Let’s Get Critical
Looking in to See Out

Meg Brunner, MLIS

Image: Gratisography
Librarian stereotypes

I will Dewey decimate you!

Image: Shutterstock
Librarian stereotypes

- Perpetuate misogyny
- Impede diversity
- Create anxiety in users
“It is important that librarians assess the basic meaning of feminization and give precise attention to their early history, for the dominance of women is surely the prevailing factor in library education, the image of librarianship, and the professionalization of the field.”

History of women in libraries

1852
First woman librarian hired

1878
67% of librarians are women

1920
90% women

2015
83% women
Early Librarians

Melvil Dewey

Amelia Gayle Gorgas
Univ. of Alabama Library
1882-1907

Art: Tommy Kovac

Stereotype shifts

Male librarians:
Academic work
Systems work

Women librarians:
“Women’s work”
Service
Listening
Caregiving

Images: Shutterstock
“Old Maid” and others

Down with man!
Husbands for old maids!
Votes for women!

At the suffragette meetings you can hear some plain things—and see them too!
“Old Maid” and others
“Old Maid” and others
“Old Maid” and others
"Reading books all day"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank of Librarians by Faculty</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics equal with teaching faculty</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>65.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semiprofessionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>13.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Race/Ethnicity of U.S. Librarians

- 8.5% Black or African American
- 4.8% Hispanic or Latinx
- 2.8% Asian

Dept. of Labor, 2015
The Unbearable Whiteness of Being
The Unbearable Whiteness of Being
A critical look at ourselves
What is critical librarianship

empathy

compassion

understanding

voice

communication

being

connect

interpersonal

representation

caring

kindness

justice
What is critical librarianship

- Critical eye inward
- Social justice and critical theory
- Question, examine, and challenge the status quo
“Neutrality” in librarianship

• information is free for all
• no one is silenced
• “neutral conduits” of information
Privilege in libraries

• The way we teach

• Our materials, websites, databases

• Our services – who gets to use us

• Our language and classification
Critical theory to evaluate:

- Our education systems
- Our positions IN those systems
- Our physical and digital spaces
- What our library does
- What we do IN our library
- How our information is organized
- How it’s shared
- How source authority is established
“In these days of mass surveillance and the massive transfer of public goods into private hands, citizens need to know much more about how information works. They need to understand the moral, economic, and political context of knowledge.”

“Valid” sources

- Peer reviewed journals with high impact factors
- Approved websites
- Sanctioned databases
Looking more deeply
Information = $$$$$

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<th>UK</th>
<th>Europe (non Euro zone)</th>
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2018 APA PsycNET Subscription Pricing

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Nope.

WARNING
THIS DOOR IS BLOCKED FROM THE INSIDE
Scholarly communication online

The SALIS Collection: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

SALIS
An International Association

MORE

COLLECTION

2,120 RESULTS

Search this Collection

Metadata
Text contents

PART OF
American Libraries

Media Type
collections 1
texts 2,119

Highly Concentrated Caffeine in Dietary 2018

Research Update (2018 March): Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

Speed: De meest gestelde vragen

Commonly Abused Drugs 2018
Rural (in)access to journals

- American Journal of Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Or purchase it *

Article Purchase
24 hours access for USD 54.00

Issue Purchase
30 days access for USD 667.00

* Local tax will be added as applicable
Empower our users!
Information for profit
Peer review
The editor explained that the *Review* did not publish papers on subjects of such *triviality*.

Source: https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2001/akerlof-article.html
What's the worst piece of peer review you’ve ever received? Six academics share theirs.

I was told that I clearly understood nothing about deafness.

The male editor-in-chief said it wasn’t the kind of thing that the journal was interested in publishing, but that his wife would probably find it very interesting (it was a discursive study on femininity and family foodwork).

Received very high praise for the manuscript, only to have the reviewer refer to me, the author, throughout as he/his. Probably didn’t believe women could write about security...

I was told we can’t publish your qualitative paper as there is no comparative white sample in your study... 🙄
This model impacts:

- Big Pile of Cash
- Scientific Literature
- VOTE
- ELECTION PROGRAM
- SPEECH
- AGREEMENT
- DEGREE
- POLITICS
Open access will save us!

Eh, not so fast.
Teach a man to #critlib...

• Our users

• Our researchers/faculty

• Each other! Yay!
Check these out

Journals
- In the Library with the Lead Pipe
- Progressive Librarian
- Journal of Radical Librarianship
- Journal of Critical Library & Information Studies

Websites
- LibraryJuiceAcademy.com and LibraryJuicePress.com for online courses and books
- CritLib.org and #critlib twitter chats

(References on last slide)
Hi, this is bad actually.

Meg Brunner, MLIS
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Chancellor RL. Libraries as pivotal community spaces in times of crisis. Urban Library Journal 2017;23(1)


Roberts ST, Nobel SU. Empowered to name, inspired to act: Social responsibility and diversity as calls to action in the LIS context. Library Trends 2016;64(3):512-532.


Sierpe E. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency and the crisis of liberalism in librarianship: The need to reconsider the social function of the library... J Radical Librarianship 2017;3:65-75