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10-19-2010

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Attebury, Ramirose Ilene, "Perceptions of a Profession: Librarians and Stereotypes in Online Videos" (2010). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Paper 433.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/433

Library Philosophy and Practice 2010

ISSN 1522-0222

Perceptions of a Profession: Librarians and Stereotypes in Online Videos

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Introduction

The popularity of YouTube has grown rapidly in recent years, and librarians are just one of many groups that routinely create and post videos to the site. Unlike prior representations of librarians in mass media formats, which have been largely controlled by non-librarians, the increased opportunities for amateur video distribution on sites like YouTube have allowed librarians themselves to decide how they are portrayed. It stands to reason that librarians have a vested interest in portraying themselves and their profession in a positive light. Indeed, an earlier study of YouTube videos correctly identifies a preponderance of negative librarian depictions in YouTube videos not created by librarians (Poulin, 2008). However, this current study argues that the manner in which video creators are portraying librarians form a complex picture that can best be understood by considering theories about stereotypes, the history of stereotypes in the library profession, and the use of parody and mimicry to call into question prevailing societal stereotypes. It is also argued that YouTube videos created by non-librarians should be compared to those created by librarians themselves in order to fully understand the contrasting representations available to YouTube video viewers. An analysis of 100 videos created by librarians paints an interesting picture about what message librarians are sending to viewers and how effectively they are challenging negative stereotypes. A comparison of these videos to those created by non-librarians shows differences from the ways that librarians portray themselves and hints at alternative methods that librarians might want to employ to combat negative stereotypes of the profession.

Stereotype Theories

Scholars have proposed several reasons for the existence of stereotypes, none of which are mutually exclusive. Leyens, Yzerbyt, and Schadron (1994) have explained that stereotypes are processes aimed at regulating social interactions while McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears (2002) add that they help alleviate information overload. That is, putting items into categories saves energy by requiring a person to understand only the category rather than each individual item in it. While librarians, as information professionals, will undoubtedly appreciate the usefulness of stereotypes in this context, there are also drawbacks to using stereotypes as time savers. Brewerton (1993, p. 22) writes, “They [stereotypes] are used by advertisers, writers and journalists who do not have the time or inclination to develop characters.” With the rise of YouTube, amateur video creators could be included in this list, and their use of stereotypes too often represents negative and untrue assumptions about all members of the profession rather than serving as useful categorizations.

Not everyone views stereotypes as necessarily negative (Shauer, 2003). Stereotypes may indicate shared a group identity resultant from similar experiences and also a desire to be part of the “in-group.” For example, a librarian might deliberately yet unnecessarily don a pair of glasses so as to appear

more bookish or intellectual and to fit in with peers of a similar nature. On the other hand, Brewerton argues that "stereotypes are often based on outmoded concepts and are invariably negative" (1993, p. 22). Problems with stereotypes arise when a person fails to realize that categories are made up of individuals who are not exactly identical. Weber and Mitchell further that "images in popular culture can even displace personal memories," so that stereotypes conjured up about librarians can easily stem from unfair representations seen in the mass media rather than from real experiences with them (1995, p. 26). Stereotypes are even more problematic when they cease functioning as mere categories and instead are used as the basis for judgment that has a real-life impact on the unique individuals in the category.

Changing stereotypes is no easy task, especially for someone who feels he or she has been saddled with an unfair image. Worchel and Rothgerber (1997) argue that this is because stereotypes are multidimensional, like a diamond with many faces. Therefore, changing just one facet of a stereotype will not necessarily alter or eradicate its entirety. If stereotypes comprise many traits, one may replace another or become more salient in the minds of those who hold the stereotype. Thus, a bun-headed librarian may be replaced with a sensible-shoe-wearing librarian, but the image of a librarian as one who is practical with little concern for appearance remains. Worchel and Rothgerber also note the importance of perceived homogeneity when considering stereotypes. A trait will be more difficult to alter if it is considered representative of all members of a group rather than a select few or even a simple majority. Thus, while hipster librarians may weaken the idea that librarians don't care about their appearance, the image of a librarian fixated on books rather than technology will be considerably more difficult to dislodge given that nearly all members of the profession still work in buildings dominated by print materials.

Librarians and Stereotypes

The library profession has no shortage of stereotypes, and the library literature has no shortage of articles discussing them. One hundred years ago, Keller outlined the characteristics of a mythical ideal librarian. Among her qualities were a neat appearance, cordial manner, avoidance of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, profanity and vulgarity, and a character deserving of the description "wonderfully adaptable, besides being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and always working overtime at something with superhuman energy and enthusiasm." In other words she described a librarian as one who devoted her entire being to work at the library (1909, p. 296). Although Keller went on to say that this image "must go before the downtrodden average, ordinary, human librarian can have a fair chance" (p. 297), from the vantage point of one-hundred years later it seems that the image did not go, but rather the negative characteristics of it became even more pronounced. The idea of superhuman energy and enthusiasm continued, but not in the form of outstanding public service as we might hope for today, but rather was transferred into a superhuman, and often overzealous, energy for the care of books, for the sanctity of the building, and for the organizational system that characterized the library.

Focusing on the image of this organizational system rather than just the librarian who works in it and further offering a suggestion for the persistence of librarian stereotypes, Radford and Radford (1997) draw on the work of Foucault and feminist theorists to help explain some of this stereotype surrounding female librarians. Portraying the library as an institutional symbol and enforcer of a venerable system of cultural knowledge and power, the authors claim that the negative trappings of female librarianship serve to mitigate the awesomeness of the system. That is, true, "the female librarian is presented as fearsome, but beneath the stern exterior, there is nothing to fear: there is only a woman" (p. 261). Female attributes, especially those typically denigrated by society, are therefore played up in the image of a librarian to alleviate fear of a "key institutional mechanism" that controls both the discourse and order of society. The authors further state that beyond serving an anxiety-reducing role, female librarians are also warnings about the power of the system. Those who dare enter into the complex world of order, indexes, catalogues, and rules, can become controlled by it, losing other essential aspects of their humanity: empathy, forgiveness, and sexuality.

Early in the development of US librarianship, the idea of complete allegiance to the library system required of librarians met little resistance from a society that already demanded a woman choose

between a career and a family. Thus, it was a short step from Keller's enthusiastic ideal librarian who devoted herself to her job with such alacrity to the stereotype of the Old Maid who had devoted herself perhaps too much, to the point she missed out on other more social aspects of life, such as marriage and children. Donna Reed's character in *It's a Wonderful Life* is often held up as an example of this stereotype. Without the possibility of marriage to James Stewart, Reed was forever able to devote the required hours to her job as a librarian, enforcing the rules of silence that serve to demonstrate reverence to the cultural symbol that is the library. Implicit in this movie's portrayal of Reed as a librarian is the notion that Reed's life as a spinster librarian is considerably less desirable than her alter-life as a wife and mother.

Thus at some point, a transformation occurred from Keller's ideal librarian, which in actuality is still a fairly positive image, into derision toward unmarried spinster librarians. Oram (1989) offers an additional suggestion as to why this shift might have occurred. Identifying the growing distrust of spinster teachers in England between 1918 and 1939, Oram posits that the developments in the field of psychology led to growing assertions that unmarried women were deviant and unnatural. Any spinsters, including those who devoted themselves entirely to the library profession, would have increasingly been seen in the same light. Although Oram also suggests that part of the concern about spinsters was their economic freedom from men, it was masked by a discussion of women's sexuality. Likewise, in the United States, a growth of conservative political views, concerns over "race suicide," and backlash against college-educated female reformers prompted many to advocate that women should devote more time to producing and caring for families and less to fighting for sex-solidarity and careers (Gordon, 1987). In this climate the image of a dedicated, unmarried librarian took a decidedly negative turn.

Ironically, the Old Maid depiction of librarians, while common throughout American history and still occasionally found in You Tube videos, seems to have been surpassed in popularity by another female stereotype—the sexy librarian, or even, the sexy old maid. Wilson's study (1982) of librarians' reactions to negative stereotypes suggests that librarians themselves might be responsible for the growth of the sexy librarian image. Wilson claimed that a typical reaction was for librarians to deny they were different from the rest of the population. Scholars have noted the increasing sexualization of contemporary western culture and especially a "wider celebration of women's sexuality in popular culture" (Attwood, 2009, p. xviii). So, perhaps if the rest of American women were increasingly viewed in terms of their sexuality—at least according to dominant media images—then it follows that librarians should be, too. Another possibility for the growth of the sexy librarian stereotype is suggested by Radford and Radford's work. If we assume that emphasizing the downgraded female aspects of librarians serves as a way to mitigate the severity of a rigid cultural ordering system, then focusing on female librarians who are over-sexed could accomplish the same purpose as denigrating those who are under-sexed, similar to Worchel and Rothgerber's claim that a single root stereotype can have multi-faceted elements to it.

While stereotypical images of female librarians have thus been heavily focused on the issue of sexuality and marriage or lack thereof, Dickinson (2002), studying male librarian stereotypes, provides a concise history of how another type of negative stereotype arose -- the policeman librarian. Librarians at early academic institutions in the United States were almost always male and were essentially custodians of their collections and as such often became very possessive of them. Restrictive borrowing practices only furthered the notion that librarians cared more for rules about protecting books than they did about helping patrons use them. Thus the idea of a librarian as authoritative, or as a "policeman," has been around in the United States since 1667 when Harvard appointed its first librarian. Newmeyer's describes pre-1870s librarians as "grim, grouchy, eccentric, and male" in an article about librarian representations (1976, p. 44). Sable (1969) suggests a reason for the continued development of the policeman stereotype among male librarians: that many male members of the profession have felt the need to distinguish themselves from the female majority by way of excessive authority.

In an attempt to identify the stereotypes of librarians currently prominent in mass media depictions, Seale (2008) found the following five: the old maid, the policeman, the inept librarian, the librarian as parody, and the hero/ine. As we have seen, the first two of these stereotypes have a long

history in the library profession. On the other hand, the forth is the type of representation that forces those confronted by it to recognize just how artificial and constructed the traditional stereotypes of librarians are at the present time. The final stereotype, the hero/ine librarian, takes various forms: battling censorship, uncovering vital information, and building relationship among community members. As Seale indicates, however, these five categories are not completely discreet, and more than one representation is often tied up in one particular individual. While all five are found among the YouTube representations, unique combinations of them also exist, and it is sometimes the combination of stereotypes that can call into question the validity of any one.

YouTube in Culture

The importance of YouTube in the creation and dissemination of culture has not gone unnoticed by academics and writers. From professors asking their students to create YouTube videos in order respond to and combat negative images of feminism (Siddiqui, 2008) to students being asked to critique YouTube videos as a means of understanding the "power of popular media in reinforcing, challenging, or creating notions of sex and gender and the ways in which an audience can support or reject particular representations" (Eudey, 2008), it is apparent that YouTube might serve as a vehicle for challenging societal attitudes and beliefs. The practice of culture jamming has been suggested as one method for raising awareness of cultural constructs and challenging those constructs that contain negative or biased information (Trier, 2007). Culture jamming involves challenging the dominant images that mass media throws at society by turning that media on itself and parodying the images presented in order to alter their message. While scholars have clearly identified examples of culture jamming being applied to brand names in a form of activism against corporations with shoddy human rights records (Micheletti & Stolle, 2008), this form of protest might also be applied to constructs other than logos or brand names. YouTube is a forum that allows disparate segments of the population to engage in culture jamming techniques against prevalent and harmful stereotypes as well.

Although it might be expected that librarians creating positive portrayals of their profession vie against non-librarians creating negative portrayals, the results of this video analysis suggest that this expectation, while true, is also not as simple as one might think. Henry Jenkins, the director of MIT's Comparative Media Studies Program proposed a cultural theory of YouTube in 2007 on his blog. He suggested that YouTube, as a space where diverse people and organizations co-exist and interact, "potentially represents a site of conflict and renegotiation between different forms of power" (Jenkins, 2007, para. 2). An obvious option for combating negative stereotypes is the creation of positive images, and many librarians who post YouTube videos have made use of this technique. This type of representation presents the librarian as a fun, positive, upbeat individual who is always ready to help patrons. Another technique with a similar goal but a different approach is that of parody and mimicry. Katherine Adams (2000) draws on the work of poststructuralists when she suggests that parody and mimicry are techniques "through which alternative meanings can be achieved." Naomi Klein (1999) has proposed "parodying advertisements and hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their message" (p. 280). In terms of librarian-related videos, this parodying might mean overdramatizing a negative characteristic of a stereotypical librarian or combining two seemingly unrelated stereotypes to deliberately point out the unrealistic nature of those stereotypes. Librarian videos found on YouTube make use of both techniques.

Methods

In this study, two broad categories of YouTube videos were analyzed: those created by librarians and those created by non-librarians. For the former to be included, it needed to be apparent either from the video itself or the supporting text that accompanied the video that the creator was a librarian. Although there are many videos in existence about libraries, this study specifically looked at librarians themselves, and so all videos included in the analysis also had to at least imply some sort of representation of a librarian. This includes videos that depicted an actual librarian or videos that referenced hypothetical situations in which a librarian would be present. In addition, while members of the

profession are usually aware of the distinction between librarians and support staff, the general public often is not. Therefore, videos were not differentiated based on whether the "librarian" in them was an actual librarian or non-MLS holding staff member.

In total, 100 videos created by librarians and 100 videos created by non-librarians were analyzed. It should be noted that the videos were not randomly selected but rather chosen as a convenience sample. Selection of videos made use of keyword searches on YouTube's website for the terms "librarian" and "librarians." Additionally, the "related videos" feature of YouTube was used to find librarian-related content as well. Future researchers may want to make use of the compilation of a larger pool of librarian-related videos than were selected for this study. Randomly sampling videos from that compilation would offer more assurance that the videos analyzed were representative of the entire population.

The criteria for evaluating videos began simply as a categorization of videos by the five stereotypes identified by Seale (2008). However, it became apparent after watching the first 30 videos that some alternative stereotypes were emerging as well. Therefore, three additional categories were added: the sexy librarian, the psycho librarian, and the librarian occupation as really "fun and positive." The first category includes those representations that deliver an image as far removed from the Old Maid as possible, but it also includes librarian images which combine some aspects of the Old Maid, such as the bun and glasses, with an element of sexiness, including tight clothing or seductive comments. The psycho librarian has characteristics in common with the policeman but takes his or her authoritativeness to extreme, socially-inappropriate, and even dangerous levels. Finally, the librarian image as "fun and positive" has similarities with the hero/ine librarian, but indicates to viewers that even when librarians are not necessarily saving the day with their information-tracking abilities, they have fabulous jobs, intelligent brains, and a desirable status. This latter image serves to combat not just the frumpy, traditional Old Maid representation, but rather the notion that librarianship is a boring, clerical-type job with few real responsibilities or demands.

Analyzing YouTube videos and placing them into one of eight categories is not without its challenges. Selecting the correct category can tax even the most decisive viewer. Some representations are obvious; others, especially those that express a clear stereotype but which might also be parodies are more difficult to determine. Not knowing the intent of the video's creator sets up a possibility of selecting the wrong stereotype. For this reason, it was decided to assign two stereotypes to videos if needed, a primary stereotype and a secondary stereotype. For example, if a video very clearly depicted an inept librarian but also hinted that the stereotype was serving as a parody, the video would be assigned the labels of both "inept" and "parody." The majority of two-stereotype videos, however, included a stereotype combined with something other than parody.

The coding for videos was done by a single person: the author. One potential drawback to this study, therefore, is the lack of any statistical assurance of inter-rater reliability. However, as an informal quality control measure, six librarians not affiliated with this study agreed to watch ten videos, randomly selected from those used in this study, and identify the stereotype they thought was being depicted. While only two of the ten videos resulted in a unanimous agreement about the main stereotype represented, for all ten of the videos at least four of the six librarians selected the same stereotype that was identified by the author of this study. Future analysis of stereotypes present in videos could improve upon this aspect of the current study.

Results

The results of this video analysis are in turns expected and surprising. In his informative study of YouTube videos, Poulin (2008), speaking of his decision to analyze only videos created by non-librarians, hypothesized that "one can safely assume that librarians are interested in presenting as positive an image of their profession as possible" (p. 4). The results of this study generally support Poulin's assertions. Videos created by librarians were indeed most likely to show Seale's hero/ine stereotype. Furthermore,

hinting that librarians might be hyper-sensitive about the Old Maid stereotype, only one of their videos contained this depiction and even that was seemingly a parody (circulating, 2008). In addition to portraying librarians as the hero/ine of videos (nearly 70%), members of the profession are also more likely to portray the profession as fun and positive (14% compared to 3% of non-librarian videos). Librarians do not seem to be very comfortable depicting themselves as sexy (1%), and they definitely do not portray themselves as psycho (0%).

Table 1. Stereotypes in Librarian-Created Videos by Number (Out of 100)\					
	Academic	Public	School	Other/Unknown	TOTAL
Old Maid	0	1	0	0	1
Policeman	0	1	1	0	2
Parody	5	8	2	8	23
Inept	1	2	0	2	5
Hero/ine	28	29	2	9	68
Fun/Positive	2	7	1	4	14
Sexy	1	0	0	0	1
Psycho	0	0	0	0	1
NOTE: Some videos contain more than one stereotype so numbers do not equal 100.					

In addition, similar to what Poulin (2008) discovered, the majority of non-librarian created videos did contain negative stereotypes. When the Old Maid, Policeman, and Inept Librarian categories are considered together, 93% of all non-librarian created videos contained one of the three as a stereotype. Still, a sizable minority of videos created by non-librarians also fall into the parody category. Given that parody may be a way to sincerely point out flaws with the unsavory stereotypes or at least inspire viewers to reconsider the notion that stereotypes are factual, concrete representations, the fact that more than one in five videos overall have made use of it is encouraging. Nevertheless, there is definitely room in the online video world for more librarians to make use of this technique. That this type of representation has made its way into even the videos created by non-librarians indicates that there is an audience and an appreciation for it among the general public. Librarians would do well to tap into this creative genre more frequently.

Table 2. Stereotypes in Non-Librarian-Created Videos by Number (Out of 100)					
	Academic	Public	School	Other/Unknown	TOTAL
Old Maid	2	2	4	19	**27**
Policeman	9	7	4	22	42
Parody	1	3	0	12	**16**
Inept	7	6	2	9	**24**
Hero/ine	0	2	0	2	**4**
Fun/Positive	0	0	1	2	**3**
Sexy	0	1	1	16	18
Psycho	6	6	1	12	25
NOTE: Some videos contain more than one stereotype so numbers do not equal 100.					

Librarian-Created Videos

While creating a parody certainly requires creativity and a sense of humor, some good examples have already been done by librarians to serve as a guide to this genre. Harper College Library produced an effective, informative, and humorous video about the services they provide to students (HarperCollegeLibrary, 2007). Parodying an inept, clueless librarian who absolutely does not listen to the

featured student, the video nevertheless is able to take viewers on a tour of the library and introduce the actual librarians who work there. In addition to combating a stereotype of librarians being unfriendly and unhelpful, the insertion of humor into videos serves to reduce library anxiety on the part of patrons who might feel uncomfortable about their lack of skills with library resources. Likewise, a video created by Carson Newman College's Library also "seriously" defies expectations of what one might expect in a library, beginning with the library director stating how serious and professional all aspects of the library are (CNL Library, 2008). The scene is then flipped to two students hanging through the book stack shelves talking about the three featured library "outlaws", Mrs. C, the "renegade reference" librarian, "Mississippi" Gaines, the one that "checks you out," and "Calamity" Kelley, the "cold-blooded researcher," all three with the "fastest 'shhh' in the land."

Although parodies like these are highly effective at presenting librarians as real people, not afraid to poke fun at themselves and, at the same time, committed to helping patrons, their creative requirements make straightforward positive portrayals of the profession more popular among video creators. Unsurprisingly, librarians are most likely to portray themselves as hero/ines in their videos, and while genuine, forthright portrayals of the profession do not always have the same attention-grabbing power as a parody, they can successfully educate the public about the role that librarians can play in society by making use of themes, special characters, or eye-catching graphics. Those that are PSAs or advertisements for a particular library are especially likely to make use of this technique. (jagdigitalstudio, 2007; denverlibrary, 2007).

As Ruth Kneale (2009) suggests in a book about combating librarian stereotypes, letting people see what librarians really do can be an effective way to destroy negative stereotypes. Her book profiles a diverse set of librarians with very unique job requirements in order to show readers that real librarians are not the finger-wagging, shushing type. A video like the Nebraska Library Commission's "Now Hiring @ Your Library" which mentions stereotypes in order to combat them and which show real work at a library is an excellent example of this approach (nirakdotnet, 2006). Likewise, a video created by the library at the University of Texas at Arlington succinctly compares the difference between a stereotyped librarian and a real librarian in order to effectively demonstrate what it is librarians actually do (UTALibrary, 2009).

Much more common than the entertaining depictions of librarians as hero/ines are those videos that adhere to basic information when demonstrating what services are offered at libraries. These standard "library tour" videos appear in abundance on YouTube and seem especially popular among academic libraries. Some small measures of diversity exist among these videos. For example, the library tour video done by Midlands Technical College in Columbia, South Carolina is completely devoid of audio, instead relying solely on captions to describe library services (librarymtc, 2009). The tour done by Eastern Michigan University's Bruce T. Halle Library makes use of both captions and voice narration while other tours such as those done by the Eastern Michigan University, the University of South Florida at Tampa, and Boise State University include only narration (emulibrary, 2007; USFLibraries, 2008; pgalanton1, 2009). Regardless of the specifics, all of these library tour videos paint a positive portrait of librarians as ready, willing, and available to help with all types of research needs. Such videos suggest the image of Keller's hardworking librarian without the overbearing zealousness often associated with librarian stereotypes.

A more entertaining example of a librarian-created video that incorporates a healthy dose of humor was produced by Arlington Heights Library (LibVlog, 2007). The amusing video likens their technical services department to a hospital emergency room. It not only compares the work done in the department to something familiar to most viewers, but it does so in a witty way by showing librarians are at once capable of hard work and expressing a sense of humor. Although undeniably exaggerating the urgency with which librarians perform their duties by putting it on par with what occurs in an ER, the video's creators nevertheless cleverly let viewers know that real effort goes into making a library operate smoothly for the benefit of all who need its services. In another take on witty publicity, the Collingswood (NJ) Public Library produced a humorous black and white video that features their director running through the neighborhood to save wayward teens with books while rescuing patrons trapped under fallen

trees (emeraldproductions, 2009). Again, although an exaggeration, the video serves to demonstrate excellent public service offerings provided by the library and does so in a manner that expresses creativity and comedy.

Non-librarians also tend to poke fun at the profession by using humor (or an attempt at humor anyway), but unfortunately sometimes the humor they bring to the YouTube table is biting. Although genuinely funny to watch, the video "Angry Librarian" depicts a librarian taking to extremes the rules of his job, so much so as to leave a patron (arguably somewhat difficult herself) completely unsatisfied by the interaction (tv12673, 2006). Extremely caustic humor and an example of Dickenson's authoritative policeman stereotype can be found in the self-identified spoof "The Librarian: A Mockumentary," which features librarian Larry Lovell combating crime and vice in his beloved library (tuzenbach, 2007). More disturbing than humorous, the policeman stereotype taken too far results in the pycho librarian, as seen in a claymation video depicting a librarian with a gun crashing a party and shooting everyone for failing to return library books (brandyleighlove, 2009).

Perhaps part of the reason there are a large number of depictions of inept/policeman/psycho librarians done by non-librarians has to do with the fact that many experiences people have in libraries are customer-service oriented. By nature these types of interactions can be dissatisfying to either party. That is, one might say that these videos are portraying a stereotype commonly held about customer service representatives in general rather than about librarians in particular. This does suggest, however, that non-librarian video creators base their perceptions of librarians on one activity—customer service. Even though this activity certainly does not represent librarianship in its entirety, and indeed is often done by paraprofessionals rather than actual librarians, it is this type of interaction that serves to foster images of the librarian in the public's mind. As Worchel and Rochgerber noted, it is difficult to change a stereotypical image representing a group of people if that image is representative of a majority of the group members. Therefore because so many librarians have traditionally worked and continue to work in a public service capacity, it will be difficult to alter the perception that librarianship is primarily a customer service job.

Thankfully, parodies can serve to soften the harshness of negative videos. The video "Managarian Part III: Customer Service" provides a great example of bad customer service in a tongue-in-cheek manner when the librarian at the desk absolutely refuses to help a patron because she has to play solitaire (Sigafoos, 2006). Even more than straight-out parodies, combinations of representations can have a similar effect. Although, it is difficult to find a way for the psycho librarian to be seen in a positive light, creative use of other stereotypes can help with the profession's image. For example, the mixing of the sexy librarian and the Old Maid librarian provides an especially powerful critique of traditional librarian stereotypes as well as the notion that intelligence and attractiveness cannot be found in one person. The video "Librarians Dangereuse," which depicts an attractive grey bun-headed librarian helping high school cheerleaders with their boy problems, combines a traditional Old Maid image with that of a librarian acutely aware of sexual issues that teenagers face (aspqrz, 2008). "Little Britain" also combines the Old Maid look with progressive ideas about sexuality (habibi81, 2007). Overall, 18% of all non-librarian videos analyzed made references to librarians as sexy while 10% of all non-librarian videos also combined this characteristic with that of the Old Maid. True Old Maid stereotypes are uncommon, suggesting that concerns about spinsterhood are no longer common enough to cause a proliferation of videos based on Donna Reed-like stereotypes.

Implications

The effects of occupational stereotypes have more impact than simply making people feel proud or embarrassed about their profession. The potential exists for stereotypes to impact public support and monetary compensation for that profession. Stereotypes can be embraced for use in a positive way, such as in the instructional video "How Not to Conduct a Reference Interview," which makes use of the inept librarian stereotype in order to remind librarians of good and not-so-good practices (sipawhiskey, 2007). Stereotypes can also lend legitimacy to the authoritative behavior that is inevitably needed in some library

settings, such as in the video "Rock the Library," when librarians must rid the building of two teenage pranksters who felt it would be humorous to set up their electric guitars in the library to play (jgoddard, 2007). The eye-rolls of the teens suggest a policeman stereotype is in effect, but it was the policing of the library that undoubtedly turned the librarians into hero/heroines in the eyes of other patrons.

Still, is it a good idea to even be talking about stereotypes in the first place? Wilson (1982) suggests that repeated reference to stereotypes often serves only to engrain the stereotypes further into our consciousness. She advocates only talking about stereotypes when something positive can be said about them. There are certainly positive things to be said about the librarian created videos found on YouTube. Well-done promotional and instructional videos are filled with the image of librarian as a hero/ine—or perhaps even a saint—who makes a difference in the lives of children (worthingtonlibraries, 2008), confused college students (nnnicck, 2007), and even problem patrons (AmericanLibraryAssoc, 2008). A smaller number of librarian-created videos are effectively using the practice of parodying stereotypes in order to point out just how silly the stereotypes are to begin with (drloopy, 2009; circulating, 2008). The juxtaposition of various representations of librarians on YouTube lends weight to Jenkins' theory that the site serves as a space for negotiation between competing forms of power.

There is little doubt that in most librarian-created videos that librarians are prospective hero/ines to anyone who has a question. Still, the lack of humor and occasional dryness found in some videos stands in stark contrast to a large number of videos housed in a forum such as YouTube. The question must be asked why viewers would choose to watch informational-only videos when they have at their disposal thousands of entertaining videos. Even if one were to argue that viewers will watch a video if it fills an information need, regardless of whether it uses humor or not, lack of view counts for videos that are informational versus those that are truly entertaining is noticeable. This study did not attempt to systematically record view counts for each video analyzed and more research is needed on how and why YouTube viewers choose and evaluate videos before definitive conclusions about video effectiveness are made. Nevertheless, it can at least be noted that none of the top rated librarian videos as indicated by high view counts are without humor, suggesting that video creators wanting to target the largest number of people need to incorporate some attempt at humor.

Both positive portrayals and parody can serve the purpose of informing non-librarians about the profession and of combating negative stereotypes such as those discussed by Keller, Radford and Radford, Dickinson, and Oram. This is an area of scholarship with great potential for future research. Assessing the impact of YouTube videos will be much more challenging than simply analyzing the content of videos. Identifying how users choose videos and how they respond to them will assist video creators in producing the most effective presentations possible whether their purpose is to promote, educate, entertain, or combat stereotypes. This introductory study into the ways librarians are making use of online videos suggests a tendency to depict librarians as hero/ines. While undoubtedly a better portrayal than inept, psycho, or policeman representations, librarians should also consider the benefits of creating parodies, not only to render an accurate picture of librarians and what they do, but also to capture the attention of viewers in the first place.

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