

Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915

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Carmichael, J. V. Jr. (1986, Spring). "Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915," *The Journal of Library History* 21: 377-99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25541702>

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Abstract:

It is commonly assumed that female librarians at the turn of the century lacked autonomy, were paid less than their male contemporaries because the male establishment was exploiting them, and served in their librarian roles largely as cultural adornments. The evidence presented in this study suggests that in Atlanta, Georgia, at least, female librarians of the period dominated in library affairs; discrepancies in pay occurred along regional rather than gender lines; and Atlanta librarians and graduates of the Atlanta Library School seemed to move easily from librarianship into marriage without resort to feelings of guilt or "betrayal." Other distinguishing regional attitudes are noted in the correspondence of the School and serve as cautionary tales against wholesale revisionism.

Article:

The first female librarians (1883-1915) of the Young Men's Library Association of the City of Atlanta (YMLA) and the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, which grew out of the YMLA, resemble stereotypical southern upper-class women of the period more than they do the revisionist/feminist historians' descriptions of exploited female library workers.¹ The careers of these southern women demonstrate that, far from being timorous library ladies, they were progressive cultural and social leaders who for the most part were admired and even cherished by their library boards and their public. At least two of them enjoyed a considerable degree of professional renown. Paradoxically, they and the women they helped to train and school in library work were as likely to leave library work for marriage as they were to remain with it, yet they felt anything but betrayal of a "sacred trust" if they left their profession.² To a degree, they shared a sense of missionary enterprise with other librarians of their era, but the difference between them seemed to lie in the fact that the Atlanta librarians viewed the public library as a means to better southern conditions, rather than as an educational or cultural end in itself.

There were several reasons why Atlanta's women met so little resistance when they entered librarianship and why they became powerful leaders. Because the male population had been decimated during the Civil War, southern women of every class had already had exposure to many varieties of work, some in traditionally male occupations.³ Library work was perceived as appropriate women's work in Atlanta in 1883, but not primarily for reasons of financial expedience. Nor was it only because the city had not yet produced any capable male librarians. Rather, in the years following the Civil War, the shortage of teachers had led southern states to accept females in an educational role. Georgia became the second southern state to found a state normal college in 1889.⁴ There were other more fundamental reasons, however, why women met so little resistance in librarianship. Even before the war, southern women were extolled in political rhetoric as the crowning glory of the southern system, and their hard labor, personal sacrifice, and heroic effort during the war strengthened their image as the moral backbone of southern society. They thus quite naturally assumed the initiative in many phases of cultural development after the war.⁵ Women were responsible, in fact, for raising the money for purchase of a lot for the first YMLA building in 1880.⁶

While the image of the southern lady demanded that she be strong, it also demanded that she be a belle.⁷ The mystique of the southern belle required that she be adept in the "management" of men and that she rule by

indirection, charm, and diplomacy while seeming to give credit to the men. The considerable administrative skills of the early librarians were softened by their charm and their deference to their boards—with one notable exception, Katherine H. Wooten. On the whole, the early librarians considered family background and connections, tact, charm, deportment, and the sympathetic understanding of southern problems and biases important to the southern librarian's career.

The career experiences of the early graduates (1906-1915) of the Carnegie Library School of Atlanta were not always so positive. In the less-developed areas of the South where some of them worked, male chauvinism, backward library practices, crude library facilities, and prejudice against public libraries provided obstacles. In addition, it was tacitly assumed that the graduates accepted the biracial system in the South, and those who did venture to other parts of the country sometimes expressed discomfort in racially integrated libraries. Also, the early graduates of the School were not always the intellectual equals of the first female librarians of Atlanta. The good example of the librarians who taught them usually fired the enthusiasm of even the dullest student, however, and, through contacts with the School and the alumnae association, a network of shared identity gradually evolved. In spite of individual differences, several characteristics distinguish both Atlanta's female librarians and their students as southern female librarians of this period.

"Acceptable Guardians ... "

Callahan has traced the growth of the YMLA (1867-1902) from a struggling subscription library to a public library in the modern sense,⁸ the first such building in the South to be built with Carnegie funds. From 1902 until 1905 the Carnegie Library had an informal training institute for new employees headed by Anne Wallace. From 1905 until 1930 the Carnegie Library housed the Carnegie Library School of Atlanta, the first southern library school, and until the 1930s the only accredited southern library school. From 1883, when the first female librarian was elected at the YMLA, until 1949 women ran the Atlanta library and, of course, also ran the school after it was founded. All of the school's pupils were female until 1930. Considering women's prominent role in library affairs, it is necessary to reiterate briefly how they came to occupy this position, and then to describe some common characteristics among them.

From 1867 until 1883 the YMLA employed six male librarians in succession, and none proved entirely satisfactory. Several of them were disabled Confederate veterans.⁹ The eccentricities of one of them, Charles Herbst, included writing the names of delinquent members in the flyleaves of books.¹⁰ The sixth male to be employed, Allie C. Billups, claimed that the demands of his office did not permit him time to collect members' dues, and he was finally dismissed on 23 February 1883 for "violating his duty in closing and leaving [the] library locked up without leave,"¹¹

Women had meanwhile gained a steady hold on library affairs. They had been granted membership in the YMLA in 1873, and by 1880 the board had granted life membership to a woman. The president of the YMLA, Julius Brown, publicly acknowledged the debt the YMLA owed to its female constituency when the cornerstone of its first building was laid in that same year: "Women's hands and women's smiles made the money with which these lots were bought,"¹² he said, referring to the numerous bazaars, concerts, and entertainments women had organized to raise the necessary money.¹³ Meanwhile, in an effort to modernize the library, the board decided to compile a catalog of the YMLA's holdings with the assistance of Miss Fannie Wallace, who was elected assistant librarian when the incumbent, A. M. Greene, resigned in January 1883.¹⁴ On the advice of notable public librarian William Frederick Poole, his protegee, Mary A. Beane of the Brookline, Massachusetts, Public Library, was also temporarily engaged to oversee the reorganization of the library,¹⁵ When the board discharged Allie Billups as librarian, no suitable replacements applied for the position. On the recommendation of several of the board members, a female member, Lida A. Field, who was a native of Dahlonga, Georgia, and had taught for some time in Atlanta, was nominated and elected librarian by a vote of 11 to 2. The board expressed its confidence that she would make "an acceptable guardian of the library and a guide to the younger members."¹⁶

With the exception of Lida A. Field, who was librarian of the YMLA from 1883 to 1889, all of the first six female librarians were Atlantans with impeccable social credentials. Frances Alexander (Fannie) Wallace (1889-1892), Anne Nicholson Wallace (1892-1908), Julia Toombs Rankin (1908-1911), Katherine Hinton Wooten (1911-1914), and Delia Fore-acre Sneed (1914-1915) were all daughters or granddaughters of pioneer stock. To claim that their families were antebellum aristocrats perhaps forces the issue; nevertheless, the fathers of the Wallaces and Sneed served the Confederate army with distinction,¹⁷ while Rankin was the niece of Confederate statesman Robert M. Toombs. while Rankin was the niece of Confederate statesman Robert M. Toombs.¹⁸ Wooten's grandfather reportedly saved the Sacred Heart Church in Atlanta from Sherman's torch,¹⁹ and he took great pride in being one of the disfranchised during Reconstruction.²⁰ The families of these women helped to carve a settlement from the wilderness in the antebellum years, and to rebuild Atlanta from the ashes after the war. Alexander M. Wallace was collector of customs under President Grover Cleveland; J. W. Rankin was a prominent merchant and druggist; Greenberry Foreacre, Sneed's father, was a railroad pioneer who settled in Atlanta in 1858.²¹ Foreacre served as provost-marshal of Atlanta before the Union occupation.²² The daughters of these prominent men had reason to be conscious of their southern heritage, and none more so than the Wallaces, whose half-brother, an editor, was shot and killed by a carpetbagger in 1867 for his published views.²³

All of these early librarians were educated privately. Sneed received part of her education abroad. Only Rankin and Sneed had formal library training: Rankin received her certificate at the Pratt Institute in 1898, and Sneed graduated from there in 1905.²⁴ As a whole, the experience that the early librarians brought to their job was limited. Sneed worked for a year as secretary for the Georgia Library Commission in 1905-1906, while Rankin's only work outside the Atlanta library consisted of organizing the Birmingham Public Library in 1904.²⁵ None of the other librarians had ever worked in libraries other than the YMLA or the Carnegie. Professional qualifications, therefore, were not the primary consideration in the hiring of the early librarians. There was a benevolent provincialism in library affairs in the very early years, and it extended to hiring practices, where personal recommendations were often the only criteria for judging applicants for positions. This provincialism even assumed a somewhat nepotistic flavor in the hiring of Anne Wallace, sister of Fannie, to be her assistant, and for a short while in 1883 their sister Minnie also worked in the YMLA with Fannie Wallace and Lida Field.²⁶

In professional activities, however, the first female librarians were far from parochial. Anne Wallace became first vice-president of ALA in 1902, three years before the occupation of that position by a female was mandated by a special bylaw.²⁷ Ironically, she was the only southerner to hold an "executive" position (honorary or otherwise) in the national association until 1936. In other spheres of activity, Atlanta's female librarians were equally prominent. Sneed became president of the League of Library Commissioners in 1908. Anne Wallace, Rankin, and Sneed all served terms on the ALA Council. Wallace also addressed the ALA on southern library development at the Asheville Conference in 1907, while Wooten updated the same topic before the Washington, D.C., delegates in 1914.²⁸

These early Atlanta librarians saw state and national activities as one of the hallmarks of their professional commitment. It is to the credit of Anne Wallace that she first persuaded the Atlanta library board to pay for the librarian's expenses to ALA conferences in 1896, long before such financial endorsement was common.²⁹ Rankin used the occasion of her summer vacation in Europe to attend the International Conference of Librarians in Brussels in 1910, but, of course, she paid her own expenses there.³⁰ The board, however, independently voted to grant Anne Wallace leave with pay when her doctor recommended a sea voyage for exhaustion in 1907.³¹ These women were in the public eye on a regular basis in the women's section of the Atlanta newspapers, and they were heeded, indeed, pampered in some instances, by their boards. The Atlanta librarians were respected outside the South as well. Some measure of the esteem that Anne Wallace generally commanded may be gleaned from Andrew Carnegie's unusual wedding gift to her: a \$5,000 bond.³²

Though it is obvious that the early Atlanta librarians were committed to their work, four of the first six librarians—the Wallaces, Rankin, and Sneed—left librarianship for marriage apparently with few qualms of

conscience. Sneed later claimed that she had only worked as a librarian until such time as her son should attain his majority.³³ During this era, of course, married women did not work, although widows like Sneed,

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and perhaps wives of very improvident husbands, were accepted in the workplace. The main motive for work seems to have been in nearly all cases financial rather than altruistic. When Anne Wallace's husband died suddenly in 1921, for example, she returned to library work as head of the struggling Drexel Library School in order that her son might finish his education.³⁴ Yet even Wallace, the prime mover in southern librarianship at the turn of the century, viewed her profession as part of the stuff of life rather than as a panacea for society's ills. When she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Georgia in 1929 for her professional achievements, Wallace (now the widowed Mrs. Howland) told her students she would prefer to continue being addressed as Mrs. Howland. "Any person with sense who works hard can get a D-R before her name," she quipped, "but it takes a real woman to be a M-R-S!" "name," she quipped, "but it takes a real woman to be a M-R-S!"³⁵

A final distinguishing characteristic of Atlanta's early librarians was their progressive attitude toward disadvantaged populations. Anne Wallace set the precedent in this area with her distinctly sympathetic efforts on behalf of blacks. When the YMLA disbanded and turned over its stock to the new Carnegie Library of Atlanta—of which Anne Wallace had been "acclaimed" the head—she suggested saving the old YMLA shelving for a black library branch.³⁶ She also secured an agreement "through Mr. [Robert Curtis] Ogden of New York," president of the Conference for Education in the South, to educate any woman she might select in practical library work "when" a black branch was secured.³⁷ H. H. Proctor, the black Atlanta Congregationalist minister, petitioned the board for a black branch in 1904, and a special committee of the board, including Wallace, drew up a request for \$10,000 from Carnegie.³⁸ Though Carnegie granted \$30,000 for two branches in 1906,³⁹ only one was built—for whites. Not until 1921 could the city be convinced to appropriate money for maintenance of a black branch.

Julia Rankin began a pilot program for library services to the blind, and helped the Jewish women of the city to secure a depository at the Jewish Educational Alliance.⁴⁰ Kate Wooten opened depositories at factory sites and telephone exchanges.⁴¹ Generally speaking, the service orientation of the early librarians was not diminished by local biases. Even though not much progress was made in special services for Jews, and none was made in services for blacks by the public library, the attitude of the librarians seems remarkable considering anti-Semitic sentiment in Atlanta, such as became evident in the famous Leo Frank trial in 1915,⁴² and the deterioration of race relations, culminating in a dreadful riot in 1906, which affected all segments of Atlanta society from 1890 to 1908.⁴³

The one sour note in this collective biography concerns the career of Katherine Hinton Wooten. Wooten became increasingly insistent in her demands for a pay raise from the city in 1914, and in spite of appeals from the board to the city on her behalf, the city refused to approve a raise. Then, in an unprecedented action, Wooten resigned, at the same time issuing a statement to the Atlanta papers outlining her complaints. Her successor, Delia Foreacre Sneed, who had been principal of the library school since 1908, later said that it had been evident from the beginning that events were "approaching a catastrophe of some kind."⁴⁴ It is difficult to determine whether the fact that Wooten was the only Catholic among the early librarians militated against her in subtle ways; certainly, she grew up in circumstances that were culturally distinct, if equally elevated, from the other librarians. More significantly, however, she had asked to be relieved of the dual responsibility of managing the school and the library.⁴⁵ Her negligence of the school may have aroused resentment from Sneed and others to whom the school, with its program of in-service training,⁴⁶ was an integral part of library operations.

Sneed wrote in 1915 that Wooten was "completely down and out as far as the library world is concerned, the city government, and her own trustees.... She furnished her own complete demolition in her last months here and her own worst enemy could not wish to see it completed further."⁴⁷ Though the circumstances of the Wooten case are obscured in the official records, it is evident from the confidential correspondence of the school that favoritism and jealousy played no small part in Wooten's downfall. The inappropriateness of her appointment of a new assistant librarian gave rise to Sneed's claim that Wooten was "injudiciously fond" of the girl, who was promoted beyond her capabilities.⁴⁸ The official report that Sneed made to the board in 1915 referred only to Wooten's negligence of book selection, a duty that Sneed felt was the primary work of a head librarian.⁴⁹ Obviously, other factors were involved in Wooten's disgrace. None of her actions, however, incensed Sneed more than her abrasive public posture with regard to her salary; the resulting embarrassment to the board had been "mortifying," the resulting embarrassment to the board had been "mortifying."⁵⁰

The Wooten case demonstrates that there were limits to what a southern lady librarian could do to better her position in Atlanta in 1914. Above all, a southern lady librarian must always behave as a lady and retain a respectful attitude toward her board. She must accept disappointments gracefully. The aftermath of Wooten's actions was predictable: the enthusiastic, somewhat informal spirit of civic enterprise and cooperation that had characterized relations between the library and City Hall in the early years abated. From about 1915 forward, formal accountability was the keynote of library administration in Atlanta.

In several different respects, Atlanta's early female librarians conformed to societal expectations defined by regional values: the cult of the southern lady demanded that business acumen, political savoir faire, and cultural leadership be cloaked, or at least lightly veiled, in charm and deference to the male power structure; the primacy of marriage and the family, more intense in the South than elsewhere, urged them to forsake their career for the more basic work of raising a family; the myth of the southern belle, to which spinsterhood was anathema, exerted a similar influence; and the broad service philosophy of American public librarianship, while democratically correct, was transformed and modified by the librarians to suit the realities of local conditions.

After a woman was established as Atlanta's librarian in 1883, it was taken for granted that the librarianship would belong to a woman, The Carnegie Library School of Atlanta received no applications from males until 1930, and then probably only because the school had just moved to Emory University, and monies from the Rosenwald Fund had become available to urge more males into librarianship in the South. If inequalities existed between the salaries of male and female librarians, as Arthur Bostwick noted in his address to the 1909 graduating class of the library school, the news incited nothing more than "a cordial tea-time reception."⁵¹

That the head librarians of Atlanta were able to resign themselves to the lack of library services to blacks while publicly and in the classroom espousing a progressive social spirit may reflect their cognizance of the overriding paucity of library services to all segments of southern society during this period. Even the little steps that were taken by Anne Wallace and others toward changing the situation, while they may seem patronizing in retrospect, were unusual for that era. Atlanta itself, the breeding ground of New South progressivism, was an anomaly among the sleepier towns of Georgia like Augusta and Savannah. "I am not sure what the rest of the state thinks of Atlanta," wrote Sneed, "Those of us who live here have our dark moments of suspecting that Atlanta is sometimes ill spoken of by her elder sisters."⁵² Nevertheless, the Atlanta spirit apparently did not encompass defiance of racial conventions, or the outright revolt of southern women who were the backbone, if not the *raison d'être*, of the southern system.

The Pioneer Graduates

One gauge of the influence of Atlanta's female librarians on southern librarianship lies in the careers of the graduates of the Carnegie Library School of Atlanta. A hitherto untapped documentary resource, the alumnae files of the school (now housed at Emory University), reveals that the school served as a virtual employment agency in its early years. The school exerted pressure, when necessary, on capricious employers. In many cases, the school engineered successive appointments throughout its graduates' careers. All of the librarians, and particularly Delia Fore-acre Sneed, who was principal of the school from 1908 to 1914, negoti-

ated salaries, smoothed over differences between graduates and employers, and always offered voluminous advice on the organization and administration of libraries.

For the purposes of this study, a 40 percent random sample of the graduates of the first ten years' classes (1906-1915) was taken from the Graduate Handbook of 1917, excluding the members of the classes of 1916 and 1917. The resulting sample, numbering 40, was distributed among the classes as follows: 1906, 5 graduates; 1907, 4; 1908, 1; 1909, 5; 1910, 4; 1911, 2; 1912, 6; 1913, 5; 1914, 3; 1915, 5.

The corresponding alumnae files of the Carnegie Library School of Atlanta were then pulled and carefully read to obtain the following information: (1) age when application to the school was made; (2) where the graduate was born, or her principal residence when applying to the school; (3) education; (4) previous work experience; (5) where the graduate worked: library, by type; (6) whether or not the graduate later married; if so, whether she returned to librarianship or not; (7) father's occupation, if known; (8) religion, if known; (9) whether or not the graduate was an ALA member in 1915; (10) whether or not the graduate was included in *Who's Who in Library Service* (1933); and (11) whether or not the graduate left the South during her career; if so, did she return? The results are summarized in table 1.

As might be expected, nearly all (38) of the sample graduates came from the South. Anne Wallace originally planned to have a representative from each of the southern states in the early classes,⁵³ but most applications came from Georgia, and particularly Atlanta, where word of the school and its work was spread through word of mouth or through lectures at the Girls' High School and at Agnes Scott Institute. Of the 40 graduates included in the sample, 11 had attended Girls' High. Another condition that favored the predominance of local girls was the reluctance of families or guardians to let their daughters or charges live alone in a strange city. The school anticipated this fear by keeping a list of boarding houses where the proprietor was "known."list of boarding houses where the proprietor was "known."⁵⁴ The expense of travel and boarding was also a factor in limiting the geographic distribution of candidates.

"Southern conditions" demanded women of a certain social standing or breeding. At least until 1915, personal attributes of good breeding, tact, and appearance vied with performance on the entrance examination as the principal qualifying factor for admission. Although the father's occupation of only 12 of the sample graduates is known, they include the daughter of Clark Howell, the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, the daughter of the state chemist, and the daughter of a member of the State Board of

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Table 1
Collective Profile, CLS Graduates, 1906-1915
N = 40
 (40% Sample)

AGE		CAREER: LIBRARY TYPE	
18-20 yrs.	7	Public	9
21-25 yrs.	16	C.L. Atlanta	5
26-30 yrs.	10	Academic	7
31-35 yrs.	6	State Commission	1
36 or older	1	State Librarian	1
	<u>40</u>	State Archivist	1
(Avg. age = 24.35)		Other State	1
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION		Government	1
Georgia	16	Army	1
Ga., Atlanta	10	Library School	2
Alabama	4	School	1
N.C.	4	Business	1
Virginia	2		<u>31</u>
Bermuda	1	Fired, quit LS	1
Florida	1		<u>32</u>
Indiana	1	No career; died, etc.	8
Texas	1		<u>40</u>
	<u>40</u>		
EDUCATION		MARRIAGE	
High School		Married	19
Public	28	Returned to career	(7)
Private	7	Gave up career	<u>12</u>
Tutor, etc.	5		
	<u>40</u>	LEFT SOUTH	
College		Left South	10
None	10	Returned	(5)
Partial	1	Stayed Away	<u>5</u>
Certificate	22		
A.B.	4	INCLUDED IN WWLS (1933)	16
M.A. (not LS)	2	ALA MEMBER IN 1915	19
M.L.S.	1		
	<u>30</u>		
	<u>40</u>	RELIGION	
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE		Catholic	1
Teaching	6	Protestant	
Lib. Asst. (LA)	9	Baptist	3
Tutor	2	Episcopal	7
Writer	1	Presbyterian	5
Librarian	1	Methodist	3
Teaching; LA	2	Not Known	21
Business; Teaching	2		<u>40</u>
Govt.; LA; Librarian	1		
Bookstore; LA	1		
Teaching; Librarian	1		
	<u>26</u>		
No Experience	14		
	<u>40</u>		

Note: Excludes characteristic Father's Occupation, since so few are known.

Medical Examiners. There are also the daughters of two other doctors, two ministers, two merchants, a photographer, the niece of a professor in the state university, and the sister of the state entomologist. In addition, the sample includes the daughter of a First Family of Virginia (FFV).

The recommendations contained in the files reveal the kinds of qualities that were deemed desirable in applicants. These qualities included good "breeding," which in the South could simply mean being known by the person recommending the girl through family or other social connections. "[C]omes from a family of culture and refinement," said one such recommendation from Atlanta's prestigious Washington Seminary.⁵⁵ The later principal of the school, Susie Lee Crumley, recommended one graduate to the mayor of Shreveport in 1923 as "a Virginia lady of gentle birth and distinction of mind."⁵⁶ If not strictly exclusive, the school clearly recognized the advantages of being well born: "She comes of an excellent family, has been well educated, & has all the advantages of travel."⁵⁷

Other recommendations strike a similar chord: "her mother is a woman of strong character."⁵⁸ "[S]he is one of the brightest girls I have ever met from one of our best families";⁵⁹ "recommendations on coming to us were of the very best, and from some of the most prominent people in Montgomery."⁶⁰ Physical attractiveness (and lacking that, physical stamina), bookishness, organizational ability, and, above all, tact were also considered desirable qualities, especially since, as Sneed said, "the idea in the library world is fixed that southern girls are more apt to have a pleasing personality . . ."⁶¹

The entrance examination was a preliminary, but not an absolutely definitive indicator of success. Depending on class size, makeup, and withdrawals, candidates were accepted with scores as high as 96/100 and as low as 56/100. The school was capable of defending physical infirmities of graduates, such as slight deafness, chronic fatigue, or the wearing of eyeglasses from the scrutiny of employers, once the girls had become alumnae. If not openly "elitist," a term that seems redundant when applied to a segregated society, the school certainly favored the girl who had "profited by the advantages of birth and education in a refined home."⁶²

"Southern conditions" also embraced a wide variety of locales, physical facilities, and local situations that often demanded an uncommon degree of tolerance even from native southerners. In North Augusta, South Carolina, one library organizer had to contend with an eighty-seven-year-old YMCA librarian who was blind and opposed to the public library idea. She struggled for three years to convert him to modern library practice, and when he finally died and his position became available to her, the city proved equally recalcitrant in endorsing a public library.⁶³ From Cordele, Georgia, one graduate confirmed Sneed's apocryphal classroom vignette about "a certain library in South Ga. into which one made one's entrance by crawling over the desk. Well, we're the guilty party!"⁶⁴ In Talladega, Alabama, the library was "the special pet of some of the rich people there."⁶⁵ In the Quitman, Georgia, subscription library in 1909, the only encyclopedia was a Chamber's published in 1869.⁶⁶ The heat was a problem everywhere in the South; even in Atlanta's state-of-the-art building, summers were "hot as fire."⁶⁷

The school was not provincial in its outlook, however, for, by 1911, fifteen graduates had gone to work with the New York Public Library and its branches and the school received "splendid reports of them."⁶⁸ One surviving graduate of the class of 1914 remembered that some of the "New York girls" lived in a boarding house bordering Central Park and that the establishment had staunchly maintained its identity as a "Southern home."⁶⁹ The reactions of the graduates who did venture out of the South provide a barometer of the range of southern attitudes on race, the North, and other cultural differences. Of the sampled graduates, ten left the South, and five eventually returned. More probably would have braved a job in the North or elsewhere had not such factors as fearful guardians or parents, dependent relatives, the cost of travel, and the higher cost of living outside of the South discouraged them.

The main disadvantage with living in New York, according to Wooten's report on the New York girls, was that "they [were] constantly broke as living is so high."⁷⁰ At least one graduate found it exciting to work in a children's room in a New York library because "the class of children we deal with is very different from those we come in contact with in Atlanta."⁷¹ Indeed, northern conditions were so different that not all graduates felt entirely comfortable with the changes. One graduate working in Portland, Oregon, found that the class of people who came to the library were "very much the same as my own West Enders [in Birmingham, Alabama.]" In a more candid vein, she added that her customers included "some cunning Japanese and some little *darkies*. I am glad to say that only one darky has been in so far but that is enough for me." Ironically, this graduate was hired in Portland because it was taken for granted that she could tell "Uncle Remus stories." A visit to Chicago both delighted and shocked her, for at the Stanfield Park branch of the library, she found the second floor "full of dirty Jewish children, but what interested me most was the basement. It was full of mothers who were taking shower baths. Each woman was given a towel and a piece of soap ... I could hardly tear myself away it was so much fun." She received a final shock in Chicago when she learned that Miss Bond, one of the assistants, who was "exceedingly nice and pleasant ... was a Negro! I knew she was different but I had decided she was a Jew."⁷²

The attitude of other graduates toward immigrants was as pronounced as the one quoted above, if more sanguine. One young lady relayed the news from Chapel Hill that her classmates in New York wrote "very enthusiastically about their foreign children, so I suppose they don't mind the dirty immigrant kisses of little Jacob Arenowitches or Isaac Schwartzes [*sic*] being planted on their 'neat' shirtwaists."⁷³

Most of the graduates were mute on racial issues, however, if for no other reason than that discretion seemed advisable due to more racially progressive attitudes of librarians from other parts of the country. Lloyd Josselyn, in the Jacksonville, Florida public library, frankly warned one graduate that if "one does not really enjoy the work, be it waiting on the general public, cataloging uninteresting old volumes, or working with dirty bright little Jews, then I do not want such an assistant on the Library Staff."⁷⁴

Sneed, then principal of the school, admitted in 1913 that the "New York Public Library ... can make use of a number of assistants who are too young or too inexperienced to go to other places but who work well under direction."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there were probably other factors than work experience to explain why more of them did not stay in more established, modern facilities in other regions. At least one such factor was prejudice against the North. "Mother has such a distaste for New York as a home for a young girl," wrote one alumna, declining a job offer in New York. She added, however, that she was strongly "tempted to join that crowd."⁷⁶ The school, which could be sympathetic to the graduate who wanted a "real" library, could also take the parents' side. As Sneed consoled one distressed family member, "I do not know why we would seem to feel that to be a few hundred miles away from home is less undesirable [*sic*] than several thousand, since in either case so far as protection is concerned a young woman is thoroughly thrown on her own resources, but somehow, I do feel that it would be better for Emily to be in the neighboring state of Texas."⁷⁷ It was not until the 1920s that the graduates, and women generally, traveled with more ease. By that time, one veteran of the early days of the New York girls could report from Long Island that she was "gasping for breath" since "nine tenths of the southern population known to me [is] in New York."⁷⁸

One startling statistic that emerges from the sample is the number of librarians who married: 19, or 47.5 percent. Although Garrison reported that only 25 percent of the graduates of Smith, Wellesley, and Vassar who were between twenty-six and thirty-seven years of age in 1903 were married,⁷⁹ as compared to only 18 percent of the pre-1900 graduates of the University of Illinois and only 7.4 percent of women librarians in 1920, nearly 50 percent of this sample married. More than 30 percent never returned to librarianship.

Unlike Garrison's examples, the southern graduates who married did so with impunity, and even relief, as had the librarians at the Atlanta library. They left librarianship *as* had Anne Wallace, "radiantly happy," according to Julia Rankin, and with "about as much interest in library affairs as Mrs. Noah had."⁸⁰ Sneed reported in 1913 that the former Miss Wallace "looks well and happy and has forgotten all about libraries."⁸¹ She wrote to another graduate that "we have had numberless changes since you were here but they have all been caused by matrimony and everyone who has left seems more than happy in their new life."⁸²

Defection was not seen so much with disparagement as with indulgence. Given the opportunity to marry, southern women of this period seemed to feel that marriage, while not compatible with a career, was certainly a viable, perhaps an enviable, alternative to a life alone. "I am leading what most people consider a very humdrum life," wrote one young housewife, complacently. "I nurse the children myself."⁸³ Rankin expressed mock horror at one of the staff of the library who "has left us for a mere man ... who she will take unto herself in July," but Rankin herself left the library to marry later that year.⁸⁴ To one librarian who seemed doubtful about her forthcoming marriage, Sneed reassured her that marriage "must be epidemic in the library world as we have nine marriages to our credit in less than a year. If you need any encouragement I will tell you that they all seem radiantly happy."⁸⁵ Rankin declared that "we have so many Library babies now that we feel quite as conversant with babies as with catalogues, and frankly the babies seem to be much more compensating."⁸⁶

There may have been, and probably were, in the southern school at this time committed professionals who would not have given up their careers even had marriage been an alternative, but if so, they do not seem to have been noticeable as a group during this phase of southern librarianship. Like Anne Wallace Howland, most of the married women who returned to librarianship did so after the death of a spouse, when economic factors, rather than purely professional concerns, were again an issue in their lives.

One final point that bears examination is associational leadership. Two of the sample graduates held national offices, one as president of the Association of State Librarians and one as president of the Association of American Library Schools. Three held offices in their state associations, and one held office in the regional library association. Remembering that only one southerner after Wallace held an executive post in the ALA before 1936, it is perhaps surprising that so many graduates, 47.5 percent, or nearly half, had joined the ALA by 1915, particularly since, for many of them, there was "no hope of getting off [to ALA conferences] & besides its [*sic*] too expensive a trip for the short absence."⁸⁷ The regional underrepresentation in national leadership positions can be explained partially in terms of the South's voting strength (see table 2). Librarians of the thirteen Confederate states constituted only 6.77 percent of ALA membership in 1908 and only 9.97 percent by 1929. Only the Southwest and the Northwest had fewer librarians. Strangely, the South also had the largest proportion of librarians who were ALA members in 1908, 21.69 percent as compared to 15.95 percent in the Northeast, and nearly as many in 1929-39.40 percent as compared to the Northeast's 39.41 percent. Because conventions were usually held outside the South, fewer could attend ALA conferences, and thus southern librarians were less well known nationally than those from other regions. The low "return" on ALA membership in terms of leadership positions may have been one of many reasons, along with cultural, historical, political, and economic reasons already familiar to students of southern history, that southern librarians formed a regional association in 1920, in spite of the misapprehension of at least one national leader from Indiana, Mary Ellen Ahern, that "a regional body would weaken the national one."⁸⁸

Conclusion

Although several tendencies characterize Atlanta's female librarians and the early graduates of their school, they were not radically different from their northern contemporaries. In fact, there were many similarities: most importantly, both constituted an educational, social, and cultural elite and were capable of patronizing or imposing their views on disadvantaged minorities. As noted above, however, elitism is redundant, perhaps irrelevant, in a segregated society. In general, the South was more homogenized ethnically than the North, and racial polarities were the basis of a legalized caste system. Within the proscriptive limits of this narrow system, even the smallest official gesture of minority recognition, like Anne Wallace's efforts to secure services for blacks, seems liberal, if not heroic. Considering the racial violence of the period during which she acted, and the discouragement northern philanthropists and educators were experiencing in Atlanta at the hands of the legislators,⁸⁹ her gestures of recognition were most courageous. The principal difference between the elites of the North and South was that the southern elite, through bitter experience, was aware of the region's peculiar difficulties, its poverty, its political turbulence, and the backward state of its ed-

Table 2
ALA Membership by States
1908 and 1929

Region ¹	1908			
	Librarians ²	ALA Mem. ³	Percent Region's Total	Percent Total ALA Members
West	620	105	16.93	5.93
Northwest	414	77	18.59	4.35
Middle States	2738	538	19.64	30.39
Northeast	5809	927	15.95	52.37
Southeast	466	98	21.03	5.53
Southwest	<u>108</u>	<u>25</u>	23.14	1.41
Total	10155	1770		
13 Confederate States	553	120	21.69	6.77
1929				
West	4210	1106	26.27	9.99
Northwest	1561	565	36.19	5.10
Middle States	10705	3971	37.09	35.88
Northeast	10762	4242	39.41	38.33
Southeast	2200	902	41.00	8.15
Southwest	<u>873</u>	<u>281</u>	32.18	2.53
Total	30311	11067		
13 Confederate States	2802	1104	39.40	9.97

¹Excluding the District of Columbia. Regional definitions from Howard W. Odum, *Southern Regions of the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 286. Odum includes West Virginia in the northeastern states and Texas in the southwestern.

²Source: U.S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 5, 1909; Louis R. Wilson, *The Geography of Reading* (Chicago: ALA and University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 175.

³Source: *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 2 (July 1908): 49; *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 23 (September 1929): 731.

educational resources. Changing laws had not brought racial equality; experimental farming had not broken the hold of King Cotton; nor would the public library or the schools transform overnight the South's largely illiterate population.⁹⁰

The southern female librarians described in this paper had realistic expectations of their careers. For them, the profession of librarianship was not a panacea for society's ills, nor did it provide a forum for issues of sexual inequality. If males dominated positions of leadership in the library profession, they did so outside the South. Southern communities of this period simply could not garner the kind of financial support necessary to attract many male librarians, especially those from other parts of the country. Even if salaries had not been a stumbling block, however, regional attitudes on *race* probably would have been. There were exceptions, of course: Lloyd Josselyn at Jacksonville Public Library and Carl A. Milam at Birmingham Public Library, to name only two. Also, Louis Round Wilson at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a native southerner, was for many years the leading spokesman of southern librarianship and was president of ALA in 1936—but only after he had assumed the deanship of the University of Chicago's Library School. On the whole, however, librarianship in

the South clearly belonged to women, and never more so than after formal training was institutionalized in Atlanta in 1905.

Atlanta's female librarians and the progeny of their school did, in fact, exert a great deal of power, however demurely they may have exercised it. Their power was not prescribed by their pay, since salaries were relatively low indicators of personal worth in a society still staggering from a paucity of all varieties of public institutions.

Notes

Abbreviations

AHS Atlanta Historical Society

Atlanta, Georgia

ALA American Library Association (Archives, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois)

APL Atlanta Public Library

(Board of Trustees' Minutes, Director's Office, Atlanta Public Library, Atlanta, Georgia)

CLA Carnegie Library of Atlanta

(Scrapbooks, Atlanta Public Library, Atlanta, Georgia)

CLSA Carnegie Library School of Atlanta Alumnae Files, Division of Librarianship, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

YMLA Young Men's Library Association of Atlanta (Archives, Special Collections, Atlanta Public Library, Atlanta, Georgia)

1. For example, Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: Free Press, 1979), esp. pp. 173-185.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
3. Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 110-111.
4. A. D. Mayo, "Southern Women in the Recent Educational Movement in the South," U.S. Bureau of Education Circular of Information, no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 40-57.
5. Scott, *The Southern Lady*, pp. 134-163, esp. p. 152; John P. McDowell, *The Social Gospel of the South: The Women's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Mrs. J. C. Croly, *The History of the Women's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G. Allen, 1898), pp. 357-369, esp. 358-359.
6. Mss. notes of president's speech, 28 June 1880, YMLA Minutes.
7. Anne G. Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 3-50; Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 6263, 178-179.
8. Betty E. Callaham, "The Carnegie Library School of Atlanta (1905-1925)," *Library Quarterly* 37 (April 1967): 149-179.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
10. *Atlanta: A City of the Modern South* (New York: Smith and Durrell, 1942), pp. 169-170; Franklin M. Garrett, pp. 169-170; Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Its Events* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1954), I: 761. Garrett includes a listing of all of the YMLA librarians.
11. YMLA Minutes, 23 February 1883.
12. Mss. notes of president's speech, 28 June 1880, YMLA Minutes.
13. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, pp. 759-761.

14. YMLA Minutes, 19 February 1883.
15. Ibid.
16. YMLA Minutes, 3 April 1883.
17. George W. Clower, "Col. Alexander M. Wallace, 1822-1901: Pioneer George W. Clower, "Col. Alexander M. Wallace, 1822-1901: Pioneer Atlanta Citizen," *Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 12 (March 1967): 26; Delia F. Sneed, "Sketch of D. G. Foreacre" (manuscript), Greenberry J. Foreacre Papers AHS; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, I: 486-488.
18. Obituary of Julia Rankin Foster (clipping), CLS Scrapbooks, vol. 7.
19. "Katherine Hinton Wooten," in "Trail of the Pioneers," pp. 197-198 (manuscript), Sarah Huff Collection, AHS.
20. Ibid.
21. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, I: 486-488.
22. Ibid., p. 523.
23. Ibid., p. 824.
24. Pratt Institute, Graduates' Records.
25. Ibid.
26. YMLA Minutes, 2 May 1883.
27. Letter from Joel M. Lee to author, 10 October 1984.
28. Anne Wallace, "The Southern Library Movement," *ALA Bulletin* 1 (July 1907): 63-67; Katherine H. Wooten, "Library Development in the South," *ALA Bulletin* 8 (July 1914): 158-166.
29. Librarian's Report, 4 June 1901, YMLA Scrapbook.
30. Minutes, July through September, 1910, APL Minutes, vol. 3.
31. Minutes, 12 March 1907, APL Minutes, vol. 2.
32. *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 February 1908, p. 5.
33. Delia F. Sneed to Frances S. Bradley, 24 February 1915, CLSA Bradley file.
34. Letter from Wallace Howland to the author, 22 July 1984.
35. Telephone interview with Wallace Howland, 18 September 1984.
36. Librarian's Report, 1 October 1901, APL Minutes, vol. 1.
37. R. R. Bowker, "Women in the Library Profession," *Library Journal* 45 (1 July 1920): 590.
38. Minutes, 5 July and 2 August 1904, APL Minutes, vol. 1.
39. Minutes, 1 December 1906, APL Minutes, vol. 1.
40. Minutes, 8 August 1911, APL Minutes, vol. 3.
41. Carnegie Library of Atlanta, *Annual Report, 1912* (n.p.).
42. Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).
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45. Julia T. Rankin to the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, 9 September 1911, APL Minutes, vol. 3.
46. Callahan, "The Carnegie Library School of Atlanta," pp. 152-153.
47. Delia F. Sneed to Frances S. Bradley, 23 March 1915, CLSA Bradley file.
48. Delia F. Sneed to Frances S. Bradley, 24 February 1915, CLSA Bradley file.
49. Librarian's Report, 8 December 1914, APL Minutes, vol. 4.
50. Delia F. Sneed to Frances S. Bradley, 24 February 1915, CLSA Bradley file.
51. Clipping, *Atlanta Journal*, 1 June 1909, CLS Scrapbooks, vol. 1.
52. Librarian's Report, 9 February 1915, APL Minutes, vol. 4.
53. Anne Wallace to Laura Elmore, 30 May 1905, CLSA Bibb file.
54. Katherine Wooten to Janet Berkeley, 28 August 1913, CLSA Berkeley file.
55. Recommendation from E. C. Weimar, 2 May 1913, CLSA Berkeley file.
56. Susie Lee Crumley to L. E. Thomas, 23 February 1913, CLSA Berkeley

file.

57. Mrs. Frank O. Foster (Julia Rankin) to Delia F. Sneed, 14 May 1914, CLSA Chamberlin file.
58. Recommendation from Mrs. B. C. David (1909), CLSA Daniel file.
59. Recommendation from E. P. Martin (1914), CLSA Hendrick file.
60. Delia F. Sneed to S. E. Bradshaw, 29 June 1912, CLSA Pitcher file.
61. Delia F. Sneed to Ethel Pitcher, 29 April 1915, CLSA Pitcher file.
62. Recommendation, 26 May 1908, Ella May Thornton file.
63. CLSA Pauline Benson file.
64. Helen Brewer to Susie Lee Crumley, 30 March 1915, CLSA Brewer file.
65. Julia Rankin to Frances Archer, 11 April 1911, CLSA Archer file.
66. Ethel L. Daniel to Julia Rankin, 27 October 1909, CLSA Daniel file. Ethel L. Daniel to Julia Rankin, 27 October 1909, CLSA Daniel file.
67. Julia Rankin to Katherine Seon, 14 August 1909, CLSA Seon file.
68. Julia Rankin to Pauline Benson, 5 June 1911, CLSA Benson file.
69. Interview with May (Smith) Rayle, 19 August 1983, Atlanta, Georgia.
70. Katherine Wooten to Ethel Pitcher, 30 October 1911, CLSA Pitcher file.
71. Katherine Seon to Julia Rankin, 2 September 1909, CLSA Seon file.
72. Louise Roberts to Susie Lee Crumley, 20 February 1916, CLSA Roberts file.
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79. Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, p. 176.
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82. Delia F. Sneed to Nan Strudwick, 13 January 1913, CLSA Strudwick file.
83. Mattie Bibb to Julia Rankin, 12 May 1911, CLSA Bibb file.
84. Julia Rankin to Eva Wrigley, 5 June 1911, CLSA Wrigley file.
85. Delia F. Sneed to Maude Durlin, 18 March 1912, CLSA Kemp file.
86. Julia Rankin to Mrs. William Edmundson, 5 June 1911, CLSA Bibb file.
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88. Mary Edna Anders, *The Southeastern Library Association, 1920-1950* (Atlanta: SELA, 1956), p. 8.
89. Wingo, "Race Relations in Georgia," pp. 185-216.
90. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), p. 400; George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 258-276.