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Librarians and Harry Potter: An Introduction of the SHHH! Personality Assessment Instrument

Connie J. Bennett
Eugene Public Library

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Director,
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Madame Pince, the cranky mistress of the library at Hogwarts, is hardly a role model to emulate. In the librarian's constant search for professional balance between providing generous community access to resources on the one hand—and safeguarding those resources from the public on the other—she's clearly on the parsimonious end of the continuum.

However, in a discussion of the librarian's image—or anything else, for that matter—in popular media, Madame Pince cannot be ignored. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books[1] are nothing if not popular. The seventh and final book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, sold a record-breaking 8.3 million copies in its first 24 hours on sale in the United States, according to Scholastic. "No other book, not even any of the six previous Potters, has been so desired, so quickly. *Deathly Hallows* averaged more than 300,000 copies in sales per hour—more than 5,000 a minute."[2]

Madame Pince provides an ironic contrast to the real-life librarians worldwide who have eagerly put the books into readers' hands, have opened library doors at midnight for special release parties, have sought to connect kids with more books through "read-alike" kits, displays, and lists. And to the real-life librarians who have defended the rights of youth to read the Harry Potter books at all.

Another record achieved by Rowling's books is frequency of challenges. The Harry Potter books were number seven on the American Library Association's list of the 100 most frequently challenged books of 1990–2000. In a 2007 Banned Books Week media release, the ALA reported, "The Harry Potter series ranks as the number one most challenged book series of the 21st Century (2000–2006)."[3] While many articles have been written in defense of the books, there have also been many written against them; Rowling's Madame Pince, guardian of the Hogwarts library's restricted shelves, would stand squarely with the latter group.

J.K. Rowling has acknowledged that the Pince caricature is merely a plot device. During a benefit reading on August 2, 2006 at Radio City Music Hall, answering a question from a librarian in the audience, she said, "I thought you were going to attack me for Madam Pince and I would like to apologize for you and any other librarians (*crowd laughs*) present here today and my get-out clause is always if they'd had a pleasant, helpful librarian, half my plots would be gone. 'Cause the answer invariably is in a book, but Hermione has to go and find it. If they'd had a good librarian, that would have been that problem solved. So, sorry."[4]

With Rowling's books still occupying multiple slots on the best selling books list this week[5] no matter how you count it,[6] perhaps we librarians should move beyond the caricature to look for other aspects of the Harry Potter stories that can speak to our organizational—and thus perhaps to our professional—lives and images.

Libraries have, as organizations, adopted many of the tools and models of the business world to identify work styles, improve communication, reduce workplace conflict, increase team effectiveness and productivity, and for library staff to better understand ourselves and others. Many a library's staff-training day or leadership team retreat has included some type of psychological instrument, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[7] (MBTI™) or the DiSC[8] (originally called the Personal Profile System®). Perhaps you know which co-workers are blue, yellow, red, or green in the Management by Strengths (MBS) survey,[9] or Merrill-Reid has sorted their Social Styles into analytical, driver, amiable, or expressive.[10]

In a similar rubric, we librarians can seek to understand ourselves and others better through use

of Rowling's personality assessment instrument, the Sorting Hat: Hogwarts Houses, hereafter referred to (in honor of librarians everywhere) as *SHHH!*

We are familiar with the basic *SHHH!* categories, named after the four wizards who founded Hogwarts over 1,000 years ago (Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, Salazar Slytherin).[11] In an annual ritual, each new Hogwarts student is sorted into one of the houses based on certain characteristics, revealed by the Sorting Hat's songs[12] as well as dialogue from throughout the seven books. Figure 1 concisely summarizes the information available from Rowling's original texts about the four *SHHH!* categories.

It is crucial for *SHHH!* to work with the original text for both psychological and professional integrity, as there are many,

Figure 1

Crest	House Description
	Gryffindor *You might belong in Gryffindor,* *where dwell the brave at heart,* *their daring, nerve, and chivalry* *set Gryffindors apart.*[13] Said Gryffindor, "We'll teach all those with brave deeds to their name."[14] Students of Gryffindor are typically brave, daring, and chivalrous. Famous members include Harry, Ron, Hermione, Albus Dumbledore, and Minerva McGonagall (head of Gryffindor).[15]
	Ravenclaw *Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,* *if you've a ready mind,* *where those of wit and learning,* *will always find their kind.*[13] Said Ravenclaw, "We'll teach those whose intelligence is surest."[14] Ravenclaw students tend to be clever, witty, intelligent, and knowledgeable. Notable residents include Cho Chang, Padma Patil, and Luna Lovegood (daughter of The Quibbler magazine's editor).[15]
	Hufflepuff *You might belong in Hufflepuff,* *where they are just and loyal,* *those patient Hufflepuffs are true* *and unafraid of toil.*[13] Said Hufflepuff, "I'll teach the lot, and treat them just the same."[14] Hufflepuff students are friendly, fair-minded, modest, and hard-working. A well-known member was Cedric Diggory, who represented Hogwarts in the most recent Triwizard Tournament.[15]
	Slytherin *Or perhaps in Slytherin* *you'll make your real friends,* *those cunning folk use any means* *to achieve their ends.*[13] Said Slytherin, "We'll teach just those whose ancestry is purest."[14] Salazar Slytherin prized resourcefulness, determination, a certain disregard for the rules.[16] Important members include Draco Malfoy, Professor Severus Snape (head of Slytherin) and Tom Riddle (later Lord Voldemort).[15]

many versions of Sorting Hat quizzes available.[17] There have even been some early attempts to link Hogwarts Houses to the MBTI™ —one insufficiently rigorous[18] and one limited to an analysis of the personality of Severus Snape[19]—as well as attempts to connect them to the four humors (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic),[20] and to the elements (earth, air, fire, water).[21]

This new *SHHH!* analysis is based primarily on five sources:

1. Text analysis of J.K. Rowling's seven books.[1]

2. The copyrighted Tough Teams essay[22] by Steven Wille comparing various four-quadrant assessment methods.

3. An exhaustive table of equivalents of four preference personality types (it even includes Jane Austen characters!) from a Web 2.0 site by "2 H."[23]

4. David Keirsey's Temperament Sorter-II, a four preference grouping of the sixteen MBTI™ types.[24]

5. Linda Beren's essays "Essential Qualities of the Personality Patterns"[25] and "Linking Interaction Styles to Other Models."[26]

Figure 2 shows the synthesis of these sources, allowing librarians to match a *SHHH!* category with results from other standard personality and styles inventories, and so move to something linked with the popular Harry Potter books beyond our connection to the biased stereotype of Madame Pince.

To discover patterns in the personalities of librarians, as well as the relationship of the stereotypical image to reality, the best source is Discovering Librarians: Profiles of a Profession,[32] which summarizes the various personality studies of our profession between 1934 and 1994, using several instruments. Mary Jane Scherdin's "Vivé la Difference: Exploring Librarian Personality Types Using the MBTI™"[33] looks at comparisons of the MBTI™ types in librarians as compared to the general population, in librarians by specialty, and by type of library. She reports on the findings of a 1992 ACRL study which found that librarians are more likely than the general population

Figure 2

DiSC®[27]	Gregorc[28]	Merrill Reid[29]	Keirsey Temperament[30]	Interaction Styles[31]	*SHHH!*
D Task Quick	CR Concrete Random	Driver Tell Control	Rationals Thinking/ Intuition (NT)	In-Charge™	Slytherin
I People Quick	AR Abstract Random	Expressive Tell Emote	Artisans Sensing/ Perceiving (SP)	Get-Things-Going™	Gryffindor
S People Process	AS Abstract Sequential	Amiable Ask Emote	Guardians Sensing/ Judging (SJ)	Behind-the-Scenes™	Hufflepuff
C Task Process	CS Concrete Sequential	Analytical Ask Control	Idealists Feeling/ Intuition (FN)	Chart-the-Course™	Ravenclaw

to be Introverted (more interested in the inner world of concepts and ideas than in the outer world of people and things) and Judging (preferring order, closure, and schedules to spontaneity and flow).[34] The most common MBTI™ types among librarians are ISTJ and INTJ, while the least common are ESFP, ESTP, ISFP and ISTP.

Extrapolating from the mapping of Figure 2, this study would indicate that using the SHHH! analysis, 34.6 percent of librarians would be sorted into Hufflepuff, 34.4 percent into Slytherin, 24.9 percent into Ravenclaw, and only 5.9 percent into Gryffindor.[35] (Or as quizilla's "Which Mix of the Hogwarts Houses are You?"[36] would put it, librarians are most likely to be Slytherpuff!) Perusing further breakdown of the figures, technical services staff is more likely to be Hufflepuff, children's librarians to be Ravenclaw, and administrative staff a mix of Slytherin and Ravenclaw. By type of library, public and school librarians are more likely to be Ravenclaw, academic librarians to be Slytherin. Another study indicated that support staff is most likely to be Hufflepuff.[37]

Of course some may feel that a trade-off between the Madame Pince image and that of Slytherin is not necessarily an improvement; I need not point out to librarians that necessities of the narrative arc of the story line (exploring the battle between good and evil) does not necessarily parallel organizational life within libraries. "While we should never put people in boxes and keep them there, it is useful to classify behavior so we can better understand behavior and leverage strengths."[22]

SHHH!, like other personality typing, can be helpful for understanding various perspectives as well as recognizing our own strengths. Librarians, like all humans, are not pre-programmed, but have options in our interpretations and responses to the events and interactions of our lives. Perhaps Albus Dumbledore is speaking to all of us

when he says, "It is our choices, Harry, that show us what we truly are, far more than our abilities."[16]

Or as Harry, himself, echoes in the epilogue to the last book: "Albus Severus … you were named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew … If it matters to you, you'll be able to choose Gryffindor over Slytherin. The Sorting Hat takes your choice into account."

"Really?"

"It did for me," said Harry.[38]

Footnotes

[1]*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (June 26, 1997) (titled *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (July 2, 1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (July 8, 1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (July 8, 2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (June 21, 2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (July 16, 2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (July 21, 2007), all published by Scholastic.

[2]Article by Hillel Italie, AP National Writer, Sun Jul 22, 2007

[3]www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/challengedbanned/challengedbanned.htm

[4]www.accio-quote.org/articles/2006/0802-radiocityreading2.html

[5]This week's top 150 best-sellers: asp.usatoday.com/life/books/booksdatabase/default.aspx

[6]For an article on the change to the New York Times Best-Seller list due to the Harry Potter phenomenon, see archives.cnn.com/2000/books/news/07/21/potter7_21.a.tm

[7]www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics

[8]www.toughteams.com/papers/fix_people.htm

[9]www.strengths.com

[10]www.tracomcorp.com/products_services/social_style/model.html

[11] *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* p. 150

[12] Songs appear in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (p. 117–8), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (p. 176–7) and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (p. 204–7); lyrics also available at hpbeyond.net/hpb/info/song. There's also an original Pokemario song, "Which Hogwarts House Do You Belong In?" (www.mugglenet.com/songs/whichhouse.shtml)

[13] *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* p. 117–118

[14] *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,* p. 204–207

[15] House crests and examples from www.personalitylab.org/tests/ccq_hogwarts.htm <http://www.personalitylab.org/tests/ccq_hogwarts.htm>.

[16] *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* p. 333

[17] Good sources for quizzes include harry-potter-harry-potter-swicki.eurekster.com/sorting+house+quiz and www.harry-potter-games.com/Sorting_Hat_quiz.htm. There's even a LiveJournal quiz, at community.livejournal.com/sorting_elite that was covered in a National Public Radio interview with designer, July 14, 2005. Warning! I know from personal experience that you can waste a lot of time here … so let me also mention my two favorites: http://www.personalitylab.org/tests/ccq_hogwarts.htm and www.thealmightyguru.com/Reviews/HarryPotter/Docs/Quiz-House.html

[18] readerravenclaw.livejournal.com/9441.html?page=2

[19] whysnape.tripod.com/mbti_afic.htm

[20] www.friesian.com/types.htm#potter

[21] www.lelandra.com/tarotbook/harrypotter-elements.htm

[22] www.toughteams.com/papers/4-quadrant.htm

[23] www.2h.com/personality-types.html

[24] http://www.keirsey.com/pum_2.aspx. Keirsey's Temperaments were first introduced in his book *Please Understand Me* (Tandem, 1984), and are based on the MBTI pairs NT, NF, SJ and SP. Others besides Keirsey have created schematics to reduce the sixteen MTBI types to four, notably Isabel Myers' functional pairs (NT, NF, ST, SF) "the most important factors by which to group preferences"(Myers, quoted by Hirsh, Introduction to Type in Organizations, *Consulting Psychologists Press;* 3rd ed., 1990, p. 11).

[25] www.16types.com/Request.jsp?lView=ViewArticle&Article=O ID percent3A59667&Page=OID percent3A59669

[26] www.16types.com/Request.jsp?lView=ViewArticle&Article=O ID percent3A128971&Page=OID percent3A128972

[27] www.discprofile.com

[28] gregorc.com

[29] www.tracomcorp.com/index.asp

[30] www.keirsey.com/pum_2.aspx

[31] Linda Berens, *Understanding Yourself and Others: An Introduction to Interaction Styles,* Telos, 2001.

[32] *Discovering Librarians: Profiles of a Profession,* edited by Mary Jane Scherdin, ACRL, 1994.

[33] Ibid., p. 125-156

[34] Ibid., p. 132-4

[35] Ibid., p. 134

[36] http://www.quizilla.com/users/Ciela13/quizzes (select "Which Mix of Hogwarts Houses are You?")

[37] *Discovering Librarians,* p. 166-7.

[38] *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,* p. 758