

# Surfacing Filipino School Children's Images of Librarians through Doodling

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This qualitative study describes how Filipino grade school pupils in a private, sectarian school in Manila, Philippines identify their views and images of the librarian. Two hundred fifty-eight (258) pupils were asked to fill out a *robotfoto* box for illustration and to fill in a diagram. As a result of the data gathered and analyzed, two (2) faces of the librarian came into view, based on the children's doodling, the desirable and the undesirable librarian. On the one hand, the desirable librarian represents the *enticing*, *enduring* and *engaging* type. On

the other hand, *disappointing*, *depressing* and *depriving* types characterize the librarian who is undesirable. The doodlings indicate that being desirable attracts library clients to visit the library and develops interest in using the library facilities more often. The undesirable qualities make students hesitate in entering the library. This study shows the need for librarians to be concerned with improving their images to develop desired qualities for the benefit of their student clientele.

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## Introduction

The library, being the main source of information in the school, plays one of the most essential roles in a learner's life. It is a beehive where students work, socialize (Houlihan 2005) and extend learning beyond the formal classroom (Lippincott 2005). The extent to which these identified roles of the library are effectively pursued depends, in great measure, on librarians who play a vital role in promoting the library and its services to its patrons. With their rich experience in the acquisition, storage and use of information resources, librarians are advocates of understanding, free inquiry and use of knowledge and style of expression, while respecting and continuing to employ the inherited values of the old. By and large, the librarian is undoubtedly a bridge builder, an advocate of freedom, a peacemaker, and most

importantly, a seeker and deliverer of truth in a world of partisans and liars (Berry 2005).

As described by Wigg (1995), the wiggly, curious, noisy preschoolers are the most consistent recipients of library resources. Children of all ages should find the library to be an open, inviting, attractive, challenging and non-threatening place to visit. However, different pictures are formed at the back of the children's minds. According to Greenspan (1999), a child begins to deal not only with behavior, but also with ideas such as one thing can stand for another and that an image of something can represent the thing itself. Artistic gestures of children evolve from basic scribbles to consistent symbols (Greenspan 1999) or doodles. Doodles are not mere figures of speech, but they contain an essential mechanism of the mind. Doodles though considered as worthless scribbles, might reveal one's innermost desires (Adler 1988). Various

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Table 1. Characterization of Librarians

Medium Used	Title	Description
Movies	Desk Set (1957)	Incredibly intelligent and being able to answer most questions asked of her without looking them up. Has a good personality, is playful with her co-workers, and she has two men pursuing her.
	The Mummy (1999)	Intelligent, able to read and write Ancient Egyptian and decipher hieroglyphics. She is beautiful, strong, and brave.
	Black Mask (1996)	Male. Shy and somewhat unsociable at work but a jokester outside the library with friends. Physical marvel, able to fight many opponents successfully without getting hurt.
Television	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	Hero librarian-a pop culture idol whose love of books and devotion to research hold the key to saving the universe.
	Friends	Very old and not so attractive
	The Lucy Show	Wears eyeglasses and hair is pulled back. Very clumsy, tripping over the same stairs several times. Admits being very strict about noise in the library and is annoyed by customers who do not know what they want. Sneezes and laughs aloud and obnoxiously. Baby talks her pet goldfish. Extremely shy and does not have a social life.
	Reading Rainbow	"Conan the Librarian", a half naked librarian who wears a loincloth, and has blue hair. A little scary as he yells and believes that children must prove they are worthy of a library card.
	The Twilight Zone	An old man with gray hair who wears a cardigan vest and nervous but strong-minded, standing up to the State in the face of death. According to him, his profession stands for freedom, intellect, and dignity. He has lived in the same room for twenty years and it is stacked high with books on furniture he made.
	That '70s Show	Very beautiful, wears his hair down, form-fitting clothes.
Books	<i>Lucy Crocker 2.0</i> by Caroline Preston	A great character, although she, too, has some stereotypical librarian characteristics, most obviously of her style of dress. She is unlike most real librarians, however, in that she is a confessed Luddite, unable to operate e-mail without instructions.
	<i>The Librarian's Passionate Knight</i> by Cindy Gerard	A very strong woman Overcame an abusive childhood to become a great children's librarian. Self-conscious and feels inadequate.
Comic books	<i>Batgirl</i> (1967)	Intelligent, and good-looking.
Children's books	<i>Red light, Green Light, Mama and Me</i> by Cari Best	African-American children's librarian.
	<i>The Library Dragon</i> by Carmen Agra Deedy	Miss Lotty Scales is very scary and does not want the children touching the books, never mind reading them.
	<i>Prue Theroux, The Cool Librarian</i> by Gillian Rubinstein	He is very mean, calling the kids "fools" and manages to make books boring.

multifarious forms, like fantasy, wishes and worries (Ruud 2004), are expressed in symbolic and naturalistic patterns (Flavin 1995). Doodling is anything but expression. It allows the unconscious to surface without judgment or critical analysis by the mind. Moving the hand freely creates symbols, which express thoughts behind one's mind. Read (1997) averred that doodling has universal and personal meaning that unleashes the hidden symbolic powers of the mind. Drawing doodles is described as simply allowing the thought to ex-

press itself (Flavin 1995). Doodles have rules in the structuring, understanding, extending and articulating of individual experience (Robertson 2003). Adler (1993, as cited by Manaster 1988) posited that doodles are assertions of the individual's particular being. Doodles can reflect individual expression and perception of a particular thing. They serve as "blueprints of thinking" (Martinez, Gaulea and Huber 2001).

While a number of studies have been initiated on how doodles could surface realities in psychology

(Houston and Terwilliger 1995), teacher education (Martinez, Gaulea and Huber 2001; Carillo 2006) and treatment of neurotics (Adler 1988), its power to describe the image of the librarian remains a research imperative in the realm of librarianship. The image of the librarian has already been described in a study (Maynard and McKenna 2005) through modern children's fiction. However, little is known as to how doodles, as potent qualitative research tools, may bring forth children's mental representation, hence this investigation.

### *Review of related literature*

Librarians in the past are stereotypically described as a "loveless frump hiding behind her spectacles and surrounded by her books" (Adams 2000, as cited by Mulhern 2003). Traditionally, librarianship has been identified as a woman's occupation. As such, the relatively low self-esteeming librarian is perceived as a very dull, serious and old-fashioned woman. As a scholar, she can identify not only books but also what they contain. While the uptight "spinster" and the nerdy "geek" librarian persists today, the integration of information and communications technology into the realm of librarianship becomes more evident, and the librarian is now labeled as an information and knowledge specialist. Dickinson (2003, as cited by Mulhern 2003), for his part, describes librarians as "drab spinsters peering over the rim of their glasses and ready to 'shush' a library patron." Gray-haired middle-aged women who always say "shhh" would be loyal impressions of library users. However, perceptions on how librarians look and what they do are of serious concern to the profession (Adams 2000).

A number of articles have explored the images of librarians using different forms of media. These include movies, television, books and the Internet. Table 1 summarizes how the librarian's characteristics were portrayed in different media.

### *The present study*

The purpose of this study is to describe various images of the librarian as captured from children's doodles, which are considered to be potent qualitative tools in discerning an individual's viewpoint.

## *Method*

### *Subjects of the study*

A total of 258 pupils recruited from a private sectarian school in the capital of the Philippines were the subjects of this qualitative study; the pupils were distributed as follows: 112 Grade IV pupils (43.41%); 48 Grade V pupils (18.60%); and 98 Grade VI pupils (37.98%) (See Table 2).

The majority of the pupils was female and in the 9–13 years old age group. They indicated that the top three reading materials that they have at home include comic books (59.30%), magazines (51.93%) and the Bible (45.73%). On the other hand, the thesaurus (9.69%), novels (9.30%) and tabloids (3.88%) were the least read materials. Interestingly, almost 60% of the respondents were influenced by their mothers with regard to reading, and only 9.30% were inspired by their siblings.

A large number of respondents prefer English language reading materials (65.50%), followed by Filipino (24.80%) and 12.80%, both. One hundred ninety-four (194, or 75.19%) of the respondents said that their purpose in going to the library is to read books and not necessarily to borrow them (40.70%). A skimpy 2.32% of respondents stated that they go to the library for the purpose of sleeping. Among the library materials frequently used were academic books (46.12%), ranking first, while the OPAC (1.55%) ranks the lowest.

Tabular data also reveal that 81% of the pupils only stay in the library for less than an hour, one to two hours (16%) or three or more hours (0.8%). Most of the respondents (46.24%) had met the librarian several times. Surprisingly 11.62% of them had not yet encountered their librarian. When asked if the librarian had ever reprimanded them, 181 answered "no" (70.16%) and 59 answered "yes" (22.87%), while 18 students (6.98%) did not respond.

### *Instrumentation*

A two-part research instrument was prepared to gather the needed data and information. The pupils were given a *robotfoto* (a Dutch term which pertains to the composite sketch of participants) (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002 as cited by Caña *et al.* 2005) to establish their baseline characteristics as readers and library patrons. Specifically, this in-

Table 2. Demographic Profile

Profile	No. of Respondents	%	Profile	No. of Respondents	%
<i>Age</i>			<i>Frequency of Encounters with the Librarian</i>		
9	41	15.89	Once	58	22.48
10	77	29.84	Twice	48	18.60
11	64	24.81	Several Times	119	46.12
12	66	25.58	Never	30	11.63
13	10	3.88	No Response	3	3.16
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Length of Stay in the Library</i>		
male	117	45	Less than 1 hour	209	81
female	141	55	1-2 hours	41	16
<i>Grade Level</i>			3 hours or more	2	0.8
4	112	43.41	No Response	6	2.3
5	48	18.60	<i>Library Materials Often Used</i>		
6	98	37.98	Dictionaries	77	29.84
<i>Been Reprimanded or Not</i>			Religious books	90	34.88
Yes	59	22.87	Academic books	119	46.12
No	181	70.16	Computer	40	15.50
NoResponse	18	7	OPAC	4	1.55
<i>Reading Materials at Home</i>			Television	41	15.89
Comic books	153	59.30	Others	1	0.30
Pocket books	50	19.37	<i>The Individual Who Influenced Them to Read</i>		
Fairy Tales	92	35.66	Mother	154	59.68
Novels	24	9.30	Father	96	37.20
Encyclopedia	69	26.74	Siblings	24	9.30
Almanac	33	12.79	Teacher	89	34.49
Dictionaries	95	36.82	Classmate/s	37	14.34
Thesaurus	25	9.69	Friends	37	14.34
Bible	118	45.73	Others	29	11.24
Magazines	131	51.94	<i>Language Preferred</i>		
Newspapers	90	34.88	English	169	65.50
Tabloids	10	3.88	Filipino	64	24.80
<i>Purpose in Visiting the Library</i>			Both	33	12.79
To borrow books	56	40.70			
To visit the librarian	12	4.65			
To read books	194	75.19			
To sleep	6	2.33			
To do assignments	51	19.77			

strument sought the respondents' ages, genders, grade levels, reading materials at home, purposes in visiting the library, influences in reading, language preferences for reading materials, length of stay in the library and the number of times they encountered the librarian and whether they had the experience of being reprimanded by the librarian.

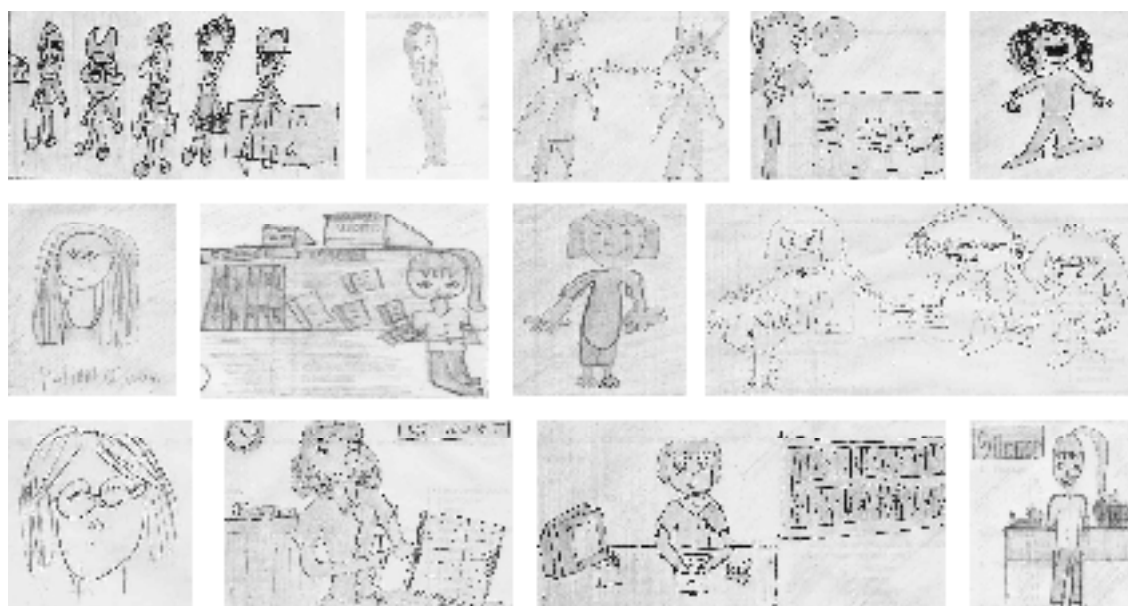
Subsequent to the *robotfoto* was the second part of the tool. The survey questionnaire was given to capture students' interpretations of a "librarian." This part includes a box for students' doodles and

a cluster map indicating what they love and hate most in a librarian.

*Data collection procedure*

A letter to the grade school principal was sent, asking permission to involve a select group of pupils in the study. Under the supervision of the religion teachers, the 2-part instrument was distributed to the pupils in 30 minutes. Instruments with incomplete information were excluded in the data analysis phase of the study.

Figure 1. Sample Doodles



### Data analysis

For a more accurate representation of a librarian, the doodles drawn by the respondents and the description of the librarians' desirable and undesirable traits were identified in the cluster map and individually tallied, analyzed, categorized and grouped in themes according to the extent of meaningfulness and relatedness.

### Results

Various doodles (See Figure 1) were illustrated by the respondents. Images include objects such as chairs, tables, stairs, shelves, doors, books, computers, desks and trophies, expressions such as smiling faces, raised eyebrows, frowns caricatures of happy kids, a fat girl, a wrinkled lady, a wide nose and the fluffy hair of a lady with a hair clip, a lady with a taped mouth and signs and symbols (heart, question mark, cross-out mark).

### Faces of the librarians

Based on the given characterizations, various representations of doodles were formed. Interestingly, two faces (desirable and undesirable) were identified. The *desirable librarian* appears enticing, enduring and engaging. On the other hand, disappointing, depressing and depriving behaviors describe an *undesirable librarian*.

### The desirable librarian

Doodles (happy/smiling face, girl at the door, happy kids, a girl with a clip, one-sided hair, curled eyelashes, neatly-ironed uniform) showing friendly gestures; someone who is clean, pretty, prim and proper; approachable and cheerful; attractive and pleasing to the eyes of the library patrons, represent a librarian with an *enticing* personality. They are the librarians who are considered to be sociable and lovely as expressed by the respondents through the following comments:

- I am smiling at the librarian.
- She says good morning!
- She has self-confidence.
- She is beautiful.

A dependable, responsible and sympathetic librarian, perceived as the *enduring* type is considered to be a smart and hardworking individual, dedicated to his/her work as shown by such characteristics as gentleness, understanding and patience. Those characteristics were reflected on the following doodles – a girl at her desk or at the counter, a girl working on the computer, a girl fixing or holding a book and a girl with a heart shape on her chest. These were embodied in the following remarks:

She works fast.  
She explains why it is important to have a book.  
She always fixes the books.  
She is kind to the pupils who are going to the library.  
She is nice, gentle and patient.  
She teaches the children how to behave.

The *engaging* type of librarian as revealed by the children's doodles (a girl and a child holding the same book, a girl assisting the child in getting a book from the shelf and a girl picking up a book), is the generous, service-oriented and accommodating. They are concerned with their library clients, always willing to help and relate well with library users. These were implied in the following comments:

She roams in the library to check on every child.  
She is willing to help.  
She is always available to help me.  
She is always there when I need help.  
She reads fairy tales to us.  
She explains to us if we have a test in the library.

### *The undesirable librarian*

Laziness and lack of responsibility of the idle librarian was reflected in the following doodles – a desk or counter without a librarian, and a question mark. Termed as the *disappointing* type of librarian, this was supported by subsequent commentaries:

She is not at the counter when I borrow books.  
They are not doing their work.  
She is sometimes loafing.

A girl with a serious face, a fat girl, a big nose, raised eyebrows, an erased or crossed out girl, sad kids, and an old woman were the doodles that related to a stern and ill-tempered librarian. These doodles reflect strict librarians who are serious, bad, frowning, snobbish, grumpy, unapproachable and shouting. These characteristics define a *depressing* type of librarian as indicated by the statements below:

She is always serious.  
She's a little bit strict.

They don't like untidy pupils.  
She easily gets angry.  
She always raises her voice on students.  
She is sometimes unkind to others.  
When we do not place the books to their proper shelf, she gets angry.  
She does not let me go out when the chair where I sat is disarranged.

However, a particular doodle of a girl with a taped mouth caught our attention. We related this to the librarian who always wants silence in the library. This sounds positive but appears to be the *depriving* type of librarian, for the children were united in saying:

They don't like noise.  
We can't talk aloud in the library.  
She sends me out of the library.  
She does not let me inside the library.  
Sometimes, she does not let me borrow books.

### *Discussion*

This study presents a wide array of children's representations of the librarians as described by their doodles. Interestingly, two major faces as reflected by the form of abstract language were identified.

#### *3 E's of a desirable librarian (enticing, enduring and engaging)*

Sociable and pleasant qualities describe the enticing librarian. These behaviors influence the library patrons' desire to visit the library. Radford (1998) averred that the five categories indicated by the library users to have been critical in their choice to approach one librarian instead another are: (1) initiation which is explicit action, perceived and reported by the user, on the part of the librarian. It occurs when the librarian initiates the encounter through multiple signals such as eye contact, body orientation, movement toward the user, and/or verbal enforcement (e.g. "May I help you?"). The user assumes a passive role and waits for the librarian to signal actions. Initiation becomes extremely important to users who may be feeling inadequate on library skills; (2) availability – a category closely related to "initiation" which is

characterized as an open yet passive stance on the part of the librarian; (3) familiarity, (4) proximity and (5) gender. He further held that nonverbal behaviors appear to be vital in the users' perceptions of availability and that eye contact was the most frequently mentioned behavior which signaled to the user that the librarian was approachable. According to Weiss (1976, as cited by Radford 1998), the librarian who is "tuned in" to the nonverbal messages of both the user, who is rather hesitant, and of themselves, who may appear aloof, can offer more appropriate help. Furthermore, according to Glogoff (1983 as cited by Radford 1998, 700), nonverbal communication can be used by the librarian "to gain and keep the patron's confidence long enough to provide the needed assistance."

The enduring librarian is characterized by dependable, responsible, and sympathetic qualities. She is hard working and intelligent. Berry (2005) noted librarians must be advocates of understanding, free inquiry, finding ways of using and enjoying a new medium or format, a new style of expression, while respecting and continuing to observe the inherited values of the old. Lippincott (2005) averred that the specific role of the library is to teach members of the user community how to access and use information resources efficiently and effectively which applies to librarians who are the primarily responsible for the services.

Generosity, a service-oriented view and being accommodating make an engaging librarian. As revealed by the respondents' doodles, librarians are more than just an intelligent mind and distinct character but also an emotional being with a heart for his/her profession and clients. Besides their usual undertakings, librarians integrate songs, rhymes, folktales, stories and biographies to illustrate the wealth of the world in library collections and programs; and develop numerous programs for educational support and information to young people (Wigg 1995). Librarians' roles include not only taking care of the physical management of the library but also more to do with the interaction with the library patrons.

### *3 D's of an undesirable librarian (disappointing, depressing and depriving)*

The disappointing librarian is mainly described to be idle and irresponsible. It is unacceptable for children to see a laid-back type of librarian. When

service of library personnel is unsatisfactory, Swope and Katzer (1972, as cited by Radford 1998) say that many library clients tend not to seek their help. Nonverbal indicators such as no change in body stance as a user approaches and lack of immediate acknowledgement characterizes a sub-standard librarian (Kazlauskas 1976, as cited by Radford 1998). Radford (1998) also ascertained that the unavailability of the librarian bothered the users. It was assumed that a librarian had the responsibility of building children's collections that will serve their youth population (Bishop and Van Orden 1998). It was frequently observed that librarians were nowhere to be found when needed.

Strict, stern, serious and ill-tempered describe a depressing librarian. Negative nonverbal behavior such as frowning became alarming to the users, not to bother the librarian and not to ask questions they think were simple (Radford 1998). Wigg (1995) affirmed that librarians should be passionate about their service to their clients. Twitching mouth and pacing (Kazlauskas 1976, as cited by Radford 1998) are unconstructive gestures that affect the library's important role of giving high quality information service and products needed by people seeking to learn (Lippincott 2005). These actions describe an impatient, uncompromising and moody librarian.

A depriving librarian is distrustful and unaccommodating. Instead of providing educational support and information to young people (Wigg 1995), this librarian limits the patrons. A hushing librarian contradicts Berry's statement (2005) that a librarian must be the advocate of understanding and free inquiry. They describe a librarian as someone who does not allow the use of the library facilities. This type of librarian restricts students' opportunities to enrich their learning experiences through reading.

### *Conclusion*

This study describes two different faces of librarians based on the respondents' doodles. Revealed by this study are the grades four to six pupils' perceptions of a librarian according to their daily interactions with the latter. Two major qualities of the librarian were defined: the desirable librarian and the undesirable librarian. An undesirable librarian limits, if not discourages, students' visits

to the library. On the other hand, one who is able to encourage enthusiasm in students to make use of the library is perceived to be a desirable librarian.

While this research focused on the two different faces of the librarian, it also proposed that cross-sectional research be done, using doodles which proved to be functional in identifying students' perceptions of librarians' performance. Furthermore, this study deals only with the perception of 50% of the three grade levels in the elementary department of a particular school. Doodling and other figurative images as tools in a comprehensive research project give meaning to what has been observed. With this information in the field of librarianship, there is much room for the enhancement and continuance of high-quality library practice.

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