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The Band of American Ladies: Children's Librarians and the Creation of Children's Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century

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In his 1974 essay celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *The Horn Book Magazine*, John Rowe Townsend, renowned children's author and scholar of children's literature, stated "the children's book world, the children's literature industry, surely was the creation not of writers or publishers but of the band of American ladies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries who built up library work with children" (Townsend 35–36). He singles out librarians Caroline M. Hewins, Anne Carroll Moore, and Alice Jordan and goes on to say that "the children's library has been a blessing to authors and publishers ... and has made possible the writing and publication of many excellent books that otherwise could never have appeared" (36). In addition, in speaking on *Thirty Years of Children's Books*, Frederic G. Melcher, editor of *Publisher's Weekly* for some three decades, also praised early children's librarians for establishing "new standards of book selection," which "encouraged dealers to use the fine types of catalogs and book-lists" that "made it possible for them to carry a far more comprehensive book stock than they thought possible" (Melcher "Thirty Years" 7). In addition, these pioneers of children's librarianship created a new profession within librarianship, one which catered to the "undesirable" children of the poor, the working-class, and of immigrants (Stauffer "The Dangers of Unlimited Access"; Stauffer "Developing Children's Interest in Reading"). While doing this, they established children's literature as a valid subject of literary criticism, set appropriate and strict standards for the appraisal of these works, and demonstrated the importance of such standards and criticism to the development of the genre (Nesbitt 389).

<2>This essay will focus on early members of that “Band of American Ladies,” in particular Minerva Sanders and Caroline Hewins, and their impact and influence on the development of children’s literature, children’s librarianship, and the literary criticism of children’s books through the latter half of the long nineteenth century.

A Background of Children’s Librarianship in the Late Nineteenth Century

<3>The contemporary stereotype of the librarian is of a middle-aged or older woman. Yet when the American Library Association (ALA) was founded in 1876, all of the leadership and most of the workforce were men (McDowell “Oh the Places We’ve Been!” 33). The first women librarians would not graduate from the first library schools until the 1890s (Niles Maack 51), and the first woman to serve as president of the ALA, Theresa West Elmendorf, would not be elected until 1911, thirty-five years after the founding of the ALA in 1876. Women, however, would come to dominate the profession by 1900 in part because the burgeoning public libraries were felt to be within their purview as institutions of civic and social improvement. Library education of the day prescribed courses in the practical, routine tasks for women, appealing to their “housewifely instincts,” and more professional courses in administration and management and in bibliography for men (Stauffer “The Work Calls for Men” 314–315), a situation which would endure for decades.

<4>Although the mission of the contemporary American public library is to serve the needs of the entire community from cradle to grave, the vast majority of public libraries in this country were closed to anyone younger than fourteen until the 1890s, deeming younger children to be “undesirable.” As the children were primarily of the poor, the working-class, and immigrants, they were viewed as noisy, dirty, and uncontrolled (Stauffer “The Dangers of Unlimited Access”; Stauffer “Developing Children’s Interest in Reading”). Although leaders of the American Library Association, such as William Fletcher and Samuel Swett Green, discussed the issue of providing for the reading of the young as early as 1876, their concern was with providing access to “good books,” and preventing young people from accessing “bad books.” By “good books,” they meant books that were “instructive and stimulating to the better nature,” while “bad books” or “sensational books” were “unwholesome food for the young, for the reason that they are *essentially untrue*.” Such sensational literature, epitomized by the adventure stories of Oliver Optic and Horatio Alger, would “impart discontent with the common lot of an uneventful life ” (McDowell “Which Truth” 18–20). Librarians and other critics of the genre argued that such books would lead young men into crime and young women into prostitution, which suggests that these library leaders were referring to young people in their teens rather

than to children (Stauffer “The Dangers of Unlimited Access”, 157–159). Their recommendations, such as they were, were unlikely to lead to a burgeoning of popular and creative literature for children as they rejected all except morally improving realistic fiction, laudatory biographies of white male heroes, nationalistic history, and practical and pragmatic works of science and technology. Not only were popular adventure stories unacceptable, so were fairy tales and other forms of folklore, and contemporary works of imaginative fiction. These attitudes toward acceptable reading for the young would hold for at least the next several decades and are still reflected today in the debates over the inclusion of comic books and graphic novels in library collections for children and teens.

<5>The first known collection of literature for children younger than fourteen in a public library was created in 1876 by Minerva A. Sanders, director of the Pawtucket Rhode Island Public Library. Twelve years later, in 1888, the New York Free Circulating Library, a privately funded library, moved a grammar school library of books to the George Bruce Branch Library and designated a space exclusively for children, becoming the first children’s reading room in the nation (Nesbitt 386). The Brookline, Massachusetts, public library followed in 1890 and the public library in Minneapolis, Minnesota, opened the first public library circulating children’s collection three years later. Thirty more children’s reading rooms would open in public libraries across the country by the turn of the twentieth century (Root “Part 1” 548–549; Nesbitt 386; Vandergrift 686). While a significant increase, this was still fewer than one per state, and nearly all such reading rooms were in larger public libraries in urban centers with the physical space to accommodate them and the population to warrant them. Rural libraries were frequently one-room storefronts and served populations in the hundreds. The first children’s department with a dedicated staff was organized in 1898 by Frances Jenkins Olcott at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (Nesbitt 387).

<6>It is no coincidence that library work for children was established shortly after women entered the profession in large numbers, nor that the prime movers of that work were women as the moral education of the young and the transmission of culture to the next generation were held to be a primary duty of women (Vandergrift 684). These new children’s librarians in these new children’s libraries began providing additional programs and services beyond reference and circulation, including children’s reading clubs, storytelling of folktales, fairy tales, myths and legends, and story time with the reading of fictional works, usually illustrated. Thus, they transmitted the white, western European and American culture that was embodied in these books and stories to the next generation of Americans.

<7>Training librarians for work with children began shortly after such collections were established. Anne Carroll Moore's lectures in library work with children at the Pratt Institute in 1896 led to the first course in children's librarianship at that school in 1898. Olcott followed suit in 1900 with a course in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, which became The Training School for Children's Librarians in 1901 (Nesbitt 387). That same year, the specialization of children's librarianship was also recognized, with the establishment of the Section for Children's Librarians of the American Library Association. Anne Carroll Moore was elected the first chair in 1901. The section became the Children's Library Association of the Division of Libraries for Children and Young People in 1941 when it merged with the American Association of School Librarians and the Young People's Reading Round Table. By 1977, after several name changes, the Division had split into the American Association of School Librarians, the Association for Library Services to Children, and the Young Adult Services Division, now the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Minerva A. Sanders

<8>While the men in the profession were arguing for restricting public libraries to those fourteen years and older, Sanders opened the Pawtucket Public library to children as young as five years old, arguing that "the work of the public library is to teach, to elevate, to ennoble," and "that we cannot begin too early" to prevent them from swelling the "numbers of paupers and criminals" (Sanders "Possibilities" 398). Pawtucket had become an important center of textile production during the American Revolution and was a prosperous mill town until the Great Depression of 1929. As Sanders noted in 1887, prior to child labor laws, nearly all working-class children began working in the textile mills in Pawtucket at nine years old and many were not attending the compulsory three months of school each year because their families could not afford to lose their wages. For these parents, "a private library, though small is unattainable; a newspaper may be a luxury indulged in" (Sanders "Possibilities" 396) when funds permitted. Therefore, access to a public library collection was necessary to compensate for the lack of reading material for working-class children and thus protect society from the perceived deleterious effects of that lack.

<9>Unusually for the time, Sanders declared the "librarian is short-sighted who will question a child as to the advisability of taking a book which seems to be beyond his years or attempt to influence him to change it." She was not quite as progressive and modern as this may sound, as her argument was that, if left to themselves, children would exercise the "keen discrimination in some of these young minds" and

“develop a taste for real literature,” which would have the desired uplifting and moralizing effect (qtd. in Peacock 793). In other words, she allowed children to select their own works (from her carefully curated collection) only as a means to an end. She continued to subscribe to the belief that the purpose of reading was moral improvement rather than entertainment or recreation. She urged librarians to supply “all that is bright, fresh, inspiring, and helpful, but nothing that will create a craving for greater stimulation or tend in the least degree to weaken moral character” (Sanders “Possibilities” 397). Although her comments reflect the prevailing view of the day of the purpose of literature, her definition of “real literature” was far more liberal than that of most other librarians of the time, including “myths and legends with their beauty and richness, well-written fiction, factual books, especially if enlivened with an occasional scintillation of wit and imagination” (qtd. in Smith 159). She exhorted her fellow librarians to “gather the children in; give “milk for babes,” in the illustrated books ... juvenile magazines and literature of a healthy nature to counteract the pernicious trash that is flooding our communities.” In order to convince the young men and boys of the dangers of such “trash,” she created a scrapbook with “cutting from newspapers of the day showing the bad influence of the dime novel,” including prison and worse, and reported that boys “relinquished to us, with pales faces and trembling hands” their “specimens of flash literature” (Sanders “Possibilities” 399) upon reading through the scrapbook.

<10>In addition, Sanders’ library boasted open stacks some thirteen years before John Cotton Dana would “pioneer” them in the Denver Public Library. Librarian Sidney Rider wrote of his “amazement at seeing boys and girls seated at tables, reading or looking at pictures” and “ranging at will in the alcoves where the books were shelved, even taking some of them down to examine” (qtd. in Smith 159-160). He was particularly impressed with the success the library was having in steering boys away from “pernicious trash,” reporting that the library director Mr. Sayles had shown him “some of the captures he had made. The boys came into the reading room with loaded pockets; he asked them to surrender; they did so; he ... opened the door and there stood an accomplished woman to ... lead them to better things” (Rider 41).

<11>Sanders also collaborated with the public schools, calling the public library “the student’s storehouse,” with its “wealth of juvenile literature” which supplemented the dry facts of the school textbook. She argued that the child’s “education commences in studying the books that his parents have borrowed from the public library” leading to a familiarity with books and the library and, once in school, “he is soon to be seen at the library seeking aid of the librarian in matters in which a child of his years is interested” (Sanders “Relation” 80). In 1889, she began creating book lists for use by Pawtucket public schools, beginning with “books in

the library pertaining to American history, extending into biography and somewhat into fiction,” followed by “a list to be used in the study of English and American literature” (Sanders “Relation” 81), and in 1890, compiled them into *A List of Books for the Use of the Pupils of the Pawtucket School of All Grades*. The stated purpose was to enable teachers to direct “the reading of the children into lines that shall supplement and enliven the school work and also create and strengthen a taste for good reading” (Sanders *List* 1). Although called a list, it was a sixteen-page pamphlet, which contained roughly five hundred titles, all of which were written by white American or European authors. The titles consisted of fiction and a variety of non-fiction, including biographies of notable white Americans and Europeans, world history, world geography, and natural history. The fiction included such now-canonical works as *Lorna Doone*, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as works by George Eliot, James Cooper, Daniel Defoe and others now considered “classic.” The items were alphabetized by author’s name and by series title, which were interfiled. The only non-fiction category heading used is “Young Folks Histories.” Why these should be singled out is not explained, although it may be because the list was intended for use by public school teachers who would be teaching history.

<12>This same year, Sanders presented the *Report on Reading for the Young* (also called *Reading of the Young*) to the American Library Association annual conference held at the Fabyan House in Geneva, Illinois. She had asked librarians to submit “methods, results and book lists,” from which lists she “selected a number of books with the thought that a list so generally endorsed will be of interest” and added to it “a few series of books both instructive and recreative” (Sanders “Report” 58). The list was made available for duplication during the conference but does not seem to have survived.

<13>In compiling quotes from the responses, her stated purpose was to “call forth the various methods employed by librarians to inspire the young with a taste for good reading.” She defined good reading as not “the saintly “Die-young-and-go-to-heaven-sure kind”“ but works that depict for the child reader “such laughter-loving, mischievous natures as its own, full of mistakes and sweet repentance” (Sanders “Report” 58). Examples of “good reading” were works such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Longfellow’s *Evangeline*, and *Ben Hur*, as well as classical myths and legends. Children should be guided to such reading as would “awaken the imagination, sharpen the observation, develop the humanities and cultivate in them a respect for the English language” (Sanders “Report” 58-59). She advocated that parents, teachers, and librarians question children about the books they had read to encourage them to reflect upon the contents of the literature. In addition, if the

danger of “excessive reading” presented itself, she limited children to two books of fiction a week. She imposed no such limit on non-fiction but, rather, encouraged such reading.

<14>While Sanders is considered a pioneer in library services to children, her direct impact on the development of children’s literature is unknown. While there is no evidence that her book list had any but local distribution and, as explained below, was published nearly a decade after Hewins’ *Books for the Young*, it is not inconceivable that it was distributed beyond the schools of Pawtucket. The 1898 ALA list drawn from the *Reading for the Young* report most definitely was, as the conference drew librarians from across the U.S. and even Canada. Certainly she had an indirect impact by admitting children as young as five years old, creating a children’s reading room and collection, and opening the stacks to children for browsing.

Caroline M. Hewins

<15>Born in 1846 to an upper-class family in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Caroline Marie Hewins enjoyed the privileges of her class and her time. Her family home boasted its own private library, which gave her access to a rich collection of classic literature from childhood. Books were so central to her life that she entitled her memoir of her childhood *A Mid-Century Child and Her Books*. It was said of her that “books and literature were part of her being and the love of books flowed from her to her community of boys and girls” (Melcher “Introduction” 81). She attended private elementary and high schools in the Boston area, then graduated from the Girls’ High and Normal School and taught in the public school system for several years, followed by a year at the Boston Atheneum under renowned librarian and indexer William Frederic Poole, who may have “taught her the rudiments and importance of bibliography” (Lindquist 16). After teaching in private schools for a few years, in 1875 she left Boston for Hartford, Connecticut, where she was appointed librarian of the Hartford Young Men’s Institute. Under her guidance, this subscription library for young men would become the Hartford Public Library in 1892 and she would be appointed its first director, a position she would hold until her death 1926.

<16>Although the library members were all adults, Hewins immediately began to promote books for their children as well. She wrote to the local newspaper, inviting children to visit the library to select books and to discuss what they read. Within three years, the library was publishing a quarterly bulletin for its members promoting books and library use, including “carefully winnowed book lists based on intimate

knowledge of the children themselves and on a broad and firsthand acquaintance with all the best in the world of literature” (Melcher “Introduction” 81). Like Sanders, Hewins’ motivation for publishing these lists was the belief that children were reading “excessively” and reading the wrong types of books. That is, they were rapidly reading “story books” and “novels” (what we today would call “genre fiction”), rather than more demanding works of literature, and were therefore failing to ponder and reflect on what they read (Moore “Section” 694–695). She recommended that children “resist the temptation to ‘cram’ a lot of reading,” but rather follow the guidance of Dr Thomas Arnold of *Tom Brown’s School Days* fame, and take the time to contemplate what they read before beginning on the next book (Hewins “Literature for the Young” 152).

<17>In 1882, Hewins published the work that would establish her national reputation as an expert on children’s literature: *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children* (reprinted in 1883, with a second revised edition in 1884). This predated Sanders’ list by eight years and is the first known published work of its kind. Whether Sanders was influenced by this work to create her list is not known, but as a member of the ALA, she must have been aware of it. The work was considered “the beginning of a new day in book selection for children, a movement that never lost its momentum,” and was said to have “extended its influence through a generation and more of librarians and into the thinking of publishing and bookselling” (Melcher “Introduction” 82; Wiegand 36). Five years later, in 1887, the ALA issued the revised edition of the book as the first section in its *Catalog* (Wiegand 47), predating the publishing sections’ publication of John F. Sargent’s *Reading for the Young* by three years (Wiegand 54). The preface to the 1890–96 edition of that work, completed by his wife and daughter after his death, notes that it includes, “by permission, the books in the excellent manual of Miss Hewins, “Books for the Young”” (Sargent 1; Jagusch 124). In 1915, the ALA published a third revised edition of Hewins’ works as *Books for Boys and Girls : A Selected List*. The *Library Journal* called it a “capital little list” which would “find its special field among the smaller town and village libraries, and the school-room libraries, constantly increasing in number” and “one of those small library ‘necessaries’”. The preface included “a few helpful suggestions as to what makes good reading for boys and girls, and what children themselves prefer” (“Reviews,” 211). Non-fiction predominated, but “some works of fiction appeared in her sections on home and school life; history, historical biography, novels, and tales; modern fairy tales; and finally, a category devoted to myths, legends, and traditional fairy tales” (McDowell “Which Truth” 25). Not surprisingly, all of these lists are dominated by the works of white Western authors, primarily Americans, writing in

English. Because they are lists of books for children, female authors appear nearly as frequently as male, particularly as authors of fiction.

<18>Also in 1882, Hewins conducted the first of the occasional national surveys of librarians that were presented as *Reading of the Young* reports to ALA Annual conferences. Subsequent surveys would be conducted and reported on by other women librarians through 1898, including Minerva Sanders in 1890, as noted above. Whether the two women knew each other socially is unknown, but they had to be aware of each other as they attended the same conferences and spoke on the same issues. These surveys collected information about what books and services libraries were providing to children. In the 1882 report, Hewins singled out sensational literature for special criticism, in particular the “stories of street-life, poor-house boys who become millionaires, etc.” (McDowell “Which Truth” 16). In her response to the 1883 survey, she lamented that “the boys have not left off their Optic, Alger, and Castlemon, or the girls their Elsie and Mrs. Holmes” and was especially disappointed not to be able to report that she had been successful in convincing them to burn those books (McDowell, “Which Truth” 21–22).

<19>Hewins contributed a monthly column, “Literature for the Young,” to *Library Journal* from February to December 1883. There is no information as to why the column lasted for less than one year. It consisted of a list of recently published selected titles with excerpts of reviews from various newspapers and occasional comments by Hewins herself. The list included both fiction and non-fiction, and ranged from historical to contemporary realistic fiction, as well as folklore and mythology. Non-fiction works included activity books for boys and girls, natural and physical science, geography and travel, and biography and history. While the vast majority of the titles were reviewed positively and were recommended for purchase, Hewins also included negative reviews, warning librarians away from such works as Fannie Belle Irving’s *Six Girls*, criticized by the *Independent* as “the work of a young American woman who can neither spell nor write English” (Hewins “Literature for the Young” [February 1883] 37); Vernon S. Morwood’s *Facts and Phases of Animal Life, Interspersed with Amusing and Original Anecdotes*, called “obnoxious stories conspicuously silly, teeming with errors of fact” (Hewins “Literature for the Young” (February 1883) 37) by the reviewer in the *Nation*; and Martha Finley’s *Elsie’s New Relations*, which Hewins called “a compound of cant, twaddle, mawkishness and descriptions of fabulous wealth.” (Hewins “Literature for the Young [December 1883] 342).

<20>Following the bibliography were “Notes and suggestions from various sources, on reading and the use of books.” While most were presented with no comment, their

meaning being obvious, such as the *New York Herald* column that warned against the dangers of the pernicious dime novels, some merited a proscriptive comment. In regard to a list of recommended children's books that appeared in *Woman's Journal*, Hewins noted that "the "Prudy" children are so mischievous, so full of young Americanisms ... that they are not always good companions for boys and girls. I have known a child's English soiled by reading the Prudy books" (Hewins "Literature for the Young" [March–April 1883] 57). In answer to a reader's question, she warned against the boys' magazine *Golden Days*, saying, while it had a "certain amount of "useful information" padding it, that the boy-reader will entirely ignore in his eagerness to reach Alger's newsboys and Castlemon's hunters." She did, however, find it "less objectionable than the *Boys of New York* or *Frank Leslie's Boys' and Girls' Weekly*" (Hewins "Literature for the Young [July 1883] 132).

<21>Hewins was as concerned for the reading of girls as she was of boys, opining that children's literature needed a series "for girls of twelve or fourteen, telling of the wholesome, sheltered home life of American girls who are carefully brought up, but at the same time have plenty of fun and frolic," similar, no doubt, to her own wholesome, sheltered home life. The Gypsy Brenton books, written for Sunday Schools by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and the *What Katy Did* series by Susan Coolidge (Sarah Chauncey Woolsey) were "as near the ideal type as anything I know." Although "some of Miss Yonge's books...have the happy home atmosphere," they unfortunately were English. Not only did she reject A.D.T. Whitney's books as "far-fetched and mystical" and Miss Warner's (Susan Warner?) as "morbid and full of obtrusive cant," she called Amanda Minnie Douglas' Kathie series "improbable," and criticized *Little Women* as having "too much slang and love-making." The problem, as she saw it, was "what to give girls in place of Mrs. Holmes' stories or weak Sunday-school tales" (Hewins "Literature for the Young" [August 1883] 152).

<22>Similar to Minerva Sanders, Hewins created and distributed reading lists to the public schools and provided collections of books to individual teachers for use in their classrooms and for children to take home, in the absence of school libraries. Upon request she would send them "good stories, interesting poetry, good novels, and anything in which we think they have the slightest interest" in addition to science, history and biography ("Libraries in Relation to Schools" 7). Hewins was a leader in women's participation in the ALA, as well. In 1886, she submitted a paper to the Milwaukee Conference, which was read in her absence (Wiegand 16), and in 1877 she was the first woman to ask a question from the floor at a conference (Wiegand 19). In 1891, she was elected the first female vice-president of the ALA (Wiegand 61); in 1893, received two write-in votes for president (Theresa West

Elmendorf, the first female nominee, received twenty) (Wiegand 82); and, in 1900, was elected to the ALA council (Wiegand 116).

<23>Her influence and reputation extended beyond the public and school library world. In 1888, she contributed an article on “The History of Children’s Books” to the *Atlantic Monthly*, in which she noted that children’s books were “a late growth of literature.” Far from an objective recounting of the history of children’s works, it is a highly subjective critique. She also left no doubt about her view of the purpose of books for children. She praised the works of Maria Edgeworth as including “little people ... well bred, reasonable, and early taught patience, self-control, and the necessity of bearing the consequences of their own follies and mistakes.” She called them “real children” as opposed to those found in “Little Lord Fauntleroy, or Little Women, or any other favorites of to-day” (an opinion not shared by Minerva Sanders). In addition, she singled out Mary Wollstonecraft for stories which “attack cruelty to animals, peevishness, lying, greediness, indolence, procrastination, and other faults of children.” She also recommends Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare* and *Adventures of Ulysses*, and “the really excellent [magazines] for growing-up boys and girls of to-day ... that tells him clearly, precisely, and attractively, something of which he is ignorant.” The “distinctively American characteristics” of Samuel Griswold Goodrich, better known as Peter Parley, were especially commended. Apparently the “American characteristics” did not include the objectionable “Americanisms” of the Prudy books. She concluded the article by noting that fairy tales and folklore were once again popular but warns that the simplified versions being written for children presented the danger that they would lead young readers to “be satisfied with abridgements and know nothing in later years of great originals” (Hewins, “The History of Children’s Books”).

<24>Although the Hartford Public Library did not include a children’s reading room when it opened in 1892, it included a circulating children’s collection and “50,000 children’s books were circulated in the first year” (Lindquist 20). In addition to books for classroom use, Hewins also sent small collections of carefully curated children’s literature to the public schools for the children to review. The reviews were sent to her, and she would later visit the school and read the best one aloud. Finally, in 1904, after years of struggle, Hewins convinced the Hartford Public Library to establish a children’s room and hire its first children’s librarian, Sarah S. Eddy. Hewins continued to review, critique, and promote children’s books, creating displays of Christmas gift books and advising parents on gift book purchases, and contributing articles on book reviewing and on the creation of book lists to *Library Journal* and *Public Libraries*. She also organized and directed the children in the public performance of plays, often playing a role herself (Lindquist 23; Hewins

“How Library Work” 97). Unfortunately, no further information about the titles or subjects of the plays can be located.

Hewins' Legacy

<25>In 1896, Hewins met then-novice children's librarian Anne Carroll Moore on the train while both were traveling to the ALA annual conference in Cleveland. The two became close friends as well as colleagues, a relationship that lasted until Hewins' death in 1926. In 1934, Moore would remember Hewins as “an all-round librarian, skilled bibliographer, informed publicist concerning library interests, book lover, art lover, and sympathetic friend of the small library” (695). These two women would soon be joined by Alice Jordan, who said of Hewins that “her name on a [ALA conference] program in those days promised a fresh, unhackneyed address, lightened by touches of wit, shrewd comment and keen insight into children's like and dislikes” (qtd. in Bush 723). Anne Carroll Moore would go on to become the most recognized figure in the development of American children's librarianship, organizing children's work for the New York Public Library, as well as reviewing children's literature for the *Bookman* magazine from 1928 to 1926 and for the *New York Herald Tribune* from 1924 to 1930 (Root “Part II” 1423). Her motto “The right book for the right child at the right time” has become axiomatic within children's librarianship, school librarianship, and elementary education (Walter 29).

<26>Alice Jordan's career included supervisor of children's services for the Boston Public Library, founder of what would become the New England Round Table of Children's Librarians in 1906, and lecturer in children's services for the Simmons College School of Library Science from 1911 to 1918 (Bush 723–34). Jordan also mentored Bertha Mahony, who opened the Women's Educational and Industrial Union's Bookshop for Boys and Girls in Boston in 1916. Mahony used Hewins' *Books for Boys and Girls* and, later, librarian Clara Whitehill Hunt's 1921 publication *The Bookshelf for Boys and Girls* (an expansion of her 1915 *What Shall We Read to the Children?*) as buying guides for the bookstore and the basis for the list she published, *Books for Boys and Girls – A Suggestive Purchase List* (Bush 725–726). That same year, she traveled to Indianapolis to train with Frederic Melcher, then manager of the Stewart Bookstore. He “was later to say that he learned as much from Bertha Mahony as he was able to teach her in the week she spent under his tutelage” (qtd. in Bush 727). Melcher took her to the 1916 American Booksellers Association annual meeting where she met May Masee, editor of *Booklist*, the ALA's book reviewing journal. “Frederic Melcher, May Masee, and Bertha Mahony would all make incalculable contributions to the development and promotion of children's books over the next two decades” (Busch 727).

<27>This earliest “band of American ladies”—Sanders, Hewins, Moore, and Jordan—were reformers, not revolutionaries. That is, they worked within the existing social and professional systems and structures, and constructions of class, gender, and childhood to improve society according to their beliefs. They did not challenge or attempt to change these systems and structures or these constructions, let alone overthrow them. They accepted and promoted the construction of literature and the public library as forces for individual and social moral improvement according to white, Western, middle-class values and norms.

<28>Through the creation of the new feminine profession of children’s librarianship, they were instrumental in creating the children’s literature industry in the late 19th century. As Melcher stated, “the great difficulty in publishing children’s books in 1898 was the restricted size of the market” (“Thirty Years” 5), and the actions of these women extended and expanded the size of that market. Sanders led the way in increasing the size of that market as well as creating children’s librarianship as a profession by opening the library to the “undesirable” working-class children younger than fourteen and establishing the first reading room and collection specifically for children. The others quickly followed and expanded on her example. They and other children’s librarians, including Lutie E. Stearns in Milwaukee, Clara Whitehill Hunt at Brooklyn Public Library, and Effie Louise Power at Cleveland Public Library (where she mentored a young Langston Hughes) (Jagus 288), developed services and programs for children which incorporated such literature, and recommended books to parents for the home library and to teachers for classroom use, thus extending and solidifying the market for children’s books beyond the private libraries of the upper classes. They created outreach programs that were designed to promote books and reading to the children of immigrants, the poor, and the working class as well as the rising middle class.

<29>They set the precedent for children’s librarians to act as critics of children’s literature, although they constructed their criticism as “recommendations” and “reviews” and their bibliographies as “lists.” Critique and bibliography were fields reserved for male librarians and scholars, while female librarians were trained in “the routine, clerical “house-wifely” tasks of the day-to-day running of the library (Stauffer “The Work Calls for Men,” 316). Theirs was to be a supportive, nurturing role, not the assertive role of the expert. Despite this, through their reading lists, recommendations, and, eventually, book reviews, they impacted not just the number of books sold, but the type and content of those books. They made no secret of their biases and preferences but assumed that parents and teachers either shared their views of what constituted appropriate literature for children or would accept their authority in making those determinations. In this, they were attempting to construct

(or reconstruct) working-class childhood according to the morals and values of their white upper-middle-class girlhoods in the New England and Mid-Atlantic states. Rather than attempting to create a new canon of children's literature, they promoted the canonical works that they had read as children. Hewins' *Books for the Young*, which included most if not all of the books she had been exposed to as a child and adolescent, was singularly influential within both librarianship and the publishing world of its day. It was used for collection development in public and school libraries and as a buying guide by children's booksellers, and also formed the basis for later bibliographies and buying guides.

<30>These women's legacy and influence on children's literature continued well into the twentieth century through their continuing activities as librarians and mentors of librarians, as library educators, and through their and their protégés' work within the ALA. In 1922, the Section for Children's Librarians began awarding the John Newbery Medal to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children annually, with chair Clara Whitehill Hunt, and in 1937, the Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished American picture book for children was inaugurated. Since that time, the Association for Library Services to Children has established six additional annual medals for children's literature, including the Belpre to a Latinx author/illustrator for the best book on the Latinx cultural experience, and the Young Adult Library Services Association an additional six annual medals for literature for young adults. The ALA administers the Schneider Family Award for the best fictional expression of the disability experience for children and teens, and the Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table awards the three Coretta Scott King Awards for outstanding works for children and young adults by African American authors and illustrators. Both associations publish annual lists of recommended works of fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, and other media, as well as Readers' Choice lists. Other sections within ALA also contribute lists of recommended books for children and teens which can be used for collection development. The Rainbow Round Table produces the Rainbow List of quality LGBTQIA+ literature for children and teens and the Social Responsibilities Round Table issues the Amelia Bloomer list of children's and teens' books with significant feminist content.

<31>Although these awards extend far beyond the subject matter that these early librarians would have thought necessary or appropriate and include works for diverse populations that these women would not even recognize, the majority of the awards continue to focus on the subjective "quality" of the literature and its social and moral impact, as determined by committees of librarians, rather than on the objective popularity of the works. At the same time, these awards demonstrate a

continuing commitment to serve the needs of those whom society deems “undesirable” through recommendations, collections, and services.

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