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Volume 14  
Number 1

*Lively Librarians Loose in the Limelight:  
Libraries in Popular Media (Spring 2008)*

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July 2014

## Pathfinder to Librarian Likenesses in the Media

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### Recommended Citation

Leslie, G. (2014). Pathfinder to Librarian Likenesses in the Media. *OLA Quarterly*, 14(1), 22-23.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1192>

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*OLA Quarterly* is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

# Pathfinder to Librarian Likenesses in the Media

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**H**ow could the topic “Libraries in Popular Media” be complete without some kind of a “library pathfinder?” This brief article is intended to be a lighthearted path to sources I have found both fun and informative.

Read on and

- find out what to watch so you can see libraries and librarians portrayed in the media;
- review the titles of a few good books about librarians and libraries in the media;
- discover a media shock for your system as you view online clips of a terrific 1947 black and white vocational film called *The Librarian*.

## What to Watch

There are several Web sites that list movies featuring librarians and/or libraries. I have selected four that are current and detailed. URLs are provided, along with quick descriptions.

1. Martin Raish has put together one of the best Web sites listing movies about libraries and librarians. His site is titled “Librarians in the Movies: An Annotated Filmography” and it is current, thorough and very well organized. Libraries as places are found in the B Group. Find his filmography at <http://emp.byui.edu/RAISHM/films/introduction.html>. The site was updated March 1, 2007.
2. A.G. Graham’s Web site “Movie Librarians: Notable Librarians & Libraries” takes a different tack than Raish’s,

and the reviews are more thoughtful integrated comments on the topic than summaries of individual films. The last time I looked, January 1, 2008, the site had been updated. The URL is <http://home.earthlink.net/~movielibrarians/>.

3. Jennifer Snoek-Brown’s 2006 Wisconsin Library Association paper puts the focus on librarians, but of course, often includes the context of the library itself. “Connecting Librarians and Film: Librarian Portrayals and Stereotypes” is an 18 page PDF listing of movies with succinct summaries. Download the PDF at <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/conferences/2006/documents/Librarian-FilmList.pdf>.
4. “Film Librarian” is a Web site that describes itself as “... an online database of films featuring librarians.” The very good lead article by Steven J. Schmidt is titled “Top ten films featuring librarians.” However, I must note that not all the films listed in the database have annotations or reviews, so it is difficult to figure out which films use the library itself as the “star” of the media. The URL is <http://www.filmlibrarian.info/> and it was last updated May 7, 2007.

Check your local public library for holdings of these titles, but you may need to rent or even buy some of them. One tip, if you go to Amazon.com, searching the “Listmania” function will find several good lists of movies for purchase, including “Librarians in the Movies: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: A list by Kitty Bookish-Nerd,” and “Hollywood Looks at Librarians A Listmania! list by Tony B. Small.”



## What to Read

Books—what pathfinder would be complete without them? Here are several titles I have found easy to read and very useful for the topic at hand. It should be noted that these books focus more on librarians than libraries themselves.

1. *The Image of Librarians in Cinema, 1917–1999*, is authored by Ray Tevis and Brenda Tevis. Published in 2005, it is very well written and easy to read. WorldCat shows the book at five locations in Oregon. The ISBN is 978-0-7864-2150-3, it is 240 pages in soft cover, about \$45. What I really liked about this book was the thoughtful analysis around each “librarian character” as fixed in the historical time of the movie, putting a very useful context on the perception of what it was like to be a librarian in a particular era.
2. *Librarians in Fiction: A Critical Bibliography*, is by Grant Burns. WorldCat shows it available in three Oregon libraries and several more in Washington. The ISBN is 978-0-7864-0499-5, it is 191 pages in soft cover, with a 1998 publication date. This is a readable reference book, with very complete details about librarians as characters in books, short stories, and plays.
3. Published in 2007, *Casanova Was a Librarian: A Light-Hearted Look at the Profession*, was written by Kathleen Low. The book has a lot of statistical parsing out of our profession, but the piece dealing with “novelty gifts for library professionals” will be very useful at the holiday season. And look for the

quotes she has pulled out of various films, books, musicals, and poetry.

These quotes go to the heart of the issue of how libraries and librarians are perceived in the popular media. The ISBN is 978-0-7864-2981-3, it is 184 pages soft cover, about \$45. WorldCat shows the book in three Oregon locations and two Washington locations.

4. Should you wish to get a totally out-of-this-world perspective on libraries and librarians, try to find a copy of James Turner’s *Rex Libris : I, Librarian*. In this comic book, Rex fights aliens misbehaving in the reference section and giant evil beings who keep books overdue. WorldCat showed Bend’s Deschutes County Public Library as holding a copy. Published in May 2007 by SLG Publishing, the ISBN-13 is 9781593620622, it is 176 pages soft cover, about \$15. Find out more here [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rex\\_Libris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rex_Libris).

Discover a media shock for your system. View online clips of a terrific 1947 black and white vocational film called *The Librarian* at the Web site <http://www.archive.org/details/Libraria1947>. The film is courtesy of the Prelinger Archives, and was produced by Holmes (Burton) Films, Inc. The film does an amazing job of putting you into a working, 1947 public library. 🌿

