

Librarians as Mothers: Stepping Outside the Stereotype Nicole Eva (University of Lethbridge)

Librarianship is rife with stereotypes, none more pervasive than the spinster librarian. I am interested in how this image creates conformity among female librarians in their self-selection of librarianship as a profession, particularly among academic librarians in North America. Are those who believe they fit the stereotype more likely to pursue this field? Are those who feel they don't fit the stereotype likely to avoid the profession because they don't think it will be a fit? When librarians DO choose to become mothers, is it seen as fitting with their profession, or at odds with it? And finally, why is it that so many women-academic-parent-librarians only have one child? This exploratory presentation will amalgamate the literature on the topic of motherhood and librarianship, will highlight some first person narratives of librarianship and motherhood at my own institution, and will discuss with the audience their experiences and impressions. Very little research has been done in this area to date; as a precursor to a full-blown research study, this session will engage the participants in a discussion about what it means to be an academic librarian, what it means to be a mother, and the ways in which those identities intersect and / or remain in opposition.