POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND FEAR: FEMINISM, FOUCAULT, AND THE STEREOTYPE OF THE FEMALE LIBRARIAN[1]

Marie L. Radford[2] and Gary P. Radford[3]

The stereotype of the female librarian is a common, well-defined, and easily recognized phenomenon in American popular culture. A large body of literature in librarianship reflects a deep professional concern over the negative effect of this stereotypical image. This essay, however, approaches the librarian stereotype as an element in a wider cultural text: that of the relationship between power, knowledge, and fear. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and feminist thought, the claim is developed that the form and the voice of the female librarian is a function of a system of power and rationality that is not of her own making.

During the premiere show of a new season for the television show *Star Trek: Voyager*, which aired in September 1995, a commercial was shown produced by the Saturn automobile company in which an off-screen, cheery (and perhaps condescending) male voice asks a female librarian if she was consulted by Saturn in their development of a quieter car. The librarian answers no, and the voice is astonished, asking, "But are not you the quietest person in town?" The librarian is portrayed as being middle-aged with tight gray curls, double chin, glasses, and wearing a shapeless suit with blouse fastened tightly at the neck. She stands stolid and expressionless, answering the male voice with monosyllabic responses and stamping papers OVERDUE with an oversized stamp while the camera cuts away to a black-and-white scene showing a child struggling to use the card catalog. The audience is shown a close-up of the

librarian's finger on her lips as she says, "Shhhhh." A QUIET PLEASE sign in red sits prominently on her desk. At the end of the commercial she is depicted as sitting alone with a lost look on her face while she is taken for a test drive. The announcer asks, again off-camera, "Do you think the car is quiet?" She answers, "Shhhhh," while the Saturn logo is displayed.

This scene is but one example of a common, well-defined, and easily recognized phenomenon that many have taken for granted—the stereotype of the female librarian in American popular culture.[4] Library scholars have asked the question of why the figure of the female librarian is not portrayed with more respect. The image of the librarian as a "little old lady with the bun, the shawl, the wire specs, and the pencils sticking out of her hair" [1, p. 650] or a "fussy old woman of either sex, myopic and repressed, brandishing or perhaps cowering behind a date stamp" [2, p. 167] is totally inconsistent with the growing development and widespread use of electronic information retrieval technologies in modern libraries. Card catalogs and date stamps, stalwarts of the stereotype, are becoming relics of the past.

These issues have been addressed from a number of perspectives, and a large literature on the topic has resulted (for example, see [3–12]). Approaches to the problem range from attempts to find out if people who become librarians really do have the traits attributed to them by the stereotype [13, 14] and whether the library profession happens to attract these sorts of people [15–16] to surveys that chart the elements, variations, and prevalence of the stereotype in different cultural forms. The general conclusion derived from this body of research is that yes, there is a librarian stereotype, and yes, it is prevalent. However, this literature has little to say as to why [14] or if it can be changed [17–18]. Clearly, there is a need to consider the female librarian stereotype from a more critical-theoretical perspective.

The stereotype of the female librarian is taken here to be a rich site to explore the representation and repression of women through cultural expression. In exploring this site, the work of Michel Foucault is used as a perspective from which to describe the nature and role of the librarian stereotype in terms of the broader notion of power/knowledge [19]. The portrayal of women in terms of such a pervasive cultural stereotype is also of concern to feminist scholarship (see [3, 20]), which, from a number of perspectives, seeks to "challenge several areas of traditional philosophy on the grounds that they fail (1) to take seri-

---

4. The presence of a male librarian stereotype has also been documented (for example, see [13, 14, 71]). However, this topic falls outside of the scope of the present article.

ously women's interests, identities, and issues; and (2) to recognize women's ways of being, thinking, and doing as valuable as those of men" [21, p. 262]. However, the relationship between Foucauldian thought and feminist philosophy is far from clear. Foucault's philosophy has been described as "alluring" yet "troubling" to feminists [22, p. 311]. On one hand, Joan Cocks and Nancy Hartsock believe Foucault's work is of limited usefulness "because it is not a theory developed *for* women" [22, p. 296]. On the other hand, there exist "Foucauldian feminists" such as Judith Butler and Wendy Brown who argue that Foucault's "work has fueled self-critical impulses within feminism that are indispensable" [22, p. 310].

Taking the latter position, Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby argue for four striking areas of convergence between feminism and Foucault. Two of these areas are of particular interest here: "Both [feminism and Foucault] bring to the fore the crucial role of discourse in its capacity to produce and sustain hegemonic power and emphasize the challenges contained within marginalized and/or unrecognized discourses. And both criticize the ways in which Western humanism has privileged the experience of the Western masculine elite as it proclaims universals about truth, freedom, and human nature" [23, p. x]. The stereotype of the female librarian is taken here as a site where such a convergence can be pursued and explored. Following Diamond and Quinby, the following questions are raised concerning the female librarian stereotype: (*a*) How is the portrayal of women librarians related to the role of discourse in producing and sustaining hegemonic power? and (*b*) How is the stereotype related to the manner in which universals such as truth, freedom, and human nature are made and privileged by masculine elites? These are large questions that go beyond the normal consideration of the librarian stereotype within the library and other literatures. By drawing on a convergence of Foucauldian thought and feminism, the problem of the stereotype of the female librarian can be considered from a broader perspective that situates it in terms of issues of knowledge, power, freedom, domination, and truth, and the voice of the female librarian can be reclaimed in a structure not dictated by dominant masculine interests.

The Stereotype of the Female Librarian

The stereotype of the female librarian is perceived to be a negative one and, in terms of the Special Libraries Association's reaction to the Saturn commercial, one that is "damaging to the library profession" [24, p. 876]. Nonetheless, Saturn's portrayal of the female librarian is

representative of the stereotype in general. As early as 1909 the word "stereotype" was used by a librarian complaining about the way that fiction writers portrayed librarians "either as 'old fogy bookworms' or as unreasonably efficient" [25, p. 25]. Stereotypes "have ranged from the bespectacled mousey male of the 1800's to the 1900's shushing spinster complete with bun" [26, p. 28]. Arnold Sable writes that the librarian stereotype is "unfailingly and eternally middle-aged, unmarried, and most uncommunicative. She exists to put a damper on all spontaneity, silencing the exuberance of the young with a harsh look or hiss. Her only task seems to be checking out books and collecting fines. Books to her are best left upon the library shelves where they do not become dirtied or worn . . . there at the desk she will stay, stamping out her books until her retirement" [27, p. 748].

The "librarian as old maid" is a prevalent image [4, 6, 17, 26, 28–31] that has remained remarkably consistent and enduring over time [32].[5] It has appeared and continues to appear in a large variety of cultural forms, including short stories [33], mystery novels [4], motion pictures[6] [29], modern fiction [30], novels and plays [34], literature [5, 6, 35], cartoons, television and comic strips [26, 36], newspapers, magazines, songs, and advertisements [26]. Locke Morrisey and Donald Case have demonstrated that the stereotype of the female librarian "is strongly pronounced among students of all ages" and that their perceptions are primarily shaped by "powerful" television, film, and print images [13, p. 454]. Pamela Cravey believes that these negative mass media and literary portraits have lingered throughout modern history [26].[7]

5. The discussion of the librarian stereotype here deals primarily with the image found in American media. The literary representations of the library cited in Umberto Eco (Italian) [49] and Jorge Luis Borges (Spanish) [59] are readily available in English translations for American audiences.

6. One indication of the continuing interest in the depiction of librarians in motion pictures is the existence of three web sites on this topic: (1) "Librarians on Stage and Screen," http://www.ala.org/alayou/publications/alaeditions/whl/movies.html, which is found under "Librariana" on the American Library Association web page, has the following two sites as hyperlinks: (2) "Librarians in the Movies: An Annotated Filmography," http://library.lib.binghamton.edu/staff/mraish/movies/introduction.html, and (3) "Librarians in Films: a Filmography," http://www.bekkome.or.jp/~ichimura/libmvdb/libmudbE.htm.

7. For a discussion of the history of the stereotype and an alternative explanation of its origins, see Jody Newmyer [37, p. 48], who argues that Melvil Dewey's interest in efficiency and scientific management "created and perpetuated a submissive, dependent, spinsterish librarian image of such strength and durability that it is now automatically assumed to have a real, not just a mythological basis." In addition, Abigail Van Slyck implies that the architecture of the Carnegie library, with its "centrally-placed charging desk" where "the librarian was expected to pass the greater part of the workday, overseeing the entire library from its central position" [38, p. 166] played a part in forming stereotypical images.

Superficially, these images are presented as entertaining, and some librarians chide others for taking them seriously [13]. Yet behind this triviality lies a cultural text that library practitioners have been at a loss to rewrite [14, 39]. Gregg Sapp describes librarians as "vigilant image-watchers." Much more than members of other, more established professions, librarians feel slighted by their public image. . . . The American Library Association has likened its crusade against the stereotype to a war" [33, p. 135]. Roma Harris compares the concern over status as reflected in the literature to an "obsession," noting that "librarianship is characterized by a pervasive anxiety about its image and identity. As a result, librarians often urge one another to undertake such tasks as monitoring the popular media for portrayals of unflattering occupational stereotypes. The literature is also full of examples of librarians exhorting their colleagues to adopt a 'more professional' manner" [3, p. 1]. In a review of images of librarians in three major library journals from 1980 to 1986, Norman Stevens concludes that "as a profession we are no closer to any resolution of how to deal with this most important and vexatious of all professional questions than we were in 1876, 1907, or 1962. The issue of our image will persist and will undoubtedly be no closer to resolution in another decade or two than it is now. We will simply have a more extensive body of folklore and literature to deal with" [17, p. 849].

Rationality, Knowledge, and Madness

What can a Foucauldian/feminist approach say about the female librarian stereotype? First of all, it enables the consideration of the stereotype as an element in a wider cultural text; in this case, that of the relationship between order, knowledge, and madness. The librarian stereotype does not exist in a cultural vacuum, of course. It meshes with portrayals and literary uses of the library institution. For example, in the Western literary tradition, the library has long been taken as a "conservator of order" [40, p. 2509] and as a metaphor for rationality [5, 41–42]. It represents, in institutional form, the ultimate realization of a place where each item within it has a fixed place and stands in an a priori relationship with every other item. The rationality of the library in many ways represents the description of nature idealized by the institutions of positivist science [43]. As the library imposes a completely consistent system on a collection of unique texts, so positivist science seeks the system by which unique observations derived from nature can be ordered and classified according to a set of general principles. Jeffrey Garrett has argued that there exists a "collective belief, unchal-

lenged until recently, in the existence of a scientifically derived and classifiable body of knowledge" and that the library is "one of the most visible and important temples that society has erected to this belief" [42, p. 382].

According to Adi Ophir, the library should not be viewed simply as a social space that happens to contain books. The library is a "space of knowledge" in which social space loses its grip; "the former did not contain the latter, any more than a book contains within its volume the space of its fiction, or an observatory, the sky observed in it" [44, p. 164]. For Ophir, the library is a site organized according to a logic of spatial and social relations different from that governing social space at large. Libraries are segregated places of intellectual activity, in which discursive subjects are constituted, objects are posited, and both are reproduced according to the logic and power relations of a specialized discourse, not according to the logic of social relations in whose context that discourse took place. The institutionalization of special places for the search for knowledge, where words are systematically linked to things and discursive authority is correlated with access and visibility, is a crucial stage in the historical process that constituted science as an established cultural system.

However, like science, the edifice of order and rationality embodied by the library resides in a constant tension with those domains that lie outside of and are uncaptured by its rigorously defined borders [45]. According to Debra Castillo [41], the alternative to the ordered knowledge of science and the library is madness: the breakdown of systematicity and the unconstrained production of discourse. Madness cannot be translated into the language of knowledge, and knowledge has no foothold in the world of madness. The world of madness invokes the reign of appearances and the dissolution of forms; the world of knowledge attaches itself to science and the establishment of new forms. The domain of the library is erected and makes sense only against the presence of madness, the domain of the Other that is not ordered [46]. The drive to create and maintain order is simultaneously a drive to exclude and marginalize the forces of madness. In this system, the library user becomes an Other, an ambiguous entity that is not under the direct control of the library and is a potential source of disorder and madness. As such, the modern library experience for both librarian and user is structured by the values of order, control, and suppression.

This realization leads to the superficially surprising claim that the library, in its stated mission of making texts available, serves to make access difficult. In its *ideal form*, a library collection is one that is complete. The librarian's role can be understood in terms of responsibility

for a system where every text has its proper place. This system demands the investment of much time, effort, and care. The image of the perfect library, the end result of the librarian's efforts, is that of a place where all is ultimately accounted for, of "closed and dusty" volumes in "the hushed library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight enclosure" [47, p. 90]. The *ideal library* is one that is never used or disrupted. Order becomes the end in itself.

The ideal library should not be taken as a model of the day-to-day practice of working libraries. Many initiatives have been developed and executed by library practitioners to enable users to access open collections in a direct manner. Rather, the ideal library is presented here as the dominant conception that frames our understanding of what libraries are and how they function: a conception derived from the tradition of positivism [43, 48]. Initiatives to allow more open access only make sense as a response to this constitutive and structuring ideal.

The nature of the ideal library in this sense is graphically portrayed in Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* [49], a murder mystery set within the confines of an exclusively male, fourteenth-century abbey in Italy. The abbey library plays a central role in the novel. Eco's library is a fortress containing a labyrinth, with secret passages, booby-trapped rooms, and a system of organization that is known only to a single librarian. The abbot describes the library as follows:

The library was laid out on a plan which has remained obscure to all over the centuries, and which none of the monks is called upon to know. Only the librarian has received the secret, from the librarian who preceded him, and he communicates it, while still alive, to the assistant librarian, so that death will not take him by surprise and rob the community of that knowledge. And the secret seals the lips of both men. Only the librarian has, in addition to that knowledge, the right to move through the labyrinth of books, he alone knows where to find them, and where to replace them, he alone is responsible for their safekeeping. [49, p. 35–36]

Eco's fortress library is a place that both orders and protects texts. The librarian's role is to keep the texts, and the knowledge they contain, safe from harm as well as making them available to library users. However, as the abbot's account continues, it becomes apparent that the sense of control is much more profound than simply protecting physical objects. The library is not only a storehouse of texts, but the means of arbitrating between truth and falsity: "The other monks work in the scriptorium and may know the list of the volumes that the library houses. But a list of titles often tells very little; only the librarian knows, from the collection of the volume, from its degrees of inaccessibility, what secrets, what truths or falsehoods, the volume contains. Only he decides how, when, and whether to give it to the monk who requests

it; sometimes he first consults me [the abbot]. Because not all truths are for all ears, not all falsehoods can be recognized as such by a pious soul" [49, p. 36].

The librarian determines the truth of an individual text through his knowledge of its place in the organizational system of the library, that is, where a particular text is located in the labyrinth and not on the basis of its particular contents. Only the knowledge of the library can determine the truth value attributed to a particular text, and it is this knowledge, rather than the texts themselves, that is so fanatically protected by the monks in Eco's novel.

The dialectic of access and completeness is, according to Michael Winter [50], a characteristic and perhaps irresolvable tension at the heart of librarianship that becomes manifest in the librarian stereotype. On the one hand, texts are collected in order to be used and thus regularly taken away. On the other hand, those texts occupy a certain place in the order of the collection, like a piece in the puzzle of knowledge, truth, and falsity. Left in place, the collection is aesthetically and ontologically whole. Its utility increases when pieces can be removed, but only at the price of a collection that is less than whole and perfect. This leads us to a consideration of the library user.

The User as the Violator of Order

In contrast to the librarian, the library user is a person who has the capacity to disrupt and ultimately prevent the ideal of the complete library. There is a tension between the goal to create (and constantly recreate) order and completeness with the goal to provide the user with service since allowing texts to circulate introduces disorder. The images of the stereotypical librarian described above are formed from the perception of this tension that is felt by both librarians and users. Ultimately, the overarching concern with order does not lead to a satisfying and productive library experience.

With few exceptions, librarians still enact and enforce strict rules for determining who is allowed to borrow materials, which materials may be borrowed, length of circulation, and monetary or other penalties for overdue materials. Mary K. Chelton's work on the communicative production of institutional authority within library service encounters is an excellent example of this [51]. Another example of the relationship of the librarian stereotype with the concern with maintaining a complete collection, enforcing circulation policies, and treatment of the user as a disruption to this order can be seen in an episode of the television situation comedy *Seinfeld* entitled "The Library," which was

televised in the fall of 1994. The episode revolves around Seinfeld having a library book, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer,* overdue since 1971. Seinfeld, with friend Kramer in tow, goes to the New York Public Library to plead his innocence with the librarian who is stereotypically female, dressed unfashionably, and deeply engaged in the task of stamping a pile of library books. She looks disapprovingly at the overdue notice proffered by Seinfeld and tells him his case has been turned over to a "library policeman" named Bookman. It is clear that the library is "cracking down" on overdue books and that Seinfeld will have to make good on his violation of the sanctity of the collection although the book has been out for twenty-three years.

This feeling of tension caused by a sense of violation becomes clear in the relationships that actual librarians have with library users. Mary Land [52] and Herbert White [53] argue that, in general, people do not understand what the librarian does. As a consequence, users have expressed confusion as to when it is appropriate to seek help or how to ask their question when they might themselves be unable to articulate it [54]. Users "very often find it difficult to state their needs without a great deal of coaxing" [28, p. 514]. Indeed, Mary Jo Swope and Jeffrey Katzer [55] found that often users were afraid to approach the seemingly ever-busy librarian because they think that their questions may be a bother or that they may appear to be stupid.

This fear of appearing stupid may be grounded in the user's awareness that their knowledge of the intricacies of navigating the library is limited. Systems of cataloging and classification enable the location of texts. However, although they have a clear and inescapable logic to the initiated, such systems "do not reveal materials in any straightforward or obvious way" [50, p. 123]. It is common for the user to be overawed by the library—not by the sheer volume of texts the library contains, but by the overpowering sense of order and the rules and procedures that need to be learned in order to use it successfully (see [56–58]). It is claimed by their creators that such systems are designed with the goal of facilitating access to texts. However, in the context of the tension created by the contrast of order with disorder, it may also be the case that such systems can be perceived as barriers that serve to deny that same access [31]. A user will usually feel confident that the needed text or information is there. It is the tortuous path one has to traverse in order to locate it which evokes fear and uncertainty. Jorge Luis Borges, in the short story "The Library of Babel," expresses this contrast: "When it was proclaimed that the Library contained all books, the first impression was one of extravagant happiness. All men felt themselves to be masters of an intact and secret treasure. There was no personal or world problem whose eloquent solution did not exist

in some hexagon. The universe was justified, the universe suddenly usurped the unlimited dimensions of hope" [59, pp. 54–55]. However, the means by which any particular piece of knowledge could be located was perplexing and, ultimately, impossible. In Borges's tale, to have knowledge of the order was tantamount to having the status of a god: "On some shelf in some hexagon (men reasoned) there must exist a book which is the formula and perfect compendium *of all the rest:* some librarian has gone through it and he is analogous to a god. . . . Many wandered in search of Him. For a century they exhausted in vain the most varied areas. How could one locate the venerated and secret hexagon which housed Him?" [59, p. 56]. Borges's tale is allegorical, but it represents in a literary fashion some of the undercurrents that structure the user's interaction with the library. The user is confronted with the "librarian-god," the guardian of rationality and knowledge, whose domain of order the user dares to violate, and who has the power to render discipline and punishment. As Alison Hall writes:

We [librarians] keep things, we keep knowledge, and knowledge is power. The library is, to the outsider or the uninitiated, a maze, a locked room, to which only the initiated have the key. It is a world of mystery and of secrets. Librarians, it would seem, have potential for immense power, which can be exercised by withholding, or alternatively, disseminating knowledge. . . . One might conjecture that myth and magic are analogous to cataloguing rules and classification schemes, which are the spells we cast to protect our materials against the incursions of intruders. Knowledge may be power, but withholding of knowledge wields even more power. Can this be the concept behind the closed stack library? Our clientele only sees what we allow them to see. We establish and maintain control by arranging the material in a way that only we can understand and interpret. [36, p. 345]

Foucault, Fear, and the Stereotype

From the preceding analysis, it is clear that the library and librarians are a prevalent metaphor of power and knowledge within popular culture. Yet there is an important contradiction and tension here that is worthy of further analysis from a feminist point of view: if librarians are gods, then why is the female librarian consistently portrayed as "a very dull, earnest body, . . . with glasses (probably those little half glasses), her hair in—yes here it comes—a BUN, wearing sensible shoes, support hose, tweed skirt, droopy sweater" [36, p. 345]?

Such tensions and apparent contradictions form the heart of Foucault's work, which offers a useful hypothesis for the description and exploration of these tensions. Foucault [19] proposes that the library can be viewed as an institution for the control of knowledge and truth.

It is also an institution that serves in the management of "fear." This fear is not a fear of libraries or librarians per se (although the stereotype does embody fear from the viewpoint of the user as a significant dimension), but a more fundamental fear of *discourse* and the dangers that *uncontrolled discourse* may give rise to. In his opening lecture at the College de France, Foucault proposed that there is an "anxiety as to just what discourse is, when it is manifested materially, as a written or spoken object" [19, p. 216]. This fear is twofold. The first is the realization that discourse has "a transitory existence, destined for oblivion" [19, p. 216]. The second is the "uncertainty at the suggestion of barely imaginable powers and dangers behind this activity, however humdrum and grey it might seem" [19, p. 216]. Foucault's genealogical projects, as described in *Discipline and Punish* [60] and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* [61], outline institutional and discursive strategies that address these fears. The analyses are derived from the fundamental proposition that "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role it is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, and evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" [19, p. 216]. In this respect, the library becomes more than a simple depository of texts to be accessed by users with information needs. It is a key institutional mechanism in both the preservation (fear 1) and control (fear 2) of discourse. It guards against its transitory nature by providing a space where discourse can be kept. If, as Foucault suggests, people must preserve, at all costs, that "tiny fragment of discourse—whether written or spoken—whose fragile, uncertain existence must perpetuate their lives" [62, p. 211], the library acts as a place where that discourse, and hence their lives, may be preserved. The library also guards against the possible dangers of uncontrolled discourse through complex mechanisms of order: indexes, catalogs, controlled vocabularies, and retrieval systems.

The idea that the library guards and controls discourse seems at odds with the idealization that the library serves to make such discourse available to anyone who needs it. It is this apparent contradiction that Foucault takes up as the object of his genealogical analyses. Foucault asks:

What civilization, in appearance, has shown more respect towards discourse than our own? Where has it been more and better honored? Where have men depended more radically, apparently, upon its constraints and its universal character? But, it seems to me, a certain fear hides behind this apparent supremacy accorded this apparent logophilia. It is as though these taboos, these barriers, thresholds and limits were deliberately disposed in order, at least partly, to master and control the great proliferation of discourse, in such a way as to relieve the richness of its most dangerous elements; to organize its

disorder so as to skate round its most uncontrollable aspects. It is as though people had wanted to efface all trace of its irruption into the activity of our thought and language. [19, p. 228]

The stereotype of the female librarian can be thought of as a strategy in which this fundamental fear can be managed, defused, and disguised. The female librarian is presented as fearsome, but, beneath the stern exterior, there is nothing to fear: there is only a woman. The fear evoked by the female librarian in the Saturn commercial is a source of humor and ridicule by the male voice-over. The power of the librarian is the power of the woman: it is recognized as present, but is afforded little respect. The stereotype of the female librarian is ultimately one of a victim. Female librarians are not gods who create and control the overpowering rationality of the library's space of knowledge. The stereotype is a front that defuses the power and fear of this rationality. Indeed, the relationship between rationality and the librarian is reversed in the female stereotype: it is the rationality that creates and controls the librarian. The stereotype portrays people who are possessed: obsessed with the order that rationality demands of them. They are transformed from normal people to figures obsessed with "efficiency" [37, p. 47], characterized by extreme "orderliness, introversion, unattractiveness [and] naivete" [33, p. 29]. Such figures are to be pitied rather than revered or admired. In the film *It's a Wonderful Life,* the one thing that ultimately persuades James Stewart's character not to commit suicide is the prospect of his wife becoming a librarian if he should die!

Librarians are often portrayed as the gatekeepers of knowledge. But the stereotype itself is a gatekeeper also. It both reflects and neutralizes the potential dangers of discourse. To enter the space of knowledge means that you will be transformed into a librarian figure. Knowledge is not to be tampered with. Its order is not to be disturbed. This knowledge can not be transgressed. The knowledge will usurp the librarian's very personality into its structure. The librarian stereotype is thus a warning. It is a concrete cultural expression of, in Foucault's words, the "fear" that "hides behind this apparent supremacy accorded this apparent logophilia" [19, p. 228]. The librarian is not a god with godlike powers. She is an old "spinster" [37, p. 46] whose role is totally subservient. She stamps, shelves, and keeps order in the domain of rational knowledge. She says to us: "We're here to show you discourse is within the established order of things, that we've waited a long time for its arrival, that a place has been set aside for it—a place which both honors and disarms it; and if it should happen to have a certain power, then it is we, and we alone, who give it that power" [19, p. 216].

The potential convergence of Foucauldian thought and feminist phi-

losophy is clear in the site of the stereotype of the librarian since it is predominantly *women* who are portrayed in this role of subservience and powerlessness. According to feminist philosophy, women in Western culture are considered to be subordinate [21, 63] and "expected to be low status" [64, p. 130]. They are associated with "domesticity, the body, emotionality, nurturance, and the like," while men are associated with "publicity, the mind, rationality, and separation" [65, p. 157]. This "is viewed by feminism as part of the process by which patriarchal society maintains hegemony through constructing systems of difference" [65, p. 157]. Feminist theory analyzes and explores the "social construction of masculinity and femininity" [63, p. 11] and seeks ways of transforming society into one with political, economic, and social equality of men and women [63].

The goals of feminist philosophy are "(1) to explain why women are suppressed, repressed, and/or oppressed in ways that men are not; and (2) to suggest morally desirable and politically feasible ways to give women the same justice, freedom, and equality that men have" [21, p. 263]. Jane Anne Hannigan and Hilary Crew have called for the application of feminist theory to the library and information science field, believing that it "provides a theoretical framework for a rethinking of the philosophy of librarianship" [20, p. 31]. Further, they argue that feminist scholarship transcends issues of equality of status and pay in that it reveals a "feminist epistemology" [20, p. 31]. However, Roma Harris notes that "curiously there seems to be a great reluctance within the profession to acknowledge the significance of gender in its evolution" and "that the processes shaping the future of this field can not be fully understood by ignoring the fact that for more than 100 years library work in North America has been women's work" [3, p. xiii].[8] Abigail Van Slyck points out that from the beginning of the twentieth century a "highly gendered library hierarchy" was in place in which women filled the majority of low-paying, low-prestige positions and men dominated "executive and management positions" [38, p. 164].

There is a clear relationship between the representation and treatment of women and the low status of the library profession [38, 66–69]. Librarianship has long been considered a "feminized profession," characterized as "a semi-professional field which is female-dominated in numbers, but male dominated in organizational control, having a shallow bureaucratic hierarchy and rigid promotion schemes" [70, p. 292]. According to James Carmichael, three decades of feminist historical and sociological analysis has presented an "unimpeachable case

8. See Harris [3] for a detailed, scholarly discussion of the feminized professions, including comparison of librarianship to nursing, teaching, and social work.

for the subjugation of women in society at large and in the feminized professions in particular" [14, p. 437]. It has been argued that "librarianship has been considered a feminist profession in which *feminist* has been used as a negative rather than a positive epithet" [20, p. 31].

Foucault's hypothesis of power, knowledge, and fear makes it clear that the form and the voice of the female librarian is a function of a system of power and rationality that is not of her own making. The conjunction of Foucauldian and feminist thought with respect to the stereotype of the female librarian allows a number of fundamental questions to be addressed, such as, *Who* is speaking through the stereotype of the female librarian, and to what ends? What interests does the stereotype serve (certainly not those of women)? How can the image of subservience and powerlessness that it affords to women be challenged and changed? It is not enough to cry out that the stereotype is "wrong," "inaccurate," or "unfair." Such responses are expected, common, and futile. It is time to dig deeper, to describe the conditions from which the stereotype is made possible, and to analyze the systems of power/knowledge that go to the very heart of what it means to be male and female, powerful and marginalized, valued and devalued.

REFERENCES

1. Manley, Will. "On Facing the Public." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 34 (1984): 630.
2. Crowell, Penny. "Not All in the Mind: The Virile Profession." *Library Review* 29 (Autumn 1980): 167–75.
3. Harris, Roma M. *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1992.
4. Barnhart, Linda A. "The Librarian's Stereotyped Image in Mystery Novels, 1980–1990: Has the Image Changed?" Master's thesis, Kent State University, 1991.
5. Walsh, D. P. " 'On Fire or on Ice': Prefatory Remarks on the Library in Literature." *Reference Librarian* 18 (1987): 211–38.
6. Long, Lucille Eileen. "The Stereotyped Librarian as Portrayed in Modern American Belles-Lettres." Master's thesis, Kent State University, 1957.
7. Foster, Jane Robison. "A Study of the Concept of Female Librarians as Revealed in Selected Novels Written between 1920 and 1964." Master's thesis, Emory University, 1965.
8. Jordan, Pamela A. "The Librarian Image: A Child's Perspective." Master's thesis, Kent State University, 1991.
9. Nation, Margaret A. "The Librarian in the Short Story: An Analysis and Appraisal." Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1954.
10. Speiden, Virginia M. "The Image of the Librarian as Seen in Eight Library Career Novels." Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1961.
11. David, Indira. "A Study of the Occupational Interests and Personality Traits of Librarians." Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 1990.
12. Wilson, Pauline. *Stereotype and Status: Librarians in the United States*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982.

13. Morrisey, Locke J., and Case, Donald O. "There Goes My Image: The Perception of Male Librarians by Colleague, Student and Self." *College & Research Libraries* 49 (1988): 453–64.
14. Carmichael, James V. "The Male Librarian and the Feminine Image: A Survey of Stereotype, Status, and Gender Perceptions." *Library and Information Science Research* 14 (October–December 1992): 411–46.
15. Agada, John. "Studies of the Personality of Librarians." *Drexel Library Quarterly* 20 (Spring 1984): 25–45.
16. Paul, Meg, and Evans, Jennifer. *The Librarians' Self-Starter: 100's of Questions to Challenge Your Thinking about Your Image, the Profession's Image, Your Job and Your Future: A Manual for Concerned Librarians.* Camberwell, Australia: Freelance Library and Information Services, 1988. (Bethesda Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 324 031.)
17. Stevens, Norman. "Our Image in the 80's." *Library Trends* 34 (Spring 1988): 825–51.
18. Wallace, Linda. "The Image—and What You Can Do about It in the Year of the Librarian." *American Libraries* 20 (January 1989): 22–25.
19. Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse on Language." Translated by Rupert Swyer. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* by M. Foucault, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.
20. Hannigan, Jane Anne, and Crew, Hillary. "A Feminist Paradigm for Library and Information Science." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 67 (October 1993): 28–32.
21. Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
22. Sawicki, Jana. "Foucault, Feminism and Questions of Identity." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault,* edited by Gary Gutting, pp. 286–313. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
23. Diamond, Irene, and Quinby, Lee, eds. *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance.* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988.
24. McCormick, Edith. "Image: Consulting on Saturn." *American Libraries* 26 (October 1995): 876.
25. McReynolds, Rosalee. "A Heritage Dismissed." *Library Journal* 110 (November 1985): 25–31.
26. Cravey, Pamela J. "Focusing on the Librarian: Are Librarians Selling Themselves?" *Georgia Librarian* 27 (Summer 1990): 28–31.
27. Sable, Arnold P. "The Sexuality of the Library Profession: The Male and Female Librarian." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 43 (April 1969): 748–51.
28. Brewerton, Anthony. "There Be Dragons—and They Are in Brown Cars." *Librarian Association Record* 94 (August 1992): 514.
29. O'Brien, Ann, and Raish, Martin. "The Image of the Librarian in Commercial Motion Pictures: An Annotated Filmography." *Collection Management* 17 (1993): 61–84.
30. Olen, Sandra. "The Image of Librarians in Modern Fiction." *Mousaion* 5 (1987): 48–57.
31. Radford, Marie L. "Relational Aspects of Reference Interactions: A Qualitative Investigation of the Perceptions of Users and Librarians in the Academic Library." Ph.D. diss., Rutgers—The State University of New Jersey, 1993.
32. David, Indra M. *Librarian's Occupational Stereotype: Will It Ever Change?* Paper presented at the sixth national conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries, Phoenix, April 1–4, 1992. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 354 885.)
33. Sapp, Gregg. "The Librarian as Main Character: A Professional Sampler." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 62 (January 1987): 29–34.

34. Wertsman, Vladimir F. *The Librarian's Companion*. New York: Greenwood, 1987.
35. Lemaitre, Renee, and Chaintreau, Anne-Marie. "In Search of Those Typical Literary Librarians." *Librarian Association Record* 94 (1992): 798–99.
36. Hall, Alison. "Batgirl Was a Librarian." *Canadian Library Journal* 49 (1992): 345–47.
37. Newmyer, Jody. "The Image Problem of the Librarian: Femininity and Social Control." *Journal of Library History* 11 (1976): 44–67.
38. Van Slyck, Abigail. *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890–1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
39. Black, S. M. "Personality—Librarians as Communicators." *Canadian Library Journal* 38 (1981): 65–71.
40. Harris, Michael. "The Purpose of the American Public Library." *Library Journal* 98 (September 1973): 2509.
41. Castillo, Debra A. *The Translated World: A Postmodern Tour of Libraries in Literature*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1984.
42. Garrett, Jeffrey. "Missing Eco: On Reading *The Name of the Rose* as Library Criticism." *Library Quarterly* 61 (October 1991): 373–88.
43. Radford, Gary P. "Positivism, Foucault, and the Fantasia of the Library: Conceptions of Knowledge and the Modern Library Experience." *Library Quarterly* 62 (October 1992): 408–24.
44. Ophir, Adi. "A Place of Knowledge Re-created: The Library of Michel de Montaigne." *Science in Context* 4 (1991): 163–89.
45. Radford, Gary P. "Transgressing Discourses, the Voice of Other, and Kant's Foggy Island of Truth." In *Transgressing Discourses: Communication and the Voice of Other*, edited by Michael Huspek and Gary P. Radford. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
46. Huspek, Michael, and Radford, Gary P., eds. *Transgressing Discourses: Communication and the Voice of Other*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
47. Foucault, Michel. "Fantasia of the Library." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interview*, by Michel Foucault, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977.
48. Budd, John M. "An Epistemological Foundation for Library and Information Science." *Library Quarterly* 65 (July 1995): 295–318.
49. Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*, translated by William Weaver. New York: Warner, 1983.
50. Winter, Michael F. "Umberto Eco on Libraries: A Discussion of 'De Bibliotheca.'" *Library Quarterly* 64 (April 1994): 117–29.
51. Chelton, Mary K. "The Communicative Production of Institutional Authority: The Example of a Library Service Encounter." Paper presented at the annual conference of the Speech Communication Association, San Diego, November 1996.
52. Land, Mary. "Librarians' Image and Users' Attitudes to Reference Interviews." *Canadian Library Journal* 45 (February 1988): 15–20.
53. White, Herbert S. "The Trivialization of National Library Week." *Library Journal* 111 (1986): 66.
54. Belkin, Nicholas J. "Anomalous States of Knowledge as a Basis for Information Retrieval." *Canadian Journal of Information Science* 5 (May 1980): 133–43.
55. Swope, Mary Jo, and Katzer, Jeffrey. "The Silent Majority: Why Don't They Ask Questions?" *RQ* 12 (1972): 161–66.
56. Kuhlthau, Carol C. "Developing a Model of the Library Search Process: Cognitive and Affective Aspects." *RQ* 28 (Winter 1988): 232–42.
57. Kuhlthau, Carol C. "Perceptions of the Information Search Process in Libraries: A Study of Changes from High School through College." *Information Processing and Management* 24 (1988): 419–27.

58. Kuhlthau, Carol C. "The Information Search Process: From Theory to Practice." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 31 (Summer 1990): 72–75.
59. Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Library of Babel," translated by James E. Irby. In *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings,* by Jorge Luis Borges, edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1962.
60. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* translated by A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
61. Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality.* Vol. 1: *An Introduction,* translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.
62. Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.
63. Hawkesworth, M. E. *Beyond Oppression: Feminist Theory and Political Strategy.* New York: Continuum, 1990.
64. Marshall, Judi. "Viewing Organizational Communication from a Feminist Perspective: A Critique and Some Offerings." In *Communication Yearbook 16,* edited by Stanley A. Deetz, pp. 122–43. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993.
65. Mumby, Dennis K. "Feminism and the Critique of Organizational Communication Studies." In *Communication Yearbook 16,* edited by Stanley A. Deetz, pp. 155–66. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993.
66. Anwar, Mumatz A. "The Profile of the Librarian: A-State-of-the-Art." *Libri* 30 (1980): 308–20.
67. Heim, Kathleen, and Estabrook, Leigh. *Career Profiles and Sex Discrimination in the Library Profession.* Chicago: American Library Association, Committee for the Status of Women in Librarianship, 1983.
68. Irvine, Betty Jo. *Sex Segregation in Librarianship: Demographic and Career Patterns of Academic Library Administrators.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985.
69. Schiller, Anita R. "Women in Librarianship." In *The Role of Women in Librarianship, 1876–1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession,* edited by Kathleen Weibel and Kathleen Heim, pp. 222–56. Phoenix: Oryx, 1979.
70. Ivy, Barbara A. "Identity, Power, and Hiring in a Feminized Profession." *Library Trends* 34 (Fall 1985): 291–307.
71. Carmichael, James V., Jr. "Gender Issues in the Workplace: Male Librarians Tell Their Side." *American Libraries* 25 (March 1994): 227–30.