

Stereotypes of Librarians in the General Public, in Popular Culture and Scientific Literature of the Librarianship

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SUMMARY: Since the very beginning of the profession, librarianship has been exposed to stereotypical perceptions of positive or negative character. The traditional labeling of a librarian as a spinster has been overcome by modern stereotypes, which are no longer exclusively tied to the female gender. The image of librarians as professionals is, primarily, conditioned by the images that exist in the media and in the public opinion, but also by their own view of the profession. In order to detect the existing attitudes and beliefs about librarians and determine the possible change of the roles of librarians, it would be interesting to examine the images that represent librarians in professional literature, mass media and popular culture.

KEYWORDS: Librarians, Librarian profession, Stereotype

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1 Introduction

Many contemporary theorists have a unique way of perceiving stereotypes as characteristics that describe, that are attributed to or are in connection with the members of certain social groups (national, ethnic, class, religious, professional, etc.). These characteristics are usually based on the general beliefs or assumptions about the existence of certain personal characteristics of a group of people that make them different from

others. As these performances occur during the process of perception, when the observer forms solid and oversimplified ideas or images of a particular group, they are usually unrealistic and biased. On the other hand, they are still accepted as a reality, because *some* truths still exist, mostly in the form of a distorted image, or exaggerated and generalized *particular* characteristics of *some* members of the stereotypical group. Positive or

negative, stereotypes are indiscriminately applied to all the members of the group, excluding the possibility of the existence of individual differences. The fact that on the basis of our own stereotypical views, at least initially, we communicate with the stereotype rather than with the real person, leads to many personal injustices, since only some people from the group fully correspond to the stereotype (Majid and Haider 2008). The existence of a certain professional image, of positive or negative stereotype, also has an impact on every person who is a member of that profession. Such is the case with librarianship, whose experts have been put into a stereotype, which is usually negative and from which it seems impossible to escape, because it has been present for centuries.

Librarians are, as it seems, from the very beginning of the profession which is among the oldest in the history of civilization, deeply concerned about their professional image and its negative effect (Radford, 1998). Negative stereotypes about librarians were first documented when Petsis, the librarian of the famous Library of Alexandria, complained to his superiors that the meaning of one of the symbols that form a hieroglyph representing librarian points to certain inferiority of a librarian, unduly placing the profession into a subordinate position compared to others (Stevens 1988). However, in the centuries to follow librarians are dissatisfied with the image of their profession. It is often questioned whether the infamous sentence of Melville Dewey, published in the first issue of *The American Library Journal* in 1876, where the librarians are described as "mousers in musty books", contributed to the strengthening of the negative representation of the profession. Clearly indicating that this was a picture of the past time when the libraries looked rather like museums, Dewey actually expressed hope that librarians would become proud of their profession and accept the responsibility for public education (Sherman 2010). Although Dewey expected that negative stereotypes would disappear by the beginning of the 20th century, we are still, after more than a hundred years, trying to liberate ourselves from them.

Dealing with a wide concept of the image of librarians, what Dewey began was continued by

other authors, creating two streams, which would actually make the yin and yang of librarianship and be seen as essential elements of the dichotomy (Stevens 1988). On the one hand, the existence of a unique intangible essence that distinguishes librarians and makes them notable, does not necessarily exclude the other, simultaneous existence of the diversity of personalities that make each person unique and thus similar to other citizens.

Stereotype certainly exists and the public has certain expectations from librarians. Describing the so-called *ideal, mythical librarian* of orderly appearance, nice manners, and kind, adaptable, omnipotent and omnipresent person who avoids the vices, always working overtime with superhuman energy and enthusiasm, devoting his whole being to the library, in 1909 Keller has revealed the unrealistic nature of the images librarians still deal with. Referring to the fictional representations of the former librarians in two ways: as old-fashioned bookish moths or ideal librarians, Keller also said that both of these images must disappear so that the average, ordinary, human librarian could get a chance (Keller 1909). However, the idea of superhuman energy and enthusiasm persisted, but not in the form of admiration, as expected, but transformed into a negative image of exaggerated worry about books, the sanctuary of the library and its organizational system (Attebury 2010). When young, unmarried women in the early 20th century in America began to join the workforce in great numbers, for only unmarried women were allowed to work, librarianship as a profession which began as a male-dominated field became mostly the purview of women, so by 1910. 78% of the librarians were female (Newmyer 1976, cited in: Wells 2013, p.3). Encountering conservative political views that women should devote more time to giving birth and take care of their families, rather than fight for a career and gender equality, the idea of complete fidelity to the library system in the form of Keller's ideal enthusiastic librarian was transformed into a mockery aiming at the *librarian "spinster"*, the most prevalent stereotype of the profession of a librarian. This job, mainly defined as bookish and poorly paid, is usually related to an elderly, unmarried woman, dressed in a tweed skirt and a sweater, with her hair raised in a bun, with

pearls around her neck and glasses on the tip of her nose. The dominant female figure reflects the artificiality, seclusion and sexual frustration, and the growing distrust towards spinsters in any profession, including the one of a librarian, has led to the emergence of extreme claims, especially in the field of psychology, such as that unmarried women are deviant and unnatural. In this type of the atmosphere, the image of a dedicated, unmarried woman who works in the library received a negative response. Strict and restrained appearance that "spinsters" are usually represented with comes from the public perception that those who dare enter into the complex world of order, index, catalog and rules can become controlled by it, losing other essential aspects of the humanity: empathy, a sense of forgiveness and finally, sexuality (Attebury 2010).

Ironically, the traditional identification of a librarian with a spinster, appears to be surpassed nowadays with the popularity of another female stereotype of the new era that arose from the growing sexualization in the contemporary western culture and especially from the "wider celebration of female sexuality in popular culture" (Attwood 2009, cited in Attebury 2010), and that is a *sexy librarian*, or even *sexy spinster* that combines some aspects of a spinster such as the bun and glasses, with elements of seduction, for example, tight clothes or seductive comments.

Although the traditional stereotype is really mostly focused on women, male librarians also have their own stereotypes they are forced to fight with. Despite the fact that the stereotype of librarians has greatly changed over the past few centuries (Dickinson 2003), male librarians are usually described as meticulous, shy, poor, civilized and intelligent, with the female quality of gentleness. As a male equivalent to a spinster, the *anti-social librarian* or "librarian without a life outside the library" (Snoek-Brown) is considered to be an inseparable part of the library and is almost never shown in a different environment, such as in family or social context. He usually represents extremely elitist attitudes, strictly obeys the rules, does not like the public and the mere idea of the public using his library can bring him into a state of panic, so libraries with such staff are often perceived as places blocked by barriers

and secrets instead of being a place expected to give knowledge and access to information. This has also led to the idea that librarians are authoritative or "police officers" derived from the practice of the early American academic institutions when librarians were almost always male and often, as guardians of collections, very possessive. An opinion evolved with the strict lending rules that these librarians-police officers are more concerned with the rules of protecting the books than helping users to use them. Such idea emerged in the United States when Harvard appointed its first librarian in 1667 (Attebury 2010).

The eccentric portrait of librarians in popular culture that is usually related to males is the stereotype of the *librarian* as a "geek" who, behind his clumsy and shy appearance, usually hides a secret, exciting life or holds the key to knowledge that is not easily attainable (Shaffer and Casey 2013). Libraries can sometimes seem daunting in their vastness and abundance of information, which nowadays with the emergence of electronic databases may apply to physically completely small libraries, so from the viewpoint of a typical user, the librarian that successfully controls all these information may seem unusual.

In addition to these, stereotypes or representations of librarians that can nowadays be found in the popular culture and are generally not associated with a particular gender are also a *psycho-librarian*, who has similar characteristics to a police officer but is extremely authoritarian, socially inappropriate or even dangerous, and the *unfit* or *incapable librarian*. Stereotypes with mostly positive connotation are *the hero-librarian* always ready to help the user with his/her information and inventive skills, and even *the librarian-saint* who changes the lives of children, bewildered students or solve customer problems, then *the amusing librarian* who is similar to a hero, but pointing out that even when they are not in a position to "save" users, librarians have fantastic jobs, a preferred status, and intelligent views. The latter image serves to confute not only the image of an old-fashioned spinster, but the impression that librarianship is a boring clerical job with few real responsibilities or duties. *The Librarian-parody* appears to deliberately emphasize and overly dramatize the negative

characteristics of a stereotypical librarian or as a combination of the two seemingly unrelated stereotypes aiming to draw attention to their unrealistic nature (Attebury 2010).

Presenting librarians as professionals, as well as the image librarians have of themselves, is caused by the existing notions and images of librarians in media and public opinion. Likewise we can say that the profession itself is to some

extent responsible for the survival of these images, whether for the lack of the diverse workforce or the existing sensitivity about their own image (Luthmann 2007). Therefore, the subject of this paper is the display of images that represent librarians in scientific literature, mass media and popular culture, regardless of the specified socio-economic conditions that affect their formation.

2 Occupation - Librarian

Attitudes of the theorists and responsible institutions about the profession of a librarian, one of the oldest in the history of civilization, greatly differed. Starting with those who deny its existence and the need for professional development of staff, the opinion existed that libraries needed staff of mediocre quality who acquired knowledge and techniques in the evening or correspondence courses, as well as attitudes that only postgraduate studies are appropriate for becoming a librarian (Stamatović 2000). At the beginning of a modern public librarianship, in new institutions that were owned by the local communities and accessible to all the members of society, the first hired librarians finished their formal education at the age of 13 or 14. This fact, along with the lower status of female librarians in spite of their better education, contributed to perceiving the entire profession as a low-status one (Luthmann 2007). The skills required for being a librarian were controversial since the very establishment of the American Library Association in 1877, when no formal qualification was demanded. The need for further education was recognized and the American Library Association introduced professional certificates in 1880 (Luthmann 2007). Over time, in the countries with developed librarianship, we perceive the necessity for continuous education of the librarians and the first attempts to introduce librarianship into regular studies of an academic level occur (Stamatović 2000). However, none of these measures provided better conditions for employment and a reasonable salary. What is more, noted Smith, in the journal *The Library World* in 1910 it is stated that being a librarian is a very simple job, which requires nothing more than the physical

capability to handle a book, for which a decent wage is more than sufficient (Smith 2006, cited in: Luthmann 2007, p. 774).

Problems faced with by the professionals in the field of librarianship at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century are similar to the contemporary ones. Although much has been done for the development of the profession and the professional self-consciousness in the national and international library associations, in the most developed libraries in the world, schools and colleges, not even a century later does the librarianship have the professional and social affirmation that the legal, medical or educational occupation and other similar professions have (Милосављевић 1990).

Although we may argue that the current image is not of great importance to the profession itself, plenty of literature that deals with these issues suggests otherwise.

2.1 Librarians in public opinion and in media

In search of an answer to the question of how different parts of population see librarians, for the researchers in the field of librarianship and information science of particular interest are certain types of audience. As future library users, children and their perceptions of librarians stand out as the most valuable. The positive opinion of children towards librarians, as friendly educated people, completely refutes the hypothesis that negative stereotypes are prevalent among children (Jordan 1991). School librarians, largely responsible for this, did a good job removing the negative image of a grumpy librarian, who

constantly silences someone.

Apart from the youngest population, many researchers were interested in students and their knowledge of the librarian occupation and the necessary knowledge and skills (Aharony 2006, Fagan 2002, Majid and Haider 2008). While judging the profession, students mostly rely on the beneficial role of librarians in finding and using the necessary textbooks, completely lacking the understanding of the nature of work. Despite the generally positive perceptions of librarians, little do they know about what librarians know and do. The majority believes that the traditional librarian jobs are the only tasks librarians have, while all the tasks related to the information itself, such as information retrieval, filtering and processing, are attributed to the information professionals. The results from the studies conducted among the university students and the academic staff of the Midwestern University in America speak about the criteria that influence the assessment of the accessibility of librarians upon first meeting them and the moments prior to deciding whether to seek help from a librarian. It was found that demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and race (Bonnet and McAlexander 2012), and visually prominent characteristics such as facial expressions, direction of gaze, dress codes and color of clothes (Bonnet and McAlexander 2013) have an impact when first meeting a librarian. Neither the users of public libraries give a more positive picture of the nature of work of librarians, their personal characteristics, social status and educational level (Majid and Haider 2008). Librarian's job, for which it is considered that it does not require higher education, is seen as a day-to-day one, easy and boring. On the other hand, the personality of a librarian is described as useful, polite and amiable, a friendly person, quiet one, conservatively dressed and in love with books. Looking at the results of all the conducted studies it is easy to conclude that the stereotype exists.

However, by testing the existing images of librarians in the media, some differences have been spotted (Robinson 2006). Nowadays in print media the librarian profession is usually praised and presented as innovative, dedicated and organized, having a highly educated enthusiastic

staff, with a possibly exciting and fulfilled world career ahead. Robinson did not find the stereotypical images in mass media, but in scientific literature of the libraries, which in a way points to the responsibility of the very profession to maintain the stereotypes. By analyzing the papers of the British daily press in the period from 1998 until 2008, Shaw (2010) determined that 89% of the articles which had libraries and librarians as a subject reportedly had positive or neutral tone. The study found that the profession should be more concerned with the low level of library references in the daily press than with stereotypes that are discussed in professional literature. Examining the aspects of the presentation of librarian profession in the articles of the most popular Slovenian daily newspaper "Delo" during 1987 and 2004, Badovinac and Južnič (2011) conclude that the frames of media representation of the profession have not essentially changed even though two very different economic, social and political periods are in question.

Although mass media does not turn to stereotypical representations of librarians, negative stereotypes still exist in the public eye, which may have an impact on the use of libraries.

2.2 Representation of librarians in popular culture

The image of a library and more often of a librarian in popular culture is the subject of a number of debates. On the one hand there are authors who believe that the performances of the profession in popular culture are derogatory stereotypical, while on the other hand those who seek positive images appear. The defended doctoral dissertations, the whole yearly issues of some magazines devoted to these issues, as well as exhaustive lists of annotated bibliographies, filmographies and websites talk about the great interest in the topic, which becomes a discourse of its own (Tancheva 2005). Most researchers interested in the image of librarians in culture have searched for these portraits in popular literature and movies.

In order to detect the existing attitudes and beliefs about librarians and examine the possible

change in the role of librarians, it is important to return to the youngest population and the literature intended for them. Based on the analysis of 35 children's books, published in the United States in the period from 1909 until 2000 (Yontz 2003), it was determined that the tasks for librarians are the same through the centuries, but the tools used to perform these tasks, like in the reality, changed. Librarians, exclusively the female ones, are primarily portrayed as diligent experts, who have a positive relationship with customers.

By examining the literary genres aimed at young population, based on the content analysis of 17 books (Peresie and Alexander 2005), we observed the portraits of librarians presented in a neutral or slightly more negative light. These are primarily middle aged females, unmarried and in a certain way unattractive. Their personalities exclude intelligence, but also asperity, shyness and eccentricity. The role of librarians in these works reflects in assisting the main characters, while in some they play the major villains. Although their duties include providing information, they are always portrayed as only performing the simplest of the library affairs.

In the literature for adults, especially in novels, the characters of the librarians are much more depicted than in other media (Hodges, 2008). Günter de Bruyn in the novel *Buridan's Ass*, avoiding the stereotypical library environment, sets the character of a 40 year-old director of a library Karl Erp into a love triangle, describing his indecision and frustration, despite the fact that he had achieved everything he wanted in his life. In this story about love, women, morality, librarians, contemporary life and society in East Berlin in the 1960s, de Bruyn skillfully leads us along the paths of human psyche and its inner struggles. The negative stereotype of librarians who overly control and protect their collections is given in the character of brother Malachi from Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*, a brilliant, but possibly insane librarian, who in his work recognizes the need to protect the people from knowledge. The same thing does the Librarian orang-utan in the series of novels about *Discworld* by Terry Pratchett, who, unlike Malachi, is not a fanatic, but is also concerned with what represents the problem about the knowledge contained in the

books. On the other hand, in his novel *The Da Vinci Code* Dan Brown gives a perhaps too stereotypical, but positive image of a librarian as an information professional, pleasant and capable mediator who in a professional and highly impressive fashion searches the electronic databases and finds the required data.

It is interesting that the written literature shows a higher percentage of male librarians than is actually the case in the profession. They are generally presented as protagonists of the detective stories. As the stereotype of a librarian—a passive bore — is not in accordance with the intensity of the mystery, the librarian shares many characteristics with a successful detective. They are shown as hardworking perfectionists, eccentrics, focused and collected, with neutral views of the world. They use dull and harmless appearance of a stereotypical librarian to avoid suspicion, while their research skills and the ability to ask the right questions allow them to obtain and evaluate the information necessary for solving of a case. They are capable of entirely substituting the personal experience of being private detectives that they lack with the knowledge they have gained reading books.

Movies can also be interesting for displaying librarian stereotypes. Scientific literature mentions the silent movie *The Lost Romance* (1921) as the first film that introduced the character of a spinster librarian and thus began this inglorious tradition (Snoek-Brown). From the librarian in the movie *Philadelphia Story* from 1940, which is believed to be the first librarian who pronounced Shhhh! on the screen, through the modern and stylish Bunny Watson (Katharine Hepburn) from the movie *Desk Set*, to Lynn Wells (Rene Russo) in the movie *Major League* who replaces the career of an athlete for an equally successful one of the library professional, it seems that movie librarians simultaneously provoke and perpetuate stereotypes. The infamous negative portraits of librarians are usually from the past. For example, the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* from 1946, shows the main character George Bailey (James Stewart), who experienced the terrible discovery that, if he had not been born, his wife Mary (Donna Reed) would not only be a spinster, but also a librarian (Luthmann 2007)! Without the ability

to marry George, Mary completely dedicates to her work as a librarian transforming her entire physical appearance by becoming unattractive, with drab and old-fashioned clothes, glasses, a severe expression, leaving the impression on the viewers that her life as a librarian spinster is less desirable than her alter-life as a wife and mother. The character of Miss Anderson (Georgia Backus) from the movie *Citizen Kane* (1941) fits into the spinster stereotype, representing a woman of neutral exterior, serious, strict and rigid, that controls the access to the archives in men's fashion. Also, the inflexibility and the characteristic silencing of the main protagonists in the film are qualities of librarians (Elvia Allman) from the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961).

With the modernization of the profession, characterizations become somewhat more positive. The movie *Desk Set* (1957) which is considered to be the first to introduce the technology into the library environment breaks the mold of the prevailing stereotypes in a rather ingenious way. Librarians are represented as organized, intelligent, efficient, with excellent professional skills, excellent memory, talkative, dressed stylishly and fashionable.

The transformation of the character during a movie is a very interesting moment that is often seen even in the depictions of librarians. This can, for example, be a transformation emerging from the process of discovering ourselves and our own potentials thanks to the reversible act of falling in love or engaging in real adventurous research ventures. The moment of personal liberation may be accompanied by changes in both physical and psychological characteristics of personalities due to new experiences. Although Marian (Shirley Jones) from the movie *Music Man* (1962) has an excellent, intelligent character during the whole movie, she turns into a playful person dressed in flowing dresses from a conservatively dressed woman of outstanding manner at the beginning of the movie, while all that is followed by the process of falling in love with the protagonist of the film and the famous musical theme "Marian The Librarian". Sometimes the traditionally displayed characters of librarians at the beginning of movies later transform into real adventurers and investigators who travel the world in search

for ancient objects (librarian Flynn Carsen (Noah Wyle) in the movies *The Librarian* (2004, 2006, 2008), and ancient Egyptian cities and treasures, encountering the revived mummies such as the character of Evelyn Carnahan (Rachel Weisz) in *The Mummy* (1999)). The initial impressions of the stereotypical librarians (Flynn as "nerd" who spends his life constantly studying and reading books, neglecting the social aspects of life, or the clumsy Evelyn, portrayed as stacking books onto shelves, in a long skirt, with glasses and hair swept up into a bun) are that during the movie they experience a real transformation both in their behavior and the way of dressing, but their intelligence and comprehensive knowledge save the world. A different way of transformation is shown in the movie *Party Girl* (1995), in which a young and modern Mary (Parker Posey) becomes an ambitious librarian from a naughty party girl, after being arrested and dealing with life's issues.

The famous *Betgirl*, a fictional character who first appeared in 1960 in the original comic book stories about Batman, published by the DC Comics, also runs the Public Library of Gotham under the pseudonym of Dr Barbara Gordon. Her "daily" character of a library genius with a photographic memory and a great connoisseur of computer technology is more firmly backed up by a PhD in library science. In addition to all of these skills, Barbara's image still incorporates stereotypical images of stacking books onto shelves, while her alter ego was in this case skillfully used as a cover for a powerful crime fighter. Another example of a highly educated librarian who uses all of his librarian skills very effectively is Rupert Giles (Anthony Stewart Head), a school librarian in the television series and comic book *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. By advising Buffy and providing her with information about the demons she encounters, Giles plays a key informational role in the successful resolution of the plots. Lutman (2007) gives an interesting data that the character of Rupert Giles has got certain librarian recognition, appearing on the cover of the magazine *American Libraries* in 1999.

There are numerous performances of the librarians and their profession and it is easy to laugh at them, but it is inevitable to mention Conan the Librarian of the movie *UHF* (1989) or Gorilla

Librarian from the episodes in the television series *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

It is clear that the traditional stereotypical image of librarians presented in the movies has evolved, but the perceptions of the profession remained relatively the same (Helms 2006). Unlike the movies, books and television programs, which provide a generally positive stereotypical picture, advertisements are most commonly the source of negative impressions of the librarians (Hodges 2008), along with YouTube videos created by the individuals who do not belong to the librarian or any related profession. Analyzing such videos, Poulin (2008) finds that almost all the descriptions of the librarians in them are negative which puts to the acid test the effectiveness of the previous efforts to refute the stereotypes. The results of the Attebury's study (2010) showed that 93% of the videos covered by the study portrayed a stereotype, usually that of a spinster (often combined with the characteristics of a sexy librarian, suggesting that the genuine spinster stereotype is no longer prevalent), a policeman and an unfit librarian. However, Attebury points out that the popularity of YouTube and increased opportunities for amateur video distribution allows the librarians themselves to have an impact on how they will be presented, and many libraries accepted that as one of the possible means of fighting stereotypes. Thus, this study in the videos created by librarians revealed a tendency towards showing a librarian as a hero, as an amusing and positive professional, while a considerable number of such records deliberately use parody and a certain amount of humor in order to first attract and then hold the attention of the viewers. These humorous videos have been proven to be the most effective, because the highest ranked videos in terms of audience are those that include a hint of humor.

Stereotype of library and librarians in popular culture, other than the media, may also depend on the genre, the circumstances and cases (Tancheva 2005). Tancheva examines the theoretical possibilities in the semiotic picture of the library presented in three movies—*The Name of the Rose*, *Wings of Desire*, and *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* - and perceives them as visual cues of the past, present and future library, using the semantic

model of Charles Peirce, in which a sign becomes a sign only because its interpreter exists. Since a sign has no inherent, intrinsic meaning from the perspective of the cultural semiotics, and its meaning depends on the context so it may be modified, Tancheva describes library and librarian stereotype in popular culture as a fluid, which does not show only one thing, such as fear, order, rationality, positivism, etc. All three characters of the library which Tancheva discusses are focused on the issue of information access, generally reflecting on the anxiety, which is most pronounced in the movie *The Name of the Rose*. The current tendency to classify information reflects on the current struggle for the freedom of information, but filters out pornography, military, and other potentially dangerous contents.

Representations of librarians in popular culture, female or male, are mostly stereotypical. While it seems that the traditional negative stereotypes are disappearing, the number of inspiring visions of modern experts is increasing. A large number of the displayed library characters within popular culture suggests the existing conscience of the positive aspects of the profession, which provide a good basis and facilitates further promotion of the profession.

2.3 Personal professional image

Since the beginning of the 20th century there has been an endless discussion in scientific literature about all the aspects of the existing stereotypes of librarians. Negative representations of librarians as small elderly ladies were most ardently criticized, considering the possible ideas about the correct way of looking at portraits. The interest for this issue, as well as the attention it gains, vary from magazine to magazine and from period to period. Nowadays it is possible to spot a certain degree of paranoia about the personal image by tracking professional debates, either within email discussion papers, professional conferences or journals. Examples that reinforce negative stereotypes, and even victimization often occur. However, Stevens (1988) believes that the image of librarians, given in scientific literature in recent years, is not so much a reflection of individual views of different authors, as it is a

reflection of the views of the editorial board of the magazine. It is interesting that, in addition to the concerns about the negative image of the profession, fear arises from the slow emergence of a new stereotype, which represents a librarian as a modern professional who is missing all the features that characterize the traditional stereotype.

3 Overcoming stereotypes

There are several theories that explain the existence of negative stereotypes. Some theorists, says Radford (1998), consider that a negative stereotype of a quiet unattractive woman who constantly silences people exist, because the field of librarianship is dominated by women, whose contribution to the profession is of little value. These theories suggest that negative stereotype is not the creation of librarians, but of the system of power and rationality (Radford 1998). On the other hand, some authors emphasize the responsibility of the librarians for their own image (Hall 1992). Male librarians, however, believe that their negative image stems from working in the field dominated by women (Carmichael 1994). Some authors, who believe that negative aspects are connected to the services provided by the profession, highlight the impossibility of fully overcoming stereotypes. Due to the nature of the information, a product which librarians operate with that everyone can access, public will have a hard time realizing what kind of work the information professionals will do. Simplifying the task of librarians will result in limited or ambiguous occupation status, so stereotype will continue to exist to some extent.

Most authors, however, think stereotype can be beaten. Radford and Radford (2005) list three ways of liberating from stereotypes. The first way is to reverse the stereotypes, meaning that the librarians place an image of librarians opposite to the current one into the media. Another approach is to provide a range of positive images to replace the negative figure that dominates the popular view. This strategy can be identified in the illustrations given by the magazines from the field of librarianship and information science, which show smiling professionally dressed librarians,

There is still no clear idea as to how to respond best to the images of the profession based on a negative stereotype. Some become angry, frustrated; some would protest, boycott; some are insulted, while some are amused. Reactions vary, like the image of librarians and their actual appearance.

who generally sit or stand behind the computer. The third strategy is within the complexity and ambivalence of its own presentations, which seek to challenge the link to the traditionally negative image. This third strategy can be spotted in different web sites created by librarians, such as *Lipstick Librarian*, *Warrior Librarian Weekly*, *Annoyed Librarian*, *Distant Librarian*, *Dan the Librarian*, *Librarian for Life*, apparently trying to change the stereotype. Regardless of the diversity of representation, these experts are still strongly identified as librarians, trying to emphasize that every librarian is more than a stereotype. As it is the case with any other profession, librarianship is made of experts who can, but do not have to, respond to the traditional stereotype in many ways. Analyzing the personal web sites and blogs of some contemporary librarians (Garcia 2006), we observed a somewhat unique approach to the problem of overcoming negative stereotypes. Aware that the image of the profession was created by the personal experience of people, librarians talk about the need for a more diverse range of quality services for their customers. Gal (2010) proposes to the librarians to create their own "brand" injecting an idea and associations into the minds of potential users about what a librarian is and what his job is. Consistent application of the "brand" and quality work can inform the users what to expect. Thus, by gradually building a good reputation it is possible to overcome stereotypes.

An aggravating factor may be the fact that many libraries still do not even have a librarian or these positions have been taken by inadequately educated employees. This threatens and damages the status of a librarian and the mere library service, which is even more promoted by

the very low provision and little or no investment. Librarianship is an independent scientific discipline and should not be reduced to the level of dutiful service, neglecting the theoretical and historical dimension and forgetting the working enthusiasm and research incentives. It is

necessary to promote the high-profile staff, with standardization of services that users can expect, which will certainly contribute to the improvement of the status and social value of work and the knowledge of the librarians (Вранеш 2004).

4 Future image

Not much has been achieved with the uncertainty about the status and sensitivity about their own image up until now, while the thought that we are persecuted by the negative stereotype has been proven untrue. It is a matter of electing positive aspects of cultural influences that will inspire us and promote the work we do. Negative images we apparently worry so much about are essentially irrelevant. What we should really worry about is the presentation of librarians and library as ominous, boring, inaccessible, or even worse, as irrelevant people and institutions. Stevens (1988) also advocates a healthy attitude that puts negative stereotypical images aside,

where they belong, regarding them as only one of the random aspects of the profession. Being too serious about issues that do not deserve to be taken seriously is an error.

Librarians should, with their individual daily work as well as working within professional associations and organizations, deny the negative characteristics of stereotypical images, presenting the skills and experience of the profession consistently and uniquely. Relevant communication is crucial and presents a clear picture of the entire spectrum of services that libraries really offer to the public.

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Interdisciplinary Research on Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Serbia and Production of Multimedia Internet Portal "Glossary of Serbian Culture"

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Scientific research project called *Interdisciplinary Research on Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Serbia and Production of Multimedia Internet Portal "Glossary of Serbian Culture"*,¹ is supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and was launched in 2011, as one of interdisciplinary researches.

The aim of the project is to use digital technology in the field of humanities to create a single digital repository of Serbian cultural, historical and linguistic heritage. Development and application of new technologies in fundamental humanistic disciplines in the world enabled the possibility to connect digital humanities and other sciences: ethnology, anthropology, history, archeology, history and theory of literature, musicology, etc.

The project is designed so that the research results of Serbian culture, tradition and linguistic heritage can be presented in an interdisciplinary way. Humanistic approach, with the support of modern technology will be used to preserve cultural and historical heritage, ethnological as well as linguistic. This will expand and modernize the approach to these areas of knowledge.

The final results of this project are two creations. On one hand, the main product will be a multimedia database intended for researchers in the field of humanities. Internet portal called *The Glossary of Serbian Culture*, on the other hand, will be a selection of representative entries

available to the wider cultural community.

Work on the project is designed so that, through a series of stages, a database is developed, with materials from digitized dictionaries of Serbian language and culture. Entries and interpretations of terms in dialect, historical, etymological, onomastic, terminology, encyclopedic dictionaries and glossaries will constitute a searchable and expandable database. Organized in that lexicographical and encyclopedic way, database would have a high possibility of further development by adding new units and multimedia content.

The project is designed to emphasize unification and interrelations of basic, applied and development research on Serbian language and cultural heritage. Modernization of scientific practice in the field of ethnology, linguistics and other humanities through collaboration with experts in the field of digital production is a prerequisite for the creation of a modern information society.

Creating a mechanisms for displaying the results of interdisciplinary research will lay far more approachable access to the knowledge in these fields. The aim of the project is also building the digital infrastructure that will allow researchers from the fields of humanities to work together and combine their theoretical and field studies. Connecting associates from various and diverse fields of ethnology, linguistics and computer science, should be a considerable effort in the development of lexicographical and digital humanities infrastructure in Serbia.

¹ Record number of the project is 47016

The project founders are four scientific research institutes: Ethnographic Institute of SASA, Institute of Serbian Language of SASA, Faculty of Technical Sciences from Kosovska Mitrovica and the Faculty of Philological of the University of Belgrade. Project Manager is Dragana Radojičić, and from December 2012 until February 2014 the project manager was Ivica Todorović. Work on the project is divided into three sub-projects: linguistic,² ethnographic³ and technical.⁴

Within the project *Interdisciplinary Research on Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Serbia and Production of Multimedia Internet Portal "Glossary of Serbian Culture"* a subproject *The Application of Linguistic Research in the Development of Digital Glossary* is conducted at the Institute for the Serbian Language, SASA.

Several stages and phases are planned. The first step to determine the lexicographical sources for digitization (including dialect, historical, terminology, and other descriptive dictionaries, lexical structure of Serbian folk speech, collected as part of *Dialectological research on Serbian language*, as well as onomastic materials of Onomastic Committee, SASA). Selected material is encoded in XML, as recommended by the Text Encoding Initiative, a standard for marking text in digital humanities. That involves segmenting text by structural-semantic rules: a controlled set of labels is used to mark all the important components vocabulary entries (lemma, grammatical descriptions, meanings, definitions, examples, resources, etc.). As a result of that process, during the next phase of the project, a modern lexicographical database will be formed and it will be searchable by all parameters used in the marking of the text.

After completion of basic coding of dictionaries and their storage in a database, the interconnections will be formed to semantic relations. That will include various forms of Serbian lexical fond.

Unfortunately, during the first three years, due to lack of funds, the main work on the project was conducted with certain difficulties and the main plan had to be adjusted. So far, within the linguistic sub-project, the first phase of digitization of two dialectal dictionaries was carried out: M. Zlatanović, *Vocabulary of Speeches of Southern Serbia*, Vranje 1998 (about 1,070,000 characters) and G. Elezović *Glossary of Kosovo-Metohian Speeches* SDZb 4/1932, 6/1935 (over 3 000 000 characters). *The Platform for Digital Edition and Transcription of Serbian Manuscript Heritage* is formed on the website www.prepis.org.⁵ The manuscript collection of words from Prizren by Dimitrije Čemerikić was scanned and 23,071 digital documents were made (each document is one side of a card). This collection is fully prepared for electronic publication and is located on the website www.prepis.org/collections/show/1.⁶ The exhibition "Prizren – a life in words" was organized (Gallery of Science and Technology SASA, from 14 to 30 October 2013.), and it represented digitizing of these collections.⁷ In the future, special attention will be dedicated to making a complete bibliography of works of all collaborators and sources and references used in the preparation of *The Glossary of Serbian Culture*.

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The Glossary of Serbian culture,⁸ the unique conceptual and linguistic thesaurus, conceived as a result of the linguistic and ethno-anthropological

2 Snežana Petrović, manager, Ivana Bašić, Marta Bjeletić, Jasna Vlajić-Popović, Ana Golubović, Sofija Miloradović, Viktor Savić, Stanislav Stanković and Aleksandar Loma, as adviser.

3 Dragana Radojičić, manager, Nina Aksić, Jadranka Đorđević-Crnobrnja, Milina Ivanović-Barišić, Aleksandra Pavićević, Branislav Pantović, Lada Stevanović, Mileša Stefanović-Banović, Toma Tasovac, Ivica Todorović, Vesna Trufunović, Đorđina Trubarac-Matić и Đurđina Šijaković.

4 Aleksandar Žorić, manager, Kristijan Kuk, Predrag Lekić, Aleksandar Micić, Mile Petrović, Dagana Radosavljević, Jovan Ristić.

5 Tasovac, Toma. Petrović, Snežana (ed.) (2013). Препис.орг: платформа за дигитална издања и транскрипцију српског рукописног наслеђа. Београд: Центар за дигиталне хуманистичке науке. ISSN: 2334-976X.

6 Petrović, Snežana. Tasovac, Toma (ed.) (2013). Збирка речи из Призрена Димитрија Чемерицића. Београд: Центар за дигиталне хуманистичке науке. ISBN: 978-86-82873-43-3.

7 Petrović, Snežana. Tasovac, Toma (2013). Призрен - живот у речима. Београд: Институт за српски језик САНУ. ISBN: 978-86-82873-42-6.

8 www.pojmovnik.rs

research of Serbian products of material and spiritual culture.

The lexemes of literary language are selected as main entries. Their explanations will lead to other lexemes and expressions, as those archaic or dialect, and those contemporary, and sometimes to those who belong to the technical terminology of other sciences. Selected lexemes will be interconnected by a variety of lexical relations – formative, syntagmatic and paradigmatic (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, etc.). *The Glossary of Serbian culture* will also include dialectal variants, their origin, as well as lexical iconicity – or motivational appointment. The encyclopedic explanation will involve, above all, an ethno-anthropological one, and will include other scientific disciplines, as well. In addition, the lexemes should be associated with texts, science and art, which will be found in *The Internet Library for Humanities and Arts of Serbia* (Ibis)⁹, and other video and audio contents.

The Glossary of Serbian culture will consist of the terms traditional and modern, rural and urban, elite and popular, related to majority and minority culture. It will cover a range of concepts of material and spiritual culture, one quite archaic and universal, and one specifically national, and one modern and international. It will form the visible layers and complexity of concepts belonging to various segments of Serbian culture, and their interconnection, and variability. Digital glossary also enables continuous replenishment and branching, which is included in an interdisciplinary approach to its development.¹⁰

Editor in Chief of *The Glossary of Serbian culture* is Ivica Todorović. Technical editors are Aleksandar Žorić and Branislav Pantović. Editor of linguistic thesaurus is Snežana Petrović and of ethnological thesaurus is Ivica Todorović.

The Glossary of Serbian culture has an international ISSN number 2334-9808.

⁹ <http://ibis.mi.sanu.ac.rs/>

¹⁰ The symbol of this approach is the glossary icon which represents a branching tree. The designer is a Branislav Pantović.