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## An Artistic Horizon: Content Analysis of Caricatures with Library and Information Science Themes

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## **An Artistic Horizon: Content Analysis of Caricatures with Library and Information Science Themes**

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### **Introduction**

The word "caricature" is derived from the Italian word "caricare" or "carcate" which means "exaggerate". Caricatures play an influential social and political role. Caricatures can illustrate the sufferings of citizens by tackling the issues of the society, analyzing economic problems, and analyzing problems. Political caricatures can make help oppressed people by criticizing the status quo and unjust political practices. Caricatures can deal boldly with social problems because they can escape censorship. It is possible to say that caricatures have the potential to correct problems faster than written words (Hafiz, 2006). By definition, (Rhodes and McLean 1990; quoted in Burns, 2004). Thus, the word "caricature" essentially means a "loaded portrait" (Wikipedia, 2009). As Marshall McLuhan (quoted in Boeschoten, 2006) says, "the medium is the message." This is true for caricatures as a medium. Caricatures can be complimentary as well as critical.

Much has been written about why caricatures are effective from an aesthetic perspective (Gombrich, 1960; Ramachandran and Hirstein, 1999) and about how caricatures are created from a practical perspective (Gautier, 1985; Redman, 1984). Yet, in library and information science (LIS), caricatures have been little considered from a research perspective.

This research attempts to use caricatures to identify negative and weak points in LIS that have not already been thoroughly discussed or debated. The results of this research can help librarians can achieve a better status and communicate the true place of the library, library resources, and librarianship. Librarians must be the first to identify and understand the shortcomings and drawbacks of our profession. This objective can be observed in Toghan's (quoted in Hafiz, 2006) saying: "caricature is not just a joke, but it is [a] change and disinfection [weapon]". The authors want to encourage and stimulate more discussion and debate on LIS issues, promote critical thinking, draw librarians' attention to ideas depicted by caricatures, and publicize librarianship as an attractive and valuable profession.

### **Research Method**

The main research question is: what are the subjects, themes, and content of the caricatures? A research population of 255 caricatures of books, libraries, and librarianship was collected. The caricatures, Iranian and non-Iranian, were selected from Internet sites, or were drawn by Vahideh Kashi-Nahanji. Using the content analysis method, each caricature was analyzed separately and categorized into eight groups and then into subgroups. These categorizations are seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Eight-fold categorization of caricatures

Subdivision	Division	Row
a. negative points about book	Book	1
b. positive points about book		
a. negative points	Reading	2
b. positive points		
c. the spread of reading culture		
a. librarians' work features	Librarians	3
b. librarians' personality		
a. library administration	Library	4
b. library equipment		
c. inter-library loan		
d. silence in library		
e. library resource overdue		
f. library resources		
g. preserving library resources		
h. library clients		
i. children		
a. publication		
b. distribution		
c. author		
d. change of book appearance		
	Librarianship	6
	Information	7
	Internet, information media (informatics)	8

### Content Analysis of Caricatures

The results of analysis are the following:

#### 1. Book

##### a. Negative points about books.

The empty world of humans, lack of importance in humans' lives, and the unfamiliarity of most humans with books are among the negative points expressed about books. Other themes include the idea that the degree of a person's popularity depends on the book collection of that person. Most people do not buy the book to read, but just to have. Some do not open their books unless they have lost something in them, such as money or notes related to water consumption. Using a book unsuitably to increase the heater flame, or as an umbrella, fan, or the like, are in this category.

##### b. Positive points about books

Books are an inseparable part of human life. They are worth keeping although we have e-books. Printed books have kept their value. It lasts a long time without the presence of its owner, and it transfers the information without the movement of its owner.

## 2. Reading

### a. Negative points

Most people pretend to study, while they only see the lines of the book without reading or comprehending. Poor reading habits transfer to the brain. People are unaccustomed to study. Most people study notes instead of scientific books. In some cases, entertainment such as watching television and listening to music have taken the place of reading for children.

### b. Positive points

Reading is food for the brain, and brings respect and dignity to humans. Reinforcing memory, encouraging wisdom, and increasing knowledge are positive aspects of the caricatures. Books complete a missing part of the mind. The most important part of our knowledge comes from reading. Reading allows us to find emotional commonalities, spiritual freedom, and a distance from reality that enriches the soul. Books can help us obtain energy to start our chores. They help people know the correct path of life and to map a better future. To fulfill these goals, it is necessary to enrich the content of books and offer books with informative content.

Based on content analysis of caricatures, it was concluded that there were some people interested in studying and reading who used every moment to study. They study even in the worst conditions. The time to study for this group, sometimes called "bookworms," is infinite. Other groups of society enjoy reading as entertainment. Some are interested in a specific subject and study that field. This shows that information needs vary.

### c. The spread of reading culture

If people are seen studying in the park and bus stations, other people are persuaded to do so. Every person interested in studying can be a prototype for others to study. Books can be used in fashion advertisements, city symbols, and statues.

## 3. Librarians

### a. Librarians' work features

Librarians can help users find what they are searching for. Sometimes, users are surprised by librarians' expertise and help. On the other hand, physical movement of librarians in the library to remove and transfer piles of books and periodicals, insufficient income, and various ideas of practice from peers in the library have an effect on librarians' performance.

### b. Librarian's personality

Caricatures of librarians show their irritation and lack of interest in helping patrons, the dull seriousness and boredom of library atmosphere. Overall, since librarians are considered the basic element of information exchange, it is necessary to design research that will optimize the scientific aspect and demeanor of librarians, and reduce burnout so that library users have higher satisfaction.

## 4. Library

#### a. Library administration

The existence of multiple rules to perform a single task, the classification and organization of reference material, guides and catalogues for searching, and the presence of open stacks, are some of the predicaments of library users. In addition, prevention of unauthorized users from using the collection, so that books will not be mis-shelved and lost, is another issue. Unsuitable selection of equipment for clients, undesirable choice of shelf size compared with users', height and lack of standardized principles are also depicted in caricatures.

#### c. Inter-library loan

It is easy to obtain sources from other libraries or branches through this system. But for a traditional system (non-electronic), it takes a long time to obtain them.

#### d. Silence in library

Emphasis on silence receives a lot of attention to as one of the library rules. In one caricature, it is expressed that one must be silent even in committing suicide. Some people abuse this situation, which is not found elsewhere. Librarians themselves frequently violate the rule.

#### e. Library resource overdue

Library users behave in different ways regarding paying fines. One group pays the fine without any prodding from librarians, the other rationalizes their overdue books to avoid paying fines. Some librarians are strict about collecting fines. Awareness of overdue material is very to obtain in traditional library systems.

#### f. Library resources

The library has existed in different forms since ancient times, from clay tablets to electronic books. In each library, there are resources for users, some of which are destroyed by the librarians. One of the strategies to obtain library resources is censorship. In caricatures, there are parodies of books such as *Who's Who*, *Who's Not Who*, and *Who's Googled*. Other depictions include law books and books on escaping the law, resources relating to the politics of a nation and resources about the secrets of political leaders. Some clients know the censored resources completely and the library must determine how to react to these people.

#### g. Preserving the library resources

Some animals, such as mice, prefer to live in libraries, which it makes preservation of the books very important.

#### h. Library clients

Depending on the kind of library, there are different types and numbers of users. The most important point depicted in the caricatures is the low number of library users. To attract more users, we have observed some approaches: cultural programs, placing cultural message on walls, shelves, and notice boards, arranging the interior atmosphere of the library creatively, kind behavior of librarians, and familiarity with users' interests.

#### i. Children

Children become familiar with knowledge at an early age. Most of them know how to work with computers before they enter school. Therefore, we must get them involved with books. A widely applied method to interest children in study is storytelling. Another way is to introduce books as toys and to play with books to make attractive things. The parents can transfer the habit of studying book to children if they sit with their children reading books, and teachers can direct students to study regularly. Librarians may sometimes have undesirable behavior with children through controlling them, directly or indirectly, and preventing them from wandering in the library. Hence, there must be some incentives for children to become attracted to books and libraries, such as making them familiar with rules, answering all questions, and motivating their curiosity.

## 5. Factors affecting book acquisition

### a. Publication

Analyses put forward in this field are: felling and cutting trees ruins the environment; the style of publication has changed remarkably from print to electronic form. In some caricatures, publishing methods were creatively, including knitting, sewing, and forging. Also, "neglecting the copyright in publication" was considered.

### b. Distribution

Access to published books is difficult due to low circulation and poor distribution of books.

### c. Author

Authors and book producers work hard to publish a book. There is a direct relationship between an author's interest, time, and study and the quality of the book content. Another important factor is editing, which can enhance the organization of the book, and, if it is not done perfectly, can destroy the format, intelligibility, and theme of the book. The author's fame and authority and the amount of advertising are influential in selling the book.

### d. Change of book appearance

Over the years, the appearance of books has changed. Printed books have arrived at a dead end, supplanted by electronic books, and most people are not aware of these changes. There are some benefits of e-books such as the speed of publication, small storage space, and easy portability. Books can now be multimedia.

## 6. Librarianship

The contrast between traditional and modern education in universities offering LIS courses is delineated.

## 7. Information

In the information age, each person must find a way to know his or her information needs, in order to increase status and achieve higher positions in the society. There are a lot of information producers, from producers (writers, translators...) to manipulators (publisher and librarians) and distributors such as publishers and booksellers.

## 8. Internet, information media (informatics)

The Internet has become a meta-reference in the information technology arena, which can be used by researchers from the beginner to the expert. In fact, the Internet is the peak of growth in Information Science and has established great databases for all disciplines.

## Conclusion

This study has contributed to research into the role of art generally, and caricatures particularly, in the world of LIS. Having analyzed different aspects of caricatures related to books, libraries, and librarianship, it is now concluded that librarians can treat the issues depicted in these caricatures in a way that enhances their jobs, qualitatively and quantitatively. Establishing an information resource such as a caricature-based blog or website for librarians would be one way to exchange opinions, strategies, and suggestions for diminishing LIS weaknesses. This could encourage and stimulate more discussion or debate on LIS-related issues, promote critical thinking, draw attention to ideas depicted by caricatures, and portray librarianship as an attractive and valuable profession. As for the future, LIS-related artistic topics can be considered for research topics. Additionally, the caricatures studied here can be analyzed from different individuals' points of view, including librarians, LIS faculty members, and end-users of books, information resources, and library and information services.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend their special thanks to the artists who created the caricatures studied in this article, some of whom are anonymous, and also to respected reviewers of the article.

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Appendix 1: Some of the caricatures studied

### Negative points about books



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/shr05611.jpg>

### Positive points about books



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/ali\\_paknahad](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/ali_paknahad)

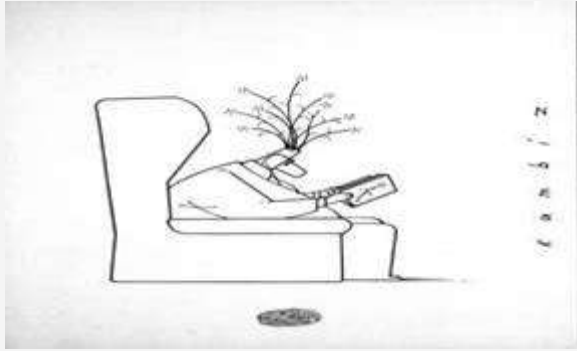
### Negative points about reading



Vahideh Kashi-Nahanji

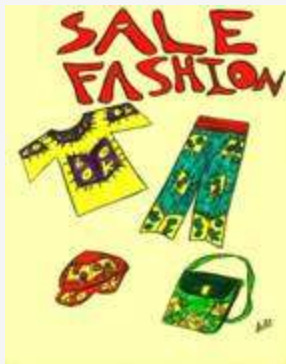
### Positive points about reading





[http://www.nlai.ir/Portals/0/SuperSKa\\_PictureGallery/1008/1083.jpg](http://www.nlai.ir/Portals/0/SuperSKa_PictureGallery/1008/1083.jpg)

The spread of reading culture



Vahideh Kashi-Nahanji

Librarians' work features



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/dro0013l.jpg>

Librarians' personality



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/jmi0156l.jpg>

### Library administration



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/cartoonists/ato/lowres/aton1641l.jpg>

### Library equipment



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/cartoonists/eollowreseoln3l.jpg>

### Silence in library



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/jdo0551l.jpg>

Inter-library loan



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/cartoonists/ato/lowres/aton1153l.jpg>

Library resource overdue



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/dro0144l.jpg>

Library resources



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/lowres/hsc3948l.jpg>

Preserving library resources



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/EHSAN\\_GANJI](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/EHSAN_GANJI)

Library clients



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/cartoonists/jlvlowresjlvn887l.jpg>

Children



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/hamid\\_sofi](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/hamid_sofi)

Publication



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/amir\\_abbas\\_tabrizi2](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/amir_abbas_tabrizi2)

Distribution



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/hale\\_ghorbani](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/hale_ghorbani)

Author



[http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/amir\\_hosein\\_sazvar](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/amir_hosein_sazvar)

Change of book appearance



[www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue24/cartoon/cartoon-24.jpg](http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue24/cartoon/cartoon-24.jpg)

Librarianship (traditional vs. modern)



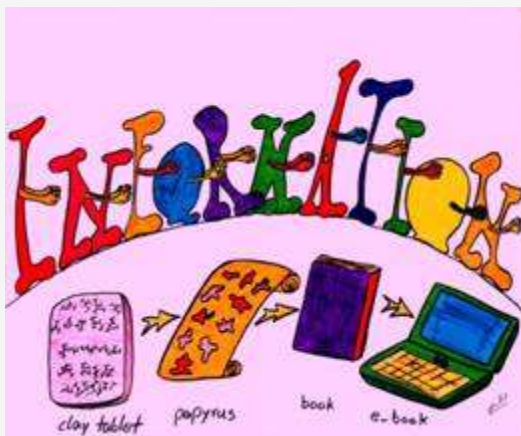
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Information



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Internet and related issues



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<http://www.ackland.org/tours/classes/glossary.html>

<http://www.cartoonstock.com>; <http://www.irancartoon.ir>; <http://www.nlai.ir>

Appendix 1 shows some sample caricatures in line with categories identified. To observe and respect copyright rules, the address of caricatures included in Appendix 1 has been inserted, except those drawn by Vahideh Kashi-Nahanji. It is notable that the artists of some caricatures are seen in their addresses. For example, [http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/ali\\_paknahad](http://www.irancartoon.ir/gallery/album252/ali_paknahad) (the drawer is Ali Paknahad).