Seeking Perfect Motherhood: Women, Medicine, and Libraries

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Abstract

Knowledge about health and medicine expanded dramatically in the first half of the twentieth century. This expansion raised an important question for women, especially mothers, who are traditionally responsible for the health of their families: where could they learn the most up-to-date information? One possible significant venue was the public library. This close study of five public libraries analyzes the diverse sources of scientific and medical information available in Midwest rural libraries. It documents the critical role that individual librarians played in bringing new sources to their patrons, and discloses that such collections reinforced contemporary medical orthodoxy.

Women, especially mothers, have traditionally been responsible for the health of their families, and by extension equally responsible for the welfare of the nation. By the end of the nineteenth century, the demands of this duty increased considerably as modern technology altered everyday life. The media and scientists daily announced discoveries that changed popular views of medicine and nutrition and that inspired the public with the news of emerging treatments for previously incurable, and even unrecognized, conditions (Apple, 2006). What was a mother to do?

Popular health literature flourished to help the literate mother. The volume of home medical books, child-care books, domestic science books, general interest magazines, and women's magazines grew exponentially from the late nineteenth century onward. In a highly mobile society with far-flung extended families, women began to turn to this literature for answers to their questions. Correspondence to editors of magazines such as *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* describes women's searches and some of the sources they used to ensure the wellbeing of their families. Though insightful, this correspondence provides

LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 60, No. 4, 2012 ("Windows on the World—Analyzing Main Street Public Library Collections," edited by Wayne A. Wiegand), pp. 694–705. © 2012 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

only one perspective: the words of literate women, usually middle-class urban women, who had the time and the resources to write letters. Sociologist John Anderson points to another source for identifying literature that women used in raising their families: the public library. In a nationwide study, he found that by 1936 nearly 45 percent of the families owned books on infant and child care. More critically, he established that almost one-quarter of his respondents depended on public libraries for their information, and an additional 9 percent utilized both their own books and those from public libraries. These libraries provided significant information for approximately one-third of the population (Anderson, 1936, pp. 73–84). What did these libraries hold for the inquiring reader? Were their collections limited or comprehensive; did they represent or challenge "orthodox" medical beliefs? Answers to such questions are critical to understand the dissemination of health information in the first half of the twentieth century.

Would Mrs. Smith, a mother seeking information on infant care, for example, find help in her local library in, say, the early 1920s? If she resided in or near Osage, Iowa, her choices would be extremely restricted. The library there dates from the 1870s, but it did not collect a child-care book until 1921 when it acquired Dr. Louis Fischer's *Health Care of the Growing Child*, a veritable compendium of contemporary medical knowledge, published in 1915 by Funk & Wagnall's. Fischer was a leading pediatrician at the time. Another early rural library in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, added *Notes on the Early Training of Children*, by Mrs. Frank Malleson, in 1892. A typical genre of the late nineteenth century, such books stressed the moral, more than the physical health of the child, opening with: "There are few gifts to man more precious, and at the same time more common, than the gift of children; and yet the art of education, of training the young into useful and virtuous men and women, is widely misunderstood or neglected" (Malleson, 1892, p. 5). More modern, medically oriented books did not appear on Sauk Centre's shelves for almost two decades, until Dr. J. P. Crozer Griffith's *Care of the Baby* in 1911. The Morris, Illinois, public library, opening in 1913, acquired its first child-care books in 1916. Another relatively late starting public library in Lexington, Michigan, did not collect child-care books until the 1930s. If our hypothetical mother lived in or near Rhinelander, Wisconsin, her choices were more numerous. The library there began acquiring child-care books as early as 1900, two years after its founding. That first book was *Care of the Child in Health* (1900), by Dr. Nathan Oppenheim, a popular pediatric author. By 1921, the library had added another twelve child-care books, including Oppenheim's later *Development of the Child* (1902) and five editions of the most popular child-care book of the early twentieth century, Dr. L. Emmett Holt's *Care and Feeding of Children* (1910, 1915 [two copies], 1918, and 1920).

Plainly, different libraries collected different books, but some generalizations are still possible. For example, each of these libraries—in Osage, Iowa; Morris, Illinois; Lexington, Michigan; Sauk Centre, Minnesota; and Rhinelander, Wisconsin—focused much of its attention on fiction. They didn't ignore nonfiction, but the quantities of health and medicine books held were not impressive. Yet, despite the poor numbers, their scope was notable: ranging from the foundational publication of the Christian Science movement, Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health* (1901), through the classic exposé *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs* (Kallett & Schlink, 1933), to David R. Reuben's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex* (1969). Also, the library collections significantly overlapped. For example, all five contained the works of Eddy. Rhinelander and Sauk Centre each acquired an Eddy volume in 1902, but most of the libraries did not include her work until 1914–15 when all five libraries added copies of Eddy's *Science and Health.* Following Eddy's death in 1910, a struggle ensued for control of her legacy. Evidently at least one faction within the church sought to bolster its position by distributing copies of its preferred edition of *Science and Health* to public libraries throughout the country (R. Schoepflin, personal communication, July 31, 2010; Schoepflin, 2003).[1]

Other entries in the accession catalogs represented familiar authors of the period. Morris Fishbein was an incredibly influential medical figure in the first half of the twentieth century. As the editor of the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association* from 1924 to 1950 and as founding editor of *Medical World News* in 1961, Fishbein shaped medical perspectives and practices and fought what he saw as quackery in American medicine. He was also the editor of the American Medical Association's magazine for nonprofessionals, *Hygeia,* and a prolific author of numerous popular medical books, including *Fads and Quackery in Healing* (1932), as well as multiple editions of the *Modern Home Medical Adviser* (1956), of *The Popular Medical Encyclopedia*, and of *The New Illustrated Medical and Health Encyclopedia* (1966). Fishbein's works appeared on the shelves of libraries across the country, including public libraries in the rural Midwest. Other frequent entries in the accession books included the books of the prominent child psychologist Arnold Gesell. His work popularized a normative approach to child development, that is, from his observations of numerous subjects he determined that children grow through a set of predetermined stages with identifiable achievement milestones. Many followed his research in volumes such as *The First Five Years of Life* (1940) and *The Child from Five to Ten* (1946), both of which went through several editions.

This small sample of health and medical books provides an indication of the breadth of literature available to library patrons. On the one hand, Eddy's works were to be read slowly, savored and applied to everyday life, books consulted over and over again. "A thorough perusal of the author's publications heals sickness," Eddy instructed. "If patients sometimes seem

worse while reading this book, the change may either arise from the alarm of the physician, or it may mark the crisis of the disease. Perseverance in the perusal of the book has generally completely healed such cases" (Eddy, 1916, p. 446). Clearly, practitioners of Christian Science would be expected to have their own copies of *Science and Health*; yet, libraries often held multiple copies. On the other hand, books such as those by Fishbein and Gesell were more common reference tools. Fishbein published *Fads and Quackery* to warn consumers against the charlatans and health cults that he saw plaguing U.S. society. His *Popular Medical Encyclopedia* (1946) was just that, an encyclopedia. And, despite the word "home" in the title of his *Modern Home Medical Adviser* (1956), the overwhelming proportion of its pages dealt not with home remedies but with the science of health and anatomical diagrams. Patrons would be expected to read such books for general knowledge or to answer a specific question.

Other areas of the library reflected this penchant for reference books. For example, all the libraries maintained collections of general encyclopedias. The most common was the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Only Lexington, the smallest of the libraries studied, did not hold this standard reference tool. Despite their ubiquity in the collections, the usefulness of these volumes is an open question since it is not clear that they were timely. Osage and Sauk Centre purchased the 1929 fourteenth edition in 1930, and there is no record of any later acquisition. Morris bought its first copies in 1958, and replaced them in 1965. Rhinelander attempted to maintain a more current set, obtaining its first copies in 1907, followed with the fourteenth edition in 1929, and subsequent editions in 1956 and 1962. Also popular among the libraries were the *Encyclopedia Americana*, the *Book of Knowledge*, and the *World Book Encyclopedia*. Rhinelander and Morris invested most heavily in such reference tools. Over the years the accession books cover, Rhinelander listed six different encyclopedia sets in ten editions. Its first acquisition of this genre was a nine-volume *Library of Universal Knowledge*, published in 1880. Morris prided itself on eight sets in thirteen editions, though it did not acquire its first general encyclopedia set, *Encyclopedia Americana*, until 1940.

Using quantity of encyclopedias as a gauge of a library's dedication to reference tools, Rhinelander and Morris were committed to building their reference collections; the others, less so. The types of health and medicine books held by the individual libraries substantiate this conclusion. The libraries of Rhinelander and Morris held a greater proportion of health and medicine books in their collections than did Osage, Sauk Centre, and Lexington, and, critically, the greatest portion of these health and medicine books were reference books.

Though Osage and Sauk Centre, the two oldest libraries in the study, appeared less interested than the others in health and medicine books, they did not neglect them. By the late 1910s, books in these arenas were

added relatively regularly in Sauk Centre at about ten a decade. In 1896, Osage obtained Edward Atkinson, *Science of Nutrition; Treatise upon the Science of Nutrition* (1896). This reference tool included a lengthy section on the Aladdin oven, which Atkinson had invented, and reference material on dietetics and nutrition, as well as recipes by leading home economists Ellen Richards and Mary H. Abel. Yet, health and nutrition books only gradually appeared in Osage's acquisition lists until the 1920s, after which approximately fifteen books were added each decade.

Rhinelander's library more consistently purchased health and medicine volumes. Initially its acquisitions were highly eclectic. As noted earlier, the library obtained Eddy and Oppenheimer in 1902. The next several years continued this jumbled pattern with the additions of Horatio Dresser, *Health and Inner Life: An Analytic and Historical Study of Spiritual Health Theories* (1906); Elwood Worcester, *The Christian Religion as a Healing Power* (1909); and Dr. Leroy Milton Yale, *The Century Book for Mothers: A Practical Guide in the Rearing of Children* (1901). Then, between 1911 and 1920, the nature of the collecting changed both in quantity and in scope. Acquisitions such as Holt's publications, F. M. D. Tweddell's *How to Take Care of the Baby* (1913), and Charlotte A. Aikens's *The Home Nurse's Handbook of Practical Nursing* (1912) typically represented contemporary orthodox medicine. Of the twenty-two health books obtained in this decade by Rhinelander, twelve were "how-to-do" volumes, nine of which focused on the specifics of infant care.

The interest in child care in this period is not unexpected. During the Progressive Era, concern for high infant mortality rates spurred physicians, reformers, and mothers to action. In 1912, President William Howard Taft established the U.S. Department of Labor's Children's Bureau, the first federal agency established to investigate and report on the condition of children throughout the country. Among its many successes was the publication of the widely read *Prenatal Care* and *Infant Care* brochures. In 1916, the popular magazine *Woman's Home Companion* promoted national "Baby Week," a campaign the Children's Bureau actively supported. "We have an infant mortality problem because we have a labor problem," the Secretary of Labor explained. "Problems of education and civic responsibility must also be solved, but poverty is a prime factor and it is most fitting, therefore, that a bureau of the Federal Department of Labor should participate in this popular educational campaign which calls attention to the factors involved in the welfare of American children" ("Wilson Favors," 1916). Jesse Bingham, director of the Rhinelander Public Library, certainly agreed with the secretary. In February 1916, she requested that the *Woman's Home Companion* send her suitable brochures for distribution to mothers in the community as part of the local Baby Week campaign. She must have also contacted the Children's Bureau because the next month the *Rhinelander News* proudly announced that the library held "much of

the best and most up to date materials on the 'Care of Infant' and 'Motherhood'" distributed by the agency (Wiegand, 2011b, pp. 214–215, n. 17). Unfortunately, pamphlets such as these were rarely entered into accession books, so we do not have details on this part of the libraries' collections.

Bingham's collection and distribution of these pamphlets reflects a common assumption about public libraries, namely, that they served as critical educational sites for local communities. Yet, few other libraries in this study showed any indication of interest in the direct instruction of library patrons. Moreover, the most vigorous advocate of educating mothers, the Children's Bureau, also ignored the instructional potential of libraries. In its 1915 brochure, "Baby-Week Campaigns: Suggestions for Communities of Various Sizes," the agency advised that communities utilize the press, the schools, women's groups, and the like to organize and publicize relevant events. There was no mention of libraries (U.S. Department of Labor, 1915). Given this lack of attention, unsurprisingly, few underpaid, untrained librarians serving rural districts would have had the knowledge or the resources for extensive educational campaigns. It is interesting to note that among the five libraries studied here, Rhinelander alone consistently employed a trained librarian. Among the other four, Lexington and Sauk Centre do not appear to have participated in Baby Week at all; Osage did, but there is no information about its library's possible involvement in the campaign (U.S. Department of Labor, 1917). However, one librarian consciously reached out to various segments of the public. Dey Smith, a librarian at the Morris Library, recognized community needs and responded to them (Wiegand, 2011a). Thus, in 1916, she contributed to the "City Beautiful" contest by compiling books and other publications on gardening for the Commercial Club; she assembled a list of books recommended for children during their summer vacation; and she put together an exhibition of recent publications for display during Baby Week. In 1916 alone, Smith added eight books on health and medicine, four of which were infant-care books. Smith left Morris for the Cincinnati Public Library in 1917, and over the next several decades, health books did not dominate Morris's collecting. How Smith's departure may or may not be related to this decline is unclear.

Libraries apparently stretched the scope of their health and medicine collections well beyond an interest in child care, adding publications on nutrition, cancer, alcohol, and psychology. Another increasingly common genre was children's books, such as F. G. Jewett, *Good Health* (1906); James Mace Andress, *Journey to Health Land* (1924); and Michael O'Shea, *Health Habits* (1921), which joined more adult reference books such as E. V. McCollum, *Food, Nutrition, and Health* (1925); and J. B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (1930).[2] For example, in Rhinelander, Bingham continued to add a few child-care books to the library's collection. She also collected Jewett, *Good Health* (1906); Mary Pascoe Huddleson, *Food for the Diabetic* (1926); and *Essential Facts*

about Cancer (1924), published by the American Society for the Control of Cancer. Osage, Sauk Centre, and Lexington also developed somewhat more comprehensive, though limited, health and medicine collections.

This analysis reveals interesting perspectives on rural libraries and their role in advancing health in the rural Midwest. First, and most critically, the information found on library shelves supported and reinforced contemporary medical consensus. With the exception of Christian Science practice and a few publications of this ilk, library books presented an unproblematic view of health and medicine. There were no books about chiropractic or osteopathy, though both of these movements were growing rapidly, especially in the Midwest.

Similarly, books on nutrition were most often written by well-respected scientists, ranging from Atkinson's *Science of Nutrition* (1896), through *Food, Nutrition, and Health* (1925, 1927) by the renowned nutritional scientist, E. V. McCollum, to *Food and Nutrition* (1967) by Dr. William H. Sebrell, another leading nutritional scientist who headed the National Institutes of Health. There was nothing on vegetarianism. The medical practice, nutritional advice, and prescriptions for health appeared uncontested within the holdings of these public libraries. But, there were a few exceptions. All the libraries but Lexington held *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs* (Kallet & Schlink, 1933). Though confrontational, this book did not challenge medical conventions of the day. Members of Consumers Research, the forerunner of Consumers Union, wrote this exposé of food and drug adulteration and helped spur the passage of the 1938 Pure Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act, which extended the powers of the Food and Drug Administration to encompass the safety of drugs and to set standards for food products.

In general, library collections were quite idiosyncratic. Osage is an interesting case in point. Rena Grey, an untrained librarian, was appointed there in 1912 and served in that capacity for the next thirty-six years. Health and medicine acquisitions increased slowly during her tenure, many written for school-aged children. Her successors added more provocative books such as Bob Cummings's *Stay Young and Vital* (1961). Cummings, a familiar television star best remembered for *The Bob Cummings Show,* which ran from 1955 to 1959, wrote about the importance of natural foods and a healthful diet that excluded white flour, white rice, and sugar. Another author popular at this time with the Osage library was Gaylord Hauser who also advocated a natural diet, with an emphasis on yogurts, brewers yeast, and wheat germ. Even though mainstream nutritionists, the American Medical Association, and the Food and Drug Administration denounced his views as extreme and even unhealthful, his books, such as *Look Younger, Live Longer* (1950) and *Be Happier, Be Healthier* (1952) were added to the Osage shelves as soon as they were published. Despite these deviations from the norm, the acquisition lists of these five libraries firmly supported the contemporary orthodoxy. Even in Osage, for every

Cummings, there was Fishbein's four-volume *New Illustrated Medical Encyclopedia for Home Use* (1970); for two Hausers, there were six Fishbeins.

Each of the libraries did hold some contemporary medical and health books; however patrons looking for information found relatively little material in their rural public libraries. The libraries had few books to offer their communities at a time of growing knowledge about the science of nutrition, about major medical breakthroughs, and about increasingly sophisticated understanding of disease. Among the five, those with larger collections contained a proportionally greater quantity of books concerned with health and medicine, but even these were not extensive. The acquisition list of the Lexington library through to 1968 contains 9,800 entries, of which only 0.3 percent would be generously categorized as health books, counting two by Mary Baker Eddy and eight in a multivolume set by Mary Harmon Weeks, *Parents and Their Problems* (published in 1914 by the National Congress of Mothers and PTAs, but not received by the library until 1931). The total holdings of Sauk Centre were significantly more substantial, over 27,000, but only 72, or less than 0.3 percent, could be counted in this category. Rhinelander, with holdings in excess of 43,000, devoted more than 0.5 percent of its collection to health and medicine, still a small part of the total collection, but nearly twice the proportion of Sauk Centre and Lexington.

Lacking similar databases from other areas, we do not know how typical of small rural libraries these collections were. We do, however, have the catalogs of the American Library Association, which give us some indication of what the professional library community advised small and medium-sized public libraries to provide their patrons.[3] The first of these, published in 1893 by the U.S. Bureau of Education, was compiled as part of that year's World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago; it listed barely 800 fiction books out of a total of over 5,000 titles, a significantly smaller proportion of fiction books than those held by most public libraries (ALA, 1893).[4] Books loosely categorized under the heading of health and medicine accounted for only 36, or 0.7 percent of the total. The percentages of health and medicine holdings of the five libraries were considerably lower, and those of fiction significantly higher, than those recommended in the ALA catalog, reflecting the findings in Wiegand's study that the libraries devoted a greater proportion of their holdings to fiction (Wiegand, 2005). Given the focus of this essay, we can develop a more meaningful contrast with the 1926 edition of the *Catalog*, an annotated listing of over 10,000 publications. The editors of this volume specifically sought books deemed appropriate for a lay audience; that is, a nonprofessional audience. Therefore, their health and medicine entries included Anna Caroline Maxwell and Amy Elizabeth Pope's *Practical Nursing* (1923), described as "Not only a textbook for nurses, but serviceable to all who care for the sick," and William S. Sadler, *Worry and nervousness; or, the science of self-mastery* (1914), termed "A thoroughgoing

discussion of the various forms of nervousness and methods for their relief" (American Library Association, 1926, pp. 259, 265). A hand count of pertinent health and medicine books listed variously under "Applied science," "Natural science," and "Children's books" disclosed 108 titles, or 0.93 percent, again a much greater portion of these publications than the holdings of any of the five libraries. This contrast is not surprising. On the one hand, professional librarians commonly disdained fiction; on the other hand, public libraries needed to respond to the preferences of their patrons, namely for fiction. From the 1930s on, librarians more likely consulted the various *Standard Catalogs for Public Libraries* and its supplements, published by H. W. Wilson. A similar study of these guides reveals that, in general, each library owned just a small portion of the health and medical books recommended.

But, if the libraries were inclined to collect fewer health and medicine books than recommended by the American Library Association and the Wilson guides, what of the books themselves? Did the *Catalogs* inform the building of health and medical collections of local libraries? The Rhinelander library held ten of the books listed in the aforementioned 1926 *Catalog*; but Sauk Centre, only four; Osage, three (two of which were juvenile); Morris, five; and Lexington, only Eddy's *Science and Health*, which was probably donated. Matching entries in other issues of the *Catalog* with library holdings documents similar numbers: over the years, Lexington held only Eddy's work, and Rhinelander held the greatest number of listed books. Most telling, in general these books were acquired before the *Catalogs* were published. For instance, each book matched in the 1926 *Catalog* was accessioned before 1926, except for one in the Morris library, and the same pattern was repeated for each of the *Catalog*'s issues through the decades of the mid-century. A comparison of library accessions and the Wilson directories provides a somewhat different perspective. By the late 1930s, 1940s, and especially the 1950s, most of the health and medicine books held by the libraries are found in the *Standard Catalogs*, though the total number was relatively small. In other words, the lists in these guides shaped the collections but did not control them.

Despite no evidence of the *Catalog*'s direct influence on the librarians of these five rural public libraries, still the content of the library holdings compared with *Catalog* and Wilson recommendations indicate the significance of a professional staff. On the one hand, Rhinelander's holdings contain more of the *Catalog*'s listed books than the other libraries, and by the late 1940s and 1950s, nearly every medical and health book in the Rhinelander accession books appeared in the Wilson guide. Rhinelander's collection was the most reflective of the ideas of the contemporary library profession. Rhinelander's library, the only one of the five to employ a trained librarian throughout the period, had employees who were more connected with the larger library profession. Sauk Centre began

employing trained librarians by 1933. In the years following, that library acquired more books in the area of medicine and health, many of which matched listings in the Wilson guides. A similar picture emerges from an analysis of the limited number of books in the Morris Library. That institution, which frequently hired librarians who had attended a summer session at the University of Illinois, held books typically listed in the Wilson. On the other hand, the Lexington library employed untrained librarians. The summer vacationers were important elements in the town economy, and the library collections were designed to attract a transient population more focused on recreation than education (Wiegand, 2011b).

Taken together, these five public libraries in the rural Midwest held relatively few health and medicine books. From this we could conclude that health and medicine were not critical to the local communities. But library holdings say little about circulation. Perhaps these books were frequently charged out of the libraries. Unfortunately, we don't have circulation statistics to track the interest of patrons.[5] We do know that most library patrons were more interested in fiction than nonfiction. So, even without detailed circulation figures, it is likely that these books did not generally leave the library. Perhaps they were shelved as reference books. If so, they could have been available for the library visitor. And as such, they could have been an important source of health information for residents of rural communities. Additionally, did mothers turn to other library sources more frequently or more easily? Scattered reports in local newspapers document that these five libraries carried a range of health-related and women's magazines. Though the historical record does not allow us to see detailed records of their holdings, we do know that all the libraries but Osage collected *Good Housekeeping* among other journals; Osage, as well as Rhinelander, Morris, and Lexington held the *Ladies' Home Journal*; and *Hygeia* was found on the shelves of Sauk Centre, Rhinelander, Morris, and Lexington. An intriguing report from Rhinelander in 1941 lists *Redbook*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Cosmopolitan*, all women's magazines that devoted many pages to health, nutrition, and child care, among the top five leading journals read by library patrons. Local women undoubtedly read these in the library. They could have also found health and medicine reference books in the library.[6]

But what would Mrs. Smith's daughter-in-law have found in the mid-century in her public library in the rural Midwest? Plainly, she would have had access to more information than her mother-in-law had, and much of it information she could use. In addition to the standard Fishbein volumes, there were Ginott's *Between Parent and Child* (1965) and his later *Between Parent and Teenager* (1969); the ever popular T. Berry Brazelton, *Infants and Mothers* (1969); and even David R. Reuben's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex* (1969). In searching for the best advice on raising a healthy family, the second Mrs. Smith would have discovered

many of the standard medical authorities of the period, as well as a few nonorthodox authors, sitting on the library shelves waiting to assist her.

Notes

1. The entries for Eddy's works in the Muncie (Indiana) Public Library document that her books were donated to public libraries, not purchased. See *What Middletown Read* (n.d.).
2. For more on children's health books, see Toon (2003).
3. Each of the libraries held various copies of the *Catalog* as well as *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries* and its supplements, published by H. W. Wilson, so we know that they were available to local librarians. There were other book catalogs as well. Though each had a somewhat different scope, in general their suggestions were close enough to use the *A.L.A. Catalogs* and Wilson guides as our gauges.
4. There were numerous supplements to the catalog and new editions over the years.
5. The recently mounted Web database *What Middletown Read* provides indirect evidence that supports this conclusion. This database represents the circulation records of the Muncie Public Library from 1891–1902. During this early period, this library also held relatively few medical and health books for popular use, approximately 80 out of a total of 11,000. Some, like Eddy's *Science and Health,* circulated widely; others did not. We still have no indication of what books were not circulated but were read in the library.
6. The database of *What Middletown Read* also includes periodicals. Analyzing the transactions of one of the library's patrons provides some indication of how the books and periodicals were used. Mary E, Moore, born 1864, joined the library at the age of eleven. As her records begin in 1892, she was clearly enamoured with Shakespeare and European history and geography. The borrower's name in the circulation records changes in 1895 when she married William Youse. By the late 1890s, she tended more to monthly magazines, such as *Scribner's* and *Cosmopolitan.* In January and February of 1902 she checked out all four of the library's volumes of the popular infant-care magazine *Babyland*, the 1885 volume twice. Thereafter her choices are more often children's literature. More of such analyses of the 6,000 patrons and nearly 180,000 transactions in this database will enable us to capture something of the life of the turn-of-the-century reader and how their reading habits changed over the life span.

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