

Home Libraries and the Institutionalization of Everyday Practices Among Antebellum New Englanders

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On 11 January 1845, John Park, a sixty-eight-year-old retired academy teacher, finished reading in his Worcester boardinghouse James Russell Lowell's *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*. A recent birthday gift from his neighbor, "Colonel" George W. Richardson, the finely bound book was a handsome addition to the 3,000 volumes Park had collected during his long life. Owing to his cramped quarters, he had stored more than 2,000 of these away in a nearby office space he affectionately called "my 'Library.'" As he retired after reading, little did he think that his precious books were in imminent danger or that he would soon be roused with alarm. "At our front door," Park later confided to his diary, "I heard Col Richardson Exclaiming 'Dr Park's Library is on fire!'"¹

Park, Richardson, and a band of local residents raced over to save the library. They found an inferno "like the mouth of an oven, under and behind one of my bookcases—the contents of which, mostly folios and quartos, were in full blaze." The few buckets of water the group splashed did little to stop the conflagration, which was "spreading along the wall and behind other bookcases." Fire engines were all too slow in arriving; so, with almost superhuman strength driven by desperation, the neighbors moved most of the collection out of harm's way. "[A] number of my friends now seized such of my bookcases as were nearest the fire," Park recorded, "and heavy as they were, with an effort which astonished me, they took five cases, books and all into Mr. Thomas's Office, a few



Figure 1: This portrait of John Park with his treasured library is still affixed inside one of his diaries. The John Park Diaries (Ms. q Am. 1352). *Boston Public Library/Rare Books Department. Courtesy of the Trustees.*

doors distant in the same entry." When firemen finally came, they indiscriminately hosed down the walls, ceilings, remaining bookcases, and everyone present. "[We] were as wet as though we had fallen into a river," Park noted. The flames were at last extinguished, leaving all but fifteen or so "valuable folios and quartos" and some "small books" among many charred or water damaged volumes. "At sun rise . . . visitors began to come" to the site as if to pay respect to the books consumed or injured.²

What was it that moved these Worcester residents to rise before dawn, shiver in a deluge of water, summon up herculean courage, and, in short, risk their lives to save a personal library? Surely, some of their heroism was commanded by regard for Park himself. Some no doubt sprang from an esteem for literary property; his library, after all, was worth a fortune and rivaled in size and scope many institutional collections. A greater portion of this neighborly valor, however, was likely a reflection of the tremendous value these people placed upon personal libraries as agents of culture in the local community. At that time, when the tax-supported public library was nearly nonexistent, social and circulating libraries relatively rare, and Sunday school libraries exceedingly limited, book borrowers had to depend upon holdings of family members, friends, and neighbors as much if not more than those of institutions. Park's library was at his friends' disposal when they drew from it titles ranging from sensationalistic novels such as Eugene Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* to ponderous theological works like George Campbell's *The Four Gospels*. Nearly 100 individuals—a patronage surpassed by few social libraries—used his collection between 1839 and 1850. It is not just size that lends the comparison, for his library was a social library of sorts, too. His diary gives ample evidence of friends calling to admire his new editions or sitting and chatting with him over texts. Writing to his daughter about the fire, he reflected upon these library chats: "circumstances often lead me into conversations with my more serious friends . . . on theological subjects, and occasion[al] references to authors in print —sometimes to sustain *my* views—sometimes to gratify my friends." In this way, libraries like Park's were instrumental to the everyday production of social and cultural meaning.³

The relationship between library history and cultural history has long interested scholars. In assessing the state of the field in his 1952 essay, "The Study of American Library History," Jesse H. Shera asked scholars to search for the deeper social and cultural contexts in which libraries grew, flourished, and changed over time. The library, he reminded his colleagues, "is an agency of the entirety of the culture." He explained that it "is one portion of the system of graphic communication through which . . . culture operates, and its historic origins are to be sought in an understanding of the production, flow, and consumption of graphic communication through all parts of the social pattern." Library historians have since answered his call, but with reluctance to step figuratively outside institutional walls. Most have followed the development of institutions and their relationship to society and culture from, as Wayne Wiegand points out, "the inside

out.” According to Wiegand, most library scholarship “focuses too much on the institution, the people who practice librarianship within that institution, and the expertise used by the people within the institution itself.”⁴

This essay attempts to study library history “from the outside in” by peering into private lives as lived rather than assessing particular institutional constructions. In order to follow the “production, flow, and consumption” of reading materials through “all parts of the social pattern,” we place the institutional library in its closest extrinsic context—namely, the analogous everyday literary practices of ordinary people, and the cultural values implied in those practices.⁵ These practices encompassed a wide range of activities similar to those of institutions, from book collecting and cataloging, to dissemination through borrowing and lending, to conversing about and evaluating libraries and texts. Some book owners self-consciously acted as “librarians,” that is, as custodians of their own circulating collections; others commented upon their relationship to the emerging public institution. And, as was the case with library-sponsoring associations, users of personal libraries wove social networks over their literary exchanges.⁶

This account of everyday practices argues for a cultural history of the library not as a thing but as a process consisting of a cluster of discrete-though-related activities requiring neither institutional support nor even specialized rooms serving the information needs of community members or strangers. The institutional history of libraries thus becomes a subset of society-wide practices of collection (and preservation), arrangement, cataloging, retrieval, and circulation of cultural artifacts, while the institution itself becomes a technology offering to enhance what people are already doing.⁷ Assessing the effectiveness and plumbing the nature of the nascent public library, in short, depends on gaining an accurate picture of the common practices it aimed to augment, remedy, or replace.

That antebellum New England not only pioneered the tax-based public library, but also had such a rich literary culture makes it an ideal site for studying the relationship between everyday practice and institutionalization.⁸ Elite, middle, and working classes alike, albeit to varying degrees, participated in local literary life. The region, after all, had the nation’s highest literacy rates by 1850 for both black and white adults—93 and 98 percent, respectively—and the quality of that literacy was high enough to support a broad-based reading public and popular literary associations like the village lyceum.⁹ These highly literate New Englanders were also “very social”—so much so that books and reading became instrumental to forging and maintaining social ties; literariness infused everyday social encounters and literature was given meaning through social expression.¹⁰

The very “everydayness” of what we call “socio-literary experience” suggests its relative independence from top-down influences through public institutions like libraries. Indeed, institutional leverage upon the practices of most

ordinary people was probably weak, for few relied primarily upon formal libraries for reading materials.¹¹ Yet, even if they did, they found that in many regards these institutions held more in common with their home counterparts than not. Both were often simply collections in locked shelves set in a corner of a multifunctional room. “Our Library occupies a conspicuous place under the portrait of Bishop Fenwick in the study-room,” James Healy, an Irish-African American seminarian at the College of the Holy Cross testified in 1849.¹² Nor were institutional libraries much better organized than home ones, for the professionalization of librarianship, with its systematic methods of acquiring, storing, sheltering, and cataloging holdings, awaited the future.¹³

Because home and institutional libraries coexisted throughout the period, however, it would be misleading to cast the institution as merely a distillation of everyday practice. There were key differences between the two: one was a corporate, sometimes entrepreneurial, entity dependent upon membership, fees, shares, dues, or tax support, while the other was a personal and nonprofit collection of reading materials. As such non-owners used them according to unwritten rather than codified rules. Being unwritten, they depended upon the mutual trust of owner and user, rather than adherence to impartial regulations. While it is true that home libraries, being so pervasive, probably more informed institutional development than vice versa, the influence was not exclusively unidirectional. Rather, the two existed symbiotically, for they shared many of the same practices and stemmed from a common “habitus,” (i.e., a pool of dispositions shaped by prior action and commitments). To add to the complexity, everyday practices were institutionalized in that they were enacted within the same socio-cultural field in which institutions necessarily thrived and operated, and hence could even mirror the activities of those institutions.¹⁴

To understand the institutionalization of everyday literary practices, we draw upon testimony found in nearly 4,000 manuscript diaries and letters authored by a diverse set of New Englanders between the years 1830 and 1861. These informants often eloquently described their socio-literary experiences as home “librarians” and the role they and their collections played as agents of literary culture within their social networks. We begin with their productive practices of creating and organizing libraries: acquisitions, arrangement, and cataloging. From there we follow the flow of books to other people, especially out and back into the home through lending. Finally, we explore the common reception of home libraries as highly valued expressions of social relations.¹⁵

Production

The library that John Park’s community saved from fire was unusually immense and broad, but having a good collection was an ideal toward which even the lowliest New England reader strived. “Oh! this is one of the deprivations of poverty, not being able to buy books,” boot-and-bonnet maker Martha Osborne Barrett, a prodigious reader, complained in 1854 after seeing “an advertisement

of a new edition of Wordsworth's poems complete." She had earlier that day withdrawn Wordsworth's *Memoirs* from a local library and no doubt would have liked to own it, for she extracted it profusely for future reference. Books and some magazines were relatively expensive items, indeed, luxuries to people for whom even a cheap pamphlet novel represented hours of labor. Strained finances severely limited the extent of libraries, but, still, poor families managed to pull together small collections from gifts, ephemera, and a few purchases. Vermont farm laborer Charles Cobb had only few—twelve music books and ledgers worth thirteen dollars, several odd books valued at "a ninepence apiece," and bound numbers of the *Saturday Evening Post*—but he treasured these volumes as much as Park did his; he frequently tallied up their value, lent them, or "swapped music books for a spell."¹⁶

The dimension of home libraries was clearly unstable, however. They expanded with wealth and contracted with hard times, not unlike institutional holdings, but book owners aligned the fluctuation with that of their personal fortunes. Upwardly mobile bibliophiles like Cambridge lawyer Mellen Chamberlain, who started out as a poor New Hampshire farmer's son, marked his achievements in the numbers of volumes he acquired. "My library has increased by more than one hundred valuable books," he assessed a landmark career year in 1859. Income was not the only inflationary factor. Inheritances or long-term loans could suddenly expand a paltry collection in much the same way that institutions could swell with a generous bequest or donation. "Uncle Waldo made me a splendid donation of Hume, Smollett, Bisset, Lardners [*sic*], Burke, 16 vols for my library," one grateful college student exclaimed. Conversely, losses through fire or theft, or financial downturns might strangle both the home or public library's growth. John Park, for one, was forced to sell his cherished run of *Edinburgh Review* in 1842; "I feel very unwilling to part with it," he sighed with remorse, "but my dividends have been so much curtailed by the mismanagement of Banks, that I must raise the wind, somehow." And he was not alone in seeing literary wealth go up in smoke; one Vermont lawyer rebuilt his law library practically from scratch at Boston bookstores after an 1846 fire "made him a beggar almost."¹⁷

Size, however, was secondary to selectivity among home library builders. To be sure, selectivity reflected limited funds, but it also denoted a utilitarian mind-set that purchased according to need or special interest. For example, between January 1856 and April 1858, Saco millworker J. Edwin Harris, who made about seventeen dollars a month, purchased fourteen identifiable books for his library, most of them relevant to his special reading interests and goal of becoming a fiction writer or poet: ten volumes of English, American, and Scottish poems, a few novels, miscellaneous titles, and two different story papers that he had bound by the volume. Middling folk also built modest, well chosen collections but tried to cover a few areas instead. "Most of our library is composed of Books of a Moral character of which kind we have a great number,"

one newlywed accountant averred in 1838; “We now need to make a good selection [of] some good histories & Scientific works—However the world was not built in a day, neither can we expect to obtain, with our present means, a complete library in a day.” As the aim of having a home library was to read and even study all of one’s books, limitations were often self-imposed. Indiscriminate buying suggested desultory reading habits. “[E]very book assists and does its respective part in the formation of a library,” an engineer opined at the beginning of his career; “and I trust that ere I am many years older I shall . . . have a respectable looking if not a select library, and trust that many of their contents may be transferred to my vacant mind.” Selectivity sometimes guided donors as well. Travelers might return home bearing locally rare books with a recipient’s taste in mind. A Bangor woman while abroad bought “all [Jean Paul] Richter’s works in 4 large volumes” for her neighbors who could read the tomes’ German prose. In this tendency to build with purpose, home librarians shared a sense of “mission” with institutions that controlled their acquisitions.¹⁸

Shelves were often lined with stray books of no seeming purpose that, however, spoke more eloquently than the rarest text. These were often books imbued with personal meaning—out-of-date almanacs inscribed by deceased relatives, gift volumes presented during courtship, personal journals filled with memories, or old textbooks worn and torn by years of schooling—that often held the greatest and deepest value for home librarians. The absence or loss of such books was sometimes felt more deeply than their presence. “How I should have valued them!!” Mary Poor complained four years after her father died in 1849; “I have not one single book that was my father’s, with his name written in it in his own hand, but a hymn book & that I value above price.” Of course, these intimate meanings would little interest librarians judging a book’s value by its suitability to a collection. The user’s relationship to an institution’s books was one of detachment, as well. “Changed some old books away for new ones,” one Providence housewife succinctly wrote, as did many other users. Institutional borrowers seldom invested meaning in a book (though not a text) that all too quickly went back to its place on the library’s shelves.¹⁹

With both selectivity and intimate meaning guiding library building, it follows that home librarians classified and arranged their books according to some personally relevant method. The lack of a set standard for organizing collections led to improvisation among even institutional librarians, who might variably shelve according size, format, alphabet, subject areas, or some mixture of any or all; once shelving was determined, it was up to successors to “understand the arrangement of the books.” Very few diarists and correspondents described their own taxonomies, but they nonetheless left evidence of definite schemes. “[H]e has arranged his books to his own mind,” a Bostonian declared in 1841 after her husband settled into a new library room. People necessarily fashioned mental compartments for their literary objects before carving out space on a shelf. Harriet Low, a wealthy Salemite with many books, was so fastidious

that she would not allow her domestics to assist her in arranging books in her cases. “The servants know nothing about books,” she griped, assuming they would create a haphazard mess. In this sense, arranging books was both an exercise in the organization of knowledge and the classification of memories, not merely an expedient way to store items.²⁰

Although most were silent about their particular shelving schemes, a few informants left traces of them in manuscript library catalogs. For the compiler, these were probably not mnemonic aids; institutional and home librarians alike knew well their usually modest collection and its place upon shelves. While institutional catalogs helped borrowers select items from large collections that they usually could not browse, ordinary people’s catalogs were not so functional. Borrowers, as we will see, often perused personal collections during social calls. Besides, most home collections were too small to warrant a catalog. Insofar as they mimicked printed forms that advertised an institution’s significance, catalogs signified their owners’ regard for their collections’ public value and social worth.²¹ Above all, these taxonomies give insight into compilers’ minds and their relations to their books.

One farmer and schoolteacher from Wilton, New Hampshire, Levi Abbott, is a good case in point. Sometime around 1855, he arranged in his diary his fifty-some-odd books into the following categories: lexicons, Greek books, French books, English schoolbooks, poetical, miscellaneous books, law books, and musical items. His system suggests that he considered language groupings and fields of practical application as categories more important than genre. Yet not all of his Greek books were in that language nor were they limited to Greek history; for example, he placed “Virgil [in] German” into this group; Alexander Adam’s *Roman Antiquities* was also located in this set—a catchall of his books on classical literature and history. An even closer look at his list evinces the pride this upwardly mobile farmer, who acquired an education against the wishes of his father, took in his various gentlemanly occupations: the lexicons, his academy and college years while mastering classical languages; the textbooks, his time spent as a teacher; the law books, his legal training and practice; and his choral music books, his vocal attainments. The miscellaneous category tellingly included books not obviously marking career milestones: a bible, album, biography, moral tract aimed at youth, and lecture on the lungs—a testament to his ill health.²²

Enoch Hale, a Newburyport printer, sometime editor, and fishyard laborer, conceived a more elaborate classification system for his sixty or so books, thirteen sets of periodicals, and hundreds of pamphlets. His catalog listed his collection alphabetically by subject and format. In contrast to Abbott, Hale lumped together foreign language lexicons within a diverse set of textbooks under “Sciences &c”; these books culled from his years at grammar school he filed neatly into one compartment, reflecting what he felt was a singular “period of about 12 years.” Despite the many topical categories, this printer was ultimately more

concerned with format (bound books versus pamphlets and documents) than genre or subject headings. He consigned most of his political works, for example, to the group “Documents, Pamphlets, &c” instead of “Political,” which was reserved for books only. His political awareness led him to distinguish among national, state, and local items; he hoped to acquire more of these, for that “would give the collection most value, both as regards my own use, and its worth, intrinsically, in any other respect.” He would refer to it as he would try time and again to succeed as a journalist. If his collection was a form of intellectual capital upon which he could draw as he made his way in life, then his catalog was like an account book.²³

Dissemination

Books flowed from personal libraries into other people’s hands and back through myriad acts of lending and borrowing. Literary circulation played into rhythms of everyday life—from visiting to enlivening working hours—just about everywhere people congregated. Some people even circulated material from afar by sending literary loans back and forth by express, mail, or courier.²⁴ Personal collections thus were ever on the move as they traversed land and sea and passed through many hands. Beyond being a way to have more reading matter than one could afford to purchase, nearly every act of circulation ultimately expressed personal relationships. Through it, literature bound lender and borrower together. One young Beverly woman was moved to write after an 1852 call, “Miss W. loaned me a book. I like her *much*.”²⁵ Even in this typically terse diary entry, sociability and book lending are clearly linked.

Most lenders were also borrowers. This was true even for those with large libraries like John Park; while incapacitated with a sore foot in 1849, his doctor carried over *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*. Two or more people sometimes generated a constant interflow of books, described by one female seminary student in 1836 as “the mutual accommodation system . . . [of] lend[ing] each other books to save buying so many.” The well-read millworker, J. Edwin Harris, also struck up similar relationships with other operatives who exchanged with him at the workplace or boardinghouse. “Evening—Read Whittiher’s [*sic*] Poems which I have borrowed of Miss Tibbitts,” he recorded in 1858, “I have lent her Longfellows.” When the back-and-forth flow was equal, both parties could at least double books at their disposal—the very logic behind membership libraries.²⁶

Borrowing and lending, though related, were distinct. Borrowing was as practical as it was sociable; it was the obvious solution for a limited budget or for those who wanted to widen the array of books at hand. Those who had only meager formal libraries nearby—or none at all—had to depend on private collections. Most of the titles that Charles Cobb read in his tiny Vermont village, which had only a Sunday School library that he avoided, were borrowed from neighbors and local kin; because of their generosity, he dipped into *Don Quixote*,

“The Rangers,” “old posts,” and a *Classical Dictionary*. Institutional libraries, even if nearby, could not always supply specialized needs, such as those of lawyers who interdependently circulated law books among themselves. And even coveted titles might be tantalizingly out of reach. “[D]o you own Goethe[‘s] Faust and will you lend it to [my son]?” a Bostonian in 1837 asked her brother, and explained, “there is such a rage for German now prevailing that it is next to impossible to get such a thing from a public library.” A surge in popularity created a long-term vacancy on the shelves. One need only follow the peripatetic life of the Mexican War narrative, *Chile con Carne*, at the Taunton Social Library. It spent no more than 30 of its first 200 days upon the shelves, as it circulated to about a tenth of the society’s 280 members. Libraries could not always sate users’ appetites.²⁷

Instead of seeking specific titles, most borrowers were opportunists hungering for a varied diet of good reading materials. Often they simply wanted something—anything different from the usual fare—to read, taking advantage of whatever was at their disposal. “H. O. S. called in a few minutes, she said she wanted ~~some~~ a book to read,” one Beverly shoebinder confided to her diary, “so she [k]new where to come[,] for [my brother] J has so many books.”²⁸ If some borrowers availed herself of friends’ well-stocked library, others looked to on-the-job literary perks. “Mr Mann has a good library of useful books which I can obtain,” a factory accountant explained of his boss in 1836; “I think now I shall not be in a great hurry to leave him.”²⁹ Such was the power of lending.

From lenders’ perspective, this power could be used either to personal advantage or for a social end—the good of employees, kinfolk, neighbors, and friends. Antebellum institutions, though tending toward social control, were still relatively disinterested lenders; influence was implied in the very selectivity of acquisitions.³⁰ While institutional librarians probably suggested books to patrons at times, the choice was ultimately that of users from limited options. Private lenders through social pressure wielded more power. They could deprive borrowers of any volition, pressing books into hand with orders to read them. Zealots who proselytized ideas in this way usually irked those coerced to borrow. “A particular friend of yours Mr— was in the store to see me,” a Universalist clerk from Andover complained to his millworker fiancée in 1835; “he lent me some newspapers . . . (you probably know what kind) so that I might get right on my religious views.”³¹ Because not all ideologically motivated lenders were so adamant, most borrowers could decline loans. Still, pressure to conform, especially within small communities, was strong.

More often, however, lenders manifested a socially genial rather than self-interested spirit. They anticipated borrowers’ needs—“carrying” literary loans to folks poorer than themselves, those bedridden, or in need of amusement. “This afternoon I took Henry & went up to Mrs Lunt’s to carry some books for her husband & children,” a Gardiner, Maine, widow recorded in her 1845 diary. “Her husband has broken one of the bones in his wrist,” she explained. If some callers had missions, others simply wanted to share the bounty with friends

who had similar reading tastes. “Call[ed] to see Mrs Lassell and carried her, ‘Light and shadows of Scottish Life,’” a Providence stablekeeper’s wife recorded in 1851; “It is a great favorite with me and I hope she will like it.” It did not always take an interested party to come calling with a loan. Guests often went home from social visits with an unexpected literary prize tucked underarm and promises to return it, perhaps in exchange for another—and thus the relationship could be continued.³²

Institutional lenders fulfilled similar social purposes as well, but indirectly, through borrowers’ activities. People “tended out” to libraries as favors. Overworked milliner Martha Barrett recounted a busy 1855 day: “have been to the Library . . . Took ‘*Belford Regis*’ . . . for myself and ‘*Farmingdale*’ for Julia B. Have scarcely had time to think.” Library goers also made the trip a social event, as did Lynn schoolteacher Mary Mudge, who in August 1854 “took a walk down to the Library” because a relative “wanted to get ‘*Drew’s Travels*’”; on the journey home the two “called at Mrs Arbers” where they were rewarded for singing with “some Pumpkin pie.” Informants like Mudge seldom described sociabilities within libraries; like shoppers in bookstores, library patrons evidently transacted business quickly and quietly, unless librarians were willing to chat. Ancillary activities, such as the lyceum or membership meetings, evoked more descriptive journal entries. Nonetheless, the very term “social library,” implied conviviality—membership within a group of people sharing a love of books. The pride that members had in belonging might be conveyed in recording an initial visit. “I made the following selection of books for my own perusal: Bryant’s & Holmes’ Poems,” one young downeaster proclaimed. “These are the first books I have ever taken from the Hallowell Social Library.” Though he did not mention circulation terms or whether or not he paid a fee or bought a share, many users did.³³

As interpersonal lending depended upon custom or individual negotiation, rules regarding it, though seldom spelled out, were strongly implied, else the system would have easily broken down. Not surprisingly, these unwritten rules resembled those of institutions. One of the most important and obvious was returning materials in good condition and in due time. While institutions tracked their numerous transactions through dated charge records, personal lenders with few books and a limited circle of borrowers hardly needed to keep accounts. Instead, they expected borrowers would bring a book “back home” in good condition, in less than a year if no time limit was imposed, but they could tolerate lapses of up to two or three years.³⁴

Lenders were less certain that their borrowers would remember what they took from whom. Aids to the memory, such as book labels with owners’ names or inscriptions nudged the forgetful. Some more careful lenders and borrowers recorded transactions in diaries. While some borrowers kept lists, most simply scribbled a terse line amid records of other daily events. Lenders, by contrast, tended to be more systematic. Mary Poor devoted a page of her pocket memo-



ENCOURAGEMENT TO BOOK-LENDERS.

"IF YOU PLEASE, SIR, MASTER'S SENT BACK THE FIRST VOLUME, AND HE SAYS,
WILL YOU BE SO GOOD AS TO LET HIM 'AVE THE SECOND?"

Figure 2: This cartoon lampoons unwary home librarians and book borrowers who dared to break the most important of unwritten rules: returning materials in good condition. "Encouragement to Book-Lenders," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 2 (May 1851): 859. Courtesy of American Antiquarian Society.

randa to “Books lent”—a list of titles and names she crossed out as items came back:

~~Mrs Hewson~~
~~1 vol of Scotts’ works.~~

Mrs Haley—New wine
 in old bottles.
~~Mrs Box—Festus—~~

Mrs Barnard.
 True Christian Religion—

~~Mrs Winchester—~~
~~David Copperfield~~

More elaborately, John Park dated his charges, frequently inventoried outstanding ones, and noted returns with an “X.”³⁵

Fearing unbearable shame, most people returned borrowed books. Charlotte Forten, an African American schoolteacher from Salem, declared in 1857 that she “should not have been able to meet” one lender “could I not have replaced” a lost title borrowed of her. Such diligence was instilled in childhood. A downeaster boasted that her six-year-old “feels an amusing responsibility when she has borrow’d books—to keep them nice & return them soon.” These attitudes evidently carried over to some institutional borrowing. Of 14,560 individual charges made at the Taunton Social Library between 7 May 1856 and 3 March 1859 only two books were lost, and one of them, *Billets & Bivouacs*, was “Paid for” by the guilty party, a forty-three-year-old laborer. Over the years at venerable institutions like the Boston Athenaeum the number of lost books inevitably accrued, as examiners witnessed. Elliot Cabot found there in 1860 that “Those missing are chiefly among the books used by school boys & *clergymen*,” of which his wife mused, “how satisfactory!” Paying institutional fines could signal negligent attitudes toward everyday informal borrowing. When in 1835 a Dartmouth College student was fined for a keeping a book “several days too many,” he chided himself: “This is my luck,—no, it is my fault—it is a bad habit. I am always dilatory in returning books, even when borrowed of friends.”³⁶

Much delinquency was due to secondary lending—passing a borrowed book on to another person. Because the practice was so prevalent, institutions often forbade it and with good reason: borrowed books lent out again could easily vanish into the maze of social networks. One businessman who lent an expensive borrowed playbook frantically searched for it when the lender finally called it in. He entreated his sister to

go down . . . & ask Miss Sarah Woodbridge if she can find Sheridans Plays which I lent to her sister Julia some two or three years ago & if she can if she will give it to you. I borrowed the book & have been asked to return it. I have been to every book store in New York & am informed that the edition is out of print. If you get it please to send it to me straight.³⁷

Fruitlessly scouring bookshops was penalty enough for lost books.

The risks of sending books out into the world could be reduced simply by inviting users into the home library to read or look over the collection. Sometimes owners, if absent, gave keys to bookcases or library rooms to neighbors, but, if present, more often let informal callers make themselves at home with their books. "This afternoon visited Br. Ray at Br. Otis' and had the privilege of reading some of the Books of Elder Otis' library," one pious Methodist reported to his diary in 1830. Outsiders thus had open access to home libraries because reading itself was a social activity—one associated with family life, visiting, and entertaining guests—rather than a recluse's pastime. Indeed, through listening to books read aloud guests momentarily "borrowed" a text. "Miss Shepard showed us some of her beautiful books, and read one or two exquisite pieces of poetry," Charlotte Forten recorded after visiting her teacher with a classmate.³⁸ Reading a selection aloud could lead to lending the book itself to the enthused listener.

Reception

Reception of libraries differs from that of texts, which has been the area of so much recent scholarly effort.³⁹ Texts are not all that are involved in library reception, for much of it concerns physically responding to a collection's "needs" through storing and maintaining books, but also evaluating one's own or others' holdings. Yet another type of response emerges from people's assessment of a collection's ability to fulfill their needs, ranging from reference questions to encouraging sociability.⁴⁰ Because evidence of library reception is often indirect, these categories are far from distinct. For example, much time expended in preserving one's books suggests high regard for the collection. Stating that a collection is valuable can be based on an unspoken judgment that it can solve one's reference queries, but so might dedicating a room or shelving to volumes to make finding answers that much easier. Then, too, esteem for one's books might be expressed though proudly noting their display. And the success of a library in advancing sociability can be discerned in descriptions of social activities taking place in proximity to it and involving it.

Whether home libraries contained lavish English editions or local newspapers, owners demonstrated their regard by lovingly tending to their collections in much the same way that institutional librarians periodically "examined" books and were otherwise charged "to take good care of all the books and other prop-

erty belonging to the Library.”⁴¹ The confluence of duties between the amateur and “professional” reflected, of course, practical and customary ways to safeguard books. That home librarians, however, voluntarily assumed these duties showed a deep valuation of their reading materials.

Covering books or sets of periodicals was probably the most basic form of preservation. Although wealthier folks (and even some workers) took their materials to binders or printers, many people were able—indeed, obliged—to do the job themselves. “Cover all your books,” a Salem housewife enjoined her teenaged daughter away at school. Similar injunctions resounded throughout the region, and it was one commandment children and adults alike heeded. While none but skilled artisans could bind in leather, amateurs honed and passed down homespun methods. A needle, thread, and strong paper or fabric was all that was necessary. “This morning my little Henry Clay came into the office with his new Spelling book, and asked to have it covered,” a physician in Chester, Massachusetts, wrote of his son; “I put on a strong paper cover, and fastened it with a needle and thread.” Some binders swore by bonnet paper, others by wallpaper or brown wrapping paper. A Glastonbury farmwoman employed cloth she starched. These makeshift binders were used by schools and Sunday schools, and, frequently, several people combined efforts in book covering and labeling sessions that could take place in sociable settings in school, church, or home.⁴²

Book owners jotted down other miscellaneous preservation techniques similar to any librarian’s. Proper handling was the first line of defense: one bibliophile upbraided a college student for “not us[ing] with sufficient care” a book he was reading. Shelving or storage came next. Shelves and bookcases could be expensive; one Worcester resident commissioned a case for twenty-five dollars only to see it destroyed in a fire before it was completed. Some industrious home carpenters made their own simple shelves and racks or repaired broken ones, but many people simply set aside a table top, trunk, box, or closet for books. No matter how safe the haven or careful the user, well-used items were destined to wither. Charles Cobb was convinced that having his father stitch several dog-eared music books together with a leather needle would “save them from coming to pieces.” Beyond that some people spoke of “overhauling”—a general inspection resulting in repair work and re-covering.⁴³

More tedious and annoying than shelf inspections were cleansing overhauls of entire library rooms. “I never was more tired out,” one Vermont woman protested after tackling the chore. Readers were temporarily displaced. The “ever dreaded anniversary has come!” John Park moaned when his wife tore up the parlor yet once again in 1847; “Take books and pictures down—up comes carpet—wash—scrub—I take refuge in a neighboring room.” Because, as he explained, the job involved evacuating and rearranging books on shelves, it exhausted the laborer, usually a woman. “I was working hard all the morning, cannot ever remember when I have perspired so much,” Salemite Harriet Low complained to her diary in 1831 when she “put all the books in order into the

bookcase” by “having to stoop to the floor to pick them all up.” Her professional counterpart, Harvard Law Librarian Mellen Chamberlain, similarly felt exhausted: “Tired & dusty from handling books all day, shall be pleased when this work is over.” Although the two, institutional and home librarians, inhabited different spaces—one public, one private—they did not live in worlds apart. It was no coincidence that institutional librarianship, work akin to routine household chores, was often as undervalued and ill compensated as women’s domestic labor.⁴⁴

Fastidiously kept home libraries with well-lit fireplaces, sumptuous carpets, gas fixtures, and comfortable furnishings saw much domestic and social activity not necessarily related to reading, but which fused library reception with routines of everyday life. One housewife sewed in her library, sometimes spending the evening there with her husband. Other folks received guests, smoked, conversed with friends, or even napped in theirs. Thus, libraries housed not only books, but cherished memories. “I love to sit here in this cozy little library,” a young Connecticut woman explained, “it has very many pleasant associations connected with it.”

A good reception of home libraries, of course, might stem from time spent alone with books. One engineer considered his library a “sanctum” for “conversing with authors long since dead.” However, valuation was most often socially conceived—evident when social callers remarked upon the “very fine” or “splendid” quality, or breadth of their host’s collections. Charlotte Forten “wanted to spend weeks” in Theodore Parker’s vast “principal library” when she visited his home in 1857. Her thrall mirrored that of visitors overwhelmed by “numberless” books housed at great institutions, from Oxford’s Bodleian to New York’s Astor. Home libraries in this sense conveyed cosmopolitanism as well as social standing. Persis Andrews, living in Dixfield, Maine, assayed a provincial neighbor’s “style of living” thus: “Library &c compare,” she emphasized, “with those of good society in Town or City.”⁴⁵

Most New Englanders could not devote a room to their library even if they had a surfeit of books. They nonetheless found an appropriate spot wherever they could. Some hid old books in attics or trunks to preserve them from mold and mildew, but they usually strategically positioned them to share living space with users. One schoolteacher on a modest salary kept her small collection in a bookshelf near a table by her stove; here she entertained her guests by reading aloud. A traveling fiddler propped his music books atop a seldom used melodean in the entry that served as both clothes closet and buttry. John Park’s boarding-house library spilled into his parlor and bedroom, in much the same way that books worked their way into every nook and cranny of his life. “Some intruder was in possession of our bedroom,” he recorded the night a new tenant was mistakenly shown his room. “The poor stranger said he . . . he seemed to have got into a College!—alluding to my bookcases.” The placement of books within enclaves of domestic activity such as hallways was not only practical, it demon-



REVERIES OF THE CIGAR.

Figure 3: Sumptuously furnished home libraries such as the one this young man occupies were also the site of everyday activities, including resting, writing, smoking, taking tea, and daydreaming. "Reveries of the Cigar" in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 11 (June 1855): 6. *Courtesy of Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.*

strated that reading, rather than being distanced from everyday life practices, merged with them.⁴⁶ Sequestered books were often little used ones.

Perhaps because only the wealthy carved out a library chamber for reading, most people probably expected little more from their institutions, which were usually collections rather than discrete buildings with public reading rooms. Except for periodical reading rooms and the relatively few libraries that provided adequate provisions for study, repositories were generally places for storing and exchanging books, not for lingering or leisurely reading. While some partisans used reading rooms for political rallying, few library patrons remarked upon social interactions, and even less on interior spaces.⁴⁷ Uninviting library environments may account for this, but other factors were at work. For one, everyday reading was associated with quotidian spaces—the kitchen, nursery, garden, parlor, under a tree, on a rock by the seaside, or even in noisy public settings. “Went up to the railroad this morn,” J. Edwin Harris wrote on 20 June 1858; “sat down and looked over Massey’s Poems.”⁴⁸ In addition, women secluded in the home necessarily combined domestic work and reading such that the phrase “sewed & read” appears frequently in their diaries. Most importantly, reading was a social activity often performed aloud, as much as half the time, to listeners.⁴⁹ Cloistered reading in libraries, even when feasible, could seem expendable, even undesirable.

Though institutions discouraged sustained reading, they might seem better able to afford answers to reference questions, but in reality they lacked services for doing so. Most people therefore relied on noninstitutional resources as a first resort. They enlisted knowledgeable acquaintances, as in the case of one Cambridge housewife referring to a neighbor as “our Reference Man” who “cannot be replaced like a Reference Book.” Other querents went to private collections. “[S]topping in Charlotte’s a few minutes . . . [,] looking in her dream-book to find the interpretation of a dream which I dreamt about her last night,” a Normal School student recounted in 1850. And one could always consult one’s own holdings. For example, in 1837 John Park noted a question that had arisen from a church group discussion: one participant “expressed a wish to know by what authority sacrifices and some other parts of the Mosaic ritual seemed to have been set aside before the time of our savior.” The question stumped Park, but rather than go for answers to the nearby American Antiquarian Society, of which he was a member, he turned to his library: “after examining many of my theological books, I found it in Shuttleworth’s ‘Consistency of Revelation,’ the second volume of Harper’s ‘Theological Library,’ Chapter XVII.th and elsewhere.” Park was not alone; in fact, in over 50,000 literary encounters our informants report, none other than those recorded by college students clearly show going to an institutional library with a specific reference question—not surprising in a time when most shelves or stacks were closed.⁵⁰

Conclusion

By the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of the public, tax-supported library took hold as a way of providing all citizens with free reading materials. Although the concept was in theory a beneficent one, it both signaled and perhaps exacerbated the erosion of social practices that maintained the vibrancy of everyday literary experience among antebellum New Englanders. Although these practices intersected with institutional processes, they were not self-consciously “institutionalized,” arising as they did from custom and quotidian realities. Most important, everyday practices were enacted by individuals tied by social relations, rather than by institutional bonds. Once the responsibility of enriching and maintaining literary experience for citizens fell primarily upon the state, the public institution was expected to appropriate the role once assumed by the individual book owner immersed within a dense social network. Public institutions as indiscriminate servants of the people may have been more impartial and effective in outreach than individuals, to be sure. But in the transfer of responsibility, reading lost some of its social meaning, for the locus of book exchange—an institution rather than a neighbor—became abstract.

At the same time, the public library would serve emerging needs that the formerly dominant informal social circulation may not have been able to address as easily. The century’s socio-economic transformation toward industrialism and corporate agricultural distribution and processing had already severely strained social relations well before the public library became a reality. For people cut adrift by the changes from social networks of literary exchange, the public library promised access to reading material otherwise unavailable. Increasingly, too, new career paths were being forged that required a wide array of specialized information: public libraries could better offer this, too. Knowledge, in general, was expanding, fragmenting, and becoming ever more technical, while reference questions were becoming more vexing yet crucial to industrial and business enterprise.⁵¹ Little wonder that collections mounted, reference services were extended, silent study and reading became the norm, or that library reading rooms proliferated.

Not only did public libraries come to serve the new order, they also helped to legitimize it, for they often stood as symbolic statements of a community’s public commitment to “knowledge,” especially in their encouragement of an associational form of sociability, in a way that private libraries could not. Thus, institutional libraries for a time ironically symbolized the very socio-literary relations they would eventually reconfigure and, in some instances, replace. Hence, incidents in which fires devastated or destroyed institutional libraries often elicited such extensive notice to suggest a personal sense of connection.⁵²

Of the many conflagrations, none seemed as devastating as the one at the Library of Congress in 1851. Having watched his own library go up in flames, the tragedy weighed upon John Park perhaps more heavily than other observers. Beginning his lengthy account “Fire in Washington,” he mourned the “60,000

volumes . . . destroyed," and concluded by noting that "Among the few articles saved is the original Declaration of Independence. Many of the books were rare works, and can never be replaced."⁵³ The sense of cultural loss was similar to that which motivated Park's own neighbors to jeopardize their own lives on that cold night in January 1845. As everyday literary practice became increasingly institutionalized, institutions became invested, for a time, with not a little of the social feeling surrounding those practices.

Notes

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1. John Park, "Fire at Brinley Block," undated description between 11 and 12 Jan. 1845, Journal, vol. 3, by courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library (hereafter, "BPL"). On the gift, see 7 Jan. 1845; on storage in the warehouse, 7 Sept. and 9 Oct. 1843. James Russell Lowell, *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets* (Cambridge, Mass., 1845).
2. Park, "Fire at Brinley Block"; see also entry for 12 and 13 Jan. 1845 in the same journal.
3. Michael Harris, introduction to Jesse H. Shera, "The Expansion of the Social Library," reprinted in *Reader in American Library History*, ed. Michael Harris (Washington, D.C., 1971), 45. Eugene Sue, *The Mysteries of Paris, A Novel*, trans. Charles H. Town (New York, 1844); George Campbell, *The Four Gospels: Translated from the Greek, With Preliminary Dissertations, and Notes Critical and Explanatory*, 2 vols. (Andover, Mass., 1837). John Park to Louisa Park Hall, 5 Feb. 1845, in John Park, Journal, vol. 3., BPL, pp. 626-27.
4. Shera, "On the Value of Library History," 12; Wayne A. Wiegand, "American Library History Literature, 1947-1997," in *Library History Research in America: Essays Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Library History Round Table*, ed. Andrew B. Wertheimer and Donald G. Davis, Jr. (Washington, D.C., 2000): 4-34, quote on 21.
5. Scholarship on "everydayness" ranges from Henri Lefebvre's *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Paris, 1947), to, on the one hand, Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (1977; Cambridge, 1993), and, on the other, to the *Alltagsgeschichten* school, whose work is introduced in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, N.J., 1995). Cf. Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984).
6. D.W. Davies, *Public Libraries as Culture and Social Centers: The Origin of the Concept* (Metuchen, N.J., 1974), 14, 34, ch. 2; Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford, Calif., 1994), 40-47; Thomas Augst, "The Business of Reading in Nineteenth-Century America: The New York Mercantile Library," *American Quarterly* 50 (1998), 290-91.
7. John Y. Cole, "Storehouses and Workshops: American Libraries and the Uses of Knowledge," in *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920*, ed. Alexandra Oleson and John Voss (Baltimore, 1979), 364-84; Jacob Schmookler, *Invention and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 196-215.
8. Sidney Ditzion, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture: A Social History of the American Public Library Movement in New England and the Middle States From 1850-1900* (Chicago, 1947) and Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England 1629-1855* (Chicago, 1949). On institutionalization, see: Ferdinand Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen* (Leipzig, 1887); Stephen H. Riggins, ed., *Beyond Goffman, Studies on Communication, Institution, and Social Interaction* (Berlin, 1990); Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalization* (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1998); and Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism and Citizenship*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London, 1992), 89-107.
9. Comparative data from the Federal Census of 1850 via the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, *Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790-1970* [Computer file] (Ann Arbor, Mich., c. 1970s). William J. Gilmore, *Read-*

- ing *Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1989); David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser. 47 (July 1990): 327-46; Mary Kupiec Cayton, "The Making of an American Prophet: Emerson, His Audiences, and the Rise of a Culture Industry in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 92 (1987): 597-620; Mary Kelley, "Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 83 (1996): 401-24. Kelley hints at how the institutional histories of readers shaped the habitus of their everyday practice, as does Richard D. Brown in *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in America, 1700-1865* (New York, 1989), chs. 6-9.
10. Karen V. Hansen, *A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in Antebellum New England* (Berkeley, 1994); Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, "Books, Reading, and the World of Goods in Antebellum New England," *American Quarterly* 48 (1996): 587-622.
11. On the period's weak institutions, see John Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848-1860* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1969).
12. James A. Healy, 6 Feb. 1849, Diary, Holy Cross College Archives and Rare Books (hereafter, "CHC"). F. Allen Briggs, "The Sunday School Library," reprinted in Harris, *Reader in American Library History*, 65-66; Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 165; David Kaser, *The Evolution of the American Academic Library Building* (Lanham, Md., 1997), 7-8.
13. Carl M. White, *A Historical Introduction to Library Education: Problems and Progress to 1951* (Metuchen, N.J., 1976), 1-19; David Kaser and Ruth Jackson, "A Century of Personnel Concerns in Libraries," in *A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada*, ed. Sidney L. Jackson, Eleanor B. Herling, and E.J. Josey (Chicago, 1976), 129-133; Arthur T. Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States: Its Origins and Development* (Philadelphia, 1981), 33.
14. Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus in his *Esquisse d'une Théorie de la Pratique précédé de Trois Études D'Ethnologie Kabyle* (Geneva, 1972), 31.
15. The three-part division of production, dissemination, and reception appears in Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *A Handbook for the Study of Book History in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 2000) and in idem. "Transcendentalism in Print: Production, Dissemination, and Common Reception," in *Transient and Permanent: The Transcendentalist Movement and Its Contexts*, ed. Charles Capper and Conrad Edick Wright (Boston, 1999), 310-81. This essay draws from our recently completed book manuscript, "Everyday Ideas: Socio-Literary Experience Among Antebellum New Englanders." The material we used and our methods are described in our "Transcendentalism in Print"; we have since refined the data and added more. We have consulted 930 informants who wrote 2,816 letters, 798 diaries, and 185 miscellaneous documents, for a total of 3,799 items, with an additional 400 from the Civil War era, for comparison. Only six of the documents consulted were in printed form and 110 were archival transcripts—all of the rest were in manuscript.
16. Martha Osborne Barrett, 22 Dec. 1854, Diary, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum (hereafter, "PEM"); William Wordsworth, *Poems of Williams Wordsworth* (New York, 1855); Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1851). On costs of books, see Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York, 1993), 11-12. Charles M. Cobb, 21 Sept. 1851, 20 Apr. 1851, 8 Apr. 1852, "The Recorder No. 21. Extra October 7, 1849," 19 Apr. 1850, 4 Mar. 1851, 27 and 31 Oct. 1847, 26 and 29 June 1851, 17 Sept. 1851, Journals, transcription, Vermont Historical Society (hereafter, "VHS").
17. Mellen Chamberlain, 1 Feb. 1860, Diary, BPL; Stephen Salisbury III, 9 and 10 Apr. 1854, Diary, Salisbury Family Papers, courtesy American Antiquarian Society (hereafter "AAS"); Park, 3 and 6 Jan. 1842, Journal, vol. 3, BPL; Susan D. Tucker, 20 Jan. and 11 Feb. Journal, VHS.
18. Joshua Edwin Harris, Journals, 1 Jan. 1856-13 Sept. 1856, 14 Sept. 1856-30 June 1858, 1860-1861, Joshua Edwin Harris Papers, Maine Historical Society (hereafter "MeHS"); I. Reynolds Hixon, 20 Dec. 1838, Diary, Old Colony Historical Society (hereafter, "OCHS"); James Barnard Blake, 15 Feb. 1851, Diary, AAS. Lucy (Pierce) Hedge to Mary Pierce Poor, 22 Sept. 1839, Poor Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University (hereafter, "SL"). Jean Paul [Richter], *Jean Paul's Sammlliche Werke*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1836-1838).
19. Zboray and Zboray, "Books, Reading, and the World of Goods in Antebellum New England"; Mary Pierce Poor to Lucy Pierce Hedge, 18 Apr. 1853, Poor Family Papers, SL; Aurilla Ann Moffitt, 13 July 1847, Personal Journal, OCHS.
20. Mellen Chamberlain, 6 Jan. 1847, Journal, BPL; Lucretia Anne [Peabody] Everett to Sarah P.E. Hale, Boston, 4 Oct. 1841, Hale Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College (hereafter, "SSC"); Harriet Low, 22 Apr. 1831, Journal, transcript [original in the Low-Mills Family Papers, Library of Congress], PEM. Zboray, *A Fictive People*, Appendix 2, 196-210; Henry Petroski, *The Book on the Bookshelf* (New York, 1999), 12.
21. Jim Ranz, *The Printed Book Catalog in American Libraries, 1723-1900* (Chicago, 1964), 7-9.

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22. Levi Abbott, Journal, 1841-1863, p. 200-201, New Hampshire Historical Society (hereafter, "NHHS").
23. Enoch Hale, undated December entry and 20 Dec. 1849, Diary, PEM. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu's use of "cultural capital" in his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1977), but also Stephen Greenblatt's metaphorical use of "circulation" in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, 1986).
24. Elizabeth Edwards to Rebekah S. Salisbury, 11 July 1840, Salisbury Family Papers, AAS; John Park, 24 Feb. 1846, Journal, vol. 4, BPL; Anthony D. Currier to Mary Ann Loring [Currier], 7 May 1835, Mary Ann Loring Currier Letters, Andover Historical Society (hereafter, "AHS"); Mary Pierce Poor to Lucy Pierce Hedge, 28 Feb. 1855, Poor Family Papers, SL; Annie White to Cyrus C. Farnum, 24 Sept. 1843, Hooker Collection, SL.
25. Emmeline Augusta Ober, 2 June 1852, Diary, Beverly Historical Society (hereafter, "BHS").
26. Park, 18 Mar. 1849, Journal, vol. 3, BPL; James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (London, 1836); Mary Pierce to John Pierce and Lucy (Tappan) Pierce, 10 Dec. 1836, Poor Family Papers, SL; Joshua Edwin Harris, 12 Feb. 1858, Journal, Joshua Edwin Harris Papers, MeHS.
27. Charles M. Cobb, 3 May 1851, 30 Aug. 1851, 1-5 May 1850, and 16 Mar. 1851, Journal, VHS; Daniel P. Thompson, *The Rangers; or, The Tory's Daughter: A Tale, Illustrative of the Revolutionary History of Vermont, and the Northern Campaign of 1777* (Boston, 1851); John Lemprière, *Classical Dictionary, for Schools and Academies* (Claremont, N.H., 1838); Augustus Rogers, 31 Aug. 1847, 29 July 1851, 2 Apr. 1852, and 15 June 1853, Diaries, Rogers Family Papers, PEM; Sarah P.E. Hale to Edward Everett, 16 Feb. 1837 [?], Hale Papers, SSC; Benjamin R. Dean, Librarian, Taunton Social Library, Record of Books Circulated, 7 May 1856-3 Mar. 1859, OCHS. S. Compton Smith, *Chile con Carne; or, The Camp and the Field* (New York and Milwaukee, 1857).
28. Sarah E. Trask, 18 Feb. 1849, Diary, BHS.
29. I. Reynolds Hixon, 2 Mar. 1836, "Retrospective," Diary, OCHS.
30. On social control, see Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York, 1979). Selectivity biases can be glimpsed in Briggs, "The Sunday School Library," 69-70; Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States*, 37; and Robert A. Gross, "Much Instruction from Little Reading: Books and Libraries in Thoreau's Concord," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 97 (1987), 162-75.
31. Anthony D. Currier to Mary Ann Loring [Currier], 16 May 1835, Mary Ann Loring Currier Letters, AHS.
32. Olive Gay Worcester, 26 Oct. 1845, Journal, transcript, Swanton Family Papers, SL; Aurilla Ann Moffitt, 11 Aug. 1851, Personal Journal, OCHS. John Wilson, *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* (New York, 1851). Visiting in the region is treated in Karen V. Hansen, "Rediscovering the Social: Visiting Practices in Antebellum New England and the Limits of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Krishan Kumar and Jeff Weintraub (Chicago, 1997), 268-302.
33. Martha Osborne Barrett, 6 Jan. 1855, Diary, PEM; Mary Russell Mitford, *Belford Regis; or, Sketches of a Country Town* (Philadelphia, 1835); Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr, *Farmingdale* (New York, 1854); Mary Mudge, 18 Aug. 1854, Diary, SL; William Allen Drew, *Glimpses and Gatherings During a Voyage and Visit to London and the Great Exhibition in the Summer of 1851* (Augusta, Me., 1852). Zboray and Zboray, "Transcendentalism in Print," 351-2; "X," "Miseries of a Librarian," *New England Galaxy* 7:362 (17 Sept. 1824): 1; Carroll Norcross, 15 May 1852, Diary, Cargill-Knight-Norcross Families Papers, MeHS; William Cullen Bryant, *Poems* (Philadelphia, 1851); Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Poems* (Boston, 1851). George H. Clark, 17 Oct. 1846, Diary and memorandum book, Henry B. Dexter Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society (hereafter, "RIHS"); Ezra Warren Mudge, 5 Mar. 1833, Miscellaneous accounts, 1832-1833, and 17 Nov. 1834, Diary, Lynn Historical Society (hereafter, "LHS"); Levi Call, 19 Jan. 1861, Diary and accounts, NHHS; Christopher Keith, 25 Feb., 14 Apr., and 19 May 1858, Diary, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, RIHS; Joseph Lye, 6 Oct. 1828, "A Diary of my daily occupations," [transcript], LHS; and Julius Catlin, 18 Mar. 1844, Diary, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter, "CHS").
34. Several informants speak in terms of bringing the book to its home: Charles M. Cobb, 6 June 1852, Journal, VHS; Seth Shaler Arnold, 20 July 1849, Journal, VHS; Hannah Hicock Smith, 21 May 1845 and 15 Jan. 1849, Diary, State Archives, Connecticut State Library (hereafter, "CSL"); Harriet Low, 22 Sept. 1831, Journal, PEM. Lenders of newspapers seldom expected them back, for the custom of mailing them in lieu of letters made them the property of addressees.
35. Samuel May, Jr., to Richard D. Webb, 15 Apr. 1860, BPL; and miscellaneous book inscriptions, 1820s-1840s, throughout A.S.W. Rosenbach Collection of Early American Judaica, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.; Cindy Dickinson, "Creating a World of

Books, Friends, and Flowers: Giftbooks and Inscriptions, 1825-1850," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31 (1996): 53-66. Exceptional borrowers who kept accounts include Brookline minister John Pierce, "Book Lists," 1814-1849, Poor Family Papers, SL; and Emma Gammell, 12 Apr. 1851, Pocket Memorandum, 1851, NHHS. Mary Pierce Poor, list of books at back of pocket memorandum, 1850, vol. 19, Poor Family Papers, SL. Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 6 vols. (New York, 1849); August K. Gardner, *Old Wine in New Bottles; or, Spare Hours of a Student in Paris* (New York and Boston, 1848); Philip James Bailey, *Festus, A Poem* (Boston, 1849); Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion: Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church* (Boston, 1833); Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (New York, 1849-1850). John Park, Journal, vol. 3, concluding pages, BPL; on periodicals lent by him extracted from these pages, see Zboray and Zboray, "Transcendentalism in Print," 351, Table 6.

36. Charlotte Forten, 5 Mar. 1857, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*, ed. Brenda Stevenson (New York, 1988), 199; Persis Sibley Andrews Black, 12 Aug. 1849, Diary, MeHS. Benjamin R. Dean, Record of Books Circulated, 7 May 1856-3 Mar. 1859, OCHS; *Billets and Bivouacs; or, Military Adventures* (London, 1858); Elizabeth Dwight Cabot to Ellen Twisleton, 19 May 1860, Cabot Family Papers, SL; Cyrus Parker Bradley, 18 Sept. 1835, Diary, NHHS.

37. Brown University, "Powers and Duties of The Library Committee and Regulations of the Library," in Michael H. Harris, ed., *The Age of Jewett: Charles Coffin Jewett and American Librarianship, 1841-1868* (Littleton, Colo., 1975), 64; Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library*, 128-29. William Watson to Sarah Watson Dana, 23 Feb. 1838, Dana Family Papers, SL.

38. On invitations, see Frederick Lathrop Gleason, 1 Jan. 1861, Journal, CHS; Augustus Dodge Rogers, 12 Apr. 1847, Rogers Family Papers, PEM; Mellen Chamberlain, Diary and commonplace Book, 5 June 1843, BPL; Park, 24 Jan. 1839, Journal, vol. 3, BPL; Annie B. Lawrence, 1 Apr. 1839, Diary, Lamb Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter, "MHS"). On keys given, see: John Park, 1 Aug. 1844, Journal, vol. 3, BPL; Elizabeth Dwight Cabot to Ellen Twisleton, 22 Oct. 1854, Cabot Family Paper, SL. Osmon Oleander Baker, 9 Jan. 1830, Diary, NHHS; Forten, 27 May 1854, *Journals*, 62.

39. We summarize some of this scholarship, and add to it, in Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, "'Have You Read . . .?': Real Readers and Their Responses in Antebellum New England," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 52 (Sept. 1997): 139-70.

40. Persis Sibley Andrews Black, 21 Jan. 1843, Diary, MeHS; Mellen Chamberlain, 9 Oct. 1846, Journal, BPL; John Park, 10 June 1848, Journal, vol. 4, BPL; Ellen Wright Garrison to Eliza Wright, 19 Dec. 1860, Garrison Papers, SSC; Charlotte Adams to Asher Adams, 25 Feb. 1852, Chamberlain Adams Family Papers, SL; Cyrus Parker Bradley, 3 Mar. 1835, School Journal, and 3 Sept. 1835, Diary, NHHS.

41. Charles Coffin Jewett, "The Preface to the Brown University Library Catalog of 1843," reprinted in Harris, *The Age of Jewett*, 63.

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52. James Healy, 6 May 1849, Diary, CHC; Electa Kimberly, 14 Mar. 1857, Diary, CHS; William Willis, 8 Jan. 1854, Diary, microfilm, Portland Public Library, original in MeHS.

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