, 285, 287, 289.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, 284.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, 285.

possible that, even in those cases, their status as women meant that female head librarians carried less authority with superintendents, who were almost exclusively male, than did their male colleagues such as Green and Foster. There are likely other explanations as well, since school districts were still evolving and individual school leaders were undoubtedly more or less inclined to work closely with public libraries depending on the circumstances of their communities.

In one unusual case, the head of a public library created a reading program and book list for pupils to be implemented in the public schools. Mellen Chamberlain, head of the prestigious Boston Public Library, created “a plan of supplementary reading” for “upper Grammar classes” which included which books to read, instruction in how to read them, and a schedule for classroom recitations of memorized passages from these books. This plan was adopted in Boston schools, and Chamberlain reported that teachers were enthusiastic about the program: “[T]eachers say that the hour for this recitation is always too short, and that the beneficial effects are felt in other recitations.”<sup>281</sup> Chamberlain’s creation of an element of the school curriculum was possibly unique among librarians. One explanation for Chamberlain’s authority over schools is that the Boston Public Library was itself quite unusual; founded in 1852, it was a leader among public libraries that paved the way for the development of many other urban public libraries.<sup>282</sup> Chamberlain carried the authority of this institution, and so he was in an unusually advantageous position to influence schools and teachers. The same gendered power relations that likely made it difficult for women librarians to successfully build

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<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, 281.

<sup>282</sup> Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library; the Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*, 179-181.

relationships with male superintendents may have had a different effect here.

Chamberlain, as a male head of a large public library, was likely more able to impress his agenda for children's reading upon the superintendent of Boston schools. There may also be other explanations that involve particularities of the Boston schools at the time.

From this Reading of the Young report, it appears that the authority of librarians to direct children's reading was increasing. Librarians reported selecting books for teachers and students, sometimes based on the teachers' lesson plans. Several librarians wrote that teachers were being asked to send notices of upcoming subjects of study to the public library, so that librarians could select and provide resources for pupils studying those subjects.<sup>283</sup> In Milwaukee, the librarian requested notice of upcoming subjects in part because there had been instances in which teachers announced their assigned subjects of study to their classes, and the pupils checked out all the books later the same day, before the teacher could borrow the materials for use of the class.<sup>284</sup> Several public libraries provided sets of duplicate books that circulated to the schools, so that whole classes could study one book together.<sup>285</sup>

Some librarians reported that they directed children's reading without regard to teachers' lessons. They gave lectures on books and book use to groups of pupils, which reflected their own views of what constituted good reading.<sup>286</sup> James herself reported that she was planning to visit every grammar school in Newton (Massachusetts), to talk to teachers and the Superintendent about "suitable selections" of reading materials for

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<sup>283</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 280, 286, 288, 289.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, 290.

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*, 286, 287.

<sup>286</sup> *ibid.*, 279.

children and to bring to school officials library card applications for their pupils.<sup>287</sup>

Librarians in five cities reported that they had created lists of locally available books to be used by children in choosing reading materials.<sup>288</sup> Book lists reported by librarians in the 1885 Reading of the Young report were created either by school superintendents or librarians. There was no repetition of the concerns expressed in 1883 over whether librarians had the authority to select books for schools; librarians were now clearly comfortable with the fact that their knowledge of books was justification enough for creating lists.

It is evident from the 1885 Reading of the Young report that public librarians were establishing some degree of professional authority in guiding children's reading. Nevertheless, the librarians whose words were recorded in the reports designated no one group (librarians, teachers, or parents) consistently as primarily responsible for children's reading. Two replies to James' query described parents as primarily responsible for guiding reading done outside of school.<sup>289</sup> One public library even offered the services of its librarians in a newspaper notice that announced that librarians were willing to "supervise and control the reading of the children, and will be glad to do so if instructed by their parents."<sup>290</sup> However, the fact that there were only two mentions of parents in the 1885 report suggests that librarians and teachers, between them, were seen as having primary authority to guide children's reading.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, 285.

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, 283, 286.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*, 279.

<sup>291</sup> *ibid.*, 286 At issue here also is a tension between two kinds of authority, parental versus professional. Women had primary responsibility for child rearing activities in the private sphere. As groups of professionals and reformers expressed greater concern about the protection of children, they established methods for directing children's activities in many spheres. Librarians and teachers provide two of many

Some librarians believed that this was not in their jurisdiction, and that instead teachers should be professionally responsible for guiding children's reading. As Poole wrote from Chicago, the public library could "do little more than give the teachers facilities for the work."<sup>292</sup> Teachers were to "superintend" the reading of children, do the "work of bringing the pupils in contact with books."<sup>293</sup> One public librarian wrote that the teachers' "influence is greatest in infusing a love of reading into the masses; and to the teachers do the librarians look for aid."<sup>294</sup> Some teachers, it was reported, did advise children on reading and gave assignments to be done at the library.<sup>295</sup>

However, once again many librarians reported struggling to engage teachers' interest in reading. One reply described librarians' unsuccessful attempts to "wake up teachers as to the importance of the subject" of directing their pupils' reading.<sup>296</sup> Mary Bean, author of the 1883 Reading of the Young report, remarked in her 1885 reply to James' query that the library was "always soliciting the pleasure of better acquaintance with the schools," but that efforts were met with "reluctance" on the part of school officials.<sup>297</sup> In one case, a librarian reported that the principal of a school expressed interest in borrowing books, but had not followed through.<sup>298</sup> A librarian from Malden, Massachusetts, reported that teachers, "as a rule, [...] neglect the advantages the library

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examples of professionals who took over women's spheres of domestic expertise in child rearing; this same shift of social authority, from mother to professional, occurred in many areas in the twentieth century, as experts formalized advice for women. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good : Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women*, 2nd Anchor Books ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), xix, 410.

<sup>292</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 279.

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*, 279.

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, 280.

<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, 284-285, 286, 290.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, 288.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, 282.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, 279.

offers them.”<sup>299</sup> These struggles created tensions between librarians and teachers, as expressed in librarians’ complaints about the unreliability of teachers in cooperating with public libraries. However, at the national level, the National Educational Association began to take note of librarians’ efforts in working with schools in 1887.

### **The NEA: Shared Ideals of Reading, But Little Connection**

As replies included in the 1882, 1883, and 1885 Reading of the Young reports demonstrate, many public librarians were aware of the potential work that teachers could do to guide children’s reading selections. On the other hand, librarians believed that many teachers were unaware of the work being done in public libraries in assisting teachers with their educational work.

Perhaps one reason that teachers were not aware of librarians’ efforts to assist them is an imbalance of numbers. By 1850, there were already over 90,000 teachers in the United States.<sup>300</sup> There were far fewer librarians. Because the profession was so new, precise statistics are not available for the numbers of librarians in 1850. However, there were only 5,338 public libraries in existence in 1884, over 30 years later.<sup>301</sup> While larger libraries in urban areas had multiple staff members, most small libraries would have employed only one librarian. Although the exact figures are lost to us, it is clear that there was a low ratio of librarians to teachers. As a result many teachers were unaware of public librarians’ desire for cooperation toward educational goals, as was evident at teachers’ national conferences during the 1880s.

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<sup>299</sup> *ibid.*, 284.

<sup>300</sup> Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue : Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*, 16

<sup>301</sup> United States. Office of Education, *Statistics of Public Libraries in the United States. from the Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1884-85. With Additions* (Washington: Govt. print. off., 1886), CCXXIX.

The National Educational Association (NEA) comprised a small group of teachers; until 1884, it had less than 355 members.<sup>302</sup> Although there were many more teachers than members of the NEA, nevertheless, the NEA constituted the only “national center of influence in American education” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meetings typically consisted of speeches on topics such as “moral education, supervision, curriculum, and a smattering of educational theory.”<sup>303</sup> There were also occasional talks that addressed reading and the proper use of books.

Teachers echoed public librarian’s concerns about the harmful effects of bad reading in the early 1880s, but they did not mention public libraries as a factor. At the 1881 NEA conference, a speaker described a boy in prison as having been corrupted by dime novels, stating that “the immediate cause of his committing his horrible acts was the class of reading in which he indulged.”<sup>304</sup> Four years later, at the 1885 conference, the NEA board passed a resolution against “demoralizing literature.”<sup>305</sup> These concerns over detrimental effects of reading echo comments made by librarians in the late 1870s and 1880s, and they demonstrate that both teachers and librarians were part of the larger cultural context of concern over children’s exposure to the print media of the day.

In 1887, the topic of school and library cooperation was explicitly addressed at an NEA conference in a paper on “The School and the Library” by Thomas J. Morgan, Principal of the State Normal School. He was from Providence, Rhode Island, like Foster, and his paper acknowledged two cities, Providence (where Foster was librarian)

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<sup>302</sup> Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue : Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*.

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, 18, 98.

<sup>304</sup> J. B. Beaslee, "Moral and Literacy Training in the Public Schools," *National Educational Association Proceedings* 20 (1881), 115.

<sup>305</sup> Thomas W. Bickness, "Resolutions," *National Educational Association Proceedings* 24 (1885), 21.

and Worcester (home of Green), as places where school and library connections were well established. This undoubtedly reflected the influence of Foster and Green in engendering fruitful connections between public libraries and public schools.

In his paper, Morgan declared that teachers' work included guiding children's reading, in order to protect them "from the miasma of pernicious literature, by fostering a taste for that which is wholesome."<sup>306</sup> Morgan also described methods of cooperation, detailing how the aid of the public library could engage children's interests in reading by providing them with interesting books from which to choose. Most importantly, he described the public library as a source of inspiration for learning:

Study should be made interesting, and school work a delight, by bringing it into such relations with comprehensive reading as to show that all school exercises facilitate the intelligent use of books. The public library with its treasures should stand as the goal toward which each courser in the school race is bending.<sup>307</sup>

Morgan presented teachers at the NEA conference with sound reasons for making the acquaintance of their colleagues in libraries. Two years later, the 1889 Reading of the Young report indicated that increasing numbers of public schools were cooperating with public libraries.

### **1889 Reading of the Young Report**

In 1889, Mary Sargent compiled the fourth Reading of the Young report, sending a questionnaire to libraries across the nation. She published neither the number of queries sent nor the wording of those queries, although she described her questionnaire as a "circular asking about the methods employed and the work accomplished in this

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<sup>306</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, "The School and the Library," *National Educational Association Proceedings* 26 (1887), 193.

<sup>307</sup> *ibid.*, 194.

direction in different libraries.”<sup>308</sup> She did report receiving 49 responses, which came from 19 different states and one other country (England). Out of these 49, Sargent stated that “twenty-six of forty-nine libraries” reported “work with the public schools,” reflecting the continued importance of these inter-institutional connections.<sup>309</sup>

Where successful cooperation with public schools had been attained, public librarians responding to the questionnaire documented their successes by giving numbers of books lent to schools. For instance, in Burlington, Vermont, the Fletcher Free Library reported that they circulated over 750 books to intermediate schools during the previous school year.<sup>310</sup> In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 29 teachers participated in a borrowing program through which 830 books had been sent to the schools in the previous school year, and those books were checked out to children in the schools 2,498 times.<sup>311</sup> For the first time in the Reading of the Young reports, public libraries included borrowing statistics in their replies. This is significant because it marks the beginning of a trend which continued during the 1890s, when the reports relied heavily on statistical evidence rather than the anecdotal evidence given in reports during the 1880s.

Despite solid evidence of effective cooperation between public libraries and public schools, there also continued to be many complaints in the 1889 report from public librarians about attempts at cooperation that were met with indifference by school administrators or teachers. Sargent’s introduction to the report reiterated the concern expressed in the replies she had received that teachers were not yet convinced of the use of libraries for educational ends. Some librarians still felt that not enough teachers

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<sup>308</sup> Mary Sargent, "Reading for the Young," *Library Journal* 14, no. 5-6 (1889), 226.

<sup>309</sup> *ibid.*, 226.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*, 234.

<sup>311</sup> *ibid.*, 235.

appreciated “the importance of the work.”<sup>312</sup> She hoped to persuade teachers that, with the aid of books from the public library, “more could be accomplished in the true education of children than by strict adherence to a prescribed textbook.”<sup>313</sup> Sargent reiterated librarians’ urgency, expressed in several previous reports, about the need to communicate to schools and teachers the significance of libraries as aids to children’s reading.

The degree of connection between individual public libraries and schools continued to vary dramatically from place to place. For example, in Worcester, a decade of work had already succeeded in making close ties between the two institutions, and, as Green wrote: “the school and the library are practically one enterprise.”<sup>314</sup> In St. Louis, librarian F. M. Crunden described the relation of the public library to the public school as “intimate and vital.”<sup>315</sup> However, in other places, public libraries replied to Sargent’s questionnaire by stating that they had no connection with the schools.<sup>316</sup> One librarian specified that they had no formal institutional connection with the schools, but did have “daily, almost hourly” contact with teachers.<sup>317</sup> These variations indicate that no pervasive standard structure for library work in connection with schools had emerged.

What had emerged through the first four Reading of the Young reports was a professional consensus, from librarians across the United States, that the public library had a role in guiding the reading of the young. Moreover, even without cooperation from schools, public librarians had found that they could be quite successful at attracting

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<sup>312</sup> *ibid.*, 226.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *ibid.*, 231.

<sup>315</sup> *ibid.*, 232.

<sup>316</sup> *ibid.*, 232, 233.

<sup>317</sup> *ibid.*, 229.

children and guiding their reading. The 1889 report alone gives ample evidence of the range of methods librarians had successfully used, including displays of books, lists of recommended books, pictures or picture books for “very little ones,” children’s reference sections, “evening entertainments from different authors,” and bulletin boards displaying titles of new juvenile books.<sup>318</sup> In addition, some libraries provided other attractions, such as “stereopticon views” and “dissecting maps” to attract young readers.<sup>319</sup> Crunden of St. Louis captured the essence of the role of the public library in children’s lives in his reply to the 1889 query, writing that “to learn how and what to read requires a library.”<sup>320</sup> Whether or not schools cooperated, by 1889 public librarians had developed their own strategies for guiding children’s reading.

### **Failures of Cooperation with Schools**

Public librarians took a diverse range of approaches to serving children, some of them with schools and some of them independent of schools. It is worth exploring some of the reasons for the failure of Green’s model of youth services, which emphasized the authority of teachers to guide children’s reading, to take hold on a national scale. In large part, Green’s model failed to become the norm because of teachers’ lack of cooperation. Of course, some teachers did cooperate wholeheartedly, but as the Reading of the Young reports during the 1880s show, many librarians were discouraged by their education colleagues’ disinterest.

Teachers, however, may not have been entirely to blame. The most compelling explanation for teacher disinterest in trying to work with public libraries was the fact that

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<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*, 227, 228, 230.

<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*, 233.

<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*, 232.

they were already overworked. Teachers managed classes in rural one-room schoolhouses with students of all ages or in crowded urban classrooms. In many schools, each classroom contained as many as fifty or sixty students.<sup>321</sup> The supply of teachers had not yet caught up with the great expansion of the public school system in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In some urban settings, a hierarchical organization allowed one teacher to supervise multiple assistants, who were older students themselves, so that a single teacher might be responsible for educating 1,000 students.<sup>322</sup> Most teachers could do little more than provide basic education for their pupils. Cooperation with libraries would have been a luxury, not a necessity, for overburdened and under trained teachers isolated in one-room schoolhouses or for teachers in urban settings who were overwhelmed by large numbers of children, not to mention the challenges of teaching to immigrant children who spoke multiple languages. Librarians who felt that teachers should take responsibility for guiding children's reading choices were fighting against the fact that many teachers had little incentive to add this responsibility to their professional duties. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that librarians struggled to initiate cooperation with schools.

Teachers also faced some barriers from the public library itself. Some libraries overregulated the way books circulated to teachers or limited their access to books on educational topics. For example, even in Providence, Rhode Island, where Foster's work was successfully creating institutional cooperation, teachers had a card which allowed them to borrow only one book for their own use. They were also given pupils' cards, but

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<sup>321</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, 92.

<sup>322</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

these cards allowed them to borrow only six more books for use in their classrooms.<sup>323</sup> In another instance, in Quincy, Massachusetts, principals were allowed to borrow 10 books, but their choices were restricted to those “relating strictly to subjects included within the educational courses”<sup>324</sup> It is impossible to say whether such restrictions were enforced, or whether they actually deterred teachers, but these complex borrowing rules and restricted borrowing privileges may have contributed to teacher disinterest. Many public librarians instead went directly to the children.

### **Serving Children Directly in Public Libraries**

By the late 1880s, many more public librarians described their practices of offering children direct, personal help. In 1885, 18 of 75 librarians replying to the questionnaire for the report mentioned offering children personal assistance in choosing books.<sup>325</sup> In 1889, 21 of 49 replies mentioned direct, personal assistance, almost as many as the 24 replies that mentioned work with schools. Some librarians mentioned both strategies.<sup>326</sup> It is impossible to determine whether the incidence of such “personal help,” “personal aid,” or “personal attendance” was actually increasing in public libraries. However, the number of public librarians who described their personal interactions with children as an important method of guiding their reading was increasing, and offering personal help to children was becoming a more accepted part of librarians’ professional duties.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 289-290.

<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*, 285.

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 226-236.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*, 231, 232.

In the introduction to her 1889 Reading of the Young report, Mary Sargent commented on this trend, noting that much “stress” was now placed on “personal influence.” Sargent also suggested that this work deserved its own dedicated personnel, writing that “special persons should be appointed to this department of library work who, through their love for children and an appreciation of their needs, seem especially fitted to render them the best assistance.”<sup>328</sup> While public librarians continued to purchase and provide materials for school use, they also provided those materials directly to children. Public librarians were beginning to assert that their own knowledge of children in their libraries and children’s books constituted a sufficient basis for guiding children’s reading. By 1889, even Green emphasized the importance of personal assistance; his reply to Sargent’s 1889 query stated that his goal was to provide enough staff to serve as assistants “so that any person who wants it, young or old, may have such aid as he desires in selecting a single book or a list of books.”<sup>329</sup>

These efforts were apparently successful, in that children were reported to be clamoring to use the library for themselves, flooding library buildings. Miss Chandler of Lancaster, Massachusetts described the crowds of children in her reply, quoted in the 1883 Reading of the Young report: “If the number of children who frequent the library is any evidence, then my efforts meet with popular approval, the room sometimes presenting the appearance of an infant school.”<sup>330</sup>

Due in part to these numbers, public libraries were also beginning to designate spaces for children. In 1889 in Brookline, Massachusetts, librarian Mary Bean described

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<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, 226.

<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*, 231.

<sup>330</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 222.

a room in the public library building dedicated to “future school work.”<sup>331</sup> This room is often described as a landmark in the development of public library youth services because it was one of the first rooms to be allotted as space for work with youth.<sup>332</sup> However, it was not necessarily intended for the kind of direct, personal work with children associated with modern youth services. Instead, the Brookline room was a space for work with schools. The Brookline room, understood in the context of youth services in the 1880s, was intended to serve teachers and their classes, and only secondarily would this room have served children on their own.

Closer to the modern model of the public library children’s room was the space Minerva Sanders in Pawtucket dedicated to children. Sanders designated a set of four reading tables as space for children. According to Sanders’ account in the 1885 report, these tables were “exclusively for children from five years to fourteen,” and the seventy seats at these tables were “generally full” of children, reading quietly to themselves or each other.<sup>333</sup> Sanders made no mention of this space being part of school cooperation. Instead, she described the purpose of this work as influencing children directly and “training them from the earliest years to the use of love of books.”<sup>334</sup> Sanders also understood that, in the manufacturing community of Pawtucket, many children received no schooling, because their parents could not afford to “spare their children’s wages for even the three months covering the compulsory law of education.”<sup>335</sup> If schools did not

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<sup>331</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 228.

<sup>332</sup> Thomas, *The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library : 1875-1906*, 104; Long, *Public Library Service to Children; Foundation and Development*, 91-92.

<sup>333</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 289.

<sup>334</sup> *ibid.*, 289.

<sup>335</sup> Minerva A. Sanders, "The Possibilities of Public Libraries in Manufacturing Communities," *Library Journal* 12, no. 8 (1887), 396.

serve all children, then librarians like Sanders had good reason to invite all children into the public library, in the hopes of filling the gaps left by schools.

### **Conclusion: The Authority to Guide Children's Reading**

School cooperation as the dominant model of public library service to youth was one important stage in the development of children's librarianship. During the years from 1882 to 1889, public librarians asserted that they had a role in guiding children's reading because they supplemented and enhanced the school curriculum. At the same time, they appropriated the educational goals of school for their own ends, to cement the importance of the public library for not only patrons of all ages, but also for other public institutions. By 1889, many librarians had established their own direct services to children, providing materials, spaces, and personnel for children within the public library building. The public library as an institution was reshaping its cultural role to include providing service to children, first by providing books in schools and later through the official establishment of youth services in public library buildings, as one of the central functions of the public library.

Initially, schools were positioned as an intermediary between children and public libraries. Over time, however, public librarians began to see that they did not require the cooperation of teachers in order to influence children's reading. The promotion of direct, personal help as the best avenue to reach children posed an indirect challenge to the notion of teacher's authority over children's reading. School work was important, but many librarians by the late 1880s had come to believe that their role should encompass more than mere facilitation of the educational ends of the teacher and the school. Librarians who promoted direct help as the best means of guiding reading were also

implicitly affirming that librarians were as well equipped as teachers to make book selections for the young. Some librarians would doubtless have claimed that they were, in fact, better equipped to make those selections. Although school cooperation remained a part of services to youth, public librarians did not rely on the authority of teachers to guide children's reading.

Nevertheless, librarians' work with schools was important, because it offered concrete evidence of ways that public libraries could influence children's reading choices. As Green wrote:

May we not congratulate ourselves that the efforts at the library and in our schools to provide children with wholesome and at the same time interesting books have had no inconsiderable influence in satisfying the craving in the young for stories and kept them from debasing literature, which, if the right kind of books had not been furnished, would have been sought for, purchased, and read?<sup>336</sup>

As public librarians successfully argued that they had the professional authority to guide children's reading through direct, personal assistance, they also began to formalize their opinions about which books were best in recommended lists, as discussed in chapter four.

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<sup>336</sup> Samuel Swett Green, "Libraries and Schools: The Results of a New Experiment in Worcester, Mass." *Library Journal* 12, no. 8 (August, 1887), 402.

## Chapter 4: Librarians' Book Recommendations for Children, 1879-1890

“We are agreed that a happy combination of school and library influences may do much to rectify the baleful tendency of aimless reading by teaching children what and how to read.”

-Mary A. Bean<sup>337</sup>

### Introduction

As work with schools was expanding in public libraries, public librarians were also working in their own buildings to direct children's reading by recommending books to children. Just as Green was an influential figure in the development of public library service to schools, Caroline Hewins (1846-1926) was an influential figure in the development of book recommendations, an important aspect of what would become youth services work in public libraries. Hewins wrote several influential lists of recommended books and, through her writings, articulated the values that informed those recommendations. Hewins' book recommendations were published in a number of sources, including Hewins' own local publication, the *Hartford Library Association Bulletin*. This bulletin was first published in 1878, and in 1882, Hewins wrote a germinal book titled *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, which was so well-received that a second printing was made in 1883, and she revised and reissued this book in 1897 and again in 1914. Also in the year 1883, Hewins' series of columns for *Library Journal* titled “Literature for the Young” appeared. These columns contained monthly updates on new books for children as well as excerpts and quotations from other, non-library publications in which other professionals commented on the reading of children. The series of columns ran from February to December of 1883.

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<sup>337</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 227.

The Reading of the Young reports from 1882 to 1889 give clear evidence of the far-reaching impact of Hewins' 1882 *Books for the Young* on public librarians. It was the most frequently mentioned resource among librarians responding to the questionnaires that led to those reports in the 1880s. At the same time, these reports show that many librarians were developing their own lists of recommended and not recommended books for children. As they did so, they articulated basic rationales about "good" or "bad" books that were in effect early collection development policies for children's collections.

Some of the rationales for recommending or not recommending books were similar to those arguments given by Fletcher and Quincy in the 1876 report, as discussed in chapter two. Some librarians worried about children reading sensational adventure books, which they feared would give them "false views" of life and lead to eventual dissatisfaction with life as it was. In the publishing context of the 1870s and 1880s, cheap dime-novel adventure books were readily available to children. However, unlike Fletcher and Quincy, librarians in the 1880s were much more specific about which particular titles, authors, and genres of books they thought were harmful to children or good for children. The Reading of the Young reports in the 1880s reflected librarians' consistent recommendations that children should read "true" books of nature, history, and sometimes biography. It was hoped that such nonfiction works would replace children's interest in fictional works.

Hewins' recommendations, in her book and other publications, balanced fiction and nonfiction works. She promoted the reading of fairy tales, legends, and myths for children, as well as other selected imaginative works of fiction. While many librarians used Hewins' book throughout the 1880s, when they named particular books or authors

in their replies to questionnaires for the Reading of the Young reports, they tended strongly to recommend nonfiction. The only exception to this was the report issued in 1890. Report author and compiler Minerva Sanders introduced the report with anecdotal evidence about how reading fiction benefited children, as discussed later in this chapter.

This chapter examines what materials were recommended for children from 1879 to 1890, beginning with an examination of the kinds of books that were being published and continuing with analysis of which of those materials Hewins and other librarians who replied to questionnaires for the Reading of the Young reports selected as appropriate for children. The materials these librarians recommended and the effects they expected books to have on children gives a rich picture of what public libraries believed they could offer to the young. Hewins' 1882 book represented a foundation of professional knowledge about children's literature which would remain central to children's librarianship as the professional specialty emerged.

### **Larger Publishing Context: Abundance of Cheap Books**

In order to understand librarian's book recommendations, one has to situate them within the publishing context of the time. Librarians were selecting books to recommend for children when the publishing industry was changing rapidly, and cheap publishing was flourishing. Many books, newspapers, and other periodicals were available at the unprecedented low prices of a quarter, ten cents, or a nickel. This era of cheap book publishing began in the early 1840s, when the serial publication *Brother Jonathan* began successfully pirating works of British fiction writers and selling them to audiences in the

United States without paying royalties to the authors.<sup>338</sup> Such works were usually produced without hard covers, so that the publishers could pass them off as “newspapers” and thereby take advantage of lower postal rates for their distribution. In addition, there were dramatic decreases in the price of paper and, increased speed of production made possible by technological advancements, so that competition in the bookselling markets was fierce.<sup>339</sup> Many publishers entered the market with their own cheap books and magazines. Beadle and Adams created the famous “yellowback” dime novels, cheaply produced books priced at a dime with yellow covers that usually contained sensational adventure stories. Given these trends in inexpensive publishing, those publishers who paid royalties to authors for their work were highly anxious about their profits, particularly by the early 1880s, when librarians were beginning to discuss which books they should purchase for children.<sup>340</sup>

In order to stay competitive, some publishers began to produce cheap “libraries,” sets of books bound in matching covers and priced according to the number of pages in each book, with a base price of ten cents.<sup>341</sup> The publication of cheap “libraries” was still growing in the mid-1880s.<sup>342</sup> Religious publishers were affected along with secular publishers by these changes in the publishing market. The two major leading Sunday School publishers, the American Tract Society and the American Sunday School Union, took to publishing their own “libraries” of books to be sold as sets. The American Sunday School Union had one such library that numbered 100 volumes, meant to be sold

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<sup>338</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes : The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: , 1966), 76.

<sup>339</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 482.

<sup>340</sup> *ibid.*, 484.

<sup>341</sup> Mott, *Golden Multitudes : The Story of Best Sellers in the United States*, 150.

<sup>342</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 485-486.

as a complete or near complete collection for the use of a a small Sunday School.<sup>343</sup> Since the average size of a Sunday school library was between 200 and 300 volumes, such a “library” might have comprised a substantial portion of such collections. Some Sunday school libraries were stocked on a bid basis, buying from the bookseller who could give the highest number of books for the least cost.<sup>344</sup> In other words, Sunday school publishers were strongly influenced by market forces, including both the larger publishing world and the typical buying strategies of Sunday School libraries, to produce books in volume as cheaply as possible.

However, by the end of the decade, forces converged to change some of these publishing trends. First, the market was so flooded with cheap paperback reprints that, by 1889, sales had declined, and these books were being given away as promotions with sales of other products, such as soap.<sup>345</sup> Second, new laws against book piracy made it more difficult to produce cheap reprints of books previously published elsewhere. In 1890, the passage of the International Copyright Act made the practice of reprinting British works without financial remuneration for authors illegal, although anything published before 1891 was still fair game.<sup>346</sup>

Publishing for children at this time was intrinsically connected to publishing for adults. There were not yet separate imprints, departments, or publishing houses that specialized in children’s literature. They too had been subject to the trend for mass-produced cheap books. In light of the numbers of children’s books available at very low prices, and the minimal to nonexistent oversight of their contents, many adults were

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<sup>343</sup> Lynn and Wright, *The Big Little School; Sunday Child of American Protestantism*, 41-43.

<sup>344</sup> Briggs, *The Sunday-School Library in the Nineteenth Century*, 70.

<sup>345</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 487.

<sup>346</sup> *ibid.*, 487; Mott, *Golden Multitudes : The Story of Best Sellers in the United States*, 154.

becoming worried about what children might find to read simply floating about on the streets. There was sense that the market was being glutted with books for children that were of low production quality and of indiscriminate moral content.<sup>347</sup>

Librarians were not the only ones realizing that children's reading was important. Another important trend in publishing for children was in part a response to the growing flood of books; from 1865 to 1881, there was a tremendous increase in reviewing of children's books. Reviews of children's books were regularly published in magazines such as *The Nation*, *Publishers' Weekly*, and *Scribner's Monthly* along with reviews of titles for adults. These publications did not necessarily divide reviews of children's books from those of adults, although they did indicate in the review which books were especially suitable for or published for child readers.<sup>348</sup>

However, public librarians were far from alone in their fears of harm to children being caused by reading in the 1880s. Among other voices raising similar concerns were the teachers of the National Educational Association (NEA). At the NEA conference in 1881, a speaker described detrimental effects of dime novel reading, including "slang language," "disrespect for parental authority," poor treatment of the "aged," "wrong ideas of life," and a "general spirit of insubordination."<sup>349</sup> Four years later, in 1885, the NEA urged teachers to cultivate children's tastes for good literature in order to displace the bad reading they were wont to do.<sup>350</sup> Many newspapers and magazines published accounts of individual children, usually boys, who attributed their descent into lives of crime to the

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<sup>347</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 597.

<sup>348</sup> Richard L. Darling, *The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881* (New York: Bowker, 1968), 13-19, 249-251.

<sup>349</sup> Beaslee, *Moral and Literacy Training in the Public Schools*, 115.

<sup>350</sup> Bickness, *Resolutions*, 21.

reading of too many adventure stories, in story papers and dime novels. In 1883, Anthony Comstock published his famous book *Traps for the Young*, which compiled many of these anecdotes together, hoping to induce parents to look out for the reading and thereby the moral health of their children.<sup>351</sup>

### **Separate Children's Books**

Although there were fears that the market was glutted in this period with bad books for children, in fact more was being published for children at all levels of quality, including some high-quality works that have since been recognized as landmarks in the history of children's publishing. For example, *St. Nicholas* magazine was founded in 1873 as competition to the many other magazines and story papers that ran serial stories for children such as *Our Young Folks* and *Oliver Optic's Magazine*. Mary Mapes Dodge, who had made a name for herself as an author for children with her 1865 book *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates*, was editor of the new magazine. Her mission to bring higher quality literature to the eyes of the young in *St. Nicholas* was so successful that, although the magazine ceased publication in 1905, it remained the model for children's serial publications well into the twentieth century.<sup>352</sup>

Lower-quality serial fiction aimed at a child audience also achieved great publishing success by the 1870s. Such stories were often hastily and formulaically written, and therefore of relatively low quality in a literary sense, but were great fodder for cheap book publishers. For girls, the series about the character Elsie Dinsmore by Martha Finley depicted a pious Christian heroine who had an uncanny tendency toward

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<sup>351</sup> Anthony Comstock, *Traps for the Young* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 253.

<sup>352</sup> Susan R. Gannon, Suzanne Rahn and Ruth Anne Thompson, *St. Nicholas and Mary Mapes Dodge : The Legacy of a Children's Magazine Editor, 1873-1905* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 1-12.

saint-like behavior, no matter how cruelly she was treated. She berated herself for any untoward thoughts she had towards her harsh guardians, and eventually made the adults around her feel the error of their ways and embrace a Christian path. This was a long-running series (1867 to 1905), and it was tremendously popular.<sup>353</sup> Boys had a different flavor of hero in the rags-to-riches stories by Horatio Alger. Alger's first book, published in 1867, was *Ragged Dick*. This title had been published earlier in serial form in *Oliver Optic's Magazine*.<sup>354</sup> In Alger's tales, boy heroes improved themselves despite their circumstances, and so were saved from the poverty of the streets by miraculous turns of fortune, often in the form of wealthy benefactors.<sup>355</sup>

Oliver Optic was the pen name for William Taylor Adams, who had created a veritable publishing empire with his series after series of juvenile books and a successful magazine. Books by Alger were, if not as wildly successful as those by Adams, not far behind. Ironically, Adams was principal of a public school and a Sunday School superintendent, and he intended his books to be a morally uplifting alternative to crime papers and fiction available on the streets.<sup>356</sup> In other words, Adams himself intended to displace worse reading with better through publishing his adventure books for children.

In addition to *Oliver Optic's Magazine*, Adams published serial fiction such as the *Young America* series, in which a principal took a school full of boys to live on a ship on the high seas, to teach them discipline. Adams' fiction portrayed young people taking on

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<sup>353</sup> Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child : American Children and their Books, 1621-1922* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 117-118.

<sup>354</sup> Mott, *Golden Multitudes : The Story of Best Sellers in the United States*, 159.

<sup>355</sup> Avery, *Behold the Child : American Children and their Books, 1621-1922*, 186.

<sup>356</sup> Evelyn Geller, *Forbidden Books in American Public Libraries, 1876-1939 : A Study in Cultural Change*, Vol. 46 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 20-22; Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900*, 188; Ward, Adolphus William, Sir, 1837-1924 (ed., English) and others, eds., *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature: An Encyclopedia in Eighteen Volumes*, Vol. 16 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/Bartleby.com, 2000), 9 (accessed September 4, 2006).

daring tasks, one-dimensional bad-boy characters disobeying their elders, and always concluded with the reformation and repentance of the bad boys at the end, usually in the last few pages of the final chapter. Whether they were saintly role-models or sinful souls in need of reform, the characters in books by Finley, Alger, and Optic were most often unrealistic caricatures of “good” or “bad” children.<sup>357</sup>

At the same time as these formulaic series were having great popular success, some of the most enduring literary classics in children’s literature were also being published. This era in children’s book publishing has been hailed as the dawn of a new realism for children. No longer were the young to be contented with the pious models of small saints in child’s clothing that had populated numerous Sunday School books. Instead, children in books were more real, with flaws as well as virtues. Young readers were “to see themselves as they were, not as they ought to be.”<sup>358</sup> One of these classics, for example, was *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, published in 1868. This book featured a realistic family and real girls who were neither all good nor all bad, but striving to better themselves. The story was moral but not preachy, and depicted day-to-day struggles rather than miraculous religious conversions or amazing financial gains. Other classics of the period with realistic characters were such books as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain (1877) and *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1883). Although neither of these books was published for children, children claimed them as their own.<sup>359</sup> Again, the children in these stories were not portrayed as either

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<sup>357</sup> Avery, *Behold the Child : American Children and their Books, 1621-1922*, 173, 195.

<sup>358</sup> Darling, *The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881*, 249-251.

<sup>359</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 597-598.

pious role models or villainous street criminals, but instead as real children struggling to grow up and make their way.

The increasing trend of publishing more and more works for children in this period influenced public librarians to think of children as a special audience with special needs. They were also influenced by the increasing middle-class tendency to view childhood as a time of life requiring special attention and protection. There would eventually be many such special audiences developed in the course of public library history, including immigrants, the blind, and other groups with needs that differed from the general population of adults that libraries were first founded to serve. With the advent of broad cultural interest in childhood and the widespread availability of reading materials for children in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, children became the first subset of the population to receive special attention in public libraries. Public librarians began to look for ways of differentiating good books for children from the mass of what was available for both adults and children, through creating lists of good children's books. First among the librarians to begin publishing such lists was Caroline Hewins.

### **Hewins' Hartford Library Association Bulletin**

A brief announcement published in *Library Journal* in December gave notice of a new quarterly publication, the *Hartford Library Association Bulletin*, edited by Hewins. The introduction to the first issue stated that the new bulletin would provide "a full list of the new books received by the Hartford Library" as well as "notes" about the library. The first issue of the *Hartford Library Association Bulletin*, published December 1, 1878, organized the new books into the categories "Biography," "History," "Travel," "Arts and

Sciences,” “Fiction,” and “Language, Literature, and Poetry.”<sup>360</sup> Books for children were indicated in these lists by annotations such as “a good book for boys” or “for girls.”

Hewins’ *Hartford Library Association Bulletin* was typical of many library publications of its time in that its primary purpose was to provide notice of books newly acquired by the library.<sup>361</sup> In fact, such bulletins listing new acquisitions were becoming common public library publications in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Other libraries, including but not limited to Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, issued such bulletins to their readers during this time period.<sup>362</sup> Typically such lists were organized alphabetically by authors’ last names, not by the sorts of categories of interest to readers by which Hewins organized the *Bulletin*.

Hewins’ *Bulletin* was unusual for its time in that it specifically noted and recommended books for children from among those acquired by the library. It appears to be the first such bulletin to do so. Most libraries at the time limited library use to those 14 years of age or older.<sup>363</sup> After Hewins began noting which books were suitable for children in 1878, Boston in 1879 added a separate section in their bulletin for books shelved in the lower hall, which included juvenile books as well as some other categories of books.<sup>364</sup> Whether the one event caused the other is not clear, as the change in Boston was not attributed to any particular influence. Nevertheless, it is possible that Hewins’

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<sup>360</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Library Notes," *Hartford Library Association Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (December, 1878), 2.

<sup>361</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> Boston Public Library, "Untitled," *Bulletin of the Boston Public Library* 4, no. 1 (1879), 1; Chicago Public Library, "Bulletin .." (1910; 1910], 1888); Cleveland Public Library, "The Open Shelf," *The Open Shelf: Being a List of the Books Added to the Cleveland Public Library* 1, no. 1 (January, 1894); Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, "Bulletin," *Bulletin of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh* 1, no. 1 (January, 1896), 1; Detroit Public Library, "Bulletin of Books Added to the Public Library of Detroit, Mich," (1889).

<sup>363</sup> Bobinski, *William Isaac Fletcher, an Early American Library Leader*, 101-118.

<sup>364</sup> Boston Public Library, "Persons Admitted to use the Libraries," *Bulletin of the Boston Public Library* 3, no. 4 (January, 1878), 1; Boston Public Library, *Untitled*, 1.

work was instrumental in bringing children's reading to the attention of librarians in Boston.

Hewins' focus on children's books was clear in the announcement of the new publication:

Much time and thought have been given to suggesting in this bulletin good books for boys and girls. As a rule, they read too much. Our accounts show that one boy had taken one hundred and two story-books in six months, and one girl one hundred and twelve novels in the same time. One book a week is certainly enough with school studies. [...] We shall gladly co-operate with fathers and mothers in the choice of books.<sup>365</sup>

She shared with Fletcher and Quincy, whose 1876 articles are discussed in chapter 2, an emphasis on the possible negative impact of children's reading. However, Hewins went further than Fletcher and Quincy in that she also named some books that "are not in the Library, and will not be." These included *Jack Harkaway* books by Bracebridge Hemyng, the *Police news* periodical, and a few books with sensational sounding titles like *The Murderer and the Fortune-Teller*.<sup>366</sup> In other words, she wanted to be clear that sensational fiction was not to appear in her collection at Hartford.

In the earlier issues of the *Hartford Library Association Bulletin*, from 1878 to 1882, children's books and adult books appeared on the same lists, and brief descriptive annotations indicated those books especially suitable for children. In 1883, annotations were replaced by a special code to indicate the books for children, which additionally differentiated between those books recommended for boys from those for girls. This code was introduced in the October 1, 1883 issue under the heading "New Books:"

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<sup>365</sup> Hewins, *Hartford (Conn.) Library Assoc. Bulletin*, 376.

<sup>366</sup> *ibid.*

“Books recommended for boys are marked \*; for girls +, and for both, \* +.”<sup>367</sup> This code was in use from the 1883 through 1897 issues of the *Bulletin* to indicate books which books in an otherwise undifferentiated list of new acquisitions were appropriate for children. In 1897, children’s books appeared in a new section, “Books for Boys and Girls,” entirely separated from adult books.<sup>368</sup>

In addition to indicating that a book was appropriate for children, the annotations from 1878 to 1882 sometimes included evaluative information, such as: “Contains some historical fables, but is in the main a good book for children.” This annotation, like many others of similar tone in the *Bulletin*, suggests that Hewins’ thoughts on evaluating books were similar to those propounded by Fletcher in 1876. Her use of the word “but” in her statement implies that children should be steered away from “unreal” stories, even “historical fables,” unless the book is “in the main” good, an evaluation that would eventually be subject to more extensive debate.<sup>369</sup> Such evaluative statements demonstrate that, even at these early dates, Hewins was engaged not only in the project of indicating good books, but also in articulating what made a book good for children.

The *Bulletin* also included some brief articles on children’s reading. An annual feature was an article on books recommended as reading for children during summer vacation. The *Bulletin* was in continual publication from 1878 to 1932, although Hewins died in 1925. Its immediate influence was local, but the significance of the appearance of recommendations of books for children in the Hartford *Bulletin* went far beyond these

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<sup>367</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "New Books," *The Bulletin of the Hartford Library Association* 5, no. 4. (October 1, 1883), 2.

<sup>368</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Books for Boys and Girls," *The Bulletin of the Hartford Library Association* 19, no. 1-2 (January-April, 1897), 24.

<sup>369</sup> Hewins, *Library Notes*, 2.

beginnings. Hewins drew upon the recommendations and annotations she had published in the *Bulletin* from 1878 to 1882 in an influential 94-page annotated list of the best books for children.

### **Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children**

This little book, only three-by-five inches in size, had a major impact on the development of public library services to children. It contained a topically organized and annotated bibliography of recommended books for children. Hewins states the purpose of the book in her preface:

The following list is the result of years spent not only in trying to guide the reading of children, but in actually reading with them. The books mentioned in it are not all the good ones which have been written for them, but fairly represent those which have become classics, and the best published during the last twenty or thirty years.<sup>370</sup>

Her publisher was Frederic Leypoldt, who had founded *Publishers Weekly*, a major book reviewing journal, in 1873 and went on to found *Library Journal* in 1876. Leypoldt was passionate about a host of projects related to book publishing, but was too ambitious and died at the age of 49, reputedly of exhaustion.<sup>371</sup> In her preface to *Books for the Young*, Hewins wrote that Leypoldt asked her to write this book, doubtless as one of his many book-related publishing ventures.<sup>372</sup> With Leypoldt as publisher, Hewins' book was most likely available to a large audience within the library world and beyond. Her book was

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<sup>370</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children* (New York: F. Leypoldt, 1883), 3.

<sup>371</sup> Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, 587-592.

<sup>372</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "How the Work with Children Has Grown in Hartford, Connecticut" In *Library Work with Children*, ed. Alice I. Hazeltine (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1917), 32.

apparently unexpectedly popular; the 1882 printing was quickly exhausted, and the work was reprinted in 1883 to meet the demands of her readership.<sup>373</sup>

The book was so successful that Hewins revised it and issued subsequent editions in 1897 and 1914. In 1890 John F. Sargent published another list of books for children titled *Reading for the Young*. At the request of the ALA publishing committee, Sargent integrated all of the titles recommended in Hewins' 1882 book into his list.<sup>374</sup> Although her subtitle identified parents and children as her intended audience, the book was taken up as a guide by many public librarians as they bought books and built collections for children. It helped them find their way through a deluge of publications. For nearly a decade after it was published, Hewins' volume was the definitive list of recommended books for children used by public librarians, as demonstrated by comments recorded in the Reading of the Young reports.

Hewins' *Books for the Young* was organized into two sections, an introductory section and the book list. There were four introductory chapters: the "Preface," "How to Teach the Right Use of Books," "English and American History for Children," and "A Symposium on Books for Children." The list of recommended books was organized by topic, and it is possible to glean some sense of the types of books she recommended from

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<sup>373</sup> 1882 editions of Hewins' book are so rare that, despite one trip to Harvard University and email correspondence with the Library of Congress Rare Books Room, no paper copies could be located. For all practical purposes, the 1882 edition may no longer be extant. However, based on information about size, page length, and other features from bibliographic records in consultation with librarian Thomas Bruno of the Phillips Reading Room at Harvard, it appears that two books were identical. I was able to examine a copy of the 1883 printing at Harvard's Widener Library, and quotations in this work are taken from that edition. If the two were not entirely identical, they must have been very close since no bibliographic features appear to have changed from 1882 to 1883. The one-year gap in their issuance also strongly suggests that Hewins reprinted rather than rewrote her book. In 1897 and 1915, Hewins wrote updated editions of this list. However, from all available evidence it appears that the 1882 and 1883 editions were identical.

<sup>374</sup> John Frederick Sargent, *Reading for the Young. A Classified and Annotated Catalogue with an Alphabetical Author-Index* (Boston: Library bureau, 1890), 1.

Hewins' topical categorization as reflected in the 1883 table of contents. The categories were:

Home and School Life;  
Modern Fairy Tales;  
Travel and Adventure [further subdivided by geographical categories];  
Myths, Legends, and Traditional Fairy Tales;  
History, Historical Biography, Novels and Tales [further subdivided by geographical categories];  
Poetry, and Selections for Reading and Speaking; Science [further subdivided into: Miscellaneous works; Astronomy; Chemistry and physics; The Earth; Natural History; The Microscope];  
Farming, Gardening, Plants, and Trees;  
Arts and Manufactures;  
Health and Strength;  
Out-Door Sports;  
Household Arts and Amusements;  
Drawing and Painting;  
Music;  
Reference Books and Literary Miscellany;  
Counsel and Example.<sup>375</sup>

At this time, debates over the educational value of fiction were at a fever pitch among librarians.<sup>376</sup> Hewins did not explicitly state her position in this debate, although she did recommend fiction in the categories Home and School Life; History, Historical Biography, Novels and Tales; and Travel and Adventure. Fiction titles were also listed in the categories Modern Fairy Tales, and Myths, Legends and Traditional Fairy Tales. The section consisting of Home and School Life stories was comprised almost entirely of fiction. Included among these recommendations were books by Jacob Abbott, Elijah Kellogg, Charlotte M. Yonge, Mary M. Dodge (editor of *St. Nicholas* magazine), Maria Edgeworth, Louisa May Alcott, Samuel L. Clemens (the pseudonym Mark Twain

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<sup>375</sup> Hewins, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, 11-12.

<sup>376</sup> Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900*, 7-43.

followed in parentheses), Washington Irving, George MacDonald, Frank R. Stockton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Hewins clearly believed that at least selected fiction titles for children were worth including in public library collections. The other sections of her list, however, consisted predominately of nonfiction works. Almost the entire second half of the list of books was devoted to nonfiction, as shown by the section headings listed above, and the largest number of books in her list was nonfiction works.

Given the debates among librarians over whether fiction was appropriate for public libraries, it is interesting to note that Hewins did not always distinguish between fiction and nonfiction in her recommendations. Some sections consisted of lists of nonfiction books with some interspersed fictional titles. For example, the section “History, Historical Biography, Novels, and Tales” contained both “factual” history books and novels and tales with historical settings and characters. Books of history recommended were titles such as *Young Folks’ History of Greece* by Charlotte Yonge and *Old Times in the Colonies* by Charles Carleton Coffin. Among the historical fiction books she recommended were *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, *The Prince and the Pauper* by Samuel Clemens, *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Each entry for a fictional title was accompanied by a descriptive phrase clarifying the time period or incident of history about which the book provided information. Thus *A Tale of Two Cities* was accompanied by the parenthetical descriptor “French revolution,” and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by “Slavery.” These accompanying annotations highlighted the informational aspects of these fictional books.

Hewins also recommended some purely imaginative works with no mention of factual content, such as traditional and modern fairy tales. Among modern fairy tales, she included works by Hans Christian Andersen, Charles L. Dodgson (the pseudonym Lewis Carroll followed in parentheses), George MacDonald, and Frank R. Stockton. Recommended myths, legends, and traditional fairy tales included works collected by the Grimms, Thomas Bulfinch, Joel Chandler Harris, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as several traditional collections without author attribution such as the *Arabian Night's Entertainments*.

A wide variety of books appeared in the list. She acknowledged this tendency in the introduction to the book itself: "Room as been left for a wide difference of choice in children's reading."<sup>377</sup> However, Hewins did include rather more focused advice to adults about how to guide children's reading. A 2-page section on "How to Teach the Right Use of Books," included eight numbered items of advice, ranging from a sentence to a paragraph in length, which detailed ways that children should be taught to interact with books.

Hewins' inclusion of advice for teaching "the right use of books" in her book was related to the increased publication of more general advice books, or conduct-of-life books during this period.<sup>378</sup> There were a tremendous number of advice books published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the popularity of which is commonly attributed to the major changes in social structure created by the industrial revolution, with the decline of status systems

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<sup>377</sup> Hewins, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, 4.

<sup>378</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage : Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, 162-163.

such as that of the master and apprentice.<sup>379</sup> There were also a number of books of reading advice published in the late nineteenth century, among them a book by William P. Atkinson, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and speaker at the 1879 ALA conference, titled *On the Right Use of Books: A Lecture*, which was reprinted twice in the three years after its initial publication.<sup>380</sup> William Foster, early innovator in services to youth through schools and author of several papers on the subject, also wrote a book of reading advice, titled *Libraries and Readers*, which opened with two sections about what constituted proper ways of reading, titled “Some Hints on Right Reading” and “Correction of Aimless Reading.”<sup>381</sup> Hewins section on “How to Teach the Right Use of Books” was in this tradition of advice literature. In fact, in her preface, Hewins cited another advice book, a good conduct book for boys and girls by E. E. Hale, titled *How to Do It*, which she described as the best source for children to learn about the use of reference books.<sup>382</sup>

Hewins’ reading advice was more practical than what was offered in other reading advice books. For instance, she wrote that children should be taught to treat books with respect, and not leave them “on the floor at the mercy of the baby, dog, or cat.”<sup>383</sup> She encouraged adults to teach children about allusions, to help them research the images they saw in popular magazines and advertisements, to teach them how to use an atlas, and to encourage them to look deeply into literature for poetry and other pieces for recitations. She also proposed ways that adults could motivate children to read by using

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<sup>379</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old are You?: Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 20-24..

<sup>380</sup> Atkinson, *Address of Prof. Wm. P. Atkinson*, 359-362.

<sup>381</sup> William E. Foster, *Libraries and Readers* (New York: F. Leyboldt, 1883), 7-47.

<sup>382</sup> Hewins, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, 7-8.

<sup>383</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

reading as a prize. For instance, she suggested using the reading of “well-bound and illustrated books” as a “privilege for Sunday afternoons and holidays, or a reward for work well done.”<sup>384</sup> Hewins also warned adults: “Do not let them read anything that you have not read yourself.”<sup>385</sup>

Hewins relied for her recommendations not only on her own opinions, but also those of others. The eleven-page section titled “A Symposium on Books for Children,” consisted of 20 quotations from authors, librarians, book reviewers and others who had written on the subject of children’s reading.<sup>386</sup> The quotations varied in length from a paragraph to a page, and 12 of the 20 quotations were attributed to specific authors, while the others were attributed only to the periodical in which they had been published.

Authors represented included Charlotte M. Yonge, T. W. Higginson, and Sarah Orne Jewett. Yonge and Higginson wrote history series for children, while Jewett was acclaimed as an author of vignettes of country life for both adults and children. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., W. P. Atkinson, T. W. Higginson and Rev. E. E. Hale had all contributed to the 1879 ALA conference, and all were quoted by Hewins in her symposium. An extensive range of periodicals was represented and included *Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation*, *North American Review*, *Dublin Review*, *Golden Rule*, *Examiner and Chronicle*, *New England Journal of Education*, *New York Tribune*, *Chicago Journal*, and the *Boston Courier*. However, Hewins did not include quotes from either Samuel Swett Green or William Foster, whose writings in *Library Journal* and elsewhere about

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<sup>384</sup> *ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>385</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>386</sup> *ibid.*, 23-34.

their work connecting their respective public libraries with schools were discussed in chapter three.

These excerpts demonstrated Hewins' awareness of the many sources of reviewing and discussing children's reading outside of librarianship. Through her choice of quotations to include, Hewins was acknowledging authorities whose opinions would reinforce her own views about how best to guide children's reading. For instance, her quote from William P. Atkinson describes how children were deprived of real intellectual stimulation through dry school work:

The poor boys and girls are kept, year in and year out, wielding knife and fork of grammar, and spelling, and ciphering, over dishes empty of all real mental nutriment, diligently dipping spoons into bowls where the intellectual draught that should have slacked their thirst has been forgotten.<sup>387</sup>

Hewins' choice of this quotation reinforced her view that children required books that appealed to them, and implied that public libraries should supply such books. Her book suggests that Hewins was practical about what would appeal to children and concerned that they be given books that were both good for them and interesting. If their interest was captured, then reading would follow from their own curiosity. Hewins' attitude was complex; she was concerned about what children would want to read as well as what reading would do them the most good.

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<sup>387</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children," (1882), 27.

## Hewins' 1883 "Literature for the Young" Columns in *Library Journal*

The year after her *Books for the Young* was published, Hewins published a series of eight semi-monthly "Literature for the Young" columns in *Library Journal*.<sup>388</sup> Each column was introduced by the statement: "Notes and suggestions, from various sources, on reading and the best use of books, are to be included in this department."<sup>389</sup> These columns included a list of books recommended for children. The February column consisted of only this list, while the second column in the March-April issues and subsequent columns included an additional section in which Hewins commented on various issues regarding children's reading. In some of these columns, Hewins continued the practice she had begun in "A Symposium on Books for Children" in her 1882 book, choosing quotations from various sources on the topic of children and reading.

Most of the books recommended in her lists were accompanied by synopses or evaluative quotations from other book reviewing sources. Some titles had no annotations, but Hewins noted that a book "whose title is given without a note is a safe one for library use."<sup>390</sup> In effect, these columns provided public librarians with a "digest" of opinions about children's books. Hewins selected quotes from book review sources such as *Literary World*, *Boston Advertiser*, *Boston Globe*, *The Nation*, *Sunday-School Times*, *Christian Register*, *Christian Union*, *the Examiner*, and others. Her columns also included recommendations for books such as Samuel Swett Green's 1882 *Libraries and Schools*, William Foster's 1883 *Libraries and Readers*, and an 1883 by J. C. Van Dyke

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<sup>388</sup> There is no indication in *Library Journal* or in Hewins' extant writings, available at the Simmons College Archive in Boston, to indicate why the column lasted only a year. Columns appeared in the February, March-April, May, June, July, August, November, and December issues of 1883.

<sup>389</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Literature for the Young," *Library Journal* 8, no. 2 (February, 1883), 36.

<sup>390</sup> *ibid.*

on *Books and How to Use Them: Some Hints to Readers and Students*.<sup>391</sup> These titles were advice books about reading, addressed to audiences of teachers, students, and public library patrons, but all would have been of interest to public librarians as they built collections for children.

Hewins' *Literature for the Young* columns echoed her 1882 book in terms of the genres most often recommended. The books most frequently listed in the columns, however, were books on science for children. A few titles serve as examples of these books: *Winners in Life's Race: Or, the Great Backboned Family* by Arabella B. Buckley; *Wild-flowers and Where they Grow* by Amanda B. Harris; *Facts and Phases of Animal Life* by Vernon S. Morwood; and *Zoological Sketches: A Contribution to the Outdoor Study of Natural History* by Felix L. Oswald.<sup>392</sup> The next most frequently listed kinds of books were history titles such as Charles Coffin's *Building the Nation*; T. W. Higginson's *Young Folks' History of the United States*; and E. E. Hale's *Stories of Discovery Told by Discoverers*.<sup>393</sup> She included a number of "how to" books for children that covered topics such as games to play and proper conduct, such as *New Games for Parlor and Lawn* by G. B. Bartlett, *What to Do and How to Do it: the American Boy's Hand Book* by D. C. Beard, and *The Primer of Politeness: A Help to School and Home Government* by Alex M. Gow.<sup>394</sup> By comparison, there were relatively few fiction books or "stories" recommended in these columns. However, a few fiction titles made it, such as Horace E. Scudder's *The Bodley Grandchildren and Their Journey in Holland* (one of

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<sup>391</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Literature for the Young," *Library Journal* 8, no. 2 (May, 1883), 84.

<sup>392</sup> Hewins, *Literature for the Young*, 36-37.

<sup>393</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.*, 36-37; Caroline Maria Hewins, "Literature for the Young," *Library Journal* 8, no. 8 (August, 1883), 151.

a series about the fictional Bodley family); Louisa May Alcott's *Aunt Jo's Scrap Bag* (further stories related to Alcott's *Little Women*); Charlotte M. Yonge's *Pickle and His Page-Boy*; and J. Otis' *Tim and Tip*. These last two were both stories about a boy and a dog.

A number of collections of folk and fairy tales appeared in the columns. In her first column, in February 1883, she included recommendations for a version of Aesop's fables adapted by Horace E. Scudder, a volume of Norwegian folk and fairy tales collected by Asbjornsen, and *Chaucer for Children* by Mrs. H. R. Haweis. In her second column, she recommended the Grimms brothers' *Household Stories*. She also listed a few folklore-inspired fairy tales, including George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Curdie* and Frank R. Stockton's *Ting-a-ling Tales*.<sup>395</sup>

However, the debate over the value of fiction in public libraries was subtly reflected in the way that Hewins emphasized the factual aspects of these collections of traditional stories in her annotations or what she quoted from other review sources. For instance, in recommending a book titled *Classic Mythology* by C. Witt, Hewins wrote that it was "a useful introduction to the study of comparative mythology."<sup>396</sup> In another instance, Hewins recommended the book, *The Golden Lotus and Other Legends of Japan*, because it would give young people an understanding of "how the children of Japan think, dream, and play."<sup>397</sup> In each of these cases, imaginative works were recommended for their connection to factual information, such as an understanding of the peoples from which they came. We will see that librarians' book recommendations in the

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<sup>395</sup> Hewins, *Literature for the Young*, 36-37; Hewins, *Literature for the Young*, 56.

<sup>396</sup> *ibid.*, 84.

<sup>397</sup> *ibid.*, 84

Reading of the Young reports from 1882 to 1889 tended away from fiction and toward nonfiction, and reflected more directly the debates the value of fiction in public library collections.

### **Reading of the Young Reports, 1882-1889**

As discussed above in chapter three, the Reading of the Young reports were a series of eight reports written from 1882 to 1898 by librarians that investigated developments in services to the young in public libraries. Librarians' responses to questionnaires, for the 1882, 1883, 1885, and 1889 reports offer a rich picture of national trends in librarians' book recommendations. They reflect librarians' attitudes about which books were best for children and why, usually in librarians' own words. Because the reports published in the 1880s show remarkable similarity of attitude about recommending nonfiction reading over fiction reading, they are grouped together here. However, major changes in attitudes were evident in the 1890 Reading of the Young report, and so librarians' book recommendations in that report will be discussed separately.

### **Bad Books in the Reading of the Young Reports, 1882-1889**

Although compiled and written by different librarians and in different years, the Reading of the Young reports published during the 1880s reflect a remarkably coherent sense among librarians of which books were especially bad for young readers, and therefore for library collections. It is clear that public librarians' book recommendations were linked to their fears about the increased publication of books "of the juvenile and fictitious class," as discussed earlier in this chapter. One librarian likened the book and

magazine market to a “...*flood*, doing more damage, I fear, than those of wind and water, which are physical and temporary.” (emphasis in original)<sup>398</sup>

However, librarians believed that children’s tastes could be trained, so that they would prefer books that were good for them over bad, corrupting books. One librarian reflected this view as early as 1877, when he wrote that good reading could “inoculate” children against a preference for bad books.<sup>399</sup> Public librarians described their task as displacing the bad with the good. In the Reading of the Young reports, lists of bad books were as frequent as lists of good books, and librarians’ book recommendations often took as their point of departure the content and effects of the materials considered “bad.”

In the replies to the questionnaires for the four reports issued in 1882, 1883, 1885, and 1889, two authors were repeatedly named as writing books that had bad effects on children: Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic (*nom de plume* for William Taylor Adams), as discussed above.<sup>400</sup> Other books described negatively by librarians in the reports included those authored by Harry Castlemon (pseudonym of Charles Austin Fosdick), Martha Finley (author of the Elsie Dinsmore series), Mary Jane Holmes, E. D. E. N. Southworth, and William Henry Thomes.<sup>401</sup> These other titles were often described as books “of the Optic class,” which suggests that Optic’s works were emblematic of what librarians liked least. Popular series by Optic included the *Boat Club* series, the *Young America Abroad* series, and the *Army and Navy* series, all comprising adventure books for boys. In the 1882 report, Hewins decried fiction that depicted “stories of street-life,

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<sup>398</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 223.

<sup>399</sup> Dewey, *The Public Library and the Public Schools*, 439.

<sup>400</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 185, 187; Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 218, 221, 222, 224; James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 280.

<sup>401</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 187, 189; Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 221, 224.

poor-house boys who become millionaires, etc.”<sup>402</sup> Rags-to-riches transformation was the defining trademark of most of Alger’s books and some of those by Optic.

A few librarians reported discarding books by Optic and Alger from library collections. For instance, one librarian reported that he had “withdrawn permanently all of Alger, Fosdick, Thomes, and Oliver Optic.”<sup>403</sup> Hewins herself, in her response to the 1883 questionnaire, lamented that “the boys have not left off their Optic, Alger, and Castlemon, or the girls their Elsie and Mrs. Holmes.”<sup>404</sup> In describing her opinions of bad books for children, Hewins even went so far as to wish that children would destroy these books:

I wish that I could tell you of great results, and that the children of Hartford had walked in procession to the Park, and there, Savonarola-like, burned their idols, Alger, Optic, Castlemon, and Elsie; but unfortunately, my regard for truth prevents any such statement.<sup>405</sup>

These words reflect the urgency of Hewins’ concerns about children reading “bad” books. As one public librarian wrote, selecting books for children in a public library required excluding “books of a sensational character, as well as those positively objectionable on the score of morality.”<sup>406</sup>

The reports also offer some information, in librarians’ own words, about what the bad effects of such reading were assumed to be. Librarians’ objections to the “Optic class” of fiction as captured in the reports were based primarily on the argument that these books encouraged bad mental habits. In her 1883 *Reading of the Young* report, Mary Bean argued that “children read too much” and that, as a consequence, they were

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<sup>402</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 218.

<sup>403</sup> *ibid.*, 187.

<sup>404</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 220-221 “Elsie” referred not to the author but to the series featuring the character Elsie Dinsmore by Martha Finley.

<sup>405</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 221.

<sup>406</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

intellectually weak.<sup>407</sup> Sensational books were appealing, easy to read, and believed to encourage fast reading that was not conducive to intellectual growth. One librarian responded to Bean's questionnaire by reporting that teachers were concerned about the number of books children were reading: "It has been a general complaint from teachers, that the excessive amount of books skimmed by the children weakened their mental power and that they did nothing thoroughly."<sup>408</sup> Another librarian reported in 1885:

Too frequent undirected use of a public library may be an injury to many children. We have many who draw a book every day in the week. Of course they skim it, and thus acquire bad habits, and lose all power of mental application.<sup>409</sup>

Books of sensational adventure fiction were believed to encourage quick reading that many considered detrimental because it required so little thought, not the "slow absorption of ideas" that was supposed to indicate real learning. Historian Christine Pawley describes this attitude towards skimming, "skipping," or reading too quickly as tied into larger ideas about education and self-improvement:

Cultural authorities believed that part of the value of reading lay in the slow absorption of ideas. However, reading popular fiction—'stories'—encouraged 'skipping.' [... E]ssential components of the correct reading included planning and reflection; readers should approach the process as though they were carrying out a campaign. The purpose of the campaign was individual self-improvement: reading the right books was a key strategy.<sup>410</sup>

Serious reading topics, such as history, biography, and science, were considered better for "self-improvement" than fiction books because they required effort in order to be read

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<sup>407</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 227.

<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*, 218.

<sup>409</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 283.

<sup>410</sup> Pawley, *Reading on the Middle Border : The Culture of Print in Late Nineteenth-Century Osage, Iowa*, 61-62.

and understood. This reflects the idea that hard work in the form of difficult reading could strengthen children's mental abilities.

Another aspect of librarians' beliefs about what constituted good or bad reading involved the social class of the reader. As mentioned earlier, librarians at the 1879 ALA conference debated the role that class played in determining which books were best to recommend. While Green submitted that children from the lower classes might be giving sensational fiction so that they would establish a reading habit and move on to better books, Wells and others asserted that poorer children needed more protection than middle-class children from bad reading materials. In the *Reading of the Young* reports, librarians tended to reflect Wells' position that poor children were at special risk from bad books. A comment from a librarian in Toledo, Ohio, from the 1883 report expressed such reservations. This extended quotation offers some insight into how class disadvantage was understood to contribute to bad effects of reading sensational fiction reading:

As the street Arab sits on the curb-stone, during the intervals of his daily traffic, he indulges in the adventures of 'Six-fingered Jack, the Border Ruffian,' and upon this model of life and character his ambitions of manliness and courage are formed. The school-boy takes his first initiative in insubordination to teachers and parents from the lawless career of 'Jack Harkaway,' or some one of the boy-heroes of the 'Wide Awake Boys of America'; while the school-girl, who has not had her taste and sentiment directed aright, imbibes rank poison from the 'Fireside Companion,' as she follows the absurd freaks of a 'Wilful Goldie.' Comments upon such a literature are not necessary. Doubtless many boys pass through such intellectual indulgence and become good citizens. Healthy home influence may serve to avert much of this harm. But that reading of this sort is bad for any boys, that it is doing an incalculable amount of mischief, and is especially harmful to boys who are not protected in a measure by healthy influences, who shall deny?<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 226.

The term “street arab” was slang for a homeless child living on the streets, with “arab” referring to their nomadic state.<sup>412</sup> This quote expresses clearly idea that the “exposed” children of the poor were at special risk of being corrupted by bad reading. In fact, in this description the “healthy home influence” presumably of the middle class served to keep the young from harm. It is as though bad reading materials were an infectious disease best prevented by “healthy” middle-class influences, and poor children, whose mothers were at work and who were themselves forced to work on the streets, were at gravest risk.

In Pawtucket, Rhode Island, a manufacturing community, librarian Minerva Sanders had opened her library to children, and like the librarian from Toledo, Ohio quoted above, Sanders was concerned about the effects of bad reading on the children of the working class. She invented a method for discouraging boys from reading dime novels, by scaring them with the “consequences.” She filled a scrap-book with “cuttings from the daily papers” that detailed crimes committed by boys which they attributed to reading dime novels. Sanders instructed the boys found reading dime-novels (she does not mention girls doing such reading) to read through the articles in the scrap-book.<sup>413</sup> She reported success with this method, writing that the boys “seem to grasp the idea quickly, and, without an exception, pass their papers to us, and seem glad to accept something better in exchange.”<sup>414</sup> This appeal to children’s own rational understanding of their malleability is unique in the *Reading of the Young* reports.

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<sup>412</sup> Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives : Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 187-197. Riis devoted one chapter of his book to the topic of “The Street Arab.”

<sup>413</sup> Providence Journal, “The Pawtucket Free Public Library and the Dime Novel,” *Library Journal* 10, no. 5 (May 1885, 1885), 105.

<sup>414</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 289.

Overall, the reports show that librarians shared a strong sense of which books were worst for children. They did not share such resoundingly similar opinions about which books were good books.

### **Good Books in the Reading of the Young Reports, 1882-1889**

The reports feature a few authors frequently mentioned for their good books, but these names appeared less consistently in recommendations for good books than their counterparts, Optic and Alger, who are so consistently mentioned as authors of bad books. Among authors whose work was frequently described in positive terms were Charles Carleton Coffin, author of *The Boys of '76 : A History of the Battles of the Revolution* and other histories for young people; Jacob Abbott, author of histories and biographies for children; and Charlotte M. Yonge, who was recommended for her “Young Folks” histories.

What many of the books by the authors of good books had in common was that they were nonfiction. Librarians consistently recommended books of nonfiction and identified nonfiction topics toward which they hoped children’s reading could be directed. These topics included “works of science, travel, history,” “biography,” and “geography.”<sup>415</sup> Most frequently, works of science, nature, or natural history were mentioned first. One librarian suggested that children should start by reading books of “natural history,” and then move on to “juvenile biographies, Charlotte Yonge’s juvenile histories, and kindred productions.”<sup>416</sup> Another librarian stated that, in selecting

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<sup>415</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 221, 223, 224.

<sup>416</sup> *ibid.*, 223.

library books for children, care was taken to “leave out all sensational reading, and give preference to stories with some historical basis.”<sup>417</sup>

Books on topics in science and nature had the advantage of being about the real world. In a number of cases, book of science were recommended partly because they did not depict human behavior, for instance Michael Faraday’s *Chemical History of a Candle* and Mrs. A. E. Anderson-Maskell’s *Four Feet, Wings, and Fins*. In other cases, such as *Life of John James Audubon* by Mrs. Lucy Audubon, books presented scientists as heroes. Other nonfiction works, including books of history, travel, geography, and biography, celebrated the accomplishments of heroic leaders and explorers. In these cases, children were to be inspired by such figures to imitate their patriotism, self-sacrifice, and dedication to duty.

In the Reading of the Young reports, librarians made claims about children’s preferences to support their recommendation of primarily or exclusively nonfiction books. Children were said to “prefer true stories.” One librarian reported that, when told “marvelous” tales, children asked questions such as “Is it true?” and “Did it really happen?” He described this response as evidence of a natural “love of truth” that should be taken as justification for guiding children away from fiction and towards fact.<sup>418</sup> Another librarian reported that her experience showed that if children were assured that “*these stories are true*,” even the most “indefatigable reader of Adams [Optic] and Alger” could be persuaded to try, and eventually to prefer, true stories of adventure or travel.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 233.

<sup>418</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 222.

<sup>419</sup> *ibid.*, 218.

Several librarians reported that children's natural propensity to enjoy factual stories could be leveraged as a means to displace the reading of fictional books. As one librarian wrote: "we believe the love for the *fiction*, which is so demoralizing to the youthful mind, may be kept in abeyance" by recommending works of nonfiction (italics in original).<sup>420</sup> Another librarian argued that, by giving children true stories, "much is done to overcome the appetite for fictitious and extravagant adventure which has so long engrossed the young reader." Yet another librarian wrote: "I feel quite sure that, if trash is shut out of the library and withheld from your readers, and, if good and interesting books are offered to them, they will soon learn not to care for the trash."<sup>421</sup> The books described as "trash" varied depending on the speaker and the context, but cheap fiction books were the most frequent target of this epithet.<sup>422</sup> "Trash" was often contrasted with the sorts of books that were "profitable" reading, but Hewins, for example, gave no exact definitions to differentiate each kind of book.<sup>423</sup>

One librarian, however, was beginning to articulate evaluation criteria that gave a more abstract approach to recommending books than by author, topic, or effects on readers. In Samuel Swett Green's 1883 edited collection of essays, *Libraries and Schools*, William Foster offered the following enumerated criteria for evaluating "a good story for children:" "1. It must be pure in thought, and simple in style and language. 2. It must not be unreal."<sup>424</sup> The awkward double-negative construction of this criterion, that a story should be "not unreal," highlights the value that librarians placed on true or truth-

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<sup>420</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 223.

<sup>421</sup> *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>422</sup> Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900*, 37-43.

<sup>423</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 189.

<sup>424</sup> Green and others, *Libraries and Schools*, 76.

like books for children. This criterion of “not unreal” allowed for the recommendation of any book that depicted realistic characters and events, whether fictional or factual.

Some librarians, however, did comment positively on fiction titles. In one instance, a nonfiction author was also credited with writing good fiction for children. Jacob Abbott, mentioned above for his authorship of juvenile histories, also wrote several fictional series. His *Rollo* and *Franconia* books, were mentioned multiple times in the report by different librarians as examples of wholesome, “truth-like” fiction for children.<sup>425</sup> But in this case, even a recommendation for fiction was couched in terms of how “true” the books were, meaning true to life or realistic. There were a few books of folktales or fairy tales recommended by various librarians, such as *The Boy’s King Arthur* by Sidney Lanier and *Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris.<sup>426</sup>

Good books were noted for their positive effects on readers, just as bad books were condemned for their ill effects. The most frequently mentioned effect of good books was that children gained factual knowledge of the world. Such knowledge of the world would lead to success in school work.<sup>427</sup> By being given high-quality books, children could be deterred from “skimming” and instead learn “how to read a book.”<sup>428</sup> They could be convinced to take a “real interest in the investigation” of topics of study, and thereby learning to use “cyclopaedias, dictionaries, gazetteers, etc.” along the way.<sup>429</sup> The market value of factual knowledge was not explicitly acknowledged in the Reading of the Young reports; instead, librarians tended to talk about children’s intellectual

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<sup>425</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 222-223.

<sup>426</sup> *ibid.*, 187.

<sup>427</sup> *ibid.*, 183-186; Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 218-219.

<sup>428</sup> *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>429</sup> *ibid.*, 220.

growth and development. Nevertheless, there were real-world consequences of gaining such knowledge, ranging from learning a trade to being able to attend college.

In the 1889 Reading of the Young report, the trend began to change, and more librarians began to acknowledge that some benefits did accrue from children's reading of fiction. Mary Sargent, author of the report, pointed out that, along with works of nonfiction, fiction could constitute worthwhile reading and "the benefits of reading good novels must not be overlooked."<sup>430</sup> Librarians were still selective in how and when they recommended fiction. For instance, one librarian reported that he had sent "good story-books" to a school, so each pupil might have one book "to be read in school after lessons."<sup>431</sup> In another instance, a librarian reported that he had offered children books of history, biography, or travel, but if a child refused these selections, then he gave them "as good a story as I can induce them to read."<sup>432</sup> These conditional recommendations for fiction indicated changing opinions among librarians, which culminated in the strikingly different tone of the 1890 report.

### **Sanders' 1890 Reading of the Young Report**

The first Reading of the Young report of the next decade marked a dramatic change from earlier reports because its author, Minerva Sanders, explicitly endorsed fiction as good reading for children. Instead of decrying the harmful potential of a fiction-stimulated imagination, Sanders argued that children should be given wholesome imaginative fiction. She defined "wholesome" books much as librarians in earlier reports defined "good" books, by first pointing out the books she considered unwholesome for

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<sup>430</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 226.

<sup>431</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 280.

<sup>432</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 228.

the young. She gave an extended explanation of what she did not mean by “good reading:”

By *good* reading is not meant the book which treats of the saintly ‘Die-young-and-go-to-heaven-sure kind,’ with a moral guide board for a frontispiece, and a tombstone for a finis. For a child is better for believing the truth that the good do not ‘always die young;’ and that it is just such laughter-loving, mischievous natures as its own, full of mistakes and sweet repentance, that are needed in the world, and who live to bless it.

Neither is the book, whether of fact or fiction, whose hero’s sole motive is ambition, and whose every thought and action is impelled by a vision ever before him of the judge’s bench, or the White House.

Nor is it the book that deals solely with cold, dry fact, unrelieved by a single scintillation of wit or imagination. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children should confiscate such books, make one grand bonfire, and let the children dance around it.<sup>433</sup>

Sanders’ descriptions capture problems with at least three different genres of reading for children of the time: Sunday School books, sensational adventure books with exaggeratedly heroic outcomes, and dry works of nonfiction. She inflected her descriptions with the humor of mild sarcasm.

There is a significant comparison to be made between Sander’s suggested bonfire of books of “cold, dry fact” and a bonfire suggestion that appeared in the 1883 report, when Hewins wrote that she wished children would burn “their idols, Alger, Optic, Castlemon and Elsie.”<sup>434</sup> In 1890, Sanders wished children would burn books that were “cruel” in their lack of “wit or imagination.” The contrast is interesting; Hewins’ 1883 reply suggested children should burn popular books that they enjoyed, while Sanders’ 1890 report argued that children should burn those books that they did not enjoy. Sanders’ report marks an important turning point, at the opening of the decade of the

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<sup>433</sup> Minerva A. Sanders, "Report on Reading for the Young," *Library Journal* 16, no. 11 (November, 1890), 59.

<sup>434</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 221.

1890s, as librarians began to look to children and the books that appealed to them as a major influence on what they would recommend.

Sanders gave several examples of good books for children, including fictional books of which she approved, such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Evangeline* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Snowbound* by John Greenleaf Whittier, and *Ben Hur* by Lewis Wallace. She argued that such books would “awaken the imagination, sharpen the observation, develop the humanities, and cultivate in them [children] a respect for the English language pure and simple....”<sup>435</sup> Her statement reflects the fact that children’s reading was coming to be seen as a kind of recreation that caused little harm and brought pleasure and the possibility of gaining knowledge. Instead of emphasizing fears of harm, librarians were beginning to adopt the stance that recreational reading was better than less savory recreational activities.

A new balance between fiction and nonfiction would emerge in librarians’ book recommendations during the 1890s, as good fiction became more accepted as part of the public library children’s collections. In fact, even books by the much-despised Oliver Optic were being reconsidered as good reading for children. For example, librarian C. H. Garland of Dover, New Hampshire, justified his inclusion of books by Oliver Optic in his library collection:

...I know very well that there is a vast difference among books, none of which are positively bad. Moreover, I don’t consider some books bad that other librarians do. I put Oliver Optic into the library freely. We have some of Castlemon’s books, and I have found these will attract young readers when better books will fail. If they do not go from these to better reading, they have at least not been

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<sup>435</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 58-59.

harmful by the brief time spent reading these little tales; and if they do drop them for better, we can score a point gained.<sup>436</sup>

Garland's more permissive attitude, and his public declaration of his pro-Optic stance, are indicative of changes in librarians' attitudes towards children's reading that would spread throughout the 1890s.

The idea that recreational reading might not cause such grave harm was itself not new. In 1879, as has been pointed out in chapter two, Green had argued in his paper "Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries" that sensational fiction was essentially harmless and could be a stepping stone to better reading. In 1882 and 1883, Hewins' book and *Library Journal* columns provided a more implicit endorsement of carefully selected fiction and framed book recommendation as a task that involved taking children's preferences into account. Hewins had emphasized the idea that factual knowledge might be gained even from fictional books, and she recommended both fiction and nonfiction. In fact, Hewins herself acquired a few titles by both Optic and Alger for her library, as recorded in the *Hartford Bulletin*.<sup>437</sup> She also recommended one title by Optic in her book—a biography of Ulysses S. Grant—which was not one of Optic's more typical adventure fiction books.<sup>438</sup> What the report of 1890 shows is that the ideas of Green and especially of Hewins about which books should be purchased for children's collections had gained widespread acceptance among librarians.

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<sup>436</sup> *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>437</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "New Books: Fiction," *The Bulletin of the Hartford Library Association* 2, no. 2 (April 1, 1880), 6; Caroline Maria Hewins, "New Books: Fiction," *The Bulletin of the Hartford Library Association* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 1884), 7.

<sup>438</sup> Hewins, *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, 74.

## Conclusion

Although there were passionately held beliefs about which books were good and bad, it was not until 1896 that a librarian explicitly questioned the evidence used to make these determinations. John Cotton Dana, in his article “Libraries and Teachers,” raised a number of such questions, pointing out:

As yet we do not even know what children like to read; much less do we know what is good for them to read. [...] The layman hears echoes of the war going on—and may it never end—in the educational world over the question of which should form the subject-matter of the child’s early education—history and literature, or nature and the science thereof. [...] As yet we know not what is good reading for the child.<sup>439</sup>

Nevertheless, during the 1880s, many public librarians developed criteria for guiding children’s reading and what books they would promote as good reading for children. They were also worried about the merits of reading fiction books, which some believed could cause harm to all children, especially those not surrounded by middle-class protections.

Perhaps the greatest influence on librarians’ ideas about which books were best was Hewins’ 1882 book *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*. Hewins’ book was ahead of its time in promoting both factual and fictional books as good reading for children. Hewins also emphasized the importance of giving children books that appealed to them—up to a point, in that she still disapproved of cheap serial fiction books. Over the course of the 1880s, librarians began to move away from negative reactions to the publishing industry and moved towards an embrace of imaginative reading as good for children.

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<sup>439</sup> John Cotton Dana, “Libraries and Teachers,” *Library Journal* 21, no. 4 (April, 1896), 133.

## Chapter 5: Librarians and Progressive Era Social Movements

“Without itself identifying with any of the movements such as the kindergarten, child-study, and social settlement, without losing control of itself and resigning itself to any outside guidance, the children’s library should still absorb what is to its purpose in the work of all these agencies.”

-Mary Wright Plummer<sup>440</sup>

### Introduction

The Progressive Era, which extended from approximately 1890 to 1920, was a time in U. S. history when many people joined a number of new middle-class social movements, hoping to create a better world. These efforts were a response to poor conditions of life, especially in urban areas, where industrialization brought workers arduous and low paying jobs, and large numbers of new immigrants meant that competition for jobs was fierce. The Progressive Era was characterized by an explosion of movements led by middle-class reformers and aimed at creating social agencies that would provide solutions for a vast array of problems, from government corruption to slum housing conditions.<sup>441</sup> As historian Christine Pawley wrote: “[a]cknowledgement that poverty and hardship were structural problems paved the way for structural solutions.”<sup>442</sup>

The meaning of the term “progressive” is notoriously hard to pin down, as is the date at which the changes of the Progressive Era began.<sup>443</sup> The term was used to refer to

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<sup>440</sup> Mary Wright Plummer, "The Work for Children in Free Libraries," *Library Journal* 22, no. 11 (1897), 682.

<sup>441</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 168.

<sup>442</sup> Christine Pawley, "Advocate for Access: Lutie Stearns and the Traveling Libraries of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1895-1914," *Libraries & Culture* 35, no. 3 (Summer, 2000), 438.

<sup>443</sup> In addition, the date of 1890 frequently mentioned as the starting point of this loosely defined era, but is not universally agreed upon by historians. For the purposes of this study, it is a fruitful date because it corresponds with many historian’s opinions and because the 1890 Reading of the Young report reflected a turning point in attitudes about children and reading that suggests a more open approach to children’s own preferences and reading choices.

social “progress” characterized by greater opportunities for the poor, immigrants, and otherwise disadvantaged peoples. As historians have attempted to define this spirit of this era, they have typically done so by looking to the motivations that gave rise to the many social movements that called themselves progressive.

Richard Hofstadter describes the Progressive Era as a time of tensions between older rural values and the realities of industrialization and immigration in burgeoning urban spaces. These tensions incited an “impulse toward criticism and change” which took hold among the middle-class. Hofstadter describes reform efforts primarily as nostalgic for an earlier, pre-industrial age when “economic individualism and political democracy” were believed to have been the norm. He questions the real basis for these nostalgic views, but nevertheless argues that the belief in an earlier golden age that had been “destroyed by the great corporation and the corrupt political machine” was a major motivating force for Progressive-Era reformers.<sup>444</sup>

Robert H. Wiebe views the Progressive Era somewhat differently, interpreting the broad middle-class impulse to reform as part of a larger structural change in society, towards pervasive bureaucratic social structures. Wiebe looks beyond the factors that motivated a widespread impulse toward change to take into account such reform institutions as settlement houses and child welfare groups, which were instances of a more bureaucratically ordered American society. Increasing numbers of jobs were created to support these reform-based bureaucracies and other social and governmental bureaucracies created during this period. Public libraries, with their organization of materials, policies for circulation, and increasing numbers of trained professionals, are

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<sup>444</sup> Richard Hofstadter and American Council of Learned Societies, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 5.

one example of a bureaucratically organized institution that gained power and prominence during this time.<sup>445</sup> Moreover, some librarians were personally involved with these bureaucratic social movements in a complex way. For example, Caroline Hewins lived at a settlement house, and in addition to her daytime duties as librarian at Hartford, she ran an evening library at the settlement.

Michael McGerr describes the reform movements of the Progressive Era as a product of class conflict. The motivation for middle-class reform efforts, according to him, was widespread revulsion at the ostentatious and highly publicized lifestyles of the extremely wealthy. He argues that there was a “radical center” of the population, which consisted of middle-class people who were driven to join social movements to express their anger over successful industry owners’ displays of vast accumulated wealth.<sup>446</sup>

However, some industry owners engaged in philanthropic efforts that furthered Progressive Era impulses. Andrew Carnegie, for example, was one industrialist who donated money on a massive scale, providing the funds to found numerous institutions across the United States, including many public libraries.<sup>447</sup>

The ways that these reform impulses played out in practice led to major changes in the social landscape. Perhaps the biggest change was a dramatic increase in the number of middle-class women who were involved in public and professional activities outside of the home. Of course, there were women working outside the home before

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<sup>445</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 133-163.

<sup>446</sup> Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent : The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (Oxford, Eng. ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-40.

<sup>447</sup> George Sylvan Bobinski, *Andrew Carnegie's Role in American Public Library Development* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: , 1966); George Swetnam, *Andrew Carnegie*, Vol. TUSAS 355 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 186; Van Slyck, *Free to All : Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920*, xxvii, 276; Zachary Kent, *Andrew Carnegie : Steel King and Friend to Libraries* (Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 1999), 128.

1890; the authors of the Reading of the Young reports were examples of such women in a hitherto male dominated profession. However, women's public roles in a variety of other arenas expanded significantly during the Progressive Era. Women's public efforts were bolstered by the popular notion that women's domestic skills as housekeepers and caregivers could translate into the public realm, as "municipal housekeeping."<sup>448</sup> Women were active in progressive reform movements for better health care, better milk distribution, and for saving children from dangerous urban environments.<sup>449</sup> Women were empowered by the notion that their gender differences brought something valuable and heretofore unknown to the American public. More women began to attain higher levels of education and professional positions. In the women's suffrage movement, there was a sense that giving women full participation in the political process was not only right and fair, but also that when women had the vote, politics would be governed by an ethic of care that could reshape society.<sup>450</sup>

In their roles as mothers, women were deeply associated with children. Mothers were commonly revered as childhood's first teachers, and this aspect of women's domestic roles was also an important means by which women came to assert that they had related roles in public service.<sup>451</sup> Many middle-class reformers believed that poor families, and especially poor mothers, needed to be educated in proper, middle-class

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<sup>448</sup> Agnes Hooper Gottlieb, *Women Journalists and the Municipal Housekeeping Movement, 1868-1914* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), xiv, 208.

<sup>449</sup> Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child : The Changing Social Value of Children*, xvi, 277.

<sup>450</sup> Welter, *Dimity Convictions : The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 230; Paul Buhle and Mari Jo Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage : Selections from History of Woman Suffrage, Edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and the National American Woman Suffrage Association* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 468.

<sup>451</sup> Gottlieb, *Women Journalists and the Municipal Housekeeping Movement, 1868-1914*, xiv, 208; Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America : Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism*, 180.

methods of childrearing. In addition, motherless children, poor children whose mothers had to work, and children who were forced to work instead of attending school, were all the targets of Progressive Era reforms. The idea that children needed special protection was central to a host of reform efforts. As Wiebe writes: "If humanitarian progressivism had a central theme, it was the child. He united the campaigns for health, education, and a richer city environment, and he dominated much of the interest in labor legislation."<sup>452</sup>

The surge of women interested in reform efforts and in professional work outside the home as well as a widespread interest in childhood came together in public library work with children. Librarianship was a profession that, like teaching, was socially acceptable for women, and during the 1890s many more women became librarians. At Columbia College in New York city, Melvil Dewey recruited women into the first training program for librarians, which opened in 1887.<sup>453</sup> Dewey and his training program were eventually turned out of Columbia in great part because of this recruitment of women. Nevertheless, in the following three decades, librarianship would become a profession predominately occupied by women, like other feminized fields that developed during Progressive-Era, such as social work and public health nursing.<sup>454</sup>

The Progressive-Era concern with children and childhood was the subject of numerous articles and presentations within the professional world of librarians during the 1890s. In April 1898, the editors of *Library Journal* wrote that the present "may be called the era of the discovery of The Child, whose customs, manners, thoughts and tendencies

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<sup>452</sup> Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 169.

<sup>453</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer : A Biography of Melvil Dewey* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1996), 45.

<sup>454</sup> Barbara Elizabeth Brand, "The Influence of Higher Education on Sex-Typing in Three Professions, 1870-1920: Librarianship, Social Work, and Public Health" (Dissertation, University of Washington), 458.

have become subjects for weighty investigation.”<sup>455</sup> In the 1890s, more public libraries were lowering or abolishing age limits and taking up the cause of serving children in public libraries than had in the 1880s.

The Reading of the Young reports were all written by women during the 1880s and 1890s, which might be seen as an early indication that work with children would become the almost exclusive province of women librarians. As the reports continued during the 1890s, there were significant changes in the format and scope of questionnaires on which they were based and the way in which replies were reported. These changes suggest how librarians were beginning to formalize experiments in library work with children into a professional specialty with an established set of competencies.

### **The Reading of the Young Reports: 1890, 1893, 1894, and 1898**

The overall trend in the Reading of the Young reports was an increase in the number of responses over time. James’ 1885 questionnaire had received an unusually large number of replies, 75 in total, from different libraries. Atypically, the 1890 report received fewer responses, only 20. However, in 1893, Hewins’ questionnaire received 146 replies. This was followed by 145 responses to the questionnaire sent by Lutie Stearns (1866-1943) of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1894 and 125 responses to Hewins’ questionnaire in 1898. Librarians’ interest in the topic was likely fueled by popular interest in childhood. In addition to drawing greater numbers of replies, the reports also reflected the further geographic expansion of libraries engaging in work with children. For instance, Stearns was the first librarian to create a report in the series who lived outside of the northeastern U. S.

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<sup>455</sup> Unattributed, "Editorial Introduction," *Library Journal* 23, no. 4 (April, 1898), 135.

The contents of the reports of 1893, 1894, and 1898 was somewhat different from the earlier reports. The form of the reports changed after the 1890 report. Reports during the 1880s consisted of excerpts of librarians' replies to one broad query, such as the question "What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?" from Hewins' 1882 report, or a few broad queries about work with children with brief introductory and concluding remarks by the compiler of the report. For the 1890 report, Sanders followed this basic template, sending out a broad query and reporting excerpts of the replies she received.

In 1893, Hewins altered the format of the questionnaire dramatically. It now consisted of a list of 11 questions. Instead of giving excerpts of replies from various places, Hewins presented primarily quantitative evidence drawn from the replies. She reported the numbers of libraries who replied "yes" or "no" to each question, and in a few cases she included select anecdotes from the replies. For the first time, a Reading of the Young report was more statistical than descriptive. This suggests that work with children was becoming normalized enough that its features could be elicited and quantified through a series of questions designed to get at factual data regarding what services were or were not being provided. Hewins' questions centered primarily on ascertaining how many librarians had implemented various features of this work, such as the physical separation of children's books from adults' books, the maintenance or abolition of age limits, and the provision of special staff and a separate room for children.<sup>456</sup> These changes in the format of the reports demonstrated the growth of increasingly formalized expectations for what would constitute work with children in libraries.

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<sup>456</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Reading of the Young" In *Library Work with Children*, ed. Alice I. Hazeltine (McLean, VA: IndyPublish.com, 1893), 23-28.

One reason for Hewins' change of format may have been the change of venue and purpose of the 1893 ALA conference, at which the report was presented. That year's gathering of professional librarians was designated a World's Library Congress and was held in concert with the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, discussed below. That Hewins was chosen to deliver the report on library work with children in this international setting demonstrates her stature among librarians as a leader in this field. Her statistical approach to the 1893 report may have been an attempt to present a relatively succinct account of work with children in the U. S., for the sake of her international colleagues.

In 1894, Stearns used a similar format for her Reading of the Young report. She asked 14 questions of librarians and described the responses primarily in numeric terms, again including a few anecdotes from the replies. Comments at the conference indicated that Stearns' report was remarkably well received, perhaps because she employed gentle humor to ridicule those who still maintained age limit policies that excluded children from their libraries, quoting such phrases as "We must preserve our books" and "We must draw the line somewhere" to demonstrate the arbitrariness of age limits. Her report included much statistical information, but also reads as an impassioned plea, framed in numeric terms, for more and better services to youth. For example, Stearns described tens of thousands of children in such cities as Jersey City, San Francisco, Boston, Minneapolis, and St. Louis who benefited from the recent abolition of age limits. Of her own city, she wrote: "If we had an age limit in Milwaukee, we would reach but twelve per cent. of the number in school, to say nothing of the thousands out of school." Stearns

reported that, for many libraries, one-fifth to one-half of their card holders were young people under the age of sixteen.<sup>457</sup>

The final, 1898 Reading of the Young report by Hewins was almost entirely statistical, with one brief page of narrative about her findings. Names of libraries were listed in a vertical row on the left-hand side of the two-page spread, and abbreviations of the questions asked formed a series of columns across the top. Each question referred to a type or feature of service to children, and each box where a library row intersected with a question column was marked “Yes,” or “Hoped for,” or left blank to indicate “no.” In the case of one question, about the numbers of books children were allowed to borrow at one time, the column was filled with the allowed numbers of books or left blank if the library did not respond. In this last report in the series, Hewins offered little interpretation, instead letting the numbers speak for themselves.<sup>458</sup>

Because the reports of the 1890s are primarily statistical in nature, they contain much less historically rich information for the purposes of understanding librarians’ debates about services to youth than earlier reports. For instance, while the reports of the 1880s included comments reflecting a range of opinions about which books were best in children’s library collections, the reports of the 1890s presented statistical answers to questions about which libraries were providing which kinds of services. The reports of 1893 and 1894 contained two questions each about books, but the 1898 report had none. Hewins stated outright in her 1898 report that no questions had been asked “about the

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<sup>457</sup> Lutie Stearns, "Report on Reading for the Young," *Library Journal* 19, no. 12 (1894), 82.

<sup>458</sup> See Appendix B for the questions that were asked in the questionnaires that served the basis for each Reading of the Young report.

kind of books bought for children in public libraries” because her report of 1893 had already covered the topic satisfactorily.<sup>459</sup>

While the reports of the 1880s showed that librarians were negotiating with teachers regarding the authority to recommend books to children, the reports of the 1890s contained little information about how librarians negotiated their roles in relation to the burgeoning Progressive Era social movements concerned with child welfare. Instead, much of the primary source information for chapters five and six will be drawn from columns, commentaries, and articles in *Library Journal*. These sources offer evidence of how librarians interacted with and in some cases borrowed ideas or methods from child-saving movements. Librarians in this period also made important distinctions between the work of such social movements and their own work in libraries.

### **Public Libraries and Progressive Era Movements**

Librarians, especially those in urban centers, were immersed in the changes that characterized the Progressive Era. The inter-institutional connections that librarians had initially fostered with schools were rapidly expanding to include many other groups and institutions. Public libraries provided reform groups and various progressive agencies with books, meeting spaces, and other services. In an article on public library connections to schools, librarians indicated that public libraries were serving a host of other agencies, including mothers’ groups, boys’ clubs, Y. M. C. A. classes, social

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<sup>459</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Report on Children's Reading," *Library Journal* 23, no. 8 (1898), 35.

settlement houses, Sunday schools, one hospital, two museums, and of course public and private schools from the elementary level up to high school.<sup>460</sup>

Four social movements involving the well-being of children were especially important in influencing librarians' ideas about how public library youth services should continue to develop. These were: the kindergarten movement, the settlement house movement, the child study movement, and the home libraries movement that began as a program of the Children's Aid Society in Boston. While librarians had ample opportunities to learn about these child welfare movements and the ideas that they espoused through the popular press, there was also an historically significant opportunity for cross-fertilization of such ideas at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The Exposition was an enormous world's fair, held from May 1 to October 31 of 1893, that drew presenters, displays, and attendees from around the world.<sup>461</sup> The site of the fair had a number of specially constructed buildings, including the Women's Building and the adjoining Children's Building. Both of these buildings included libraries, featuring titles written by women in the Women's Building and titles for children in the Children's Building.<sup>462</sup> There were also a number of organizations that held meetings in conjunction with this event. As mentioned above, the ALA transformed its annual meeting into a World's Library Congress, inviting international colleagues to join their

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<sup>460</sup> Samuel Swett Green, "Work between Libraries and Schools: A Symposium," *Library Journal* 22, no. 4 (April, 1897).

<sup>461</sup> Julie K. Rose, "The World's Columbian Exposition: Idea, Experience, Aftermath," Julie K. Rose, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma96/WCE/title.html> (accessed January 23, 2007).

<sup>462</sup> Anne H. Lundin, "Little Pilgrims' Progress: Literary Horizons for Children's Literature," *Libraries & Culture* 41, no. 1 (Winter, 2006), 133-152, <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790e183771395b86e5aafe43b67a4805f9391deb00867a4da2d3ff9e4ea3ee991c4a&fmt=C>.

American members. Librarians attending this Congress would have had an opportunity not only to see the Exposition, but also to see and hear presentations by a number of groups concerned with the well being of children.

Three of the four movements that influenced the development of children's librarianship most deeply were represented at the Exposition. Some of these groups were running displays at the fair. For example, the International Kindergarten Union sponsored displays that included a working kindergarten, complete with a teacher and young kindergartners, as one of their exhibits in the Children's Building.<sup>463</sup> Others were represented in meetings that, like the annual ALA conference, were held in conjunction with the Exposition. For instance, at the World's Congress of Representative Women, representatives of the kindergarten movement and settlement house movement spoke, among them the renowned Jane Addams of the Hull House settlement in Chicago.<sup>464</sup> Similarly, a number of representatives of the child study movement gave talks at the meeting of the International Congress of Education, which was held in place of the annual meeting of the National Educational Association.<sup>465</sup> The only one of the four major movements to influence youth services in public libraries that did not have a presence at the exposition in 1893 was the home libraries movement, described later in this chapter.

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<sup>463</sup> Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, 151.

<sup>464</sup> Allen Freeman Davis, *Spearheads for Reform : The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 187.

<sup>465</sup> Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 281-283.

## The Kindergarten Movement and Libraries

The kindergarten movement was one of the most influential factors in the history of childhood in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was an outgrowth, expression, and extension of the idea of middle-class protected childhood. Kindergartens originated in Germany, where educational reformer Friedrich Froebel had created the kindergarten as an educational program for children below the age of about six. Froebel was inspired by the notion that children needed to have the opportunity to develop according to their own propensities and in an environment with other children, not isolated in their homes. Kindergarten education was designed to assist the natural development of the child's own learning through directing the child's "spontaneous activities" through the use of "gifts"—simple geometric toys—as well as games and songs.<sup>466</sup>

In 1859, Elizabeth Peabody of Boston founded the first English-language kindergarten in the United States; she went on to become one of the most influential proponents of kindergarten education in the country.<sup>467</sup> In 1873, Peabody convinced a few innovative educators in St. Louis to found the first publicly funded kindergartens in the country. These educators included Susan Blow, who herself went on to become a powerful advocate for kindergartens, and William T. Harris, superintendent of St. Louis schools and public libraries, which were jointly managed at this time. Harris had also created a classification scheme which became the basis for the Dewey Decimal

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<sup>466</sup> Joachim Liebschner, *A Child's Work : Freedom and Play in Froebel's Educational Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1992), xv, 153; Elizabeth Dale Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 120; Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, xi, 223.

<sup>467</sup> The first kindergartens founded in the United States were founded by German immigrants who taught the children of other recent German immigrants. It was not until kindergartens came to be taught in English that they began to gain widespread acceptance in the U. S.

System.<sup>468</sup> Blow and others involved with the kindergarten movement in St. Louis founded an influential training program for kindergarten teachers, teaching them to use Froebelian methods to encourage children's learning through their play.<sup>469</sup> Froebel promoted the idea that the "natural" nurturing talents of women made them well suited to the work of running kindergartens, and training schools for kindergarten work founded in the U.S. were attended exclusively by women. As mentioned in the introduction, Blow would speak as a proponent of kindergartens to one of the first training programs for children's librarians in 1900.<sup>470</sup>

Training for kindergarten work was available in several places by the 1880s. Peabody in Boston and Blow in St. Louis each ran training programs based on Froebel's kindergarten principles. Other kindergarten proponents founded schools in New York City, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. Some normal schools, where teachers were trained, added to their curricula kindergarten training classes for young women. Additionally, a number of new normal schools grew out of kindergarten training programs.<sup>471</sup> Training typically consisted of one year of coursework and observation and a second year of "practice teaching."<sup>472</sup> Students of kindergarten teaching were expected to be as creative as possible in making crafts, telling stories, and using music with children. Because Froebel's games and songs did not always readily translate from the German, American

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<sup>468</sup> Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer : A Biography of Melvil Dewey*, 403.

<sup>469</sup> Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States*, 1-18; Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, 29-44.

<sup>470</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians* (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, [1901]).

<sup>471</sup> Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States*, 52-66.

<sup>472</sup> *ibid.*, 60.

kindergartners invented “new songs, stories, and games, always containing a moral or [educational] purpose.”<sup>473</sup>

The kindergarten movement in the United States adapted Froebel’s ideas somewhat in order to use kindergarten methods to address the Progressive concern with finding ways to rescue children from dangerous social and family environments. The St. Louis example was an unusually early instance of kindergartens being affiliated with public schools; most kindergartens were not affiliated with schools, but were created by reformers as free programs to help educate the children of the urban poor. During the 1880s, over one thousand free kindergartens were established in the United States, many of them run by a combination of trained kindergarten teachers and volunteers.<sup>474</sup> There was also widespread attention given in the popular press to the American kindergarten movement.<sup>475</sup> As the kindergarten movement gained momentum, it sparked popular interest in the lives of very young children, their development, and the ways they might be educated.<sup>476</sup>

Kindergarten proponents, including Susan Blow and students trained by her in St. Louis, presented themselves as experts in protecting children, which was a powerful expertise to claim at a time when educating children was coming to be seen as the key to solving future social problems. They “seized upon the problem of the children of the

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<sup>473</sup> *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>474</sup> Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, 86.

<sup>475</sup> Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States*, 19-33.

<sup>476</sup> Liebschner, *A Child's Work : Freedom and Play in Froebel's Educational Theory and Practice*, xv, 153; Joachim Liebschner, *Foundations of Progressive Education : The History of the National Froebel Society* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991), xi, 164; Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, xi, 223; Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States*, 120.

poor as their own special province.”<sup>477</sup> Many kindergarten advocates saw the establishment of free kindergartens as a means of not only providing poor urban children with food, and clothing, but also instilling “habits of cleanliness and discipline.”<sup>478</sup> These free kindergartens were frequently allied with settlement houses, either as a program run by the volunteer occupants of a settlement house or as a program that was initiated as an independent project but later paved the way for the establishment of an affiliated settlement house.<sup>479</sup> The two institutions shared a concept of social betterment that involved spreading the habits of middle-class childrearing practices to lower-class families and children.

The kindergarten movement, with its emphasis on the need to provide education to children under six years of age, was a potent force in support of librarians arguing for the admission of young children to libraries. Libraries in the 1890s were beginning to reexamine their age limit policies. Whereas before library use had typically been limited to those 12 to 14 years or older, during the 1880s a few pioneering librarians such as Hewins and Sanders began to serve children of all ages. By the 1890s, librarians who had successfully incorporated services to youth into their public library offerings were admonishing their recalcitrant colleagues to revise their policies and allow children of all ages into the library.<sup>480</sup> Some made these arguments by referring to the activities of the kindergarten movement. For instance, when the Hartford library became a free library in 1891, Hewins pointed out that kindergarten children were among the first patrons to express their eagerness to use the library. She described the voluntary participation of

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<sup>477</sup> Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, 93.

<sup>478</sup> *ibid.*, 86.

<sup>479</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>480</sup> Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 81-82.

children in fundraising efforts, writing that “school children, even in the kindergartens, gave so generously in proportion their means” that the Hartford trustees voted to give them “first use” of the library in appreciation of their gifts.<sup>481</sup> Similarly, Green, who had long embraced the use of libraries for even the youngest in cooperation with their teachers and schools, declared at the 1893 at the World’s Library Congress in Chicago that librarians “ought to begin in the kindergarten to educate readers in the schools.”<sup>482</sup>

Froebel’s notion that education could come from the spontaneous activities of building with blocks, the more structured activities of singing songs and playing games, and other playful endeavors had a tremendous influence on American education and on popular conceptions of childhood. Public librarians incorporated some of the wide-ranging ideas about play, games, and songs into library work with children. The use of the “gifts” or toys with children in kindergarten classes highlighted the ways that children could learn even before they could read, through experiences with objects. Influenced by these practices, librarians in the late 1880s and early 1890s began to furnish children’s spaces with maps, globes, pictures, stereopticon viewers, and other visually stimulating objects for children.<sup>483</sup> One librarian, for example, described providing “miniature tables and chairs” for the comfort of small children, and touchable objects which included “games, scrap-books, dissected maps., etc” that were intended “for the tiniest

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<sup>481</sup> American Library Association, "Conference Proceedings," *Library Journal* 16, no. 2 (December, 1891), 105.

<sup>482</sup> American Library Association, "Conference Proceedings," *Library Journal* 18, no. 9 (September, 1893), 6.

<sup>483</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 233.

[children].”<sup>484</sup> The latter example suggests that there was a connection between the sorts of non-reading, hands-on activities offered and the young ages of patrons.

As public libraries expanded services to the young, they required assistants who could work effectively with children. Two decades before the establishment of specialized training in library work with children, a number of kindergarten training programs were going strong, as mentioned above. In several cases, librarians found that trained kindergarten teachers were a good fit for their staffing needs. For example, Frances Jenkins Olcott at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library argued that kindergarten-trained women made excellent assistants to librarians, because they had “already worked among the children” and knew them “thoroughly.” Olcott wrote:

Their experience in the slum kindergartens and the summer playgrounds of the city has replaced their sentimentality by broader human sympathies, and given them a knowledge of the odds against which they are working. They start from a point to which it is almost impossible to bring those who have never been in contact with the kindergarten spirit. They are original, resourceful, and of untiring zeal in studying to broaden their knowledge of children and books.<sup>485</sup>

Olcott’s quote praised their passion and willingness to learn, particularly in expanding their knowledge of books for children, which was not a part of kindergarten training. When Olcott created and supervised a number of home libraries, discussed below, she hired as director a woman who had “three years’ training in a kindergarten school” as well as “experience in the free kindergarten and playground.”<sup>486</sup>

However, other librarians tried hiring kindergarten-trained women to work with children in libraries, but found that the kindergarten teachers were “inadequately prepared

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<sup>484</sup> Elizabeth Louise Adams, "Method of Children's Library Work as Determined by the Needs of the Children--II." *Library Journal* 22, no. 7 (July 1897, 1897), 29.

<sup>485</sup> Frances Jenkins Olcott, "Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh," *Library Journal* 25, no. 4 (April, 1900), 166.

<sup>486</sup> *ibid.*, 167-168.

in technical methods and children's literature."<sup>487</sup> In fact, Barbara Brand suggests that the failure of kindergarten training to adequately equip workers for the children's department in public libraries may have been one impetus behind the creation of training programs for children's librarians, and in particular behind the founding of the Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School for Children's Librarians in 1900.<sup>488</sup>

As librarians discussed what kind of special training the children's librarian would require, some mentioned aspects of kindergarten training. For instance, Mary Salome Cutler wrote in 1897 that the special training needed for children's librarians "will probably include a part of that taken by the kindergartner," but would be augmented by "a course in child-study according to modern methods and a careful analysis of children's literature."<sup>489</sup> However, other librarians sought to distinguish the work of the children's librarian from that of the kindergartner or the teachers. Hewins described the difference as one of "personality:"

The personality of a children's librarian is of the greatest importance. [...] No broken-down teacher, with a formal manner or 'school ma'am air,' no kindergartner of the aggressively 'sweet' type can hope to succeed in a children's room.<sup>490</sup>

Professional children's librarianship, according to Hewins, was distinguished from these other forms of women's professional work in part by the matter-of-fact way in which librarians should interact with children. Although librarians incorporated some of the kindergarten ideas about play, games, and songs into their work with children, they

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<sup>487</sup> Jagusch, *First among Equals*, Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore : *Foundations of Library Work with Children*, 185.

<sup>488</sup> Brand, *The Influence of Higher Education on Sex-Typing in Three Professions, 1870-1920: Librarianship, Social Work, and Public Health*, 153.

<sup>489</sup> Mary Salome Cutler, "The Children's Librarian," *Library Journal* 22, no. 6 (June, 1897), 292.

<sup>490</sup> American Library Association, "Conference Proceedings," *Library Journal* 25, no. 8 (August, 1900), 121.

remained clear that their work as children's librarians was distinct in both professional demeanor and in their knowledge base of children's literature from that of the kindergarten teacher.

### **Child Study and Libraries**

Another highly influential movement to influence the American view of childhood in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and librarians' youth services work was the child study movement. The idea of child study grew out of a demand for more scientific understandings of pedagogy from the field of education. G. Stanley Hall was the founder and champion of this popular movement focused on gathering factual data about "the nature of the child," including a wide variety of statistical information about children's growth, development, preferences, and propensities.<sup>491</sup> Hall and the educators who worked with him were inspired by the 1859 book *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, whose theory of species evolution was popularly interpreted as a metaphor for the development of children. At least as important as Darwin in the interpretation and dispersal of these ideas was Herbert Spencer, an influential scholar in a range of fields including education, who described child development in terms of evolutionary progress. Among other things, Spencer was interested in the idea of social evolution, and with the implications of evolutionary ideas for understanding the nature and development of children. As an example of Spencer's influence, it was he, not Darwin, who coined the term "survival of the fittest."<sup>492</sup> Spencer promoted the theory that, as children grew from

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<sup>491</sup> Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*, 290.

<sup>492</sup> Egan, *Getting it Wrong from the Beginning : Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*, 11-36.

infancy to adulthood, their individual progress through a series of stages recapitulated the evolutionary progress of the human species.

Hall drew upon these concepts in his work as a psychologist and president of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, as the theoretical basis for his idea of child study. Child study addressed both the practical concerns of educators and the more theoretical interest that was then emerging in the development of children. The child study movement that Hall founded gained national prominence during the 1890s, as Hall and his assistants successfully enlisted the help of laypeople to gather data about children. His methodology was typical of simple survey research conducted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the breadth of the respondents solicited for his child study surveys was unusual.<sup>493</sup> He distributed questionnaires to educators, women's clubs, mothers' groups, women's reading circles, and other groups around the country to gather information about such topics as children's play activities, children's lies, and children's fears. He was especially interested in the normal patterns of physical development and health "as the proper foundation for mental development." Hall amassed data on children's heights, weights, and other statistical measures of their growth. In 1894-1895 alone, he gathered twenty thousand replies from across the country.<sup>494</sup>

Librarians were not among the groups he actively recruited for his studies, but they did take note of Hall's ideas and methods. The central idea of child study, that

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<sup>493</sup> The word "survey" refers to the practices of this historical period that would lead to the development of formal statistical survey research today. Survey practices typical of this time period consisted of the distribution of questionnaires and the gathering of responses, which might be reported in terms of numbers responding "yes" or "no" or in the form of excerpts from the replies received. For more in-depth information about the history of survey research, see Jean M. Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence, 1890-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), xv, 564; Martin Bulmer, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Kevin Bales, *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xix, 383 , [8] of plates.

<sup>494</sup> Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*, 279-308.

children were worthy of serious study and inquiry, was interpreted and adapted by librarians for their own ends. The editorial staff of *Library Journal* described their professional interest in child study by making analogies between the “child investigators” of the child study movement and their own interest in discovering children’s preferences in library services:

Within the past year or two the phrase ‘the library and the child’—which was itself new not so long ago—has been changed about. It is now ‘the child and the library,’ and the transposition is suggestive of the increasing emphasis given to that phase of library work that deals with children, either by themselves or in connection with their schools. The present, indeed, may be called the era of the discovery of The Child, whose customs and manners, thoughts and tendencies, have become subjects for weighty investigation. ‘This is a child,’ says Haigha to the unicorn in ‘Through the looking-glass.’ ‘I thought always they were fabulous monsters. Is it alive? Can it talk? Talk, child,’ answers the unicorn, in whom we recognize the child investigator of to-day. But in his concluding words, the unicorn set an example to his successors. In all library work with children the child himself must be the central figure, and his capacities and likings are important factors in wisely guiding his use of books.<sup>495</sup>

These librarians described the broader child study movement as emphasizing, from the librarian’s point of view, the need to understand children’s reading behaviors as the basis of effective services to them. The quotation of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* within this paragraph shows that public librarians were beginning to interpret national influences like the child study movement through the lens of their own growing expertise in literature for children. The child study movement indeed provided an impetus for librarians to gather their own data about children’s reading. They did this by distributing their own questionnaires to local teachers or children.

Some librarians tried to ascertain the effects of library use by surveying teachers, as Hall did in his child study surveys. One typical example of a library survey of teachers

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<sup>495</sup> Unattributed, *Editorial Introduction*, 135.

was the circular created by W. H. Brett of the Cleveland Public Library. Brett sent his questionnaire out to teachers to inquire about the library's recently implemented program of loaning books to the schools. The circular asked each teacher "what the results had been in her school," and "whether it was desirable to continue the issue" of books to the schools. Brett found that teachers expressed overwhelming support for continuing the service. He also noted that some teachers reported that pupils' school-work had improved as a result of the availability of interesting books related to their studies, and that some pupils had been inspired to take greater interest in their studies by this program.<sup>496</sup> In another instance, two librarians sent out circulars to investigate how students and teachers were being trained in the use of reference books. Emma Louise Adams of Plainfield, New Jersey, sent a circular to normal schools, and found that little instruction was given in how to use reference books properly. Josephine A. Rathbone of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, surveyed teachers in "40 of the leading high schools in the country" and discovered that they were instructing students to use reference books to some degree, but commented that the teachers' instructional approaches left room for improvement.<sup>497</sup>

In yet another instance, librarian John Cotton Dana, who was renowned for his prior work at a major public library and museum in Newark, New Jersey, surveyed teachers near the library where he was then working in Denver, Colorado. He asked teachers for their opinions of how best to influence children's reading habits. Dana found that the teachers reported that they did have significant influence over their pupils'

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<sup>496</sup> William H. Brett, "Use of the Public Libraries in the Cleveland Schools," *Library Journal* 16, no. 12 (December, 1891), 30.

<sup>497</sup> Josephine A. Rathbone, "Instruction in the Use of Reference Books and Libraries," *Library Journal* 23, no. 8 (August, 1898), 87-91.

reading choices, but that, nonetheless, teachers hoped to induce children to do more reading.<sup>498</sup> In each of these cases, librarians were using surveys of teachers to gather data about library use or opinions of library services, much like those in the child study movement used surveys to gather data about children's development and preferences.

In other cases, librarians distributed questionnaires directly to children. Librarians used these questionnaires to investigate topics such as what the young were reading, whether they were using libraries, and what they believed were the effects of their library use. Some surveys simply affirmed that many children were indeed using libraries. For instance, Hewins reported the results of an impromptu survey of children in a school, in which she found that "of 66 boys and girls from 12 to 16, 44 had library-cards."<sup>499</sup> The following year, Electra C. Doren, of Dayton, Ohio, distributed a survey to children through the schools. Doren asked questions about their favorite books and their library use habits. She received replies from 3,192 children between the ages of 10 and 14, which provided evidence that, although many of them were using the library, a substantial number had not yet availed themselves of library privileges.<sup>500</sup> In 1897, Anne Carroll Moore conducted a more formal survey of 100 child library users, investigating how long and how consistently they had been using the library; her conclusions were that children were very consistent in their use of the library, and she argued that her data offered "proof that they do not use the library as a fad."<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> John Cotton Dana, "Children's Reading: What some of the Teachers Say," *Library Journal* 22, no. 4 (April, 1897), 187.

<sup>499</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "The Relation of the Hartford Public Library to the Public Schools," *Library Journal* 19, no. 9 (September, 1894), 294.

<sup>500</sup> Electra Doren, "School Libraries," *Library Journal* 22, no. 4 (April, 1897), 190.

<sup>501</sup> American Library Association, "Discussion on Children's Library Work," *Library Journal* 22, no. 10 (October, 1897), C157-158.

One important example of a survey of children that elicited information about their reading choices was that conducted by Mary Wright Plummer of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. In 1897, she asked 150 children who were regular library users a series of questions about the consistency of their library use, how their families used libraries, their preferred means of help with selecting books, and their favorite books.<sup>502</sup> The information she gathered gave evidence of children's reading tastes. When asked about their favorite book, Plummer reported that children gave a broad range of replies, but many girls mentioned *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and many boys mentioned *The Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann David Wyss. Other books that children mentioned as favorites included *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Plummer also observed that boys typically preferred history, travel, biography, and "books of adventure," while girls preferred "books about boys and girls, fairy stories, and poetry." From this evidence, she concluded that the "tastes of the boys on the whole were more wholesome, and the girls need most help here."<sup>503</sup> This comment reflects the notion, discussed in chapter four, that nonfiction books were more serious and better for intellectual growth, while story books were more frivolous. It also reflects typical biases of the time period about gender, and demonstrates that, although Plummer was a woman herself, she was not free from the influences of such biases.

The 1893 and 1894 Reading of the Young reports also included in their respective questionnaires several inquiries about librarians' observations of what children were reading. Hewins in 1893 asked "What authors are most read by children who take books

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<sup>502</sup> Plummer, *The Work for Children in Free Libraries*, 683.

<sup>503</sup> *ibid.*, 684.

from your library?”<sup>504</sup> Hewins reported that the most common response was Louisa May Alcott, although many other authors were named as well. In 1894, Lutie Stearns asked two questions related to children’s reading, although she was clearly more interested in questions of the quality of children’s reading than in a broad picture of what was being read. She asked librarians to answer “What per cent. of your circulation is children’s fiction?” and “Do you circulate Alger, Optic, Castlemon, Trowbridge, and kindred authors?” Stearns found that responses were mixed. Out of 145 responding libraries, 9 libraries circulated no books by these authors, 18 were not replacing books by these authors as they wore out, and 25 circulated Trowbridge only. In addressing these examples of popular series fiction, Stearns concluded: “There seems to be a great difference of opinion in regard to the relative value and worth of these authors.”<sup>505</sup>

In another instance, a questionnaire was distributed to children for an educational purpose. Mary E. Dousman of Milwaukee used what can be described as a “survey” of children to create an “object lesson” regarding proper care of books. She displayed a book that had been damaged when a child “had evidently amused himself by making criss-cross marks, with a knife, upon the covers,” and she posted a note asking children to deposit their thoughts on the culprit in a box on the counter. She received “80 or 90” answers “in a short time,” and the children’s responses were critical of the child who had committed these destructive acts. Dousman posted a few examples of children’s responses for all to see. This “survey” was really an opportunity for Dousman to educate misbehaving children by eliciting the “righteous indignation” of the community of

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<sup>504</sup> Hewins, *Reading of the Young*, 251.

<sup>505</sup> Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 83.

children to censure the child who had destroyed one of their library books.<sup>506</sup> This incident is, in part, one interesting acknowledgment of the existence of children's own social structures by a librarian. In this instance, the librarian used her "survey" to reaffirm children's own ideas about responsible behavior with library books. Although this example may seem to be quite different from the typical child study survey, in fact Hall envisioned educational uses for the questionnaires he distributed through the child study movement. Whatever the results of his surveys, Hall hoped that the questionnaires would serve as an educational "device to make teachers and mothers more sensitive to childhood experience."<sup>507</sup>

Of course, librarians had been using basic survey methods in the Reading of the Young reports since Hewins wrote the first report in 1882, sending questionnaires to their colleagues in libraries. However, the child study movement influenced librarians to use these techniques with teachers and children, to discover more about effectiveness of library services. Librarians made use of surveys to try and learn what children were actually reading, how they were using libraries, and whether library services were effectively reaching librarians' goals such as improving children's reading tastes in book selection.

The use of surveys by librarians reveals that, although they were primarily concerned with children and reading, librarians were also curious about children as children, and expended great effort in the 1890s to understand how children were using the library. The substance of these surveys tends to contradict characterizations of librarians as overly sentimental about children. One historian, Dee Garrison, described

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<sup>506</sup> Mary E. Dousman, "Object Lessons," *Library Journal* 24, no. 9 (September, 1899), 516.

<sup>507</sup> Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*, 291.

children's librarians as being peculiarly lacking in "searching self-criticism" as compared to others within the library profession.<sup>508</sup> The existence of these surveys and the use of the data they provided to improve services to children demonstrate the opposite. In fact, the librarians developing services to children were quite early to use basic survey methods, such as those used in the Reading of the Young reports. More importantly, they extended these methods to children themselves during the 1890s, inspired by the child study movement, and used them to gather data about how their services were and were not working to reach the aims they had set. In a number of instances, librarians stated that they had used or planned to use the information they had gathered to improve their services.

The child study movement was criticized because it was not strictly scientific, although Hall attempted to make it appear to be so. The great consistent picture of childhood which Hall hoped would emerge from these studies never did emerge from the data, and the child study movement had already begun to fade by 1904.<sup>509</sup> Nevertheless, the attempt to study children had effects elsewhere, and librarians' surveys of children were certainly inspired by the national interest aroused in the topic of child study during the 1890s.

### **Settlements and Libraries**

The settlement house movement emphasized building relationships with immigrant and working class children and their families in order to provide them with social services of various sorts. Like the American kindergarten movement, the

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<sup>508</sup> Garrison, *Apostles of Culture : The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920*, 180.

<sup>509</sup> Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*, 307.

settlement movement was also concerned with children living in urban poverty. Several names were used to describe these agencies, among them settlements, settlement houses, and college settlements. The idea of settlement houses was imported from London, where the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, was founded in 1884 by two Oxford University students, Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley. The premise of the settlement movement was that reform-minded individuals, many of them women, would live among impoverished city-dwellers and provide them with services and educational programs to help improve their lives. In United States, the first settlement house was the Neighborhood Guild, founded in New York City in 1886. However, the most famous and influential settlement in the United States was the Hull House settlement in Chicago, founded by Jane Addams in 1889.<sup>510</sup>

Settlement house workers aimed to bring culture and education to all people, young and old, in the large urban centers in which they worked. They distinguished their work from that of charity organizations. Instead of helping the needy with philanthropy, settlement workers acted as neighborly “visitors” to bring them culture and arts. As they started offering these programs, they soon discovered that providing activities for children was an effective means to establish relationships with families. Jane Addams and others aimed their efforts at adults, but found that the best way to reach adults was to provide entertainment and educational experiences for their children.<sup>511</sup> Some settlements opened free kindergartens to attract families to their other classes and evening

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<sup>510</sup> Davis, *Spearheads for Reform : The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, 3-17; Mina Julia Carson, *Settlement Folk : Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 27-50; Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change : From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), x, 300.

<sup>511</sup> Carson, *Settlement Folk : Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*, 61-63

events. Other settlements were founded as an outgrowth of free kindergartens or charity societies.<sup>512</sup> At least one settlement house had a library from which children could borrow books. For example, in the University Settlement in New York City, the Neighborhood Guild Library was established “exclusively for children.”<sup>513</sup>

Librarians working with children would have had ample opportunity to encounter settlement ideas in newspapers, in which muckraking journalists wrote articles about the problems of urban American, using settlement houses as their base from which to observe urban poverty.<sup>514</sup> There was at least one instance in which a librarian was personally connected with a social settlement. As mentioned earlier, Caroline Hewins lived in the Hartford Social Settlement for twelve years and opened a branch library for children at the settlement in 1895.<sup>515</sup> There was also at least one direct connection from a leader in the settlement movement to children’s librarianship, when renowned settlement leader Jane Addams came to speak to students in the first training class at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library Training School for Children’s Librarians in 1900.<sup>516</sup> One article in *Library Journal* suggested that librarians could look to settlements to better understand and serve the “children of the crowded city districts.”<sup>517</sup> The kindergarten movement and the settlement movement did much to popularize one another, and so librarians interested

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<sup>512</sup> Davis, *Spearheads for Reform : The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, 23; Shapiro, *Child's Garden : The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey*, 103.

<sup>513</sup> Edwin Milton Fairchild, "Methods of Children's Library Work as Determined by the Needs of the Children--I." *Library Journal* 22, no. 10 (July, 1897), 20.

<sup>514</sup> Davis, *Spearheads for Reform : The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, 29-30.

<sup>515</sup> Root, Mary E. S., "As it Was in the Beginning: Caroline M. Hewins, Lover of Children," *Public Libraries* 30, no. 5 (May, 1925), 246-250. Jagusch, *First among Equals, Caroline M. Hewins and Anne C. Moore : Foundations of Library Work with Children*, 99. Hewins, *How the Work with Children has Grown in Hartford, Connecticut*, 34-35.

<sup>516</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians*, 8.

<sup>517</sup> Helen Moore, "City Children and the Library," *Library Journal* 25, no. 4 (April, 1900), 170.

in work with children were likely to encounter information about settlements along with information about free kindergartens.<sup>518</sup>

However, not all librarians saw settlement houses as a positive ally to public libraries. In fact, one librarian criticized settlements and other social programs for their “paternalism” in relation to the poor. Lindsay Swift of the Boston Public Library expressed his disenchantment with many Progressive Era reform efforts. He was especially critical of library efforts to emulate the social reforms of other movements by reaching out to the poor. While he acknowledged that librarians could be of help if “specialists” in these movements would “come under our roots and form a part of the larger system,” he strongly disliked the active involvement of libraries with a whole host of social movements and organizations, including “Chautauqua assemblies, federations of women, free lectureships, public baths, college settlements” and even public schools.<sup>519</sup> Swift’s central objection to such outreach services was this: “Somehow it appeals to me as a childish scheme to send these collections of books to people who haven’t moral energy or intellectual hunger enough to bestir themselves in the matter.”<sup>520</sup>

Nevertheless, public librarians did create extensive outreach programs. They sent books to schools, another practice to which Swift raised objections. They also sent sets of books in traveling libraries to people in rural areas.<sup>521</sup> They loaned books via branch “stations” to children and adults working in factories.<sup>522</sup> Swift’s idiosyncratic indictment

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<sup>518</sup> Davis, *Spearheads for Reform : The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, 43-45.

<sup>519</sup> Lindsay Swift, "Paternalism in Public Libraries," *Library Journal* 24, no. 11 (November, 1899), 609.

<sup>520</sup> *ibid.*, 618; Geller, *Forbidden Books in American Public Libraries, 1876-1939 : A Study in Cultural Change*, 61-67.

<sup>521</sup> Pawley, *Advocate for Access: Lutie Stearns and the Traveling Libraries of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1895-1914*, 434-458.

<sup>522</sup> Brett, *Use of the Public Libraries in the Cleveland Schools*, 30-31.

of such outreach services as “paternalism” did little to stem the tide of librarians’ creative distribution of books to those limited by geography or by the long hours required in industrial occupations.

B. W. Pennock of New Bedford, Massachusetts, wrote a rebuttal to Swift’s article. Pennock pointed out that Swift assumed that all children came from homes with equal opportunities to learn, when in fact, as Pennock wrote: “By far the larger part of these children are not blessed with cultivated homes, and thus do not enter school with the predisposition to study and learning which children from more favorable conditions often have.” He argued that the public library should be of service to “the public as a whole—not to one class alone, but to all classes.”<sup>523</sup> Pennock thus articulated the understanding of the place of the public library in the community as directly related to the settlement idea of spreading cultural benefits to neighborhoods without such advantages.

### **Home Libraries**

One of the most important movements to influence the history of youth services librarianship was inspired by the settlement house movement idea of outreach to the poor. The idea of the home library was that volunteers would put together sets of books to be circulated to groups of children in impoverished neighborhoods from one central household in that neighborhood. In addition, volunteers made weekly trips to these homes, as “friendly visitors,” to encourage children’s reading. Although the scope of its influence was a bit more narrow than the other three movements, the home libraries movement was influential in expanding librarians’ notions of what could be done to interest children in reading.

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<sup>523</sup> B. W. Pennock, “The Other Side of ‘Paternalism’,” *Library Journal* 24, no. 2 (February, 1900), 61.

Home libraries developed as a program of the Boston Children's Aid Society. Children's Aid Societies were a network of organizations based in the northeastern U. S. that took a broad interest in the well-being of urban children. The New York Children's Aid Society specialized in "saving" urban children, most infamously through the "orphan train" relocation programs. In these programs, children were relocated from the supposedly unhealthy urban East to the rural and more healthful agrarian West, where some found better lives but others were subjected to cruelty and deprivation. Unfortunately, these programs sometimes mis-identified poor working children who actually had families. Reformers would occasionally presume that children were orphaned and put them on trains, when in fact they were simply working on the streets to help their families survive. In the eyes of reformers, these children needed "saving" from their urban environments, and proper care was not always taken to assure that children did not have homes.<sup>524</sup>

The Boston Children's Aid Society was involved in similar "orphan train" programs before 1885, when they hired Harvard graduate Charles Birtwell to direct their programs. Birtwell abandoned the relocation projects and focused instead on other sorts of services to urban children and families. He promoted the idea that conditions for poor families could be ameliorated through providing books as the means for self-education. Among the strategies he employed was the creation of home libraries, which were placed, as Birtwell phrased it, "in the homes of poor and morally exposed children."<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Ashby, *Endangered Children : Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History*, 53-54.

<sup>525</sup> Charles G. Birtwell, "Home Libraries of the Children's Aid Society," *Library Journal* 16, no. 9 (1891), 278.

A home library consisted of a set of about 15 books “and a supply of juvenile magazines and papers.” Each library set contained a distinctive collection of reading materials, and these sets circulated among the groups of children so that they would constantly have something new to read. The homes in which the library was located were selected because they were situated in a neighborhood where there were few if any books in children’s homes. Older children were the designated custodians of these collections, which they then shared with siblings and neighbors.<sup>526</sup>

However, home libraries were more than a collection of reading materials placed in homes. The system established by Birtwell and his corps of volunteers, included regular visits from a “friendly visitor” who met with the children and encouraged their reading. A volunteer visitor was assigned to each home library group, and each week the visitor would meet with that group of children “in the home of the librarian,” librarian in this instance referring to the older child in charge. The visitor would lead discussions of the books the children had read and lead them in other activities:

For each library there is a volunteer visitor, who meets the children at the regular weekly exchange of books, becomes acquainted with them, encourages intelligent and thorough reading, arranges pleasant outings, teaches home games, induces the children to save their pennies and open accounts at the savings-banks, and enters in a hundred ways helpfully into the lives of the youthful readers.<sup>527</sup>

Home libraries in Boston grew rapidly. From October 1891 to August of 1892, the number of home libraries in Boston grew from 49 to 69, and by the latter date had 44 active “friendly visitors” and 475 child members. Because of these increases, Birtwell

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<sup>526</sup> Unattributed, "Children's Aid Society of Boston," *Library Journal* 17, no. 10 (October, 1892), 426.

<sup>527</sup> Birtwell, *Home Libraries of the Children's Aid Society*, 278. The misspelling of Birtwell’s name as “Birkwell” at the start of the article attests that librarians had been previously unaware of Birtwell and his work.

organized a monthly meeting of all the visitors and employed a paid assistant to organize the work.<sup>528</sup>

These successes were brought to the attention of public librarians in 1891, when several brief articles about home libraries appeared in *Library Journal*.<sup>529</sup> In 1892, Birtwell gave a paper on “Home Libraries” at the ALA conference. Birtwell described the work, emphasizing that the visitors interwove books and reading with recreational activities. He focused extensively on justifying the provision of “home amusements” by pointing out that they were preferable to those amusements children would “have to run into the street or the dime show to get.”<sup>530</sup>

Birtwell also stated that many visitors found the children to be “very ignorant of the commonest games,” and so they taught children games to play. It is difficult to say whether children were actually ignorant of games or simply knew games that their middle-class American “friendly visitors” didn’t know. In the case of immigrant children, they likely knew of games from their home countries, but may only have played such games in other languages that the visitors did not speak. To be fair to the visitors, there may have been substantial cultural barriers to ascertaining children’s knowledge of games. Whatever the case may be regarding children’s knowledge of games, learning and teaching games became a standard part of the home library visitors’ repertoire of activities. Birtwell wrote:

It is now one of the duties of the visitors to learn all they can about games; standing-up games, sitting-down games, noisy games, quiet games, games that tax

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<sup>528</sup> Unattributed, *Children's Aid Society of Boston*, 426; Charles G. Birtwell, "Home Libraries," *Library Journal* 17, no. 8 (August, 1892), 10.

<sup>529</sup> Birtwell, *Home Libraries of the Children's Aid Society*, 278-279; Unattributed, *Children's Aid Society of Boston*, 426.

<sup>530</sup> Birtwell, *Home Libraries*, 10.

the brain, and games that do not; and any visitor who discovers a new game places it on file for the use of all other visitors.<sup>531</sup>

Visitors and groups of visitors and children also held other organized activities as part of the home libraries projects. Among the activities they sponsored were Christmas festivities, group outings in the summer, and a fall festival and plant sale to raise funds, although “some of the children worked and could not attend the day festivals.”

Individual home library groups expanded the range of activities even further, taking on a range of projects. Birtwell describes one home library group that “made a plan to help out a poor old woman who kept a candy-store” by doing chores and tending the store. Another visitor used music with a flagging group, giving some time each meeting to singing songs together, and with this technique successfully revived interest of both children and parents.<sup>532</sup>

A particularly interesting view of home libraries was provided by Mary Salome Cutler, librarian and library school vice-director in Albany, New York. She was a volunteer visitor for a home library for several summers. She presented a paper at the 1892 ALA conference in favor of providing home libraries to children as a service of public libraries. Cutler’s brief paper emphasized the needs of children:

I was very much struck by the fact that the children needed exceedingly personal help; that although they were interested enough to take the book home many of them had not cared enough about it to read it through.<sup>533</sup>

She also urged libraries to cooperate with other institutions including home libraries, clubs and “various other agencies that can supply this personal element and make the books more useful.”<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>532</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>533</sup> Mary Salome Cutler, "Home Libraries," *Library Journal* 17, no. 8 (August, 1892), 14.

Cutler further reflected on her experiences of serving as a visitor to home libraries in an 1896 article in which she emphasized the role of the visitor as a “friend:”

It is hard to tell just what the visitor does. It is perhaps simplest to say that she is a friend to the children and that she studies how to help them. That means a great deal. The plan is elastic, and each visitor chooses her own methods.<sup>535</sup>

Two aspects of this quote are particularly interesting. First, the idea, or at least the wording of the statement, that the visitor “studies how to help” the children was almost certainly influenced by the child study movement. Second, the idea that the librarian should be a “friend” echoes both earlier descriptions of how public librarians should relate to children and contemporary progressive activities. As mentioned in chapter three, librarians had distinguished themselves from teachers by offering direct, personal help to children, and Hewins had earlier posited the ideal attitude of the librarian towards children as that of a “winsome friend.”<sup>536</sup> A friendly demeanor remained an important part of the professional demeanor that children’s librarians were expected to present, and so the visiting aspect of the work of home libraries found an understanding audience among children’s librarians.

Home libraries had major impact on the kinds of work done with children in public libraries. Their influence led to the dramatic expansion of the kinds of activities used to encourage children’s reading, from reading circles and lectures in the 1880s to more active celebrations, outings, games, music and songs, and other group activities in the 1890s, discussed in more detail in chapter six. Because the home libraries movement shared with youth services work in public libraries, the example that this movement set,

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<sup>534</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>535</sup> Mary Salome Cutler, “Home Libraries,” *Library Journal* 21, no. 2 (February, 1896), 60.

<sup>536</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 190.

of using a wide range of activities to encourage reading, changed how children's librarians viewed the possible range of their techniques. Home libraries offered evidence that these recreational techniques could be successfully used to guide children's reading. For instance, Cutler argued that the activities she led as a visitor heightened children's interest in reading, and that her encouragement as a visitor eventually allowed the children to have the patience to read longer and higher-quality stories. Cutler wrote that it "was a long step ahead when the brightest child in the group began to read the continued stories in the *St. Nicholas*, and to watch eagerly for the next number."<sup>537</sup> The "continued stories" were typically serial novels or novellas, and so these children were extending their ability to read in duration.

Cutler also argued that children developed other important skills as a result of the recreational activities led in home library visits. She wrote that that games helped children to develop "attention, concentration, and courtesy, qualities in which these children are especially lacking."<sup>538</sup> Such "friendly visitors" often held class biases against the children they visited. Many recent historical works have described the difficulties that "visitors" in various lines of Progressive Era work had in convincing the lower-class "beneficiaries" of their charity that their help was in fact needed. As Cutler's above quotation demonstrates, visitors were typically critiquing and trying to change the habits of the poor even as they served them.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Cutler, *Home Libraries*, 60.

<sup>538</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> Carson, *Settlement Folk : Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*, 66-68; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City : Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45-53.

Home library visitors had the same biases, and, in addition to the work they did with children, they would keep an eye on neighborhood conditions, encouraging “electric lights put in streets” and discouraging “illegal liquor-selling.” Birtwell himself described resistance to the establishment of home libraries, and his own rather condescending persuasive techniques:

Sometimes when a prospective librarian and a group of little children are very anxious to have a library go to a house, the important masculine head of the house not having been notified at the beginning by my assistant, who usually sees the people with whom we propose to place a library, thinks that it would be an intrusion; that the children would be apt to come in while he is at supper, or that they will make a noise, or interfere with him and his pipe, and so on. Then I simply dispatch my assistant to conquer the man. It can always be done. We simply acknowledge our grievous error in not having seen him first. We flatter his vanity, and usually inside of from 25 to 45 minutes we can make him cordial.<sup>540</sup>

Historian Steven Mintz described the biases of “child saving” activities, writing: “Many child-savers were guilty of paternalism, class and racial bias, xenophobia, and double standards regarding gender.”<sup>541</sup> Home library visitors imposed their own vision of proper life regardless of the preferences of neighborhood dwellers. Nevertheless, their work in bringing books to children had many positive effects.

The importance of the home libraries for librarians working in youth services was evident in librarians’ writings, activities, and in the training programs they created for children’s librarians. In the 1894 Reading of the Young report, Lutie Stearns argued for the use of a host of activities to engage children in libraries. She found that the “circulation of lanterns and lantern slides, tennis and croquet sets and the best indoor games” were all receiving “the warmest approbation from all lovers of children; for if

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<sup>540</sup> Birtwell, *Home Libraries*, 11, 13.

<sup>541</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 155.

‘Books of Refreshment,’ why not ‘Games of Refreshment?’”<sup>542</sup> Stearns drew upon the growing understanding among librarians, influenced by the kindergarten and home libraries movements, of the role of the public library as not only educational but also recreational or “refreshing” for tired workers after their long days of labor.<sup>543</sup>

The addition of recreation to the duties of the public library was controversial. Not all librarians accepted the argument that games belonged in the children’s room as they did in home libraries. For example, Mary Wright Plummer, librarian at the Pratt Institute, held the opposite view:

In regard to the desirability of amusements in the library, I own that I am somewhat skeptical. [...] Books properly administered should have the same drawing power, and their influence once felt, is toward quietness and thought, rather than toward activity and skill with the complications of dispute and cheating that may arise from the use of games.<sup>544</sup>

Nevertheless, many libraries began to offer games for children. Some librarians highlighted the necessity of being selective about games in the library, choosing only those that would “contribute to the library’s success in establishing the reading habit.”<sup>545</sup>

The influence of the home libraries movement is best reflected in the development of home library programs based in public libraries. A number of public librarians developed home libraries that circulated from their children’s departments. For example, the New York Free Children’s Library in 1899 started sending out home libraries to small groups of children, along with weekly visitors to talk about and read books with children. Several settlements cooperated with these efforts, providing locations for these home

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<sup>542</sup> Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 87.

<sup>543</sup> Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900*, 77-82.

<sup>544</sup> Plummer, *The Work for Children in Free Libraries*, 681.

<sup>545</sup> Fairchild, *Methods of Children's Library Work as Determined by the Needs of the Children--I.*, 26

libraries and weekly visits.<sup>546</sup> Home library methods were also adopted at the new training schools for librarians. Stearns noted in her 1894 report that “library classes at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn and Armour Institute, Chicago, are starting home libraries in slum neighborhoods.”<sup>547</sup>

As training programs for children’s librarians developed, they too incorporated both a diverse range of activities inspired by home libraries and practical home library programs. At the Carnegie Pittsburgh Public Library, Frances Jenkins Olcott started a home libraries program which consisted of “21 libraries [circulating sets of books], 20 friendly visitors, and a membership of 200 children.” Olcott hired a supervisor especially for this work. In addition to sets of books in cases, the library sent out “picture bulletins and games” in order to “gain the confidence and affection of the children and to aid them in securing real benefit from the libraries.”<sup>548</sup>

At the Carnegie Pittsburgh Library Training School for Children’s Librarians, a segment of the first year’s studies was devoted to home libraries. A 1901 brochure advertising the program listed included the following entry in the “outline of study:”

*Home libraries.* Methods of procuring home libraries.—Finding and training friendly visitors.—Organization of groups.—Preparing programmes for group meetings (stories, games, etc.).—Visiting the homes.<sup>549</sup>

The next years’ advertisement was amended slightly. The title of this entry was changed to “*Home libraries and groups*,” and “Organization of groups” was replaced by “Organization of home library groups and reading circles.”<sup>550</sup> This change in 1902

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<sup>546</sup> Unattributed, “New York, University Settlement,” *Library Journal* 24, no. 1 (January, 1899), 34.

<sup>547</sup> Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 86.

<sup>548</sup> Olcott, *Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*, 167-168.

<sup>549</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians*, 4.

<sup>550</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians*, 6.

demonstrates that librarians were integrating home library methods with the methods they were already using, such as reading circles, to guide children's reading.

### **Connections to and Distinctions from Progressive Era Movements**

There is a disadvantage to discussing the impacts of the kindergarten, child study, settlement, and home libraries movements individually, as though they were separate strands of influence. In fact, many social movements during the Progressive Era were intertwined in complex ways. For instance, the New York University Settlement had a library, and the librarian who worked there sent periodic reports of progress to the "Library Economy and History" column. This column in *Library Journal* contained excerpts of reports from libraries across the country, offering brief glimpses of local progress. However, this particular settlement also had a kindergarten and a playground for children, so that multiple movements and institutions were represented in just this one building.<sup>551</sup> This is just one of many examples that demonstrate the interconnected nature of progressive reform efforts.

The four movements explored here are the ones that had the most significant impact on the development of children's librarianship, but public librarians also worked with many other social reform organizations during the 1890s. For example, in Cleveland in 1897, Linda Eastman reported lending books to "night schools, to a number of boys' clubs, to Y. M. C. A. classes, and to Goodrich House social settlement."<sup>552</sup> Another librarian pointed out that many organizations offered opportunities for providing children with "personal contact" with librarians to guide their reading:

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<sup>551</sup> Unattributed, *New York, University Settlement*, 34.

<sup>552</sup> Linda Eastman, "Work between Libraries and Schools: A Symposium: At Cleveland, O." *Library Journal* 22, no. 4 (April, 1897), 183.

While school are naturally the most effective way of providing the personal element, there are various other agencies through which the library can act. The home library is peculiarly fitted for it, missions, reading-rooms, boys' and girls' clubs, juvenile branches of Young Men's Christian Associations, children's hospitals, industrial schools, Sunday-schools,...and lastly there is the much abused parent.<sup>553</sup>

As more institutions, organizations, and movements gained momentum in the reform-minded ranks of the American middle class, there was an ever lengthening list of possibilities for public library cooperation.

However, there were also tensions between the expanding opportunities and practical limits of what any individual librarian could accomplish. In fact, the editors of *Library Journal* raised objections to the ever-expanding sense of the librarians' responsibilities:

In addition to fulfilling technical and bibliographical duties, none too simple in themselves, the librarian, we are told, must serve as a guide, philosopher, and friend to the entire community, must maintain close relations with the schools, must direct and stimulate better reading, must guide the youthful mind, and send books to those who will not come for them.... [A] Neversleep Liveforever would be the only librarian who could carry such a plan to success.<sup>554</sup>

The mention of services to youth in this editorial is significant. Youth services was an area of work in which librarians' responsibilities had the potential to expand tremendously, and indeed did expand over time, as will be discussed in chapter six. In light of a potentially endless field of duty, librarians had to continually negotiate what was an appropriate aspect of their work and what was outside of their scope.

Librarians working with children were energized by Progressive Era interest in their work, but some similarly argued for the need to define more clearly what was or was not properly part of public library youth services. Mary Wright Plummer of the Pratt

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<sup>553</sup> Adams, *Method of Children's Library Work as Determined by the Needs of the Children--II.*, 31

<sup>554</sup> Unattributed, "Editorial Introduction," *Library Journal* 24, no. 8 (August, 1899), 472.

Institute in Brooklyn was one librarian who attempted to delineate how librarians could reasonably limit their work while drawing from a variety of social movements. In her 1897 article “The Work for Children in Free Libraries,” Plummer wrote:

Without itself identifying with any of the movements such as the kindergarten, child-study, and social settlement, without losing control of itself and resigning itself to any outside guidance, the children’s library should still absorb what is to its purpose in the work of all these agencies.<sup>555</sup>

In developing children’s librarianship as a professional specialty, librarians did just as Plummer suggested.<sup>556</sup> They established connections with various other movements and institutions, but also retained their separate identity and place within the larger world of libraries.

### **Social Movements and Training for Children’s Librarianship**

The response of youth services librarians to many Progressive Era social movements was recorded in the coursework requirements of several new children’s librarian training programs. In 1897, Mary Salome Cutler, who was vice-director of the New York State Library School in Albany, announced that she was developing a program of study for children’s librarians. Cutler wrote: “This special training will probably include a part of that taken by the kindergartner, a course in child-study according to modern methods and a careful analysis of children’s literature.”<sup>557</sup> Other aspects of the

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<sup>555</sup> Plummer, *The Work for Children in Free Libraries*, 682.

<sup>556</sup> Unattributed, “Conference Proceedings: Meeting of Section for Children’s Librarians,” *Library Journal* 27, no. 7 (July, 1902), 220-227. At this meeting Hewins described the limits she had to place on her “branch in a slum settlement” in order to prevent carelessness with the books and the amassing of unmanageable crowds. Even when librarians worked directly with institutions, and in this case Hewins lived in the settlement, they retained their own identity and enforced library rules.

<sup>557</sup> Cutler, *The Children’s Librarian*, 292.

training Cutler developed, as described in an article by Hewins, involved study of “boys’ and girls’ clubs and settlement libraries.”<sup>558</sup>

A second training program began at the Pratt Institute Library School in October of 1899, under the leadership of director Mary Wright Plummer.<sup>559</sup> There were a number of departments within the Institute, including departments of fine arts, science and technology, the Lenox library in addition to the library school, and a department of kindergartens, which had a kindergarten teachers’ training program. The “special course of the training of children’s librarians” was “given in connection with the kindergarten department of the institute.”<sup>560</sup> Lecturers from the kindergarten school taught in the children’s librarians’ courses in the library school. Part of the coursework was devoted to the “study of work allied to that of children’s librarians,” such as “the work of home libraries, traveling libraries, of co-operation between libraries and schools, of visits to children’s libraries in the vicinity, etc.”<sup>561</sup>

In autumn of 1900, the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library started a training class for children’s librarians, under the leadership of director Frances Jenkins Olcott. This program was also allied closely with a kindergarten training program, as was made clear in the announcement of its opening:

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<sup>558</sup> Caroline Maria Hewins, "Work with Children: What Libraries Have Done and Are Doing," *Library Journal* 25, no. 8 (August, 1900), 122.

<sup>559</sup> Mary Niles Maack, "'No Philosophy Carries so Much Conviction as the Personal Life': Mary Wright Plummer as an Independent Woman," *The Library Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (January, 2000), 1-46, <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790e183771395b86e5aa6431cdf7b7321a3a81d30d8f5e30562cdc04399154323d2&fmt=C>; Barbara Elizabeth Brand, "Pratt Institute Library School: The Perils of Professionalization" In *Reclaiming the American Library Past*. (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1996), 251-278.

<sup>560</sup> Unattributed, "Pratt Institute Library School," *Library Journal* 24, no. 2 (February, 1899), 72.

<sup>561</sup> Mary Wright Plummer, "Pratt Institute Library School, Course of Training for Children's Librarians," *Library Journal* 25, no. 4 (April, 1900), 185.

Arrangements have been made with the Pittsburgh and Allegheny Kindergarten College for co-operation, giving those in training that part of the kindergarten course which will bring them into the proper attitude toward children and teach them to handle children in mass as well as individually.<sup>562</sup>

The training program also took advantage of connections to several other social agencies in Pittsburgh. Students were required to have hands-on training in the six children's rooms of the library and its branches and "practice among the home libraries, in the schools, and in the free kindergartens and the summer playgrounds of the city."<sup>563</sup>

Librarians had developed, over 20 years of discussions regarding helping individual children or school groups with book selection, a strong base of expertise in service to youth. Through these training programs, they now adapted elements of kindergarten, home libraries, and other social service work for children to their own ends of guiding children's reading.

Librarians were indeed absorbing all that was to their purpose in various social movements while retaining their own distinctive professional identity, as Plummer had said they should. In the 1900-1901 school year, Olcott invited to the training program for children's librarians a number of speakers who represented some of the most exciting movements related to children during the Progressive Era. Susan Blow represented the kindergarten movement, and Jane Addams represented the settlement movement. Jacob Riis, author of *How the Other Half Lives*, represented the widespread concern over the condition of life in urban areas. John Dewey, professor of education and psychology at the University of Chicago, represented new thinking about how children learned through all their experiences. Ernest Seton Thompson represented an interest in connecting all

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<sup>562</sup> Unattributed, "Training Class for Children's Librarians at Pittsburgh Carnegie Library," *Library Journal* 25, no. 7 (July, 1900), 333.

<sup>563</sup> *ibid.*

children, even those in urban environments, with the natural world; Seton wrote nature books for children, and was instrumental in founding the Boy Scouts of America in 1910. Yet even as they absorbed influences from elsewhere, librarians working with children continued to develop their own distinct professional culture.

## Chapter 6: Techniques of Work with Children in Libraries

“We have been experimenting as to what pleases and attracts the children most, and we have found that, if our bulletin boards, pictures friezes, and story hours are made to appeal to their imaginations, we can practically control the juvenile reading.”

-Frances Jenkins Olcott<sup>564</sup>

### Introduction

In the 1880s and 1890s, librarians developed techniques of work with children that became defining elements of their professional culture, including the library story hour. This chapter explores the techniques that librarians developed for use with children. These techniques were developed in response to several forces, including the younger ages of children coming to libraries and the influence of Progressive Era ideals about child-saving, and in particular a new sense of the importance of children’s recreational experiences that motivated the home libraries movement. The development of techniques such as picture exhibits, story hours, and library clubs for children grew out of earlier efforts to reach children through providing direct, personal help. As described in chapter 3, the early 1880s had seen the emergence of children’s services primarily offered through their schools, which was followed in the late 1880s by a period of emphasis on offering children direct, personal help in the library. A few librarians, including Caroline Hewins and Minerva Sanders, had formed library clubs for children at these early dates. However, most public librarians served children only through their schools or through offering personal assistance when asked for books. During the 1890s many public librarians extended their services to children to include recreational experiences that were designed to lead children to good reading.

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<sup>564</sup> Olcott, *Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*, 166.

## Reasons for the Creation of Special Techniques

Encouraged by the general Progressive Era enthusiasm about the child, children's librarians responded to changes in library policies that led them to develop new methods for working with children. First, the lowering of age limits in the early 1890s changed the population of those who could use the library. As early as 1887, Minerva Sanders decried age restrictions and abolished them in her library. As noted in the previous chapter, she had argued that children deserved full access to libraries.<sup>565</sup> The success of this policy change was documented not only by Sanders herself, but also by Sidney S. Rider, who was a visitor in her library in 1889. He praised the behavior and diligence of young people he observed reading in the library.<sup>566</sup> Similarly, Samuel Swett Green of Worcester, Massachusetts, who had always welcomed children of all ages to the library building, reported in the Reading of the Young Report for 1890 that a new feature of his library's work with children was "giving cards to persons under fifteen years of age."<sup>567</sup> In 1891, he commented that there were now many libraries serving young children and singled out Pawtucket, Rhode Island, where "great attention is given within the library building to little children."<sup>568</sup>

Out of twenty replies to the questionnaire for the 1890 Reading of the Young, three replies (including one from Green mentioned above) explicitly mentioned policy changes that involved lowering library age limits. The Boston Public Library reported that that very year the policy that restricted library use to those 14 and above had been

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<sup>565</sup> Sanders, *The Possibilities of Public Libraries in Manufacturing Communities*, 399.

<sup>566</sup> Sidney S. Rider, "What I Saw in the Free Library in Pawtucket," *Library Journal* 14, no. 1 (January-February, 1889), 22.

<sup>567</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 63.

<sup>568</sup> Samuel Swett Green, "Libraries and Schools," *Library Journal* 16, no. 12 (December, 1891), 22-26.

changed to allow those 12 and above full use of the library.<sup>569</sup> In another library, the comment was made that, although the age restriction of 14 years or older stood, the librarian did “extend the privilege [of library use] to any under that age whom I think will be benefited, provided they allow me to guide them in their reading.”<sup>570</sup>

Where age limits were entirely abolished, public libraries had a new population of very young children, some of whom had not yet learned to read. The kindergarten movement, highlighting the ability of even young children to benefit from learning activities, had influenced librarians to look beyond reading itself as they developed activities for these youngest library patrons. Librarians, inspired by the presence, interest, and curiosity of these children, began to provide engaging activities that would lead them on toward reading. Practically speaking, however, librarians needed to provide young children who could not yet read with something simply to keep them occupied in the library building.

From a theoretical standpoint, librarians and others were now coming to see children’s learning as extending beyond the confines of school work or reading books. At the University of Chicago, John Dewey (1859-1952) was developing his ideas about children’s learning, a major statement of which was his 1899 book *The School and the Society*. Dewey argued that children’s learning occurred not only through school experiences, but through all of their experiences, including those in public spaces, of which libraries were one example, and in the home. He argued that education should become “child-centered,” and that schools should become “society-centered” so that children were able to grow into the relationships they would eventually have as

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<sup>569</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 59.

<sup>570</sup> *ibid.*, 61.

“members and citizens of society.”<sup>571</sup> Libraries were public spaces and therefore part of the larger society to which Dewey referred, but librarians also provided somewhat protected spaces within the library building for children. Providing activities for children in libraries also provided them with an opportunity to learn how to behave as good citizens in the library.

In light of these new ideas about the scope of experiences that contributed to children’s learning, librarians were now ready to accept new forms of activities that were previously dismissed as too recreational and not educational enough. Although libraries had long positioned themselves as educational institutions to justify their tax-based funding, it was now becoming generally accepted that they were also places of recreation. The battle over fiction was being resolved in favor of libraries providing not only “classic,” “high quality” fiction but also fiction regarded as of a lower quality but attractive to readers.<sup>572</sup> Recreation was slowly becoming an accepted aspect of what libraries provided to their communities, and for children it was now becoming accepted that reading itself could be recreational as well as educational. In the 1890s, librarians began to emphasize the “*pleasure* of reading” in their discussions of children’s reading.<sup>573</sup> As notions of recreation, pleasure, and the provision of broader experiences of the world became acceptable justifications for librarians’ work with children, the scope of their techniques expanded.

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<sup>571</sup> Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey : A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 199-203.

<sup>572</sup> Carrier, *Fiction in Public Libraries, 1876-1900*, 458.

<sup>573</sup> Doren, *School Libraries*, 190.

## Activities for Children in Libraries Before 1890

The activities that were to become widely accepted in the 1890s as appropriate for library work with children originated earlier as experiments. Especially important in recognizing the need for new ways of working with children were two women who have already appeared in earlier chapters as leaders in the emerging field of children's librarianship: Caroline Hewins in Hartford, Connecticut, and Minerva Sanders in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. In 1881 Hewins had founded at her library in Hartford a junior chapter of the Agassiz Association. The Agassiz Association was a nature study club, named for the famous naturalist Louis Agassiz. Her group had 15 to 20 members, and included both "boys and girls, from nine to thirteen." Meetings were held at the library reading-room, and Hewins wrote that she always recommended books at these meetings, including "any new book on birds or insects" with occasional reference to older books. If the weather was good, she took the group out on field-work excursions.<sup>574</sup>

In 1887, Sanders described a club that she had organized at her Pawtucket library for children "from five years of age to 14" called the Flower Band. Its members brought flowers once a week to the library and then distributed them to the sick and infirm and "in any place where they [would] add a bit of brightness to a shadowed household." Sanders also had club members seek out homes where the Flower Band might perform their services. Approximately 200 children attended weekly club meetings. Sanders gave out membership badges as a mark of children's pledges to participate.<sup>575</sup> This service-based club for children reflected the commitment of many middle-class women, Sanders among them, to philanthropy. In both instances, Hewins and Sanders drew upon the

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<sup>574</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 221.

<sup>575</sup> Sanders, *The Possibilities of Public Libraries in Manufacturing Communities*, 399.

association of children with the natural world, inspired by Romantic-era ideas and images, to form the bases of their clubs.

In this early period, a common technique used to engage children's interest in reading was the lecture. In 1885 Hewins reported that she gave a talk on books on U. S. history to classes studying the topic in two different schools.<sup>576</sup> Another librarian reported giving a lecture, illustrated by library books, to school classes that visited the library.<sup>577</sup> Lectures were also used to draw children's attention to good books, as in Providence, where William Foster enlisted E. E. Hale "and other masters of the subject" to give a series of lectures on the "Old South" at the library.<sup>578</sup>

Both Hewins and the children's library assistant at Boston, Miss Jenkins, mentioned making displays of attractive books for children in order to catch their attention with appealing covers.<sup>579</sup> Several librarians noted that they had created special bulletin boards for children to display attractively decorated lists of new children's books.<sup>580</sup> As early as 1885, a librarian noted that the Boston Public Library provided children with an array of visually stimulating materials, including "engravings, maps, pictures, relics, curiosities, etc."—in short, offering them "everything which the library contains that can illustrate or give reality to their reading or study."<sup>581</sup> At Children's Library Association of New York City, it was reported that: "We have stereopticon views after the first hour and a half [that the library is open], and also dissecting

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<sup>576</sup> Bean, *Report on Reading of the Young*, 279.

<sup>577</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>578</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 62.

<sup>579</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 227.

<sup>580</sup> *ibid.* Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 62.

<sup>581</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 281.

maps.”<sup>582</sup> The mention of a time-delay after the room is open and before “stereopticon views” were allowed is not explained, but it suggests that librarians were using the “views” to reward children for spending some time reading. Dissecting maps were puzzles created from maps, of real places, which had been cut into pieces and pasted onto cardboard or thin pieces of wood. By properly assembling the puzzle, children learned geography. Stereopticons were devices that allowed the viewer to peer through a set of goggle-like lenses so that the two slightly different pictures displayed at the other end of the viewer appeared to be one three-dimensional image.

A few libraries ran children’s reading clubs. At Boston, Miss Jenkins was asked by a group of girls to form a reading club with them. She did so, and the group went on to read first “one of the novels of a popular sensational author” (the author was not named) and then a book chosen by Miss Jenkins herself, after which she reported that the girls “refused” to go back to sensational reading. Jenkins wrote: “Other and better works of good authors, travels and poetry, have been the later selections, and the girls are now among our best readers.”<sup>583</sup> A. L. Peck, librarian of Gloversville, New York, formed “one or two reading circles among the children of the Grammar and High schools,” and described their activities thus: “Each child reads one book, sometimes a portion of a book only, and reports at certain times at the various meetings.”<sup>584</sup>

Other activities drew on theatrical traditions. One librarian mentioned furnishing multiple copies of Shakespeare to a group of girls who liked to act out plays.<sup>585</sup> Another librarian made brief mention of the positive effects on reading of “evening entertainments

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<sup>582</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 233.

<sup>583</sup> James, *Yearly Reports on the Reading of the Young*, 282.

<sup>584</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 232.

<sup>585</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 60.

from different authors,” but gave no details about who these authors were or how such evenings were arranged.<sup>586</sup> Mary E. Sargent, author of the 1889 report, wrote that children at her library put on an “entertainment” to raise money to purchase more books, but provided no further details.<sup>587</sup> These activities may well have been inspired by scenes from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, a very popular book in which the character Jo March led her sisters in acting plays at home.<sup>588</sup>

One librarian in 1890 mentioned the use of storytelling. Frederick Crunden of St. Louis reported that he gave talks at the public school “about the pleasure and profit of reading” and, while he was with the students, would “tell them a story, or read extracts from some interesting book.”<sup>589</sup> Crunden was the first librarian in all the reports to mention storytelling, which would become a defining practice of children’s librarianship in the coming decade.

### **Activities for Children in the 1890s**

The activities for children that were developed rather sporadically in the 1880s gradually became more diverse but also more widely accepted in the 1890s. Librarians continued to invent creative methods to attract children to books. For purposes of discussion the techniques are grouped into three categories: exhibits and pictures, storytelling and story hours, and library leagues. The new approaches developed in this decade can be considered to culminate in the 1898 Heroes Exhibit at the Pratt Institute, which combined visual displays of heroes’ portraits with informal storytelling about the

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<sup>586</sup> Sargent, *Reading for the Young*, 229.

<sup>587</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>588</sup> Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*: (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869), 17-22.

<sup>589</sup> Sanders, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 63.

heroes and drew large number of children. Librarians also used child-study-inspired questionnaires to ascertain the results of the exhibit.

### **Pictures and Exhibits**

The use of pictures, ranging from simple mounted pictures to elaborate exhibits, were considered to be appealing to children, especially those too young to read. Several major libraries, including Milwaukee Public Library, Denver Public Library, and the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, collected and circulated pictures to young people. Individual pictures and exhibits of sets of related pictures were sometimes used to illustrate the information that could be found in books which lacked illustrations. In other cases, librarians emphasized the educational importance of illustrations. Green, for example, wrote that "...a book which contains pictures and descriptions of animals may be used in training the eye and cultivating the power of observation in children."<sup>590</sup>

Librarians' responses to the queries for the 1894 and 1898 Reading of the Young reports demonstrate that the collection, display, and circulation of pictures constituted a new and growing aspect of library work with children. For the 1894 questionnaire, Stearns included one question about pictures, asking: "Do you circulate pictures in schools and homes? In what form issued?" She received a number of positive replies, and noted that Milwaukee and Los Angeles were two of several leaders in this field. Stearns remarked that pictures should be selected for their "aesthetic value," in order to contribute to the purpose of "training the child's sense of beauty and imagination."<sup>591</sup> In 1898, Hewins asked librarians "Do you circulate pictures?" Of her 125 respondents, ten

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<sup>590</sup> Green, *Libraries and Schools*, 22.

<sup>591</sup> Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 85.

responded positively.<sup>592</sup> Although this number seems small, other sources provide evidence that many librarians were experimenting with using pictures.

In some cases, the use of pictures and other visually appealing materials was a direct outgrowth of educational efforts. For example, one library mounted an exhibition of pictures in a library building lecture-hall, including “photographs, etchings, etc., illustrative of the civil war” to tie in with pupils’ studies of American history. Also included were pictures of “the scenes in which Shakespeare moved, fac-similes [*sic*] of the earliest editions of his works, and views of London; [...] Catlin’s representations of custom among North American Indians, Moran’s scenes in the Yellowstone Park;” and, for the study of natural science, “Trouvelot’s representations of heavenly objects as seen through the telescope.”<sup>593</sup> In another instance, librarians at the Boston Public Library advocated the placement of geography-related objects in the children’s room, including “a fine, large modern globe” and “a map of the United States [...] hung in a conspicuous place in the room.”<sup>594</sup>

Identifying pictures correctly was an element of several exhibits at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, which had an extensive photograph collection.<sup>595</sup> Librarians there mounted two exhibits, a Hero exhibit and an Animals exhibit, both of which were intended to help children to correctly identify visual images and to encourage them to read stories about heroes or literature featuring animals.<sup>596</sup> By 1900, the Institute had also held exhibits of landscape paintings, Tiffany glass, pottery, mosaics, rugs, textiles,

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<sup>592</sup> Hewins, *Report on Children's Reading*, 35-39.

<sup>593</sup> Green, *Work between Libraries and Schools: A Symposium*, 181.

<sup>594</sup> Unattributed, "The Children's Room," *Library Journal* 22, no. 9 (September, 1897), 439.

<sup>595</sup> Mary Wright Plummer, "The Pratt Institute Photograph Collection," *Library Journal* 24, no. 12 (December, 1899), 660.

<sup>596</sup> Unattributed, "An 'Animal Exhibition' at Pratt Institute," *Library Journal* 23, no. 12 (December, 1898), 671.

and more. Although several of these exhibits consisted of objects, not pictures, they were displayed behind glass, and therefore the exhibits were essentially visual experiences for children. The exhibits of two collections, a collection of mounted butterflies and a collection of dolls, were particularly popular with children.<sup>597</sup> One of these exhibits, the Hero Exhibit, will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. In another library, a contest was held in which the children had to correctly identify the pictures of well-known authors. A book selected by the librarian was the prize for the winner.<sup>598</sup>

In some instances, librarians hoped that displays of visual images would cultivate children's interest in fine art. For example, in Cleveland the library worked in cooperation with "the superintendent and master of drawing of the public schools, and of the faculty of the School of Art," who they hoped would help assure the success of their plan to circulate pictures from the library.<sup>599</sup> Denver Public Library had an exhibition of pictures taken from magazines that represented the work of "most of the leading American illustrators," intended to lead people "toward appreciation of art as well as toward appreciation of books." The Artists' Club of Denver helped prepare a circular to advertise the exhibit, and 300 to 700 people attended daily, which suggests that their efforts were successful.<sup>600</sup>

Another purpose of picture collections was simply to bring pleasure to young viewers. By 1897, the Milwaukee Public Library had a "collection of over 2000 mounted

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<sup>597</sup> Anne Carroll Moore, "The Place of Pictures in Library Work for Children," *Library Journal* 25, no. 4 (April, 1900), 159.

<sup>598</sup> Unattributed, "Library History and Economy: Toledo (O.) P. L." *Library Journal* 24, no. 10 (October, 1899), 588-589.

<sup>599</sup> Green, *Work between Libraries and Schools: A Symposium*, 183.

<sup>600</sup> Unattributed, "Art for the School-Room at Denver Public Library," *Library Journal* 22, no. 2 (February, 1897), 90.

pictures which are loaned to the schools.”<sup>601</sup> In the case of this collection, one librarian described the purpose thus: “The intent is not to add another task, but to give the children pleasure, and in giving it, to add that unconscious culture which beautiful pictures carry so easily.”<sup>602</sup> There are two significant aspects of the idea expressed in this statement: first, that children’s pleasure was reasonable justification for the use of pictures, and second, that pictures were good for children in ways analogous to good books, because they gave children “culture.”

Three articles on various kinds of “picture work” that demonstrate the ongoing process of negotiation that characterized the development of youth services appeared in *Library Journal* in 1900. Anne Carroll Moore, Clara Hunt, and Evva L. Moore each wrote about the usefulness of pictures with children. Hunt was skeptical about whether the collection and display of pictures constituted an appropriate use of time and space in libraries. She argued that pictures awakened only “transient interest” in the topics they depicted as compared to books, which, she argued, encouraged a more serious connection to content. Hunt also expressed reservations about the appropriateness of “picture work” in libraries:

We should remember, first and always, that *this is a library*, not a kindergarten, not a normal school practice department, neither is it an art gallery or an exhibition room. It is entirely contrary to library principles to make the reading-room a show place which will attract sightseers whose coming in distracts the students and readers (italics in original).<sup>603</sup>

Instead, Hunt urged librarians to maintain the “bookish spirit and influence of the place [the library]” and to trust in “the charm of the books themselves” to engage children’s

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<sup>601</sup> Green, *Work between Libraries and Schools: A Symposium*, 186

<sup>602</sup> Milwaukee Public Library, “Work with the Library and Schools in Milwaukee,” *Library Journal* 20, no. 4 (April, 1895), 123-124.

<sup>603</sup> Clara W. Hunt, “Picture Work in Children’s Libraries,” *Library Journal* 25, no. 8 (August, 1900), 67.

interest without “resorting to” pictures. Hunt did, however, agree that the display of a few pieces of judiciously selected art in the children’s room would enhance the atmosphere.<sup>604</sup>

The two other articles were more sanguine about the benefits of picture collections. These articles were written by Evva L. Moore and by a young Anne Carroll Moore, who later became director of the children’s department at New York Public Library and a renowned children’s book critic. Evva Moore wrote that “the first object is to increase the children’s appreciation and enjoyment of pictures.”<sup>605</sup> Again we see a librarian describing children’s pleasure as a respectable motivation for the use of pictures with them. However, she also cautioned librarians not to overemphasize the collections of pictures, in order to guard against the mistaken idea that “the library is nothing more than a picture gallery, where the children are to be entertained.”<sup>606</sup> This echoes Hunt’s concerns about keeping the role of the library distinct from that of other institutions. E. Moore’s statement also questioned the value of entertainment for children, which suggests that pleasure was not an entirely robust justification for using pictures with children. She argued that the most important use of pictures was for “geography work,” when children needed to “gain correct ideas” of people and places “in a world remote from their own.”<sup>607</sup> E. Moore argued that the worth of pictures should be evaluated in familiar terms, arguing that pictures would be a “help or a hindrance” to a child “as they

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<sup>604</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>605</sup> The article had a numbered title because Hunt’s article, which had the same title, immediately preceded it in the same issue of *Library Journal*.

<sup>606</sup> Evva L. Moore, "Picture-Work in Children's Libraries-II." *Library Journal* 25, no. 8 (August, 1900), 67.

<sup>607</sup> *ibid.*, 68.

are true or false to nature.”<sup>608</sup> It is interesting that the terms of earlier debates over true or fictional works in public library children’s collections, as discussed in chapter four, were reiterated in evaluating pictures, which E. Moore judged to be good insofar as they were “true.”

Anne Carroll Moore distinguished between three practical uses for pictures: the permanent display of pictures in the children’s room, for which she suggested a number of specific art prints; the creation of topic-specific picture bulletins, or brief newsletters to be printed and distributed to children; and the mounting of picture exhibitions in the children’s room. Of these last two, she wrote:

Both the picture exhibition and the picture bulletin should be accompanied by descriptive text and a reading-list if the object of bringing children into close relationship with the books is to be completely secured.<sup>609</sup>

The purpose of the use of pictures, as Moore put it, was to awaken and sustain “a genuine interest in the subject presented.”<sup>610</sup> She was writing as a librarian at the Pratt Institute, where a picture collection and a number of successful exhibits had already been mounted. Perhaps because she worked in this context, her essay devoted no space to debating whether pictures were worthwhile in children’s rooms, but instead delineated the practical plans by which they could be used.

Moore provided evidence of the appeal of pictures to children in two quotes from children, one from a girl and one from a boy. Each child had benefited from the display of pictures, Moore argued, in different ways, the girl by seeing a familiar image of her

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<sup>608</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>609</sup> Moore, *The Place of Pictures in Library Work for Children*, 161.

<sup>610</sup> *ibid.*

former home and the boy by having a wider view of the world.<sup>611</sup> Moore described this eight-year-old boy as having “never learned to read easily.” She reported that he was motivated by the pictures he saw at an exhibit to declare that, now that he had seen pictures of some other places in the world, “I’m going to see the rest some day.”<sup>612</sup> The latter example also reinforced the notion that the library could offer something useful and even inspiring to children in the form of visual images even if they were struggling to read.

### **Storytelling and Story Hours**

The creation of the library story hour is perhaps the greatest success of children’s librarianship. Although women had been telling stories to children for centuries (and providing tales for collections by the likes of Perrault and the Grimms), the use of storytelling in libraries was probably inspired in part by its use in kindergartens, where teachers had great successes with the use of stories, games, and songs to teach moral lessons.<sup>613</sup> However, at least one librarian was using storytelling with children well before the kindergarten movement was nationally established. Adults who had been children in the late 1860s recalled with great fondness the stories told to their school classes by librarian John Jay Bailey in St. Louis.<sup>614</sup> No records aside from these adults’ later recollections remain to suggest how or why Bailey used storytelling.

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<sup>611</sup> Moore’s description highlights differences in librarians’ expectations of boys and girls during this period that deserve further investigation.

<sup>612</sup> *ibid.*, 162.

<sup>613</sup> Ross, *The Kindergarten Crusade : The Establishment of Preschool Education in the United States*, 120

<sup>614</sup> Effie Power and St. Louis Public Library., *How the Children of a Great City Get their Books; Being an Account of the Work with Children in the St. Louis Public Library* (St. Louis, MO: , 1914), 4. Kimball, *Youth Services at St. Louis Public Library, 1909-1933: A Narrative Case Study*, 182.

The practice of storytelling to children received little attention as a technique of librarians' work with children until the late 1890s. The second mention of storytelling in *Library Journal* (after the 1890 Reading of the Young Report) appeared in 1896. Mary Dousman of Milwaukee presented a brief overview of recent developments related to library work with children in a few major cities, including the cities of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Buffalo, New York; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Denver, Colorado. Dousman quoted a librarian from Buffalo who detailed a number of aspects of their work with youth:

In addition to our books and pictures, our dissected maps and sliced animals [...] are extremely popular; children wait for them in threes and fours. We are going to have more. We have just added kindergarten peg-boards, and picture scrap-books are in process of construction. I keep pencils and paper at hand for restless little people who are tired of looking at pictures and think it fun to make some. *We shall have a regular hour for storytelling, and announce the hour and subject on our bulletin board.* (emphasis added)<sup>615</sup>

Whether or not there was a direct connection to kindergarten storytelling in the form of librarians' story hours is not made clear. It is evident that these librarians were taking up some other kindergarten techniques.

Unfortunately, the questionnaires that were the basis of the Reading of the Young reports of 1893, 1894, and 1898 did not include any questions about storytelling or story hours.<sup>616</sup> There are also few mentions of story hours or storytelling in *Library Journal* during these years. After Dousman in 1896, the next mention of storytelling occurred in an 1898 article proposing forms of specialized training for children's librarians. In this

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<sup>615</sup> Mary E. Dousman, "Children's Departments," *Library Journal* 21, no. 9 (September, 1896), 407.

<sup>616</sup> Hewins, *Reading of the Young*, 23-28; Stearns, *Report on Reading for the Young*, 81-87; Hewins, *Report on Children's Reading*, 35-39.

article, Anne Carroll Moore mentioned “storytelling, both reproductive and original, with pictures and without” as a useful technique for children’s librarians.<sup>617</sup>

Despite these rather scant sources, by 1900, several prominent librarians made it clear that storytelling and story hours had become staple elements of their youth services work. In an article published that year, Frances Jenkins Olcott (1872-1963), librarian and head of the training program for children’s librarians at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Public Library, wrote a detailed account of story hours there. She described “the weekly story hour” as a time to “introduce the children to the great stories of the world.” There was no need, she wrote, to take exactly one hour for these events, but instead the time should “fit itself to the story, and the story in turn fit itself to its audience.” She suggested that the attitude of the librarian should be relaxed:

The more informal the story hour, the greater the lack of selfconsciousness (sic) on the part of the children, and this is to be aimed at, as a perfect effacement of self makes a receptive audience.<sup>618</sup>

This approach emphasized the stories and the books that contained the stories, not the storyteller as performer. Olcott argued that the librarian should use “what means and ways can she devise to subtly create a taste for the best literature,” and that storytelling was an important means of influencing children.<sup>619</sup>

Olcott documented the success of the weekly story hour at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library in terms of the numbers of attendees and the books borrowed. Over the course of the winter of 1900, she reported that over 5600 children had attended story hours. Olcott wrote that librarians were “rarely able to satisfy the demands for books

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<sup>617</sup> Anne Carroll Moore, "Special Training for Children's Librarians," *Library Journal* 23, no. 8 (August, 1898), 81-82.

<sup>618</sup> Olcott, *Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*, 70.

<sup>619</sup> Frances Jenkins Olcott, "Story Telling, Lectures, and Other Adjuncts of the Children's Room," *Library Journal* 25, no. 8 (August, 1900), 69.

about the stories after the story hour is over..." despite their best efforts to prepare a "full shelf" of books in advance. Plans were underway to assure that sufficient numbers of books would be available to supply the demand created by the story hours.<sup>620</sup>

Olcott gave her view of the purpose of storytelling in youth services work in an article on work with children at Pittsburgh Carnegie Library:

We aim to produce an unforced, natural love for the best in literature, to lift the children's eyes from books written down to them, to the world of history and art and active life as presented in good literature, and to lead them gradually to pursue the subjects further.<sup>621</sup>

The result of these efforts would be to guide children to reading the best books, and, as mentioned above, story hours were successful in encouraging circulation of related books. It is worth noting that Olcott contrasted this "unforced, natural love" of literature with the work assigned by teachers. She lamented that "even our weekly story-telling lectures are seized on by teachers as material for compositions and tests of memory..." which, as she described it, entirely defeated the purpose. Librarians were interested in shaping children's own preferences through appeal, not through the structure of lessons. They were also differentiating their professional roles from those of teachers.

Unlike kindergarten teachers, who used very simple songs and rhyming stories for young children, records of youth services work indicate that public librarians told extraordinarily complex stories to children. For example, a series of story hours at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library were devoted to Shakespeare stories.<sup>622</sup> A 1903 pamphlet provides a broader picture of the kinds of stories told during these first few years of story hours for children under Olcott's direction. The title alone, *Story Telling to Children*

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<sup>620</sup> Olcott, *Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*, 166-167.

<sup>621</sup> Olcott, *Story Telling, Lectures, and Other Adjuncts of the Children's Room*, 70.

<sup>622</sup> *ibid.*, 70.

*from Norse Mythology and the Nibelungenlied*, conveys a sense of the complex traditional tales that were told by librarians. The repertoire listed therein also included tales from the Grimm brothers, tales written by Hans Christian Andersen, Greek myths, and Arthurian legends.<sup>623</sup> Unfortunately, it is not clear what ages of children comprised the audience for these stories, but certainly the length and complexity of the tales suggest that older children along with younger children could have been the intended audience.

The introduction of this pamphlet indicated that the stories chosen were intended to instill the values of “our Germanic civilization: justice, order and unity.”<sup>624</sup> This mention of Germanic civilization is consonant with the historical research of Matthew Frye Jacobsen, who documented the complex assemblage of belief about race and racial traits that were prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century United States. Jacobsen provides evidence of common prejudices of the time that favored people from Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic backgrounds, often referred to as “Germanic” peoples.<sup>625</sup> The choices librarians made of which tales to tell represent the influences of several factors. In part, they reflect the fact that librarians shared general cultural biases of their time regarding race and ethnicity. In part, they reflect the values that librarians wished to transmit to children in the form of the legendary deeds of heroes in folklore, and therefore the books librarians hoped children would read. The relationship between ethnic identity and heroes as an element of the Pratt Institute’s 1898 Hero exhibit is discussed below.

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<sup>623</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Story Telling to Children from Norse Mythology and the Nibelungenlied* (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 1903), 48.

<sup>624</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>625</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color : European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, 46-48

At the ALA conference in 1900, Hewins presented an overview of the history of library work with children thus far. She mentioned storytelling-related skills as important for this work:

The children's librarian should be a good story-teller and story-chooser, for the old art of story-telling has been revived in children's libraries. She must have the dramatic faculty to a certain extent, to hold children's attention....<sup>626</sup>

By 1900, only four years after storytelling was first mentioned in *Library Journal*, Hewins, a major leader in this area, listed storytelling as among the necessary skills of a children's librarian.

### **Library Leagues and Reading Groups**

The Library Leagues were library-based clubs for children that fostered civic pride by inviting children to help to care for the books and other amenities in their department of the public library. Although some involved participation in reading groups and other activities, the basic premise was that the children who joined would pledge to help care for their library. The Library Leagues originated in Cleveland, where librarian Linda Eastman started the first Library League. Eastman credited the "Children's Street-cleaning League of New York" for inspiring her to start this new organization. To start the league, she posted an announcement:

"We posted a bulletin in the juvenile alcove, asking the children to join the Library League, speaking of what New York children were doing toward keeping the streets clean, asking if Cleveland children couldn't do as much for clean books as New York children were doing for clean streets, and referring them to the assistant in the alcove."<sup>627</sup>

The Library League was founded to be an organization of similar civic pride;

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<sup>626</sup> Hewins, *Work with Children: What Libraries have done and are Doing*, 121.

<sup>627</sup> Linda Eastman, "The Cleveland Children's Library League," *Library Journal* 10, no. October (22, 1897), 151.

Eastman wrote that she hoped children would help to care for the 1000 new juvenile books added to the children's collection in Cleveland in the spring of 1897.

Children pledged to help by treating library books with care and respect and by monitoring each others' treatment of books. To join, a child would sign a Library League Honor Card which displayed the motto of the League: "Clean hearts, clean hands, clean books."<sup>628</sup>

The league was announced on March 29, 1897, and by June of that year membership had risen to "over 3500" children. Schools were about to close for summer vacation, and Eastman expected that the membership would grow as a result. Children were also encouraged to enlist other children to join the League, and to keep track of their work by recording "the number of new members you get for the League."<sup>629</sup> Just over a year after the League was founded, members numbered an astonishing 14,354. The Library League had a song that referred to the extraordinary numbers of children who had joined:

Oh, we are the League, the Library League,  
The League ten thousand strong,  
And if you value the bright new books,  
Join us and sing our song.<sup>630</sup>

Eastman herself wrote that the "Library League has done much as an advertising medium" for the public library as a whole. A year after its founding, League members were not only taking care of books, but also forming a number of "Library League Reading Clubs" for books on topics such as travel and biography, and children were

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<sup>628</sup> Linda Eastman, "The Library and the Children: An Account of the Children's Work in the Cleveland Public Library," *Library Journal* 23, no. 4 (April, 1898), 143.

<sup>629</sup> Eastman, *The Cleveland Children's Library League*, 151-153.

<sup>630</sup> Linda Eastman, "Methods of Work for Children: The Cleveland Library League," *Library Journal* 22, no. 11 (November, 1897), 687.

invited to propose other topics for these reading groups.<sup>631</sup> The fact that Library League members were encouraged to form reading groups demonstrates that librarians still intended to guide children's reading, even as they also tried to encourage children to take a more general interest in protecting the library.

In describing the League, Eastman pointed out the special benefits for "city children" who had previously roamed "the streets and the city slums" without adult supervision. Like many others involved with social reform efforts during the Progressive Era, Eastman was afraid of how urban environments might impact the young:

No one can observe city life closely without seeing something of the evil which comes to the children who are shut up within its walls; the larger the city the greater is the evil, the more effectually are the little ones deprived of the pure air, the sweet freedom of the fields and woods, to be given but too often in their stead the freedom of the streets and city slums. This evil is greater during the long vacations, when the five-hour check of the school room is entirely removed, and many a teacher will testify to the demoralization which takes place among the children who are let loose upon the streets.<sup>632</sup>

One purpose of the League, as described by Eastman, was to provide children something better to occupy their time, including League meetings to attend and carefully selected books to read.<sup>633</sup> She also wrote that these city children were "largely of foreign parentage" and "almost without exception from uncultured homes." Much like those who started home libraries in Boston, Eastman expressed class biases typical of many reformers who assumed that poor and immigrant groups would benefit from the adoption of middle-class values.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Eastman, *The Library and the Children: An Account of the Children's Work in the Cleveland Public Library*, 142-143.

<sup>632</sup> *ibid.*, 143-144.

<sup>633</sup> *ibid.*, 144.

<sup>634</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 155.

After the Cleveland League was started, many other public libraries followed suit by starting library leagues of their own. A brief column published in 1898 listed “Libraries with Library Leagues.” Among those listed as having started leagues were the libraries of Braddock, Pennsylvania; Dayton, Ohio; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; De Witt, Iowa; Jamestown, New York; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition, six other libraries were listed as in the process of considering the formation of library leagues. The Minneapolis Library League had 7000 members and was “still growing.” Even relatively small towns had participation of a few hundred children of the community, such as Braddock, Pennsylvania, which had 266 members, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, which had 424 members.<sup>635</sup> In many places, children’s reading groups became Library Leagues as the popular idea spread across the country.

### **The Pratt Institute Hero Exhibit**

In 1898 at the Pratt Institute Library, librarians mounted an exhibit of portraits of heroes for the benefit of child patrons. The Hero Exhibit comprised over 48 portraits of famous heroic figures on bulletin boards, with accompanying text to explain who each was, and books about them that were kept out of circulation and made available to visitors until the end of the exhibit. This exhibit provides an interesting instance of a technique for work with children. By presenting children with portraits of heroes, librarians were indicating their opinions about the kinds of role models they hoped children would emulate. Librarians followed the exhibit with a survey of children to find out what they had gleaned from the experience. The findings of this survey indicate that librarians at Pratt were aware of the diverse ethnic makeup of the children who attended

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<sup>635</sup> Unattributed, “Libraries with Library Leagues,” *Library Journal* 23, no. 4 (April, 1898), 144.

and were interested in children's choices for their favorite hero in relation to their ethnic identities.

Librarians chose portraits of a range of heroes for display. Included were "portraits of men and women who were truly heroic, interpreting heroism not alone as physical courage, but as embracing acts of endurance, self-sacrifice, self-denial and duty, that were heroic in the highest sense."<sup>636</sup> Mary Wright Plummer, in her article on the exhibit, described the display of portraits as organized into the following categories: heroes of antiquity, saints and martyrs, national heroes, heroes of religion and philanthropy, and others, including some that represented "simple honesty and duty" and the "every-day heroism of firemen, fishermen, miners, and others."<sup>637</sup> Of the 48 heroes named, 34 were men, 13 were women. The gender of one was not stated; this one was a character from a poem, "The Little Hero of Harlem." The inclusion of such a large number of women suggests that the gender of the people chosen as heroes for the exhibit reflected the increased public role of women during the Progressive Era.

Unfortunately Plummer did not include the numbers of visitors or the numbers of children who filled out questionnaires. She did mention that teachers and parents as well as children attended, and that the Hero Exhibit was a great success. It attracted so many visitors to the library that the exhibit was extended beyond its originally scheduled one-week time period to be open to the public for three weeks. It was displayed a second time at the following ALA conference in 1899, to allow other librarians see for

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<sup>636</sup> Mary Wright Plummer, "Pratt Institute Hero Exhibit," *Library Journal* 23, no. 4 (1898), 146.

<sup>637</sup> *ibid.*, 146.

themselves that an exhibit could be a useful technique for engaging children in libraries.<sup>638</sup>

After children had seen the hero exhibit, they were invited to fill out “question papers” that were designed “to discover the effects of the exhibition upon the children.” This was entirely voluntary, given only to those “children *who wanted* to fill out the blanks”(emphasis in original).<sup>639</sup> The emphasis on children’s voluntary participation in this survey was another instance in which librarians distinguished their approach to children from that of teachers. The collection of data from child attendees about the exhibit was likely inspired in part by the child study movement. The questions asked of children about their experience were:

1. What picture in the exhibition do you like best?
2. If you can, tell why you like it best?
3. Can you mention other names whose pictures are not in the exhibition?
4. Give the name of your favorite hero.
5. What do you think makes a hero?
6. What book or books have you read which have interested you in heroes?<sup>640</sup>

Plummer reported that, in the 98 responses received, the favorite heroes were George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. All of these were men with whom children would have been familiar from their school studies of American history. Other slightly less popular choices for favorite portrait were “Benjamin Franklin, [...] John Brown, Sir Galahad, Nathan Hale, Jeanne d’Arc, St. George, and Columbus.”<sup>641</sup>

Plummer reported excerpts from a number of children’s responses to the question of why they chose a particular portrait as their favorite. Some of these were presented as simple

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<sup>638</sup> Plummer, *The Pratt Institute Photograph Collection*, 660.

<sup>639</sup> Plummer, *Pratt Institute Hero Exhibit*, 146.

<sup>640</sup> *ibid.*, 146.

<sup>641</sup> *ibid.*, 148.

quotations from the children. For instance, one child's reason for preferring Washington was: "Because he was the father of his country and never told a lie."<sup>642</sup>

Although Plummer did not ask children's names or ethnic identities in the questionnaire, the librarians at Pratt were in some way able to determine which child had submitted each set of answers. This is made clear by the parenthetical commentary about the age, gender, or ethnic identity that accompanied the excerpts of the children's statements that Plummer reported. For example, the response of a child who preferred Jeanne d'Arc as hero was quoted and described thus: "'Because she was brave and a girl' (this from a boy)." Similarly, regarding a child who preferred Lincoln: "'Because he was a self-made man' (from a girl of 10 years)."<sup>643</sup> In both cases, the qualifying phrases describing the child point out the disparity between the child's own gender and the gender of his or her preferred hero.

In several other instances, Plummer's parenthetical remarks mentioned children's ethnic identity in connection with their responses. For instance, one child's response about preferring Washington was quoted thus: "'Because he was such a plain man and was so modest at the inauguration' (this from a German boy)."<sup>644</sup> Plummer may have been indicating her surprise at the unexpectedness of his choice, insofar as the choice of the American hero Washington might have been seen as surprising coming from a recent immigrant boy from Germany. In light of the tremendous immigration to the U.S. occurring at the time, Plummer's description of the boy's choice could have been in praise of the Americanization of this immigrant boy. On the other hand, it could have

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<sup>642</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>643</sup> *ibid.*, 146.

<sup>644</sup> *ibid.*

been meant as a comment on Germanic racial superiority, insofar as the selection of Washington by a German could be read to confirm that German children had “good taste” in heroes. As mentioned above, Historian Matthew Frye Jacobsen documented the common 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that Germanic civilizations, and by extension many German immigrants, were superior to other immigrant populations.<sup>645</sup> Of course, Plummer might have meant to indicate all of the above implications with her inclusion of this information about gender and ethnic identity.

Plummer also mentioned that several children chose Sir Galahad’s portrait as favorite, and quoted and described the children thus: “‘Because it represents the qualities most needed by man—honesty, compassion, and strength’ (Jewish boy of 12). [...] ‘Because he was a brave man and undertook to look for the Holy Grail’ (German Jew of 14).”<sup>646</sup> Sir Galahad was a figure of Arthurian legend known for his heroics as a Christian knight who was one of the three who found the Holy Grail, and his character represented Christian piety. In these cases, Plummer appears to be highlighting the contradiction between the child’s Jewish identity and his preference for a hero engaged in a Christian quest. Jacobsen describes another commonly held 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that Jews (and other groups, including Celts and Eastern Europeans) were a separate race readily identifiable by physiological characteristics and personality traits. Racial features were commonly exaggerated to the level of stereotyped caricature in cartoons in popular magazines and newspapers.<sup>647</sup> By drawing attention to these children’s Jewish identity, Plummer may have intended to indicate that the children’s understanding of religion was

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<sup>645</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color : European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, 46-48

<sup>646</sup> Plummer, *Pratt Institute Hero Exhibit*, 146.

<sup>647</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color : European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, 171-199

confused, that their choice of hero was surprising, or that they were becoming Americanized by adopting heroes from a different ethnic background than their own. Of course, these descriptions may have reflected a more seriously anti-Semitic bias, implying that, because Jewish children preferred a Christian hero, Christianity was superior to Judaism. Plummer's commentary is not sufficient evidence from which to conclude that she was biased in this more serious way. However, it is reasonable to conclude that Plummer's remarks about children's gender and ethnicity reflected the common biases of her time, and that she was surprised by the ways some children's preferences for heroes did not reflect the children's backgrounds. The inclusion of this identifying information about children demonstrates, among other things, that librarians were noticing the diversity of the children whom they served.

### **Successes of Activities in Libraries**

Librarians' writings in the 1890s indicate that new techniques of work were successful in attracting large numbers of children to the library and in directing their attention to recommended books. However, these impressive successes were also accompanied by some trepidation that youth services work was expanding too rapidly. Plummer captured both of these sentiments in an 1897 article, when she wrote: "With lectures and experiments, reading clubs, and possibly original stories in contemplation, there is no danger of rust from inaction, especially as to obtain any one of these there are serious obstacles to overcome."<sup>648</sup> Librarians had now dramatically expanded the scope of their work with children. Olcott made strong claims for the successes of the new techniques she had implemented in Pittsburgh:

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<sup>648</sup> Plummer, *The Work for Children in Free Libraries*, 685.

We have been experimenting as to what pleases and attracts the children most, and we have found that, if our bulletin boards, pictures friezes, and story hours are made to appeal to their imaginations, we can practically control the juvenile reading.<sup>649</sup>

The new methods of attracting children's interest were sustained in librarians' work for precisely this reason. These techniques were successfully appealing to children's own interests, curiosity, and imaginations and were effectively addressing the heart of the motivation for bringing services to children into the realm of public library work: directing children's reading.

### **Coursework in Activities for Children**

Training in how to conduct many of these activities was offered as a formal part of coursework in the training programs for children's librarians that started around the turn of the century. Olcott opened the Training School for Children's Librarians at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library in October of 1900.<sup>650</sup> This program went on to become the most influential program of its kind during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>651</sup> The coursework required for the two-year training program included more general library work in the first year and more specialized work with children in the second year, as demonstrated by the topics of coursework as advertised for the 1901-1902 school year:

First Year: Ordering and accessioning books; Cataloguing and shelf-listing; Classification; Loan work; Reference work; Planning and equipment of children's rooms; Administration of children's rooms; Literature for children; Bulletin and picture work; Story telling and reading aloud; Relation between libraries and schools; Home libraries; Psychology

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<sup>649</sup> Olcott, *Work with Children at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh*, 166.

<sup>650</sup> Unattributed, *Training Class for Children's Librarians at Pittsburgh Carnegie Library*, 333.

<sup>651</sup> To give one example of its influence, Effie Power, who went on to write the major textbooks used across the U. S. in children's librarians' training courses from 1929 well into the 1960s, graduated from this program in 1904. M. A. Kimball, C. A. Jenkins and B. Hearne, "Effie Louise Power: Librarian, Educator, Author," *Library Trends* 52, no. 4 (Spr, 2004), 924-951.

“Second Year: Cataloguing and indexing; Classification; Administration of children’s departments; Literature for children; Story telling and reading aloud; Relation between libraries and schools; Civic education; Psychology<sup>652</sup>

As mentioned briefly in chapter five, in the pamphlet for the following year, “Home libraries” was replaced with “Home libraries and groups.”<sup>653</sup> The inclusion of picture work, storytelling, and work with home libraries and other groups of children as elements of this training program demonstrates that these methods had gained a permanent place in the work of the children’s librarian.

## **Conclusion**

Librarians developed new techniques for work with children including picture collections, exhibits, story hours, and Library Leagues to give children new experiences in the public library. These methods developed in partial response to lowered age limits and the large numbers of children coming through library doors. Some of these activities were started as extensions of educational efforts, but many had strong recreational aspects, designed simply to bring children to the library so that they would be more likely to choose books to read from among those librarians had in collections for children. The topics of exhibits, story hours, and reading groups formed by Library League members all related to books in the library. In the case of the Library Leagues, children were encouraged to actively assume new responsibility for the well-being of their library. When librarians served poor or immigrant children in crowded urban settings, their attitudes reflected the same sorts of biases typical of other Progressive Era reformers. However, librarians did attempt to ascertain how successful their efforts were in some

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<sup>652</sup> Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, *Training School for Children's Librarians*, 4-5.

<sup>653</sup> *ibid.*

cases, providing children with questionnaires about their experiences. These techniques of service engaged children's imaginations and directed their attention to good books, and their success was confirmed when training in storytelling, picture work, and leading library groups were included as topics of coursework in the first major training program for children's librarians.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Children's work can be taken up as a fad, it can be emphasized unduly in its relation to the library as a whole, it can be weakened by ill-judged enthusiasm or sentimentality; but the principles underlying it are good and permanent ones, and *it has its place as a legitimate department of the public library.*  
-*Library Journal* Editorial Staff (emphasis added)<sup>654</sup>

### Professional Children's Librarians

The emergence of children's librarianship as a professional specialty within librarianship was marked by the creation of three training programs for children's librarians from 1898 to 1900, as described earlier, and the creation of an ALA group for children's librarians in 1900. By the turn of the century, it had become a stated expectation that children's work in libraries was "woman's work."<sup>655</sup> It is no accident that the training programs were shepherded into existence by women. The three training programs were established at the State University of New York in Albany by Mary Salome Cutler, at the Brooklyn Pratt Institute by Mary Wright Plummer, and at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library Training School by Frances Jenkins Olcott. Two of the three programs, those at the Pratt Institute and at the State University of New York at Albany, were relatively short lived, and mentions of the specialty disappeared from the two schools' published announcements by 1901. However, the other school, the Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School for Children's Librarians, continued to grow, and it was there that many of the outstanding leaders in youth services work in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were trained.

In 1900, the first professional group dedicated to youth services was founded.

The first national meeting held for children's librarians took place at the ALA conference

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<sup>654</sup> Unattributed, "Editorial Introduction," *Library Journal* 25, no. 4 (April, 1900), 158.

<sup>655</sup> American Library Association, *Conference Proceedings*, 123.

in 1899, where they formed the Club of Children's Librarians. In 1900 this club became an official section of the ALA, and the name was changed to the Section for Library Work with Children.<sup>656</sup> The section continued to grow and to diversify until it achieved the organizational profile that it has in ALA today: the Association for Library Service to Children, the Young Adult Library Services Association, and the American Association of School Librarians. The developments described in this dissertation are only the beginning of the long story of children's librarianship that has continued to evolve as a professional specialty.

The early children's librarians whose work and ideas have been discussed in this dissertation, informed by a wide range of cultural developments in the period under review, created their own professional culture. This culture should be understood as an outgrowth of professional discussions that took place from 1876 to 1900. Through such discussion and such rigorous methods as surveys of teachers and children, librarians arrived at a commonly accepted set of basic elements in their work. These involved not only the practices they developed, such as those related to collections, spaces, personnel, and special techniques, but also a range of beliefs and attitudes, their own specialized set of values that are a necessary part of the identity of any professional group.<sup>657</sup>

Aspects of their professional culture involved expectations about the "personality" or demeanor of the children's librarian and the "atmosphere" of the children's room. Anne Carroll Moore touched on the idea of demeanor when she described the "personal fitness" necessary for a children's librarian:

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<sup>656</sup> American Library Association, "American Library Association: Transactions of the Executive Board," *Library Journal* 25, no. 11 (November, 1900), C691.

<sup>657</sup> Michael F. Winter, *The Culture and Control of Expertise : Toward a Sociological Understanding of Librarianship* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 21-38.

The children's librarian should be first of all well educated, refined—but not too limited in her tastes—possessed of a sound common sense, clear judgment, and a keen sense of humor, gifted, it may be, with that kind of sympathetic second-sight that shall enable her to read what is often obscure in the mind of the child.<sup>658</sup>

Similarly, it was accepted that children's rooms were to be decorated in such a way as to create a particular "home-like" atmosphere, partially described here by librarian Mary Ella Dousman of Milwaukee:

Children are greatly influenced by their surroundings, and a room devoted to them cannot be made too attractive. It should be of good size, light and airy, sunny, if possible, with plenty of wall-space for pictures. [...] Window boxes filled with plants and vines would add to the home-like appearance of the room.<sup>659</sup>

The main characteristic of the places librarians created for children and the attitudes that they believed were necessary for those wanting to work with children involved a special idea of friendliness towards children. This idea of "personal fitness," or "personality," as it was sometimes called, that was believed to be appropriate for children's work, could be misread as sentimental.<sup>660</sup> In fact, the professional attitudes that were seen as part of the personality of the children's librarian were based on knowledge carefully distilled from the experiences of those working with children and from systematic investigations such as those represented by the Reading of the Young reports that, in some cases, assimilated accounts of child preferences.

Children's librarians assessed the outcomes of their efforts in both qualitative terms, as at the Pratt Institute in the survey that followed the Hero Exhibit, and quantitative terms, not merely in terms of circulations figures but through other metrics such as when librarians at the Cleveland Public Library reported that over ten thousand

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<sup>658</sup> Moore, *Special Training for Children's Librarians*, 80.

<sup>659</sup> Dousman, *Children's Departments*, 406-407.

<sup>660</sup> Moore, *Special Training for Children's Librarians*, 80.

children had joined the Library League. The atmosphere that children's librarians created in their rooms and departments was indeed intended to be friendly, even cozy, but it was also calculated to attract children effectively to the children's room and thereby make it possible for librarians to guide their reading.

### **Limitations of This Study**

This history examined in this dissertation is limited in several ways. It deals with only the first 24 years of public library services to youth. The findings presented here are also limited in that they are primarily based on published writings and records of discussions at ALA conferences. Other sorts of evidence, such as private correspondence of important individuals, might shed a different sort of light on these developments. However, such materials are difficult to find. For example, we have the letters of Caroline Hewins in the Simmons College Archive in Boston, but they are only selected examples of her correspondence. Hewins almost certainly had some conversations with other compilers of the Reading of the Young reports, but no letters have yet been found from or to these individuals. If we had such letters, they would shed light on, for instance, the relationships involved in the creation of the Reading of the Young reports and might amplify what appears in the reports.

Other approaches to this topic might foreground other kinds of data, such as statistical data amassed from library annual reports. A systematic study of the early library school curricula for children's librarianship would be useful. One might even hope to find early work diaries of the kind used in a later period by Melanie Kimball in

her study of children's librarianship at the St. Louis Public Library.<sup>661</sup> Studies based on these sources would complement the understandings of librarians' attitudes and activities explored here. The Reading of the Young reports represent the best nationally collected evidence of what was going on with children in libraries in the period investigated here, but until the 1890s they contain relatively little statistical data. Nevertheless, more analyses of other available kinds of data and greater scrutiny of the activities at key libraries would add other dimensions to the findings reported in this dissertation.

### **Contributions of This Study**

This study presents a nuanced understanding of the cultural forces that informed the emergence of public librarians' work with children. In the early period of the development of children's librarianship as a professional specialty, librarians were most concerned with avoiding the corruption of children's characters through bad reading. This was a time when book and magazine markets were flooded with sensational adventure fiction for children. Librarians began recommending good books for children in this context, to guide children towards reading something better than the cheap fiction they could find in bookshops and newsstands. During the 1880s, librarians worked extensively with schools to provide educational materials for children that would augment the lessons assigned by teachers. Librarians at this time also began to recommend books for children's pleasure reading. Caroline Hewins, for example, was one of those who early in the period began to promote the idea that good books for children should be both wholesome and appealing.

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<sup>661</sup> Kimball, *Youth Services at St. Louis Public Library, 1909-1933: A Narrative Case Study*, iii-243.

By the 1890s, most librarians had accepted the idea that children should find books in library collections that they could read for pleasure, and that this involved including fiction in these collections. During the decade of the 1890s, public librarians were influenced by several Progressive Era “child-saving” movements as they developed and refined their services. Librarians created and distributed questionnaires to children in order to gather information about their experiences in the library. In addition to providing children with books, librarians now believed that they needed to provide enjoyable experiences for children to draw them into the library. To do this, librarians displayed pictures, held story hours, and formed “library league” clubs and, through the content they presented or displayed in these and other ways, sought to guide children to select books and magazines that the librarians were recommending.

Recently, historians of childhood have begun to look at how children acted or were acted upon by adults in a range of social settings, from schools to war zones.<sup>662</sup> This study contributes to an understanding of children’s voluntary presence in the public spaces of libraries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The results of librarians’ surveys of the time provide intriguing documentation of what children enjoyed or appreciated about the experiences they had in public libraries. It is also clear that children participated extensively in the library activities that were provided for them, as evidenced by the over 14,000 child members of the Cleveland Library League. The boys and girls whose voices are recorded in librarians’ writings are perhaps scantily and inadequately represented, and librarians’ characterizations of children in terms of gender or ethnicity raise more questions than they answer. Nonetheless, documenting the presence of children in public

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<sup>662</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood*, xi, 445.

libraries adds another chapter to the history of childhood, and particularly to the history of children as citizens-in-training in public spaces.

As mentioned in the introduction, Dee Garrison described the women who worked as children's librarians as "sentimental" and unprofessional.<sup>663</sup> This study demonstrates that such descriptions are incorrect by providing a more accurate account of the nature and quality of the early work undertaken by men and women for children in libraries. The early phases of this work were not solely the province of women, although women did eventually dominate children's librarianship and professional librarianship as a whole. What librarians did in developing services to youth involved numerous local experiments, many of them recorded in the Reading of the Young reports, and more systematic attempts to decide how librarians could most effectively guide children to the best possible books. Garrison was misguided in her descriptions of them as sentimental and unprofessional. Those early librarians who did this work were essentially rigorous and professional in their approach.

Because women faced overt discrimination in the work place as in other public places during this time period, it is remarkable that all of the women who wrote the Reading of the Young reports began to speak up within the predominately male profession of librarianship in the late 1870s and early 1880s. These reports are an interesting instance of women librarians finding a way to voice their own opinions by quoting and interpreting the words of others. By using this strategy, they were able to present their ideas as a consensus based on the comments and suggestions of many others. Hewins, who was the first woman to speak at an ALA conference, led the way in

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<sup>663</sup> Garrison, *Apostles of Culture : The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920*, 180.

the use of this technique in her 1882 book and in the first Reading of the Young report. She opened the section in which she described her own views by stating that they were “conclusions to which these opinions, from libraries and schools in ten different States, lead us....”<sup>664</sup> This way of voicing one’s opinion indirectly, in a socially appropriate way for women at the time, was an ingenious strategy for entering into discussions within a male-dominated profession.

### **Further Research Directions**

Perhaps the most important area for further research is a history of what happened next in children’s librarianship. The developments that followed those discussed in this dissertation marked what some have described as the golden era of children’s librarianship, a time when children’s departments were flourishing and many librarians were intimately connected with children’s publishing.<sup>665</sup> Christine Jenkins covered a later period in her extensive history of youth services librarians in the ALA, from 1939 to 1955.<sup>666</sup> A history of the ALA-based national organization of children’s librarians (which underwent several name changes) during the period from 1900 to 1939 could offer insights into a number of major developments in this field. For example, examination of librarians’ writings and discussions from this later period could shed light on how children’s librarians moved from recommended book lists to the creation of evaluative standards for children’s literature. These standards culminated in the creation

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<sup>664</sup> Hewins, *Yearly Report on Boys' and Girls' Reading*, 189.

<sup>665</sup> Bush, *New England Book Women: Their Increasing Influence*, 719-735; Betsy Hearne, "Margaret K. McElderry and the Professional Matriarchy of Children's Books," *Library Trends* 44, no. 4 (Spr, 1996), 755-75.

<sup>666</sup> C. A. Jenkins, "The Strength of the Inconspicuous: Youth Services Librarians, the American Library Association, and Intellectual Freedom for the Young, 1939-1955." (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison), 719.

of the major book awards for children, the John Newbery Medal, first awarded in 1922, and the Randolph Caldecott Medal, first awarded in 1937. The field of youth services continues to evolve, and in recent years a number of new book awards have emerged, among them the Coretta Scott King Awards, which began in 1970 to honor African-American authors and illustrators; the Pura Belpre Award, first given in 1996 to honor Latino/Latina authors and illustrators; and the Michael Printz Award, started in 2000 to honor the best books published for young adults. The creation of these awards can be seen as reflecting the deliberate connection of youth services librarianship to larger social and cultural movements today. More research is needed to understand how librarians expanded and extended their authority from the creation of lists of recommended books to the establishment of these major book awards in children's literature, which continue to the present day to have enormous impact in the realm of children's publishing.

This history of the evaluation of materials also raises some interesting questions about how books are evaluated now. This study sheds light on the tremendous influence of the 1870s and 1880s publishing market that informed and shaped librarians' book recommendations. Librarians' words about the dangers of sensational reading must be read with an understanding of the historical context in which they were written, a context rife with rapid changes in the publication and marketing of books and magazines. The fact that markets were so influential at that time raises the question of how librarians' evaluative activities, from collection development to book or other media awards, may have been informed or influenced by market changes since then. The story of fiction in children's collections provides one example of rejection followed by slow acceptance. Without understanding the marketing context of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is easy to

lambaste librarians as censors.<sup>667</sup> How librarians embraced or rejected various new forms of media that have emerged since 1900 must similarly be understood to involve reactions to the marketing of these media. The rejection of comic books but the acceptance today of their close cousins, graphic novels, is such an instance. The story of how children's librarians today are reacting to new technologies, including the internet, computer games and the gaming industry, and other emerging media is still unfolding. Understanding the early history of the development of collections of reading and other materials for children offers one model for comparison with these more recent developments.

The creation of training programs for children's librarianship and the formation of a national organization for children's librarians signaled the end of the formative period 1876-1900, but this was only a beginning. More research into the historical changes in training courses and changing requirements for the practice of children's librarianship could offer insights into how the knowledge considered central to youth services librarianship changed over time. In particular, a history of how the training program at the Pittsburgh Carnegie Public Library continued to grow would contribute enormously to our understanding of how public library youth services were sustained and developed over time. The evolution of these training programs was also part of the broader process of the maturation of librarianship as a profession. Today, departments of library and information science are responding to major technological changes as they strive to produce adaptable professionals. Looking back at how children's librarians were trained in the context of the technological innovations that characterized the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>667</sup> Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America : Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), xii, 286.

could offer informative analogies for thinking about how best to train youth services professionals today.

Although gender is addressed at a number of points in this work, the question of how children's librarianship became such an intensely female specialty remains open. Several contributing forces are mentioned, including the difficulties female librarians faced in working with male school leaders and the Progressive Era tendency for women to frame their public contributions as an extension of their private care-giving work. However, the feminization of children's librarianship must be understood in the context of the feminization of librarianship as a whole and, as Mary Niles Maack pointed out, there is much yet to be understood about how women came to dominate librarianship. Women's circumstances, such as their lower salaries, marital status, and even their perceptions of themselves in a gender-stratified society, were among the contributing forces to the major shift in librarianship from a male-dominated specialty in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to a female-dominated specialty in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>668</sup> How these factors played out in the area of children's librarianship warrants further investigation.

Public libraries and public schools continued to coexist and in some cases cooperate after the period in the 1880s when librarians, discouraged by teachers' lack of interest, developed direct services to children. There is much room for further research into how these two kinds of institutions continued to co-evolve, whether they were cooperating, working separately but in parallel ways, or in conflict with one another.

There has been one study of the formation of the American Association of School

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<sup>668</sup> Mary Niles Maack, "Toward A History of Women in Librarianship - A Critical Analysis with Suggestions for further Research," *Journal of Library History Philosophy and Comparative Librarianship* 17, no. 2 (1982), 164-185; Maack, *Gender, Culture, and the Transformation of American Librarianship, 1890-1920*, 51-61.

Librarians that touches briefly on the early history of school and library cooperation.<sup>669</sup>

However, this study does not mention the tension that characterized many librarians' perceptions of teachers, as described in chapter three. A history of the co-evolution of public libraries and schools that takes into account the growth and development of separate school libraries could shed greater light on how schools and libraries developed separate institutional roles and responsibilities.

Ideas about why reading is important and how reading is best done were important aspects of librarians' early discussions of how best to serve children. As mentioned in chapter four, a number of reading advice books were published in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The instructions given in such books about how to read properly constitute a potential area of further research which could shed light on the basic assumptions that many librarians and educators share about the proper ways of reading even today. Because the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period when reading was believed to hold great power over an individual's character development, examining books of reading advice from this period might provide a way of understanding the historical bases for contemporary attitudes towards reading, education, and libraries. This information could also provide insights into how those attitudes are changing or how they need to change to accommodate new kinds of media and potentially new kinds of reading that may emerge as technologies develop.

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<sup>669</sup> Pond, *The American Association of School Librarians: The Origins and Development of a National Professional Association for School Librarians, 1896-1951*, 1-824.

## **Implications and Looking Forward**

Understanding the cultural origins of children's librarianship allows contemporary children's librarians to assess critically their own work in new ways and with a richer knowledge of the ideas upon which their specialty was founded. The findings presented here raise a number of important questions about the future of youth services work: If we are a profession deeply committed to furthering children's imaginative experiences, as well as their school-based learning experiences, what else could we be doing? Librarians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century rethought their exclusion of fiction from children's library collections. Should librarians today be rethinking what "reading" itself means, in a culture of exploding visual literacy? Should the inclusion of movies, videogames, and other new forms of online media in library collections signal an opportunity to reevaluate the notion of "reading" as central to what librarians do? The effects of reading and other media on children's development will be studied, negotiated, debated, and reevaluated long into the future. How does the marketing of books and other materials for children affect the ways in which today's librarians make recommendations for those children? This dissertation offers a glimpse of those analogous questions and conversations in the past, as children's librarians addressed the weighty issue of how best to guide children's reading at a time when choices of what to read were believed to hold enormous power to determine who a child would grow to be.

## Appendix A: Overview of the Reading of the Young Reports

<b>Author, Date of Report</b>	<b>No. of Replies</b>	<b>No. of States Represented</b>	<b>No. of questions asked</b>	<b>Qualitative, Quantitative, or Mixed Data</b>
Hewins, 1882	25	10	1	Qualitative
Bean, 1883	25 (out of 50 questionnaires distributed)	8	*	Qualitative
James, 1885	75 (out of 125 questionnaires distributed)	17	4 (questions not given in report)	Qualitative
Sargent, 1889	49	19 (including one library in England)	*	Qualitative
Sanders, 1890	20	*	*	Qualitative
Hewins, 1893	152	*	11	Mixed
Stearns, 1894	145 (195 contacted)	(including libraries in Canada)	15	Mixed
Hewins, 1898	125	*	17	Quantitative

\* = information not available

## **Appendix B: Contents of Questionnaires for the Reading of the Young Reports**

### **1882 (Hewins)**

“What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?”

### **1883 (Bean)**

Did not give the question or questions asked, but Bean wrote that she had “followed the admirable plan initiated by my predecessor in last year’s report[.]”

### **1885 (James)**

Did not give the question or questions asked, but James described her request for information in such a way as to suggest three categories of questions or perhaps three questions asked: “The circular requested information upon the connection of the libraries with the schools; their methods of influencing the young in their selection of books for home reading; as to whether lists of books for the young had been prepared, and requested copies of the lists, if printed.”

### **1889 (Sargent)**

Did not give the question or questions asked, but Sargent wrote that her circular asked “about the methods employed and the work accomplished in this direction in different libraries.”

**1890 (Sanders)**

Sanders described her query thus: “In preparing this report, librarians were very largely called up on for ‘methods, results, and book lists; also any items of interest that would be helpful.’”

**1893 (Hewins)**

1. Are your children’s books kept by themselves?
2. Are they classified, and how?
3. Have they a separate card catalog or printed finding list?
4. Are they covered?
5. Do you enforce rules with regard to clean hands?
6. Have you an age limit, and if so, what is it?
7. Do you allow more than one book a week on a child’s card?
8. Are children’s cards different in color from others?
9. What authors are most read by children who take books from your library?
10. What methods have you of directing their reading? Have you a special assistant for them, or are they encouraged to consult the librarian and all the assistants?
11. Have you a children’s reading room?

**1894 (Stearns)**

1. At what age may children draw books? Why do you have an age limit?
2. Do the children use the library to an appreciable extent?
3. Is the number of books a child may take per week restricted?

4. What per cent. of your circulation is children's fiction?
5. Do you circulate Alger, Optic, Castlemon, Trowbridge, and kindred authors?
6. Do you have special lists or catalogues for children? State price, if not free.
7. Do you have Teachers' cards? How many books may be drawn at a time? Are these books issues by teachers to pupils, or used solely for reference?
8. Do you send books to schools in proportion to size of classes, *i.e.*, fifty pupils—fifty books, to be issued by teachers to pupils for home use?
9. Do you send a number of copies of the same work to schools for supplemental reading?
10. Do you circulate pictures in schools and homes? In what form issued?
11. Do classes visit the library?
12. (a) Have you a children's reading-room? (b) Is there a special window in circulating department, for children?
13. Have you a special supervisor of children's reading?
14. What other important work are you doing for children, not included in these questions?

**1898 (Hewins)**

1. Have you a children's room or children's department?
2. Have you a Library League pledge?
3. If not, do you expect to have one?
4. Do you work with schools?
5. Do you circulate school duplicates?

6. Have you branch libraries in schools?
7. How many books at a time do you allow teachers?
8. Have children access to the shelves?
9. Have they a separate finding-list?
10. Are their books separated in the general finding-list?
11. Do you use the Maxson book-mark?
12. Do you give talks in schools?
13. Are talks or lectures to school pupils given in the library?
14. Do you make book lists on special subjects, as holidays?
15. Is the home reading of certain books required by schools?
16. Do you circulate pictures?
17. Do you give exhibitions of pictures?

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## **Author's Biography**

Kathleen (Kate) McDowell was born in Tallahassee, Florida, on August 1, 1972. After a brief childhood stint in Julich, Germany, she moved to Illinois at the age of five. She graduated from New College (Sarasota, Florida) in 1995, and then moved back to Illinois for graduate studies. She received a Master's degree from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1999 with a concentration in youth services, and the Herbert Goldhor Award for her professional commitment to public librarianship. For several years, McDowell worked at The Urbana Free Library in Urbana, Illinois as a children's librarian, where she was known for her creative story hour programs. Since leaving to pursue the doctorate, she continues to serve on the Board of Trustees at The Urbana Free Library. Following the completing of her Ph.D., McDowell will begin working as an Assistant Professor at Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.