

At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880–1905

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This article explores the positive and negative aspects of the feminization of librarianship between 1880 and 1905, focusing on the early history of the Los Angeles Public Library. It examines the careers of three of the institution's premiere women librarians: Mary Foy, Tessa Kelso, and Mary Jones. Its goal is to propose a more complex understanding of how early women professionals managed their careers within the institutional and political environment in which they worked and to see what patterns emerge pertaining to the employment history of the first generation of women librarians.

In *Reclaiming the American Library Past* (1996) Suzanne Hildenbrand observes that

the narrow focus of library history, celebrating white male leaders and their institutions, reflects the politics of library history. It has forestalled the development of a realistic library history in step with contemporary historiography and fails to show the centrality of women to library development.

Hildenbrand goes on to acknowledge historians' recent biographical efforts to "write women in" and show them "as active agents, choosing their work and making valuable contributions in the face of enormous obstacles."¹ This article continues this biographical journey to discover women's place in the history of libraries and librarianship in America by looking at the careers of three women librarians working within the same institution, the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL).

Feminization: An Historical Construct

Between 1880 and 1920 women made significant inroads into the American workplace, dominating a number of established fields as well as creating and/or expanding others. Yet instead of signaling professional or economic parity, these hospitable occupations became "feminized," a

process that depressed salaries, limited professional advancement, and segregated women into low-status, nonadministrative positions. Still, labor historians have shown that women workers did not view their work as lacking in meaning or status. Indeed, young women enthusiastically and in record numbers entered the labor force at the turn of the century to work as clerks, telephone operators, secretaries, salesgirls, teachers, and librarians. They sought employment because of personal choice rather than economic need alone, and within these emerging female occupations many found relative autonomy and satisfaction as well as a community of like-minded friends. In addition, a few women enjoyed meteoric success in their chosen fields and attained positions of leadership and authority, at least during their professions' formative period. Feminization, then, had a contradictory message for early women professionals. It provided them unprecedented employment opportunities, yet the constraints of its gendered construction compromised, even thwarted, many promising careers.²

Librarianship offers a particularly good example of feminization's contradictions. In 1870 only 20% of the profession was female; by 1900 nearly 75% of all library employees were women, and they still account for over 78% of librarians today.³ As a result of this dramatic increase, early women librarians enjoyed a rare opportunity to help shape the emerging profession. These pioneers not only taught in but frequently directed library training schools. They were prominent in the American Library Association, they edited some of the profession's major journals and publications, and they directed many academic and public libraries. Moreover, because women predominated during librarianship's formative period, they were in a position to articulate the profession's ideals and goals, ones that, not coincidentally, reflected their own "gender-linked value system" of altruism, advocacy, and intellectual and moral uplift.⁴

Despite these myriad professional accomplishments, ambitious women librarians were frequently frustrated by the limitations of the feminized workplace. As Abigail Van Slyck has observed, although women librarians were "active partners," they were not "equal partners." Moreover, Van Slyck continues, library leaders "supported a highly gendered library hierarchy, in which men were to dominate executive and management positions in the field, while women were encouraged to fill less prestigious and lower-paid positions."⁵ As a result, even the most successful woman professional could find herself removed from her administrative post or demoted to a less responsible position. The feminization of librarianship, then, offered pioneering women professionals both opportunities and obstacles, as the early administrative history of the Los Angeles Public Library will demonstrate.

Origins of the Los Angeles Public Library

When the Los Angeles Library Association was organized in December 1872, Los Angeles was still a provincial outpost. Lacking a natural harbor or land transportation system, the city's population stood at less than 6,000, with an economy based on the same ranching and farming enterprises begun under Spanish and Mexican rule a century before. However, during the next fifteen years both the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroad companies established operations in Southern California, opening the region to massive commercial and real-estate development. When Mary Foy was hired as librarian in 1880, the population had grown to more than 11,000. At the time Tessa Kelso was employed in 1889, the population was well over 50,000, and when Mary Jones assumed the directorship in 1900, L.A.'s population topped 100,000. By the time Everett Perry became the library's chief executive in 1911, more than 310,000 people resided within the city that his institution served.⁶

At the outset of this great boom, Los Angeles developers and businessmen promoted an image of Los Angeles as a homogenous, prosperous, and progressive community, and expounded on the many business, health, and recreational opportunities the city afforded.⁷ It was rather disturbing to the city's champions, then, that Los Angeles could not claim a public library, the standard beacon of American civic pride and culture. John R. McConnell, former California state attorney general and founder of the Los Angeles Library Association, remarked in 1872 that he was "surprised that a city the size of Los Angeles, and which contained the most cultivated residents of the coast, should be without a public library."⁸ The Los Angeles *Star* likewise complained that "the absence of a place where a cultivated person may go for books of reference or standard library works has been spoken of to our injury abroad."⁹

On 7 December 1872 over 200 prominent and concerned merchants, lawyers, educators, and ministers gathered in a local theater to organize the library association.¹⁰ At this meeting Los Angeles pioneer John Downey offered the use of vacant space in a building he owned in the heart of the business district and near the historic Plaza, and the institution that would evolve into the Los Angeles Public Library was born. The original library consisted of two rooms. The larger room was called the "Book Room" for obvious reasons. The smaller space was tagged the "Gentlemen's Sitting Room" or "Conversation Room," and it contained newspapers, tables, chairs, and spittoons for the chess and checkers players who gathered there. The library appears to have been a popular resort for local men looking for respectable companionship and self-improvement, and its rooms were "filled every night with a crowd of

thoughtful, earnest young men, intent on improving their minds and increasing their stock of knowledge.”¹¹

The Los Angeles Library Association was unusual in that women did not play a significant role in its founding. Mrs. John Downey was given an honorary membership out of “courtesy.”¹² Otherwise, no woman was listed in the association’s founding documents, women were not represented on the board, and women were denied access to the library’s reading room. However, this situation quickly changed. Within its first six months of operation, the board discussed allowing “lady” limited membership, letting them use their male relatives’ membership cards to gain access to the library’s collections.¹³ In 1876 the library added a “Ladies Room” to its complex. Although the new room did not contain books, it did house a number of popular magazines as well as comfortable sofas and chairs for local clubwomen to use.

The Los Angeles Library Association became a tax-supported public library in March 1878, predating by eleven days the statewide Rogers Act, which authorized any incorporated town in California to levy a tax for the establishment of a free public library and reading room. As a result, the library’s initial governing structure was unlike other city libraries in that during the library’s formative period the mayor and city council served as the board of directors. In 1889 a new Los Angeles City Charter reorganized the library’s management by establishing a mayor-appointed board of library commissioners who served four-year, renewable terms. The new charter also established a regularized operating and acquisitions budget to be administered by the library board.

John C. Littlefield, a transplanted New Englander and editor of L.A.’s *Weekly Express*, was appointed the city’s first librarian in 1872. Littlefield’s former colleagues at the *Express* praised his selection, predicting that the librarian’s “attainments, industry and intelligence will prove of great value in giving the library such standing as we all desire.”¹⁴ Despite the general indifference of city officials, Littlefield made some significant improvements in the library: he successfully set up the library’s facilities, through fund-raisers and donations he more than doubled the library’s book holdings, and he compiled the library’s first catalogue. Unfortunately for Littlefield and the library, the position of librarian was considered a political appointment and viewed as part of the extensive patronage system then prevalent in Los Angeles government. Thus, the Office of Librarian was declared vacant each January, and it was up to the board of directors to reappoint the incumbent or select another whom they preferred. Indeed, the city charter indicated that the librarian “served at the pleasure of the board,” giving the directors the authority to appoint and dismiss librarians at their whim.

When the office of librarian was declared vacant in January 1879, the board replaced Littlefield with a partisan appointee, Patrick Connolly.

Connolly had no experience in library affairs; his previous employment has been described variously as a clerk, a painter, and a “typical Irish scholar.” Moreover, according to early LAPL board member William A. Spalding, what Connolly “did not know about running a library would have made a larger volume than any upon the public shelves.” Spalding suggested that Connolly—who ironically served as president of the Catholic Abstinence Society—was an alcoholic who regularly missed work for intervals of ten days or more.¹⁵ Although always discreet, the board minutes reveal serious concern over Connolly’s deportment and performance. “Charges” were made against him as early as January 1880, though these were subsequently “expunged” from the record. But in June the board asked the mayor not to endorse Connolly’s paycheck, and the following month Connolly was discharged for his “continued absence.” At this point board member William Spence moved that the board “elect a lady librarian.” The motion passed unanimously.¹⁶

For the next twenty-five years the LAPL would be headed by a series of women administrators: Mary E. Foy (1880–1884), Jessie Gavitt (1884–1889), Lydia Prescott (1889), Tessa Kelso (1889–1895), Clara Fowler (1895–1897), Harriet Child Wadleigh (1897–1900), and Mary L. Jones (1900–1905). Some were appointed because of their families’ political connections, others because of economic need. Kelso, Wadleigh, and Jones were Southern California migrants hired because of their experience with library work. Although all of these women administrators made noteworthy contributions to the LAPL, Foy, Kelso, and Jones were the most influential in determining the library’s policies, services, and overall character. Moreover, Foy, Kelso, and Jones were also involved in a series of conflicts with their boards of directors which culminated in abrupt resignation or dismissal. The successes and failures of these three notable L.A. librarians, then, help illuminate the experiences of late-nineteenth-century women professionals as they confronted the realities of feminization.¹⁷

Mary Foy (Sheri D. Irvin)

After Patrick Connolly was discharged, Mary Foy, the eighteen-year-old daughter of prominent local merchant Samuel Foy, approached Mayor John Toberman expressing interest in becoming the librarian for Los Angeles. Mayor Toberman was a family friend and next-door neighbor, and he advised her to contact all fifteen city council members to solicit their votes. “She promised, if appointed, that in the two months before taking office she would study librarianship with Ina Coolbrith, head of the Oakland Public Library.”¹⁸ Mary Foy and three others (two women and one man) were nominated for the position of librarian, and Foy was elected unanimously. Foy proceeded to spend the summer of 1880 in the



Figure 1. Mary Foy. Photograph courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank Photograph collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

San Francisco area, meeting with Ina Coolbrith, Frederic B. Perkins (head of the San Francisco Free Public Library), and librarians at the city's mercantile and mechanics libraries.

Unfortunately, the library board's minutes do not supply any information as to why they decided to hire a "lady librarian." There was precedence, however, for nominating a woman. Changes in the library board usually resulted in the nomination of a new librarian. When Patrick Connolly was nominated to replace John Littlefield, so also was a Cordelia Bradfield. Foy's nomination did not result from changes in the board, but from Connolly's incompetence. It is possible that Mayor Toberman perceived Foy in need of a job and wanted to be a good neighbor. It was not unusual for decisions to be based upon needs of the individual. As Joanne Passet has observed, library boards and communities "viewed the librarian's position as a form of charity—an honorable means of assisting needy men and women in the community."¹⁹ Indeed, in 1884 Foy herself would be replaced by a woman, Jessie Gavitt, whose economic need was assessed by the board to be greater than Foy's. Others attribute the board's hiring of Foy to heavy patronage by women of the library and their complaints regarding Connolly's intemperate behavior.²⁰ The board may have selected Foy because she represented the values that flourished in women's organizations. Therefore, it may have been a politic choice, a result of well-applied pressure by the city's powerful women's clubs. Outside of Los Angeles the employment of young women as librarians was becoming increasingly common, and according to Ray Held, by 1879 city libraries in Marysville, Oakland, Sacramento, and Petaluma had already hired women librarians.²¹

Finally, the board's action to hire a woman may have been largely economic. John Littlefield earned \$100 a month when he was hired in 1872, but his salary had been reduced to \$75 in 1878. In December 1878 board member S. H. Buchanan argued unsuccessfully to drop the salary even further to \$50 monthly, with no compensation for janitorial work. He repeated this argument the following year to no avail. Foy's starting salary was also \$75, and she too was expected to provide janitorial service. The board's increasing parsimony when it came to salaries, indeed any library-related expenditures, could well explain why it was time to hire a "lady librarian."²²

When Mary Foy assumed the duties of librarian for the Los Angeles Public Library on 1 September 1880, her responsibilities included

setting up a catalogue system, keeping the library accounts, acting as hostess in the Ladies Reading Room, serving as referee for ongoing chess games in the Newspaper Room, and settling bets made in the downstairs saloon on such questions as, 'Who wrote Webster's Dictionary: Noah or Daniel?'²³

The library was also intended to enhance L.A.'s cultural and intellectual life as well as to assist tourists temporarily in the city. In 1951, when Foy addressed the Native Daughters of the Golden West, she recalled,

You know one of the great services of the library in that day was to just act as headquarters for all the tourists who happened to be here. Anybody coming into any hotel in Los Angeles—any stranger in the city—all were welcome to take out books if they wanted them.²⁴

Early in Foy's tenure, the board appeared supportive of her activities and decisions. For example, on 1 February 1881 the board minutes note, "The Board gave the Librarian to understand that they would support her in any action she might take regarding unruly boys." When Foy suggested in September 1882 that the chess and checkers games be removed because of a complaint of noise, the board voted to remove the games. This would prove to be the most controversial incident involving Foy and library operations. It continued as a topic of public interest, seen occasionally to surface in the minutes of board meetings. On 2 January 1883 the board minutes note, "A petition from the citizens of Los Angeles praying for the restoration of the chess was presented, read and referred to the Finance Com." The minutes also include an undated newspaper clipping that discusses what improvements the library could make and recommends the chess room be set apart from the general library.²⁵

Foy's appointment was renewed for three years, during which time her neighbor Mayor Toberman presided as president of the library board. A new mayor was elected in 1884, C. E. Thom. This new mayor reorganized the board and did not re-appoint Foy. According to historian Jane Apostol, "The city council decided another woman was in more need of the salary and gave the job to Miss Jessie Gavitt, whose father had recently died, leaving small provision for his widow and children."²⁶

Upon Foy's resignation, she published a valedictory in the newspaper, where she criticized the board for its lack of involvement and interest in the library. This is the first real clue as to Foy's relationship with the board. Regarding the board's activities, she states,

Had their meetings been more punctual and had the committees taken more of their own work upon themselves and more fully realized that the duties of the Board were of as vital interest as those of the Librarian, then, I think, the Library would have reached the standard of excellence which our taxpayers have a right to expect.

She points out that there were only ten meetings between September 1880 and December 1882, and ends the piece with, "Let the office which

prevents crime be at least as important in your eyes as the one which punishes."²⁷ Despite Foy's frustration, her experience as LAPL librarian "offered her the first taste of politics [and] was but the beginning of active participation in the world of affairs."²⁸ After leaving the library, Foy enjoyed a full career of teaching and political involvement until her death in 1962, a few months before her one-hundredth birthday.

The significance of Foy's 1880 appointment as the first woman librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library underscores the changing social expectations of the 1870s and 1880s. The library board may have appointed Foy for personal reasons, based on acquaintance; practical reasons, based on local business interests to maintain an image for tourists and settlers drawn to Los Angeles; and political reasons, emerging from their recognition of the changing status of women and the political muscle of women's organizations. Foy's appointment also began a twenty-five-year trend of women being appointed as librarian. Charles Fletcher Lummis would be the man used to break that trend. Ironically, it was Lummis, a prominent literary man but not a librarian, who observed, "Miss Mary E. Foy was the first person in this city to grasp the privileges and the responsibilities of librarianship."²⁹

Tessa Kelso (Karen F. Gracy)

In the annals of library history, the brief tenure of Tessa L. Kelso at the Los Angeles Public Library stands out as a period of remarkable accomplishment. She guided what was still a small, municipal public library into something altogether more impressive: a civic institution that stood as a fine example of progressive library administration to the rest of the United States.

Previous to her time at LAPL, Kelso was a successful newspaper-woman and publicist. In her six years at LAPL, she used her public relations experience to increase circulation and holdings dramatically. A capable administrator and innovator, Kelso introduced the Dewey Decimal Classification System and interlibrary loan services, established a library training class, instituted a civil service program for hiring new librarians, and founded the Southern California Library Club. She also abolished most subscription fees for library card holders, advocated an open-stacks policy, and established the first delivery stations to extend service to the growing neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

Outside of the library, Kelso exhibited great zeal for activism and reform. At the national level, Kelso participated often at the annual meetings of the American Library Association, offering witty comments and rejoinders upon topics under debate. A prototypical feminist of the Progressive Era, she participated actively in local women's organizations

such as the well-known Friday Morning Club. Her fervor for art and music led to substantial LAPL collections of art books and music scores and the establishment of the Ruskin Art Club.

As this brief inventory of her many accomplishments shows, Tessa Kelso was a remarkable woman. Yet, at the pinnacle of her success Kelso was forced to resign her post, and she returned to the East to work in the publishing industry. Although she worked at Baker and Taylor in the library service department for over twenty years, her career in public librarianship was over.

By all published accounts, Kelso's forced exodus was universally condemned by Los Angeles citizens as the shameful result of partisan politics. From no corner was there any suggestion that Kelso's performance as city librarian was substandard. Yet, a current of disapproval ran underneath the praise for her accomplishments. Kelso was a woman unconcerned with conventions of the day. She had no compunctions about litigation, filing two lawsuits during her tenure—one concerning her use of public funds and the other resulting from a minister who made slanderous statements about her character. She had a "habit of strolling about the streets, her hair short, and wearing no hat, smoking cigarettes, and obviously not caring in the least for anyone's opinion on the subject."³⁰

The cumulative effect of Kelso's protofeminist stance may have resulted in a *sub rosa* movement to remove her as librarian. An unconventional woman such as Kelso was tolerated while the institution under her charge remained small and unimportant, but by 1895 the Los Angeles Public Library rivaled other public libraries in the country. Twenty-five years ahead of her time, Kelso was too progressive for the conservative coalition that controlled city government. In truth, she was a victim of her own success. Her attempts to bring prestige and admiration to the Los Angeles Public Library had the side effect of focusing the limelight on herself, highlighting a lifestyle and opinions that were unpopular with the conservative contingent of Los Angeles society and government. When this contingent gained the upper hand on the library board, Kelso's days as city librarian were numbered.

Kelso assumed the directorship in 1889, when the board of directors once again decided a change was needed in librarians. Kelso, a twenty-six-year-old Cincinnati native, had no previous library experience. Due to her active participation in the American Library Association, she was, nonetheless, conversant with the difficulties and challenges of public librarianship. (She had been a member of the ALA since the Milwaukee Conference in 1886, where she was covering the event for the *Cincinnati Illustrated News*.)³¹ In addition, she was a woman of culture, renowned for her knowledge of books.



Figure 2. Tessa Kelso. Photograph courtesy of Pacific National Bank photograph collection/ Los Angeles Public Library.

Librarian Kelso immediately set about making major changes to improve the services of the library, aided no doubt by a generous increase in the operating budget. As her first chore, she organized the library's move from the now cramped quarters in the Downey Block to the third floor of the new City Hall. The library remained closed for two months while staff cleaned, catalogued, classified, and shelved books in their new location.

Progress after the move to improved quarters was swift and impressive. During the months of September, October, and November of 1889, the library added 4,771 volumes to the collection of 6,356 books. Circulation increased from 4,833 transactions in September to 7,261 in November, likely due to a combination of increased attendance in the reading rooms and a greatly expanded collection. Kelso writes,

That our citizens are awakening to the importance of having a good Library in their midst is apparent from the interest expressed and in the increased apportionment for its support, and it is regretted that a report at this time can give but a meagre idea of how well founded this realization is.³²

The librarian's report for 1890 shows a continuation of the work begun at Kelso's appointment. Acquisition, circulation, and attendance figures continued to rise, and the project of building a card catalogue according to Dewey's decimal classification system and Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog* was begun in earnest. The library also inaugurated special collections in several key areas: art, music, local history, and government documents.

From this evidence, it is obvious that Kelso was trying to expand services to encourage more Los Angeles residents to take advantage of the resources at their disposal. In particular, she established an early connection with the educational system of Los Angeles. The board of directors reports that the library had "endeavored to make the library virtually a part of our public school system."³³ Los Angeles teachers would later become some of Kelso's staunchest allies, offering support at the time of her forced resignation in 1895.

It was during this time that Kelso promoted Adelaide Hasse to assistant librarian. Kelso recognized Hasse's abilities early on and set her to the task of organizing the library's large collection of government documents, an assignment for which she was well suited. Hasse would later go on to create a classification system for government documents, which is still in use by the United States Superintendent of Documents and many depository libraries. Evidence suggests that Kelso became Hasse's mentor, encouraging and inspiring her to adopt progressive views and become

an outspoken, independent feminist.³⁴ Their friendship was close, and beginning in 1892 they became roommates.³⁵ Their joint resignation in 1895 did not cut short their friendship, for they remained in contact after moving back East.

After two years of highly satisfactory work, the board of directors were quite impressed with the city librarian's achievements:

The librarian, Miss Kelso, has demonstrated her possession of excellent executive ability and to her knowledge of the wide range of resources that can be made helpful in each department, and to her energy and quick intelligence is owing no small share of the library's present prosperous condition.³⁶

Kelso now had the administration of the library firmly in hand, having a facility for securing excellent assistants and an enthusiasm for adopting the newest methods of library economy. She was quickly building up the Los Angeles Public Library to be one of the most progressive in the nation, and in the 1891–1893 interval, Kelso continued along this course.

The library in 1891 took the important step of abolishing all dues, including those previously charged for home circulation. Although in 1889 fees had been reduced to fifty cents per quarter, Kelso felt strongly that even so small a fee discouraged many from using the library. As expected, the abolition of dues resulted in increased attendance and circulation, and the impact on staffing and resources was felt. To increase the number of assistants without burdening the library's current budget, Kelso began a training class to teach young women the rudiments of librarianship. The training class had the added benefit of providing the library with a pool of well-trained prospective employees from which to hire assistants.

In 1891 six pupils began to train and were at the same time engaged at the library. Two years later the number of pupils had expanded to thirty. The prospectus for the training class states:

The training class of the Los Angeles Public Library is the first public library class organized for the purpose of training pupils in the rudiments of library science. The experiment was largely the result of a firm conviction that the best interests of a library depend in a great measure on the nonpartisan method of providing service. To eliminate everything that savors of personal or political influence, and make all appointments solely on the basis of individual merit, is the only means whereby a thoroughly efficient staff can be obtained.³⁷

The date of this brochure indicates that the training class was among the earliest of such schools; only the Pratt Institute, founded in 1890 in Brooklyn, predates it.³⁸

The introduction of civil service into the hiring practices of the library through the means of the training classes was a first for Los Angeles city government. The pointed language referring to “personal or political influence” shows that Kelso and the board of directors at that time were well aware of the effects of politics on the administration of the library. Unfortunately, those efforts to provide job security for library personnel would collapse two years later, when a new board of directors flaunted the civil service regulations previously implemented.

However, between 1891 and 1893 the city librarian enjoyed the full support of the board. Although two members were replaced in 1891, both of the replacements were sympathetic to Kelso’s progressive plans. In 1892 the library opened a delivery station in Boyle Heights so that patrons did not have to travel great distances to visit the library at its location in City Hall. In her report Kelso asserts the importance of expanding access to books in this manner, stating that “free distribution of library books has become as much a necessity as free delivery of letters.”³⁹ During the following year, several other delivery stations were established near University Avenue, in East Los Angeles, and on Angeleno Heights. The library also began to distribute books in public schools in 1893, having taken over the school libraries the previous year. In doing so, the library hoped to bring “children and families in contact with books that would otherwise make no use of a library, and above all to direct and in a great measure control the character of the reading of the young.”⁴⁰ Similar to other librarians of the era, Kelso felt strongly that the library should be a positive force in the education of youthful library users.

To encourage even more participation and interest in the activities of the library, in November of 1891 Kelso began the Southern California Library Club. At club meetings, papers were read and discussed. Initially these papers concerned subjects of library science, but eventually art and literature were topics as well.⁴¹ Teachers as well as librarians formed the core membership of the club. At the same time that Kelso launched the club, the first issue of the *Library Bulletin* was published. The primary aim of the *Bulletin* was to distribute monthly updates to the finding list, at that time a crucial service since the card catalogue was not yet complete. However, the most interesting aspects of the *Bulletin* were its short, didactic editorials and reports on the most popular literature of the day. Kelso often took the opportunity to proselytize the benefits of the public library. In the first issue, she reminds readers that “in Southern California out of 24 towns of over 1000 inhabitants 10 have libraries. Our

State law makes it possible for all towns to tax themselves to support a library. No progressive community can afford to be without one."⁴²

A final event of note in the period of 1891–1893 was the attendance of Tessa Kelso at the World's Congress of Librarians and the American Library Association, both held in Chicago in July of 1893. In the annual report for that year, the board of directors made special note of the importance of sending a delegate to these important meetings (such a subject was not a normal topic for the annual reports).⁴³ Despite this board's authorization, City Auditor, Fred H. Teale, challenged Kelso's reimbursement request for the \$200 expense of attending the Chicago meetings, and ultimately Kelso was forced to sue Teale for the money.⁴⁴

The lawsuit against Teale was the first ripple in what was, up until that point, a calm sea. Teale's accusations that funds were being misappropriated and misused damaged the formerly stellar reputation of the library and its librarian. A public that had approved of the progressive methods of the library now began to question how the library was being run.

In July of 1894, the *Los Angeles Herald* published a caustic editorial entitled, "Plain Facts About the Library," in which the financial policies of the library, as implemented by George Dobinson (president of the board of directors) and Kelso, were critiqued strongly:

The principle that the laborer is worth his or her hire, is one that should be introduced in the public library. There are a few girls working there who do the greater portion of the work and receive the minimum pay. Absorbed in deep, abstruse problems, with reference to the ethics of bibliology to be sometime projected on the heads of sapient thinkers in some book congress in Chicago, San Francisco or Hong Kong (with expenses paid by the taxpayers), it is very rare, indeed, that Miss Kelso or her high-salaried assistants condescend to do anything in the way of doling out books to the library patrons.⁴⁵

The author goes on to suggest that if Kelso and other high-ranking assistants "buckled down to work" in the reading rooms and workroom, the operating budget of the library could be reduced to \$6,000 a year. Ironically, the city council had already reduced the library's apportionment from tax revenues for the 1894–1895 fiscal year by \$4,700.⁴⁶ In their annual report for 1894 the board of directors points out that

the salary expenditures of the Library have been kept down with much rigor in order to save money with which to buy books demanded by the public; the amount paid the members of the staff

does not fittingly represent their worth, and is far below that paid by any similar institution in the country doing the same amount of business.⁴⁷

The ill will evidenced in the editorial suggests that certain constituencies had grown tired of the progressive policies of the library. In the opinion of the *Los Angeles Herald*, librarians should hand out books and type catalogue cards, not attend professional gatherings to exchange knowledge. Any activities that did not yield direct, tangible benefits to the library users were suspect. In such an environment of mistrust and allegation, the positions of the directors and the librarian were endangered. It would be only a short while before Dobinson and Kelso's foes were offered a chance to oust them.

Soon after this captious editorial was published, Kelso found herself again under fire. On this occasion criticism of the administration of the library was coupled with a personal attack when a local clergyman, Reverend Campbell of the First Methodist Church, voiced his disapproval of the library's acquisition of Jean Richepin's *Le Cadet*, a French novel "of immoral character." Campbell publicly denounced the librarian, praying for the redemption of her soul during a sermon. Kelso was outraged, particularly since she did not speak French, had not been responsible for the selection of that volume, and was not even a member of Campbell's congregation! She sued Campbell for malicious slander.⁴⁸

Such public criticism could only have had a deleterious effect on Kelso's reputation among the conservative elements of the community. At the same time, she faced unresolvable administrative problems, which hindered the successful operation of the library. Though Kelso ran LAPL with the same business acumen that she displayed earlier in her tenure, she was battling the difficulties imposed by a shrinking operating budget and increasingly cramped work space: "the present quarters of the library are so cramped and inadequate, that the public are subjected to crowding, bad ventilation, delays and confusion which make the drawing of a book a disgraceful scramble."⁴⁹ In December of 1894, Kelso complained that "the status of the Library for the past two years has been one of the frantic struggle to do, in mercantile parlance, a \$100,000 business on a \$10,000 capital."⁵⁰

On 8 March 1895 the first hint of what was to come appeared in the *Los Angeles Evening Express*. The paper reported that because the two-year term of the library board was about to expire, a new board would soon be appointed by newly elected Mayor Frank Rader. "In view of this the applicants for appointment as Librarian are becoming especially active. A number of applications have been filed for the place."⁵¹ The article also recounted that a petition was circulated stating that Kelso and Adelaide

Hasse were about to resign to go East. Kelso was quoted as considering that statement to be “outrageously presumptuous.” Despite her denials, on 18 March the newspaper again reported that

While no official intimation is given out, it is generally believed that this entire change in the membership of the Board means a change of head librarians. Mayor Rader, as an experienced business man, believes that there are many places in both city and county government where greater economy and better management can be practiced, so as to bring public affairs nearer to the same judicious management observed in private business, and that the library is one of them.

The editors of the *Los Angeles Herald* were more optimistic about Kelso's future, pointing out that

The good work of the library has not been by accident. Some one with a large knowledge of books, with a broad general culture, a capable grasp of details, and the power to get the best service out of assistants, has been at the head of the institution. Everyone who patronizes the library knows who this person is, and the fact that she is a woman does not make the work less creditable to her nor the results less valuable to the city. . . . Miss Kelso's work speaks for itself, and the reading and thinking people of the city know what it is. The fact that she is not popular in certain political circles can have no particular bearing on the question. The schools and the library should be kept out of politics. We believe that the new board will give a just recognition to the unusual merits of the present librarian by a unanimous vote for her re-election.⁵²

However, between 18 March and 2 April (the next meeting of the board) a confluence of events contributed to the instability of Kelso's position at LAPL. On 23 March the *Los Angeles Herald* reported that the Supreme Court of Los Angeles County had ruled in favor of Kelso in her suit against Fred Teale. The court pronounced that the decision of the members of the library board should be honored:

It was not the province of this official [Teale] to judge whether the benefits to be derived by the taxpayers and patrons of the library from what might be learned by a delegate to a congress of librarians were too remote, too speculative and too chimerical to make the expense of such a delegate a legal charge upon the public funds. That question was one to be determined by the directors

in the first instance, and it must be presumed that a state of circumstances was shown under which the expenditure would be authorized and acted upon by the board when it made its appropriation.⁵³

For those members of city government who believed that the librarian and the board should be shown to be fiscally irresponsible, this outcome must have been galling.

On 1 April Kelso received another favorable ruling in the matter of her libel suit against Reverend Campbell when the court decided the prayer offered up for Kelso was slanderous. She had argued that “by his invocation the minister conveyed the charge that [she] was a sinful and immoral woman and unworthy of being librarian by reason of her moral delinquencies.” The court agreed with Kelso’s claim that Campbell “intended to injure her by innuendo,” and gave the defendant ten days to file an appeal.⁵⁴

On the same day that the ruling in the slander suit was handed down, the library board met again, and in the words of the *Los Angeles Herald* the proceedings were a “circus.” Given the very public discussion of the past month over whether Kelso and Hasse would be allowed to retain their jobs, it is not surprising that they came to the meeting prepared to do battle. At the beginning of the meeting the directors passed two resolutions, the first reaffirming the civil service program that had been implemented for the past three years, and the second stating that no changes in staffing would be made until the close of the fiscal year.⁵⁵ Kelso had hoped that the board members would be forced to make a decision regarding appointing a new librarian immediately, before they had had a chance to review applications for the position. Thus, she objected to the resolution, “saying that it placed her in an unpleasant position, she having been in charge for six years, and did not like the idea of being practically on probation for three months.”⁵⁶

At this point, Kelso decided to play her trump card, presenting the board with her resignation—to take effect immediately. Hasse followed suit, forcing the board to vote for successors when they were obviously not prepared to do so. Nevertheless, nominations were given (Kelso being among those nominated), and a vote was taken. A tally of the votes revealed that the five board members could not reach a majority on who was to be the next city librarian. At a loss for what action to take, the board asked Kelso and Hasse to rescind their resignations. After they agreed to do so, the board took the unorthodox step of expunging all mention of the preceding events concerning the resignations. The first round had gone to Kelso and Hasse, and the *Los Angeles Herald* noted that “Miss Tessa Kelso looked happy while the board seemed ill at ease.”⁵⁷

In the next meeting, on 8 April, the board would come to regret their decision to expunge the minutes. The city attorney had been consulted to provide his opinion on whether the board had violated procedure, and the board was obliged to amend the minutes to reinstate what had been deleted. The anti-Kelso faction of the board had the upper hand in this meeting, with Frank Flint introducing a resolution to reduce the salary of the librarian from \$150 to \$125 per month and the salary of the assistant librarian from \$100 to \$75 per month. Though Henry O'Melveny protested this suggestion, maintaining that this action would likely result in the resubmittal of letters of resignation by Kelso and Hasse, the resolution was passed with a majority, the yea votes being cast by Frank Flint, George Bonebrake, and H. E. Storrs. P. W. Search, the City Superintendent of Education who was present at the meeting, lodged a protest in the name of the teachers of Los Angeles, to no avail. Kelso had been outgunned by a board of men who, in their determination to sweep the last vestiges of the old administration under the rug, cared little for her past experience and accomplishments.

The public response to the attempt by the board to humble Kelso and Hasse ranged from approval to outright disgust. On 10 April, an editorial in the *Los Angeles Herald*, entitled "Economy in the Library," cynically stated,

Strictly from the point of view of municipal economy the fierce and emphatic action of the new library board in cutting down the librarian's salary is to be highly commended. It is always expected of new boards that they do something of this kind and if they show special discretion in striking at the pay of those who hold their positions by reason of brains and competency rather than through political influence, they are fairly safe from adverse criticism.⁵⁸

It did not take long for Kelso and Hasse to submit their resignations anew rather than suffer the indignities to which they were being subjected. At the 29 April board meeting, Kelso read three letters of resignation (the third being offered by the head of the reference department, Estelle Haines). The directors quickly accepted the resignations, the only dissenting voice being O'Melveny who expressed his regret at the loss of the talented librarian and her assistants.

The board immediately set about electing Kelso and Hasse's successors. Clara B. Fowler, a woman with no library or literary experience, was chosen as city librarian, while Daisy Austin became the assistant librarian. Although it is unclear why Fowler was chosen, evidence suggests that the appointment of Austin was a political reward of sorts. Daisy Austin's father, Henry C. Austin, had run against Frank Rader in the 1895 mayoral

election, and Austin dropped out of the race under the condition that his daughter receive a substantial promotion in the library. At the time of her appointment as assistant librarian, she had only attended the first term of the LAPL training class, making her quite unqualified for the position she was given. In addition, her appointment amounted to a complete violation of civil service that the board had just recently affirmed as proper for library employment.⁵⁹

After the meeting adjourned, Hasse remarked bitterly that

I should very much like to have remained in Los Angeles with the library. I should like to have played chip for chip and met every move as it was made in this game. But what is a person to do where expert politicians are opposed to a woman?⁶⁰

One might infer from that statement that Hasse felt the board members to be opposed to a particular type of woman—a progressive woman. Otherwise, they would have elected a man to replace Kelso, instead of choosing Clara Fowler. Such statements also suggest that Hasse had realized that their dismissal was inevitable once their champions on the library board were deposed, despite her refusal to acknowledge their fate publicly in March of 1895. Indeed, by the 29 April meeting of the board, Hasse had already accepted another position in the library of the Superintendent of Documents located in the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C.

Kelso, upon being asked by Director Stewart to assist the incoming librarian, snapped that

Mrs. Fowler is amply competent to look out for herself, else this board would certainly not have elected her librarian. I am now out of a position, and will have to devote all of my time to finding a new opportunity to earn my bread and butter.⁶¹

Unlike Hasse, however, Kelso did not seek employment as a librarian after being ousted. After submitting her resignation for the second time, Kelso moved back East, taking a position at the publishing house of Charles Scribner's Sons. In 1898 she began to work at Baker and Taylor, and remained there for many years as the head of their library department. Although she continued to attend American Library Association meetings for another two decades, she never again worked in a public library.

Twenty years ago, Evelyn Geller lamented the loss to the profession: "Had she survived as a leader, we might have been able to boast of our own Jane Addams." Kelso did not disappear from the public eye com-

pletely, however, as Geller's statement suggests. Her progressive zeal merely found other outlets, as indicated by her active commitment to reform through the New York Women's Municipal League and her employment at the New York *Evening Post*, where she wrote weekly columns for and about working women.

Sadly, beyond these snippets of information, not much is known about Kelso's life in New York after she left Los Angeles. Primary source material on Kelso is scant. Research has thus far failed to uncover any personal papers, and aside from a few scrapbooks, the collections of the Los Angeles Public Library contain no trace of the tenure of Tessa Kelso. Secondary materials are largely anecdotal, and much of the information contained within them is contradictory or unverifiable. Lastly, aside from her annual reports and a few writings, Kelso was not a major contributor to library literature. There is no doubt, however, that her contributions to librarianship during her tenure at LAPL were remarkable and deserve a prominent place in library history.

Mary L. Jones (Debra Gold Hansen)

The administration of Mary L. Jones, LAPL's chief librarian from May 1900 through June 1905, culminated a generation of feminization and professionalization. Jones expanded programs and policies initiated by her predecessors, modernized the library's cataloging and bibliographic efforts, and brought children's and readers' services in line with professional practices in the East. She also strengthened ties with local schools, settlement houses, playgrounds, and the like, institutionalizing the library's social service and recreational functions. However, in pushing LAPL's outreach role to its limits, Jones privileged women and children at the expense of more serious (i.e., male) researchers. This disturbed and frustrated the board of directors, which had a different agenda for the library. By spring 1905 the board decided that the LAPL required a male executive officer whose ideology and intentions mirrored their own.

Mary Jones was born in 1865 in Bristol, Wisconsin. Of Welsh immigrant heritage, her father was a Methodist minister. She attended the University of Nebraska and later Melvil Dewey's New York State Library School. Graduating in 1892, she was hired as University of Nebraska librarian, where she remained until the school's president informed her that he planned to "secure a man for librarian as soon as the University could pay a fitting salary."⁶² During 1897 and 1898, Jones worked at the University of Illinois School of Library Economy, the Iowa State Library, and the American Library Association. In the spring of 1900, she was appointed LAPL's head librarian, following a brief stint as an assistant librarian.

As director, Jones expanded and modernized the library, focusing on three main areas: collection building, children's services, and access and outreach. Her first goal was to improve the library's fiction and nonfiction collections, and between 1900 and 1904 the library increased from 60,000 to over 110,000 volumes. She also added several sizable special collections, including numerous photographs, exhibition catalogues, painting reproductions, scientific treatises, and technical and engineering reports. In 1903, the library purchased 500 out-of-print Spanish language books, forming the foundation of the institution's impressive early California history collection.

To bring LAPL in line with national trends, Jones next focused on developing children's services. She increased the department's acquisitions budget and agreed to purchase textbooks for local schools. She dispatched staff members to mothers' circles and child-study groups to advocate parents' important role in stimulating good reading habits and, moreover, closed the book stacks to children so that adults could monitor youngsters' book selection. Her staff compiled topical reading lists for the library's young clientele, and this work by 1903 evolved into a separate card catalogue for juvenile literature. As a consequence of this sustained effort, Jones felt confident that L.A. children's reading had "greatly improved."⁶³

Jones's work with children was emblematic of her mission to increase library use and access. During her administration the library opened every day but Christmas. She liberalized access policies, lowering minimum age requirements from twelve to ten and abolishing vestigial monetary guarantees for library privileges. Her predecessor had opened the library's book stacks to the public; Jones did the same for magazines. She also set up a "new books" shelf for quick perusal of incoming materials and established a separate fiction catalogue to facilitate searches for popular items. Due to these measures, annual circulation jumped from 392,000 in 1900 to 751,000 in 1904, ranking the LAPL twelfth in the nation.⁶⁴ The main beneficiaries of these innovations were women and children. With more than half of the acquisitions budget spent on fiction, magazines, and children's books, twice as many women as men obtained new library cards during Jones's administration.

Jones's success in increasing library usage rendered its already cramped quarters unbearable for staff and patrons. To alleviate space problems, Jones set up branch libraries throughout the city. Tessa Kelso had experimented with delivery and deposit stations, whereby the local residents provided space and volunteers, and the library supplied a regular shipment of books. Emulating eastern libraries, Jones now transformed these temporary reading rooms into regular branch libraries with permanent collections, regular operating hours, and their own branch



Figure 3. Mary L. Jones. Photograph courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank photograph collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

librarian.⁶⁵ The first branch was established for local children and immigrants in the Boyle Heights district east of Los Angeles in 1900. By 1904 the LAPL operated eight others at sites throughout the city, including the El Felix Hogar Settlement House, the Pico Heights Improvement Society, the Presbyterian Sunday School, Los Angeles High School, Grand Avenue School, the Hollenbeck Home for elderly and disabled adults, and the YWCA hotel for single girls. These small libraries had a decidedly social-service orientation, bringing library materials to children, single women, the elderly, and the poor. Serious researchers were directed to the downtown library.

Perhaps Jones's most ambitious undertaking was to improve the library's cataloguing. "Next to an intelligent attendant," remarked Jones, "the most important item in a library is a catalogue."⁶⁶ Desiring that the LAPL have "as perfect a card catalogue as has been devised," Jones not only increased the cataloguing staff, she also began purchasing cataloguing records from other institutions, such as the Library of Congress, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Cleveland Public Library.⁶⁷ In so doing, the LAPL became one of the first libraries to participate in a national cataloguing network.

In her 1904 annual report, Jones reflected with characteristic modesty upon what she had accomplished:

It is worthy of comment that during the past four years the library has nearly doubled in size both in number of volumes it contains and in the extent of the home circulation. During the same period the staff of the library has increased from thirty-one, nine of whom were employed part time, to forty-four, twenty of whom have been appointed since 1900. I know of nothing which can speak more for the efficiency of the library service.

In this same report, the board of directors praised their librarian and declared that the LAPL's popularity "indicates a degree of intelligence and culture . . . gratifying to all who have at heart the best interests of the city."⁶⁸

Despite this apparent satisfaction with library management, the 1900–1905 annual reports exposed recurring facilities and personnel problems. Each year both the board and head librarian issued desperate pleas for a new, stand-alone library. Jones lamented that her staff worked under conditions "scarcely conceivable to one not familiar with the circumstance,"⁶⁹ while the directors insisted that the LAPL deserved a building comparable with those in other major metropolitan areas. Unfortunately, their joint call went unheeded.

To deal with deteriorating, oversubscribed rooms, Jones resorted to measures that simultaneously undermined her liberal access policies and frustrated library users. Citing overcrowded and hazardous conditions, she restricted public access to the fiction and documents sections. To increase shelf space and work areas, she eliminated both the ladies reading room and the newspaper alcove and consigned many children's books to an external storage facility.

The deteriorating building and impacted workspace not only inconvenienced patrons but also exacerbated existing staff tensions. The most divisive issue was the implementation of civil service for city employees. In 1892 Tessa Kelso had instituted formal procedures governing the hiring, placement, and promotion of library attendants. In 1903 despite objections from the board, the city imposed its own civil service requirements on the library staff, which required workers to pass two sets of exams, one administered by the library and the other by the city. This meant that all library employees, save the head librarian, had to take the civil service exam to retain their current positions. Although all but one attendant passed this initial exam, it precipitated a rash of resignations and absences for "ill health."⁷⁰ Notwithstanding that civil service increased wages modestly, at \$35 per month attendants were among the city's lowest paid workers.

Branch library employees were particularly discontented. To ensure trained personnel at the various sites, Jones created in 1902 a new position of branch librarian. Although paid slightly more than regular attendants, these librarians had to remain on the premises from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. Isolated in the town's poorer sections, forced to work nights, and divorced from their central library colleagues, attendants complained bitterly.

Jones also was plagued by ongoing difficulties with certain employees. She even told one of her librarians that had she been a man she would "have been justified in shooting down some of the attendants on account of their unruly conduct."⁷¹ Jones left most staff disciplining to her first assistant, Celia Gleason. Attendants resented Gleason, complaining that she had been unfairly exempted from the civil service exam and that she treated them too harshly. Jones, however, relied on Gleason completely.

Jones's most incendiary personnel problem was Nora Miller. A product of LAPL's first training class, Miller was library board member Isidore Dockweiler's "protégé," and in 1902 he convinced the board, despite Jones's objections, to appoint her second assistant librarian. In February 1903, after months of tension, the two librarians had such a serious argument that Miller pressed charges against her supervisor.⁷² Jones, complained Miller, had behaved in an "unladylike manner" toward herself

and other attendants. Furthermore, Miller accused the head librarian of being under the “hypnotic influence” of Celia Gleason, who ran the library behind the scenes.⁷³ The board conducted a thorough investigation, interviewing the library staff about Jones’s behavior and effectiveness as a manager. In the end, the board, with the exception of Dockweiler, voted to exonerate Jones. “The matter is too trivial to warrant the time and expense it is entailing,” Director A. W. Fisher commented dismissively to the *Los Angeles Times*. “These ladies have spats.”⁷⁴

The Miller case confirmed the liabilities—squabbling and petty jealousy—that the board felt prevented female employees from working together toward larger institutional goals.⁷⁵ Instead of looking to Jones to remedy the dissension, the board held her accountable. To restore harmony, they gave Miller a lengthy leave of absence and passed rules to regulate on-the-job deportment: Attendants were forbidden to leave the building, to receive visitors, or to gossip, while posted signs reminded them to “be courteous.”

In addition to being concerned about Jones’s personnel management, the board was extremely dissatisfied with her financial practices. They disliked the librarian’s “playing favorites” with “effete” eastern establishments instead of patronizing local businesses. For example, the board considered Jones’s ordering of equipment and supplies from the Boston-based Library Bureau “peculiar,” “careless,” and “unbusinesslike.” As merchant Siegfried Marshutz maintained, “I absolutely hate to send money out of this town if I can help it.” The board thus dictated that all contracts, so far as possible, be awarded to Los Angeles firms. Jones, resenting this interference, argued that certain establishments manufactured items exclusively for libraries. But the board refused to compromise on the matter.⁷⁶

Jones reluctantly capitulated to the unbending board and hired a local firm to make library catalogue cards. When the cards arrived, though, they were miscut and deemed otherwise inferior. One can only imagine the librarian’s frustration at seeing her “perfect catalog” marred by the amateurish work of local printers and her concomitant annoyance at the board’s failure to adopt industry standards. Jones rejected the offending cards and ordered a new set from the Library Bureau. The board, infuriated by the action, considered Jones insolent and insubordinate.

By spring 1905 the board decided that an administrative change was imperative. “Were Miss Jones occupying the position of first or second assistant librarian,” Dockweiler reasoned, “I believe she could be of considerable service in the library.” But she required the supervision of “a forceful and energetic librarian.”⁷⁷ In short, the Los Angeles Public Library needed to be headed by a man with strong business and political connections and the authority to discipline the staff. It was Dockweiler

who engineered Jones's dismissal. Only the previous year he had successfully lobbied Mayor Owen McAleer to have his friends and allies, Foster Wright and Siegfried Marshutz, fill two board vacancies. As for the mayor, he agreed to support a change in the library's administration, but he did not want to get embroiled in "a lot of women's rows."⁷⁸ Unbeknownst to Jones, Dockweiler then convinced the board to ask flamboyant and noted man of letters Charles Lummis to serve as LAPL Librarian. After some initial hesitation, Lummis agreed.⁷⁹

As Lummis pondered the board's offer, Jones approached Chairman John A. Trueworthy, demanding raises for herself and Gleason. When he refused, Jones became agitated and, according to the affronted Trueworthy, spoke to him in a most "insolent and sarcastic manner." A few days later, he asked for Jones's resignation, adding "it was for the best interests of the library to have a man at the head of it." Jones refused to resign, indicating in her official statement that "she could fulfill the duties of librarian just as well as any man." She thereupon adamantly reported to work daily, sitting regally at her desk and receiving well wishers.⁸⁰

Whereas the board had assumed that Jones would comply with their wishes, she easily out-maneuvered them through gaining public sympathy. The local press portrayed her as "charmingly defiant," and she rewarded reporters with behind-the-scenes details and quotable observations. "Those directors seem as crazy after a man," she wickedly commented, "as though they were a board of old maids."⁸¹ Jones also informed the American Library Association that "politics have again broken out in the Los Angeles Public Library." The ALA, in turn, responded with a stinging denunciation of the board's action, declaring that replacing Jones with a political appointee was "a blow to the whole library cause."⁸²

Finally, Jones took her case to the city's formidable women's organizations—most notably the Friday Morning Club, the Wednesday Morning Club, the Ruskin Art Club, the Ebell Club—and they, too, rallied around this discrimination victim. Calling the board's actions "unjust" and "most humiliating to us as women," club members crowded into the library, bringing Jones flowers and offering encouragement. This female solidarity outraged the board who, at their next meeting, ruled that the librarian's office was not to be used by women to "congregate in and gossip."⁸³ Unintimidated, the clubwomen petitioned the mayor and city council to reinstate Jones and fire her enemies on the board. On 28 June one thousand women crowded into the Friday Morning Club's lecture hall to hear the renowned feminists Susan B. Anthony and Anna B. Shaw speak on the situation.

Capitulating to clubwomen's pressure, the mayor fired all board members except Willoughby Rodman, who had steadfastly supported Jones.

At this juncture, the Los Angeles City Council intervened and conducted a month-long public hearing into the dismissals of the librarian and the board. In the end the city council ruled that the librarian served "at the pleasure of the board" and could be discharged "for cause." Jones's dismissal and Charles Lummis's appointment thus became official. During her public lecture, Susan B. Anthony had foreseen this outcome: "Of course the man will win, because there's only men to settle it."⁸⁴

Unlike her predecessors, Jones did not abandon librarianship following her dismissal. In 1906 she assumed the directorship of the University of California, Berkeley, summer library training program and thereafter became library director at Bryn Mawr Women's College. In 1913 she returned to the Los Angeles area and worked for another five years in the newly established Los Angeles County Library System. Her supervisor was Celia Gleason.

Conclusion

Periodically the Mary Jones case resurfaces in the professional literature, as historians recount the time when a lady librarian locked herself in her office and refused to allow the board of directors to replace her with a man. Interpretations of the Jones affair range from denunciation of the proceedings as a prime example of gender discrimination to exoneration of the board for their actions. Others treat the episode as a farce, reveling in the eccentric characters involved and the escalation of events.⁸⁵ The trouble with these interpretations, however, is that they focus exclusively on whether or not Jones's firing was justified without broadening the inquiry to consider what it reveals about women professionals in late-nineteenth-century America.

By looking at the experiences of three pioneering female librarians who headed the Los Angeles Public Library between 1880 and 1905, we have sought to go beyond this type of individualized narrative to locate common career patterns. We wondered when and why library boards began hiring women, and hoped to discover what impact these women had on the public library's roles, images, and status within the nation's emerging civic culture. We were particularly interested in discovering what women librarians were able to accomplish during their administrations as well as identifying the obstacles that they confronted as they professionalized the library. We also hoped to illuminate the contention that erupted between librarians and their boards to better understand when and why city authorities began replacing women head librarians with men. In short, by studying the LAPL's hiring and firing of three successful women librarians, we aimed to illuminate the general process of feminization.

The Los Angeles Library Association was founded in 1872 as a cooperative effort among prominent men to advance the intellectual, cultural, and moral character of the city. In designing the facility, these men created a spectrum of male-oriented services and activities that centered around a “gentlemen’s reading room” furnished with newspapers, gaming tables, even spittoons. Allowing women the use of the rooms was apparently an afterthought. Although documentation is sketchy, it appears that by 1880 women were frequenting the reading rooms in such large numbers that the board determined it was appropriate to hire a lady librarian. This initial appointment had a strong economic motive as well, for the lady librarian was paid only three-fourths the salary of her male predecessor.

The hiring of Mary Foy was the beginning of the feminization of the Los Angeles Public Library. Though a recent high school graduate at the time, Foy influenced the library’s development in several important ways. She was the first librarian to advocate specialized training for the position, and she endeavored to learn professional practices and procedures at her own expense. She also helped redefine the library’s mission and uses, by removing the “unruly boys” and their games and making the library a haven for individuals with more refined reading and recreational tastes. Although her appointment represented a personal favor to the city’s mayor, Foy did not become the passive library housekeeper/hostess that the board likely expected. On the contrary, during her time as librarian Foy developed into an assertive, proactive professional and an advocate for the library’s needs and interests. When she found the city’s management of the library wanting, she broadcast her critique in the local paper and pressed for significant improvements in the institution she helped create. Later on, Foy would become one of the most prominent women in L.A.’s club movement and suffrage campaign. One has to assume that she provided a vital link between the library and women’s public culture in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles.

If Mary Foy’s years as librarian inaugurated the library’s feminization, Tessa Kelso’s administration brought about its actualization. Enjoying unprecedented city and public support during her early years as librarian, Kelso guided the institution to professional maturity. She improved the library’s collections dramatically and democratized access to them. She liberalized library use policies and modernized its cataloguing and recordkeeping systems, while her training class, though justified as an economic measure, established for the first time academic and skills-based requirements for employees. Kelso also participated in the California and American Library Associations and was instrumental in establishing LAPL’s strong reputation within the professional community. In fact, the Katherine Sharp papers at the University of Illinois

contain a number of items produced by the LAPL during Kelso's tenure, suggesting that one of the nation's leading library educators was monitoring what was going on in Southern California.

Kelso's professionalization of the LAPL was inextricably intertwined with its feminization, and many of her innovative programs were suffused with female values of the period. She attempted to remove residual exclusivity in the library, making women, children, and even the homeless welcome in the library. She promoted the library's recreational uses, once declaring that even if the library became a "loafing center," its existence would be justified on those grounds alone.⁸⁶ Kelso's training class accepted young women only, making official the tradition that librarianship was a female occupation. Outside the library, Kelso aligned the institution with the public schools and women's clubs. This cooperation reinforced the close relationship between librarians and other female professionals and civic leaders, thereby creating a powerful network among women in the city.

Ultimately, Kelso became a victim of the cruel paradox thwarting many turn-of-the-century women professionals. As an outspoken, progressive administrator, she raised the LAPL to national stature. At the same time, however, she earned the enmity of conservative Los Angeles society for behaving too much like a man. When this traditional element gained control of the board, they backed away from honoring Kelso's professional librarian status by sharply lowering her salary and reneging on paying her conference expenses. Rather than see herself and her position deprofessionalized, Kelso resigned and abandoned librarianship altogether.

Mary Jones's career as head librarian marked the culmination of female professionalism. Following in Kelso's footsteps, she carried on with the LAPL's expansion and professionalization, enlarging its holdings, improving access to the collections, and formalizing deposit stations into regular branch libraries. Using her extensive professional contacts, Jones broadened Kelso's efforts to bring LAPL's services in line with current standards and eagerly joined with other libraries in the latest cooperative ventures. She, too, was dedicated to the library's training class, and under her stewardship twenty local girls became professional librarians.

While Jones's administration of the LAPL earned her the respect of professional peers, her programs and policies brought her into conflict with the board of directors, which had much different plans for the library. As real-estate developers, entrepreneurs, and lawyers, they took a boosterish rather than professional approach to developing the library, and they adamantly believed that the institution should reflect the values and needs of local business and government. So while Jones sought to

TABLE 1
LIBRARIANS' SALARIES

Librarian	Start Date	Beginning Salary	Ending Salary
John C. Littlefield	Dec. 15, 1872	\$75/\$100	\$75
Patrick Connolly	Jan. 7, 1879	\$75	\$75
Mary Foy	June 15, 1880	\$75	\$75
Jessie Gavitt	Feb. 1, 1884	\$75	\$75
Lydia Prescott	Jan. 7, 1889	\$75	\$75
Tessa Kelso	April 1, 1889	\$100	\$150
Clara Fowler	April 29, 1895	\$125	\$125
Harriet Wadleigh	May 21, 1897	\$125	\$125
Mary L. Jones	May 29, 1900	\$125	\$150
Charles F. Lummis	June 21, 1905	\$250	\$300

Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Board of Library Commissioners, Minutes, 1872–1910.

create a library with strong recreational and social-service features, the board envisioned it becoming major research institution, one that would proclaim L.A.'s coming of age and outshine other municipal libraries in the East.

The series of conflicts between Jones and the board also derived from the close connection between feminization and professionalization and the board's inability to distinguish between the two. As a result, when problems in the library arose, the board treated them as gender rather than professional issues. For instance, the board considered personnel problems not as a by-product of grueling work schedules and low wages, but the result of inherent weaknesses in the female character. Similarly, the board did not appreciate that Jones's patronage of eastern library suppliers was grounded in professional standards. Instead, they dismissed her financial arrangements as "unbusinesslike," "peculiar," and symptomatic of female particularism. The board also complained that Jones could not handle her female staff, yet when the librarian disciplined the attendants, she was criticized for being "unladylike." Likewise, when Jones argued for her positions on library policy, she was accused of "insolence" and "insubordination." In retrospect it becomes clear that when the directors fired Mary Jones, they were exorcising the female presence that currently dominated and, in the eyes of the board, demeaned the public library. The men were determined to refashion the library in their own image, but to do this the LAPL had to have a man at its head.

Notes

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1. Suzanne Hildenbrand, ed., *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996), 5, 14.

2. For more on feminized occupations, see Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900–1995* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997); Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); and Penina Migdal Glazer and Miriam Slater, *Unequal Colleagues: The Entrance of Women into the Professions, 1890–1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Barbara Laslett's "Women's Work in Late-Nineteenth-Century Los Angeles: Class, Gender, and the Culture of New Womanhood," *Continuity and Change* 5:3 (1990): 417–41, provides a revealing and pertinent look at women's occupational patterns in L.A.

3. Statistics from Katharine Phenix, "The Status of Women Librarians," *Frontiers* 9 (1987): 36; C. Herbert Carson, "Placements & Salaries 96," *Library Journal* 122 (15 October 1997): 29.

4. Mary Niles Maack, "Gender, Culture, and the Transformation of American Librarianship, 1890–1920," *Libraries & Culture* 33 (Winter 1998): 51. For more on the contributions of women library pioneers, see Joanne E. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West, 1900–1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Paula D. Watson, "Founding Mothers: The Contributions of Women's Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States," *Library Quarterly* 64 (July 1994): 233–69; Suzanne Hildenbrand, *Reclaiming the American Library Past*; Laurel A. Grotzinger, "Biographical Research on Women Librarians: Its Paucity, Perils, and Pleasures," in *The Status of Women in Librarianship: Historical, Sociological and Economic Issues*, ed. Kathleen Heim (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1983), 139–90; Mary Niles Maack, "Toward a History of Women in Librarianship: A Critical Analysis with Suggestions for Further Research," *Journal of Library History* 17 (Spring 1982): 164–85; and Mary Niles Maack, "Women in Library Education: Down the Up Staircase," *Library Trends* 34 (Winter 1986): 401–32.

5. Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 164. See also Barbara E. Brand, "Librarianship and Other Female-Intensive Professions," *Journal of Library History* 18 (Fall 1983): 391–406.

6. Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 403.

7. See Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted—Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (Winter 1985): 22–33; John

E. Baur, "Los Angeles County in the Health Rush, 1870-1900," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 31 (March 1952): 13-31.

8. Los Angeles Library Association, Board of Library Commissioners, Meeting Minutes, December 1872, Volume 1, p. 1. Los Angeles Public Library, Board of Commissioners Office.

9. As quoted in Bernadette Dominique Soter, *The Light of Learning: an Illustrated History of the Los Angeles Public Library* (Los Angeles: Library Foundation, 1993), 19.

10. Jerry Finley Cao has studied the socioeconomic background of the LALA founders. He determined that they represented the elite of the city, including sixty men in trade and industry, eighteen in law, nine in medicine, and two in education. See "The Los Angeles Public Library: Origins and Development, 1872-1910" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1977), 49. Cao's dissertation provides the most detailed and reliable account of the library's formative period, and much of the following discussion of the institution's origins and development is based on this work.

11. As quoted in Cao, "Los Angeles Public Library," 67-8. For a nice portrayal of the early library rooms and their "noble array" of books and periodicals, see Faith Holmes Hyers, "Brief History of the Los Angeles Public Library," *Forty Eighth Annual Report of the . . . Los Angeles Public Library* (Los Angeles: LAPL, 1936), 32-3.

12. Cao, "Los Angeles Public Library," 73.

13. Los Angeles Library Association, Meeting Minutes, 3 May 1873, v. 1, p. 19; see also Hyers, "Brief History," 35-6.

14. *Weekly Express*, 19 December 1872, as quoted in Cao, "Los Angeles Public Library," 64.

15. As quoted in Cao, "Los Angeles Public Library," 105.

16. Los Angeles Library Association, Meeting Minutes, vol. 1, 6 January 1880, p. 80; 3 February 1880, p. 82; 15 June 1880, p. 90.

17. Given more space, Harriet Child Wadleigh could very well have been included in this article. An experienced librarian from Massachusetts, Wadleigh professionalized and modernized the LAPL in many ways, including opening the books stacks to the public, establishing a number of important new departments like cataloguing and reference, and creating a separate juvenile collection. Like Foy, Kelso, and Jones, Wadleigh had a series of conflicts with the library's board that resulted in her dismissal in 1899. However, unlike the others, Wadleigh successfully sued the city to retain her job. Wadleigh was very active in local women's organizations, especially the Friday Morning Club, and she was among Jones's most strenuous supporters during the so-called "Library Wars." See Hyers, "Brief History," 47, and Della Haverland, "Harriet Child Wadleigh," *Pacific Bindery Talk* 9 (February 1937): 99-101.

18. Jane Apostol, "Mary Emily Foy: 'Miss Los Angeles Herself,'" *Southern California Quarterly* 78 (Summer 1996): 115. Ina Coolbrith, who became the first poet laureate of California, had grown up in Los Angeles and was a classmate of Mary Foy's mother. For more information about Coolbrith's library and literary careers, see Lannie Hurst, "Ina Coolbrith: Forgotten as Poet . . . Remembered as Librarian," *PNLA Quarterly* (Summer 1977): 5-11.

19. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders*, 5.

20. Della Haverland, "Mary E. Foy and the Los Angeles Public Library," *Pacific Bindery Talk* 9 (June 1937): n.p.; Apostol, "Mary Emily Foy," 114-5.

21. Ray E. Held, *The Rise of the Public Library in California* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1973), 13.
22. See Cao, "Los Angeles Public Library," 92–7, for an interesting discussion of the city council's refusal to allocate necessary funds to the library, despite a growing surplus.
23. Apostol, "Mary Emily Foy," 116.
24. Ibid. For more on Foy's experiences as librarian, see William S. Lewis, "A Partial History of the Los Angeles Public Library," typescript, Rare Book Room, Los Angeles Public Library.
25. Los Angeles Library Association, Meeting Minutes, vol. 1, 1 February 1881, p. 101–2; 2 January 1883, p. 129.
26. Apostol, "Mary Emily Foy," 116.
27. Los Angeles Library Association, Meeting Minutes, vol. 1, 28 January 1884, p. 163.
28. Haverland, "Mary E. Foy," n.p.
29. Charles F. Lummis, "Books In Harness," *Out West* 25 (September 1906): 205. For more on Foy as librarian, see transcript of a 1952 tape-recorded interview with Mary Foy, University of California, Special Collections, Collection #873, Box 7.
30. John D. Bruckman, *The City Librarians of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Library Association, 1973), 24.
31. Marian C. Manley, "Among Librarians: Tessa L. Kelso, August 13, 1933," *Library Journal* 58 (1 October 1933): 800.
32. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1889* (Los Angeles: Evening Express Co., 1889), 17.
33. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1890* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1890), 13.
34. Clare Beck, "Adelaide Hasse: The New Woman as Librarian," in *Reclaiming the American Library Past*, 102–3.
35. The residence of both women was 410 W. 7th Street in 1892, 455 S. Broadway in 1893, and 347 S. Hill Street in 1894 and 1895. *Los Angeles City Directory, 1892–1895*. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Family History Library. Salt Lake City, Utah. Microfilm rolls 1 376 983—1 376 984.
36. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1891* (Los Angeles: Evening Express Co., 1891), 8.
37. *Los Angeles Public Library Training Class: Announcement No. 1* (Los Angeles: [Los Angeles Public Library], 1893), [1].
38. Other training classes of this era include Drexel Institute (Philadelphia 1891) and Armour Institute (Chicago 1893). See Maack, "Women in Library Education," 407.
39. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1892* (Los Angeles: Evening Express Co., 1892), 19.
40. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1891*, 20.
41. Held, *Rise of the Public Library in California*, 91.
42. *Public Library Bulletin* 1 (November 1891): 1. The library distributed gratis three thousand copies of each issue. The life of the *Bulletin* was brief during Kelso's tenure (only seven issues were published). Kelso recounts in "Librarian's Report" of 1892 that she was dissatisfied with the arrangement with the publisher, which required that six pages of sixteen be reserved for advertising space. Kelso would have preferred that all *Bulletin* content be generated by the library itself, dispensing with the advertising matter entirely. See LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1892*, 26–7.
43. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1892–1893* (Los Angeles: n.p., 1893), 6.
44. "Tessa's Trip to Chicago," *Los Angeles Herald*, 23 March 1893, 5.

45. "Plain Facts About the Library," *Los Angeles Herald*, 21 July 1894, 5.
46. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1893-1894* (Los Angeles: n.p., 1894), 7.
47. *Ibid.*
48. "The Los Angeles Library Libel Suit," *Library Journal* 19 (October 1894): 329, 340.
49. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1893-1894*, 32.
50. *Ibid.*, 34.
51. "New Library Board," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 8 March 1895, 7.
52. "A New Library Board," *Los Angeles Herald*, 23 March 1895, 6.
53. "Tessa's Trip to Chicago," *Los Angeles Herald*, 23 March 1895, 5.
54. "Parsons Not Privileged," *Los Angeles Herald*, 2 April 1895, 7.
55. "Library Meeting Yesterday," *Los Angeles Express*, 2 April 1895, 5; "Library Trustees Mixed," *Los Angeles Herald*, 2 April 1895, 10.
56. "Library Trustees Mixed," 10.
57. *Ibid.*
58. "Economy in the Library," *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 April 1895, 6.
59. "She Had a Pull," *Los Angeles Record*, 11 May 1895. In the Los Angeles Public Library's Rare Book Room, a scrapbook containing materials relating to the resignation of Tessa Kelso includes a series of anonymous letters sent to Library Director George Stewart by a person who identified him or herself only as a "resident of Los Angeles." The letters contain advice, criticism, and much "insider" information that could only have been known by someone with a connection to the library. Many of the writer's caustic criticisms concern the incompetence of Daisy Austin in the position of assistant librarian and the failure of the library board to observe the rules of civil service promotion. The anonymous faultfinder admonishes Stewart that "the newly appointed assistant Librarian has been tried, and found wanting. She has no just, moral, nor literary right, nor claim to the post, for, she is one of the girls in the lowest order of merit and she is now superintending those who instructed her, and those possessing talent and ability have been passed over by influence and favoritism." Anonymous letter to George H. Stewart, 8 May 1895, *LAPL Archives III* [scrapbook]: "Public Libr[ary], 1895-6-7," Los Angeles Public Library Rare Book Room.
60. "Miss Tessa Kelso Resigns," *Los Angeles Herald*, 30 April 1895, 4.
61. *Ibid.*, 4.
62. Quoted in Sharon McCaslin, "The Displacement of Mary Jones," *American Libraries* 21 (March 1990): 188. See also Sharon McCaslin, "Mary L. Jones: Founder of the Nebraska Library Association," *NLAQ* 23 (Spring 1992): 4-6.
63. *Ibid.*, LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1904* (Los Angeles: Southern California Printing Co., 1904), 15. For more on Jones's interest in children's access to books and reading, see Mary L. Jones, "School Reading thru [sic] the Public Library," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting [of the National Educational Association]* (Chicago: National Educational Association, 1899), 1143-8.
64. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1900*, 11; LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1904*, 23.
65. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1900*, 7.
66. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1903* (Los Angeles: Out West Co., 1903), 18.
67. *Ibid.*, 14, 17-9.
68. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1904*, 21, 7.
69. LAPL, *Annual Report . . . 1902* (Los Angeles: McBride Press, 1902), 18.
70. Between 1902 and 1903, ten women resigned and another ten took lengthy leaves of absence, representing one-half of the library workforce.

71. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 March 1903, 11.
72. For full report, see *Los Angeles Times*, 3 March 1903, 1.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*, 5 March 1903, 11.
75. For the classic articulation of the problems with women employees, see Herbert Putnam, "The Prospect: An Address Before a Graduating Class of Women," *Library Journal* 37 (December 1912): 651–8.
76. Quotes from "Library Investigation: Proceedings of the Committee of the Whole of the City Council of Los Angeles" [hereafter referred to as "Library Investigation"], 6 February 1906, v. 4, p. 291; 13 February 1906, v. 6, p. 378, 385. Typescript. Los Angeles City Archives.
77. Library Investigation, 21 February 1906, v. 8, p. 502–3.
78. Library Investigation, 20 February 1906, v.7, p. 467.
79. Since 1903, Charles Lummis had been advising the library on its historical and Spanish language purchases.
80. Quotes from Library Investigation, 20 February 1906, v.7, p. 445, 447; 13 February 1906, v. 6, p. 398.
81. *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 1905, 1.
82. *Library Journal* 30 (September 1905): 138; *Library Journal* 30 (July 1905): 414.
83. *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1905, 1,6; *Los Angeles Times*, 29 June 1905, 1.
84. Margaret F. Maxwell, "The Lion and the Lady: The Firing of Miss Mary Jones," *American Libraries* 9 (May 1978): 270.
85. See, for example, Maxwell, "The Lion and the Lady"; Wayne A. Wiegand, "The Lion and the Lady Revisited: Another Look at the Firing of Mary L. Jones as Los Angeles Public Librarian in 1905," *Library and Information Science Resources* 5 (Fall 1983): 273–90; McCaslin, "Displacement of Mary Jones"; Armine D. MacKenzie, "The Great Library War," *California Librarian* 18 (April 1957): 89–92; and Margaret Cool, "The Ousting of Mary Letitia Jones," *Westways* 70 (November 1978): 14.
86. Tessa Kelso, "Some Economical Features of Public Libraries," *Arena* 42 (May 1893): 7.