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Librarians and Pop Culture: What's the Skinny, Anyway?

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So, some of you may be wondering if there's any pop culture relevance for librarians anymore. I'm here to tell you the answer is a resounding "Yes!" and to share some of the pop culture references of the last couple of years. Let's dive in!

If you haven't heard of the movie *The Hollywood Librarian: A Look at Librarians through Film* (<http://www.hollywoodlibrarian.com/>), well, now you have! It shows "the realities of 21st century librarianship, including stereotyping, censorship and intellectual freedom, and the total impact of librarians in our culture and society," and it premiered last summer at the annual ALA meeting. The filmmakers are now traveling the country; check your local public library to see if they'll be showing it!

If you're interested in cheesy Indiana Jones-inspired world adventures starring a nominal librarian character, look no further than Flynn Carsen. He's the hero of two TNT made-for-TV movies, *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (<http://tinyurl.com/292d9w>) and *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mine* (<http://tinyurl.com/u4zvl>). A third movie is in production and supposed to be released in 2008. Grab the popcorn and your willing sense of disbelief!

Down under, the Australian Broadcast Company recently aired a six-part mini-series called *The Librarians* (<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/librarians/>). From the press release, "The six-part series centers on the trials and tribulations of Frances O'Brien, a devout Catholic and head librarian. Her life unravels when she is forced to employ her ex-best friend, Christine Grimwood—now a drug dealer—as the children's librarian. Frances must do all she can to contain her menacing past and concentrate on the biggest event of the library calendar—Book Week." A surprise ratings hit for ABC, the series is about to be released on DVD.

Casanova was a Librarian: A Lighthearted Look at the Profession (<http://www.casanovawasalibrarian.com/>) by Kathleen

Low was published last summer. The book "provides a peek at the lighthearted, humorous, sexy and intriguing side of librarians;" check your local library for a copy.

Miss Wilhelmina Zukas continues to have adventures in and around the Bellehaven Public Library in the mystery series from Jo Dereske (<http://www.jodereske.com/work3.htm>). *Catalogue of Death*, the tenth in the series, was published in April 2007. You've got to love a librarian whose epithets include "Oh, Faulkner!"

I like Rex Libris a great deal! This comic series by James Turner (<http://www.jtillustration.com/rex/>) tells the story of Rex, the "tough-as-nails Head Librarian at the Middleton Public Library and his unending struggle against the forces of darkness." Rex has been around a while, and now he protects anything and everything in the library from those who would do harm to it. Eight issues have been released, along with a compendium (with additional stories!). If you like your librarians with big guns, teleportation crystals and buttermilk, here's where you'll find them!

Engineers have Dilbert ... librarians have Dewey! The comic strip *Unshelved* (<http://www.unshelved.com/>) tells the story of the Mallville Public Library, primarily through the eyes of Dewey, the YA librarian. There's a librarian here for everyone—the perky children's librarian, the technophobic reference librarian—even the branch manager. (And Mel is a lot nicer than the PHB!) If you aren't reading *Unshelved*, please start doing so immediately. Trust me!

In a similar but completely different vein, also be sure to look at *Shelf Check* (<http://shelfcheck.blogspot.com/>), another strip about working in a public library, but from a very different perspective.


²Schwartz, Greg. Blogs for Libraries. *Web-Junction*. Available at <http://www.webjunction.org/do/%20/DisplayContent?id=767>. Posted February 22, 2005.

³Schnell, Eric. Where is my manuscript? Part 2. *The Medium is the Message*. Available at <http://ericschnell.blogspot.com/2007/08/where-is-my-manuscript-part-2.html>. Posted August 7, 2007.

A Librarian Mom's Thoughts

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college students still think of librarians in such stereotypical ways? And, what does this mean for those students and adults who need assistance but won't ask because of this image? What does it mean for the future of libraries if their caretakers (librarians) are viewed as unapproachable?

Will our children, and their children, see libraries as welcoming community spaces? We must keep trying to reach children and adults through our services and resources to create richer communities—and to create an image that outweighs the weight 

Who Do They Think We Are?

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⁵Jesella, K., A Hipper Crowd of Shushers, *The New York Times*, July 8, 2007.

⁶Block, M., from Party People, accessed on Ex Libris at <http://www.marylaine.com/ex-libris/>.

⁷Kneale, R., Librarian Image Study at <http://www.infotoday.com/mls/nov02/kneale.htm>.

⁸De Rosa, C., et al., Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership (Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Online Computer Library Center, 2005), Part 6 (Conclusions), page 3. Accessed at <http://www.oclc.org/reports/2005perceptions.htm>.

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Emily Lloyd shares the stories of Jan, who is trapped behind the reference desk, and her clueless boss; the questions and situations Jan deals with regularly make me glad I'm not on a reference desk myself!

There are plenty of other things out there—toys, books, movies, even search en-

gines “modeled” on librarians, one of which was released in late 2007 (findingDucinea, which bills itself as “Librarian of the Internet”). Keep your eyes open—as long as these activities are going on, then librarians have pop relevance! 