Special Issue: Romancing the Library (Editor's Introduction)

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Popular romance collections in libraries of all kinds—public, academic, and special—have faced their fair share of controversies. These can be as simple as whether or not a particular title is owned by the library, public or patron reactions to that title, and librarian responses to those reactions. Romance novels in libraries are often in high demand with readers and are therefore highly circulated items; nevertheless, the sexual content in romance can also invoke calls for these same popular items to be banned and removed from shelves. Though librarians are part of professional organizations that subscribe to freedom of information, academic and intellectual freedom and, thus, actively discourage censorship,[1] and many librarians embrace these ideals, at times librarians and libraries can—intentionally or unintentionally—play a role in marginalizing romance novels and their authors.

Scholarship surrounding libraries and popular romance is a small but growing area of interest; however, it has, until recently, been mostly confined to the literature of library and information science. Germinal studies such as those from Denice Adkins, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez laid the groundwork for scholarship regarding romance and public libraries,[2] and others have since taken up that banner, but studies of academic and special library collections and practices have lagged behind.

The intersections of libraries and romance have been introduced to popular romance scholars since the very first International Association for the Study of Popular Romance (IASPR) conference in Brisbane, Australia, with Juliet Flesch's "Attitudes of Victorian Public Librarians towards Romance Readers." My 2012 article in *Journal of Popular Romance Studies (JPRS)* became the first article aimed at romance scholars to address popular romance studies in academic libraries, but my focus was on the collection on popular romance scholarship, not on the primary resources themselves.

In this special issue of *JPRS*, Sarah E. Sheehan and Jen Stevens begin to close that gap by focusing their article on the idea of acquiring popular romance novels for an academic library collection. Additionally, Renee Bennett-Kapusniak and Adriana McCleer as well as Vassiliki Veros expand on their presentations at the 2014 IASPR conference in Thessaloniki, Greece. Bennett-Kapusniak and McCleer provide an in-depth look at making multicultural romance e-books available in a public library consortium, and Veros offers a

critical discussion of romance novels' cultural capital, paratext, and metadata (or lack thereof) in library catalog records, and how this serves to marginalize romance authors and their works.

All three of these articles add vital components to the literature that connects library science and popular romance, but there are many other topics within this scholarly intersection yet to be examined. Future librarians/popular romance scholars have an open and exciting field of inquiry to contribute to, and I can only hope they embrace the challenge.

[1] "Intellectual Freedom Statements." *IFLA*. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 3 Feb. 2015. Web. 16 Aug. 2015. **http://www.ifla.org /publications/intellectual-freedom-statements-by-others.**

[2] Though not a comprehensive list, see: Adkins, Denice, Linda Esser, Diane Velasquez, and Heather L. Hill. "Romance Novels in American Public Libraries: A Study of Collection Development Practices." *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 32.2 (2008): 59-67; Adkins, Denice, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez. "Relations between Librarians and Romance Readers: A Missouri Study." *Public Libraries* 45.4 (2006): 54-64; Adkins, Denice, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez. "Promoting Romance Novels in American Public Libraries." *Public Libraries* 49.4 (2010): 41-48.