
Seeing the World from Main Street: Early Twentieth-Century Juvenile Collections about Life in Other Lands

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ABSTRACT

By the late nineteenth century, the United States had emerged as a major industrial nation and an increasingly important force in world politics. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, books set in countries outside the United States proliferated. In particular, books as part of a series, both fiction and nonfiction, were selected for inclusion in public library collections. It is not surprising that large urban libraries with diverse populations like St. Louis and Buffalo would acquire children's fiction and nonfiction on themes related to life in other lands, but what did library collections in smaller, less diverse communities include? The view from small-town Main Street was similar to the view from large cities—children's librarians acted on their belief that their patrons needed to have access to materials that discussed the world outside the borders of their town, state, and country. An analysis of titles held by five small midwestern libraries, book lists of the St. Louis Public Library, and lists of books included in the classroom collections from the Buffalo Public Library in the early twentieth century shows an increasing number of books that described life in other countries. This suggests that there was widespread agreement about the importance for children's reading about life outside the borders of the United States.

By the late nineteenth century, the United States emerged as a major industrial nation and an increasingly important force in world politics. Not only did the United States involve itself in the outside world, that world came to America. The immigrant population steadily increased from just over 2 million in 1850 to more than 14 million in 1930 (Gibson & Lennon, 1999, table 2). Throughout that period, the majority of immigrants were from Europe—mainly from Western Europe in the early part of the century,

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but shifted at the end of the nineteenth century when immigration intensified from Eastern Europe and Russians, Romanians, Czechs, Poles, Latvians, and Croatians came to the United States. Immigrants were expected to assimilate into American culture. So-called Americanization efforts often centered on children, who were thought to more easily adapt to life in a new country since they had to learn English in school (Miller, 1919).

Public libraries provided one means to assimilate immigrant children, many of whom came from economically disadvantaged families. Libraries provided reading material for free, and the librarians who served them worked for their benefit. It is not surprising that large urban libraries with diverse populations like St. Louis and Buffalo would acquire children's fiction and nonfiction on themes related to life in other lands, but what did library collections in smaller, less diverse communities include? The view from small-town Main Street was similar to the view from large cities—children's librarians acted on their belief that their patrons needed to have access to materials that discussed the world outside the borders of their town, state, and country. Data from such public libraries, both large and small, and from a respected catalog of recommended titles, suggest widespread agreement on the most suitable publications about life in other lands for juvenile readers. This agreement existed because of the jurisdiction that children's librarians claimed for themselves as arbiters of appropriate juvenile reading material.

LIBRARIANS AND CHILDREN'S READING

Effie Louise Power, one of the early twentieth century's most influential children's librarians, stated in *How the Children of a Great City Get Their Books*: "The library's ideal . . . was to lead children to love good books. And the best way to do this is to place good books before them and to provide for the children a librarian who understands them, who knows good books, and who loves both" (1914, pp. 2–3).¹ But this "ideal" had only a recent history. In the 1850s and 1860s when many public libraries were established in the New England and mid-Atlantic states, most catered only to an adult population and did not include books for youth in their collections. Moreover, libraries tended to limit library use to persons above the age of twelve, although the particular age varied from library to library and could be as high as sixteen (Stearns, 1894).² This changed by the 1890s as early pioneers of library service to children such as Caroline Hewins and Mary Wright Plummer argued for the provision of books and services to young people (Thomas, 1982, p. 128). By the early 1900s, library service to children was an established part of urban public libraries, and several libraries instituted specialized programs to train librarians who worked with children (Kimball, 2003, pp. 127–128).

Children's librarianship as a profession emerged in the late nineteenth century and quickly developed standards of professional practice,

including collections of materials specifically for children, and activities such as story hours and clubs to promote reading. Librarians who worked with children aligned themselves closely with other professions with a particular interest in children, such as social workers and those involved in the settlement house movement (Eddy, 2006, pp. 23–27). All of these occupations were part of the late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century Progressive Era. Among other areas of social reform, Progressivism promoted modernization of educational methods and the creation of laws to restrict child labor. Progressives also worked with immigrant families to promote health and well-being in urban tenements and assimilation, especially of children, into what they saw as the American way of life.

A close connection existed between public schools and public libraries that, in some cases, went back to the foundation of the library itself. In several cities, public libraries were originally founded to support public schools. For example, the St. Louis Public Library began as the St. Louis Public Schools Library and Lyceum (Kimball, 2003, pp. 29–30). In Cleveland, a collection of books funded by the State of Ohio were housed in an old school building named the Public School Library and only later the Cleveland Public Library (Cramer, 1972).

Beginning in the 1870s, many called for public libraries and schools to work together to further children's education (Cole, 1895; Dana, 1897; Doren, 1897; Eastman, 1896; Foster, 1879; Foster, 1883; Merington, 1895; Metcalf, 1879; Rathbone, 1901). In 1877 Charles Francis Adams, Jr., a trustee of the Quincy, Massachusetts, Public Library, and Adams family scion, called on the teachers to come to the library and take out suitable books for the classroom. Thus, "both schools and library would begin to do their full work together, and the last would become what it ought to be, the natural complement of the first—the People's College" (Adams, 1877, p. 441).

One of the ways librarians answered the call for closer cooperation was to provide "classroom libraries," or small collections of books, selected specifically for a particular grade and placed in local classrooms at the beginning of the school year. Public libraries in Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and other American cities all selected books for classroom collections. When Buffalo librarians published their classroom library list, other cities adopted it as a guide.

Although part of the responsibility of the public library in a community was to support local schools, children's librarians were clear that their area of expertise lay in the realm of children's literature. By the early twentieth century, librarians had carved out a professional jurisdiction for themselves as cultural gatekeepers for children's reading. Caroline Burnite noted: "Library work must be an active influence in the mental progress of the child. . . . Books must be selected, not picked. They must be read, not looked over. They must be used with children, not as a rule

left on the shelves for their injudicious selection” (1911, pp. 162, 166). Librarians were clear that their responsibility lay in selecting “good” books for inclusion in the library’s collection, providing access to this collection, and vigorously promoting it to children. This was the particular province of the librarian—a role distinctly different from parents or teachers.

Between 1890 and the early 1930s, the activities implemented by children’s librarians created the foundation for today’s professionals. Public libraries served as a source of reading material for all children in the area they served. For those children whose families could not afford to buy books, the library provided access to a range of print materials including books, periodicals, music, and artwork, while children who had access to books in their own homes found supplementary reading in the library (Power, 1914, p. 1). The primary work of a children’s librarian was to connect children with literature, both for use in schoolwork as well as leisure time.

Librarians were zealous in their book selection because they assumed that reading, while an activity they greatly desired for children, could just as easily influence a child’s character for bad as for good. There should be reading of the “right” sort. As one librarian put it, “We do most earnestly believe in the power of books to affect the soul of a child. . . . We claim for the children’s library the possibility, the duty of being a moral force in the community (Hunt, 1906, pp. 98, 100). Hence librarians were cautious about their purchases and also tried to be aware of just who their young patrons were in order to better serve them, or to give what librarians perceived their youthful patrons required.

WHAT IS GOOD LITERATURE?

In reading prescriptive articles from early twentieth-century library literature, it is far easier to identify what constituted poor reading for children than to identify elements that made up “good” reading. Particular authors were censured, others promoted. Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, and Ouida were cited over and over as bad influences on readers (Optic and Ouida eventually drop off the lists as the twentieth century progressed, presumably because they were no longer read, but Alger remained as an example of poor reading well into the 1930s). So-called nickel or dime novels and sensational newspapers were also soundly criticized because they were thought to lead readers, usually boys, to expect adventure around every corner, while Alger books presented success as a matter of luck rather than hard work, as Power noted in *How the Children of a Great City Get Their Books*:

A young Jewish boy asked the Supervisor who selects the children’s books why he could not get Horatio Alger’s stories, and after receiving an answer at length said: “Yes, the boys are poor and get rich easy. Gee! They just pick money and things out of their pockets; but it makes you

feel good to read about it." To recognize this innate longing for success and this instinct for hero worship, and to find the books which will help to turn it into right channels, is a privilege. (Power, 1914, p. 7)

Librarians were certain that if they could capture young minds and interest them in good literature it would naturally follow that the child would continue to read only the best into adulthood. Anna Mason, Children's Librarian at the St. Louis Public Library's Divoll Branch, described this process in 1913: "Miss Robi and I attended Miss Power's class on children's literature at Central this morning. The subject was 'Ladders' of books or in other words, the plan of leading from a lower to higher grade book in direction of children's reading" (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 142). In order to keep children turned toward the "right channels," it was necessary to be very careful about what was purchased for the library.

LIBRARIANS AND RECOMMENDED BOOK LISTS

A logical extension of librarian's book selection activity was the creation of lists of recommended books that could be shared by children's librarians across the country. Larger urban libraries made their lists available to libraries across the country. Lists could be annual "best" books, books for specific purposes such as home reading, lists of sources for story hours or reading clubs, and books for use in the public schools. The Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh even published its entire catalog of children's department books (Carnegie Library, 1909). Such lists were widely shared and became part of the network of library work with children across the country. In 1909, H. W. Wilson Company published *Children's Catalog: A Guide to the Best Reading for Young People*. It included "3000 titles of books in print, commonly found in the children's department of public libraries" (Potter, 1909, preface) selected by compiler Marion E. Potter. Potter used twenty-four lists from the American Library Association, state library commissions, and libraries across the United States as the basis for items included in the catalog. A second edition (1916) states in the preface "this new Catalog is based on carefully selected library lists of best books, in the belief that a selection based on the cumulated judgment of experienced librarians has a value beyond that of any single list based on the judgment of one person, however wise" (Bacon, 1916). *Children's Catalog* quickly became a standard reference work for children's librarians. Although it was published irregularly, Wilson periodically produced supplements to update the holdings.³ The St. Louis Public Library and Buffalo Public Library were among those whose lists were consulted for *Children's Catalog*.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ABOUT LIFE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

From the late nineteenth century forward, the number of publications for children increased, from 408 titles in 1890 to 935 in 1930 ("Books of 1890," 1891; "Ten Thousand Books a Year," 1931). One type of publication

that showed a marked increase beginning in the 1890s was books for children about life in other countries and regions of the world. This occurred in part because the United States expanded its role in world affairs, and Americans began to take an interest in life outside the borders of their own communities. In addition, rising numbers of middle-class Americans had the wherewithal to travel abroad while others joined travel clubs and indulged in fictive journeys to other lands.

Issues of St. Louis Public Library's *Monthly Bulletin* from 1903 to 1933 included recent acquisitions of children's books, including international folktales as well as other titles focused on life in other countries and regions of the world. The folktale collections consisted of Japanese, Chinese, Native American, Norse, Indian, Celtic, Russian, Greek, and Turkish stories.⁴ In addition, St. Louis Public Library acquired standard folktale collections such as the Grimm brothers and Andrew Lang's "color" fairy-tale books. These books constituted the basic sources that librarians used for their storytelling programs. The *Bulletins* also listed many stand-alone novels set in other countries, such as *Two Little Friends in Norway* by Margaret Sidney and *Hans Brinker or, the Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge. Books published as part of a series that dealt with various foreign countries were particularly prevalent. A few of these series were published in the late 1800s, but from 1901 to 1930, a steady flow of books about other countries appeared in the *Monthly Bulletin*.⁵

Complementing the St. Louis *Monthly Bulletin* were the Buffalo Public Library's *Class-Room Libraries for Public Schools*, compiled for local teachers' classroom use and sold to librarians elsewhere. The first was published in 1899, then revised and updated in 1902, 1909, and 1923. All four lists included books also found in the St. Louis *Monthly Bulletin*.

Buffalo librarians initially selected books "on the basis of the reading from the Children's Department of the public library" (*Buffalo Public Library*, 1899, preface). They tested a selection of books in ten classrooms in 1898 and made revisions before finally publishing in 1899. Although librarians relied on input from teachers, they regarded themselves as the ultimate experts in selecting materials for children's reading, and did not have any doubt of their authority to choose.

Readers and primers, fiction and nonfiction titles and, in the lower grades, picture books populated the lists. Librarians also created title, author, and subject indexes to further assist teachers, and identified reference works suitable for the classroom. In Buffalo, individual classrooms received their collections at the beginning of the school year. Midway through the year, the BPL switched collections to give students access to even more books.⁶

What about libraries in smaller towns with more homogeneous populations? Did they collect any of the series recommended by Buffalo and St. Louis, and also by the *Children's Catalog*?

The Main Street Public Library Database (Ball State University, n.d.) is a compilation of library accession registers from five small Midwest libraries: Moore Library (Lexington, Michigan); Morris Public Library (Illinois); Sage Public Library (Osage, Iowa); Rhinelander Public Library (Wisconsin); and Bryant Library (Sauk Centre, Minnesota).⁷ Like their urban counterparts, all five libraries, included books on life outside the United States. They did not purchase as many as the urban libraries, but several purchased as wide a variety of titles, though this varied across the five towns.

International series could be either fiction or nonfiction, and the St. Louis, Buffalo, and Main Street sources include both types. Nonfiction series are informational in nature, generally laying out the facts about the geography, languages, and social customs of other countries. Fictional series, while set in other countries, use the facts about the country as background, with the story and characters taking precedence in the narrative. A few series fall into a special category of writing sometimes referred to as “faction”—a blend of fiction and fact (a term still utilized in children’s literature today). Plots and characters may be well-formed, but more usually, they serve as a device to make dry facts more interesting.

International series have two goals: to teach young Americans about the way of life in other countries; and (sometimes subtly, other times bluntly) to demonstrate the superiority of American democracy and the American way of life. They were not written for immigrant children to see themselves in works of literature. Rather foreign-born children or children of foreign-born parents were expected to assimilate—to be “Americanized.” For the same reason, folktales used in story hours did not necessarily reflect the populations of the cities in which they were held. Librarians chose individual stories for their narrative style and ability to interest the children in reading.

The remainder of this article focuses on books published as part of a series about life in countries outside the United States. Such series will henceforth be referred to as “internationals.”

INTERNATIONALS IN LARGE URBAN LIBRARIES

Like many American urban centers, St. Louis had a large immigrant population at the turn of the century. The original German and French pioneers who founded the city were, by the early twentieth century, well-established. Newer immigrant populations came from Russia, Eastern Europe (Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia), and Italy. Foreign born residents made up 25.4 percent of the total population in St. Louis in 1890, 19.4 percent in 1900, 18.45 percent in 1910, and 13.4 percent in 1920. African Americans were another prominent minority group, particularly significant as many St. Louis institutions, such as the public schools, were segregated. The library was one of the few public institutions that served an integrated population.

From the number of internationals that appear in the St. Louis lists, understanding the world beyond the borders of the United States was important to St. Louis children's librarians. The number of internationals purchased increased in the years leading up to World War I, and then sharply decreased after 1918. However, this decrease does not necessarily mean that librarians thought internationals were no longer important. For example, St. Louis librarians published a list of books entitled "World Friendship through Children's Books" in the June 1931 *Monthly Bulletin* (p.167). The list is divided by country or, in the case of Africa, by continent, and includes both stand-alone titles and books that were part of a series. Books about the United States appear as well, presumably because the list was made available to librarians in other countries such as Canada.

Like St. Louis, Buffalo had a diverse population that included large numbers of immigrant groups: Italians, Russians, Poles and other Eastern Europeans. Buffalo's foreign born population went from 35 percent of the city's total population in 1890 to 29.6 percent in 1900 to 28 percent in 1910, and 24 percent in 1920. In addition to the immigrant population, Buffalo had a significant African American population.

The collection and use of internationals in larger urban libraries is not necessarily linked to the diverse nature of their populations. Librarians in cities such as St. Louis and Buffalo wanted to help Americanize immigrants. Internationals were intended to teach American children about the world outside their own country, not to assist immigrants. However, the variety of cultures in St. Louis and Buffalo may have created a more immediate awareness that differences existed, resulting in collections of great numbers of internationals.

INTERNATIONALS AND SMALL TOWN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The five midwestern towns had far less diversity, although their ethnic populations are very similar to one another. Lexington, Morris, Rhinelander, and Sauk Centre's immigrant populations were mainly made up of Northern Europeans—Germans and Scandinavians—as well as "native born" whites. Osage also had German and Norwegian immigrants, as well as Bohemian and Irish. None of the five towns included any African American residents.

All five libraries purchased international series books written for children. However, there are distinct differences in the individual library collections. The two libraries that collected the most broadly were the Rhinelander Public Library (Wisconsin) and the Morris Public Library (Illinois), and both share several other similarities. Both towns used money from Andrew Carnegie to fund new library buildings. Rhinelander Public Library opened in November 1904 and Morris Public Library opened in December 1913. Both libraries had a commitment to service to children, including story hours, and both contained similar titles of internationals.

In addition, both libraries had librarians trained at established library schools: Rhinelander's librarian, Mary Smith, came out of the Wisconsin Library School, and Morris's librarian, Dey Smith, trained at the University of Illinois summer school (Wiegand, 2010; Wiegand, 2011, chap. 4).

Libraries in Lexington, Osage, and Sauk Centre purchased fewer series of all types and fewer individual titles within series. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that none of the three were staffed by professional librarians. Sage Public Library in Osage, Iowa, opened its doors in 1876. A succession of librarians came and went, none of them with any professional training. Political appointments were the norm at Sage because "for the city council library committee . . . loyalties seemed more important to a majority in power than did any professional expertise" (Wiegand, 2011, p. 52). Osage also had a separate library for the town's school, unusual for this time period. This may explain why their collection of internationals is not as extensive as might be expected. In 1911, using money from Carnegie, Sage Public Library opened a new building. Having a purpose built children's room does not appear to have induced them to have more services for children. It was not until 1922 that Sage Public Library had its first children's story hour and it was not run by the librarian, but by a women's club (Wiegand, 2011, chap. 2).

Sauk Centre's Bryant Library began as a subscription library. In 1879 it became a public library, housed in the local high school. After moving to a new location in a municipal building in 1894, the library trustees approached Andrew Carnegie, were successful in obtaining funds for a new building, and moved into the new edifice in 1904. In 1913, due to state legislation, it also officially became the library for the public schools and received additional funds to purchase books. Librarians utilized lists of recommendations from the Minnesota Library Association for book selection for the schools. The connection to the schools further cemented as teachers assumed responsibility for Saturday story hours (Wiegand, 2011, chap. 1).

Moore Library in Lexington, Michigan, had a slightly different beginning. In 1885, a group of local women established the Lexington Athenaeum Literary Society. They included a room to house a library for the members and "looked for ways to improve local culture (Wiegand, 2011, p. 78). When prominent citizen Charles Moore died, his daughters used their inheritance to purchase a building to be named after him. The ground floor housed the library, and the Athenaeum used the second floor. In 1903, Moore's daughters presented the library to the city and the library became open to the public. The librarians at the Moore Library were not trained professionals; the board of trustees chose the books. While some of the other Main Street libraries eventually employed methods used by professionals, Moore remained isolated from the professional library community. The first story hour, which did not take place

until 1917, was led by local teachers. This lack of a professional presence is reflected in the choices trustees made in the children's book collection (Wiegand, 2011, chap. 3).

INTERNATIONAL SERIES

In order to understand whether the choice of reading material for children was consistent in small and larger libraries, the St. Louis *Monthly Bulletin*, Buffalo classroom lists, and Main Street database were consulted. Eight representative international series were used for comparative purposes: the Boy Travellers, Family Flight, Zigzag Journeys, Our Little Cousin, Little People Everywhere, Peeps at Many Lands, Children of Other Lands, and the Twins series.

The Boy Travellers, Family Flight and Zigzag Journeys, 1880s and 1890s

International series books for children written in the late 1800s read like travelogues. Narrative is slight and serves only as "connective tissue" to move the reader from one place to another. Such series included the Boy Travellers, Family Flight, and Zigzag Journeys.

Thomas Knox, author of the Boy Travellers series uses the journeys of cousins Frank Bassett and Fred Bronson to guide his readers. The series included adventures to Central Asia, Japan and China, Ceylon, Egypt, Mexico, South America, the Congo, and Africa.

The narrative device in the Family Flight series, by Edward Everett Hale and Susan Hale, is a family consisting of a mother, father, son and daughter, and an unmarried aunt who also travels widely.

The Zigzag Journeys series is about a group of boys who attend Yule Academy and "form a society for the study of the history, geography, legends, and household stories of some chosen country, and during the long summer vacation as many of the society as could do so, visited, under the direction of their teachers, the lands about which they had studied" (Butterworth, 1884, p. 21).

Virtually every title in all three series was recommended in the 1909 *Children's Catalog*. None appear in subsequent editions, presumably because they were considered too old fashioned for children in the 1920s.

None of these series appear in the St. Louis *Monthly Bulletin* because the serial did not begin publication until 1903, but it is very probable that they were in the St. Louis children's collection. Titles from the Zigzag series are on the Buffalo classroom lists for 1899 and 1902 and 1909 for use in the fifth and sixth grades, and titles in the Family Flight and Boy Travellers series are on the 1902 and 1909 classroom lists for use in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Among the Main Street libraries, Sauk Centre included *Zigzag Journeys in the White City* (about the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago), *Zigzag Journeys on the Mediterranean*, *A Family Fight Through Mexico*, *The Boy Travellers in South America*, *The Boy Travellers*

in Mexico, *The Boy Travellers in Southern Europe*, and *The Boy Travellers in the Russian Empire*. Rhinelander had only one: *The Boy Travellers on the Congo*. Osage had *Zigzag Journeys in Classic Lands* and *The Boy Travellers in the Russian Empire*. Morris had only *Zigzag Journeys in Northern Europe* acquired in 1914 (perhaps by gift), though published in 1892. Moore Library had the greatest number of titles from the three early series: *Zigzag Journeys in Acadia*, *Zigzag Journeys in the Antipodes*, *Zigzag Journeys in British Isles*, *Zigzag Journeys in Classic Lands*, *Zigzag Journeys in Europe*, *Zigzag Journeys in the Levant*, *Zigzag Journeys in the Orient*, *Zigzag Journeys in the Sunny South*, and *Zigzag Journeys in Northern Lands* all acquired between 1903 and 1906. The Moore also held *The Family Flight over Egypt and Syria* and *The Family Flight in Spain* and the Boy Travellers adventures in Siam and Java, South America, Ceylon and India, and Egypt and the Holy Land.

These titles, published in the 1880s, demonstrate how economic stability in the United States made it possible for affluent Americans to travel for pleasure. The premise of each series is similar. The reader is taken to a particular country or geographic region and by following a group of travelers, learns something of its history and geography. The narrative is less important than the detailed description of each city, including buildings, artwork, lifestyle, and people. Intricately drawn illustrations show important buildings and, in some cases, portraits of historical figures.

These early series had parallels in books written for adults during this time period. Kristin L. Hoganson discusses the fictive travel movement that was part of women's clubs at this time. Throughout the Gilded Age and into the Progressive Era, women's travel clubs proliferated. Their members read and discussed accounts of travel abroad. These early series books for children parallel their adult counterparts and much as members of adult travel clubs "could escape the confines of domesticity and explore the far reaches of the consumers' imperium, without ever having to change perspectives," young readers could do the same (Hoganson, 2007, p. 208).

Our Little Cousins and Little People Everywhere, 1901–1927

The first books of the Our Little Cousin series were published in 1901 and included *Our Little Indian* [i.e., Native American] *Cousin*, *Our little Russian Cousin*, *Our Little Japanese Cousin*, and *Our Little Brown Cousin*.⁸ While telling the story of a particular "cousin," this series uses narrative to convey facts about life in various countries.⁹ Mary Hazelton Blanchard Wade authored most titles written between 1901 and 1905. Since the countries Wade discussed cover a wide variety of regions, it is doubtful she had first-hand knowledge of life in each place. Subsequently, different authors wrote each book, and it appears authors may have been chosen for some expertise in the area. The last book of the series, *Our Little Lapp Cousin*, was published in 1927.

The *Children's Catalogs* for 1909, 1916, and 1925 and their supplements recommended all books in this series but with only lukewarm praise: "Most volumes of the series are useful, few can be recommended with any enthusiasm, all are very popular with children" (Bacon, 1916, p. 170).

Books from this series appear on the 1902, 1909, and 1923 classroom lists for Buffalo for third and fourth grades, and all were collected at St. Louis Public Library. The Main Street libraries vary greatly in number of titles held from this series. Osage did not collect any of these books. Morris only had two, for Japan and Mexico. Rhineland had twenty quite diverse titles, including European, South and Central American, and Asian "cousins." Lexington and Sauk Centre each had twenty-five of the fifty-seven titles in the series, also from diverse areas around the world.

A series similar to *Our Little Cousins* is the *Little People Everywhere* series, written by Etta Blaisdell Macdonald and Julia Dalrymple. The series was published between 1909 and 1916 with reprints published well into the 1920s. The series included fourteen titles altogether, beginning with *Colette in France* (1909) and ending with *Chandra in India* (1916). The *Children's Catalogs* for 1916 and 1925 recommend all of the titles except *Hassan in Egypt* and *Chandra in India*. The other books are all about European countries, Canada, Mexico, and Japan. Since the *Children's Catalog* recommended other internationals with settings in India and Egypt, this oversight is puzzling. Even more puzzling is that the 1916 *Catalog* recommends both *Betty in Canada* and *Donald in Scotland*, but omits them in the 1925 catalog.

This series was used in fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms in Buffalo, was collected in its entirety in St. Louis, and is listed in the catalogs of all but two of the Main Street libraries. Moore Library and Bryant Library did not have any books from this series. This could be because both libraries had many of the *Little Cousins* series and found no need for books that appear to be so similar. Morris had all of the titles except *Betty in Canada*, including the two books left out of the *Children's Catalog*. Sage had all but *Colette in France*, *Hassan in Egypt*, and *Josefa in Spain*. Rhineland had only five titles, those set in Russia, Germany, Spain, Ireland, and Mexico.

Peeps at Many Lands, 1907–1931

The nonfiction series *Peeps at Many Lands* began publication in 1907 with books about France, Italy, India, Holland, Japan, and Scotland. It is the only series discussed here that was not published in the United States, but in Great Britain. Multiple authors wrote in the series, but not necessarily because of any expertise about the country they covered. Instead, authors relied on secondary sources for their information.¹⁰ Some titles were reprinted and some updated and rewritten by other authors. The last original book appeared in 1931 and the last reprint in 1935. The books included information about the manners and customs of the people in addition to geographical information.

Books in the Peeps at Many Lands Series are recommended in all three editions of the *Children's Catalog*. One of the annotations says, "In some books of the series the language and treatment is too mature for all but high school children and adults" (Bacon, 1916, p. 217). Buffalo classroom lists for 1909 and 1923 have selected titles from this series for the sixth and seventh grades.

Main Street libraries diverged widely on holdings for this series. Lexington did not purchase any of them, and the Sage and Bryant collections only held *Switzerland*. For Lexington and Osage, where support of the public schools by the public library was not great, it is understandable. However, the Bryant Library functioned as the library for the public schools, and used the list of titles recommended by the Minnesota Library Association (lists that were also consulted for the *Children's Catalog*) to guide their purchases (Wiegand, 2011, chap. 1). By contrast, Rhinelander and Morris both collected many of the titles. Morris collected forty-three of the seventy titles in the series. Both Morris and Rhinelander had trained librarians guiding the purchase of materials for the library, which could explain the inclusion of books that appear on multiple lists of recommendations (Wiegand, 2010; Wiegand, 2011, chap. 4).

Children of Other Lands, 1906–35

Between 1906 and 1935, Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard published the series *Children of Other Lands*. Each book is an autobiographical account of childhood in countries outside of the United States written by an adult who later emigrated to the United States. The twenty-eight titles, written by men and women, include volumes set in China, Japan, Italy, Greece, Palestine, and other countries. All books in the series are recommended in the second and third editions of *Children's Catalog* and supplements.

This unique series was purchased in its entirety in St. Louis, and two of the titles, *When I Was a Boy in Greece* and *When I Was a Boy in China* are listed in the 1923 Buffalo classroom list for use in the seventh grade. Of the Main Street public libraries, the Bryant library held six titles in the series—Australia, England, France, Iceland, India, and Sweden. All of the countries included were North and Western European or part of the British Empire. Rhinelander purchased titles about Belgium, Iceland, India, Norway, Russia, and Sweden, again a fairly narrow focus. Morris purchased the most diverse number of titles, and almost a full run of the books: Armenia, Australia, Bavaria, Belgium, China, Denmark, England, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Korea, Norway, Persia, Rumania, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, and Turkey.

The Twins Series, 1911–38

Titles in this fictional series, written entirely by one author, have better-developed characters and plot than the Little Cousins series. Lucy Fitch Perkins was a trained artist who illustrated her own writings as well as books

for other authors. She published the first book of her Twins series, *The Dutch Twins*, in 1911. The last, *The Dutch Twins and Their Little Brother*, was completed by her daughter and published posthumously in 1938 (Dillon, 2011). In between, Perkins wrote about twins in Japan, Ireland, Mexico, Belgium, France, Scotland, Italy, Switzerland, the Philippines, Norway, Spain, and China. Still other books treated ethnic groups living within the United States or in its territories as exotic “other,” such as *The Indian Twins* (about a pair of generic Native American twins set in the indistinct past) and *The Alaskan Twins*.¹¹

Perkins attempts to accurately depict the life of children in particular countries and include social issues specific to the country portrayed. For example, due to economic privation, the Irish twins emigrate from Ireland to the United States, the Mexican twins’ father fights in the Mexican revolution, and the Belgian twins’ story is set in World War I during the occupation by Axis forces.

The *Children’s Catalogs* for 1916 and 1925 recommend all titles in this series. The St. Louis Public Library purchased all of her works, and the

Table 1. Moore Library, Lexington, Michigan: Holdings of Internationals

Zigzag Journeys 1879–95	Boy Travellers 1879–95	Family Flight 1881–86	Our Little Cousin 1901–37	Little People Everywhere 1909–16	Peeps at Many Lands 1907–31	Children of Other Lands 1906–36	Twins 1911–38
Acadia	Siam and	Egypt	African				Belgian
Antipodes	Java	and	Brown				Dutch
British Isles	South America	Syria	Canadian				Eskimo
Classic Lands	Ceylon and	Spain	Chinese				French
Europe	India		Cuban				
Levant	Egypt and		Dutch				
Orient	the Holy		English				
Sunny South	Land		Eskimo				
Northern Lands			French				
			German				
			Hawaiian				
			Indian				
			Irish				
			Italian				
			Japanese				
			Jewish				
			Korean				
			Norwegian				
			Philippine				
			Puerto Rican				
			Russian				
			Scotch				
			Siamese				
			Swiss				
			Turkish				

Buffalo classroom list for 1923 includes *The Eskimo Twins*, *The Japanese Twins*, and *The Mexican Twins* for third-grade classrooms; *The Dutch Twins* for use with fourth graders; and *The Italian Twins* for fifth graders.

Main Street libraries all had at least one title from this series in their collections. The Bryant purchased only *The Swiss Twins*. This seems like an oversight given their support for the public schools, but since the series was fictional rather than nonfiction, it may have been considered too close to being a novel. The Moore had only *The Belgian Twins*, *The Dutch Twins*, *The Eskimo Twins*, *The Farm Twins*, and *The French Twins*. This could have been due to the lack of professional librarians choosing books in this library. The Sage, Rhinelander, and Morris libraries collected all of the titles in the series. The Sage did not collect many of the international series; this is the only one that the librarians collected in its entirety. With more professional connections, Rhinelander and Morris were more likely to buy recommended books, so it is not surprising that they purchased all of these titles.

While all of the Main Street libraries collected across the eight series, the three libraries with fewer connections to professional librarians and their recommended lists—Osage, Lexington, and Sauk Centre—did not collect as broadly as Rhinelander and Morris. They purchased fewer titles

Table 2. Rhinelander Public Library, Rhinelander, Wisconsin: Holdings of Internationals

Zigzag Journeys	Boy Travellers	Family Flight	Our Little Cousin	Little People Everywhere	Peeps at Many Lands	Children of Other Lands	Twins
1879–95	1879–95	1881–86	1901–37	1909–16	1907–31	1906–36	1911–38
	Congo		Alaskan	Germany	Burma	Belgium	Belgian
			Armenian	Ireland	China	Iceland	Chinese
			Australian	Mexico	Egypt	India	Dutch
			Brown	Russia	England	Norway	Eskimo
			Chinese	Spain	Germany	Russia	Filipino
			English		Greece	Sweden	French
			Eskimo		Holland		Indian
			French		The Holy		Irish
			German		Land		Italian
			Grecian		Ireland		Japanese
			Guatemalan		Italy		Kit and
			Hawaiian		Japan		Kat
			Indian		Korea		Mexican
			Japanese		Norway		Norwegian
			Panama		Scotland		Scotch
			Puerto Rican		South Africa		Spanish
			Scotch		Switzerland		Swiss
			Siamese				
			Spanish				
			Swedish				

overall, and in general did not buy in broad geographic areas like the others. Visual representations of the Moore (see table 1) and the Rhinelander Public Library (see table 2) holdings graphically display the differences.

CONCLUSION

Early twentieth-century children's librarians assumed the central part of their work was to help create a reading child. They believed their expertise made them the best judge of what kinds of literature were appropriate for their patrons. Librarians took great care in book selection, and made sure that only the "best" books (as *they* defined them) were in the library's collection both in the library building and in classroom collections.

The internationals purchased for use in large urban libraries were also included in the collections of smaller libraries in towns with a more homogenous population. The desire to know more about the world was not limited to large libraries that served more diverse ethnic groups—smaller town libraries also wanted the same books. However, none of the Main Street libraries collected internationals as broadly as larger public libraries, so children in smaller towns had less access to books about cultures outside the United States. The collections at Rhinelander and Morris contained more internationals and reflected more diversity of locales than the other three Main Street libraries. Children who utilized those two collections were better informed about life in other lands than their counterparts in Lexington, Osage, and Sauk Centre.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States had become a leader in world affairs. The Progressive Era, with its emphasis on social reform and Americanization of immigrants, was underway. The proliferation of books for children that center on other cultures was a reflection of what was happening at a national level. As the dominant culture in the United States struggled to create an acceptable identity they defined as distinctly "American," of necessity they also clearly identified characteristics of what was not American. Ultimately, internationals dealt with questions of identity, what it means to be an American, and *who* gets included in that definition.

NOTES

1. Throughout this article the word "children" will be used to designate persons from about age five up to age sixteen. Most children did not complete high school, but left formal education at around age fourteen to go to work. This age varied from place to place depending on local compulsory education and child labor laws. Librarians did not yet conceive of older children as "young adults," so leaving formal schooling was the point at which adulthood began.
2. In 1894, Milwaukee librarian Lutie E. Stearns surveyed 145 libraries in the United States and Canada to discern at what age they allowed children to take books out of the library and why there was an age limit. She found that 70 percent of public libraries in the United States had an age limit and 30 percent did not. The ages varied "from eight to sixteen years of age—the average age requirement being thirteen years" (Stearns, 1894,

- p. 81). The most-cited reasons were that children damaged books and books were to be preserved or that the library did not contain books suitable for young readers.
3. *The Children's Catalog* is still a source of recommended titles for children's librarians. In addition to the print catalog—the twentieth edition came out in 2010—it exists online as part of Wilson's "core collections" database.
 4. Early twentieth-century children's literature tends to treat Native Americans as if they were "foreigners" rather than indigenous Americans. They are either savage opponents, as in many Westerns, or noble savages in stories set in an undefined historical past rather than people who exist in contemporary culture. Thus, several of the folktale collections as well as international series regard Native Americans as part of an exotic foreign culture.
 5. Each *Monthly Bulletin* included a section called "Juvenile Books" and later "Young Folks Books." I created a database of all titles listed in the *Monthly Bulletin*, n.s. 1, no. 2 (1903), which was the first time the Juvenile Books section appears, through n.s. 31, no. 12 (1932). Entries in the database include title, author, publication date, series, annotations included in the *Bulletin* entry, and subject headings of my own creation. I included a subject heading—International—for all titles that were about other countries both fiction and nonfiction.
 6. There were some problems with the system since each year the library added additional schools and classrooms to the project but had a finite number of books. Sometimes there were not enough books to meet the needs of each room, as noted in the 1904 annual report of the Schools Department for the Buffalo Public Library: "No new schools were added during the year, and in Sept. the number of books sent to a grade was cut, in 6th grades from 50 to 45, in 4th & 3rd grades from 45 to 40, and 1st grades from 40 to 35. This was occasioned by the necessity for economy after the cut in the library appropriation. Some teachers accepted their reduced libraries without comment while others sent us notes like these: '50 children and 40 books, may I have more?' One 1st grade teacher reported 70 children and 60 was an average 1st grade" (p. 4).
 7. Many thanks to Wayne Wiegand for generously sharing this database. It is a rich source for information about what small libraries included in their collections in the twentieth century.
 8. The title of *Our Little Brown Cousin* was changed in 1923 and the book republished as *Our Little Malayan Cousin*.
 9. The series expanded to include historical cousins such as *Our Little Viking Cousin of Long Ago*, *Our Little Crusader Cousin of Long Ago*, and *Our Little Aztec Cousin of Long Ago*.
 10. The verso of the title page for *South Seas* states, "The Author wishes to acknowledge the assistance he has derived from the Rev. Dr. Codrington's "Melanesia" . . . and the "Solomon Islands" of the late Dr. H. B. Guppy, R. N. . . . in the making of this little book. He would refer the reader who desires to make the fullest acquaintance possible of Melanesia, without getting there, to these two fine works, together with "The Savage South Seas." Of Messrs. Hardy and Elkington . . ." (Abbott, 1908).
 11. As with the Little Cousin series, Perkins also wrote titles about "historic" twins including *The Cave Twins*, *The Spartan Twins*, *The Colonial Twins of Virginia*, *The American Twins of 1812*, and *The American Twins of the Revolution*. In a 2011 article in *Children's Literature*, Karen Dillon discusses the Twins series as "cultural ambassadors" to American children.

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