

BOOKWOMEN

*Creating an Empire in Children's
Book Publishing, 1919–1939*

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Protecting Books

*Anne Carroll Moore, Alice Jordan,
and the Public Library*

IN 1919, FREDERIC MELCHER, editor of *Publishers Weekly*, and Franklin K. Mathiews, chief librarian of the Boy Scouts of America, hit upon the idea of a Children's Book Week to encourage juvenile reading. The two men had strong feelings about the subject; Mathiews, in particular, had waged a series of bitter battles against Edward Stratemeyer, author and editor of books Mathiews considered morally unfit for America's youth. Five years earlier, an article he wrote for the *Outlook* castigating Stratemeyer's use of such unsavory topics as murder and arson in books for juveniles had caused a distinct though temporary decline in Stratemeyer's sales.¹ Now, continuing his campaign in the cause of improved books for children, Mathiews joined Melcher to promote Book Week, an annual event designed to emphasize better reading choices than those offered by Stratemeyer and his ilk. The two men had more than one reason for viewing the public libraries in New York and Boston as ideal locations to inaugurate their plan. Not least, Melcher and Mathiews realized that in selecting those public libraries for Children's Book Week activities, they were, by extension, inviting Anne Carroll Moore and Alice Jordan, the supervisors of children's work in those libraries, to host the event.

Anne Carroll Moore has been variously described as a shepherdess, the godmother of fairy books, a pioneer, a world citizen, a commander in chief, and a comrade in arms.² Carl Sandburg called her "an occurrence, a phenomenon, an apparition not often risen and seen among the marching mannikins [*sic*] of human procession."³ Most often, she was known simply as "my dear Miss Moore." Some of her correspondents belonged to a who's who of American letters and progressive reform; others—branch librarians

in their first professional jobs, young patrons of the library, grateful parents—were known only to her. Moore was already forty-eight years old and a veteran librarian and literary critic when Melcher and Mathews invited her to host Book Week.

Well aware of Moore's reputation as the nation's foremost authority on children's books, both as a librarian and as a children's book critic, Melcher and Mathews regarded her as an ally who agreed with their dual goals: more and better books for children, and more and better children's authors.⁴ The planners of New York's recently opened public library had generously designated well over three thousand square feet, albeit in the basement, for children and their books. This design reflected a growing need: NYPL circulated over two and a half million books a year through the children's room in its first year of operation.⁵ Its two large rectangular rooms, separated by an arched alcove, with polished wood walls, and windows set deeply to allow children sitting room, had earned the Children's Reading Room a reputation as "the showplace of the city." Moreover, since the conclusion of the First World War, NYPL had become the acknowledged center for municipal entertaining. Outdoor ceremonies for visiting international dignitaries routinely took place on the grand steps leading up to the library.

Individuals concerned with children's books often visited Moore's office at NYPL—the famous room 105—to consult her or to attend one of her well-known and frequent celebrations in the children's room. Frances Clarke Sayers, Moore's successor at NYPL and her biographer, acknowledged that library trustees, architects, editors, artists, and representatives of foreign countries came "to check all points of the compass" with Moore. Her dedication to multiple uses of the Children's Room encouraged individuals both in and out of the library movement to view NYPL as a professional meeting place. Consequently, the room was regarded as the accepted "hatching ground" for new concepts in children's books, and became associated with an interprofessional collegiality that, Sayers remarked, "created an outward flow of shaping waters that edged on beaches far beyond the margins of the library."⁶

Moore was born in Limerick, Maine, on July 12, 1871, and nicknamed Shrimp by her seven older brothers. Her first reading experience was with the Gospel of St. John, and throughout her life she insisted that while she loved books, she had never been bookish. She was particularly close to her father, a lawyer and president of the Maine state senate in the 1850s, whom she described as "a boy at heart." He encouraged independence in his

daughter, and from him Moore developed the strong notion of childhood that shaped her professional endeavors. She hoped, in fact, to read law with her father, although she realized full well that “women lawyers were far and few” at that time. She recalled particularly how moved she was by cases involving children affected by divorce, homelessness, or abuse. She also considered her father to possess “qualities of pioneering,” primarily because he purchased a large tract of woodland and swamp considered a “wasteland.”⁷ Watching him convert the worthless property into usable land inspired Moore, creating lifelong passions both for nature and for progress. After the death of her parents when she was nineteen, Moore attended the library school at Pratt Institute in New York, then under the direction of Mary Wright Plummer, an early leader in the library movement. Moore went to Pratt initially not to study children and their books but to pursue her interest in research and reference work, hoping that library work would offer a “quaint, congenial life.”⁸

Boston, one of the nation’s oldest literary cities, was also a good choice for Book Week activities. In advance of most American municipalities, Boston had consistently demonstrated its commitment to reading by providing generous financial support for its public library. As a result, BPL had been, until recently, second only to the Library of Congress in the number of volumes it owned. The prominence of the library derived not only from its size, however, but also from the crucial leadership it had provided to the national library movement. Alice Mabel Jordan, as supervisor of children’s work at BPL, was, like Moore, considered by many to be an expert in children’s books. For that reason, she was routinely consulted, both in her official capacity at BPL and as the founder of the New England Round Table of Children’s Librarians (NERTCL), which she had established some years earlier.

Jordan was born in Thomaston, Maine, on November 7, 1870, at a large colonial home in the center of the seventeenth-century shipbuilding town. The Jordans were powerfully linked to Thomaston through their family’s own connection to the sea; three generations of Jordan men had been sea captains, including Joshua, Jordan’s father. The presence of maps and charts in the home, as well as her father’s tales of the sea, familiarized the child with geography at an early age; indeed, her two older siblings, Edwin and Mary, were born on their father’s ship, *Pride of Port*. He loved children and frequently sang and chanted stories and fairy tales to them “with great gusto and drama.”⁹ Her mother instructed her four children—James was the youngest—about literature and art, reading “quantities of poetry” from

Longfellow and Whittier. Likewise, several English and American children's magazines, including the *Peep-Show*, *St. Nicholas*, and the *Nursery*, were available in the Jordan home.¹⁰

When her father retired from the sea and moved the family to Newton, Massachusetts, Jordan was ten years old. Her parents enrolled her in school and she later graduated from Newton High School. After graduation, she taught at the Carroll School, a private school in West Newton. She became interested in library work as a result of her association with Margaret McGuffey, an employee at the Boston Public Library and daughter of the creator of the famous McGuffey's readers.¹¹

As young, professionally trained women, Moore and Jordan were quickly drawn to national library politics, caught up in the crucial decisions facing their profession at the beginning of the twentieth century. As noted, early library politics reflected attitudes about women and children that were in a state of renegotiation, the result of which was an ambiguous mixture of traditional and new attitudes, strikingly evident in annual ALA conventions. By the 1890s, a cadre of outspoken women librarians within the organization, including Moore and Jordan, converged around the issue of library services for children. In addition to Plummer, whom Moore credited with being the first librarian to offer children's work departmental status, Moore and Jordan admired Clara Whitehill Hunt of the Brooklyn Library, Frances Olcott of Cleveland, and especially Caroline Hewins, librarian at Hartford, Connecticut, and legendary for her work on behalf of children's books.¹² These women constituted part of a professional nucleus that helped to develop the "library faith," a subcategory of the progressive "gospel" of social welfare. Articles of the faith among its members included beliefs in the resilience of children, the "near-sacred communion between reader and text," the uniqueness of each child, children's services as comprising an "egalitarian republic of readers," the power of literature to enhance the intellectual and moral capacity of individuals (and establish improved relations among them), and the "friendly and unsentimental older sister's attitude toward children." These tenets laid the groundwork for "the religion of children's librarianship" and represented "the collective wisdom of the profession."¹³

This nucleus of women professionals persistently urged the ALA to offer formal acknowledgment of the importance of library work with children, although organizational resistance to their demand stemmed from a powerful historical precedent against age segregation. Despite recent trends toward viewing children as a distinct group, the ALA, and much of America,

continued to expect children to read adult books as part of their preparation for adulthood. Adulthood would be rigorous and demanding; childhood was no time to mislead children about their future. Activities failing to portray adulthood realistically deserved scrutiny.¹⁴

Yet as libraries moved from closed to open shelf systems, adult patrons of public libraries complained that children were nuisances. Sensitive to this criticism, the ALA became increasingly amenable to segregated library services so that children would “cause no annoyance to the adults.”¹⁵ As an added bonus, age segregation would also facilitate supervision of children’s reading selections and behavior, goals well within the province of the library’s activities.¹⁶

Establishing formal organizational support for children’s work, however, implied a willingness to place women in charge, another source of ambivalence for ALA leadership. Women seemed the logical choice to supervise children in public spaces, as they traditionally did in private, and most librarians agreed that “sympathetic and sane-minded” women were likely to have a positive effect on children.¹⁷ Unlike other feminized professions, indeed, women were allowed full ownership of the professional hierarchy of children’s services.¹⁸ Yet, as noted, library leaders were uneasy about immoderate female sway over children’s reading.

To offset the perceived dangers of feminization, library leaders frequently urged discipline in the library and advocated the recruitment of women who did not necessarily care for children. As one leader put it, “assistants who are ‘fond of children’ are often the very worst persons to do work in a children’s room.”¹⁹ The message, if not the method, was clear: supervise children, but not so much as to rob them (particularly boys) of natural curiosity and personal exploration. Sensitive to this message, librarians sometimes became defensive. In 1897, a Denver librarian reassured readers that children were not unduly supervised in the library: “Having got his card [the young boy] walks into the room in a subdued sort of way and wanders aimlessly about for a time with half an eye on the people at the counter, as if expecting every moment some lover of childhood would rush in and impose upon him books which he ought to read.”²⁰ To avoid the problem of excessive supervision, the librarian’s desk in Denver was placed “at such a distance that she would seem not to be acting as an overseer, but simply as a good-natured person willing to give assistance if asked.”²¹

In 1900, eighteen years after Caroline Hewins made her initial appeal to the ALA, the organization established the Children’s Section, thereby extending formal recognition to its work with children.²² This decision was

multilayered, benefiting adults as much as children. But once the ALA accepted its role in children's work, it heartily recognized such work as an appropriate space in the public library for women, creating, in effect, a group of experts (children's librarians) within a group of experts (the ALA). In the process, professional opportunities for women in the library were enlarged by this "natural" power base within which they might establish and exert authority. It might have been less clear at the time that claiming children as their special province also carried less positive consequences for library women. By accommodating the prevailing gender ideology of "spheres," women accepted the necessity of segregation—figurative as well as literal—for themselves as well as for children, along with pay consistently among the lowest in the profession. For the moment, however, Moore and Jordan began their careers in the context of perceived victory within the ALA, a victory that carried implications for professionalization, including education.

Many women in the ALA approved of the organization's broad educational aims. If, as Jordan believed, the librarian was to be "the major liaison between a person and a book," education was crucial.²³ Regarding the library as the pinnacle of those connected with books, Moore agreed. But, they argued, a generalist library education like that offered by the New York State Library School at Albany would be inadequate in a society that placed a high premium on specialization. To remain valuable, librarian experts were needed in various subject areas. Moore and others insisted that expertise have a place on the older, loosely defined list of professional qualifications: culture, technical training, and executive ability. Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, therefore, women librarians founded specialized training programs in children's work. Normally within established library schools or within their own libraries, these courses generally focused attention on children's literature, the creation of a children's room within the library, and methods for dealing with the special interests and needs of young patrons.

Aside from her ALA activities, Moore also worked full time as a librarian. After graduating from Pratt in 1896, she was appointed to head the new children's library there, one of the first rooms in the nation specifically designed for children.²⁴ For ten years that position provided her with important opportunities to experiment with professional self-expression, fine-tune her attitudes about the role of the library in children's literary lives, and develop her management style. These activities set the pace for the remainder of her working life.

Determined from the start to cultivate a powerful relationship between

children and the library by whatever means necessary, Moore insisted on gaining personal knowledge of children who patronized the library and on making the library a visceral experience for them. Young patrons were allowed to help adults in the children's rooms, performing such tasks as shelving modification, putting up books, and even mending. Together with an open shelf system, such efforts, she believed, enhanced the relationship between the library and the child and resulted in "marked improvement" in "personal appearance and . . . bearing," as well as "contented minds and subdu[ed] animal spirits."²⁵ Evidently, children became civilized by handling books as well as by reading them.

The concept of the library as a visceral experience found special expression in storytelling and hands-on exhibits, which contributed to a nationwide trend.²⁶ Storytelling, in fact, was a hallmark of children's work at Pratt. Marie Shedlock, Moore's friend and an internationally known storyteller, persuaded her that reading aloud was a lost art containing the power to encourage an appreciation of "the best in literature." Shedlock's goals for stories were to give "dramatic joy," to develop a sense of humor, to present by means of "example, not precept," and to develop the imagination—all qualities of the literature Moore favored.²⁷ Chronic book shortages, particularly in rural school districts, gave storytelling strong practical application. The storyteller Ruth Sawyer complained that "West Virginia supplies no textbooks; there were none here, either to be read or studied out of, save those few the teachers had bought and brought. Most of the children had never owned a book. Not one of them had ever heard a story before."²⁸ Moore utilized storytelling "not for amusement . . . not to tempt children to come to the library . . . not to help in discipline," but to bring children to books.²⁹ To raise its prestige, Moore enlisted the help of literary figures like William Butler Yeats for the children's room, a practice she continued throughout her career.³⁰

Likewise, Moore viewed art as critical to enriching children's experience with books, and art was central both to her exhibits and to the decorating scheme of the children's rooms. Colors and lighting were soft, vases of fresh flowers sat on librarians' desks, and artwork was often drawn from the work of well-known illustrators, such as Howard Pyle. Most often, exhibits were either biographical or natural; Moore regularly created displays featuring famous authors in celebration of their birthdays, or exalted nature with seasonal arrangements of flowers, leaves, and plants. Taken together, story hours and exhibits complemented each other by placing children's literature in what Moore considered a "living context."³¹

Moore's work eventually came to the attention of Arthur Bostwick, still struggling to organize NYPL's circulation departments after consolidation. Like many libraries in the nation, NYPL had established children's rooms, but by the end of 1905, it seemed clear to Bostwick that a supervisor was needed to assume direct responsibility for children's work, now in desperate need of organization and leadership. Moore's innovative activities with children made her an appealing candidate for the position and, in 1906, he called upon her to bring her ideas and organizational skill to NYPL. Especially impressed by her attention to efficiency, Bostwick intended to make the new supervisor a member of his board of experts.

Without hesitation, Moore accepted Bostwick's invitation despite the overwhelmingly transitional state of the library overall and the daunting task of organizing the haphazard conglomeration of work with children that she faced in particular. Some of Moore's library friends in other cities, in fact, viewed NYPL as a "wasteland" and a "wilderness,"³² but just as her father had worked wonders with a wasteland, so could she. Always interested in new professional experiences, Moore found the change refreshing and brought to NYPL the skills she had honed at Pratt.

Moore proceeded to recreate her successes at NYPL. Traditional age restrictions related to book borrowing were eliminated, still a relatively new and controversial idea, although in some cities restrictions either never existed or had already been removed.³³ Story hours, successful at Pratt, were embraced with equal enthusiasm at NYPL. During her first year as supervisor, Moore offered two hundred story hours in the children's room, sometimes conducted in the foreign languages of various New York neighborhoods; by 1913, the annual number had risen to almost two thousand, excluding those held around the city.³⁴

Under her direction, NYPL's children's room became a prime example of the literary and civic infrastructure being designed for children, an infrastructure that operated on both the individual and collective level.³⁵ Viewing the library as more than a quiet place for reading and solitude, Moore made the children's room available to a variety of organizations, thereby enlarging the scope of the library activity and challenging its traditional definition. Scouting chapters used the library as both a meeting place and a source of suggestions for plays and stories, and on occasion missionaries visited the children's room to get book ideas to take back to the field.³⁶ In 1908, Moore organized some of the nation's early library clubs, and within four years NYPL was home to forty-two clubs, twenty-five for boys and seventeen for girls.³⁷ Their purpose, in her mind, was to "deal . . . with the

restless [children] who throng the streets and make trouble because of nothing better to do.”³⁸ The club season corresponded roughly to the calendar school year, running from October 1 until the end of May. Club titles often expressed a particular literary interest, such as the Shakespeare Club or the Dickens Club. Clubs were supervised by NYPL staff, but remotely; members selected officers and established their own reading agendas. Intraclub competition was encouraged, as were debates over current issues designed to make youngsters more politically aware and active. The term “library club,” therefore, is somewhat misleading since the clubs often had little to do with books. Activities also included woodworking, basketry, domestic science, or physical exercise. Agreeing that they needed to satisfy their “natural desire for self-development and expansion,” Moore even allowed dancing in the children’s rooms. The name is also misleading since clubs frequently met outside the library, in places such as juvenile court rooms, club members’ homes, and settlement houses.³⁹

By opening the children’s rooms to such activities, Moore increased library patronage and demonstrated agreement with views of the library as a civilizing agent that struck a balance between freedom and order, frequently a class concern since certain children were thought to be in special need of civilizing. A Buffalo librarian, for example, declared that “these children are almost all from the poorer classes, some of them . . . from the very poorest. . . . The lesson hardest for them to learn is the proper handling of books; and this, considering their homes, is not surprising.”⁴⁰ Thus, the children’s rooms were part of what Christine Pawley calls “a class system unobtrusively at work”: grown up in the context of industrialization and profound social change, libraries operated as a values-transfer mechanism.⁴¹ Story hours and reading clubs instructed children that reading was not only important as an individual activity, but also served as rehearsals for adult sociability, since positive childhood group experiences might encourage sturdy social and political engagement in the future.⁴²

Furthermore, this practice illustrated her belief that children’s lives—along with the library—were “expanding.”⁴³ She considered the library a “mental resource” with ties to, but a distinctive role from, schools or social organizations. The library’s greatest attribute was its voluntary nature, Moore believed, because it underscored self-education, one of the library’s main goals.⁴⁴ Bostwick, while admiring Moore’s work, sometimes reflected his colleagues’ concerns about female influence; he insisted that expanded activities should not be allowed to replace the primary mission of the library: reading.

In 1900, the library trustees appointed Alice Jordan, then thirty years old, to direct its work with children. She, like Moore, viewed the library as “nurseries of citizenship”; books, she claimed, had the power to preserve American ideals “in the hands of boys and girls. . . . Through books Americanism can be taught. . . . Save the children for the country and save the country through the children.”⁴⁵ But Jordan also believed that children’s rooms were “nurseries of the imagination” and, before assuming her responsibilities at BPL, visited Moore at Pratt. The visit profoundly affected Jordan, largely because she found a “kindred spirit” in Moore. By sharing her beliefs about children’s services with Moore and others, Jordan left New York with a clarified vision of children’s services at BPL.⁴⁶ Subsequently, Jordan mimicked Moore’s decorating scheme, including large, round study tables with green shaded lamps, original Pyle artwork hung on the lower level, and a comfortable second floor balcony. The typical decor of children’s rooms made them “metaphoric homes,” part of the way bookwomen advocated for the rights of children.⁴⁷ The ways in which they defined the space for children in libraries revealed their belief that children were entitled not only to the functional literacy they encountered in the classroom, but also to social, imaginative, and self-directed literacy.⁴⁸

Jordan accomplished her tasks so successfully that library administrators quickly broadened the scope of her function to include supervision of the children’s work in branch libraries. In 1906, as an outgrowth of her expanded role, Jordan invited children’s librarians from ten public libraries in the greater Boston area to meet and discuss policies related to children’s work. From that meeting, the New England Round Table of Children’s Librarians (NERTCL) was launched. Jordan chose “Work with Schools” as the topic for its first meeting, an issue of great personal interest to her since she was particularly disturbed by the lack of school libraries.⁴⁹ Many shared her concern. Librarians, frequently regarding the public library as “the people’s university,” desired to attach themselves to the public school system as its logical complement. Students, they argued, learned to read and then had nothing to read. Moreover, the infamous recitation system taught students the skill of reading without cultivating good taste. Such “formal” teaching was, therefore, not “intelligent” teaching; it lacked the critical component of instilling comprehension. Moreover, the boredom of reciting passages they did not understand heightened pupils’ interest in sensational books, resulting, librarians claimed, in a “literate but nonliterary” population. This made teachers the unwitting allies of the very books against which they fought. On this basis, librarians insisted on a role distinct from,

but strongly connected to, schools. Libraries would supply what the schools did not: good taste in literature. For their part, teachers resisted viewing librarians as educators and colleagues, and were inclined instead to view them as clerks. Jordan helped to ease such professional tensions by using NERTCL as a training forum for her “girls.”

Schools and libraries had a long history of defining their relationship, but there was essential agreement that the library complemented the school. Mutuality was the goal, but libraries were generally regarded as “helpers.” Recognizing the need to cultivate cooperative working relations with educators, Jordan instituted several services to schools, including special borrowing privileges for teachers and special schoolbook lists, complete with budgetary suggestions. To some extent, such measures were successful, for by the end of the nineteenth century, the National Educational Association allowed librarians to present their views at national conferences, and established a library section within its organization. Further, educators began to acknowledge the importance of creating libraries within public schools.

Pleased with the activities of NERTCL, Jordan was nonetheless concerned that it lacked the formal structure required of a professional organization. In 1912, therefore, she drew up a constitution that, in part, authorized the election of officers.⁵⁰ Now, as a professional woman’s organization, NERTCL developed aims and activities reflecting progressive ideals. Like Moore at NYPL, Jordan encouraged librarians to become involved in charitable work that was, she believed, intimately connected to library work. Boston City Hospital was a regular visitation site for Boston’s children’s librarians, because Jordan believed that it represented a “new opportunity for extending library work with children.”⁵¹

In part, expanded activities at NYPL and BPL reflected a degree of enthusiasm for progressive reform, particularly those intended to Americanize immigrants or “civilize” children. Determined that neither the new urban-industrial order nor the changing cultural composition of America should subvert their vision of a cultured, educated citizenry, reformers moved into urban neighborhoods to provide various types of assistance to those considered at high risk for poverty, criminal behavior, or unemployment. For adults, the settlement house movement provided a host of services, including food, clothing, job training, and language and civics instruction. For children, settlements provided day care, recreational activities, and summer camps. Despite periodic accusations that they had become “too tender-hearted,” resembling “welfare workers” with a “missionary spirit,” librarians increasingly embraced home, hospital, and settlement house visitation.⁵²

Such activities, attached to coercive as well as to humanitarian ambitions, became a significant part of the librarian's daily routine. One of the first orders of business for a librarian was to familiarize herself with the neighborhood in which the library was situated, often by studying and contacting organizations she believed would benefit from her help, or with which she could establish cooperative working relations.

Librarians often divided cities into territories to facilitate such investigation, and results were submitted to the chief librarian of the city's public library. Librarians at the Logan branch of the Minneapolis Public Library, for example, sometimes went shopping with children, recommended books containing medical advice, assisted with finding jobs for homeless individuals, provided instruction on mothering skills, attended PTA meetings, advised wives about intemperate husbands, counseled children about their spiritual lives, and even offered fashion advice.⁵³ Although, as Abigail Van Slyck comments, libraries remained tightly connected to "elite roots," librarians were nonetheless a visible presence in America's communities, redefining the role of the library and expanding it beyond the erudite confines of tradition.⁵⁴ Moore and Jordan were in the forefront of such changes.

As she brought organization to NYPL, Moore began to believe that the real wasteland was not NYPL but children's literature itself. She rejected the "stepping-stone" argument, that is, that poor books would lead the way to better ones. A good children's library, to Moore's mind, included books that were, conveniently, steady sellers, including the work of Beatrix Potter, Mary Mapes Dodge, Kenneth Grahame, Kate Greenaway, Arthur Rackham, Leslie Brooke, N. C. Wyeth, Howard Pyle, Louisa May Alcott, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Altsheler, and Frances Hodgson Burnett. Overall, she approved of books that encouraged an appreciation of tradition, such as fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and folklore; books involving nature or animals, such as Beatrix Potter's, or books generally viewed as "classics," such as the writing of Washington Irving. Moore's canon generally reinforced—or at least, did not challenge—prevailing social norms, and avoided topics generally considered unacceptable for children's books. Likewise, good books were not "sensational," meaning they should not cause anxiety or agitate unhealthy imagination about such things as murder or kidnapping. They should, conversely, be soothing. The lessons derived from approved books were social rather than moral in any religious sense, reinforcing positive qualities (courage, loyalty) rather than instilling fear of, or interest in, negative behavior. Moore generally preferred illustrations that were idyllic. Gentle pastel illustrations, she believed, ideally complemented

the text and encouraged children's imaginations. Stories and illustrations, in short, contained happy endings.

These books were readily available, Moore conceded, but competed with books of distinctly poorer quality. Publishers' attitudes about children's books were, to Moore's way of thinking, narrow minded and careless, owing to the uncertainty of the market for children's books.⁵⁵ Mediocrity in children's book publishing was the norm, she declared, and she was tired of it. By "mediocre," Moore often meant "sentimental." Sentimental books, for Moore, might be old or new; she did not value a book simply because it was old, nor dismiss a book only because it was new. "Pollyanna," she noted dryly, "may be more wholesome than 'Elsie Dinsmore,' but she is no more real."⁵⁶ Although she approved of "classics" of an earlier generation, she considered herself progressive, and did not perceive the canon of "good" children's literature in a static manner. Indeed, she regarded the body of children's literature as a work in progress.

Sentimentalism annoyed Moore for reasons other than its potential to dilute American reading taste; she also objected to its formulaic plot lines, stock characters, and simplistic solutions, particularly in books intended for girls. She detected "poverty" in literature for girls, characterized by obsession with "self-analysis and the reformation of characters . . . introspective, sentimental, moralizing and didactic." "Why," she wondered, "do the writers for girls always send their heroines to the country to be made over or bring the country girls to the city to reshape the artificial lives of their cousins?" This tendency she attributed to a lack of literature generally about the lives of women. "No girl has been free to live her own life. She has been at the mercy of some author who had her life all mapped out for her." Moore claimed that a girl "cannot afford to waste her emotions nor her time. She has need of every resource that may fortify her spirit, sharpen her native wit and challenge the full powers of mind and heart."⁵⁷ Good books were one of those resources.

Evaluation of sentimentalism in Moore's outlook reveals an interesting paradox. Repudiation of sentimentalism has been viewed as an important marker of a "modern" outlook. Yet Moore herself behaved in ways that can only be interpreted as sentimental. Her intensely personal concept of "good" books was most often expressed by vague, nostalgic metaphors of nature and innocence. Ultimately, we are left with images of the sentimental Moore, reverently placing lilacs beneath the picture of Louisa May Alcott in an exhibit for the children's room, and the unsentimental Moore, tearing books from library shelves for containing characters whose traits,

ironically, resembled her own. A clear contradiction exists, although evidence does not suggest that Moore was aware of it. To be successful as the supervisor of the Children's Department at NYPL—an exemplar of the “modern” library—Moore needed to cooperate with library policy by distancing herself from unpopular styles of writing, such as didacticism. But the consistency and passion with which she criticized sentimentalism suggests that her view represented more than simple accommodation to the attitudes of her superiors.

To improve the quantity and quality of books available to children, Moore demanded a larger portion of NYPL's fiscal attention. During her first year at NYPL, she requested a budgetary increase of ten thousand dollars for acquisition of juvenile titles more to her liking, claiming that the amount was about a tenth of what was necessary to overhaul the children's library. That she received it, considering the uncertain financial condition of NYPL, suggests that she was persuasive with her superiors although, pressured to create a “modern” institution, they did share her commitment to children's books. Moore instructed branch librarians to discard outdated books and carry duplicate copies of standard juvenile titles, despite her promise to Billings that she would allow books to remain on shelves until they wore out. To ensure compliance, she routinely visited branch libraries, searching for “remnants of Sunday-school libraries and cheap sensationalism” beneath which “the skeletal beginnings” of “professional concern” could be seen.⁵⁸

Once branches in the library had been pruned, Moore invited librarians to submit purchase requests to replenish their now scant inventories, but only about half of the seventy-five thousand requests met her definition of “good” books. Most significantly, Moore remained in charge of making that decision. Still, some branch librarians, like Elizabeth Shumway, were delighted with the changes Moore instituted. “Wonderful things began to happen [after Moore came to NYPL],” Shumway averred. “One after another children's rooms were opened or remodeled, our book stock was revised and replenished.” If NYPL was the wilderness, in other words, at least some library workers saw Moore as the voice in it. Librarians who later scattered to libraries in other cities frequently credited their training under Moore as essential to their “vision of the whole great scheme.”⁵⁹

Not all librarians who answered to Moore shared Shumway's enthusiasm about the new supervisor of children's work. In her early years at NYPL, Moore experienced resentment and outright rejection from branch librarians. If subordinates viewed her anxiously, the feeling was sometimes

mutual, since she perceived branch librarians as “untrained” and resistant to supervision. At times, she played the diplomat. When Bostwick once inquired how she had come to terms with a particular branch librarian with whom she had had a difficult time, she responded that it was “very simple. . . . She has no interest in and no knowledge of library organization. I talk to her about books and plays and Woodrow Wilson and she lets me do anything I want to with work with children in her branch.”⁶⁰

When diplomacy (or manipulation) failed, Moore relied on other strategies. She did not tolerate “complacency” or “doldrums.” Some librarians felt slighted, exasperated that Moore was not liberal with praise for what she considered merely the fulfillment of professional tasks. Others might have disliked what they perceived as an overbearing management style, but Moore’s commitment to professional advancement for children’s librarians was undeniable. The NYPL staff represented a variety of professional backgrounds and education. In contrast to the cultural homogeneity characteristic of other NYPL departments, Moore prided herself on multicultural hiring practices. Free to operate outside the hiring constraints of other departments, since funding for the children’s room derived from the reference department rather than public funds, Moore selected new staff on the basis of her intuitive responses to applicants, rather than race or ethnic background. In fact, her staff was consistently multiracial and multiethnic, although by no means proportionally representative of New York.

Moore routinely met with branch librarians, delivering fervent lectures intended to inspire her subordinates. Her credo, invariably, was “admit no defeat.” Another consistent message to staff members was what Frances Clarke Sayers referred to as “the four respects”: respect for children, respect for books, respect for fellow workers, and respect for the professional standing of children’s librarians (which meant women). At times, Moore viewed the library organically, regarding librarians as part of a larger contingent of book-related professions. At other times, she saw children’s work hierarchically, at the top of which was the library.

Moore’s concern for books did not, however, remove her from financial realities. Her attempts to ameliorate librarians’ poor pay and bolster professional prestige belied an attachment to middle-class liberal thought: hard work, more education, and patience with the system would rectify employment issues facing women. Recognizing the link between pay and expertise, Moore gained professional status for children’s librarians at NYPL in 1908 by demanding—and receiving—a pay grade for children’s librarians that included a fixed salary rate and defined specific training qualifications

for children's librarians.⁶¹ She did not, however, win this concession single-handedly. Bostwick confirmed to library trustees that the upgrade was necessary for NYPL to remain competitive and attract "competent persons" into children's work. A pay raise accompanied the grade, and a new position of assistant was created in children's rooms throughout the city. Qualifications included peer recommendations, a six-month rotating internship that provided the applicant with interbranch familiarity, and a paper written about the library.⁶² Librarians from around the country vied for internships in the children's room under Moore's supervision.⁶³ Librarians coveted the position, in part, to enlarge paychecks that did not normally reflect the claims of those who insisted that librarianship was the "highest calling."

Public libraries in Boston and New York were part of the nationwide trend to pay librarians substandard wages; at times, librarians did not receive even subsistence wages. In Boston, despite relatively generous municipal funding, library administrators remained obliged to cut corners, which normally meant holding wages down. In 1908, Boston librarians received eight dollars a week, a dollar less than the living wage.⁶⁴ The rate of pay, however, is more informative when examined in the context of gender. In 1907, excluding department heads, 134 of the 219 individuals employed by BPL were women whose average annual salary was \$575.22, while men received \$610.12 for similar tasks, making an overall average of \$585.34. The following year, pay increases appropriated by the city raised the average to \$719.43. But the gender discrepancy enlarged substantially, since the salaries of male librarians under the new wage scale then stood at \$903.66, while women received \$630.45. Men's salaries had increased by one-third, therefore, while women's salaries rose only about one-tenth—about \$55—annually.⁶⁵ In New York, Bostwick repeatedly appealed to the trustees to raise salaries, but salaries for the lowest pay grades still ranged from \$30 to \$40 monthly in 1908.⁶⁶ Thus, as more women entered librarianship, they lost financial ground, thanks to popular perceptions of librarians as clerks. Despite the efforts of Moore and Bostwick, librarians' pay remained so poor that library administrators faced serious staffing shortages.

Little changed in the next five years. In 1913, the U.S. Bureau of Education reported that the average salary for librarians nationwide in libraries containing five thousand or more volumes was \$871; in the Northeast, the average was \$744.⁶⁷ These figures were so low, relative to other feminized professions, that in 1916, 16 percent of NYPL's staff left to take better paying positions; by the end of 1917, more than 20 percent had done so.⁶⁸ Responding to assumptions that they did not really need the income, librarians in

Brooklyn reported that of 287 female employees, 260 were dependent upon their own earnings, with 120 supporting others as well. Only 27 of this total lived at home, avoiding the cost of room and board, or had outside income.⁶⁹ Moreover, NYPL employees pointed out that “service to the public” had increased by 75 percent between 1907 and 1916, while staff had grown only 47 percent.⁷⁰ It is hardly surprising that Moore advocated higher rates of pay and further training, including internships, or that women employed by NYPL and BPL eagerly sought such training. With it, they could hope for promotions within those libraries or, if necessary, secure higher positions elsewhere.

Some librarians, however, rejected Moore’s vision of professionalization and her gradualist strategies for achieving it. Refusing the notion of “working on the inside” to effect change, they advocated unionization as a more effective and immediate means of obtaining better pay and benefits. One example of this occurred in 1917 when the New York Public Library Employees’ Union (LEU) was created, an unprecedented event in library history. Membership in the union was predominantly female; its first executive board, in fact, consisted entirely of women. The LEU identified itself with other women’s reform groups, including the New York Federation of Women’s Clubs, the Federation of Women’s Civil Service Organizations, and the Women’s Trade Union League of New York, as well as with the AFL. LEU publicity head Maude Malone clearly articulated the organization’s primary goal: abolition of discriminatory hiring and promotional policies, including equal pay for equal work.

Library unions and their organizers received immediate and severe criticism from library administrators and the public, who claimed that unions undermined the librarian’s role as a selfless public servant. Union activities, opponents charged, demonstrated unfeminine and unprofessional conduct, selfishness, disorderliness, and even fanaticism—all violations of “the library faith.”⁷¹ But in May 1918, ignoring the “general feeling” among librarians that mentioning salaries was “not ladylike,”⁷² some fifty BPL employees, the majority of whom were women, started a union and made demands echoing those in New York. The Library Workers Union of Boston Public Library resulted, in no small measure, from changes implemented as a result of recommendations made the previous year in a formal report by Edwin Andersen and Arthur Bostwick calling for increased education. Those librarians without college degrees were thus threatened, perceiving that, for them, the consequence of “professionalization” might be unemployment. In addition, they claimed, professionalism was the *real* cause

of discriminatory employment practices. Maude Malone accused “professional” librarians such as Anne Carroll Moore of elitist attitudes that contradicted rhetoric about democratic reading and declared the very notion of professionalism itself undemocratic, since it necessitated one group imposing its reading preferences on another.⁷³

The response of library leaders to unionization was swift and reflected themes of patriotism and anticommunism, potent rhetorical markers in wartime America. The recent revolution in Russia allowed Charles K. Bolton, librarian at the Athenaeum, to invoke the traditional, if often unfounded, connection between unionization and communism. Writing to the *Boston Herald*, Bolton claimed that, “the obvious result [of a union] will be to break down discipline . . . With the experience of Russia before our eyes, it should not be necessary to use a column of argument to justify orderly government. . . . A good deal of time was taken up [at the union meeting] in the denunciation of college-bred women. . . . It was said that young women without college education ‘considered themselves fully as equipped to carry on the work as any of the college graduates.’ . . . Have we not reached a Russian standard of ‘self-determination’ in the Boston Public Library?”⁷⁴

Given the degree of social pressure to behave as proper, patriotic citizens (and the very real legal consequences of failing to do so), it is perhaps not at all surprising that unionization attempts—perceived as “boat rocking”—failed. A national mood of fear and conformity, together with longstanding middle-class disapproval of labor movements, no doubt contributed to the failure of these efforts. But they also failed because the majority of women in the library, despite impoverished paychecks, maintained genuine confidence in liberal attitudes about education and patience over direct action as a means of raising professional status. Direct action might improve conditions in the short run but held little long-term value in terms of establishing professional authority, achieved more by carefully constructed relationships with middle-class institutions than picket lines.

The strength of this belief was demonstrated clearly in 1919, when unionists demanded an ALA vote on measures urging library administrators to increase salaries and end discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. The proposed measures were overwhelmingly defeated by the general membership, four-fifths of which was female.⁷⁵ The concept of service, for most, remained more powerful than poverty, although continued adherence to it, like the insistence on “natural” knowledge, contained disadvantages as well as advantages for working women. In the short run, the service ideal

served as a legitimizing agent for women in search of careers. In the long run, however, it reinforced gendered professions, making it difficult for women both to quantify their worth and to bargain assertively on their own behalf in the workplace.

As the war drew to a close, Eugene Saxton, new managing editor for the *Bookman* under the publishing efforts of George H. Doran, invited Moore to take over the periodical's discussion of children's books beginning in the November 1918 issue.⁷⁶ This kind of work was not entirely new to Moore; she had contributed to the *Library Journal* since publisher R. R. Bowker asked her to "get the point of view of the children's librarian" into that journal in 1912.⁷⁷ But because the *Bookman* had a wider readership than the *Journal*, and because Moore contributed on a regular basis, the *Bookman* essays became a significant instrument through which Moore established herself as a literary critic.⁷⁸

Bookman essays varied in length, generally from one to five pages, and virtually always contained anecdotes from Moore's experiences as a librarian, praise for books that had impressed her, and identification of problems in children's book publishing. In them, Moore came as close as she ever would to offering her definition of "good" reading material for children. Good books should emphasize a love of nature, create heroes, contain original story lines (or illustrations, in the case of traditional tales), respect historical tradition, avoid moralism, be clearly written, have international appeal to children, and satisfy both "the lover of fairy-tales and . . . the believer in 'tell nothing but the truth to children.'"⁷⁹ The *Bookman* essays had an impact on the publishing world. Before the Christmas selling season in 1918, publishers and booksellers began demonstrating an interest in a renaissance of children's literature; some publishers even announced plans to bring out "good modern books" for children, and Moore was thrilled, hopeful that the time was ripe for such a renaissance.⁸⁰

For the moment, "natural instincts" remained unquestioned, work with children remained a crucial, and possibly singular, arena of authority acquisition in the public library, and Moore used these facts to create an atypical professional advantage.⁸¹ Women with aspirations in other professional venues were also beginning to discover that professional authority could be had in return for acknowledging and promoting themselves as "naturals."