
The World of Tomorrow: Geographic Coverages of the Main Street Public Library, ALA Catalogs, and H. W. Wilson Company's *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries*

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ABSTRACT

This article details what one high school senior from each of the five Main Street public library communities (Sauk Centre, Minnesota; Osage, Iowa; Rhinelander, Wisconsin; Morris, Illinois; and Lexington, Michigan) would find in collections in 1945 related to particular geographies. The global milieu of the New York World's Fair 1939–40 frames the historical events that stimulated each of the student's topics. To determine what each public library's collection held about the world, the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) section of geography and travel (classification number 910) was used. Cross-referencing each library's accession records for books added prior to 1945 against books recommended for all public libraries in the geography and travel (910) sections of standard professional guides like the ALA catalogs, the H. W. Wilson Company's *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries*, and other ALA publications like the *Guide to Reference Books* shows what students using these five libraries would have found. The recommended titles from the professional guides and those accessioned in the libraries indicate a distinct bias toward books concerning North America and Western Europe.

THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

On April 30, 1939, the New York World's Fair opened in New York City, with the theme of "building the world of tomorrow." After the Great Depression, New York hoped to further stimulate its own economy by using the 150th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration to celebrate American accomplishments since that event (Seifert, 1974, p. 10). During planning, Lewis Mumford convinced the World's Fair officials to turn away from the typical retrospective celebration of world expositions and toward

the more futuristic theme (Duranti, 2006). To promote the event, in 1939 alone, 160 magazines ran special features, 731 radio broadcasts discussed the event, and “over 12 million column inches appeared in newspapers across America” (Mullen, 1990, p. 298). The forward-looking theme sparked the imagination of fairgoers with displays and dioramas of life in future societies that utilized science and technology to enable greater individual freedom and economic prosperity (Gold & Gold, 2005).

This future manifested itself within the fair’s centrally located main attraction, the Perisphere, a great sphere eighteen stories tall that housed the *Democracy* exhibit. From twin rotating balconies, attendees gazed down upon the *Democracy* diorama of a future model city (Cotter, 2009). The community was organized in concentric circles of industrial and residential buildings lining streets radiating out from around a large central tower. Projected onto an enormous dome above this city were film clips of its citizens including farmers, industrial workers, engineers, bankers, and professionals with narration explaining everyday life in the utopia (Duranti, 2006).

Much like the layout of the futuristic city, the fairground was arranged into zones branching off from the central exhibit of the Perisphere. Zones included transportation, production and distribution, communications and business, community interests, amusement, and government. The exhibits provided companies with the opportunity to market advances in science and technology and related products, such as fluorescent lights and the automatic dishwasher (Gold & Gold, 2005). The exhibits in these zones comprised everything from impractical oddities like the Westinghouse Electric Corporation’s *Elektro*—the talking, walking, smoking robot—to the proposed United States superhighway system of the 1960s viewed by visitors riding in moving chair-cars above miniature landscapes in General Motors’ *Futurama* exhibit. To the southeast, the amusement zone of the fair provided entertainment, from vaudeville to strip shows, to generate profits for investors. For small fees attendees could view peculiarities stretching from Morris Gest’s *Midget Town* to the topless women swimming in a giant fish tank at Salvador Dali’s surrealist funhouse, *Dream of Venus* (Seifert, 1974).

The government zone contrasted the excitement at the rest of the fair with nostalgic renderings of cultural heritage and current tourist information for sixty-two participating nations from opening day to the closing on October 31, 1939. Visitors could partake in foreign cuisines, such as the circular rotating appetizer table called the “smörgasbord” at the Swedish pavilion. Famous national artists’ works were on display, such as Vermeer’s *The Milkmaid* at The Netherlands exhibit (Seifert, 1974). Like those of many countries, the Japanese pavilion showcased its culture with ornate gardens and talks given by native women dressed in traditional Japanese attire on other aspects of culture. The Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics (USSR) built a four million dollar pavilion designed to exhibit its strength.

When the fair reopened for its second season on May 11, 1940, the mood had changed radically. In reaction to Nazi aggression in Europe, the 1939 theme of “building the world of tomorrow” shifted to “for peace and freedom” (Duranti, 2006). “After the Non-Aggression Pact between Stalin and Hitler, the Soviet pavilion was dismantled and returned to Russia at the exhibitor’s request” (Gold & Gold, 2005, p. 101). For financial reasons related to the war, Albania, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Yugoslavia also did not return in 1940 (Duranti, 2006; Seifert, 1974). Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Denmark pavilions remained operational at the fair because their governments were in exile and the workers had nowhere else to go. The stark emptiness of the Czechoslovakian pavilion silently reflected that country’s destruction. Poland’s exhibit contained a map showing the country being torn apart by a swastika pulling west and a hammer and sickle pulling east (Seifert, 1974). On July 4, 1940, a bomb at the British pavilion exploded and blew out the Polish pavilion’s windows. It killed two police officers who were attempting to disarm it. The explosion did not stop the fair. In fact, with Mayor La Guardia’s reassurance of police protection, the July Fourth holiday weekend’s attendance rose to 640,000 (Mauro, 2010).

The fair continued with a few more bomb threats and growing reminders of the war like Belgium, Danish, French, Luxembourg, Norwegian, and Polish flags draped in black to symbolize the fall of those countries. As the closing date of October 26, 1940, neared, the foreign workers expressed concerns that they had no homelands to return to after the fair (Mauro, 2010). The fair acted as a palimpsest for the world stage one last time as a *New York Times* article announced on December 13, 1941, that the city would demolish the Japanese pavilion: “it does not fit in with the Park Department’s ‘final’ plans for that area,” officials argued. They made no mention in the announcement of the attack on Pearl Harbor six days prior (City, 1941).

The 1939–40 New York World’s Fair, and the Second World War that followed, certainly stimulated American interest in foreign lands. At public libraries across the country, users sought information concerning the world beyond their main streets. The multitude of media coverage promoting the fair certainly reached Midwestern towns like Sauk Centre, Minnesota; Osage, Iowa; Rhinelander, Wisconsin; Morris, Illinois; and Lexington, Michigan. I discuss details of what one high school senior from each of these five communities would have found in their respective public libraries’ book collections while researching particular locations in 1945.

To determine what each public library’s collection held about the world, the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) section of geography and travel (910) was used. Cross-referencing each library’s accession records

for books added prior to 1945 against books recommended for all public libraries in the geography and travel (classification number 910) sections of standard professional guides like the ALA catalogs, the H. W. Wilson Company's *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries*, and other ALA publications like the *Guide to Reference Books* shows what students using these five libraries would have found. Although catalogs typically recommend narratives or travelogues, the reference books include bibliographies, almanacs, atlases, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, and some guide books to cast a wider net of geographic related materials. Cross-referencing is the most widely used method of qualitatively evaluating a library's collections (Comer, 1993).

THE WORLD OF THE STANDARD PROFESSIONAL GUIDES

Of course, students using these five libraries had access to information sources beyond the library collections (e.g., church literature, newsstands, drug stores, traveling book salesmen, home encyclopedia collections, periodical and newspaper subscriptions, radio, films, and friends and neighbors with whom they gathered at social events). Catalogs and bibliographic guides show what the library profession recommended to American public libraries, and the librarians at these five libraries used many to develop the collections available to their patrons.

Together, catalogs and collections create snapshots reflecting representations of a world recommended for public library users. For the latter, I analyze the database of the five small public libraries' collections Wayne Wiegand (2011a) compiled for his *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876–1956*, including the Bryant Library of Sauk Centre, Minnesota; the Sage Library of Osage, Iowa; the Rhinelander Public Library of Rhinelander, Wisconsin; the Morris Public Library of Morris, Illinois; and the Moore Library of Lexington, Michigan. All of the Main Street public libraries used the DDC. The DDC ten geography and travel (910) sections in the catalogs provide lists of books that the library profession recommended for purchase by all public libraries. Admittedly, books under "history" and other main classes potentially contain information regarding geography and travel, but determining the subject content of those titles would be difficult. The ten geography and travel (910) sections include Description (910), Historical Atlases (911), Atlases (912), Antiquities (913), Europe (914), Asia (915), Africa (916), North America (917), South America (918), and finally Oceania (919).

The four ALA catalogs recommended 1,748 total items within the 910s. The *A.L.A. Catalog, 1926: An Annotated Basic List of 10,000 Books* recommended 1,005 910 books, almost exactly 10 percent of the total books recommended (1926). Other ALA catalogs—published every five years "to supplement the *A.L.A. Catalog 1926*" contained fewer titles (1933, p. v).

In its introduction, the 1938 ALA edition stated: “books of history and travel follow the currents of world events. One year the center of interest is mirrored in the books on Germany; the next year attention is focused on Ethiopia, then on Scandinavia, Spain, and the Orient” (p. v). For example, Germany, the most controversial country listed in the catalogs for these times, shows significant change from edition to edition. In the ALA 1926 catalog, Germany ranked nineteenth in the number of books per country with seven titles, but rose steadily in the 1931 catalog to seventh with five books and fell slightly in the 1936 catalog to twelfth with only three titles listed. Ironically, in the ALA 1941 catalog, Germany was entirely absent. An omission mirrored at the New York World’s Fair, which left Germany off the guest list (Mauro, 2010). The library profession recommended books to American public libraries without direct mention of world events; however, quotes like “books are weapons in the warfare of ideas” suggest reasons for decisions made by 1941 edition compilers (1943, p. v).

The section of general Description from the four ALA catalogs cited 114 recommended books including tales of voyages and wanderings from Marco Polo’s (1926) *Travels of Marco Polo*, edited by Manuel Komroff, to Rudyard Kipling’s (1920) *Letters of Travel, 1892–1913*. The catalogs also recommended eleven Historical Atlases, seventeen Atlases, and eighty-five titles on Antiquities. The majority of recommended titles focused on a continent, a region or country within a continent.

For those continental items, the ALA catalogs revealed a distinct bias toward North American and Western European nations. The four ALA catalogs recommended 531 books within the North America section, including 387 titles covering the United States and its states and territories and the fifty-one books about Canada. John Muir’s (1916) *Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* and Helen Henderson’s (1917) *Loiterer in New York* reflect the variety within the recommendations from naturalist voyages to urban sightseeing. In total, North American titles comprise 30.4 percent of the 910 books recommended in the ALA catalogs.

A close second behind North America was Europe with 487 books (27.8 percent of the books recommended). After the United States, the next three most recommended countries were England (136), France (81), and Italy (51). In fact, the lists included more England titles than the entirety of Oceania (122 titles, 7 percent of the total), South America (109 titles, 6.2 percent of the total), or Africa (85 titles, 4.8 percent of the total). These numbers reflect the same biases in the fair’s government zone. For example, at the fair only the Belgian Congo, Morocco, and Southern Rhodesia represented Africa, and only Australia and New Zealand represented Oceania (Mauro, 2010). Only Iraq, Japan, and Siam represented Asia at the fair; the three countries comprised 11.3 percent of the recommended titles in the ALA catalogs. Figure 1 shows the 910

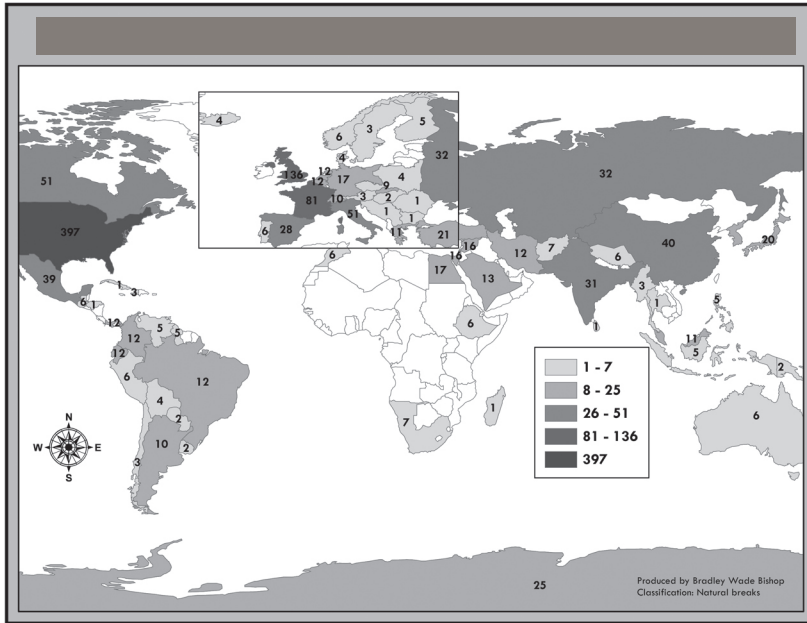


Figure 1. 910 totals for ALA catalogs by country

totals for the ALA catalogs by country and the global distribution of the recommendations.

Because “geography and travel” frequently gets covered in reference materials such as maps and gazetteers, I reviewed three ALA subject guides for reference books, two editions of *Guide to Reference Books* by Isadore Gilbert Mudge, and one Hirschberg title. These reference guides focused on four types of reference books—gazetteers, dictionaries of place names, atlases, and guide books (Hirschberg, 1942; Mudge, Reed, & Winchell, 1929; Mudge & Winchell, 1936). Hirschberg only cited two gazetteers and atlases; Mudge listed forty-one in 1929 and sixty-nine in 1936, including gazetteers and atlases covering the entire globe. In total, Hirschberg recommended thirty-four items, the 1929 Mudge recommended sixty-nine items, and the 1936 Mudge recommended ninety-three items. Although the United States was the most recommended country in these reference materials, it only represented between 17 percent and 20 percent of the total recommended in each guide.

I also consulted the 1929, 1932, 1934, and 1940 editions of H. W. Wilson Company’s *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries*. The four catalogs recommended 3,887 items in the 910s. Unlike the ALA catalogs, each subsequent Wilson catalog contained not only the books published since the last release, but a revised basic collection. In the preface of the 1929 catalog, compiler Minnie Earl Sears indicated she is “indebted to a number of

librarians and specialists" (p. vii), but offers no hint at how world events or anything else shaped the lists.

"Geography and travel" included 238 recommended books from the four Wilson catalogs. Many replicated ALA citations, but Wilson offered a wider range of authors and their works. The Wilson catalogs also recommended twenty Historical Atlases, thirty-two Atlases, and 228 titles on Antiquities. The Wilson catalogs contained slightly more Antiquities (228 books, 5.8 percent of the total) than the ALA catalogs (85 titles, 4.7 percent of the total). Like the ALA catalogs, the majority of recommended titles in the Wilson catalogs referenced a particular place.

Like the ALA catalogs, the four Wilson Company's *Standard Catalog for Public Libraries* favor North America and Europe. The Wilson catalogs listed 1,188 books under "Europe" (30.6 percent of the 910 books recommended). North American books accounted for 1,047 of the total (26.9 percent), which include 750 books about the United States. The larger number of titles also enabled Wilson to give greater coverage of both Europe and North America. For example, Wilson recommended twice the number of books for Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana and also contained at least one title for states not covered by the ALA catalogs (Mississippi, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin). For Europe, Wilson listed almost twice the number of books for each nation as the ALA catalogs.

With 11.4 percent of the recommended titles in the Wilson catalogs, Asia's 442 books ranked third, just as the ALA catalogs. China (86), India (67), and Japan (45) ranked seventh, tenth, and twelfth, respectively, in Wilson catalogs, but few other titles related to Asia. Like the ALA catalogs, the Wilson catalogs also listed the least number of recommendations for the sections on Africa, South America, and Oceania. Wilson listed 284 books for Oceania (7.3 percent of total 910s) and 204 titles for both Africa and South America (5.2 percent of total 910s). Figure 2 shows the distribution of the Wilson catalogs' recommendations by country.

Glaring gaps in the recommendations, represented on the maps by white space, indicate either an absence of writings on many of the African nations or the library profession's indifference to those countries, or both. The 1939-40 World's Fair's government zone reflected the same biases. Many more Western European nations attended than the rest of the globe, and even individual U.S. pavilions outnumbered countries from Asia, Africa, South America, and Oceania combined. Table 1 compares the 910 section of the ALA and Wilson catalogs. By percentage of recommended titles, the two catalogs are extremely similar.

How do Main Street public library collections compare?

THE WORLD IN MAIN STREET PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Cross referencing the professional catalogs with the collections database yielded 684 different titles from the collections for a total of 1,308 books.

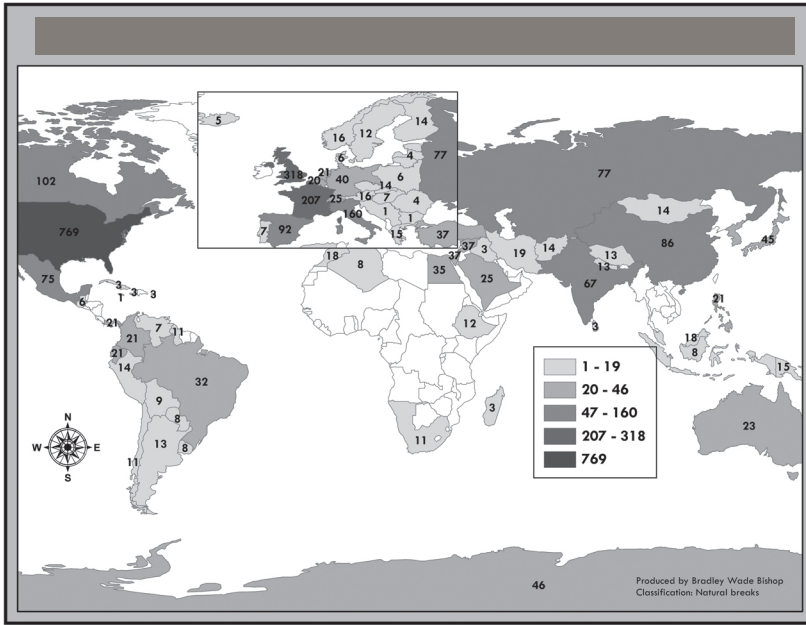


Figure 2. 910 totals for H. W. Wilson catalogs by country

The collections may have contained more books from the geography and travel (910) sections than those found by cross-referencing. Because Wiegand's database did not include DDC numbers locating 910 items not cited in professional catalogs was impossible. Also, the ALA and Wilson guides recommended more books for certain countries and therefore cross-referencing had a greater chance of yielding more books concerning those places. Table 2 contains the total number of books from the geography and travel (910) sections and the percentage of the total collection those books represented in each of the main street public libraries.

To compare these collections against each other and against the professional guides, I have created five hypothetical students doing research on five different geographical subjects.

George in Sauk Centre, Minnesota

When George's civics teacher reminded the class in the spring of 1945 about the term paper due on Monday, he realized that he must forgo his weekend plans of playing ball to spend time at the Bryant Library. The assignment entailed describing the culture of a nation of his choosing. Since the paper had to be written in a hurry, he thought including details from his older cousin Elmer's most recent letter would help. Cousin Elmer grew up in New York, joined the Navy, and sent George letters over

Table 1. 910 Section Totals and Percentages in the Catalogs

910 Section	ALA (1,748)	Wilson (3,887)
Description (910)	114 (6.4)	238 (6.1)
Historical Atlases (911)	11 (0.6)	20 (0.5)
Atlases (912)	17 (0.9)	32 (0.8)
Antiquities (913)	85 (4.7)	228 (5.9)
Europe (914)	487 (27.8)	1,188 (30.6)
Asia (915)	197 (11.2)	442 (11.4)
Africa (916)	85 (4.8)	204 (5.2)
North America (917)	531 (30.4)	1,047 (26.9)
South America (918)	109 (6.2)	204 (5.3)
Oceania (919)	122 (7.0)	284 (7.3)

Table 2. 910 Section Totals and Percentages of the Libraries' Collections

910 Section	Bryant	Sage	Rhineland	Morris	Moore	TOTALS
Description (910)	55 (16.6)	63 (17.7)	55 (20.8)	38 (11.8)	7 (20.0)	218 (16.7)
Historical Atlases (911)	2 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)
Atlases (912)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)
Antiquities (913)	13 (3.9)	10 (2.8)	3 (1.1)	7 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	33 (2.6)
Europe (914)	50 (15.1)	55 (15.5)	39 (14.7)	53 (16.5)	7 (20.0)	204 (15.6)
Asia (915)	49 (14.8)	35 (9.9)	25 (9.4)	46 (14.3)	6 (17.1)	161 (12.3)
Africa (916)	22 (6.6)	16 (4.5)	18 (6.8)	15 (4.7)	2 (5.7)	73 (5.6)
North America (917)	95 (28.6)	134 (37.7)	75 (28.3)	108 (33.7)	9 (25.7)	421 (32.2)
South America (918)	25 (7.5)	17 (4.8)	23 (8.7)	31 (9.7)	1 (2.9)	97 (7.4)
Oceania (919)	21 (6.3)	24 (6.8)	26 (9.8)	23 (7.2)	3 (8.6)	97 (7.4)
910 TOTALS	332	355	265	321	35	1,308

several years recounting his adventures. The light tone of Elmer's first letter about the wonders and women at the New York World's Fair gave way to increasingly darker descriptions as Elmer headed across the Pacific. Elmer's depiction of combat and the tenacious and dedicated enemy, the Japanese, left George curious about the customs of Japan's people.

George hoped the library would have enough books on Japan to provide background for his paper. He recalled that after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Bryant's librarian, Eleanora, posted maps of the Pacific theatre and created a War Information Center. George's little bookworm brother

actually won the “Bomb Tokyo” reading program last year, in which Eleonora wrote children’s names on battleships that would get closer to Japan with each book they read.

George asked Miss Gralow for assistance and found four books on Japan, including *Japanese Girls and Women* (1902), *Japan, an Attempt at Interpretation* (1904), *Japan, Korea, and Formosa* (1924), and *Children of the Rising Sun* (1938). The oldest title, *Japanese Girls and Women*, provided insight into the lives of Japanese women from years of interviews with “refined and intelligent Japanese women” (Bacon, 1902, p. ix). George turned away after a few pages of meticulous descriptions of domestic service (without a single picture) and toward the more sensationalized texts, which Bacon actually warned readers about in her preface. Lafcadio Hearn (1904) in the pages of *Japan, an Attempt at Interpretation* offered more racist views of the culture in comments such as “the notion of a humanity even physically as little related to us as might be the population of another planet” (p. 12). The differences highlighted in later texts available to George more closely matched the wartime sentiment that led to the recent internment of Japanese-Americans (Camp McCoy, Wisconsin is less than a day’s drive from George). Flipping through pages, George knew he could piece together enough information about the country’s customs. However, the books did lack up-to-date information highlighted by comments concerning the likelihood of a Japanese attack on the United States as “no probability of this now . . . their recent terrible distress having brought the two nations into close sympathy” (Tietjens, 1924, p. 287).

George found similar dated discussion when he consulted the library’s fourteenth edition of the *Britannica* (1929). The *Webster’s New International Dictionary* (1929) also failed to reflect recent events, but George thought, “how often do cultures change”? George knew that a few quotes from Elmer’s letter would add detail and currency to his term paper.

Luckily for George, he lived in Sauk Centre. The Bryant contained the greatest quantity and most recent resources of any of the five Main Street libraries about Japan. Although he would have stumbled into similar reference resources at the other four libraries (the Sage and the Morris held the fourteenth edition of *Britannica*; the Morris had two copies of the *Webster’s New International Dictionary* [1929], and Rhinelander one from 1914), their age would have limited the content of his term paper in 1945, especially in a world that had drastically changed in the past fifteen years. The Rhinelander had four recommended titles, but only one was published in George’s lifetime. The Sage had the two older books also owned by the Bryant, the Morris had only a 1913 edition of *Japanese Girls and Women*, and the Moore held nothing. The Main Street public libraries collected books related to Asia third most of any continent.

This matches Asia’s ranking of third most recommended in the library profession’s catalogs. Japan ranked fourteenth in the ALA catalogs and

thirteenth in the Wilson catalogs. At 14.8 percent of Bryant's 910s (forty-nine titles), students would have had access to the most books on Asia in any of the Main Street public libraries.

Helen in Osage, Iowa

Helen, a German-American senior, was diligent and had plans to attend the University of Iowa after graduating from high school in 1945. Her social studies teacher assigned the class a genealogy project to create a family tree and describe the places from which their ancestors had come. Helen rushed to the familiar stacks of the Sage Library in order to beat any other overachieving students to books held about Germany. She was excited to read about the birthplace of her parents because they had not shared much with her.

For example, anytime her father would speak with her mother about subjects that he did not want the children to hear, he spoke German. In an effort to enculturate, her parents required her and her sisters only to speak English. On the walk to the library, she recalled the only time she had seen her father cry. When she was younger she would often read the paper to her father. One morning, his eyes began to water as she read an article in the Mitchell County Press News that described a proposed Freedom Pavilion at the New York World's Fair to showcase the Germany of yesterday and tomorrow. She learned to refrain from reading stories about Germany aloud after his emotional response.

Once at the Sage, she started with the library's fourteenth edition of the *Britannica* (1929) and the library's eighteen copies of the *New International Year Book*, which were added from 1918 to 1931. These reference materials gave some general information on the formation of the country, its physical geography, and other aspects of its culture. Since she was unlikely to get much detail beyond the names of her family from home, she knew she had to consult more sources to strengthen the cultural aspects of her assignment. Luckily, she discovered the library held three books related to Germany—Louis Untermeyer's (1930) *Blue Rhine, Black Forest*, Mrs. Cornelia Parker's (1932) *German Summer*, and Nora Waln's (1939) *Reaching for the Stars*, all of which were added in the same years as their publication.

The two older books provided travelogues full of cathedrals, historical figures, and picturesque rivers and forests. In contrast, Waln's (1939) account of travels with her musician husband across the Fatherland included discussions with discontent citizens, frank talks about nationalism with Hitler Youth, and "streets garlanded with swastikas" (p. 21).

Helen now had enough for a good paper. Her mother could provide more insight into the country she left as a child and fill in her family tree. Helen would learn she was named after her great-grandmother, Helena.

Had she lived in any of the other four communities, she could have

written a similar paper about Germany. All five Main Street public libraries purchased Waln's (1939) *Reaching for the Stars* in 1939. The paper may have included more on German social life, if she had access to the Morris's copies of both *Beer and Skittles* (1932) and *So You're Going to Germany and Austria* (1930). The Moore and Rhinelander only had the Waln and lacked the books with a travelogue perspective of Germany.

Again, the five libraries also had some overlap in terms of reference materials beyond *Britannica*. The Rhinelander held twenty-one copies of the *New International Year Book*, which were added from 1914 to 1941; the Morris had a very outdated 1915 copy. The fifteen-year-old *Britannica* set and one *New International Year Book* available at the Morris would have limited the currency of Helen's genealogy report.

Combined, the libraries held six different titles and eleven books altogether on Germany. The bibliographic guides of the library profession recommended Germany more often than most countries, with Germany ranked fifteenth in the ALA catalogs (despite being absent from the 1940 catalog), and fourteenth in the Wilson catalogs. Like George's Japanese search, Helen could find enough to write a paper on Germany.

Eugene in Rhinelander, Wisconsin

Eugene grew up hearing his dad's stories about prospecting for gold in the Yukon and Alaska. His dad did not strike it rich, but he also never lost interest in mining, and every other month he still received a copy of *Rocks and Minerals*. His dad wrote organizers of Mineral Day at the New York World's Fair on June 17, 1940, and received promotional materials with colorful pictures of the gems and minerals from countries all over the world. Browsing these items sparked Eugene's interest, and in 1945 he wanted to learn more about where his dad traveled as a young man.

Eugene piled up the books found in the Rhinelander Public Library related to the regions of the gold rush. In all, there were eight about Alaska acquired from 1912 to 1940 and twelve about Canada acquired from 1909 to 1939. Harry Alverson Franck's (1939) *Lure of Alaska*, John Muir's (1915) *Travels in Alaska*, and other books told of beautiful lands with a wealth of natural resources. The title that focused most on the time his dad was there was John Jasper Underwood's (1925) *Alaska, an Empire in the Making*, with extensive detail on mines, miners, and mining in the region and including discussion of the Yukon Territory. However, Eugene also turned to the Canadian books for more detail.

Most of the library's Canadian books focused on eastern Canada and other aspects of that country's history. Only one title, Agnes Deans Cameron's (1910) *New North* detailed a woman's journey to the Arctic Ocean and a few encounters with the people of mining towns. Still, without much about Canada, Eugene would have plenty to read concerning Alaska's role in the gold rush. For further reference, he could have consulted the

library's *Britannica* because its 1929 information would have been current enough to include details on the time his dad was in the territory.

With many explorers writing about their adventures in Alaska in the twenties and thirties and plenty of readers interested in the region, Alaska was well represented in all the Main Street collections, except the Moore. However, the Moore only had three books on states—one each for Alabama, Arizona, and Massachusetts. Overall Alaska was the most collected state or territory, with thirty-seven books in total, including seventeen books at the Sage, five books at the Bryant, and seven books at the Morris. Arthur Treadwell Walden's (1928) *Dog-puncher on the Yukon* would have been the most useful for Eugene's purpose, but it was only held at the Bryant and the Sage. Alaska even outranked all but twenty-one countries in the Main Street libraries' collections. The professional guides recommended Alaska titles second of all states and territories; Alaska was behind only New York in both the ALA and Wilson catalogs, with forty-three and twenty-six recommended.

In total, the librarians purchased forty-five books about Canada, making it the fifth most collected country. As stated earlier, none of the Canadian books at the Rhinelander or those at any other library dealt with the Yukon. Therefore, Eugene would not have had any advantage if he used the other libraries. If anyone was interested in the other parts of Canada or a basic overview of the country, then the Rhinelander and other libraries held plenty. All but the Moore held copies of Dillon Wallace's (1905) *Lure of the Labrador Wild* and Stewart Edward White's (1903) *The Forest*.

The variety of travel descriptions in the collections reflects the breadth of books recommended in the professional guides. Canada ranked fifth among the most recommended country in the catalogs, with 51 titles listed in the ALA catalogs and 102 titles listed in the Wilson catalogs. Only the United States, England, France, and Italy, ranked higher than Canada.

Dorothy in Morris, Illinois

In 1945, Dorothy was counting the days until she could escape Morris. She vividly recalled the radio advertisement nearly six years earlier that beckoned one and all to the New York World's Fair with thrills like the Parachute Jump, with its twenty-five-story drop, and the Aquacade, where performers swam and danced in a music show. She politely asked if she could go, but was quickly denied. Her mom explained that a trip to New York would be too expensive for the family. So, Dorothy asked if she could go to New York and pay her own way. Her mom agreed as long as Dorothy finished high school first.

Over the years, Dorothy saved and prepared to leave the grain fields far behind. However, she wanted to gather as much information as possible before taking off and decided to stop by the Morris Public Library to see what she could find. The Morris had three books about New York,

all acquired by the library in their year of publication. Clifton Johnson's (1915) *Picturesque Hudson* was full of old pictures and historical points about the river, but Dorothy did not see it as useful for her purposes. The same was true for both nostalgic narratives, Alice Earle's (1896) *Colonial Days in Old New York* and Carl Carmer's (1936) *Listen for a Lonesome Drum*. The old stories ranging from cockfights to the origins of Ann Lee, Shaker leader, would not have helped Dorothy. Dorothy was disappointed, but figured she would learn plenty about the city when she got there.

The Main Street public libraries held seven titles about New York State and New York City. The Morris and the Sage both held three. Dorothy would have fared better at the Sage with access to Clara Elizabeth Laughlin's (1939) *So You're Visiting New York City* and Rian James's (1931) *All about New York, an Intimate Guide*. The Rhinelander held only the dated *Picturesque Hudson* (1915), and the Moore had none. For reference, the Morris, the Moore, and the Bryant all retained a 1941 *World Almanac*, but this would not have been useful for Dorothy's needs, even if she bothered to keep searching after her disappointing start.

Despite these small numbers, the Empire State was the third most collected state among the Main Street public library collections. The Grand Canyon State, Arizona, was the second most popular behind Alaska in the libraries despite being the fifth and seventh most recommended in the professional catalogs. Beyond Alaska, Arizona, and New York, each library accessioned two or fewer books on all the other states. Books on twenty-seven states were not purchased at all, including four out of the five states in which Main Street public libraries were located. Sauk Centre and Morris each had a single book about Chicago.

The ALA and Wilson catalogs both recommended books on New York State (including New York City) more than any other state or territory. With fifty-six titles, the Wilson catalog recommended New York twice as much as any other state or territory, except Alaska and California. The same was true for ALA catalogs, with the twenty-nine New York books listed. The catalogs also recommended books on the cities of Chicago, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, and Washington DC, but no library accessioned more than one book on any city. The city books purchased by the libraries were antiquated and would not help Dorothy with a move to any of them.

Betty in Lexington, Michigan

Betty volunteered at her church and planned to dedicate her life to mission work. One day in 1945 while browsing through papers in a storage box, Betty stumbled across a brief pamphlet from 1939 describing the formation of Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people and calling for protest over new British restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine. Apparently, the British wanted to limit the number of Jewish

immigrants to Palestine to a one-third minority in order to reduce conflict between the Arabs and Jews. The pamphlet asked for prayers as many Jews were fleeing Europe and heading to the Holy Land to escape Nazi persecution. The narrative ended with a quote from Albert Einstein's speech dedicating the Palestine pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair, "Palestine is exposed to constant attack, and every one of its members is forced to fight for his very life" (Mauro, 2010, p. 210).

This moved Betty; she wanted to know what had happened there since 1939, but the remainder of the storage box was filled with only sheet music and old church bulletins. Betty did not visit the Moore Library often, but thought she would check to see if it had any books on the subject. After Betty asked what the library had on Palestine, Miss Florence Walther walked her to the 910s section of the library. The entire world fit onto only two shelves at the Moore, and Miss Walther pulled out Henry Van Dyke's (1908) *Out-of-doors in the Holy Land*, acquired by the Moore in 1909, and handed it to Betty. Betty thanked her and began to read the introduction. She soon realized that the book was too dated to help her.

Betty put the book back, but then found her curiosity raised by the other titles in front of her. Although she planned on mission work, she did not know much about the potential places she could go. Church literature indicated there was need in Southeast Asia and Africa. The Moore had two books related to Southeast Asia, Nicol Smith's (1935) *Burma Road* and Agnes Newton Keith's (1939) *Land below the Wind*. The library held one title related to Africa: two copies of Paul Belloni Du Chillu's (1928) *Country of the Dwarfs* acquired in 1936. Upon review, none of the books made their destinations sound too appealing, but as a missionary she expected sacrifice.

The Moore held the least number of books from the geography and travel (910) section of any Main Street public library and had the smallest percentage of 910s to the total collection (0.3 percent). Betty would have found more about Southeast Asia at the Morris and the Sage. The Sage and Bryant held two books on Malaysia, and the Morris held four. With thirty-eight titles related to China, twenty-two books about India, thirteen about Malaysia, and twelve on Japan, Asia collectively ranked third in every library behind Europe and America.

Again, Asia ranked third among continents in the professional catalogs, with 639 books listed, but the recommendations on Southeast Asia were relatively low. The ALA catalogs recommended eleven books about Malaysia, and the Wilson catalogs listed eighteen books. The Wilson catalogs recommended twenty-one books about the Philippines, but the ALA catalogs listed only five. Despite the numbers for those two countries, the rest of Southeast Asia was lacking in the professional guides. This limited selection of recommendations may indicate a lack of importance placed on this part of the world by the profession.

Betty's search related to Africa would have been similar in any of the Main Street public libraries because every library held *Country of the Dwarfs*, but little else. Africa ranked behind every other continent, with only seventy-three books in all the libraries combined. The other four libraries held books on Egypt. The Bryant held two books on both Morocco and Ethiopia. The Morris had one book about the Union of South Africa and one about Madagascar.

The African section was also underrepresented in the professional guides. Even the few recommendations, 204 titles (5.2 percent of the total) from the Wilson catalogs and 85 titles (4.8 percent of the total) from the ALA catalogs, did not usually relate to a country. Cited African books focused on large regions traversed to explore wildlife and natural resources. Also, many recommended titles did not make Africa seem very appealing, such as the accounts of several expeditions massacred by native inhabitants in Ludovico Nesbitt's (1935) *Hell-hole of Creation; the Exploration of Abyssinian Danakil*.

Betty's first purpose for visiting the Moore was to find out about Palestine. She would have found a copy of *Out-of-doors in the Holy Land* (1908) at all the libraries, but that was not recent. The Bryant, Sage, and Morris retained some spiritually infused Palestinian books from the late twenties and early thirties, like Henry Morton's (1934) *In the Steps of the Master*. In any library, Betty would not have found a recent update on Palestine. The Moore held a 1941 *World Almanac*, but the contents would not have been much more current than the 1939 pamphlets she found at church. This low representation of Palestine in the stacks did not match the abundance of recommendations concerning the country in the professional guides.

Palestine was ranked fifteenth in the ALA catalogs, with sixteen recommendations, and ranked fourteenth in the Wilson catalogs, with thirty-seven recommendations, thus placing it above many other more established and less turbulent nations. The importance placed on this region by professional guides was not reflected in the Main Street public library collections, all located in communities with Christian super majorities.

CONCLUSION

Although these examples provide only a few hypotheticals of students accessing the 910 sections in the five Main Street public libraries, they show strengths and weaknesses each library had in geography and travel. Both the professional guides and accession records present a world skewed to North America and Western Europe. The catalogs were remarkably similar in their makeup and the dominance of particular countries, like the United States, England, and France. The greater value the American library profession placed on those dominant countries compared to the rest of the world is clear. Figure 3 reveals this same pattern of North American and Western European bias in the Main Street public library

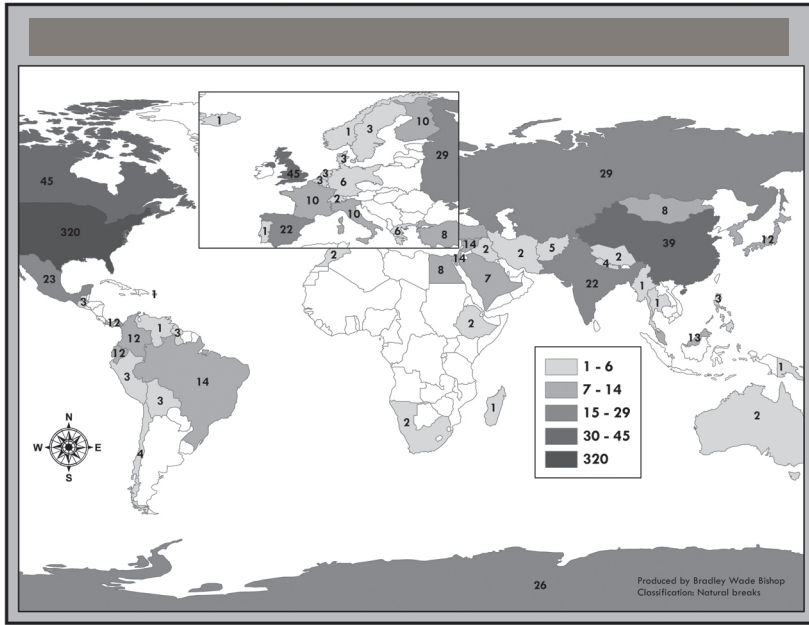


Figure 3. 910 totals for the Main Street public libraries by country

accession records. Note the lack of any Eastern European countries from the collections. Southeast Asia and Africa constitute two other major gaps in geographic coverage.

This third map is not markedly different from the maps illustrating what the professional guides recommended. The actual purchases reflected what librarians on Main Street thought were the most important items to offer their patrons. Similar to the New York World's Fair's government zone, the collections focused only on what Americans thought were the most important nations in 1945; much of the world was under-represented or not represented at all.

Each of the five students faced different challenges in their library collections. George and Helen found enough to write papers about Japan and Germany, albeit from books that were often dated and sometimes xenophobic. Beyond these countries, the scopes of both the geography and travel (910) sections in the libraries and the catalogs regarding countries were limited. Only nine countries were represented in the collections by more than 20 books: India (22), Spain (22), Mexico (23), Russia (29), China (39), Canada (45), England (45), and the United States (320).

Eugene got lucky with Alaska because beyond Arizona and New York, the libraries did not collect many books about states, despite the numerous recommendations in the ALA and Wilson catalogs. The focus on

Alaska matches a high number of purchases on other areas of exploration in the libraries: Arctic Regions (thirty-six), Antarctic Regions (twenty-four), Nepal (four), and Tibet (two). In these instances, Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton's (1920) *South*, Vilhjalmur Stefansson's (1913) *My Life with the Eskimos*, and Sir Francis Edward Younghusband's (1926) *Epic of Mount Everest* described adventures that librarians thought would entertain their patrons and be worthy of purchase.

Dorothy's quest for information on New York City and Betty's failed mission to locate much information about other places at the Moore are two exceptions that other users would encounter in Main Street public libraries. For any of the five, the narrower the geographic scope of the search, the fewer books on the shelves. Despite the multitude of books about the United States, the collections held little about individual states and even less about cities.

That Moore held only thirty-five titles is consistent with the special mission assigned it by its community: "To satisfy tourist desires," which may not have included learning about other destinations around the world (Wiegand, 2011b, p. 256). For every library, regions missing from the 910 section signify a void in coverage of the world. At the Moore, however, the percentage of the collections represented by the 910 section in table 3, shows clear purchasing decisions to limit those types of books and focus on popular fiction and "titles acclaimed by the literary establishment and reinforced by professional acquisitions guides" (p. 270).

The geographic gaps and biases in the collections are not the only limitation for the users of these Main Street public libraries. The Bryant, Sage, and Rhinelander all had *Britannica* sets eleven to sixteen years out of date in 1945. Because other reference materials and books were also dated, currency of information researched on nations performed was greatly limited at the libraries.

Analysis of the catalogs and collections shows a certain skewed view of the world. Just as Western Europe and the United States dominated the New York World's Fair's government zone, so the American library profession showed a lack of interest in much of the world. This bias extended to their mother country, England, and their nearest neighbors, Canada and Mexico. Collections and catalogs show less interest on states and cities within the United States, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and

Table 3. 910 Section Totals and Percentages of the Libraries' Collections

Main Street Public Library	910 totals	Percentages
Bryant Library (Sauk Centre, MN)	332 (27,101)	1.2
Sage Library (Osage, IA)	355 (38,095)	0.9
Rhinelander Public Library (Rhinelander, WI)	265 (43,287)	0.6
Morris Public Library (Morris, IL)	321 (34,464)	0.9
Moore Library (Lexington, MI)	35 (9,792)	0.3

the continent of Africa. The world available for checkout for these five students was restricted by geography and time. Similar to the New York World's Fair, the collections and catalogs pointed patrons to a world of tomorrow that largely promoted the industry, entertainment, democracy, and dominant religion of the United States.

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