““OUT – out – OUT!””:
Obstructive libraries and librarians in children’s and young adult literature

by

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Chapter one. Introduction

‘Ye were not made to live like unto brutes, But for pursuit of virtue and of knowledge.’ Dante, *The inferno XXVI.*

Dante’s *The inferno XXVI* acknowledges that searching for information is both worthwhile and dangerous, and this applies to young people as well as adults. Libraries in children’s and young adult (YA) literature can be hazardous places, where violent and controlling librarians zealously guard their collection, while perils such as Panoptic surveillance, overwhelmingly large mystical libraries and marauding beasts attempt to deny access to child protagonists. In this thesis, I coin the terms “obstructive” libraries and librarians to indicate how library architecture and layout and librarians’ personality types create difficulties for patrons in locating information. I argue, however, that obstructive libraries are actually beneficial for protagonists in literature for young people. In reality, public libraries and librarians attempt to cater for a vast array of patrons of varying ages, socio-economic groups, races and literary abilities, (Willis 1999, pp. 1-2) however, they are not always successful because often the focus is on how librarians think libraries *should* be arranged, rather than arranging them for patrons’ ease of use. Unless community needs assessments are regularly undertaken, libraries can only ‘guess’ what patrons need (MacKellar 2016, pp. 37-38). However, in literature, such obstruction assists protagonists in the hero’s¹ journey (Campbell 2008).

Using Carl Jung’s work on the collective unconscious and archetypes (2008, pp. 12-14) and Sigmund Freud’s theories of the Oedipus complex (2008, p. 2, p. 7), Joseph Campbell identifies a fundamental structure common to most mythical and fantasy stories where the archetypal hero proceeds through a series of tasks and challenges before they succeed in their quest (2008, pp. 23-29). In children’s and YA literature, libraries and librarians often provide a number of initial challenging encounters. By acquiring the skills to evade and bypass the hegemonic

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¹ In this thesis, the term hero refers to any gender, and the use of the title hero can be both literal and figurative.
architecture, layout and organisation of obstructive libraries, as a result, the heroes develop agency and power, enabling them to better prepare for their quest. Young people developing agency – the concept of a capacity to act, along with the willingness to do so (Spencer & Doull 2015, p. 907) – is common in literature for children and young adults (Cart 2010, pp. 23-4). Developing agency in child- and young adult-hood is vital for the advancement of ‘...motivation, learning, self-regulation and accomplishment...’ (Pajares & Urdan 2006, p. ix), which are all vital life skills and gaining knowledge is one aspect of developing agency (Mills 2010, p. 300). Implied readers, too, learn about acquiring and developing agency from texts in what Margaret Meek designates as ‘untaught lessons’ (1988, p. 7), by which she means learning that only occurs when one is reading.

This thesis will address the way in which librarians and libraries for young people are portrayed in a selection of texts for children and young adults. It will investigate how fictional libraries control access to knowledge, and thus, power; how libraries promote or stifle intellectual growth; how issues of accessing information from libraries promote self-determination in the selected texts; and the strategies characters employ to evade the control of the library and the librarian. I have chosen books from a contemporary range of genres and geographical locations in which libraries and librarians are central elements of the young protagonists’ journey. The picture book The boy who was raised by librarians (Morris & Sneed 2007, and hereafter entitled Boy), the seven books in the Harry Potter series (Rowling 1997-2007, HP2), and its companion title Quidditch through the ages (2001, Quidditch), the chapter book The legend of Spud Murphy (Colfer 2004, Spud Murphy), and the YA novel Lirael: daughter of the Clayr (Nix 2001, Lirael) have been selected as representative of how libraries and librarians are depicted in literature for young people. These texts provide a useful comparison when determining how libraries serve young people and how an ordered and

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2 Individual titles in the Harry Potter series will be shortened as follows;
Harry Potter and the philosopher’s stone - PS
Harry Potter and the chamber of secrets - CoS
Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban – PoA
Harry Potter and the goblet of fire - GoF
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix - OoP,
Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince - HBP
Harry Potter and the deathly hallows - DH
controlled library affords varying outcomes for library users compared to an obstructive library that appears chaotic and inaccessible. The texts I have selected include one title from each age range of child and YA readers\(^3\), (plus the *HP* series, which encompasses both child and YA ages) and encompass several types of literature for young people. The titles that have been adopted for this study are from a spectrum of fantasy, humorous and realist fiction. This selection of texts is representative of children’s and YA literature on the topic and will help shed light on the value of obstructive libraries and librarians.

The chosen titles include *Boy* (2007), where interactions between young Melvin and three librarians are featured, the librarians embodying stereotypical librarian features, while heavily regulating Melvin’s library. *Spud Murphy* (2004), which is told from the point of view of nine-year-old Will. Will and his older brother Marty are sent to the local public library, where they encounter the librarian, ‘Spud Murphy’, a stereotypical ‘bun and glasses’ type librarian who controls the boys’ access to the library collection. However, the boys employ problem-solving skills to evade such control. The fantasy novel *Lirael* (2001) follows the journey of the eponymous orphan hero. Lirael is the only female teenager of the Clayr not to develop the ‘Sight’, the accomplishment of ‘Seeing’ into the future. Lirael finds solace in her job as Third Assistant Librarian at the Great Library of Clayr, where her curiosity and a sense of adventure result in the exploration of the obstructive and forbidden areas of the library. *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) is the ‘chosen one’, on a hero’s journey to defeat evil Lord Voldemort. Gaining information and knowledge is key to Harry’s success. The *HP* series is influential due to its global audience reach and place in popular culture; over four hundred and fifty million copies have been sold (Rowling 2016, p. 291), making it the highest-selling book series in history (Calio, Frohlich, & Hess 2014, n.p.).

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\(^3\) Reading ages can be defined as: preschool to primary age covers ages four to eight, pre-teen and tween caters for ages nine to twelve, while YA books are produced for ages twelve and upwards (*The Children’s Book Review*, 2017).
The *Harry Potter* series, *Lirael* and *The legend of Spud Murphy*, can be described as *bildungsroman*[^4], and demonstrate that, perhaps ironically, obstructive libraries and librarians often facilitate the development of protagonists’ self-determination, agency, and moral and intellectual growth. A library that is ostensibly difficult to extract information from, and librarians who act as guardians to knowledge, can be advantageous to characters in *bildungsroman*. Libraries that are poorly organised, excessively large, difficult to navigate, dangerous and which are guarded by librarians who perform the role of gatekeeper appear to prevent research. However, the problem-solving skills developed in relation to the requirement of seeking alternative sources of information play a vital role in preparing protagonists for their quests, particularly in fantasy fiction. Such self-development likewise endows characters with intellectual growth that would have been inconceivable without the impediment of obstructive libraries and librarians.

Furthermore, although seeming counter-intuitive, libraries that are well-organised and ‘helpful’ librarians restrict young people’s growth, as seen in *Boy* (2007). Scaffolding, the notion of helping young people to think, and finding solutions to their problems, creates dependence (Burkins & Yaris 2016, p. 3), while independence is fostered through problem-solving and learning. This thesis adds to scholarly research through its contribution to the understanding of the role of libraries and librarians in literature for young people. It also adds to the conversations and research regarding developing child- and young adult-hood agency in fictional settings, and the power of literature for young people to both challenge and reinforce the *status quo*.

The stereotype of the librarian is widely disseminated as a ‘spinster’ (Grimes 1994, p. 3, Lutz 2005, Balling, Henrichsen & Skouvig 2008, p. 56, Shaffer, & Casey 2013, p. 39) or ‘little old lady with the bun, the shawl, the wire specs’ (Manley 1984, p. 650), who ‘is characterized as picky, hardworking, standoffish, bookish, and, by most accounts, pitiable’ (Grimes 1994, p. 3). Her ‘prime concerns are meticulousness and organising books in a sphere of efficiency’ (Balling, Henrichsen & Skouvig 2008, p. 56), she is ‘myopic and repressed, brandishing or perhaps

[^4]: A German term describing a book that follows the moral growth and development of the protagonist (Trites 2010, pp. 10-15).
cowering behind a date stamp’ (Cowell 1980, p. 167) and her favourite word is ‘Shh!’ (Stevens 1988, p. 828). However, libraries appear as ‘cathedrals of the mind’ (Moran 2012, n.p.), ‘sanctuaries’ (Basbanes 2012, vii), venues which ‘enshrine[d]’ books (Brooklyn Public Library 2017) and act as the repositories of ‘cumulated human knowledge’ (Davis 2012, p. x); venerable places where information gleaned may have the power to change lives (White 2012). Yet, they are also depicted as ‘physically and historically imposing’ (Freier 2014, p. 5), and ‘are understood through metaphors of control, tombs, labyrinths, morgues, dust, ghosts, silence and humiliation’ (Radford & Radford 2001, p. 325).

The selected texts are not isolated in their depictions of stereotypical libraries and librarians, but are indicative of broader children’s and young adult literature that demonstrates the power of the institution over the young person. Titles such as Escape from Mr Lemoncello’s library (Grabenstein 2013), the Alcatraz series (Sanderson 2007-2010), The strange library (Murakami 2008), The fantastic flying books of Mr Morris Lessmore (Joyce 2012), Bats at the library (Lies 2008), Evil librarian (Knudsen 2014), the series of graphic novels Library wars, (Arikawa and Yumi 2007-2015), The forbidden library (Wexler 2014) and The Grimm legacy (Shulman 2011) all feature either obstructive libraries and/or librarians. Although these books assisted in the definition of my topic, they are outside the scope of this research. My focus is concerned with protagonists’ access to knowledge being challenged by the restrictions of the library while the discarded titles feature: libraries that promote only lower-order thinking skills, warfare-type conflict between librarians and others with no reference to information needs, bats and librarians as focalisers, and subscription and private libraries that are staffed by young people, but which are not for young people.

The HP series, Lirael and Spud Murphy are united in their seemingly paradoxical approach to obstructive libraries as being useful to the self-development of protagonists. It is important to note, however, that the passive ideology, where minor characters, and by extension, others, are unable to access information due to the library’s obstructive nature, denies them the ability to establish agency and power. Further, the concept of the hero having some elements of agency and
power before they encounter officious libraries and librarians is arguably one reason why they are able to challenge the authority of these institutions and other characters cannot. However, it is evident that obstructive libraries and librarians do pose challenges to the protagonists that enable them to develop problem-solving skills and further their agency and power to a point where they are able to undertake the hero’s journey (Campbell 2008) and successfully engage in their respective literal and figurative battles. Yet, the passive ideology in these books reveals that the majority of young people will not be able to access the information they need to grow and learn in these types of libraries as they may not possess the self-determined qualities of the archetypal hero. Although there are numerous positive aspects to the denial of access to information, it is nevertheless a problematic trope.

The topics of libraries and librarians in children’s and YA literature have been addressed by the academy. Here, the focus inhabits the domains of stereotypical representations of libraries and librarians, libraries that are difficult to navigate and the development of diagnostic skills by characters who discover that their library is less than accessible. Jennifer Burek Pierce (2004) identifies the beneficial effect, particularly on children and young adults, of developing problem-solving skills and applying them to real-world situations where access to information and knowledge is vital. Burek Pearce (2004) and Freier (2014, p. 8) both recognise the benefits of a controlling library and librarian. With reference to the HP series, and Lirael, Burek Pierce argues that adolescents develop both character and self-determination through the act of seeking information from a variety of sources, the library being just one avenue (2004, p. 74). Freier establishes that HP librarian Madam Pince’s incompetence leads Hermione to become an adept researcher (2014, p. 4). While Burek Pierce addresses the value of self-imposed information seeking in Lirael and the HP books, my thesis focuses on the notion of children and young adults as independent researchers, encouraged by their desire for information, which overcomes any obstacles deliberately placed in their way. I acknowledge that such obstacles assist protagonists to prepare for their particular quests.
As literature for young people is hegemonic, produced by adults for children (Nodelman 2008, p. 113), there is a synergy between this concept and that of protagonists being denied access to knowledge. However, there is a gap in existing literary criticism as there is little acknowledgement that such obstruction by libraries and librarians may positively influence character development and agency. Sally Maynard and Fiona McKenna (2005) find that while libraries are generally depicted in a positive manner, there are few constructive renderings of librarians in texts for children (2005, p. 120). Maynard and McKenna do not acknowledge the positive possibilities of unhelpful librarians, and Elizabeth Richardson and Sarah Wagner (2011) define Harry Potter’s Hogwarts school library as a negative space, an overwhelming place for students, with access to library books being ‘random’ (2011, p. 3), with no recognition of the possible beneficial impacts of this difficult space. This thesis will consider how the library is a place of surveillance, which results in protagonists self-modifying their behaviour as a result.

Theoretical framework

Designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1778 as a model for constructing prisons, the Panopticon entails

A building circular - A cage, glazed - a glass lantern... - The prisoners in their cells, occupying the circumference - The officers in the centre. By blinds and other contrivances, the inspectors concealed [...] from the observation of the prisoners: hence the sentiment of a sort of omnipresence—The whole circuit reviewable with little, or if necessary without any, change of place. One station in the inspection part affording the most perfect view of every cell (Bentham 1843).

The concept of the Panopticon (see Figure 1), in which there is an ever-present risk of surveillance, pressures those within to assume they are constantly under observation. This consequentially ensures that individuals modify their conduct, employing self-surveillance and control of their own actions as a result.
Figure 1. An example of Bentham’s Panoptic organisation (1843, p. 172), illustrated by Willey Reveley and used by Foucault (1979).

The Panopticon forms a major component of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (1979) regarding how prisons (and other institutions) control and incarcerate inmates. Foucault’s doctrines will be employed to interpret the selected texts and to examine how such control influences the behaviours of the child characters. Foucault’s approaches to discipline, control and punishment can be applied to the analysis of the hegemony of libraries within children’s and young adult literature. All of the libraries featured in the corpus have some type of control or retribution arrangements that Foucault identifies. Although he uses the prison system as its basis, Foucault identifies the school as another member of the ‘carceral archipelago’ (1979, p. 293). He suggests that the school is an institution that implements a series of disciplinary techniques when he asks the rhetorical question ‘Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?’ (1979, p. 228). Although the *HP* series is the only one of the texts to be set in a school, libraries too could be included in Foucault’s list as they are examples of institutions that use techniques of control and real and imagined surveillance to regulate and dominate users.
My corpus of texts employ hierarchical observation (Foucault, 1979, p. 1970), which is one specific element of disciplinary power Foucault identifies. The librarians are often a focal point of power over the rows of bookshelves and students within the library. Foucault states:

> On the whole, therefore, one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social 'quarantine', to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of 'panopticism' (1979, p. 216).

The layout and organisation of the libraries is reflective of Foucault’s notion of quarantine, an enclosed space where Panopticism is enforced through the librarian being ever watchful of patrons’ and/or students’ actions. Here the individual internalises the possibility of constant surveillance and, in turn, learns to discipline and control themselves. However, the young protagonists discover that aligning themselves with the expectations of the Panopticon is unproductive in their search for information; they learn that they must break the implicit rules of the comprehensive controlling mechanism to gain the knowledge, agency and power they need to fulfil their particular quest. As power enables behaviour to be altered, ‘The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly...’ (Foucault 1979, p. 200). An example of the organisation of Bentham’s Panopticon (1843) as shown in Figure 1, used by Foucault (1979), demonstrates the way in which the layout of an institution can affect behavior. As the Panopticon ensures that ‘power should be visible and unverifiable’ (Foucault 1979, p. 201), the perception of seemingly constant observation imparts a sense of self-surveillance on the behalf of the patron, ensuring behavior modification. Similarly, figure 2, an illustration of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, exhibits a Panoptic scheme, due to its repeated design and numerous floors. Shira Wolosky (2013), employing Foucault’s concept of discipline regarding the school-wide control of students, identifies that such discipline ‘fosters individual initiative’ (2013, p. 296) in the HP series.
Foucault’s theories of power and powerlessness are ‘fundamental’ (Trites 2001, p. 473) to YA literature. Roberta Seelinger Trites identifies three essential conventions in YA literature that address the protagonist’s relationship with power. These include the negotiation of ‘the many institutions that shape them’ (p. 483), the stabilisation of their power in relation to that of their parents and/or authority figures, and the realisation of the amount of power they hold (p. 483). The books that I will discuss in this thesis acknowledge these elements of power, with the library being the institution that frames the protagonists, and engenders the understanding and acceptance of the power that these characters develop.

In the following chapters, I will conduct a textual and visual analysis (where appropriate) of the selected texts, attending to the discourse that informs the representation of the library, the librarian, and the child/young adult as library user. I will consider how the following narrative strategies impact upon the representation of libraries and librarians: how characters are depicted (the librarian and the students interacting with them); plot and events (how library use is rendered and how an obstructive library contributes to the development of the plot); setting (how the library is described and situated within the text); theme
(whether the library is situated positively or negatively within the theme of the
text) and narration, including whether the narration uses the first-person or the
third-person (Gamble & Yates 2002, pp. 39-40). I will be applying techniques for
analysing texts and picture books proposed by Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer
(2003), Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2013), John Stephens (2005) and
Nodelman (2005) to evaluate the narrative strategies and picture book techniques
used by authors and illustrators for both content and meaning, which may be
explicit or implicit.

**Literature review**

This review of the literature will analyse select writings from authors whose focus
includes fictional representations of young adults as information seekers, the
library and librarian in texts written for children and young adults, and ways that
Foucault’s theories of knowledge, power and discipline can influence conceptual
thinking about libraries. Further, studies of the depictions of these concepts in
adult literature are also included, as it is important to note if there is connection or
disunity between the presentation of the library and librarian in literature for
young people and adult fiction. As already established, literature for young people
has a hegemonic role of its own, yet conversely, can also be subversive. As
Kimberley Reynolds explains, ‘children’s literature... is simultaneously... orthodox
and radical, didactic and subversive’ (2007, p. 3). Yet, whether the prevailing
ideologies in literature for young people are those of adult power, or young
protagonists challenging the *status quo*, is revealing concerning the philosophies
presented to implied readers. The consequences of these ideologies illustrates that
power is conferred on Harry Potter, Lirael and Will and Marty. However, Melvin is
delineated as being subjugated to the power of the librarians.

Library use is a subject position in which young people, both in reality and within
children’s literature, access the library as reader, learner and seeker and consumer
of information. As an individual, the young library user is unique in their use of the
library, as they are more controlled by the establishment due to their age than
adults. The library user (certainly in the era before widespread Internet connectivity) is subjugated by the librarian (Tuominen 1997, p. 350) and the young library patron is further under the power of the adult librarian. However, the trope of fantasy fiction sees the young mage engaged in learning magical proficiency that requires a broad spectrum of approaches, with libraries as one avenue of learning (Burek Pierce 2004, p. 74). What is notable in these texts though, is that the library only appears to be obstructive when the information requirement of the young adults involved is personal and self-directed; research imposed for schoolwork or information requirements of an adult appears straightforward (Burek Pierce 2004, p. 75). The fantasy texts I consider in this thesis, the HP series and Lirael, are based on the structure of the hero’s journey. To develop the agency and power required to complete the hero’s journey, the need to problem-solve and to seek information outside of the library and acquire knowledge is necessary. If Harry Potter and Lirael had been able to access information quickly and easily, they would never have developed the curiosity, agency, sense of adventure and power needed to become heroic. Additionally, Burek Pierce notes that the information-seeking behaviour displayed by the protagonists ‘holds implications for identity and self-hood’ (2004, p. 74). Here, the requirements of Harry Potter and his friends to broaden their search past the library, empowers them to ask questions, think, solve problems, collaborate, seek knowledge and follow the trajectory of the bildungsroman. Lirael also develops such skills in her searches of the areas of the library forbidden to her, while the boys in Spud Murphy achieve this on a smaller scale when they challenge the restrictions of their library. These developments become obligatory in the success of the protagonists in the selected texts. While Burek Pierce’s paper is useful, it is limited by its brevity, its scope of only YA fiction, and is confined to only five out of the seven HP titles.

The stereotype of the librarian in children’s literature is the focus of Heylman (1975), Alexander and Huggins (2002), Yontz (2003) and Peresie and Alexander (2005). None of this research addresses the way in which obstructive libraries and/or librarians can actually enable information seeking and problem-solving skills. Literature for young people that features libraries and librarians often
depicts librarians as incompetent. However, Agnes Griffen (1987) and Marcia Myers (1998) argue that where libraries feature in adult texts, librarians often do not. This absence of a librarian pertains to the view that the profession is unnecessary or superfluous to the library and its adult users. Librarians that feature in adult texts are still depicted stereotypically (Myers 1998, p. i), which is reflected by Christopher Shaffer and Olga Casey’s more recent studies (2013, p. 39).

In *HP, Lirael* and *Spud Murphy*, opposition between librarians who want to keep library resources in order, and young patrons who intend to disrupt such order through the removal and use of resources, creates a vital tension between order and knowledge. Seale (2008, n.p.) and Radford and Radford (1997, p. 256) establish that in the ‘ideal library’, it is the tension between the goal of the librarian (to keep order) and the goal of the user (to disrupt order by removing, mis-shelving and borrowing books) that creates opposition and misunderstanding (Radford & Radford 1997, pp. 255-256). Such obstruction is reflected in the texts I consider in this thesis where obstacles are placed before the young researchers in their quest for information. Yet, these restrictions can be viewed as beneficial when the protagonists gain agency through problem-solving by seeking out alternative sources of information.

There is similarity in how both children’s/YA fiction and adult literature depict libraries. Labyrinthine or dusty libraries that are life changing when traversed are also present in adult fiction such as Elliot Perlman’s *The street sweeper* (2011). Similarly, the concepts of controlling librarians persist from children’s titles to those for grownups, as in Umberto Eco’s *The name of the rose* (1983). The overarching stereotypes of libraries and librarians are indeed both pervasive and obligatory. The stereotypes promote tension between the establishment and the protagonist, which must be challenged. To develop problem-solving skills and assist in the hero’s journey, incremental challenges must be presented to protagonists, particularly in fantasy texts.
This Introduction has illustrated the need for an investigation of the role of obstructive libraries in literature for young people. The current scholarship addresses specific aspects of information seeking in fictional libraries, library and librarian stereotypes and obstructive libraries and librarians. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the resulting strategies that are refined by child protagonists to counter such obstruction including the accumulation of skills and power that are acquired. My thesis is distinctive as it combines all of these aspects of library and children’s literature scholarship. Libraries and librarians represent symbols of knowledge and are designated motifs of the power struggle between protagonists and the establishment. The concept of libraries being places of fear, humiliation and cathedrals of learning (Radford & Radford 2001, p. 299) is perfectly contrasted with information seekers to establish tensions between the protagonist and the institution that signifies the system they must inevitably fight against.

Chapter two will examine the features of obstructive libraries in the chosen books, including Panoptic architecture and layout, mysterious and enchanted libraries, and large, imposing and dangerous libraries. The chapter will analyse the methods that protagonists employ to negate obstructive libraries and attributes that an obstructive library can engender in characters. It will argue that problem-solving and higher order thinking skills including critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, logic and reasoning, creative thinking and application to real world problems are necessary to combat obstructive libraries and are vital steps in the protagonists’ growth. The physical and intellectual act of searching for information empowers the heroes in their literal and figurative quests.

Chapter three will discuss the trope of the stereotypical librarian, employed in the texts to obstruct the research requirements of the protagonists. Hyperbolic themes such as when the librarian is depicted as ‘policeman’, ‘witchy’, or ‘helpful’ and emotionally unintelligent librarians will be contrasted with ‘warrior’ librarians. This chapter will propose that ideologies in the texts that relate to the agency and power of the characters needed to challenge authority, encourage self-determination and the pursuit of knowledge and growth.
This thesis aims to explore the concept of Bentham’s Panopticon (1843), which was derived and developed by Foucault (1979). The library is an institution that also can also be aligned with Panoptic theory, where architecture and surveillance are employed to control the behaviour of patrons. Opposition is created between librarians and patrons where the order of the library and the quest for knowledge are in contention. Barriers to knowledge, such as difficult librarians and imposing libraries add resistance to the young person’s symbolic transition to maturity. However, libraries can be precursors to circumstances where protagonists face life-threatening situations, furnishing them with a place where skills may be tested and refined before facing such treacherous conditions.
Chapter two. Dusty labyrinths: obstructive libraries.

The physical structure of the library, its architecture and layout, all of which contribute to the Panopticon, modify library use. Children and young adults absorb information from an assortment of learning opportunities (Nichols 2011, p. 165), and spaces specifically provided for young people within a library affect their learning experience. The observation that a 'library of straight angles suggests division into parts or subjects, consistent with the medieval notion of a compartmentalized and hierarchical universe' (Manguel 2007, p. 138) reinforces the concepts of order and hegemony within the library. This aligns with Foucault’s Panopticon, where ‘mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals’ are employed through surveillance to control behaviour (1979, p. 77). Here, through the architecture and layout of the library, the patron is subjugated to the library and librarians’ dominion. Such control is enhanced when patrons are children or young adults.

The libraries in the selected texts assert control in a number of different ways: the Panoptic design of libraries created to aid surveillance by adults over young people; physical and magical barriers to books and specific areas within libraries; the sheer size of libraries and collections that are overwhelming to navigate; the presence of danger within the library; and conversely, one children’s library collection that is so small that it scarcely caters for its young patrons. All of the libraries in the selected texts feature one or more of the descriptors provided by Radford and Radford, who state in their study of library representation in popular culture that, ‘Libraries are understood through metaphors of control, tombs, labyrinths, morgues, dust, ghosts, silence and humiliation’ (2001, p. 325). However, I challenge Radford and Radford’s argument that ‘The meaning of the library... is ultimately determined by the discourse of fear’ (Radford & Radford, 2001, p. 325) because although the above methods of control can be initially viewed in a negative manner where adults have developed numerous mechanisms to restrict their young patrons, these barriers often have unexpected results where the protagonists develop agency through the acquisition of problem-solving skills when the information they require is not readily accessible.
In *Spud Murphy* (2004), the first-person narrator Will and his older brother Marty are sent to the local public library during school holidays as their overwrought parents are desperate to find something ‘educational’ (2004, p. 7) for two of their five mischievous boys to do. Here the two boys encounter the librarian, ‘Spud Murphy’, a stereotypical ‘bun and glasses’ type librarian who controls the boys’ access to the library collection. However, the boys employ problem-solving skills to evade such control. In *Lirael* (2001), Lirael is the fourteen-year-old focaliser, who resides in the historical fantastical Kingdom of Clayr. She is an orphan, and the only woman of the Clayr not to develop the ‘Sight’, the accomplishment of Seeing into the future. This limitation, and her unusual complexion and hair colour mark Lirael out as ‘other’. Lirael finds solace in her job as Third Assistant Librarian at the Great Library of Clayr, initially seeking information from the library to commit suicide. However, curiosity and a sense of adventure result in Lirael exploring the obstructive and forbidden areas of the library. The *HP* series (1997–2007) is wainscot fantasy and features three main characters, Harry, the focaliser, and Ron and Hermione, who enter the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as students at age eleven. Each of the seven books relates to one school year and the protagonists age one year per book. Lord Voldemort executed Harry’s parents and attempted to murder Harry when Harry was just one year of age. Once Harry arrives at Hogwarts, the threat to his life from his nemesis becomes stronger, as does the urgency for Harry, as ‘the chosen one’ to defeat Lord Voldemort. The library has a central role in enabling the protagonists, particularly Hermione, to solve problems and apply this learning to their everyday lives. *Boy* (2007) illustrates the physical growth of young Melvin, the focaliser, who frequents the library where the librarians are his *de facto* family. However, although the librarians intend to assist Melvin, and by proxy, the other patrons, their ‘helpfulness’ cultivates a learned helplessness, where curiosity is crushed and dependence is fostered. In the following sections in this chapter, I will analyse the library as Panopticon, mysterious and enchanted, imposing, and dangerous. The Panoptic organisation of the library can be imposing, and creates fear, deception

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5 Wainscot fantasy occurs in the real world, but appears under the surface, apparent only to those who are a part of that fantasy world (Webb 2014, p. 77).
and the need for subterfuge; patrons must develop clandestine endeavours to nullify the power of the Panoptic library. The restriction of access to specific areas of the library and information establishes the mysterious, while the Panopticon can be dangerous as it facilitates power of a privileged group over a group with less power. The obstacles within the library and way in which protagonists resist such obstacles will also be addressed.

**Library as Panopticon**

Foucault’s theories of control through the employment of Panoptic environments are reflected within the libraries in differing manners in the selected texts. The layout and organisation of *Lirael’s* Great Library of Clayr, and the hierarchical nature of its management are all designed to repress most of those within, and as such, perform Panoptic functionality. The extensive, strange and mysterious Great Library of Clayr is described as being ‘... shaped like a nautilus shell... there were countless other corridors, rooms, halls and strange chambers’ (2001, pp. 60-61). The nautilus shell shape of the Great Library reflects that of Panoptic organisation, as does the revelation that the library contains at least five floors (2001, p. 97). The employment of corridors in the Great Library’s design emulates the design where ‘Bentham envisioned... mazelike connections among tower rooms to avoid glints of light or noise that might betray the presence of an observer’ (Barton & Barton 1993, p.139). As Lirael is the only female of age in Clayr without Sight, this motif reflects the surveillance by those in the upper echelons of the hierarchy over those in the lower ranks. The circular staircase of the Great Library of Clayr illustrates that a large spherical area of the Library may be under surveillance by one person (2001, pp. 60-61), observing patrons and staff moving from one area of the library to another. The bracelets that allow staff access to specific areas of the library according to their place in the hierarchy (2001, p. 70) are reflective of Bentham’s plan for Panoptic surveillance that needed to be visible, but unverifiable (Bentham 1843).

Even Lirael, an employee of the library, is controlled in her movements;
'Depending on your work and post, it [her enchanted bracelet] will then open all the appropriate doors' (2001, p. 70). ‘Appropriate’ defines the boundaries between Lirael and those at the apex of the hierarchical structure of the library, who have set the permissions in her bracelet according to her tasks. This method of obstruction and surveillance is apparently due to her age and her rank. The fact that, 'in the Library there was strict discipline and a chain of command' (2001, p. 483) demonstrates just how courageous assistant librarian Lirael is in her searches of the library throughout her teenage years. The term ‘strict discipline’ conveys a sense of punishment, while 'chain of command' exudes the feeling of an iron-clad hierarchy that is not to be challenged. Further, the chain of command within the library is explicit for both characters and reader as the brightly coloured waistcoats worn by all library staff denotes their ranking immediately (2001, pp. 66-67). Foucault’s notion of hierarchies having a direct relationship with surveillance implies control and power (1979, p. 281). However, Lirael does challenge these hierarchies successfully, and as a result, her magical abilities grow as a consequence of her complete acceptance of her curiosity (Lanning 2011, p. 36) and her covert challenging of those who hold power in the library. Here, obstructive libraries facilitate the hero’s quest. Emily Lanning explains that Lirael’s curiosity and explorations of the library over five years enable knowledge and abilities previously unseen (2011, p. 36). It is recognised that Lirael has used the obstructive nature and layout of the library to her advantage, as it has enabled her to develop her problem-solving skills and magical capacity.

The Great Library’s holdings, are described as being

full of the Clayr’s written records… prophesies and visions… books and papers
from all over the Kingdom… Scrolls, maps, spells, recipes… weapons and armour…
dressmakers’ dummies… greenhouses… (2001, pp. 60-61)

This denotes a considerable collection that resides within, suggesting that locating information may be difficult due to the extent of the accumulated materials. However, the corridors, rooms, halls and chambers that depart from the central spiral create an aspect of the secret. These rooms cannot be under the centralised supervision of the fundamental Panoptic layout which gives Lirael the opportunity to circumvent the surveillance of other librarians. However, another aspect of the
Panopticon is imprisonment, and the beast identified as a Stilken is incarcerated within the walls of the Great Library (2001, p. 126), further identifying the Great Library as carceral.

Hierarchical observation, or surveillance, also occurs in HP's Hogwarts library as well as in most classroom layouts that require theoretical rather than practical learning. The alignment of the Panopticon prison with schools (Foucault 1979, p. 228), as seen in figures 1 and 2, shows that Hogwarts compares with Bentham’s prison due to its repeated design over several floors and in which students are constantly observed by ghosts and animated portraits that line the walls. The librarian, Madam Pince, is a focal point of power over the rows of bookshelves and students within the library. The librarian is ever watchful of the students’ actions. Although the majority of students are constrained by the Panoptic layout of the library and carceral-like disciplinary methods, Harry, and to a lesser extent, Ron and Hermione, challenge many of the restrictions that face other students. Harry accesses the library out of hours when he is given an invisibility cloak by the Headmaster, while Hermione secures a note from a teacher allowing her permission to access the Restricted Section under false pretences.

In Spud Murphy, the Panoptic notion of quarantining and corralling children into a small area for effortless surveillance, as when the boys are instructed that they must ‘stay in the junior section of the library’ (2004, p. 25), is explicit. Confinement and exclusion are methods of discipline, control and power (Foucault 1979, p. 198), adding spatial approaches to the architectural power of the Panopticon. Further, the Panoptic influence on the boys is demonstrated when Will begins speaking ‘like an army cadet’ (2004, p. 25). The metaphor of Will acting like an army cadet, the lowest of the ranks, is one of being controlled and under strict orders by the hierarchy.

The theme of the Panoptic order of the library being compared to the army is also reflected in Boy where:

> Everything had its place in the library, and Melvin liked it that way. His favorite books were always in their places, lined up on
the shelves like soldiers. And his favorite people were always in their places, behind the reference desk (2007, n.p.).

The use of the simile comparing books to soldiers evokes the feeling of strict order and control of the library. It is clear that this library is well-ordered, predictable and organised, with the text matching the illustrations to confirm the ‘truth’ of this.

The libraries in HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy are all unhelpful. However, the library that purports to be helpful in Boy, demonstrates just how controlling and Panopticon-like even a ‘helpful’ library can be. In Figure 3, the front cover illustrates a wistful young boy with glasses, looking out from between the library shelves where non-fiction gardening books reside. This metaphor of a boy growing and being nurtured in the library is comparable to a plant featured in the gardening books and his Harry Potter-style glasses evoke thoughts of an inquiring and powerful boy. However, it can also be seen that the boy has been subjected to classification as he is just another item in the library. He is surrounded and bound by the highly organised books and bookshelves, creating a type of prison that binds his growth and intellectual freedom. The books could be likened to bars on a prison door, with the boy mournfully peering out onto freedom. This evokes the concept of Panoptic organisation that controls and regulates the boy, and is reinforced, as Nodelman and Reimer (2003, p. 282) identify, by the fact that in picture books, ‘angular’ shapes are correlated to ‘rigidity and orderliness’.

Figure 3. The cover of The boy who was raised by librarians, illustrated by Brad Sneed.
Initially, the Livingstone Library in *Boy* appears to completely contradict the Panopticon system. The children’s section of the library is illustrated on the first page, where the protagonist, Melvin, is introduced. The area is colourful, with books shelved at child-level for easy access. The bright area is attractive, yet Melvin is the only child using this space. The illustrations feature warm colours and gives the library an appearance of calm.

![Figure 4. The children’s section in *The boy who was raised by librarians*, illustrated by Brad Sneed.](image)

However, as seen in figure 4, the children’s area is immaculately ordered and three librarians who, in figure 5, sit at a circular desk with other areas of the library radiating out from this counter, corresponds to Panoptic control, order, organisation and surveillance.
Although the librarians have their backs turned to the reader, which creates an illusion of their inattention to patrons, their swivel chairs enable unpredictable and rapid change in their outlook. Thus, the concept of the Panopticon is reinforced as patrons must assume that they are under surveillance at all times. Hierarchical observation of patrons is enabled through Panoptic library designs and layouts in each of the selected texts. However, a number of the protagonists recognise the importance of information and knowledge, and they develop the courage to challenge the mechanism of control, resulting in the acquisition of knowledge and agency.

The mysterious and enchanted library

Areas of the library that deny access to patrons naturally become mysterious, and as such, desirable places to explore. Will imagines the books in Spud Murphy’s library are animated (2004, p. 21), and he and Marty dream of ‘having the guts’ (2004, p. 58) to examine the adult section of the library.

The libraries in Lirael and HP share many similarities. As both are from the fantasy genre, the trope of the mysterious and enchanted library is shared. Magical elements within the libraries include barriers to information such as ropes, doors and dangerous beasts. The Great Library of Clayr holds unusual and secretive elements, ‘rooms of total darkness, swallowing up… anyone foolish enough to enter…’ (2001, p. 61). Library books are also often enchanted. Lirael’s discovery of In the Skin of a Lyon (2001, pp. 149-150) and The Book of Remembrance and Forgetting (2001, p. 265) demonstrate the power of magical books where they mutate and evolve depending on the power and need of the reader (2001, p. 265).

Lirael encounters areas of the Great Library sectioned off by rope: ‘She had always hankered to enter the doors they passed, to step across the red rope barriers that marked corridors or tunnels where only authorised librarians might pass’ (2001,
p. 61). The barriers within the Library prove to be mysterious to Lirael, and thus in need of investigating. Lirael’s attraction to opening the door is significant as a door is a device that defines the boundary between worlds (Nikolajeva 1988, p. 76) and Lirael is eager to negotiate boundaries. A doorway is also a mechanism that represents the delineation of child- and adulthood. The rope marking the area where access is denied is not a strong physical obstacle, rather it is symbolic, as it can be assumed in a fantasy text there would be magical spells accompanying the physical boundaries. Burek Pierce notes that the Great Library has ‘magic that restricts and permits access to the library’s many venues’ (2004, p. 76). Although not specified, it may be assumed that the Chief Librarian, at the very least, would be permitted to access all areas of the Library. Thus, the question may be posed whether access is restricted based on age, skill, or a certain level of employment in the library. As most library employees progress through the ranks of assistant librarian at a slower pace than Lirael (her curiosity and agency has expedited her promotion from third to second assistant librarian), then it appears that access is denied primarily due to a young age, which reinforces the concept of hierarchical control and power.

The Hogwarts library is described as ‘very eerie’ (PS, p. 151), while several books in the Hogwarts library ‘contain powerful Dark Magic never taught at Hogwarts’ (PS, p. 146). Some library titles whisper to patrons (PS, p. 151) and identify those who are trespassing. Other books from the Restricted Section scream when opened (PS, p. 151), seemingly without a teacher’s permission (PS, p. 145). In his first year, Harry Potter accesses the Restricted Section, which ‘was right at the back of the library’ (PS p. 151) late one night, and as such, avoids the librarian, simply by entering the library and ‘Stepping carefully over the rope which separated these books from the rest of the library...’ (PS p. 151). Being located at the rear of the library ensures the Restricted Section is inconspicuous and although again primarily symbolic as in Lirael, the rope providing a barrier could be magical and thus dangerous.

As magic empowers the young characters in Lirael and HP, the institutions within which they reside are charged with the task of repressing them (Trites 2001, p.
Such restrictions and barriers to information can be identified as a symbol of the power of the adult and the establishment over the child. However, the concept that ‘In almost every adolescent novel, some institution exists that simultaneously increases and decreases adolescents’ sense of their own power’ (Trites 2001, p. 475), decrees that there must be an avenue for young people to learn and grow, and thus, the obstructive library provides both an impediment to, and an opportunity for, developing power.

**Imposing libraries**

The large Great Library of Clayr is both a bounty and a hindrance in *Lirael*. Lirael’s lack of Sight, a metaphorical blindness, sets her on a journey where she must instead become a seeker of information. As the oldest Clayr girl without the Sight, she feels extremely out of place and isolated. This is illustrated by the description of Lirael standing out ‘like a pallid weed among healthy flowers’ (2001, p. 14). The use of simile in the above passage likening Lirael to a weed not only marks her out as ‘other’, but as something that is ugly, useless and unwanted. Her way to solve this problem is to commit suicide (2001, pp. 24-25). Lirael knows that committing suicide will need planning and a special spell and ‘She’d have to search the Great Library for such a spell, and that sort of magic would be locked away by charm and key’ (2001, p. 25). This sentence initially identifies that the library of Clayr is a special one; a ‘Great Library’, with capitalisation emphasising its importance. The use of the adjective great could mean large, or important, or both. Thus, before anything else about the library is revealed, it is explicit that it plays an important role in the Kingdom of Clayr. It is later identified that the Great Library has extensive and varied collections (2001, pp. 60-61) and appeals to scholars (2001, p. 71).

The resources in the Great Library of Clayr are often difficult to locate due to the size of the library and its collections:

> Many [of the chambers within the Great Library] were full of the Clayr’s written records, mainly documenting the prophesies and visions of many generations of
seers. But they also contained books and papers from all over the Kingdom (2001, pp. 60-61).

Sabriel, the Abhorsen, the most powerful person in the Old Kingdom, notes that ... while they keep everything in that Great Library of theirs, [they] rarely find anything useful in it... I should like to look there myself, but that is a task that would take months, if not years' (2001, p. 299).

This passage is notable for its reference to a library collection so large and unwieldy that it is rendered useless to Sabriel, as the sheer length of time a search of such an extensive collection would take makes discovering the desired information impossible. However, it is the size of the Library that facilitates Lirael's searches, adventures and self-reliance.

Although the library in the HP series does not have the extensive number of chambers that the Great Library of Clayr has, it is nevertheless portrayed as voluminous; ‘... the sheer size of the library; tens of thousands of books; thousands of shelves; hundreds of narrow rows’ (PS p. 145) makes it difficult for student researchers to locate the information they require. Comparable to that in Lirael, the size of the Hogwarts library is overwhelming for users, demonstrated by the use of the adjective ‘sheer’ and the repeated use of numerical identifiers for books, shelves and rows. Similarly, the issue of organisation within the Hogwarts library tends to demonstrate that the arrangement of the books follows no known system, nor one that can be interpreted by the young protagonists. Here, the control of the library over Harry Potter and his friends is explicit.

Considering that Hermione is a well-read student, she would likely have had previous access to libraries, both school and public, and would understand how libraries are arranged. Yet, she, Harry and Ron spend months searching for information in the library in PS: “Ever since you mentioned Nicolas Flamel, we’ve been trying to find out who he is... We must've been through hundreds of books already and we can't find him anywhere...” (PS p. 145). This identifies the difficulty the students have in locating the information they require. The term ‘ever since’ indicates the search has been conducted over long period of time, ‘hundreds of books’ quantifies the size of their search, while ‘can't find him anywhere'
denotes the frustration with the organisation (or lack thereof) of the library. Hermione also has difficulty discovering her desired information in CoS, “I think she’s trying to read the whole library before Christmas”... (CoS p. 112), 'Hermione emerged from between the bookshelves. She looked irritable...' (CoS p. 112). The concept that the only way of discovering the required information in the library is to read every book in 'the whole library' identifies the library as averse to assisting students in their quest for knowledge, while Hermione's irritability denotes that she is accustomed to locating information quickly. This scene is located around Halloween, however, it is not until May the following year (CoS p. 210, p. 211) that Hermione eventually finds the information she requires (CoS p. 215). The length of time and arduousness in locating information reinforces the library as a large and difficult place to navigate. Thus, the mechanism of control of the library acts as an obstacle to young people seeking information, although due to patience and diligence, these barriers are eventually overcome by Hermione.

Figure 6. The exterior of the Livingstone Library in The boy who was raised by librarians, illustrated by Brad Sneed.

The size of the library collection in Boy is not explicit, however, as shown in figure 6, the building itself is commanding, both in size and architecture. Its entrance, with its concrete steps symbolising that access may be difficult for some members of the community, aligns with the concept that 'library buildings are rich in
symbolism and meaning’ (Biando Edwards, Rauseo & Unger 2013, n.p.) because they are ‘physical containers for a society’s shared knowledge, historical documents, and academic musings’ (McKeough 2013, n.p.). Here the parallels to the large and intimidating libraries in *Lirael* and *HP* are explicit, even though the fantasy elements are absent.

In *Spud Murphy*, the library the boys enter is also rendered as a large one, as it ‘... seemed to go on forever. Row after row of wooden bookshelves, bolted to the floor at the bottom and the ceiling at the top’ (2004, pp. 21-22). The symbolism of the library shelves being bolted to the floor and ceiling evokes a sense of immovability and inflexibility; here the library seems as fixed as its shelves. The rendering of the library as being large, coupled with the explanation that the boys had to enter the library by climbing the ‘concrete steps’ (2004, p. 17), reflects the majestic library entrance in *Boy*. However, the insignificant section demarcated for children in *Spud Murphy* is in inverse proportions to the libraries in *HP* and *Lirael*. Nevertheless, the library is obstructive to Marty and Will, as the children's section ‘was actually a single box shelf with four rows of books. On the ground before it was a small patch of worn carpet’ (2004, p. 26). The use of the adverb ‘actually’ denotes the harsh reality of the situation, while the term ‘single’ announces the limited scope of the books the boys are entitled to read. The ‘small’ ‘patch’ of ‘worn carpet’ again implies the tiny capacity of the children’s section, along with the neglected and unappealing area for children to sit and read. This description of the extent of the children’s section matches the illustration in figure 7, which demonstrates the hindrance to the boys’ reading selection. Thus, libraries that are overwhelmingly large, and those whose collections are minute, are equally controlling.
Obstacles in the library

Obstacles to discovering information in the libraries featured in *HP, Lirael, Spud Murphy* and *Boy* can be aligned with Foucault's concepts of obstacles acting as a form of punishment (1979, p. 107). Here, the idea that obstacles are required to discipline those who are not in positions of power is found to be explicit within the texts. The Great Library of Clayr in *Lirael* has no electricity or access to technology (Nix 2001, pp. 160-161), comparable to the entire Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (*GoF* pp. 475-476). Both libraries represent traditional libraries before the advent of computers and the Internet, thus there are no computer catalogues to assist in searches, or websites to access or eBooks to read instantly. Correspondingly, Maynard and McKenna note the rendering of the library in *Spud Murphy* is also ‘serious’ and ‘old-fashioned’ (2005, p. 125), with the depiction of a card catalogue and no evidence of computers (2005, pp. 125-126). Such tradition correlates to the need for manual searches of the (if available) catalogues and shelves. This can prove to be an obstacle as the time needed to search is much greater than that if Internet access or eBooks were available.
In *Lirael*, when it is revealed that the eponymous protagonist needs information to learn how to commit suicide, it is acknowledged that some books are removed from the general collection, ‘locked away’ by two means; ‘charm and key’ (2001, p. 25). Such obstacles to information ensure that Lirael’s planned suicide must wait until the information is procured. The censoring of information through the removal or locking away of particular items from the collection is an impediment to the protagonists. However, this hindrance is positive in this instance, because if Lirael had discovered the information she required, she presumably would have been successful in killing herself. This reinforces the concept of the dangers of some forms of information.

Further, Lirael discovers that ‘There were bestiaries in the Library, she knew, but finding and getting access to them could be a problem’ (2001, p. 95). The use of the terms ‘finding and getting access’ denotes that discovering the location of resources can be problematic, even for a staff member. Once found, though, accessing the item may pose further problems, as some items are chained and cannot be removed or used without a librarian’s knowledge. The library is further illustrated as explicitly obstructive, particularly when Lirael must learn how to stop a dangerous being from escaping into the main areas of the library and thus posing a threat to the Clayr;

Within a week, she managed to secretly obtain copies of *On the Making of Sendings* and *Superior Sendings in Seventy Days*, as *The Making and Mastery of Magical Beings* proved too difficult to spirit out of its locked case. The bestiaries proved troublesome too, as all the ones she could find were chained to their shelves. She dipped into them when no one was around, but without immediate success.

Clearly, it would take some time to find out exactly what the creature was. (2001, p. 107)

The use of the adverb ‘secretly’ reveals that although the information is restricted from Lirael, she manages to find a way to procure it. The word ‘spirit’ denotes the lightness of touch needed to remove a book, and it is, in this instance, too difficult for Lirael, as she is still in the process of learning the art of magic. The ‘chained’ books denote an archaic and medieval library in which many books were attached to shelving and access limited (Murray 2012, p. 39), the noise of the moving chain
alerting librarians to their use. This recalls the Panoptic organisation of the library, where observation and restricting access to information are keys to control. The employment of the adverb ‘clearly’ demonstrates that the information is not readily available. Lirael’s lack of immediate success and the ‘seventy-three days before she found a bestiary that told her what the creature was’ (2001, p. 108), indicates her engagement with overcoming obstacles in the Library. The fact that the narrator explicates the number of days it took Lirael to locate the required information specifies the level of complication the library places before her: ‘In those ten weeks of worry, study and preparation, she had searched through eleven bestiaries’ (2001, p. 108). The repetition of the length of time Lirael searches for the information demonstrates that she is a persistent and resilient problem-solver. Further, the repetitious use of nouns to describe her groundwork details the complexity of her task.

The Hogwarts library’s Restricted Section (PS p. 145) and the complete removal of books deemed inappropriate from the library (DH p. 88) in the HP series is reflective of the restrictions in the Great Library of Clayr. There are several familiar elements in place to render the Hogwarts library obstructive. Younger students are restricted in the material they may borrow from the library (PS p. 146), only those who are ‘older students studying Advanced Defence Against the Dark Arts’ (PS p. 146) may borrow freely from the library. Students in years one to six are denied admittance to the ‘Restricted Section’ of the library without a note from a teacher. The concept that ‘Books can be misleading,’ (CoS p. 220), declared by author and teacher Professor Lockhart, is a further example of obstacles to information. The need to employ critical evaluation skills when presented with information that is potentially false and even damaging is overt. Although it is true that titles located in the Restricted Section contain ‘powerful Dark Magic never taught at Hogwarts’ (PS p. 198), Harry and his friends save the lives of others due to the information they discover in the Restricted Section, books they are not meant to access.

While both Lirael and Harry encounter physical and magical boundaries to their quest for information, Marty and Will, the brothers in *Spud Murphy*, a humorous but realistic story, find the barriers to be purely physical. Once Will and Marty have
read the small collection of titles in the children’s section and are desperate for more reading materials, they begin to devise ways of gaining access to resources that aren’t designated for them. (2004, pp. 58-61). This collaborative problem-solving and agency, enabled through the obstruction to the wide variety of resources held in the library, allows the boys entry to a diverse collection of books. Although the boys are observed breaking the rules, and thus seized by Spud Murphy, their use of collaborative problem-solving due to an obstructive library is ultimately rewarded. The librarian grants Will an adult library card, entitling him to enter any section of the library and to borrow any book the librarian deems appropriate. Although there is still an element of censorship present, the way in which the boys solve their problem and question the obstructiveness of the library results in Will gaining access to the majority of the materials located in the library. The library engenders problem-solving and agency purely in relation to its obstructiveness.

However, as with Foucault’s concept of obstacles as necessary, he identifies that barriers must be temporary:

The penalty transforms, modifies, establishes signs, arranges obstacles. What use would it be if it had to be permanent? A penalty that had no end would be contradictory: all the constraints that it imposes on the convict and of which, having become virtuous once more, he would never be able to take advantage, would be little better than torture; and the effort made to reform him would be so much trouble and expense lost by society (1979, p. 107).

Similarly, impediments within the libraries in HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy are transitory. The obstacles can be evaded due to the agency and problem-solving skills of the protagonists. However, in Boy, it appears that the obstacles facing Melvin, where they can never be overcome, will form a kind of torture (Foucault 1979, p. 107). Foucault identifies punishment that is perpetual does not rehabilitate, but instead becomes a source of loss to society, where the punished are unable to reconstruct themselves and their lives (1979, p. 107). From the midpoint of Boy, when Melvin is in the first grade, he stops thinking for himself and conversing with the librarians. His interactions with the librarians take the form of them directing him and reading to him. His voice does not appear again in the text
until he is an adult, a graduate librarian. His natural curiosity, evident previously, is now extinguished, forming a torturous affliction to his personality and growth. Although the obstacles to information in *HP, Lirael* and *Spud Murphy* are conquered, Melvin is unable to overthrow those in his circumstances. Melvin, as a very young boy, is unable to challenge the control of the library and librarians. As explicated by the title of *Boy*, the librarians are Melvin's *de facto* family, and his need for their love overpowers his information needs.

**Dangerous Libraries**

Dangerous libraries are symbolic of the power of the privileged group over others. In *Lirael*, the *HP* stories and *Spud Murphy*, libraries are acknowledged as dangerous places. The Great Library of Clayr contains ‘dangerous things and dangerous knowledge’ (2001, p. 61), while in *HP*, some library holdings are determined treacherous, and thus located in the Restricted Section. Further, all books with references to Horcruxes have been completely removed from the Hogwarts library, unavailable even in the Restricted Section (*HBP* p. 357). Spud Murphy’s library is a place of fear (2004, pp. 8-11, pp. 17-20) and punishment (2004, p. 43). These depictions all reinforce Radford and Radford’s identification of libraries as places of fear (2001, p. 303). By using Foucault’s concepts of control and discipline, they equate the library with the prison, based on their shared ‘inscrutable rules of behaviour’ (Radford & Radford 2001, p. 303). The library and its effect on its patrons in *Boy*, personified by Melvin, contrasts with *Spud Murphy’s* library; while still being classified and methodically arranged, it provides the stimulation and opportunity for the boys to favourably challenge the Panoptic layout. The library in *Boy* is the complete opposite to those depicted in *HP, Spud Murphy* and *Lirael*. A highly organised and ostensibly helpful library is unable to provide a challenge to Melvin to procure his own information and develop problem-solving skills as he matures, whereas the libraries in *HP* and *Lirael* contribute to the protagonists’ agency, as their need for information engenders knowledge and skills previously unattainable. Thus, the concept of the library being ‘ultimately determined by the discourse of fear’ (Radford & Radford, 2001, p. 325) can be disputed.
Harry Potter discovers that some of the books housed in the library not only contain dangerous ideas, but are also physically threatening. A book screams at him \( (PS\ p.\ 151) \), implying violence or horror. Even after Harry is able to discover a way to access the Restricted Section of the library, the real obstructions in this instance are the books themselves, as some are in unrecognisable languages and unable to be understood and others could not be opened \( (PS\ p.\ 151) \). This theme implies the potential danger of books and information, which provides a lesson to the trio on becoming more critical seekers of information.

As with Harry, Marty and Will, Lirael also has difficulty acquiring the information she craves. While exploring a section of the Great Library, she mistakenly unleashes a dangerous creature \( (2001,\ p.\ 86) \). It is acknowledged by Lirael that she is responsible for allowing such a treacherous being to threaten the safety and wellbeing of the library staff. Although accidentally released, the Stilken threatens the safety of Lirael’s colleagues. Despite the library being accepted as a dangerous location to work, Lirael is determined to solely correct the problem that she herself created. Her developing knowledge of the library assists her in determining how to solve this particular problem, resulting in a self-reliance that assists her growth.

**Resisting the obstructive library**

The protagonists in *HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy* display problem-solving skills, resilience and agency when devising methods to overcome obstacles to their information needs. Harry and his friends often return to the library, although ‘they had almost given up hope of ever finding [information about Nicolas] Flamel in a library book...’ \( (PS\ p.\ 158) \). Their persistence in seeking information is rewarded when, on this occasion, the students discover information regarding Nicolas Flamel on the reverse of a chocolate frog card \( (PS\ p.\ 160) \), an item designed for children, rather than a library book written and selected by an adult. This occurs when the students broaden their search for information due to the barriers the library provides. Their agency and problem-solving skills ensure that they now recognise
that there are multiple areas of access to information, as required for their quests.

Lirael negotiates the obstructions of the library by breaking the spell of her charm bracelet to access areas in the library she is unauthorised to enter (2001, p. 71). Similarly, when she is facing adversity in unearthing information in order to defeat the being she unwittingly unleashed in the Great Library, it is purely tenacity and serendipity that leads her to the information regarding the Stilken (Burek Pierce 2004, p. 77). While the somewhat random and serendipitous nature of the accessibility of information within the various libraries is highlighted, it is Lirael’s conviction that she must solve the problem of the Stilken herself, without surrendering her self-determination to adults (Burek Pierce 2004, p. 77), that demonstrates her developing agency. Such forays assist Lirael in ‘defining herself’ (Campbell 2014, p. 220), and her identity is forged through such experiences (Danehy 2007, p. 82). Crucially, this agency has replaced her desire to commit suicide.

Spud Murphy’s Will and Marty also construct the solution to their problem of accessing wider reading materials without adult intervention, by removing their shoes and sneaking into the library proper. Eschewing the assistance of libraries and librarians at important junctures in HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy demonstrates the young people’s challenge to libraries that ‘guard and control’ (Radford & Radford 1997, pp. 260-261) and librarians who present as ‘gatekeepers’ (Burek Pierce 2004, p. 79). However, these controls, perhaps ironically, animate Lirael, Harry, Ron and Hermione, and Will and Marty to seek the information they require from varied sources that results in the development of their skills in problem-solving. These protagonists evade the repression designed by adults, in the form of surveillance and physical and magical barriers, to regulate their access to information and knowledge. Harry, Lirael, and Will and Marty push the boundaries regarding obstacles to information that the libraries present to them. Lirael learns to add elements to her magical bracelet to enable access to forbidden areas of the library. Harry and his friends undertake independent research that includes the increasingly skilful questioning of others. Will and Marty physically evade the barriers designed to contain them and their information needs. These protagonists
are all rewarded for their attempts in varying ways.

It is noticeable, though, that Boy differs from HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy, as Melvin is unable to challenge the barriers to his information needs. This is an example of how a well-ordered library leads to the crushing of curiosity and the denial of higher-order thinking skills. Melvin was an intelligent and curious young boy who had many and varied interests when he first began visiting the library. As I will discuss in chapter three, Melvin’s lack of speech for much of his youth symbolises that he becomes a product of the controlling library and he fails to realise that the complete control the library exerts stifles his intellectual growth and self-determination.

This chapter has demonstrated that for protagonists, obstacles within libraries are important, as the need to develop problem-solving skills is required to overcome them. Higher-order thinking skills, including critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, logic and reasoning, creative thinking and application to real world problems are necessary to combat obstructive libraries. The ability to acquire information in difficult circumstances transforms this information into knowledge, which subsequently leads to agency and power. All of these methods are interrelated and are vital steps in the protagonists’ growth. The act of searching for information empowers the heroes in their quest. Boy is differentiated from HP, Lirael and Spud Murphy as Melvin is unable to undertake the efforts required to challenge the obstacles in his specific library. Chapter three will address the way in which librarians provide further barriers to the access of information.
Chapter three. “I said, what do you want?”: obstructive librarians.

The stereotypical librarian trope that is employed in *HP, Spud Murphy*, and to a degree, *Lirael* and *Boy*, is pejorative. However, it is purposely applied in the texts for literary reasons and plot development, giving protagonists a safe place to test their agency. Although libraries have been proven to be dangerous places, they are safer than the outside world for Harry Potter and Lirael, at least. Radford and Radford (2001, pp. 324-325) claim that librarian stereotypes are needed as they are easily recognised by the masses, where the ‘cultural code’ of libraries and librarians ensures their recognition (Radford & Radford 2001, pp. 324-325). While it is true that several featured librarians are the personification of the control of access to knowledge, there is certainly cause for analysing the outcomes of such hindrance to information amenity in children’s and YA literature. The librarians in *Lirael* and *Spud Murphy* are shown to be subversive to differing degrees; librarians are ultimately rendered as warriors in *Lirael*, and ostensibly ‘library policeman’ Spud Murphy relaxes library rules for regulation-breaking. However, there is tension in the texts where the appearance is that heroes can challenge existing ideologies. What is left unquestioned, though, is that the majority of child characters are unable to confront and negotiate such power.

The individual can be subjected to power by others through non-violent and subtle means (Foucault 1979, p. 26). This can be aligned with the way in which librarians obstruct young people’s access to information and knowledge in *HP, Lirael, Spud Murphy* and *Boy*. If this obstruction is deliberate and forms a type of censorship, in which resources are unattainable and people need to prove they are worthy to access information, it is problematic. Censorship can take many forms, but can be distilled as ‘... actions which significantly restrict free access to information’ (Moody 2005, p. 139). All of the selected texts feature both libraries and librarians that wield their power over patrons through subtle means where various forms of censorship occur.

While it is true that librarianship is a feminised profession (Carmichael 1992, Piper & Collamer 2001, p. 406, Lutz 2005, p. 6), and thus, it could be expected that
female librarians feature in the selected texts, all of the librarians characterised in books are women, with the exception of Melvin, who graduates as a librarian at the conclusion of Boy. The use of the stereotypical middle-aged or elderly, cardigan wearing, unattractive woman librarian can be interpreted as useful to plot development, with fear of the librarian obliging the protagonists to seek other avenues of knowledge. Apart from Lirael, who becomes an assistant librarian, all of the protagonists are male, and this provides a pattern in terms of the way female librarians are constructed as opponents to the boy protagonists. However, the stereotypical rendering of the librarian is subverted to differing degrees in Spud Murphy and Lirael, leaving gaps in the text that raise questions about the portrayal of the stereotype. Such stereotypical librarians include the ‘library policeman’, where rules must be obeyed leaving no room for judgement; the ‘witchy’ librarian, whose parsimony manifests as ugliness; ‘helpful’ librarians, who appear to assist patrons on the surface, yet control their informational requirements and ‘emotionally unintelligent’ librarians who are entirely unable to relate to their patrons and their needs. The ‘warrior’ librarian opposes and subverts the previous clichés.

The ‘library policeman’

Foucault’s theory ‘…that power and knowledge directly imply one another…’ (1979, p. 26) is commensurate with the way in which librarians manage the young library patrons that frequent their libraries. It appears that all of the librarians in the selected texts are apprehensive about permitting their charges free access to information, and thus to become knowledgeable and powerful. The ostensibly negative portrayal of librarians develops with the stereotype of the severe ‘policeman librarian’ (Seale 2008, n.p.) that is present in the HP series and Spud Murphy, while the librarians in Boy are depicted more as a kindly constabulary, and the Chief Librarian in Lirael is formidable (Nix 2001, pp. 64-65). In one of the HP companion books, Quidditch, a quote on the front matter from school librarian Madam Pince appears, demonstrating the severe punishment she will deliver if the book is damaged:
A warning: if you rip, tear, shred, bend, fold, deface, disfigure, smear, smudge, throw, drop or in any other manner damage, mistreat or show lack of respect to this book, the consequences will be as awful as it is within my power to make them.

Irma Pince, Hogwarts Librarian (Quidditch 2001, n.p)

The use of repetition regarding any type of damage done to a book conveys that this will result in punishment. The use of simile relating to the consequences of any blemish upon the text leads the reader to infer what such consequences might be; the result is the limit of their imagination. Further employment of simile occurs when Madam Pince is described as having a ‘vulture-like countenance’ (HBP p. 288), comparing the librarian to a vicious bird of prey. Madam Pince is presented as a figure to be feared by the students, ready to attack when necessary. She is explicitly cast as the stereotypical obstructive librarian, or ‘library policeman’, forming an overwhelmingly large shadow over the library in her care. It is not surprising that although she is the only trained information professional within the Hogwarts School, Madam Pince is unwillingly consulted by students (and staff) on only rare occasions. Even Headmaster Dumbledore is aware of Madam’s Pince’s policing of the treatment of library books;

Please be careful how you treat this book... I cannot promise Madam Pince will not swoop down on you, wherever you are, and demand a heavy fine.

Albus Dumbledore (Quidditch 2001, p. vii).

The use of ‘swoop’ in a metaphorical fashion gives further weight to Madam Pince’s numerous descriptions of being vulture-like (CoS p. 124, GoF p. 419). The rendering here of the librarian as deadly is symbolic of what Harry and his friends must challenge in the wider wizarding world. Although Madam Pince’s obstruction to resources is less than subtle, it does represent the struggle between power and knowledge, as acknowledged by Foucault (1979, p. 26).

Similar to Madam Pince, the librarian in Spud Murphy is also a library ‘policeman’. She is a feared creature, who is accused of possessing a ‘spud gun’ and who ‘shoots kids with it if they make a noise in the library’ (2004, p. 10). Her tightly tied hair illustrates that she is uptight and controlling. While the concept of a commanding librarian is made explicit before the boys have even entered the library; ‘A smile could get you thrown out... if you laughed aloud, you were never seen again’ (2004,
pp. 18-19), the reality is almost as atrocious. A sense of foreboding is conveyed through the text, congruent with Will and Marty's prior fears.

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 8.** The full-colour cover of *The Legend of Spud Murphy*, illustrated by Tony Ross.

Figure 8, from the cover of the text, gives an indication that perhaps the fears of the boys are correct, as the aforementioned spud gun is illustrated shooting Will repeatedly, despite his efforts in absconding as quickly as possible. His facial expression exhibits fear and dismay.

![Image](image2.png)

**Figure 9.** Spud Murphy in *The Legend of Spud Murphy*, illustrated by Tony Ross (2004, p. 33).
Figure 9 shows the library stamps hanging from Spud Murphy's waist. They are evocative of weapons, primed for brisk utilisation, reminiscent of a law enforcer. Her stance implies that she is ready for a showdown, claw-like fingers twitching, she is prepared for a fight that she is equipped to win. Here, the threat of violence is present, and as police do need to employ their weapons on occasions, the risk of brutality exists.

![Figure 9. The library stamps hanging from Spud Murphy's waist.](image)

Figure 10. Will's fear in *The Legend of Spud Murphy*, illustrated by Tony Ross. (2004, p. 22).

Figure 10 depicts a startled Will overshadowed by the much larger librarian, demonstrating her physical power over him. His shocked demeanour is exemplified through his sudden movement and startled facial expression. The shadowy outline of the librarian shows rather unattractive large nose and ears, with pointed finger outstretched, making her commanding intentions clear. Such a depiction signifies that she is not at all feminine, and her masculinity adds to the boys' fear of her. Spud Murphy's ugliness, and thus most probably, spinsterhood, reinforces the stereotypical execution of librarians. All of the illustrations within the text are black and white, with a feeling reminiscent of Roald Dahl illustrator Quentin Blake's style of movement and humorous exaggeration. However, as black and white illustrations tend to suggest 'authenticity' (Nodelman & Reimer 2003, p. 281), there is a tension created between the fear outlined in the text and the somewhat playful, but amplified drawings. The resulting ambiguity (Nikolajeva & Scott 2013, p. 30) creates an intriguing gap for the reader to devise their own understanding. However, the reader is positioned to query Will's version of events.
as his droll narrative and the accompanying illustrations meld to form a comedy that is reliant on Will’s somewhat distorted perspective.

The concept of Foucault's discipline and punishment is explicit in *Spud Murphy*. The layout and organisation of the library is again reflective of Foucault’s notion of quarantine, an enclosed space where the concept of Panopticism is enforced (1979, p. 216) through the librarian being ever watchful of the users’ actions. This is particularly true for *Spud Murphy* as every time the boys emerge from the librarian’s imposed boundaries, they are identified as breaking the rules. The librarian has total control of the behaviours of the young library users, and punishes them when they break the nonsensical boundaries she has imposed. However, once the boys are under her control and do not break any rules: ‘Spud Murphy generally left us alone so long as we returned our books on time and didn’t make any noise on the carpet’ (2004, p. 55). The Panopticon layout of the library with its power of surveillance subjugates its users into specific behaviours. However, when surveillance breaks down, the boys are able to begin their explorations of the library.

![Figure 11. Spud’s power in *The legend of Spud Murphy* illustrated by Tony Ross. (2004, p. 27).](image_url)

Although the illustrations in *Spud Murphy* are exaggerated, figure 11, above, demonstrates to the reader the sheer difference in size between Spud Murphy and Will, as perceived by Will, the first-person narrator. She wears slippers so that she
can sneak quietly around the library, scrutinising the behaviour of users, further aligning with the Panoptic employment of surveillance. The librarian is in a position of power over Will, not just because of her role as librarian, but also her physical extent, ‘Spud Murphy glared down from a great height. She was big. Taller than my dad, and wider than Mum and my two aunties strapped together’ (2004, pp. 23-4). Here, the illustrations reinforce the ‘truth’ of the text, Spud Murphy is confirmed in both text and drawing as a large and imposing person. Further, the use of the word ‘glared’ implies that she is not a librarian who makes children, at least, welcome in the library. Will’s description of the librarian’s size makes use of black humour; making light of what, in nine year-old Will’s mind, is a frightening situation. As she leans over Will, again pointing her finger to reinforce her command, Spud Murphy explains that Will and his brother must sit and stay on the tiny piece of mat and read only from the small bookshelf, as illustrated in figure 7. Here, the librarian is obstructing the boys’ access to the remainder of the large library by insisting that they must ‘Stay on the carpet, or there will be trouble’ (2004, p. 26). As with Madam Pince’s threats, the statement that ‘there will be trouble’ leaves a worrying gap that the reader may fill. There is no reason given for the boys’ prohibition from the generous collection. Further, the boys are explicitly instructed that they are not allowed to enter the library toilets, as they are not located in the children’s section of the library. Here, rule enforcement is raised to a new, barbaric level.

Although Spud Murphy is not presented as a positive stereotype (Maynard & McKenna 2005, p. 128), the temporary subversion of the cliché, where Spud grants Will an adult library card late in the text of Spud Murphy (2005, p. 128) is welcome. The semi-subversion of the ‘policeman’ librarian trope, coupled with the somewhat exaggerated illustrative style, including the drawing on the front cover of an incident that never actually occurs, eventually renders Spud Murphy as a humorous book. This gives credence to the use of the first-person narrator, who, as it comes to light, is not the most reliable narrator, although this appears to be the unintentional result of Will’s fear of Spud Murphy due to her reputation. The tensions between the text and the illustrations are thus resolved. However, the use
of humour reinforces the librarian stereotype where implied readers are encouraged to laugh at Spud Murphy.

As with Spud Murphy, Madam Pince flaunts a weapon of sorts at children. Harry Potter browses the library early in his first year and when he is unable to verbalise his information needs, "Madam Pince the librarian brandished a feather duster at him. "You'd better get out then. Go on – out!"" (PS p. 146). Madam Pince is neither welcoming nor helpful. The librarian does not encourage Harry to use the library, and her use of 'Go on – out!', along with the brandishing of a feather duster does not resemble the way in which librarians are taught to use 'the reference question', where librarians encourage patron inquiries and assist library users to discover the resources they need (Brown 2008, p. 1). Even the word 'brandished' suggests a sword or other weapon wielded at the newly enrolled eleven-year-old student. The flourishing of the feather duster is reminiscent of Spud Murphy's spud gun, where library 'policemen' tote their weapons of choice to control children in their library.

Madam Pince also employs her wand as a weapon (again) when removing Harry Potter from the library for eating; ‘…whipping out her wand, she caused Harry’s books, bag and ink bottle to chase him and Ginny from the library, whacking them repeatedly over the head as they ran' (OoP pp. 577-8). This demonstrates a librarian who values only library books and not the gaining or sharing of information that should come from the tomes. She certainly does not value patrons as she practically assaults Harry for eating in the library. The use of the present tense implies an urgency and a violence in her countenance. Madam Pince appears to do her best to deter them from using the library at all; ‘… the librarian prowled the aisles menacingly, breathing down the necks of those touching her precious books’ (OoP p. 475). Madam Pince appears to feel an ownership of the books in her charge as the term 'her precious books' illustrates, thus she guards them overzealously. The librarian is ‘menacingly’ ‘prowling' and 'breathing down their necks' implying that she is uncomfortably close to the students, looking for trouble, eager to find a student engaged in a misdemeanour. She is again likened to an unpredictable wild animal, ready to pounce, attack and punish rule breakers.
‘Prowling’ is used to describe Madam Pince in further volumes (HBP p. 285), which certainly denotes her as a stereotypical “policeman” librarian.

Harry Potter’s entry to the library in PS at night (PS p. 151) is an evasion of the observation of the librarian comparable to that of Will and Marty. Similarly, Lirael uses the break in visual control by the entire staff of librarians to access any of the previously forbidden library areas or books in which she is interested (2001, p. 112). Here the protagonists break the concept of the Panoptic mode of self-surveillance, as the desire for information and knowledge outweighs their fear of the librarian.

**'Witchy' librarians**

Foucault’s concept that representation is more important than reality (1979, pp. 94-95) can be employed regarding the rendering of the female librarian. Women who are portrayed as witches, particularly in contemporary children’s and YA literature, are the fulcrum of the history of folk- and fairy-tales. The witch in children’s literature is often portrayed as ‘a woman whose outward ugliness is a reflection of her inward evil...’ (Donlan 1972, p. 608). She is a person ‘with detestable flaws...’ (1972, p. 608), but who is able ‘to control her environment’ (1972, p. 608). HP’s school librarian Madam Pince is the personification of a stereotypical witch; she is described through the use of simile as a ‘thin, irritable woman who looked like an underfed vulture’ (CoS 1998, p. 124). Spud Murphy’s age and appearance, as seen in figure 4, further elicit a perception of ‘witchiness’. Her outline, depicted in figure 3, shows a large nose and ears and claw-like hands and fingers that are reminiscent of fairy-tale witches. Her ugliness, and therefore witchiness, is explicit, just from her shadow. The use of physiognomy to reinforce defects in personality abounds in folk and fairy tales, and is also employed in HP and Spud Murphy.

Scholars have identified that male dominated collections of stories have constrained females by depicting influential women as ‘witches’ (Haase 2008, p.
providing an effective metaphor that implies aggressive or liberated women are a danger to patriarchal society (Donlan 1972, p. 609). The expectations relating to the way gender is understood and often depicted in literature are socially constructed (Goodman, 1996, p. vii), and some of these constructs are stereotypes involving the ways in which both males and females are expected to behave. Because librarianship is a feminised profession, it is then conceivable that many librarians in fiction are presented as witches. These constraints are visible in \textit{HP} and \textit{Spud Murphy}, where the protagonists are principally male. Women presented as witches often provide the protagonist with obstacles which they must overcome (Haase 2008, p. 1032), which is the case with the librarians in \textit{HP} and \textit{Spud Murphy}. As with Madam Pince, similes are also employed when describing Spud Murphy; she is presented as ‘An elderly woman was leaning on the massive wooden desk, her knuckles bigger than acorns.’ (2004, p. 23). This description evokes a sense of fear; her age and large knuckles infer that she has a ‘witchy’ countenance.

The representation of female librarians as witches is one which disparages both their gender and profession. However, not all librarians are presented in this manner. Although Lirael and her kinfolk are all mages of some type, none of the librarians are portrayed as being ‘witchy’ as this is a story about powerful women. The kindly librarians featured in \textit{Boy} are also not subject to such depictions as their renderings are purported to be positive. Therefore, the librarians who can be classified as ‘witchy’ are usually marked out by the fact that they deny access to information.

\textbf{Emotionally unintelligent librarians}

Many of the librarians in the selected texts have their own obstacles when dealing with library patrons. The first mention of librarians in the \textit{HP} series aligns the profession with negative connotations; ‘… he [Harry] didn’t belong to the library, so he’d never even got rude notes asking for books back’ (\textit{PS} p. 30). The use of the word ‘rude’ renders the librarians as impolite at best or perhaps even abusive. As
the third-person narrator professes this concept, it has a large element of ‘truth’ behind it; this denotes that such behaviour appears typical of librarians. As third-person narrators are often able to tell the reader more about the plot than one character can (Nodelman & Reimer 2003, p. 71), the reader can develop a sense of trust with the narrator, due to their apparent objectivity. The employment of Harry Potter as focaliser means that readers tend to ‘accept the vision presented by that character’ (Bal 1980, p. 104). Here, the concept of librarians who cannot relate to others is already explicit.

This thought continues when Harry encounters Madam Pince. On almost every occasion, their interactions are problematic and provide further evidence of the power the librarian wields over the student. When Harry is browsing the library shelves, he is unceremoniously excluded from the library (PS p. 146). When Madam Pince discovers Harry and Ginny eating Easter eggs in the library, she uses magic to assault them with their own schoolbags (OoP p. 578). She is seemingly unable to conduct a conversation with the students, prizing her ‘precious books’ (OoP p. 475), over the learning needs of young people. This demonstrates that Madam Pince feels that the collection of library books belong to her, and the adjective ‘precious’ can be perceived as being ironic in this instance. Madam Pince’s preference for books over people and her inability to make positive connections with students renders her a character whose power is paradoxically bypassed by the protagonists in the act of seeking information.

The stereotypical concept of librarians who are unable to relate to people, and that a library is a place of silence and solitude is explicit in the beginning of Lirael, when shy and speech averse fourteen-year-old Lirael asks to be employed in the Great Library of Clayr (2001, p. 59); “‘Please,’ said Lirael, pursuing that thought to the logical place where she could avoid people the most. ‘I think I would like to work in the Library’” (p. 59). Further, because it denotes the idea that there is no training required to become a librarian, the trope of the inept librarian is fortified. When she is interviewed for the position of third assistant librarian, Lirael identifies the Chief Librarian as both powerful and frightening, forging the concept that Vancelle’s superiority renders her aloof (2001, pp. 64-65).
Another librarian whose aloofness is paramount is Spud Murphy. Her attitude towards children, where they are treated as less than human, is clear when she shouts at Will and Marty, during their first library visit, ‘from the other side of the library... ‘What do you want?... I said, what do you want?’... banging the desk with an ink stamp’ (2004, p. 23). The repeated use of ‘what do you want?’ evokes Madam Pince’s approach to students and instigates the feeling of being unwelcome in the library. The violent use of an ink stamp implies a short temper. Her prohibition regarding bathroom visits (2004, p. 26) is another demonstration of how Spud Murphy is unable to relate to children. However, although extremely intimidating to young people, in one instance Spud Murphy acknowledges that “Books are what this library is for, sometimes even I forget that”’ (2004, p. 86). Although her admission shows a sign of her attitude towards children softening, it is notable that she, like Madam Pince, still endorses books over young people.

Even though the Livingstone Library librarians appear to value Melvin over books, this approach also demonstrates their inability to relate well to the child. Figure 12 illustrates the way in which the librarians hold both physical and intellectual power over Melvin, yet they seem completely unaware of their effect on him.

Figure 12. Melvin is physically and intellectually overpowered in The boy who was raised by librarians, illustrated by Brad Sneed.
Instead of placing themselves at his level, their heights and the desk between them demarcates their dominance. Figure 13 also establishes the librarians’ inability to relate to Melvin, as their physical stature and constant movement overwhelm him. The librarians are excited about assisting Melvin, yet they are ignorant of the consequences of their eagerness. His small, solitary form is deficient when measured against three adult librarians. The need Melvin has for the librarians to love him – as according to the title of the book, they form his substitute family – results in his unwillingness to dispute their control, and risk rejection. It appears, like Madam Pince, Spud Murphy and even early in the text of Lirael, that the librarians are unable to converse successfully with their patrons to identify their needs. Ideally, librarians should be able to discuss patrons’ information requirements with them to assist in locating the desired resources (Brown 2008, p. 1). However, those who are unable to conduct open and balanced dialogue with their users, whatever their age, are implementing control of the institution over the person.

Figure 13. The continuous movement of the librarians in The boy who was raised by librarians, illustrated by Brad Sneed.
'Helpful' librarians

*Boy* (Morris 2007), which is an ostensibly innocuous picture book written and illustrated for very young readers depicts three diverse and seemingly helpful librarians. Two of the three female librarians are white, wear glasses, and appear to be middle-aged. One has a large stature and is wearing pearls, while the other has zany hair. The third librarian is an extremely thin, young woman of colour with dreadlocks tied back into what may be perceived as a bun. Between the three librarians, the stereotypical librarian is complete; middle aged, female, glasses, bun and cardigan wearing.

The illustrations in *Boy* are exaggerated, adding humour to the book. The thin librarian is extremely thin, the large librarian is excessively large and the zany hair on the third librarian completely overtakes her persona. However, a person of colour is a welcome addition to the book given the prevalence of white librarians in children's literature. Nevertheless, Hall (1997, p. 258), recognises the stereotype as a powerful signifier, where ‘stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequities of power’ (author’s italics). Initially, it may be thought that the inequities of power are felt by those subjected to stereotyping. However, those who are stereotyped can form a group, and those who are excluded from the association are classified as “other” (Hall 1997, p. 259). Thus, any user of the Livingston Library would be subjugated by the powerful group of stereotyped librarians, and as helpful as they may seem, Melvin, as a child, finds his invalidation is augmented. The triumvirate of librarians is in a position of power that involves Foucault’s concepts of ‘knowledge, ideas and representation’ (Radford & Radford 2003, p. 59). The exaggeration of having three librarians (possibly the entire staff, as no others are illustrated) assist one child can be seen as being overly helpful, as the text repeatedly states ‘They couldn’t help it. That’s how librarians are’ (2007, n.p.). However, deeper analysis identifies that such ‘help’ is a form of power the three librarians have over Melvin.

Further illustrations and text show Melvin asking where to find information on snakes, and even though they weren’t requested to, all three librarians help Melvin
by acquiring the desired information for him. Figure 14 depicts the fervour of the librarians in their quest to supply Melvin with information. The feeling of movement is rendered through the large librarian stretching so far for a book that she nearly topples off her stool. The zany haired librarian’s pointed finger declares a successful search, while although the librarian of colour bends down to Melvin’s height, she invades his personal space and the book she produces is overly large, while Melvin appears miniscule beside it and hesitant to take it from her.

Illustrators deploy the technique of continuous movement so that ‘viewers tend to complete the lines in pictures by imagining them to extend beyond their depicted length’ (Nodelman & Reimer 2003, p. 292). This is certainly true of this page where the movement of the three librarians evokes a scene of unceasing agitation. However, Melvin asked where to find the information, not for the librarians to identify it on his behalf. It is not Melvin looking up the computer or reaching into the shelves for the books, it is the librarians. The librarians do not ask Melvin reference questions, determining the type of information he needs, they charge ahead and give him books ranging from raising snakes, making purses and shoes out of them to snake poems and blessings. ‘That’s how librarians are. They just can’t help it’ (2007, n.p.) states the text. Such an excessive reaction to a simple question from the child results in the librarians completely paralysing Melvin with too much information, with much of it irrelevant. Here the illustrations confirm the ‘truth’ of the text, with the frantic movement of the librarians, the entire library staff, consumed in vigorously supplying their interpretation of what Melvin is searching for. Here the librarians purport to being helpful. Yet this help renders Melvin mute for much of the book, as his curiosity slowly wanes.

At the beginning of the book, Melvin was an intelligent and curious young boy who had many and varied interests and would ask questions and make exclamations. However, from the half-way point of the book, Melvin does not speak again until he is a university graduate. His child and young adult voice has been silenced by the library and the librarians. Foucault sees adults silencing children as part of the Panopticon’s role of disciplining recalcitrant youths (Foucault 1979, p. 294). The illustrations convey the truth of the text as they all either support its expression or go beyond the text to transmit a hyper-extended revelation that is explicit.
Throughout the text, Melvin experiences a retrograde journey as he moves from a childish independence to complete dependence on the librarians. Melvin’s autonomy is slowly eroded; his queries degenerate from asking for assistance to the librarians providing him with what they assume are answers. Serendipity and happenstance are impossible, as is the ability to problem-solve, and the librarians’ complete control of Melvin’s research results in a lack of autonomy and his reliance on adults; the Panoptic surveillance is stifling. Melvin is never pictured or described as wandering independently around the library, creating an opportunity to browse the collection and perhaps to discover something of interest. The librarians are always present and govern his library use constantly.

The question of why Melvin continuously returns to the library when the librarians thwart his creativity and curiosity can be answered. There are no textual or illustrative mentions of his family, thus, as mentioned by the title, the librarians become his pseudo-family and the controlling role of parents is transferred, in this instance, to the three librarians. This removes the possibility of being humiliated by the gatekeeper, a librarian (Radford & Radford 2001, pp. 318-319), a figure of authority (p. 322), as they conduct all of the roles where a patron might misunderstand, and thus, learn. In Boy, the librarians remove the fear from Melvin as their constant scaffolding ensures that he is not at risk of such faux pas. However, scaffolding creates dependence, rather than independence (Burkins & Yaris 2016, p. 3), and it is such scaffolding by the librarians throughout his child- and young-adulthood that prevents Melvin from discovering information independently. Melvin’s independence is unable to develop by such a hegemonic relationship with the librarians. The rendering of ‘helpful’ librarians in this book demonstrates that they can be controlling and dis-abling of young patrons in relation to finding information, discovering ideas, learning, problem-solving and developing agency
Warrior librarians

Juxtaposed with the ostensibly obstructive librarians is the ‘warrior’ librarian, for whom courage and commitment to duty is paramount. The Great Library of Clayr is declared as housing ‘dangerous things and dangerous knowledge’ (2001, p. 61), and the equipment that a librarian may need in day-to-day tasks includes ‘weapons, climbing ropes and a whistle to attract attention to an emergency’ (2001, pp. 66-67). Vancelle, the Chief Librarian has a sword laying on her desk, which reinforces the implication of the library as a dangerous place. The stereotype of the weapon carrying ‘library policeman’ is contrasted with a sword-wielding warrior. The contrast between the traditional interpretation of the staid, inept librarian and the concept of the warrior librarian introduced in *Lirael* becomes more evident when it is explicated that when working in the library, a librarian’s call for help may go unheard. The gap in the text that does not explain the requirement for weapons enables a vision of a vastly large and dangerous library and further challenges the stereotype of the librarian. It is not uncommon for librarians to lay down their lives for the benefit of the Clayr as a whole, either in perilous ‘research, simple overwork, or action against previously unknown dangers discovered in the Library’s collection’ (2001, p. 83). Although the number of librarians who have given their lives for their occupation is not specified, the novel makes it clear that the library is a perilous place to work. This revelation completely renders the librarian stereotype dead; it is clear that librarians must be selfless and fearless, putting the welfare and wellbeing of the Clayr library patrons ahead of themselves. Although the warrior librarians in *Lirael* are subversive in their characteristics, obstructive elements remain, such as their almost constant surveillance of the library and its occupants (2001, p. 76, p. 78, pp. 134-135), lending a Panoptic control to the Great Library.

Mitigating obstructive librarians

As the protagonists in *HP* and *Lirael* are on the hero’s journey, it is vital that they succeed in procuring the information and knowledge required to successfully
conclude their quests. Will and Marty require stimulating reading materials, while Melvin is curious about the world. As Foucault notes, ‘the submission of bodies through the control of ideas’ (1979, p. 102) demonstrates a position of power by those in authority. It is necessary for these young characters to challenge the librarians who attempt to restrain their understanding, and thus, discover alternative routes to the information they require.

Lirael copes with the obstructive librarians in the Great Library of Clayr when she waits patiently for the times when the staff are called away to the Watch. As she is the only person of the Clayr without the Sight, her services are not required, giving her the time and space to explore the library and its resources without being under surveillance (2001, p. 76, p. 78). Lirael also waits until Vancelle, the Chief Librarian is asleep, to break into her rooms to ‘borrow’ Binder, the powerful sword needed to nullify the Stilken (2001, pp. 134-135). The hero’s journey is aided by the discontinuity of adult surveillance and authority. Not only does any break in library surveillance enable Lirael’s self-determination, but the absence of adults in general is essential for bildungsroman. The scarcity of Lirael's colleagues enables this protagonist to grow without adult interference (Nikolajeva 2010, p. 16).

Will and Marty evade the seemingly ferocious librarian by postponing their reading requirements until Spud Murphy is occupied elsewhere. They plan to disrupt Spud Murphy's obstruction first by testing to see how she will react to them challenging her authority (2004, pp. 31- 35). Marty, likening himself to a hero (2004, p. 29) for attempting to subvert the power dynamic in the library, is unsuccessful in this instance, yet he learns more about Spud Murphy’s boundaries and punishments. Armed with this knowledge, the boys then plan an audacious raid on the adult fiction collection, minus shoes and socks to ensure silence (2004, p. 64). To further evade detection of their wrongdoing, the boys place a children’s title cover over the adult book they are reading (2004, pp.70-71). Their problem-solving skills develop to the point of success, as they read their contraband book for an entire day (2004, pp. 73-74); however, eventually Spud Murphy detects the misdemeanor. Nevertheless, she rewards Will for breaking the rules “Because you left the carpet for a book. Not to cause mischief. Books are what this library is for,
sometimes even I forget that” (2004, p. 86). Here, the way in which Marty and Will deal with Spud Murphy is successful, even though they are discovered breaking the rules.

Harry Potter and his friends, too, break rules to evade the detection of the school librarian. Harry’s use of his invisibility cloak to break into the library on Christmas night (PS p. 151) is ultimately unproductive in terms of discovering information, however, it encourages him to attempt other methods of subterfuge. Hermione garners the signature of Professor Lockhart, needed to permit her to borrow a title from the library’s Restricted Section, through deceitful means (CoS p. 123). Hermione becomes the de facto and ‘Ideal Librarian’ (Freier 2014, p. 8), with her ever evolving and successful information-seeking strategies deeming Madam Pince obsolete. Harry and his friends also use a range of strategies to discover information from a variety of sources that precludes the library. Chocolate frog cards (PS p. 160), daily newspapers (HBP p. 78, DH, p. 80) and questioning others (HBP p. 63, p. 458) all form beneficial methods of gaining information, while Hermione avoids the obstructive librarian when she conjures previously censored library books into her possession (DH p. 88).

In contrast, Melvin is unable to evade the librarians from the Livingstone Library. Although they act as proxy for his family, and are the only librarians in the selected texts to offer a protagonist seemingly helpful assistance, the three librarians surround Melvin on numerous occasions, so that he is unable to circumvent their control. Melvin is literally outnumbered by the librarians and he is unable to develop or employ successful strategies to overcome and/or evade their control. In this situation, one young boy is unable to oppose three librarians, who completely control his learning experiences. The consequences of this overwhelming power that the librarians wield over him, is that Melvin transitions from inquisitive child to a philosophical doppelgänger of the incognisant librarians. His highly articulated requests for assistance to find information on fish, bugs and snakes devolve into silence. Thus, Boy demonstrates that a protagonist who does not already possess elements of agency and self-reliance, may find it difficult to challenge the hegemony of librarians and the library.
This chapter has demonstrated that the trope of the stereotypical librarian, in all its guises, is often employed in texts to obstruct the research requirement of the protagonists. However, if characters are able to challenge the control of their ideas by library staff through problem-solving skills, then they develop agency that empowers them to triumph over their specific nemesis. Almost all forms of representation of the profession are aligned with some type of power, however the portrayal of librarians as witches can be viewed as demonising them as their power is frightening from a child’s perspective. Nonetheless, the passive ideologies in the texts that relate to the agency and power needed to challenge authority disallow certain characters to access knowledge. As they are unable to defy the barriers to information presented to them by libraries and librarians, these characters, such as Melvin, remain powerless.
Chapter four. Conclusion

The concept of the Panopticon, conceived by Bentham (1843) and derived and developed by Foucault (1979), focuses on institutions such as the prison, army barracks, hospitals, factories and schools (1979, p. 228). However, libraries are institutions that can also be aligned with Panoptic theory, where architecture and surveillance are employed to influence the behaviours of patrons, who are the subordinates of librarians. The aim of the librarian is to keep resources in order for ease of access, yet the goal of the borrower is to disturb such order by removing, mis-shelving and borrowing books (Radford & Radford 1997, pp. 255-256). This opposition creates tension between order and knowledge, and librarians and patrons, and this tension is reflected in *HP*, *Lirael* and *Spud Murphy*. Often barriers such as ‘policeman’, ‘helpful’ and emotionally unintelligent librarians and large and imposing libraries exist in both reality and literature. Fantasy literature adds symbolic obstacles including dangerous, mysterious and enchanted libraries and ‘witchy’ librarians. However, for some protagonists, such opposition enhances self-determination, higher-order thinking skills and agency, and assists them on any quests they may be involved in, and in their journey to adulthood. In literature, these libraries then provide a place where skills may be tested and refined before life-threatening situations face the protagonists. However, it must be acknowledged that characters who do not yet contain some capacity of self-determination and agency, may find encounters with difficult librarians and obstructive libraries too problematic to overcome. Thus, obstructive libraries and librarians are useful when protagonists need a challenge to further develop the skills and courage they already possess, but they are distinctly disadvantageous to those who are yet to develop these abilities.

*Boy* shows that overzealously helpful librarians working in Panoptic library layouts stifle the intellectual curiosity and development of the young person. Yet, those librarians and libraries that are difficult to engage with cause child protagonists, who are unable to challenge them, to become paralysed. However, for fantasy texts such as *Lirael* and *HP* particularly, the hero being tested by the regulating bodies of the library and its staff leads them to challenge the *status quo*
and assists the hero’s journey. In the selected texts, libraries and librarians are determined to be important for the acquisition of knowledge and agency, whether they are rendered stereotypically or progressively. As gaining knowledge is one aspect of developing agency (Mills 2010, p. 300), the authors of *HP, Lirael* and *Spud Murphy* grant power to the protagonists by acknowledging that knowledge is provisional and evolving and should not be limited to and by adults. These books are not so much a critique of librarians and the library system, but a commentary on exploring one’s own intellectual agency, as facilitated through problem-solving brought about by the Panopticon and related barriers to the desired information. As the selected texts demonstrate, and Dante’s *The inferno XXVI* reminds us, the pursuit of knowledge is worthwhile.
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