

# From Sensuous to Sexy

## The Librarian in Post-Censorship Print Pornography

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Among the many calls for progressive librarianship in the now classic compendium *Revolting Librarians* is a short chapter encouraging librarians to “practice a few sensuous exercises.”<sup>1</sup> One exercise recommends that readers imagine themselves in the centerfold of the *Library Journal*. The sensuous librarian, thought Kathleen Glab, would act as an antidote to the common misperception “that all librarians had silver hair, wore half glasses, tailored suits, sensible shoes, and had their index fingers permanently frozen into a pointing position.”<sup>2</sup> Published in 1972, Glab’s chapter made her declaration for physically gratifying library work at the same juncture when a trend in popular fiction began to represent librarians in the process of shedding not only “the old maid-Marian-Librarian image” but also the conservative clothes and stodgy professionalism that Glab identifies as part of the stereotype.<sup>3</sup> Dansk Blue Books, a small imprint owned by the California-based smut mogul Milton Luross, published an early example of such fiction the year prior to *Revolting Librarians*.<sup>\*</sup> Written pseudonymously by Rod Waleman, *The Young Librarian* marks the emergence of a pornographic subgenre that presents librarians less as old maids and more

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\* For more on Luross, see Earl Kemp’s fanzine *eI 7*, no. 4 (August 2008), available at <http://efanzines.com>. Luross published his final adult magazine in 1972, the same year *Revolting Librarians* came out. Titled *Sensuous Living*, it promotes love for all the shapes, smells, and feelings of a physically gratified life.

often as attractive young women, inhibited by library decorum but congenitally oversexed.<sup>4</sup> This chapter argues that, like the sensuous librarian, representations of the sexy librarian in pulp pornography emerged from a historically specific bid to cultivate an erotic public sphere from liberal institutions of reading.

If the common stereotype of shushing librarians imagines library employees as unsensuous agents of social repression, librarian pornography refashions them as victims of repression—and invariably ripe for liberation. The protagonist of *The Young Librarian*, Linda Brumiglia, embodies the trope in the “demure knee-length” dress she wears to work, which the narrator explains as “in contrast to the attractive dresses in Linda’s closets with their provocative miniskirts.”<sup>5</sup> Even her demure dress, however, stands out against the backdrop of her boss’s “ministerial garb” and “bland, colorless efficiency.”<sup>6</sup> In this case, the library itself represents a stifling social institution that keeps Linda from realizing the potential pleasure of her “tall-bodied, superb figure.”<sup>7</sup> Unlike the silver-haired authoritarian that Glab invokes to capture the popular image of librarians, Linda chafes against the employee hierarchy that keeps her secluded in a far corner of the library where she works in the cataloger’s office, obediently following rules imposed by her superiors. The sight of her head librarian, a woman described in the same terms Glab uses to describe the old maid stereotype, makes Linda lament the “somewhat smothering embrace of library employment.”<sup>8</sup> Miss Patten’s “white-haired semi-senescence” provides the young librarian with motivation to wear her raven-black hair down and yearn for a sexual awakening.<sup>9</sup>

By the early 1970s, the image of librarians as prim old women had been cemented in the popular imagination as a cultural icon, providing the foundational trope that librarians and pornographers reimagined as something far sexier. While Glab’s cheeky suggestions for increasing the sensuousness of library work undoubtedly have inspired generations of enterprising librarians, Waleman’s more explicitly pornographic representation of cataloger Linda Brumiglia has set the tone for a proliferation of sexy librarian imagery that reaches far beyond pornography. The 2003 sequel to *Revolting Librarians*—*Revolting Librarians Redux*—includes

a brief overview of the scope of the sexy librarian phenomenon. Cindy Indiana lists advertisements, cartoons, hardcore pulp novels, mainstream and pornographic movies, along with several librarian-run websites dedicated to cataloging even more examples.<sup>10</sup> Jessamyn West, Martin Raish, Dan Lester, and Candi Strecker have gone a long way toward documenting the widespread cultural interest in pornographic representations of librarians.<sup>11</sup> Yet interpretations of the cultural significance of these representations have not been elaborated. Indiana attributes the phenomenon to a misplaced sense of irony: “The media sees an opportunity for humor in suggesting that even a librarian might enjoy sex.”<sup>12</sup> Strecker similarly chalks up the pornographic fascination with uniformed women to sexist assumptions about women in the professional world: “Part of the arousal factor seems to be based [*sic*] on the paradox that a woman might be brainy and slutty.”<sup>13</sup> While both theories pinpoint the contradictory Madonna-whore dynamic that most sexy librarians embody, neither explains what these images might mean to librarians or patrons.

The frumpy librarian stereotype, on the contrary, has received considerable attention from academic librarians concerned that it contributes to a pervasive professional devaluation. Several of the most theoretically nuanced elaborations of that stereotype come from Marie and Gary Radford, who together have worked to bring critical theory into conversation with investigations of librarian stereotypes. Using Michel Foucault’s theory of discourse, for instance, they have usefully explicated the seeming paradox embodied by the stereotypically buttoned-down librarian: at once the gatekeeper of public propriety and the butt of endless cracks at outmoded conservatism. As the Radfords put it, “The female librarian is presented as fearsome, but, beneath the stern exterior, there is nothing to fear: there is only a woman.”<sup>14</sup> The sexy stereotype takes the misogyny even further, moving from “only a woman” toward a sexual fantasy featuring foreboding librarians turned librarian sexpots.

If the sexist attitudes coloring much librarian-themed pornography were not already apparent, the Radfords’ Foucauldian analysis would make them easy to recognize. Their analysis has usefully explicated the way that a professional discourse of library services easily bends toward cultural

fantasies of librarians servicing patrons. Foucault's theory of discourse, however, does less to explain the coincidental emergence of a sexy librarian trope alongside a feminist-inspired vision of sensuous librarianship. I explain that historical coincidence by contextualizing the library, pulp publishing, and obscenity law within a shared field of cultural production. Historically specific interpretation of the sexy librarian stereotype uncovers its roots in a 20th-century free speech movement that culminated with a series of high profile Supreme Court cases. Those cases deregulated print pornography, left librarians to renegotiate acquisition policies, and, eventually, changed library collections across the country. The fundamental assumption that this chapter elucidates is that a change in collection policy welcomes a change in the public a library serves, opening avenues to revamp the cultural associations that underlie librarian stereotypes.

### **Libraries: Lusty or Musty?**

One of the most significant aspects of the Radfords' discursive analysis is their insistence that we approach stereotypes of the librarian as continuous with stereotypes of the library. They see fear of complex library systems as the background from which a fearsome librarian emerges in the popular imagination. Similarly, the sexy librarian emerges from what Candi Strecker describes as "the erotic potential of the library setting" with its distinctive mix of public and private space organized by isolated stacks.<sup>15</sup> Cultural understanding of libraries, as much as librarians, contributes to the appeal of the particular fantasies that library porn constructs for readers. Most of the sexy librarians populating moving image pornography and mainstream advertising never set foot in a library. The hardcore pulps published during the 1970s and 1980s, however, invariably use the library as at least a backdrop, even when the main action—sexual and otherwise—happens elsewhere. As Avi Steinberg put it in an article for *The Paris Review Daily*, "Porn books still feel the compulsion to tell a story, to make the glasses and bun *mean* something."<sup>16</sup>

His reading of librarian pornography situates the golden age of librarian porn in relation to a much earlier libertine tradition, best known for its association with the notorious Marquis de Sade. Historians understand

the libertines' rejection of aristocratic mores as contributing to the rise of liberal democracy.\* Steinberg describes some of the most renowned titles from the period—including *Bang the Librarian Hard*, *Hot Pants Librarian*, *The Librarian Gets Hot*, and *The Librarian Loves to Lick*—as an “earnest libertine revival.”<sup>17</sup> By his account, they portray mid-20th-century sexual liberation and public librarianship as belonging to the same progressive trajectory that leads toward liberalism flourishing in body and mind. More recent librarian porn, he argues, “reveals a zeitgeist of anxiety” that correlates the librarian’s neglected sex life with the extinction of the library.<sup>18</sup> Access to information has indeed played an important role in developing the robust public spheres necessary for maintaining a democratic society, but Steinberg’s characterization of librarian porn from the 1970s takes an overly sanguine attitude toward the various depictions of the library that those novels present. While his main example, *Bang the Librarian Hard*, features a protagonist who uses sex as a means of promoting the library, other titles of the era portray the library as a cultural institution that stifles individuality, including creative and sexual expression.

In fact, portrayals of the library as a repressive institution are common. For example, in *The Young Librarian*, when cataloging work stifles her individuality, Linda discovers that taboo sexual practices provide a cathartic outlet for otherwise frustrated emotions. Sex with other women and minors lets her cut across the grain of professional propriety enforced by her superiors at the library and convinces her that she will not end up a shriveled old maid like the head librarian, Miss Patten. If *The Young Librarian* presents a unique case for coming so early in the 1970s and for featuring so little of the library setting that helps define the genre, it nonetheless provides a sense of the library as a potentially contentious social institution.

A more typical example of the genre titled *The Naughty Librarian* came out in 1981 under the Greenleaf Classics colophon. Responsible for several smaller imprints, including Heatherpool Press and Patch Pockets, Greenleaf published an entire line of librarian-themed adult books that all looked nearly identical. The covers feature an ink drawing—in this case,

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\* For the best work on pornography’s relationship to democracy, see Lynn Hunt, ed. *The Invention of Pornography* (New York: Zone Books, 1993). In response to a reader’s comment, Steinberg indicates that he consulted her introduction to the volume during his research.

of a woman wearing large-framed glasses and her hair in a bun. Propped up on a pile of hardcover books, her right hand grasps the back of a man's head, pulling his face toward her bare breasts, while another man watches from behind a nearby bookshelf with his mouth agape. The drawing conforms to the depiction of the novel's protagonist, library employee Sandy Lewis, who the narrator describes according to strict generic conventions. "Her drab clothes, thick glasses and spinsterish hairdo," we learn at the outset, hide "the gorgeous wanton woman beneath."<sup>19</sup> Although one scene placed late in the story does involve Sandy naughtily assisting a patron in the stacks while her boss looks on, the novel opens with Sandy playing the voyeur. She masturbates while watching two teens in a storeroom of the library because, even as her 21st birthday approaches, the narrator laments, Sandy has yet to find a sex partner of her own.

It turns out the teens noticed her watching them, as Sandy learns by overhearing their postcoital conversation. The girl sees her as a tragic figure: "It's too bad the only fun she can have is watching someone else fuck."<sup>20</sup> The boy, however, takes a far less sympathetic view, insisting that such a "bow-wow" couldn't expect anything more. Their exchange represents an especially significant moment for the novel because, in addition to introducing the baseline librarian stereotype, it provides Sandy with the motivation to transform her look and transcend her station at the library. More immediately, even, it propels the narrative into the second sex scene as Sandy convinces the local beefcake gym owner to become her personal sex trainer. The description of her disrobing for the first time intends to reveal more about the main character than simply her "lush curves" and "uplifted fullness." The novel takes the opportunity to turn the spectacle of Sandy's nude body into a metaphysical epiphany about her sexual identity: "Layer by layer, Sandy's true beauty was revealed. Once the thick glasses were removed and the heavy bun loosened, she looked totally different—and totally feminine."<sup>21</sup> Shedding her shapeless clothes reveals the truth of her shapely body, which in turn stands in as a sign of the purity of her gender and the unbridled sexuality that she soon achieves.

Sandy's considerable achievement, however, necessitates a career change. Whereas *Glab* hoped that sensuous librarians would transform

the way employees and patrons experienced the library, the sexy librarian of pulp pornography would just as soon transform her personal life by leaving the library behind. After vindicating herself by seducing the teenage boy who likened her to a dog, Sandy leaves her post at the circulation desk to become the secretary and sexual incentive at a small, all-male business firm. Her new boss, the hunky patron who ravished her on a pile of books in a secluded corner of the library, introduces the staff by offering her as a bonus to anyone who closes a big contract. The offer takes Sandy aback at first, but when her first “fringe benefit” lover asks her at the end of the novel if she regrets leaving the library, she assures him that she does not. “I’m glad I’m done with musty, dusty books and catering to musty, dusty people!”<sup>22</sup> Contrary to Steinberg’s examples, the library and the librarian stereotype figure here as obstacles that the protagonist must overcome to liberate herself from the confining sexual conventions of an earlier age. In other words, *The Naughty Librarian* and many similar titles worked to entrench rather than challenge the old maid stereotype, while simultaneously offering a vision of sexual liberation fraught with sexist assumptions about women in the professions.

## Librarians for Liberation

Liberation from cultural conservatism is a defining preoccupation of the classic librarian-themed titles. While the library plays various roles—sometimes a repressive social institution, sometimes a hub of promiscuous community engagement—the narrative arc always moves toward new kinds of freedom from the somewhat smothering embrace of old-fashioned values. Another librarian title from Greenleaf Classics, *Horny Licking Librarian*, makes the point abundantly clear as every single character who works with Polly Prentiss at Hardwick School masks their libidinal urges in caricatured forms of Victorian morality. The assistant librarian, “a very shy and puritanical young man,” is engaged to a woman who won’t kiss him until they marry, which her parents will not allow until he establishes his career.<sup>23</sup> With a little work, Polly manages to seduce him and finds out that he’s a natural lover. He notices in turn that Polly demonstrates an entirely different attitude toward rules when at home in bed than she does at

the library. “She sure wasn’t like the woman he knew at work,” the narrator explains. “That Miss Prentiss wore her hair in a prim bun, glared at any student who even breathed loudly, and was always cold and efficient. But the Miss Prentiss he saw now was a wild woman. . . . She wasn’t at all uptight about revealing her pleasure.”<sup>24</sup> The severity of her adherence to library rules eases and quickly turns into outward contempt for such regulations once she begins seducing other colleagues and students on campus.

The novel’s most defiant moment occurs when the headmaster finds Polly enthusiastically engaged with three men, two employees and a student. He dismisses them all from the school at once, but Polly manages to charm him with kinky sex. Early in the novel we learn that the headmaster is a sort of censorship crusading Comstock figure,\* “probably the biggest prude who ever lived. The rumor was that he pissed ice water. If he caught any student or faculty member having anything to do with sex, he kicked them out of Hardwick instantly. People had been expelled just for reading about sex.”<sup>25</sup> Cracking the censorship nut represents a complete subversion of the “stern moral principles and strict standards of conduct” that define the educational institution’s tradition.<sup>26</sup> When the headmaster finally joins the orgy at the end of the novel he completes the simple allegory of sexual liberation. But the gesture toward his ban on illicit reading material gives the narrative more than a symbolic resonance with the very real censorship laws regulating pornographic materials.

One reason these novels worry so much about their own status as anti-repressive folktales for mature audiences is that, unlike today, print pornography held not only a culturally contentious place in American society but also a legally contentious place in the US judicial system. Explicit references to the regulation of reading materials create a self-reflexive narrative technique that aims at enlisting readers in the same pursuit of sexual expression that absorbs the lusty librarians in these novels. The articulation of a desire for freedom from sexual norms and censorship regulations goes even beyond the narrative to define the tone of the paratext framing Greenleaf Classics. Many of the librarian-themed titles include a brief

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\* For more on Anthony Comstock’s life and legacy, see Anna L. Bates, *Weeder in the Garden of the Lord* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995).



foreword attributed to the publisher that offers a liberal justification for the novel's redeeming social value. *The Naughty Librarian*, for example, begins with a three-paragraph note that summarizes and interprets the narrative to follow:

In this story, a female librarian has learned to be outward and honest with her sexual desires, and she becomes a woman whom many would brand as a slut and others would merely call liberated. She is a woman dedicated to becoming a sexually liberated soul—a person who not only feels sexually free, but who has been compelled to unshackle others from the bonds of puritanism and censorship.<sup>27</sup>

However vexed an image of sexual freedom the novel offers up, the book itself could exist only because of an unshackling of censorship laws.

The librarian-themed adult books published in the 1970s and 1980s, and the stereotypes they forwarded, followed in the wake of a decades-long legal battle over definitions of obscenity that effectively ended in 1967. Beginning with the 1933 decision that James Joyce's *Ulysses* did not "excite sexual impulses or lustful thoughts,"<sup>28</sup> the anti-censorship campaign came to a head in the 1960s with a series of cases provoked by titles from the Grove Press catalog. Grove's founder, the self-fashioned anti-censorship crusader Barney Rosset, knowingly published banned books with the intention of defending them in court. His legal strategy for defending novels such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer*, and *Naked Lunch* involved marshaling expert testimony from established authors, critics, and even the American Library Association to confirm their literary value, thus circumventing the definition of an obscene text as lacking any redeeming social value.<sup>†</sup> The strategy proved effective for Grove but also forced an uneasy distinction between illicit masterpieces with inherent artistic merit and smutty pulp that merely pandered to lascivious tastes. The US Supreme Court demonstrated the legal force of that distinction in 1966

† In the landmark First Amendment case *Roth v. United States*, Justice William Brennan explained the reach of obscenity law: "implicit in the history of the First Amendment is the rejection of obscenity as utterly without redeeming social importance." *Roth v. United States*. 354 US 476 (1957). Full-text available at [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu).

when it took up a case against Putnam's edition of John Cleland's 18th-century novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* along with two separate cases against popular pornographers Ralph Ginzburg and Edward Mishkin. Putnam received the Court's go-ahead while Ginzburg and Mishkin received jail time.<sup>29</sup>

Because Grove Press fought so many landmark obscenity cases, many accounts of what literary historian Loren Glass has recently called "the end of obscenity"<sup>\*</sup> attribute the mid-20th-century liberalization of print regulations entirely to Rosset's efforts.<sup>30</sup> In fact, another case in 1967 has the distinction of extending the freedoms Rosset secured for legitimate presses to the underground world of pulp pornography. When an undercover cop arrested Robert Redrup for selling him Greenleaf titles *Lust Pool* and *Shame Agent*, Greenleaf's founder William Hamling offered to cover his legal fees if he pled not guilty. The case ended up in the US Supreme Court, where the majority opinion decided that written materials sold to willing adults were protected under the Constitution.<sup>31</sup> Paperback sex book publishers finally had a court sanction to operate lawful, full-scale business, and Greenleaf took full advantage by issuing increasingly frank descriptions of sex.<sup>†</sup> The carefully, if minimally, rendered plot lines and paratexts that insisted on the social significance of sexual liberation kept the novels within the bounds of the law. In the ever-evolving field of obscenity law, the paratext also provided a built-in argument for the redeeming social value of any given title.

Relaxed print regulations meant that a greater number of sexually explicit texts became available in the market place, including the novels that popularized sexy librarian stereotypes. The cultural reverberations of anti-censorship campaigns were quick to reach institutions of reading in the public sphere. Libraries in particular became privileged sites of contention for debates about access to sexual materials. As long as pornographic

\* Glass borrows his chapter title "The End of Obscenity" from Charles Rembar, *The End of Obscenity* (New York: Random House, 1968). Rembar provides a classic example of Grove-centric interpretations of print deregulation. His influence persists in popular accounts such as Fred Kaplan, "The Day Obscenity Became Art," *New York Times*, July 21, 2009, A21.

† According to Frederick Lane, the *Redrup* decision also allowed photographic pornography to move toward increasingly explicit imagery. Frederick S. Lane, *Obscene Profits* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 27–28.

works were illegal, of course, libraries had no reason to consider collecting them. However, with the newly legitimated status of sexually explicit classics such as *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, librarians had to reconsider their role in mediating between the public and material collections. Should they redouble censorial efforts to live up to their perceived role as custodians of community standards? Or should they champion liberal ideals of intellectual and informational freedom? In the wake of the obscenity trials, public debates about the redeeming social value of pornographic works permeated professional debates in the form of anxiety not only over book collections but also over librarians' commitments to liberty, democracy, and the future of state-sponsored libraries.<sup>‡</sup>

When the American Library Association entered a brief as *amicus curiae* in support of *Tropic of Cancer* in 1964, it set the tone for liberating the library from what Morris Ernst and William Seagle once dubbed “the subterranean censorship” of acquisition policies. Writing in 1928, Ernst and Seagle pointed to selection practices developed in London during the Victorian era that effectively banned so-called objectionable books: “If the libraries agreed among themselves not to stock a book the publisher might just as well decide to sell it for so much waste paper; it had been relegated to limbo.”<sup>32</sup> With the emergence of more affordable books, libraries exercised considerably less control over the literary marketplace. Yet Ernst and Seagle’s concern that public libraries in the United States had adopted a similar practice to supervise their readers’ tastes resonated in the post-censorship era in which Greenleaf’s librarian titles flourished. With the old maid stereotype of librarians fully formed by the mid-20th century, discussions about how libraries and librarians should handle sexually explicit materials invariably touched on popular perceptions of their work.

In 1971, for instance, Bill Katz wrote an article about magazine selection that echoes points Ernst and Seagle make about the importance of catering to patron demand. “Despite the wide interest in the subject,” writes Katz, “the erotic is an area most librarians fail to appreciate—at least in

‡ For an excellent account of the contentious debates about pornography during this period see, Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Chapter 5, “The Permissive Society,” is especially relevant.

terms of their public collections.”<sup>33</sup> His nod to the popular idea of librarians as unerotic fogies relates to his conviction that librarians had “heavily damaged” their image by trying to keep smut out of the stacks.<sup>34</sup> Repairing that image, he argued, meant aligning library collections with popular culture. For Katz, incorporating pornography into public collections meant keeping up with the progress forged by a liberal democracy, making pornography in libraries “a sort of ultimate test of freedom.”<sup>35</sup> Much as uninhibited sexual expression constitutes the ultimate liberation for librarians in pornography, pornography in the library constitutes the ultimate sign of freedom for at least one librarian. Reading the professional literature alongside the pornographic literature demonstrates, perhaps ironically, that the anti-censorship ethos encapsulating Greenleaf and progressive librarians in a common vocational spirit dovetailed with a shared yearning for a more provocative archetypal librarian.

## Promiscuous Public Images

Not all librarians got caught up in the zeitgeist of sexual liberation, although debates about how to handle sex materials had a widespread impact on professional librarianship. According to Kathleen Molz, editor of the *Wilson Library Bulletin* during the 1960s, a rich mine of material interpreting the sexual revolution in literature “can be found in the lesser-known journals of special interest to one of the most overlooked participants in the erotica business: the public librarian.”<sup>36</sup> For her own part, Molz believed that adults who wanted tawdry entertainment should have the freedom to obtain it. Professionally, however, she insisted, “it does not lie within the responsibility of a public library to indulge every vagary of human taste.”<sup>37</sup> The problem for librarians was to decipher a cultural field turned topsy-turvy by the emergence of what Molz calls “the high pornography.” While the lowbrow production of Greenleaf’s pulp pornography—which included cheap paper and explicit covers—marked it as unsuitable for library collections, most of Grove Press’s catalog and several of Greenleaf’s nonfiction publications created a gray area. How should librarians handle the collection of Supreme Court obscenity decisions from 1973 that Greenleaf published with a scathing introduction on the dangers of state

censorship? Or the nonfiction study *Sex, Censorship and Pornography* that boasted over 50 pages of explicit images for reference? Did they constitute legitimate research materials?<sup>38</sup> For Molz, the path toward answering those difficult questions did not consist in running away from the image of libraries as “conservative, square, or what you will,” but rather in honing a more critical reception of “a literature squalid in style, poor in effect.”<sup>39</sup> She worried more about librarians looking frivolous than repressive.

The identity crisis plaguing post-censorship librarians did not escape the people responsible for Greenleaf Classics. They targeted librarians as fodder for pornographic fantasy precisely because—in addition to the apparent obsession with women in uniform—they regarded the library as insufficiently responsive to the changing social climate of the late 20th century. Despite the American Library Association’s strong statement in their brief for the *Tropic of Cancer* trial that “a patron of a library has a right to read in the library any book of his choice,” the library continued to represent an area of cultural access off-limits to Greenleaf Classics.<sup>40</sup> As the publisher puts it in the foreword to Heather Brown’s novel *The Librarian’s Naughty Habit*, “One profession, that of librarian, reflects the uneven progress of social change.”<sup>41</sup> Lucky for librarians, Greenleaf had a plan to help. By presenting the story of Samantha, an ambitious and adventurous young woman who “finds herself suddenly confronted by a sexual liberalism which challenges her curiosity,” the publisher hopes to cast “a new light onto a profession long stereotyped.”<sup>42</sup> The novel is, it promises, “a chronicle of our times. The story of a woman trapped in a tide of social change.”<sup>43</sup>

*The Librarian’s Naughty Habit* is somewhat unique among librarian pornography in that it relies on very few of the generic character types that usually signify *librarian*. Told entirely in the first person, the novel treats readers to more of the protagonist’s internal character than her external physique. Samantha never describes herself wearing a bun, thick-rimmed glasses, or dowdy clothes. Nor does she fervently defend library decorum. The path to sexual liberation for Samantha involves fostering a public sex culture at her library. Beginning and ending with scenes that involve the dubious place of sex materials in the library, the narrative dramatizes con-

temporary professional anxieties over how the growing public acceptance of, and in some cases demand for, pornography will complicate standard best practices. Although she responds to the challenge in farcical ways, Samantha finds herself, much like librarians of the period, learning to mediate between patron desires for sexual content and library protocol. As it progresses, the narrative makes increasingly clear that at stake in Samantha's ongoing negotiation with sex materials is the same concern over image that catalyzed the divergent professional perspectives represented by Bill Katz and Kathleen Molz.

Samantha's story begins with the head of circulation asking her to determine whether a new acquisition could go out for standard shelving. A standard assignment, Samantha explains, except "this time there was an exceptional quality about her request because the book she wanted me to read was one of those sex manuals."<sup>44</sup> Like some of Greenleaf's nonfiction titles, sex manuals notoriously flouted censorship regulations by packaging sexually explicit images as reference material. When a patron researching a term paper for his physiology of reproduction class asks to look at the book, Samantha has to inform him that her boss has not yet approved it for circulation. In the next chapter she lies to the head of circulation about the graphic nature of the book so that it can go out to the stacks, where she finds the student masturbating. Their encounter culminates in a threesome with another member of the library staff. The novel suggests at the outset that what libraries allow on their shelves has direct bearing on how patrons relate to librarians.

Samantha's instinct to bend the rules toward providing patrons access to sex materials intensifies at the end of the novel when the head librarian, Mr. Smiley, tasks her with single-handedly running the library's meager public relations office. Facing budget cuts at the hands of the city council because of public indifference to the library, Mr. Smiley asks her to increase library traffic by two or three hundred patrons in just a few days. Samantha strikes upon the idea of showing a popular film, thinking that changing the library's offerings will also change the extent of its public reach. The novel gestures toward early 1970s porno chic, a period when several pornographic films had wide theatrical releases, as Samantha describes

her research process for deciding what to screen.\* “To my surprise, one type of movie seemed to be beating everything else cold. Nobody went to westerns anymore. Or war pictures. Spy pictures were dead. Nobody was interested in musicals these days. And certainly not family pictures. Sex was what everybody was interested in.”<sup>45</sup> Here, as in the opening scene, research leads the novel’s characters toward sexual discovery. Cooperative interaction between library materials, staff, and patrons creates a promiscuous public library that attracts people from far beyond “the small fraction of the public it ordinarily attracted.”<sup>46</sup>

After a brief moment of reflection to think about whether or not a skin flick has any place in the library, Samantha decides to order *Hitchhikin’ Housewife*, accidentally agreeing to take the X-rated version normally available only for private viewings. Needless to say, the screening is a success—a crowd of noisy youngsters shows up to see a film that the local police had banned in theaters. By the end of the film “reality became a part of fantasy” as the audience erupts into a spontaneous orgy.<sup>47</sup> Rather than focusing on the transformation of Samantha’s image and identity, *The Librarian’s Naughty Habit* shifts attention to the transformation of the public that the public library serves. It not only grows, giving Mr. Smiley the numbers he needs for his budget presentation at the city council, it also changes character as Samantha’s programming efforts tend toward the promotion of a public sex culture. Samantha’s efforts eventually result in a radically changed perspective of the library: the city council recognizes it as a thriving cultural institution, far from the musty, dusty scene of cultural decay that many popular representations of librarians and the library imply.

Although outlandish in the extreme, the climax of *The Librarian’s Naughty Habit* goes against the grain of popular renderings to offer an optimistic representation of the library. The layered image of promiscuous library patrons indiscriminately indulging in sex as they watch a promiscuous hitchhiker have sex on screen depicts the possibility of sex materials organizing, rather than fracturing, a public. The absurd, and admittedly crude, rendering speaks to the difficulty of imagining such a possibility.

\* For more on the moment of “porno chic,” see Loren Glass, “Bad Sex: Second-Wave Feminism and Pornography’s Golden Age,” in *Cultural Expressions of Evil and Wickedness*, ed. Terrie Waddell (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 97–112.

As Michael Warner points out in *The Trouble With Normal*, a seminal explication of sexual politics in the United States, “There is very little sense in this country that a public culture of sex might be something to value, something whose accessibility is to be protected.”<sup>48</sup> With the deregulation of the printed word, however, both librarians and pornographers set about reimagining public libraries as institutions that actively cultivate public sex culture. Not exactly a model for sexual freedom but nonetheless moving beyond the mere tolerance posited by censorship debates, the librarian in 1970s and 1980s pulp pornography gave a farcical face to the cultural significance of anti-repressive institutions of reading.

Library professionals probably would not do well to enlist Samantha, Sandy, Linda, and Polly as poster children in the campaign to overturn librarian stereotypes. Yet closer attention to a historically particular form of cultural production that made the “sexy librarian” a conventional stereotype might provide an object lesson on the deep connections between the public library’s social function and public perception of librarians. At the very least, several decades after its emergence, librarian pornography provides those of us invested in understanding the impact of popular representations of librarians with a unique occasion for collectively negotiating the benefits of access to a public sphere that promotes promiscuous imagination.

## Notes

1. Kathleen Glab, “The Sensuous Librarian,” in *Revolting Librarians*, ed. Celeste West and Elizabeth Katz (San Francisco: Booklegger, 1972), 20.
2. *Ibid.*, 19.
3. *Ibid.*, 20.
4. Rod Waleman, *The Young Librarian* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Dansk Blue Books; North Hollywood, CA: Brandon House, 1971). Page numbers correspond to reprint by Olympia Press, 2007.
5. *Ibid.*, 5.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 8.
8. *Ibid.*, 7.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Cindy Indiana, “In the Stacks and in the Sack: An Undercover Look at Librarians and Erotica,” in *Revolting Librarians Redux*, ed. K. R. Roberto and Jessamyn West (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 100–103.
11. See Jessamyn West, “Naked Librarians,” accessed <date of access>, [www.jessamyn.com/](http://www.jessamyn.com/)



- naked/index.html; Martin Raish, "Librarians in the Movies: An Annotated Filmography," last updated August 5, 2011, <http://emp.byui.edu/raishm/films/introduction.html>; Candi Strecker, "Sex in the Stacks: Librarian Porn Novels Reviewed," ChipRowe.com, accessed July 17, 2013, [www.chiprowe.com/articles/library.html](http://www.chiprowe.com/articles/library.html). "The Image of Librarians in Pornography," Dan Lester's extensive bibliography (formerly at [www.riverofdata.com/librarians/porn](http://www.riverofdata.com/librarians/porn)), unfortunately no longer exists.
12. Indiana, "In the Stacks and in the Sack," 101.
  13. Strecker, "Sex in the Stacks."
  14. Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, "Power Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian," *Library Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (July 1997): 261.
  15. Strecker, "Sex in the Stacks."
  16. Avi Steinberg, "Checking Out," *Paris Review Daily* (blog), December 26, 2012, [www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/12/26/checking-out](http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/12/26/checking-out).
  17. Steinberg, "Checking Out."
  18. Ibid.
  19. Laura Quincy, *The Naughty Librarian* (San Diego: Heatherpool, 1981), 6.
  20. Ibid., 10.
  21. Ibid., 13.
  22. Ibid., 149.
  23. Nick Eastwood, *Horny Licking Librarian* (San Diego: Patch Pockets, n.d.), chap. 2. Plain text e-book available at <http://neatopotato.net/xnovel>.
  24. Ibid., chap. 3.
  25. Ibid.
  26. Ibid., chap. 8.
  27. Quincy, *Naughty Librarian*, 1.
  28. United States v. One Book Entitled Ulysses by James Joyce, 191 US 545 (1934). Full text of the decision is available online at [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu).
  29. Ralph Ginzburg et al., Petitioners, v. United States. Edward Mishkin, Appellant, v. State of New York. 383 US 463 (1966). Full text of the decision is available online at [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu).
  30. Loren Glass, *Counter Culture Colophon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).
  31. Robert Redrup, Petitioner v. State of New York. 386 US 767 (1967).
  32. Morris L. Ernst and William Seagle, "The Subterranean Censorship," *Bookman* 68, no. 1 (September 1928): 37.
  33. Bill Katz, "The Pornography Collection," *Library Journal* 96 (December 1971): 4065.
  34. Ibid., 4061.
  35. Ibid., 4066.
  36. Kathleen Molz, "The Public Custody of the High Pornography," *American Scholar* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1966–67): 93.
  37. Ibid., 101–102.
  38. Stanley Fleishman, *The Supreme Court Obscenity Decisions* (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, 1973); Donald H. Gilmore, *Sex, Censorship and Pornography* (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, 1969).
  39. Molz, "High Pornography," 103.
  40. Fleishman, *Supreme Court Obscenity Decisions*, 218.
  41. Heather Brown, *The Librarian's Naughty Habit* (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, 1976), 3. Page numbers correspond to reprint by Olympia Press, 2006.
  42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 5.
45. Ibid., 100.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 112.
48. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 171.

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