
“A Home-like Atmosphere”: The Advent of Children’s Rooms at St. Louis Public Library, 1906–1912

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ABSTRACT

Most public libraries in the United States did not include collections, rooms, or librarians dedicated to work with children until the early twentieth century. The establishment of children’s rooms as a customary feature of U.S. public libraries coincided with bequests to public libraries by the Carnegie Corporation. One such library, St. Louis (Missouri) Public Library, provides an example of how large, urban library systems expanded to include neighborhood branches as well as a central branch building, all of which contained a purpose-built space for work with children. As branch buildings with children’s rooms emerged, so did the need for trained children’s librarians. Paradoxically, as soon as there were rooms dedicated to children, librarians extended their reach to municipal playgrounds, schools, and other venues outside of the library. Children’s librarians found themselves traversing a variety of spaces, serving a diverse population in multiple sites.

This is the largest of a chain of rooms for children, including one in each branch library throughout the city. . . . The room itself is rather larger than most children’s rooms, but it is so treated that its size does not detract from the home-like atmosphere. (St. Louis Public Library, 1917, p. 10)

From the vantage of the early twenty-first century, it is almost inconceivable that there was a time when public libraries did not exist in the United States. It is even more unbelievable that in the early period of public library development, the presence of children in the public library was a rare occurrence, and that there existed none of the elements we associate with children in public libraries: large collections of picture books and literature for youth, brightly decorated walls with child-sized furniture,

the presence of librarians devoted to the special needs of children, and story time and other programming particularly designed for them. In the early twentieth century, even after half a century of public library provision, rooms for children's books and specially trained librarians devoted to children were still very new concepts.

Specialized library space for children is one of the five elements that define work with children as "a formal entity within the American public library" (Thomas, 1982, p. 297). One factor that led to an increase of children's rooms in public libraries was the establishment of library buildings funded through Andrew Carnegie's foundation, the Carnegie Corporation. For larger urban areas, the building of a system of branch libraries throughout the city was typical of Carnegie's library bequests.¹ Although the Carnegie Foundation did not require that each building include a children's room, it was certainly encouraged (Van Slyke, 1995, pp. 201–202).

Carnegie-funded public library buildings "stood on contested ground. . . . They were cultural artifacts whose meanings varied with the intentions and experiences of a diverse group of users" (Van Slyke, 1995, p. xxvii). Nowhere is this more evident than in the large urban public library that serves a sizable and diverse population. Indeed, Carnegie Corporation donations for public library buildings coincided with increasing interest in library work with children and the inclusion of separate space for children's collections. Thus, it is against this background of diversity and contestation that children's rooms emerged and grew in United States public libraries.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS A PUBLIC SPACE

When considering the library as a public space, it is important to answer two questions: What is meant by "public" and what is meant by "library?" The definition of "public" varies according to time period and location. In the early years of the public library movement in the United States, libraries commonly restricted access to patrons based on age. The age restriction varied according to the particular library; some did not allow patrons under twelve years of age to use the library, others limited use to patrons fourteen years and older, and still others to age sixteen.² Also, some areas of the country restricted access to the library based on race; for example, African Americans were excluded from many Southern libraries (Graham, 1998; Malone, 1995). Did this mean that "public" meant only adults? Did the "public" in the library include only members of a particular race?

The definition of "library" is likewise unclear. Is the library merely the edifice in which library activities occur, or does it include the collections contained in that building? What happens when those collections move outside of the building to be dispersed from delivery stations, deposit col-

lections, and playgrounds? Does the playground or deposit station then become "the library?" What is the significance of the library as a public space when library work takes place outside the library building? All of these questions become particularly interesting when considering work with children in urban public libraries, since such activities often take place in multiple spaces and with diverse populations.

CHILDREN'S ROOMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Specialized services for children were not a feature of early public libraries in the United States. As noted above, many libraries had age requirements that excluded children from checking books out of the library. However, in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for books for children increased for a number of reasons: the growth of free public schooling resulted in more children who needed and wanted reading material; books for children were published in increasing numbers; and adults committed to the education of children realized the value of public libraries as a source for books. All of these factors contributed directly and indirectly to larger numbers of children in the library.

In 1896, John Cotton Dana, librarian at the Denver Public Library, noted, "What to do with children in the free public library is one of the unsettled problems of library economy. For the comfort of the elder reader it is certainly desirable that children should not come in large numbers into the main part of the library in which the public is given access to the shelves" (Dana, 1896, p. 555).

One common solution to this "unsettled problem" was to set aside a separate space for the juvenile collections that would keep children at least somewhat separate from adult readers. Some libraries began by devoting a corner of the reading room to children's books, often with child-sized tables and chairs nearby. For those libraries that had the means, this corner often evolved into a separate room for the children's collection (Bostwick, 1910, pp. 76–77). This was doubly beneficial because children's collections tended to be placed on open shelves—where children could get their own books—in contrast to the closed-shelves prevalent in libraries at the time (Bostwick, 1910, p. 78). Closed shelving required that the patron consult a catalog, most likely one with only author and title access but no subject headings, and then request the book from a "delivery desk," which was often separate from the "issue" (circulation) desk. There was no routine instruction for children in the use of the catalog, so they had difficulty in finding books in the closed stacks system. By giving children open access to books and placing those books in discrete locations, traffic at the delivery desk was reduced, adult patrons were not disturbed by the presence of children, and children received better service.

It is difficult to determine which library in the United States was the first to have a separate room for children, but two of the earliest were in

Brookline, Massachusetts, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, each of which had a room devoted to the children's collection by 1889 or 1890. These rooms already existed in the library buildings but were originally designed for a different purpose. The first purpose-built children's room was that of the Pratt Institute Library in Brooklyn. Dedicated in 1896, the building's layout was designed by Mary Wright Plummer, head of the Institute, and included a reading room for children "chiefly to relieve the pressure of circulation in the delivery-room and to prevent crowds of children from annoying the adult borrowers" (Pratt Institute Free Library, 1897, p. 11). The Pratt Institute Library was intended to serve not only the school but also the surrounding community, since there was no public library service in Brooklyn at this time.³ The new room required a librarian to run it, and Plummer appointed Anne Carroll Moore, a new graduate of the Pratt Institute, as the first children's librarian in the Institute Library.⁴

As children's rooms became more common, librarians wrote articles that laid out the elements that were essential to the well-run children's room. In 1906, for example, Adelaide Bowles Maltby of Buffalo Public Library summed up prevailing practices in public library children's rooms: "[the room] . . . should be large, sunny and cheerful in coloring. The furniture in a children's department should all be simple and durable, suited in size to its users. It may be artistic as well, but it must be practical—small chairs and tables for small folk . . . there must be 'fixins'" (Maltby, 1906, p. 360). By "fixins" Maltby meant items such as plants, flowers, and pictures, all designed to create an inviting atmosphere that would appeal to children and draw their attention to the books within the room.

Although the establishment of children's rooms came about in large part to solve a problem for adult patrons, this separate space was a very important contributor to the growth of library work with children. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, most large public libraries had separate children's rooms. A good example of how a network of children's rooms grew, and for which there are extensive archival records, is that of the St. Louis (Missouri) Public Library (SLPL).

SPACE FOR CHILDREN IN ST. LOUIS PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1894–1906

The public library in St. Louis originated in 1865 as a subscription library, the St. Louis Public Schools Library and Lyceum.⁵ From its inception, it had no age restriction; anyone who could afford the subscription fee was welcome. Though children were allowed to use the library, there were no librarians dedicated to work with children, nor was there any separate area for the juvenile collection.

When the library became free to all in 1894, the application for a li-

brary card stated, "A card entitling the holder to draw books for home reading will be issued on application to *any* person who resides *or* pays taxes *or* has permanent employment in St. Louis, and who can furnish a reasonable assurance that he will comply with the rules and regulations [emphasis mine]" (St. Louis Public Library, 1895, p. 12). Children under age seventeen were required to have the signature of a parent as "guarantor," but otherwise had no special limits placed on them. Head Librarian Frederick M. Crunden emphatically responded to Lutie Stearns' 1894 survey "No age limit. Don't believe in it. Let children take books as soon as they can read" (Stearns, 1894, p. C81).⁶ The library was also free and accessible to members of all racial and ethnic groups in St. Louis, a direct contrast to the racially segregated public schools and municipal playgrounds in that city.

Crunden's energies prior to 1894 had been directed toward making the library a publicly supported, free institution. Once that was accomplished, he turned his attention to the organization of work with children. The juvenile collection consisted of separate shelves for the children's books in the adult open-shelf room. It was moved to shelves opposite the entrance so that "our young folks will have free access to the books from 3 to 6 in the afternoon, with an assistant specially assigned to wait on them. This will secure to them better attention and also lessen the crowd at the regular issue desk" (St. Louis Public Library, 1895, p. 4). Crunden hired Julia Krug, a schoolteacher with no special training in library work, as superintendent of the Juvenile Department, although her work consisted mainly of arranging for public library books to be sent to the public schools.

In 1897, the children's books were moved into the "medical room," a little-used space that had previously housed books on medical topics. The room was not large enough to hold the entire juvenile collection, so the overflow was shelved in the nearby stacks. In the annual report for 1897, Head Librarian Frederick M. Crunden wrote of the new children's room: "The tables in the room are full every afternoon, and on Saturdays the room and the aisles of the stacks are so crowded that passage through them is difficult. A room not less than six times as large ought to be provided, and fifty such rooms should be opened in the different parts of the city. The cost would be relatively little, and the benefits to the city incalculable" (St. Louis Public Library, 1898). Notwithstanding Crunden's enthusiastic desire to provide children's library space throughout the city, funding such rooms was out of the question for the SLPL in 1897. The situation changed four years later when the SLPL received a grant from Andrew Carnegie's foundation and the library could afford to open library branches throughout the city—each of which included a separate space for children.⁷

THE CARNEGIE LIBRARIES, 1906–1912

The SLPL branch library buildings funded by Andrew Carnegie opened between 1906 and 1912. These buildings were the first purpose-built library buildings for the SLPL, and each included purpose-built space for children. The branch buildings each had a slightly different, though very similar, design.

Construction on Barr Branch began in 1905. The branch opened in 1906, followed by Cabanne Branch in 1907, Carondelet Branch in 1908, Crunden Branch in 1909, and Soulard and Divoll Branches in 1910. Construction on the last of the Carnegie-funded buildings, the Central Branch, was completed in late 1911 with the building opening in January 1912. Although each building was designed by a different architect, they all provided service to both adults and children, and all included rooms for group meetings that were made available the public at no charge. Librarians regarded the library and the services they provided as a nexus of social and intellectual life for their particular communities. Head Librarian Arthur Bostwick noted, “Efforts to make the library a social center have gone furthest in the branch libraries, as is natural, owing to their local or neighborhood character. . . . The branch librarian makes an effort to get and keep in touch with all labor and industrial organizations in the vicinity, to consult their needs and wishes in the provision of reading matter and to make them feel in every way that the library is to be looked upon as an intellectual centre in the community” (St. Louis Public Library, 1911, p. 44–45).

Barr (1906), Cabanne (1907), and Carondelet (1908)

The first three Carnegie-funded branches all had very similar floor plans, though designed by different architects and catering to distinctively different populations. Upon entering the buildings, patrons passed through the vestibule into the entrance hall (a.k.a. delivery room). The circulation desk was at the back of the entrance hall, directly in front of the stack area. The stacks were open to the public and included several tables and a display rack. The adult reading room was to the left of the entrance, and the children’s room was to the right with “glass partitions which give an appearance of space and a very real amount of light” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 52), so that “the effect is distinctly not that of separate rooms” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 43). Both reading rooms were the same size, but the children’s room had open shelving around the periphery of the room while the adult room had only a few shelves on one side.

Cabanne also had four big fireplaces where “fires may be lighted to celebrate festivals or to brighten gloomy days” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 43). Patrons donated plants, and the Society for the Promotion of St. Louis Art loaned art work to decorate the space. Cabanne Branch

Librarian Mary Pretlow found that “Buildings, like people, have personalities—it is something more than ‘atmosphere.’ That word might describe the qualities of a cathedral or theatre, but the library belongs to that class of buildings which may be said to possess distinct personality—and that of the Cabanne Library is a very interesting one. It reflects the temper of its surroundings. It is a gay and happy little individual, and it is striving to be useful, progressive and helpful” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 62).

Crunden (1909), Soulard (1910), and Divoll (1910)

The last three of the neighborhood branches to be built with Carnegie funds had a different design from the first three. The first floor was constructed as one big room with the administration desk in the middle to separate the adult and children’s section. The books were all on open shelves, and “the whole impression is that of a large home library in which even the age distinction is obliterated as far as practical. Indeed, from the first day the people of the neighborhood felt at ‘home’ in the Crunden Library” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 7). This difference in structure is interesting, as past practice was to keep the children’s and adult rooms completely separate. The patrons entered through the front door, and instead of going into a vestibule, immediately entered the library. This very large rectangular room had the adult department to the left and the children’s department to the right, except for Soulard Branch, which reversed the placement of the adult and children’s spaces. Shelves around the periphery of the room held all the books. The delivery desk was in the center of the room, immediately opposite the entryway. As with the other branches, each building held an auditorium and meeting spaces where local groups could meet for free.

Crunden Branch had an exhibition case strategically located right in front of the entrance to the children’s room. The rationale for placing it there was that children would stop to look at the contents and then be inspired to learn more about what they had seen. As one of the children’s librarians asserted in the library’s annual report,

This is the psychological moment for the children’s librarian. She passes a few remarks to the curious child in regard to the articles exhibited and after a while she shows him a book that treats of the objects in question. . . . The child when left to himself will usually hunt for the fiction shelves and once having started to read storybooks will very likely continue with them indefinitely. With the help of this exhibition however, the child discovers from his entrance into the library that it carries for him a collection of nonfiction books on all kinds of subjects, so entertainingly written that many a smart story fades by comparison. (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, pp. 83–84)

The site for Soulard Branch was chosen by the SLPL Board of Trustees because it put the library in a “position as part of the civic center of the neighborhood” (St. Louis Public Library, 1913, p. 87). Very near the

branch were located the playgrounds and a public bath house, both of which attracted visitors to the library who otherwise might not have come.

Most of the circulation at Soulard Branch came from children. As with Crunden Branch, immigrant children tended to take books home to their parents, especially those who did not speak English. The nearby bath house had a pool, and the librarians in the children's room could always tell if it was boys' day or girls' day at the pool by the attendance in the children's room. The playground was directly across from the branch and was a great attraction for children. During the summer, playground workers organized activities and games. Stories were told every afternoon with one each week told by the Soulard children's librarian. The library club room was used to cooperate with the playground for various activities such as making costumes.

One major difference between Divoll and the other branches was the large grounds surrounding the building. Children enjoyed sledding on the hill in front of the library, to the detriment of passers-by:

No pedestrian is safe on the sidewalk when it snows or when the roller skate season is on. The library assistants are kept busy apologizing to adults and answering letters of complaint, for janitors and policemen are powerless to combat this perfectly normal desire for play. (St. Louis Public Library, 1912, p. 110)

The grounds were a continual problem for the library:

There is no playground in the neighborhood and the school yard across the street is paved with brick. Naturally a wide lawn covered with grass and shaded by big trees is a temptation to any child. The terrace on one side, the ledge surrounding the building, the stone balustrade and flag pole offer wonderful facilities for juvenile acrobats and it is difficult to maintain all these in good condition. (St. Louis Public Library, 1920, p. 5)

Central Library Building (1912)

While waiting for the rest of the branches to be built, the library utilized temporary spaces for some of its activities. The Central Branch moved to temporary quarters in 1908 because it had outgrown its original space. A seven-story building directly across the street from the Board of Education Building that had previously housed the library provided enhanced circumstances. The library had use of the entire building, which doubled the total space of the library; the circulation department was located on the first floor instead of the sixth floor as it had been in the Board of Education Building and was thus accessible directly from the street. The Children's Department, now on the fourth floor, encompassed "five times its former space" and held all the books in the children's collection, an

improvement over the previous space where some books had to be kept on shelves in the hallway (St. Louis Public Library, 1909, pp. 50–51). The new arrangement of the books promoted independence among children: “The children are learning to browse and make their own choice, thus simplifying the routine duties of the assistants and giving more opportunity for personal work at the shelves with the children who need help” (St. Louis Public Library, 1909, p. 30).

The new Central Branch opened in January 1912. It was a monumental edifice designed by well-known architect Cass Gilbert. Names of famous authors were inscribed around the top of the building. The front door was reached after climbing vast numbers of stairs, perhaps symbolic of an ascent to the heavenly mysteries of education and culture. The interior featured high arched ceilings in the entryways, marble floors, and wall lamps set in alabaster sconces, all intended to uplift the human spirit.

The children’s room was located on the ground floor. In contrast to the magnificence of the main building, there was an attempt to create a “homelike atmosphere” by providing such elements as a fireplace, the only one in the building. There were also “fixins” as Maltby suggested, intended to bring the domestic sphere into the public space. There were brightly colored pictures on the walls, and the room was decorated all year round with fresh flowers donated by trustees, local florists, and the librarians themselves. There were also plants in the room, and wildlife—in the form of fish and amphibians. One entry in the work diary for the Central Branch children’s room describes the sad death of “Peter Pan,” a tadpole who lost his tail but never grew legs and did not become a frog. The walls were lined with wooden book shelves low enough for children to reach and included tables and chairs in different dimensions to accommodate the changing sizes of the children as they matured.

When the new building opened, school groups were given tours. Entries in the librarian’s work diary note that “the children say ‘Oh! The room is grand’ and their good behavior shows their real appreciation and pleasure.”⁸⁸ This good behavior did not preclude another group of schoolchildren from finding their greatest pleasure by skating on the marble floor. Other children were fascinated by the drinking fountains and spent a good deal of time trying them out.

Circulation and foot traffic rapidly increased in the children’s room. Just three months after the opening, on March 9, daily circulation reached its highest point ever, 952 books. The librarian noted that although there were many people in the room that day, and some noise in the hallway outside, “people commented on the splendid atmosphere in the room, children were interested but there was no restraint, there was order in disorder.”⁸⁹ The librarians, while they tried to encourage good behavior inside the library, clearly understood the realities of real children’s actual behavior.

CHILDREN'S ROOMS DEMAND CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS

As each new branch opened, SLPL hired its first trained children's librarians to take charge of work with children.¹⁰ When Arthur E. Bostwick became head librarian at the SLPL in 1909, he immediately reorganized the Children's Department.¹¹ Bostwick created a position of supervisor of children's work to coordinate work with the branches and hired Mary Douglas, first assistant to Anne Carroll Moore at the New York Public Library, to take charge of the work with children. She was hired "with the expectation that the methods so successfully used by Miss Moore to coordinate and systematize the work in a large number of branch children's rooms could . . . strengthen similar work here."¹² Children's work at the SLPL became a thriving concern. The library, which had always held children and their education as an important part of its mission, had for the first time a department headed by a trained and experienced children's librarian who could supervise and coordinate the work done in the Central Library with that done by other trained children's librarians in the branch libraries.¹³

LIBRARY SPACES BEYOND THE BUILDING

In addition to the Central and neighborhood branch libraries, books were distributed in other places around the city. The administration of these "extralibrary" collections was the responsibility of two SLPL departments: the Stations Department and the Traveling Libraries Department. Each had jurisdiction over very specific library resources.

The Stations Department administered the delivery stations. These were housed in small retail shops, mainly drug stores. Patrons could write out call slips for the books they wanted, and the books would be sent from the Central Branch to the delivery station where the patron could pick them up. Library staff picked up and dropped off books on a regular schedule. Patrons retrieved the books from the employees of the store in which the delivery station was housed. The drug store owners did not charge the library for housing the books or handing them out to patrons because they considered it as a form of free advertising. "The stations are therefore considered a makeshift at best, and whenever a new branch is opened, those in its immediate vicinity are discontinued. The Delivery Stations system will be maintained, however, as long as there are districts in the city not served by branches" (St. Louis Public Library, 1909, p. 85).

The Traveling Libraries department was in charge of deposit stations. These small collections were placed in a particular location for a set amount of time and then replaced by a different set of books. Deposit collections were often placed in schools, hospitals, and settlements. The original deposits were in school buildings and contained books for children, but when the Traveling Libraries department was organized in 1910, the deposit collections expanded to include adult titles. Deposit col-

lections began in schools, but later small deposits were added in social settlements, hospitals, factories, orphans homes, convents, churches, the YMCA, and a dental clinic that wanted books to keep their patients busy reading as they waited their turn. Children's librarians were added to the staffs of the Stations and Traveling Library Departments in 1912.

Librarians referred to this work as "missionary activity." Once demand in an area grew great enough, they envisioned that the station, sub-branch, or deposit would be replaced with a full-service branch building. Patrons who used the delivery stations wrote out request slips for books they wanted to read. In the event that the book was not available, they were asked to indicate that they were willing for the librarian to make a substitution. Librarians then substituted a "good" book for a merely "popular" title.

The Library Assistant is thus able, not only to advise that a particular book be read, as would be the case with a reader actually present in the library or one of its Branches, but to send the book itself directly into the reader's household, where it is so much more likely to be read. . . . In particular, the reading of the children who use the delivery stations is practically under the control of the Library. The printed grade lists, which are distributed free of charge, contain the only names of books and authors that many of these children have ever seen. These lists are carefully made out, and it has been deemed expedient to print several in some of the grades, in order not to narrow down the call to too small a collection. It is interesting to note how some of the children read every book on the lists, scratching out one title after another. (St. Louis Public Library, 1912, pp. 94-95)

PLAYGROUNDS AND OTHER VENUES

Work with children expanded still further outside the library walls when librarians began a series of summer story hours in municipal playgrounds in 1908. In 1911 the program expanded to include distribution of books on playgrounds, which necessitated a more regular, systematic program. Librarians told stories and distributed books on a regular schedule that took them to each playground once a week. At the end of the summer, the books were collected and returned to the library. Children whose library books were not returned received a visit at home from one of the library assistants.

Librarian Frances Eunice Bowman, who had a key position as the person in charge of the Central Branch children's room, took the lead in storytelling efforts. In a 1912 entry in the work diary, she noted that telling stories on the playground was tiring work, in part because of the coordination required with playground employees.

It is not the stories that tire me but so much talking must be done to teachers and directors. And going into a ground where the atmosphere is not cordial is very trying. However the spirit grows friendlier all of the

time. . . . Went to Carnegie Park play ground. It is a lively playground. Many children all interested and enthusiastic. But Mr. Bowden [the director of the playground] is not very sympathetic about the books. He says the books we send are too simple, the children on that ground are a good class and do not need any "up lift" work. I wanted to test the books but I was there at too busy a time. However the boys left their ball game and came running when they saw me start to tell a story to a few children sitting under the awning. . . . Before I got through there were at least sixty children standing around with mouths wide open. Yet "fairy tales are too simple." It will take hard work to have the library make any impression on that ground and yet it is an excellent playground.¹⁴

Although Bowman found it difficult to work with the playground directors at times, the story hours on playgrounds were generally quite successful.

Librarians also told stories to groups of people in other venues. They traveled to factories to tell stories to young women who left school to work.¹⁵ They told stories to the students at the Missouri School for the Blind. They also told stories to groups at the Ethical Culture Society. In some cases, the groups were not only made up of schoolchildren but also adults who were just as interested in hearing a story. In 1913, for example, Frances Bowman reported her experience at one such event:

Told "The Sacred Flame" by Selma Lagerlof to 600 people from 4 yrs. old up to gray hairs. Even the little tots were held by the story, for twenty minutes you could have heard a pin drop in the room. It is a wonderful story, idealistic & imaginative yet strong, with a firm grip upon life, full of action and splendidly dramatic.¹⁶

Librarians at Divoll Branch began telling stories to children in St. Louis' House of Detention on a regular basis beginning in 1925. The children were segregated along gender lines but not along racial lines. Librarians would tell the same stories to the group of boys as to the group of girls, although they also responded to special requests:

There were 15 boys and 25 girls at the House of Detention. They enjoyed the "King of the golden [sic] River" very much. The girls asked me if I would tell them the "Twelve dancing [sic] Princesses" as they could not go to the playgrounds. The group of boys consisted of the ones who had been punished and were kept-in from playground recreation. I felt sorry for the little boys, as they were to have had a ball game.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

When Andrew Carnegie agreed to give the St. Louis Public Library a grant to build a new central library building and a series of branch libraries, librarians realized a long-desired goal to expand library collections and services throughout the city. Beginning in 1906 when Barr Branch opened and continuing with the opening of the Cabanne, Carondelet, Crunden, Soulard, and Divoll branches, SLPL experienced rapid growth

and was able to reach patrons in a way that was not possible prior to 1906. Each Carnegie branch, including the new Central Library building, had a purpose-built space for children. The number of registered library users rose steadily as did circulation numbers.

The children's rooms in the SLPL central library and its branches were special domains for children and by extension for the women who were children's librarians. Like the private domestic sphere, an effort was made to create a "homelike atmosphere" within which the female librarians presided much as women presided over the home. Separation from the rest of the library—reflecting, at least in part, the attempt to keep the presence of large numbers of children from bothering adult patrons by providing a special space—brought more children to the library. Separation also provided a power base for the women who controlled the rooms as well as for the supervisor who coordinated all children's work in the system. Children's librarians were supreme in their dominance of the work with children with little interference from the rest of the library staff. Their chief aim was simple: to lead children to love reading and "good books" in the hopes of creating and sustaining American cultural norms.

Paradoxically and prophetically, once a room for children's work was established, library work with children expanded almost immediately beyond the boundaries of the room itself. The children's room provided a base of operations from which children's librarians extended their reach to schools, playgrounds, factories, and to other adults who worked with children. Children's librarians were no longer limited to a domain in the children's room, but had a presence in the cultural life of St. Louis at large.

NOTES

1. Carnegie supported the building of branch libraries as early as 1887 when he specified that of his one million dollar donation to Pittsburgh, \$300,000 should be for the building of branch libraries. In 1899 he donated five million dollars to New York City for branch libraries and began to require large cities to use part of his gift to build branches. After 1908, he no longer funded central library buildings at all but gave money to cities only for neighborhood branch libraries (Van Slyke, 1995, 102).
2. In 1894, Milwaukee librarian Lutie E. Stearns surveyed one hundred forty-five libraries in the United States and Canada to discover at what age they allowed children to take books out of the library and why there was an age limit. She found that seventy percent of public libraries in the United States had an age limit and thirty percent did not. The ages varied "from eight to sixteen years of age—the average age requirement being thirteen years." The most-cited reason was that children damaged books or that the library did not contain books suitable for young readers (Stearns, 1894, 1894).
3. Brooklyn Public Library did not begin operation until 1898 (Dain, 1972, p. 224).
4. Anne Carroll Moore is perhaps the best-known and most-researched children's librarian in the United States. Her contributions to the profession are important and well-documented in a biography by Frances Clarke Sayers (Sayers, 1972) as well as many articles and unpublished dissertations.
5. The following archival sources relating to the St. Louis Public Library were examined: (1) Central Branch Children's Room Day Book 1 (1912–1916), St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections, (cited hereafter as Central Day Book 1); (2) Divoll Branch Children's

- Room Day Book 4 (July 1920–July, 1925), St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections (cited hereafter as Divoll Day Book 4); (3) Divoll Branch Children’s Room Day Book 5 (August 5, 1925–May 15, 1930), St. Louis Public Library, Special Collections (cited as Divoll Day Book 5).
6. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the position at SLPL that today would be called the Library Director was simply referred to as the Librarian. In order to make a distinction between the Director and other librarians at SLPL, I will refer to this position as “Head Librarian” throughout this article.
 7. In 1900, the Library Board of Trustees approached Andrew Carnegie to request money from his foundation for the new library building. He agreed to donate one million dollars, half of which would go to build a new Central Library building and the other half to build small branch libraries throughout the city (St. Louis Public Library, 1900, p. 6).
 8. Central Day Book 1, p. 1.
 9. Central Day Book 1, p. 6.
 10. Frances Eunice Bowman, a graduate of the Carnegie Training School at the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, which had a special program for library work with children, joined the staff at SLPL as children’s librarian at Barr Branch in 1906. Augusta Anderson, hired as children’s librarian at Cabanne Branch in 1907 and the second trained children’s librarian to join the staff, was also a Carnegie-trained librarian. More significantly, Mary Douglas, Effie Louise Power, and Alice I. Hazeltine, the first, second, and third Supervisors of Children’s Work, respectively, were all Carnegie graduates. The training that these women received at the Carnegie School strongly influenced the manner in which work with children progressed at SLPL.
 11. Divoll Day Book 4, p. 1.
 12. Divoll Day Book 4, p. 29.
 13. The gendered aspects of children’s librarianship in the early twentieth century cannot be ignored. The prevailing attitude viewed waged work with children as an extension of women’s domestic sphere. There was no question of the sex of the children’s librarian. “She” would be the one to provide children with the right kind of books. This assumption had some basis in fact. Librarianship was a female-intensive profession and indeed there were no male children’s librarians at SLPL during this time period. However, children’s librarians did not equate themselves with mothers. Rather, they considered themselves to be professionals with a distinct purpose and vision. Librarians believed that their work was of vital importance to the development of children into educated, well-behaved citizens, and they did not shy away from using the word “control” to describe their role in supplying children with reading material.
 14. Central Day Book 1, p. 31.
 15. Central Day Book 1, p. 57; Divoll Day Book 4, p. 1.
 16. Central Day Book 1, p. 87.
 17. Divoll Day Book 5, p. 1.

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