

Dissertation Proposal

**Reporting on Reading for the Young:
The Professionalization of Library Services to Youth
in the United States from 1876-1900**

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Introduction: The Reading of the Young Reports

Librarian Caroline Hewins of Hartford, Connecticut sent out a questionnaire in 1882 to 25 libraries, asking: “What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?” This 1882 survey began a tradition of reports on “Reading of the Young,” repeated by various librarians in 1883, 1885, 1889, 1890, 1893, 1894, and 1898. Each of the six women who undertook these investigations modified the questions asked and the number of libraries queried. Numbers of questions ranged from Hewins’ initial single one to 17 questions in Hewins’ 1898 survey, and numbers of libraries surveyed ranged from 25 to approximately 150. Although most of the surveying librarians were based in the northeast, the respondent libraries were geographically dispersed across 24 states in the United States, including the Northeast, Midwest, West, South, one library in Canada, and one in England. The titles of the reports differed slightly, including such variants as “Yearly Report on the Reading of the Young,” “Reading for the Young,” and “Report on Reading for the Young.” Nevertheless, the surveys were clearly related to one another in format, content, and in their execution, as detailed in the introduction to Hewins’ 1893 report, which lists all of the surveys and administrators up to that date. The Reading of the Young reports provide quantitative and qualitative data from an important period in the growth of public libraries, offering a national scope and details of local practices in providing youth services before the professional formalization of youth services librarianship, marked by the establishment of the first training programs for children’s librarians, in 1898 and 1900.

This dissertation will examine the cultural foundations of youth services through this series of eight national surveys, which were published in *Library Journal* and

reported at American Library Association (ALA) and other major professional library conferences from 1882-1898. These documents offer intriguing pictures of both local practices and evolving philosophies of youth services in libraries. The Reading of the Young reports have been overlooked in histories of youth services as a set of documents that detail the increasing formalization of library services to children. These surveys and related documents published in professional journals around the same time comprise the textual materials for addressing the central research question for this proposed dissertation: What was the cultural context of the earliest services to young people in libraries in the United States? The proposed analysis of the cultural context surrounding libraries in the late nineteenth century, from about 1876-1900, centers around three main historical questions: What were the professional connections of the librarians who undertook these surveys? How were children and childhood understood by the librarians who provided them services? How was the process of professionalization of youth services reflected in these surveys? Through analyzing these surveys and other documents covering the time period of approximately 1876-1900, this dissertation will explore an initial professional network of women in youth services, analyze evolving 19th century attitudes towards children and childhood, and investigate the process of professionalization of youth services as a gender-specific profession.

Six librarians, including Hewins, shared responsibility for the administration and reporting of these surveys: Mary A. Bean of Brookline, MA; Hannah P. James of Newton, MA; Mary Sargent of Lowell, MA; Minerva A. Saunders of Pawtucket, RI; and Lutie Stearns of Milwaukee, WI (see Appendix A). Many more librarians shared responsibility for responding to questionnaires, suggesting the importance of a

professional network in the earliest days of youth services work. Further research into the professional biographies of these librarians, including their education, affiliations, and professional connections that may have led to their collaboration in the production of the surveys will offer information about the collaborative approaches that have continued to be a hallmark of youth services librarians' work.

By situating local data about attitudes towards children and libraries in a national framework of the emergence of children's services, the Reading of the Young reports recorded professional rhetoric and data about the connections between librarians and larger changes in children's social and cultural status. Children's librarianship emerged during a time of intense change in the history of childhood, and analysis of the rhetoric and practices reflected in these surveys offers insights into the ways that librarians both reacted to and contributed to shifting understandings of childhood as a phase of life. Analysis of the rhetoric librarians used in relation to children's reading requires contextualizing their discussions in the larger setting of late 19th century. In connection with other child-saving movements and professions, including kindergarten teachers, settlement house workers, advocates of universal access to schooling, and anti-child-labor advocates, librarians contributed to the evolving understanding of who children were and what childhood should be.

The changing form and content of the reports reflect the formalization of methods from 1876 to 1900, shifting from first experiments and concerns about children's reading to institutionalized approaches and attitudes that mark the professional specialization of youth services. In her book *Apostles of Culture*, Dee Garrison argued that "sentimentality overruled any attempt at a realistic assessment of the work being

accomplished in the children's department," and that the activities of children's librarians "did not exceed the Victorian stereotype of the female." (Garrison 2003, p. 180) Yet these earliest librarians serving children were not merely reproducing Victorian-era domestic-sphere gender roles. The administration and contents of the Reading of the Young reports show that, from the earliest days, librarians were making systematic attempts to cultivate new practices in service to youth by continually assessing the state of this emerging professional specialization. The use of surveys as a professional strategy for gathering data about emerging youth services suggests that stereotypes of the "natural, maternal" children's librarian is suspect, and more research is needed to understand the complex relationships between gender and work that affected the emergence of youth services as a professional specialty of librarianship.

Calls for further research in youth services history

Youth services has been a defining characteristic of public library services in the United States, comprising "an essential, if not *the* essential, component of our library system." (Grotzinger 1983, p. 143) However, youth services librarians have often been left out of histories of libraries and biographical studies of librarians. Despite frequent calls for further research into youth services history, response to this scholarly gap remains limited. In her literature review, "The History of Youth Services Librarianship," Christine Jenkins writes: "Like many other activities involving women and children, youth services librarianship has been simultaneously revered and ignored...." (Jenkins 2000) Despite establishing early training programs for children's librarians and a professional group within ALA, youth services librarianship had "little influence" in education for other areas of librarianship and was overlooked even within the general

profession of librarianship. (Brand 1983, p. 47) Youth services librarianship has the special characteristics of being a professional occupation created by women and created for service to children. The combination of the lower prestige of women relative to men and the lower prestige of children relative to adults comprises an unusual case of prestige issues, with status doubly devalued by both gender inequities and the cultural tendency to trivialize children.

Women comprise the workforce of youth services librarians, and, like other women in library history and history in general, their contributions have too often been ignored. Women in youth services work have been overlooked in major historical biographical dictionaries (Sasse 1973, p. 216), and women in librarianship generally have been overlooked as subjects of biographical studies, despite their predominance in the profession at large. (Grotzinger 1983, p. 140-151) Over the last twenty years, a body of scholarship has emerged to redress this imbalance, writing women into the history of librarianship. Compilations of essays edited by Suzanne Hildenbrand and by Kathleen Heim document women's history and discuss historical methodologies for recovering and interpreting women's contributions to librarianship. (Heim 1983; Hildenbrand 1996) Much historical work remains to be done in describing the contributions of women to youth services librarianship and in investigating how the complicated status issues of women serving children affected the development of youth services. This study will contribute to that body of research.

Major Historical Texts

Two significant histories of public libraries, by Jesse Shera (1949) and Sidney Ditzion (1947), offer limited information about youth services, but nonetheless give

significant historical background and interpretation of the complex social forces which converged to shape the public library context in which youth services emerged. Jesse Shera's classic text *Foundations of the Public Library* covers the period from 1625-1855. In his section on causal factors in public library development, Shera includes factors relevant to youth services, such as the emerging 19th century impulse towards universal public education, but focuses primarily on educational resources for adults and older children, such as apprentice libraries and self-education movements. (Shera 1949, p. 226-237)

Similarly, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* by Sidney Ditzion stresses the adult educational mission of the library from 1850-1900. Although Ditzion briefly acknowledges youth services work, he argues that the public library was "historically an agency of adult education," citing age limits that restricted children's access to library collections. Ditzion is correct in the strictest sense that the "children's room proper was an innovation of the last decade of the century [1890s]." (Ditzion 1947, p. 96) However, concerns about guiding children's reading surface in library literature much earlier, and, as the Reading of the Young reports show, there was active experimentation in including youth in libraries well before the 1890s. Neither Shera nor Ditzion explicitly address the ways that women were central to the emergence of youth services, and neither text includes analysis of gender or childhood as important factors in public library history.

Dee Garrison's book *Apostles of Culture* is the most significant source in public library history which addresses gender and youth services librarianship. Through an exploration of related issues of the "feminization" of librarianship through the entry of middle-class women into the workforce, Garrison presents one analysis of how gender

impacted public libraries. In her foreword to the 2003 reissue of Garrison's book, historian Christine Pawley accurately characterizes the book's lasting impact, writing that "...it remains the most recent—and most cited—interpretation of the public library's past, a landmark in the history, and the historiography, of libraries and librarianship." (Pawley 2003, p. xvii) Although many scholars since have shown that her arguments and evidence were flawed, Garrison nevertheless opened an important discussion by questioning the role of gender in librarianship.

The most often criticized aspects of Garrison's argument involve her assertions about the detrimental impact of feminization on the public library profession. Garrison claims that women's entry into the profession of librarianship served to depress salaries and marginalize the public library as an institution. However, Garrison offers no evidence to establish whether the public library indeed had marginal status. (Maack 1982) Furthermore, she fails to establish whether women were actually causal in creating lower status for libraries. Rather than questioning whether lower salaries might have facilitated the entry of women into the profession, she blames the presence of women for depressed salaries and other negative consequences. (Hildenbrand 1983; Maack 1982; Wiegand 1989) In arguing that "the prevalence of women in the library worked to stunt the process of professionalization," (Garrison 1979, p. 172) Garrison also overlooks the ways that women, particularly women in the female-dominated area of youth services, were actively creating professional roles for themselves, both within libraries and eventually through the establishment of training programs and professional organizations. In fact, a complex range of factors, including salaries, gender roles, and, for youth

services in particular, cultural images of children and childhood, influenced women's entry into librarianship.

Garrison's work has been criticized because of sparse evidence for the claims she makes. Although she cites many writings by men and women in the library profession, her main evidence for the impact of feminization on librarianship is based on examining the roles of 36 librarians, only eight of whom were women. (Maack 1982) As other scholars have noted, paucity of evidence poses a real barrier to making generalizations about gender and work. In her literature review documenting the need for research on women in library history, Mary Niles Maack writes: "More association histories, more quantitative analyses, and more biographical studies are necessary before we can adequately grapple with the question of women's effect upon the professionalization of librarianship." (Maack 1982, p. 172)

Other scholars have critiqued Garrison for taking professional rhetoric at face value, without examining the social contexts and political dynamics in which such rhetoric functioned to promote particular ends. Suzanne Hildenbrand criticizes Garrison for her "over-reliance on prescriptive sources," (1996) and her uncritical acceptance of women's statements about consonances between their work and gender roles which appear to endorse gender ideologies of the late 19th century without examining these statements as part of women's active creation of a place in the public sphere of work. Although such statements read like an unequivocal endorsement of then-traditional gender roles, women (and men) were speaking in a complex context as women moved into public work situations.

Librarians were far from alone in using gender-based rhetoric to justify their work. In taking on work roles, women were struggling against ideas that women were “too weak or delicate to work outside the home.” (Ziarnik 2003, p. 2) Women also faced notions that intellectual activity, to which librarianship was certainly related, stood in conflict with her natural abilities and place in the working world, (Welter 1976) and might even place her at risk for nervous disorders. (McReynolds 1990) Women’s gender-based rhetoric promoted their particular fitness to work in areas of the public sphere from they would likely have been barred otherwise. Barbara Brand’s research involving patterns in female-intensive professions suggests that women were not merely passive victims of discriminatory gender stereotyping, but worked actively with the opportunities and obstacles they encountered and used rhetoric to help further their entrance into professional fields. (Brand 1983)

Garrison downplays the significance of women leaving the domestic sphere and entering the public sphere of the workplace. Although she acknowledges that women faced discrimination in workplaces, she tends to ignore women’s active attempts to move into the public sphere, instead emphasizing the passive and negative impact of women’s gender-based traits on librarianship as a whole. So significant is this tendency to interpret women as harmful to professionalism that some have charged Garrison with outright sexism, as Hildenbrand did when she accused Garrison of harboring “a firmly rooted, although perhaps unconscious, prejudice against women.” (1983, p. 10) Hildenbrand argues that Garrison’s position that women had a “baneful influence” on librarianship (p. 12) both results from and perpetuates negative stereotypes of women:

“Ironically then, the only serious treatment of women in library history by a historian of women, Garrison, goes beyond the traditional library history, which merely ignored women for the most part, and blames them for the supposed failures of the public library.” (Hildenbrand 1996, p. 7)

Unfortunately, this history has been accepted widely as the most accurate account available of women’s contributions to library history, simply because, unlike previous sources, Garrison does acknowledge that women made substantial contributions to librarianship, although she frames many of these contributions as detrimental.

Nowhere is Garrison’s tendency to denigrate women’s contributions to public librarians more intense than in her writing about children’s librarians. Garrison entirely disregards the move of women from domestic and private endeavors to male-dominated public work spheres, and she instead argues that the activities of children’s librarians “did not exceed the Victorian stereotype of the female,” and that this caused their work to remain “substantially unquestioned and unexamined by male library leaders.” (Garrison 1979, p. 180) Garrison implies that, had male leaders been involved, this work would have been different or even better. In an earlier paragraph, Garrison presents her interpretation of children’s librarians’ work:

“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 searching self-criticism in every other phase of library work.” (Garrison 1979, p. 180)

However, Garrison takes children’s librarians’ rhetoric at face value, overlooking the cultural context of changing attitudes towards children and childhood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and such major changes as the legislation and enforcement of mandatory schooling laws, crusades against child labor, and other child-saving efforts

such as kindergartens and settlement houses. Even in documenting professional rhetoric about children's librarianship, Garrison's evidence is sparse, and leaves out debates about cooperation between schools and libraries that involved both men and women. (Foster 1879) Although she cites a few sources from the 1890s, most of her sources are from well after the year 1900, leaving out the formative years of youth services as a professional specialty.

Although she briefly mentions youth services pioneer Caroline Hewins as the first woman to speak at the 1877 ALA conference, Garrison sarcastically dismisses this act, writing: "[p]erhaps this small temerity earned her the reputation of fearless spokeswoman[...]" (Garrison 1979, p. 182) Garrison ignores much published evidence of Hewins' contributions, downplaying her influence and importance in the field of librarianship generally. Like other sources, Garrison ignores the significant developments in youth services from 1876 to 1900 (Lopez 1976), including the work of Hewins and others in administering and contributing to the Reading of the Young surveys from 1882-1898.

Garrison's disregard for the cultural context of childhood and the significant reshaping of children's social roles in the United States in the late 19th century comprises a major gap in her work. The changing significance of children led to the development of newly important child-saving work, such as that undertaken by kindergarten leaders, settlement house workers, public health nurses, and youth services librarians. (Brand 1983, 1983, 1978; Davis 1984) Garrison emphasizes women's low status, but neglects to analyze the ways that working with children at a time when childhood was becoming

more important may have made that work seem more valuable than library work with adults, at least by some measures.

Women were seen as specially suited for work with children, and they navigated complex, sometimes contradictory intersections of prescribed gender roles, caretaking, and teaching expectations while developing professional jurisdiction in increasingly public spheres. Garrison's analysis equates all librarianship with children's librarianship, citing youth services as the most extreme case in a continuum of "feminization" that marginalized the public library. However, youth services librarians were distinct in their association with children. By ignoring children and changes in childhood, Garrison fails to acknowledge cultural and social forces that affected women in librarianship and the emergence of youth services.

Texts that Mention the Reading of the Young Surveys

Most historical research in the history of youth services has focused on the time after training programs and professional groups were formed, after approximately the year 1900. However, there are a few sources that have explored earlier developments in youth services and discussed the Reading of the Young reports. In her dissertation, "The Genesis of Children's Services in the American Public Library; 1875-1906," Fannette Thomas chronicles the evolution of youth services in five overlapping stages: specialized collections, dedicated spaces, specialized personnel, interagency cooperation, and techniques of reader service. (Thomas 1982) Thomas offers an excellent categorization and description of the elements which emerged to create formalized youth services, but does not analyze the causal factors involved, making only passing mention of the larger

cultural contexts of changes in childhood and gender ideology as women were entering work roles. In her dissertation, Thomas draws on the Reading of the Young reports as one of her sources for describing the local events that marked the emergence of youth services. Thomas uses excerpts of the questionnaire replies gathered in the reports to illustrate her five categories, but she does not treat these reports as a move toward professionalization through systematically gathered data about the emergence of youth services.

In another dissertation, Sybille Jagusch focuses on the biographies of Caroline M. Hewins and Anne Carroll Moore, both leading figures in youth services. Moore is the most famous of historical figures in youth services librarianship, and several biographical studies have highlighted her passionate and persuasive work advocating for the aesthetic experiences of children through books. (Bush 1996; Lundin 1996; Sayers 1972; Vandergrift 1996) Hewins has received less extensive biographical treatment. In her dissertation, Jagusch highlights Hewins' role as immediate predecessor of and mentor to Moore in youth services work. In discussing Hewins, Jagusch devotes a paragraph to each of the Reading of the Young reports, framing the set of reports as one of Hewins' many accomplishments and emphasizing her role as instigator. (Jagusch 1990) However, this approach downplays the shared nature of this endeavor and the significance of these reports in marking increasing professional specialization.

These two dissertations, by Thomas and Jagusch respectively, are primarily descriptive, not analytical, with Thomas chronicling the early developments in youth services and Jagusch describing the biographical connections between and contributions of two central figures in youth services work. Both are significant in that they recover

some of the early history of pioneers in this work, adding to the body of historical research and demonstrating concrete accomplishments in American youth services before the 1890s. However, both dissertations lack analytical approaches to broader contextual questions of gender expectations, changes in attitudes towards childhood, or the emergence of professions more broadly.

In a few other instances, scholars have demonstrated some awareness of the significance of the Reading of the Young reports as early surveys of youth services work. Several scholars correctly cite the Reading of the Young reports as a series, undertaken by various librarians. (Jackson 1976; Lundin 1996; Long 1969) However, other scholars of youth services history have mistakenly identified individual Reading of the Young reports by leading figures as isolated instances rather than as a connected body of survey reports. In her biography of Anne Carroll Moore, France Clark Sayers cites two reports by Hewins (1882) and Stearns (1894) as indicative of the emerging “concern for the minds of the young,” (Sayers 1972, p. ix) but does not mention the other reports in the series. Like Jagusch’s dissertation, Bush’s article on “New England Book Women” emphasizes Hewins’ role as groundbreaking leader; Bush quotes the survey question posed by Hewins for her 1882 survey, citing Hewins’ delivery of the report at ALA. (Bush 1996) Although Bush’s article focuses on the interconnections between women in children’s literature and librarianship, she highlights Hewins’ contribution without mentioning the interconnected series of reports. Similarly, in her article “Female Advocacy and Harmonious Voices” highlighting the women who worked in and across children’s librarianship and publishing, Vandergrift mentions only Lutie Stearns’ report (1894) as a “kind of standard against which those establishing libraries for young people

could measure their work,” (Vandergrift 1996, p. 692) but neglects to mention the context of Stearns’ report, as part of a collaborative effort to produce a series of national surveys.

These oversights illustrate that the Reading of the Young reports have not always been understood accurately as a body of work representing a collective effort to produce professional knowledge. These reports also indicate overlooked interconnections between early librarians engaged with questions of how libraries could serve young people. Although the reports were published under slightly varying titles and at irregular intervals, Hewins herself described the reports as a series in her 1893 presentation at the World’s Library Congress (Hewins 1893), reprinted in Alice I. Hazeltine’s collection of historical sources, *Library Work with Children*. (Hazeltine 1917) The misunderstandings and lack of contextualization of the Reading of the Young reports demonstrate a particular need in the history of youth services librarianship for clarification about what these reports were, what surveying practices they entailed, what impact they had, and what collaboration their shared administration indicates.

Brief Description of the Reading of the Young Reports

As mentioned earlier, the first questionnaire was distributed by Caroline M. Hewins in 1882, and she posed a single question to librarians: “What are you doing to encourage a love of good reading in boys and girls?” (1882) Hewins created a format for her report which was adopted for the following four reports, providing excerpts of all 25 replies received and categorizing the replies by library and respondent librarian. These reports were shared with the professional audience of librarians in general through their delivery at ALA conferences and publication in *Library Journal*, with one exception: the

1893 report which was delivered to the World's Library Congress and reprinted in Alice Hazeltine's 1917 compilation of historical sources in library work with children.(Hewins 1893)

In the first report, the replies were arranged loosely by topic, covering a range of content, from which books should be read to whether check-out or age limits should be enforced. Hewins concluded the 1882 report by offering her synthesis and interpretation of the best ways that librarians could serve young people, emphasizing the importance of guiding them to "better" reading, which has implications for how librarians viewed books, children, and the importance of their reading. Although some libraries reported innovations in this work, others reported age limits and other restrictions that barred children from use of the library.

The next two reports followed Hewins' model most closely, with minimal introductory remarks before excerpted replies from different libraries and conclusions which emphasized the opinions of Mary M. Bean (1883) and Hannah P. James (1885), respectively. James altered the format slightly in that excerpts of replies were organized systematically: arranged alphabetically by state and town, rather than loosely by topic. In synthesizing 25 replies to the 1883 survey, Bean emphasized the problem of children reading too much, particularly too much fiction, which distracted them from school work. James received 75 replies to the 1885 survey, and, in her conclusion, suggested that librarians should consider supervising and limiting children's borrowing if given authority by their parents.

The fourth and fifth surveys retained the format established by Hewins and modified by James, but changed significantly in tone. Mary Sargent received 49 replies

to the 1889 survey, and argued in her report for the beneficial results from the reading of good novels. (1889) Minerva Sanders (spelled “Saunders” in other sources) received only 20 replies, but contradicted previous assessments in her 1890 report, declaring that excessive reading had ceased to be a problem now that children were familiar with having library cards. (1890) These two surveys in 1889 and 1890 reflected shifting attitudes towards fiction and recreational reading, which again suggest a need for further analysis of how librarians viewed children, childhood, popular reading, and the potential impact of children’s reading.

The sixth survey, in 1893, was again administered by Hewins, who changed the format substantially. Instead of reporting excerpts, an arrangement which was becoming long and unwieldy as more libraries sent replies, Hewins asked 11 questions and reported replies in aggregate, reprinting each question followed by her synthesis of replies received. This marked a shift toward quantitative data, with tallied numbers of “yes/no” replies. However, the 1893 report also contained qualitative information in the form of narrative and description to illustrate some of the more complex replies to questions. With 152 replies, the 1893 survey received the largest number of responses of any in the Reading of the Young reports. Stearns received 145 replies to the seventh survey in 1894, the second highest number of responses, and her report followed the new format established by Hewins, synthesizing replies to each of 15 questions asked. (Stearns 1894)

The eighth and final survey, in 1898, was also undertaken by Hewins, and she again changed the format to focus even more heavily on quantitative data. (1898) Hewins asked 17 questions about specific methods or types of service to children, and issued her report in the form of a chart, with columns representing the services provided,

rows for each of the 125 respondent libraries, and a “Yes” in each field indicating which services each offered. This format eschewed the discussion of problems that dominated the first five surveys, including discussions of what and how much children should be reading, and instead recorded, on a national scale, what services for youth were becoming “standard” in public libraries.

The change in the format of the reports over time marks a move from “problems” of the reading of the young to “solutions” in the form of library methods, and this emergence of standard practices shows a process of formalization of youth services librarianship as a professional specialty. While the first five surveys provide rich qualitative data about experiments undertaken and attitudes towards children, the last three are increasingly quantitative. The earlier surveys served to disseminate new and experimental ideas; the later surveys documented methods of service. These reports represent the earliest efforts on a national scale to draw together the attitudes and practices that would lead to training programs in professional youth services.

Research Questions and Proposed Chapter Descriptions

Through investigating the librarians, the children, and the processes of professionalization connected with the Reading of the Young reports, this dissertation will address the central research question: What were the cultural foundations of youth services work in public libraries? This project aims to look at the period before specialization from about 1876 to 1906, beginning with the U.S. Bureau of Education report from 1876, which included William Fletcher’s article on the lack of services for children, and concluding with the formation of the two major training programs for youth

services librarianship, starting in 1898 at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and in 1900 at the Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School.

This time period overlaps substantially with that described by Thomas in her dissertation on the genesis of youth services librarianship. Thomas detailed developments within libraries, providing extensive documentation of the events in the emergence of youth services. However, this dissertation will analyze how those developments internal to the public library, as reflected in the Reading of the Young reports, relate to the changing cultural context outside the library. The Reading of the Young reports offer a particularly useful set of documents for examining these changes; they included a national context but also detailed local developments, providing an unusually broad vantage point on developments within the library. This breadth provides a basis for analysis of how those myriad internal library developments, including the process of professionalization, connected with and related to developments in the larger cultural context.

In addition to offering a detailed analysis of a set of documents which have been overlooked, the proposed analyses will make contributions to three main areas: the history of the first network of women librarians to provide youth services in libraries; the history of childhood in relation to libraries, librarians, books, and reading; and the historical process of the emergence of youth services librarianship as a female-intensive specialty. The working titles for five proposed chapters, below, are followed by a description of the research questions and selected literature to be addressed in each chapter.

- 1) Historical Context: Development of Public Libraries and Librarianship

- 2) The Librarians who created the “Reading of the Young” Reports and the Leadership Network of Developing Youth Services
- 3) Children, Childhood, and Reading: Children’s Reading, Librarians’ Rhetoric, and Changing Expectations of Childhood
- 4) The Process of Professionalization in Youth Services
- 5) Conclusion: Continuities and Changes in Youth Services Today

1) What was the historical context of the Reading of the Young reports?

In order to understand the emergence of youth services, it is necessary to situate this emergence within the historical context of developments in public libraries. There were several significant events in public library history in the year 1876, including the formation of the American Library Association, the initial publication of *Library Journal*, and the publication of a major national report on the status of public libraries, *Public Libraries in the United States of America*. One paper in this report, “Public Libraries and the Young” by William Fletcher, raised questions about the reading of young people and how libraries should address the young. (Fletcher 1876) Three years later, at the 1879 American Library Association conference in Boston, a group of speakers addressed the problems of the reading of the young and emphasized the urgency of librarians’ developing methods to guide young readers to better books. (Fiction in Libraries and the Reading of Children 1879) Although many libraries still enforced age limits of fourteen years or older (Power and Library. 1914), librarians were beginning to discuss how they could or should try to impact the reading of the young as early as 1879.

Libraries emerged in the larger historical context of the United States, and elements of this historical context include the move towards universal education and

compulsory schooling laws (Kaestle and Vinovskis 1980) along with perceived needs for increased levels of literacy in the United States. Records of legislative changes in educational practices are easier to trace than the actual experiences of children, but they nonetheless provide a sense of how the broad social context was changing in relation to the kinds of services libraries were beginning to offer. Literacy rates are significantly more difficult to estimate than educational changes due to both lack of evidence and scholarly debates over how to interpret the evidence that is available. (Kaestle and Damon-Moore 1991) However, arguments for the need for library service emphasized the importance of literacy and education, particularly in librarians' rhetoric about self-improvement and the importance of libraries as providers of self-educational opportunities. (Ditzion 1947)

Historical factors that were important in the creation of library services for youth and the formation of youth services librarianship include the larger historical context of middle-class women's increasing paid employment outside of the home and related changes in gender-based expectations. These complex elements of women's experiences created both tensions between competing expectations and rhetoric that emphasized the consonance of women's traditional domestic roles with their new roles in workplaces. While some scholars have emphasized the ways that women were idealized as domestic caretakers, upholding the "virtues" of "True Womanhood" (Welter 1976), others have attempted to use salary evidence and other indicators of status to analyze both discrimination against women and their increasing public power. (Brand 1983, 1983; Passett 1993) However, generalizations about the climate of gender expectations must be tempered with careful attention to the particular historical context at issue in public

libraries and with an eye to the ways that women were active in resisting and conforming to the late 19th century gender system.

2) What were the professional connections of the librarians who participated in the Reading of the Young Reports?

Evidence about the specific professional connections between the women who distributed questionnaires, compiled replies, and wrote the Reading of the Young reports may potentially be found through a number of historical sources, some readily accessible and others more difficult to find. Several scholars have noted the lack of biographical data available about women in library history (Grotzinger 1983) and about children's librarians specifically. (Sasse 1973) However, as mentioned earlier, Sybille Jagusch's dissertation provides biographical information about Caroline Hewins (Jagusch 1990), and there is at least one biographical article written about Lutie Stearns, administrator of the 6th survey in 1894. (Pawley 2000) These and other biographical sources may provide both background information and potential leads to primary sources that can be investigated for professional interconnections that allowed for the shared creation of the Reading of the Young reports. The women who were part of this network probably shared similar backgrounds, including educational and work experiences, which may help to explain their professional connections. Any personal papers that have survived as part of archival collections, such as those of Caroline Hewins at the Hartford Collection of the Hartford Public Library, could provide insight into how connections were made and what specific issues motivated the inauguration of the Reading of the Young reports. In addition to those who administered the reports, analysis of librarians who replied to the

questionnaires, particularly those who replied in multiple years, may also indicate some of the librarians who were particularly involved with these issues and whose voices had influence in the early years of services to youth.

The American Library Association conference reports are a potentially rich source of information for detailing how this network of women came to share the endeavor of the Reading of the Young reports. Because meticulous records were kept of these early conferences, much detail is available in terms of who participated, when these women could have met, and even some recorded conversations. In addition to papers presented, the dialogue following these presentations was recorded in the early years of ALA conferences, providing some insights into how ideas about service to youth were received and discussed amongst participants. These detailed records give a sense of the tensions and complexities through which service to children was negotiated as well as the roles that various advocates played in helping to shape the discussion.

A number of sources document the importance of professional networks in the history of youth services from the period after 1900, including Jenkins' detailed dissertation on the network of ALA women (Jenkins 1995, 1996), investigations of the importance of mentoring relationships (Jagusch 1990; Hearne 1996), and Mildred Batchelder's remembrance of the relationships that constituted the leadership network of youth services in the early 20th century. (Batchelder 1988) Youth services work continues to be characterized by a collaborative ethic and strong professional networks in the present day. The librarians who created the Reading of the Young reports may represent the first such network amongst youth services providers. The question of how

collaboration, sharing of resources, and even friendship came to be the norm amongst youth services librarians deserves further scrutiny.

Female librarians in the late 19th century shared characteristics of gender, race, ethnicity, and class that may have been influential in establishing their interconnections. Again, investigation of extant biographical data can help to flesh out the picture of who these women were, collectively and individually. In particular, gender as a factor in these networks must be carefully analyzed, to work against the essentializing notion of women's "natural" amicability. In fact, as Hearne points out in her exploration of the "matriarchy" of women who formed children's publishing and developed children's librarianship, relationships between female mentors and protégés can be both harmonious and fraught with tension. (Hearne 1996) Similarities in gender, middle-class status, and race that characterize the women who wrote the Reading of the Young reports should similarly not be seen as necessarily deterministic in causing their networked relationships. Particularly at time when women were navigating complexities of 19th century gender expectations and new work roles, socio-economic traits should be analyzed as factors which, along with women's own agency, help to explain librarians' professional networks.

Investigating the specific network of librarians involved with the Reading of the Young reports should not be done in isolation, particularly in light of the larger historical context of emerging professions and work roles for middle-class women. In her dissertation, Barbara Brand provides a systematic look at similarities between three female-intensive professions, examining librarianship, social work, and public health nurses from 1870-1920. (Brand 1978) There may be evidence of similar, same-gender

networks amongst other child-saving professionals, such as settlement house workers, kindergarten teachers, playground leaders, and school teachers. It is important not to treat librarians as isolated from other social developments, particularly those related to child-saving ideas and movements. There may be significant understandings of historical context to be derived from exploring the commonalities of women whose work roles revolved around concern for children and child welfare.

3) How were children and childhood understood by the librarians who provided them services?

As social changes in women's work roles were coming about, so were changes in the roles of children and the ways that stages of childhood were understood by adults. Some analyses of historical shifts in childhood have focused on the changing economic definitions of children, from contributing economically to families, to "priceless" and protected from industrialized work conditions. (Zelizer 1994) Other analyses have focused on how stories about children were used rhetorically to advocate for reforms, for instance, the vice-crusader Anthony Comstock's tales of the "fall" of upper-class children from good social standing into abject disgrace or death bolstered his arguments for anti-obscenity laws. (Beisel 1997)

As new child-saving work roles emerged for women, new institutions began to address the needs of childhood, including settlement houses (Davis 1984), kindergartens (Shapiro 1983), playgrounds (Cavallo 1981), children's aid societies (Birtwell 1891), and other child welfare organizations. Older educational institutions also reflected these changes, as new compulsory school laws were enforced and new educational

organizations, such as the National Education Association (Martin 1957; Urban 2000), began to organize and have national influence. Changing ideas about children were also generated by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who pioneered the academic study of child development. (Ross 1972) At the same time, outside of institutions of higher learning, the creation of child study groups and mother's groups demonstrated a groundswell of popular interest in children and childhood. Ideas about childhood also came from figures such as Friedrich Froebel, whose theories and plans for kindergarten education in Germany spawned a movement in the United States (Shapiro 1983), and John Dewey, whose progressive educational ideas were beginning to influence educational practices. (Coughlan 1975)

New institutions and popular attitudes in the late 19th century reflected heightened regard for childhood as an important time of life. The Reading of the Young reports offer evidence for how librarians' rhetoric about children reflected the urgency of their concern about guiding children's reading. While the earlier reports stress concerns of over-reading and the dangers of fiction (Hewins 1882; Bean 1883; James 1885), later reports endorse fiction reading and dismiss fears that too much reading will harm children or distract them from their schoolwork. (Sargent 1889; Sanders 1890) Through an analysis of these reports for their implicit understandings of children and in light of broader changes in the history of childhood, developments within the professional specialty of children's librarianship can reveal potentially overlooked aspects of the changing, socially constructed nature of childhood in relation to books and reading.

However, generalizing about "childhood" without qualification is problematic; Phillipe Aries' germinal work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) was later heavily critiqued

for generalizing from the experiences of a few elite children and for making far-reaching assumptions about childhood roles based on paintings. (Graff 1995) More recent historical investigations have reflected a range of childhood experiences, including differences of socio-economic status. (Petrik and West 1992) As historian of childhood Harvey Graff has shown, complex differences in young people's socio-economic realities may outweigh the similarities amongst those called "children." Graff's historical approach emphasizes the availability of multiple paths to growing up, influenced by both circumstance and children's own agency. (Graff 1995)

The children who used public libraries from 1876 to 1900, or those specific children whose library use was represented in the Reading of the Young reports, likely reflect a wide variety of paths to growing up. However, it may be possible to "read" some aspects of children's perspectives in the Reading of the Young reports, albeit mediated by adult recording, through careful attention to the stories told by librarians and what they considered noteworthy, exemplary, or detrimental behavior by children. In her study of Osage, Iowa, from 1870 to 1900, historian Christine Pawley gives evidence about patterns in library use of a limited population of young readers. (Pawley 1998) Even in such a single-town study, Pawley's evidence reflects gender differences that entail different paths through childhood.

Although the gendered nature of youth services librarianship has many historical and political implications, it is important to remember that children are themselves gendered and function as part of gender systems. In some cases, librarians' authority to choose books for boys has been challenged because librarians were female. (Jenkins 1996; Brand 1983) Gender is only one of many factors such as race, class, and ethnicity,

that affect the identities and experiences of individual children as they move through the complex time of “childhood.”

During the period from 1876 to 1900, librarians’ rhetoric reflected urgent concern about influencing as a part of librarians’ professional and even social responsibilities. Librarians promoted high-quality book for children by creating and distributing book lists, such as Hewins’ widely used list of books published in 1882 as *Books for the Young: A guide for parents and children*, for the use of libraries in creating new collections. (Hewins 1882) This and other lists of reading for young people indicates an increased in the number of books published for children, which began after the Civil War and continued through the end of the century. (Darling 1968)

Lists were also provided to children directly to facilitate their own selection of recommended books through bulletin board displays (James 1885) and through printed lists on bookmark-sized paper, such as the “Maxson book-mark,” a book list which originated in Milwaukee, designed with boxes to check so that it functioned as a call-slip for children. (Hewins 1898) Librarians’ concern about children’s reading also extended to providing deterrents to “dangerous” reading choices, as evidenced by a scrap-book of newspaper clippings at Minerva Sanders’ library in Pawtucket, RI, which featured “crimes committed by boys instigated by reading dime-novels.” (James 1885) These are only a few examples of the practices and discourses of librarians regarding the reading of the young. The Reading of the Young reports provide a rich basis for analysis of how these methods of influencing children reflect librarians’ understandings of children and the importance of reading in childhood. Librarians’ discourse about children and their

stories of interactions with children can add an overlooked chapter to understanding the multiple paths of growing up that comprise childhood.

4) What processes of professionalization and bureaucratization are reflected in the Reading of the Young Reports?

The Reading of the Young reports aggregate national data about librarians' discourse and practices during a period of formalization of youth services librarianship. The reports themselves reflect this formalization, shifting from more qualitative anecdotes of library experiments and successes in the first five surveys to more standardized questions and quantitative data in the last three. Similarly, in analyzing the reports for their descriptions of the methods of work with youth, the first five surveys tend to emphasize the problems of children's reading along with a few suggested methods for addressing these problems, while the last three surveys reflect the acceptance of many formalized methods, posing "yes/no" questions about whether libraries use those methods.

This sequence of development, from emphasizing problems to advocating expert solutions, follows the sequence of the general development of professions described by sociologist Andrew Abbott in *The System of Professions*. (1988) The development of youth services librarianship merits comparison with the development of professions more generally, in terms of the establishment of professional jurisdiction and expertise. The jurisdiction of librarians over children's reading was, in an important sense, always partial by design, since librarians emphasized gaining children's affections, not dictating their selections without attempting to win their trust. (Lundin 1996) Because librarians did not routinely dictate reading selections, children read both books advocated by

librarians and a variety of other materials. (Pawley 1998) Nonetheless, through youth services librarianship, women established a professional realm in which they had powerful influence over not only the reading of the young, but also over children's spaces in libraries, books purchased, and even over the books published for children. (Lundin 1996)

Issues of expertise and professional jurisdiction are particularly complex when analyzing the professionalization of children's librarianship. On the one hand, their developing expertise was in encouraging children to stretch their reading abilities and thereby improve themselves. However, by claiming jurisdiction over the realm of children's reading, librarians also exercised authority over what children would be allowed to read, through what was included and excluded from the library collection. The rhetoric of self-improvement that informed librarians' efforts was itself informed by issues of class, and the connection of education to higher social status. These issues of jurisdiction and authority are complicated by librarians' position in society. While librarians were powerful figures within the children's room, outside of children's spaces they were Victorian-era women who garnered far less respect than their male counterparts, even within the profession of librarianship.

As professional women, children's librarians did have significantly more public authority than other women, including the mothers of the children who were the children's librarians' main clientele. In some ways, youth services librarians are more like the sorts of experts that Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English call the "child-raising scientists" in the book *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women* (2005), taking control away from mothers by claiming professional

jurisdiction. In some efforts to visit schools, librarians met with resistance attributed to their “disruption” of the school day which may have been intertwined with competing professional jurisdiction between librarians and teachers. (Ziarnik 2003)

Children’s librarians can also be seen as analogous to mothers, because their professional jurisdiction and their powerful assertion of authority over books for children is linked inseparably to their domestic gender identities, their association with children, and a caring attitude towards children. Few children’s librarians were themselves mothers, however. The picture of how women’s professional roles grew through children’s librarianship is complex, and requires analysis of disparate and wide-ranging factors such as salary differences, marital status, and the ways that cultural images of childhood influenced women’s entry into librarianship.

In addition, understanding the context of these reports can provide a sense of how the practice of surveying came to be used by these librarians. The reports functioned to ascertain established practices in serving youth and to disseminate new ideas about how best to open libraries to youth. The practice of distributing questionnaires and synthesizing replies was not new in 1882, even within library service to youth. John Jay Bailey of the St. Louis Public Library investigated public library minimum age requirements through distribution of a questionnaire in 1870. (Power and Library. 1914) Similarly, the American Library Association surveyed libraries in 1881, with questions about their “practices in excluding certain kinds of fiction.” (Pawley 1998, p. 287) In 1897, when the Reading of the Young reports had been a part of the professional discourse for some time, librarian Mary Wright Plummer of the Pratt Institute Library in Brooklyn, NY surveyed 100 children, “boys and girls who were regularly using the

library,” for their opinions on how to improve the library. (Plummer 1897) Historian Fannette Thomas identified a 1906 survey on the state of services to urban youth (Jackson 1906) as the “culmination of the genesis of youth services in the public library.” (Thomas 1982, p. 304) Clearly, surveying practices were part of the professional development and discourse of youth services librarians. More research is needed to understand how librarians serving youth came to use these basic surveying practices in the late 19th century, and how these practices connect with the process of professionalization in librarianship and compare with similar practices in other professions.

5) How are the cultural foundations of youth services librarianship reflected in librarianship and the discourses of librarians today?

The concluding chapter will interpret the findings of this historical study in light of any influence they have had in the further evolution of youth services in public libraries, extending into the present day. Although many aspects of library services have changed radically--technologically, socially, and otherwise--the Reading of the Young reports offer an important perspective on the earliest philosophies of professional youth services, and some elements of these philosophies still influence library practices. While the professional legacy of the earliest youth services librarians merits study as an important part of public library history that has been overlooked, the philosophical legacy of these earliest librarians should also be critically scrutinized for the ways that 19th century attitudes towards childhood may implicitly inform 21st century youth services librarianship. In order to make specific comparisons of professional discourse in the late

19th century and today, the concluding section will also analyze the listserv PUBYAC, which is the leading listserv for public youth services librarians today, as an example of current, ongoing professional discourse. Although the possibilities for participation in such discourse have changed radically as a result of new technologies, many elements of contemporary discourse and concerns reflect continuities with the emergence of professional youth services in the late 19th century.

Methodology

Historical methods comprise the foundation of this proposed project, and as such the use of primary sources, including but not limited to the Reading of the Young reports, is paramount. Although many of those sources, including ALA conference reports and early volumes of *Library Journal*, are readily available, other materials may be accessible only through archives in the northeast United States, home to most of the librarians involved in the reports. Because of the nature of the Reading of the Young reports, concepts and methodology from textual discourse analysis are also useful, in that these reports constitute a group dialogue which evolves over time, moving toward the professionalization of youth services. (Brown and Yule 1983) Using close analysis of these texts from a discourse analysis perspective acknowledges the context in which the reports were written, reflecting and constituting an ongoing conversation about the development of youth services. The Reading of the Young reports and other documents from the same time period of 1876 to 1900 serve as the lens through which one can see discussion or discourse as a process that was taking place. Discourse analysis as a methodological orientation also highlights the need to take prescriptive declarations with a grain of salt, avoiding overgeneralizing from discourse. Professional declarations do

not always reflect reality, as when actual patrons make reading choices despite librarians' proscriptive efforts (Pawley 1998) or when statements are made in order to further an argument for particular sorts of professional jurisdiction in the ongoing discussion of professionalization.

Several historians of libraries provide analytical approaches that inform this proposed analysis, particularly Abigail Van Slyck whose book *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* takes as its starting point the architecture of Carnegie libraries and from there uses a multidisciplinary approach to analyze the multiple social factors reflected in and reinforced by the physical structures of buildings. (Van Slyck 1995) Similarly, this dissertation will start with a series of reports, but look for connections and concurrent historical events beyond library literature to address the larger social implications, moving from the micro-level of particular reports to the macro-level of the larger context of public libraries and the societal factors of gender and childhood.

Like some other historical investigations, this study will scrutinize youth services librarianship by looking most closely at reports that reflect events leading up to the formalization of youth services as a professional specialty. Jesse Shera's book *Foundations of the public library; the origins of the public library movement in New England, 1629-1855* has some resonance with this approach, in that Shera examines the development of public libraries through the lens of the historical background that preceded their official establishment. Similarly, this proposed study of the Reading of the Young reports will trace the historical background before the formalization of youth services librarianship.

Many feminist scholars have created useful approaches to the study of women in history, and this dissertation will draw on those approaches to create a nuanced picture of the complex factors of gender that affected women in library work with children.

Hildenbrand's feminist studies of library history have focused in part on refuting Dee Garrison's work. In describing her methodology, Hildenbrand adapts a model from feminist historian Gerda Lerner, advocating the practice of writing "women in history" as opposed to more separatist history. Jenkins promotes Hildenbrand's "women in history" model describing this approach as:

based on the assumption that men and women are neither completely similar or dissimilar but are instead influenced by a wide range of variables, including—but not limited to—gender. This awareness of the contextual gender system enables researchers to view more clearly the power relationships in a given context and how the various actors—male and female—fit into that frame. (Jenkins 2000, p. 123)

This dissertation will follow the model of writing "women in history," seeing their work as part of a system involving both women and men. The emergence of youth services librarianship as a female-intense specialty came about through many social forces, including the roles of women and men at the end of the 19th century, the connections of women with children in the domestic sphere, and how those connections translated into the public realm of library work.

Significance and Implications

The cultural context that surrounded and permeated the emergence of youth services as reflected in the Reading of the Young reports can offer insights into how gender and childhood informed the process of professionalization for youth services librarianship. Although Garrison argues that children's librarians embodied the

“Victorian stereotype of the female,” the earliest librarians serving children were in fact departing from stereotypical female gender roles in their use of surveys as a professional strategy for gathering quantitative and qualitative data. From as early as 1882, public librarians were making systematic attempts to cultivate new practices in service to youth, continually assessing the state of this emerging professional specialization and developing new methods of reaching children. The Reading of the Young reports are particularly important because they provide an unusual series of snapshots during a time of emerging professional specialization. By situating local data about methods and attitudes as elements in the national emergence of library service to children, these reports give valuable information about shifting library practices and philosophies during a time of intense growth in public library history.

Appendix A: Timeline

1876—Founding of the American Library Association and Library Journal

1878—Caroline M. Hewins (librarian at Hartford, CT) compiled an influential list of books for boys and girls, published in the “Library notes” newsletter.

1879—The ALA conference in Boston took up the two topics of “Fiction in Libraries and the Reading of Children.”

1882—Hewins’ “Books for the young, a guide for parents and children” was published.

1882—Hewins created the first survey of 25 libraries, undertaken to ascertain their methods for guiding children’s reading.

1883—Mary A. Bean (Brookline, MA) expanded Hewins’ survey to include 50 libraries in her “Report on the Reading of the Young.”

1885—Hannah P. James (Newton, MA) expanded both the questions asked and the number of libraries surveyed; James’ “Yearly Report on the Reading of the Young” compiled replies from 75 libraries.

1889—Following the tradition started by Hewins and continued by Bean and James, Mary Sargent (Lowell, MA) surveyed of 49 libraries regarding “Reading for the Young”

1890—Minerva A. Sanders (Pawtucket, RI) continues survey tradition with a poetic flare in “Report on Reading for the Young.”

1893—Hewins’ “Reading of the Young” offers her esteemed opinions on the best answers to the 11 survey questions which she sent to 152 libraries.

1894—Lutie E. Stearns (Milwaukee, WI) surveyed 145 libraries for her “Report on Reading for the Young”

1897—Mary Wright Plummer (Brooklyn, NY) surveyed 100 children, “boys and girls who were regularly using the library,” for their opinions on how to improve the library. Plummer lists lectures, experiments, reading clubs, and original stories among the methods to be tried as a result of this survey.

1898—Hewins surveyed 125 libraries to ascertain their services in 17 areas, and presented her findings in a diagram indicating whether each library had implemented or intended to implement each of 17 aspects of children’s library work.

1898—Pratt Institute Training School

1901—Carnegie Pittsburgh Training School

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