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The Importance of Fiction to the Raffles Library, Singapore, During the Long Nineteenth-Century

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Abstract

One of the main controversies in the world of librarianship in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century was the role of fiction in the public libraries of North America and United Kingdom. To what extent was this concern translated to other parts of the English-speaking world? This article explores, from the available evidence, the attitudes towards fiction held by officials of the Raffles Library, Singapore. It suggests the library tended to be very liberal in its views. To understand why this was the case, the article argues, involves an understanding of the notion, commonly held at the time, of human degeneration from prolonged exposure to tropical environments, and the colonialist reaction to this predicament.

Keywords: Singapore, Fiction, Library history, Colonial libraries

Introduction

Much has been written on the debates concerning whether fiction had a place in the public libraries of North America and the United Kingdom in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, if it did, what kind of fiction was most appropriate.¹ This article aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the fiction collection and policy of the Raffles Library of Singapore. It examines the surviving evidence to ascertain the extent to which fiction was

considered a legitimate component of library service in the colony and then provides an explanation for this policy. Since colonial libraries are not frequently discussed in the literature on the fiction question, this article helps to widen the literature's scope. But the particular circumstances of Singapore also provides evidence of the key role social context played in determining the stance individual libraries took in handling the question of fiction in their collection.

The fiction question

A number of scholars have noted that alongside the development of the public library in the United Kingdom and United States came a debate about what place fiction should have within its collection. Although some librarians recommended that the library eschew all fiction, they were always a minority. The major issues in the debate were not whether or not fiction should be included, but how much and what kind. These were both difficult questions. On the one hand, it was fiction which pulled significant numbers of people in from the streets to use the library, thus making possible inflated claims about the importance of the institution to the community. Without this influx, the user statistics assiduously collected for annual reports would undergo a serious decline with likely dire consequences for future budget allotments. On the other hand, encouraging an image of the library as a place where people could go to get free novels was not seen as particularly flattering to the professional image that librarians were trying to forge in those years either.

Complicating the situation further was the perception at the time that the public library was primarily used by the working class and women — two groups both seen as in need of guidance and capable of making foolish choices. So a careful balance had to be struck between maintaining the semblance of popularity and being accused as a bad influence on weaker elements of the population. One solution

to the problem was to claim that, although people initially came to the library to read popular novels, their tastes would change to 'better literature' in a matter of time, once they were exposed to good examples in the library.² In 1908, the attendees of the Library Association Conference adopted unanimously a set of three resolutions that tried to strike a balance between professional objectives and popular demand³ and, as Snape notes, after the First World War, the issue faded away considerably.⁴ To what extent was it an issue in Singapore during these years?

The Raffles Library, Singapore

The Raffles Library and Museum opened its doors for the first time on 14 September 1874.⁵ Previously the colony had enjoyed only limited library service. The Singapore Free School housed a small library from 1837 onwards and in 1844 the Singapore Library was established by certain prominent residents as a private library funded entirely by subscriptions.⁶ It managed to survive over the years, but by 1874 its financial difficulties had grown so large that the proprietors agreed to transfer their assets to the new Raffles Library in return for the government taking over their debt and guaranteeing lifetime memberships to its founding partners.⁷ Thereafter the government provided an annual subsidy that ranged from a low of \$4250 in 1899 to \$12,000 in 1913. This money covered many of the expenses of running the library and museum, but it was expected that the library would also generate its own funds in the form of subscriptions. Two classes of subscriptions were available. A first-class subscription gave the patron the right to two books and a periodical at a time from the lending section of the library, while the second-class subscription allowed for only one book and a periodical.⁸ Novels accounted for much of the borrowing that took place.

The annual reports make it clear that fiction was a key part of the

collection. The report for 1886 tells us, for example, that 34% of the acquisitions of that year (181 works) were fiction. In fact, from 1886 to 1913 this percentage never went below 27% (1887) and reached as high as 71% in 1900 (the complete series is provided in Appendix 1). Over the years, the proportion spent on fiction rose from an average of around 30% to an average of 50%. Circulation numbers also bear out the importance of fiction to the library's users. We do not have the full set of circulation numbers from the library for all years, but what is available is presented in Appendix 5. These figures clearly indicate that for the Raffles Library, fiction enjoyed growing popularity, representing 70% of the circulation in 1881 and growing to an astonishing 87% by 1905. This figure is higher than the highest percentage recorded by Kelly in his sample of fiction circulation statistics from UK lending libraries in 1876 and 1877.⁹

Selecting fiction for the Raffles Library, Singapore

Like most public libraries of the nineteenth century, the selection of books for the Raffles Library was not a task entrusted to the sole discretion of the librarian.¹⁰ Although the library maintained a list of user-recommended books and advertised in the *Straits Times* the existence of this list,¹¹ the regulations governing the institution specifically noted that all books under consideration for purchase had to be reviewed by the Library Committee who collectively had the final say in whether or not they would be added to the collection. A minute of a meeting in 1876 tells us that the procedure was for members to prepare individual lists of books which were then discussed by the committee with a final list decided upon afterwards.¹²

Although the committee had a great deal of power over the library's collection, there is no evidence to suggest that it was sufficiently concerned with the amount being spent on fiction to take steps to reduce it. In fact the record suggests that they took

pains to cater to the demand. Recounting the recent history of the library's collection policy, G. D. Havilland noted that between 1886 and 1891 the Committee had instructed its agents in London to ship to Singapore at their discretion each month books by well-known authors.¹³ This was done in order to 'as much as possible [...] avoid delay in procuring new works by well-known authors [... so that] by this means all grounds of complaint on the part of subscribers in regard to the late arrival of works of importance will be removed'.¹⁴

However, starting in the 1890s, some of the librarians in charge of the collection voiced disquiet at the amount of fiction bought. Havilland obliquely criticized the committee for purchasing so much fiction by comparing its policy to the policy intended by the founders of the library. He wrote that:

the Lending Library was formed for the convenience of those who desire to borrow books; and after a good stock of books was obtained, they [the founders] intended investing only to the amount subscribed in the purchase of books for the Lending Library. This excellent intention was, however, not adhered to, and of late years the subscriptions of subscribers have paid neither for the salary of the Clerk who attended them, nor for the books purchased for the Lending Library.¹⁵

Of course, key to this criticism is that fiction was primarily concentrated on the lending side of the library.

One librarian in particular seems to have taken direct issue with the fiction collection. From 1895 to 1918, Dr Richard Hanitsch was in charge of the library and during those years we find a marked increase in criticism of the committee's fiction policy. Hanitsch began this criticism in the 1903 report where he noted, rather defensively, that 'contrary to a generally-expressed opinion that the Library buys works of fiction chiefly, and only caters for the novel-reading public, the Library contains many works of extreme and even unique value [...]'.¹⁶ A year later, he was at pains to note that, although the library chiefly purchased fiction, 'the amount spent on

this class of literature was only \$580 against about \$1670 on other books'.¹⁷ He went on to inform his readers that the most valuable of these was *Views of Prince of Wales' Island* by Robert Smith. In 1907, Hanitsch reported on a six-month survey of the circulation patterns in the library that was meant to complement a similar study conducted in 1895. The results must have been discouraging for him as 87% of the books borrowed were novels, an increase of 5% from 1895. He reported that the 'taste of the Singapore public has further developed in the direction of light literature', although he was quick to point out that 'certainly it cannot be said that the change above alluded to is the fault of the Raffles Library, or that the Library caters in any way for the novel reading public'.¹⁸ His evidence for this dubious proposition was the share of the collection budget novels represented: 'the total amount spent on books during the year was \$2,477, the share for novels came to the moderate sum of \$531 only, a trifle of over £5 a month', he records.¹⁹ Luckily for Hanitsch, he repeated the survey the following year and found that 'the total number of books issued was less, especially in fiction'.²⁰ This professional interest in the library, coupled with his deep interest in scientific matters, probably explains much of his attitude towards fiction. It was not, as far as the present evidence allows us to determine, shared by the committee as a whole.

But if the library committee's policy was to supply fiction to its subscribers, it was also part of its policy to set standards as to what was admitted to the collection. It is hard to develop any clear idea of how the library committee judged the fiction that passed their way from direct evidence of the minutes of their meetings. There was no official collection policy and the committee instead relied on the individual expertise and status of its members to choose books. Furthermore, the surviving minutes do not record the issues involved in these debates except on a few occasions. There was a flurry of activity associated with the purchase of the *Thousand Nights and One Night* in 1886 which ultimately led to the book being removed from circulation and permanently kept in the

librarian's office.²¹ The minutes also mention another work, *A Nineteenth Century Romance*, that after discussion by committee was dismissed simply as not fit to 'be put upon Library shelves'.²² What became of this book was not revealed. Other books similarly banned from the library included: *Cynthia in the Wilderness* by Hubert Wells (no further books by the author were to be purchased), *Pink Purity* by Gertie de S. Wentworth James, and *Winding Paths* by Gertrude Page.²³ The policy granting discretion to its London agent over book purchases, initially started in 1886, also appears to have eventually generated concern. In March 1892 the Committee decided to cancel its standing orders and ordered the librarian to inform the agent, Jones & Evans, that 'no books except those especially ordered are to be sent'.²⁴

We can also gain an understanding of the standards that the committee used to judge the fiction it purchased through an examination of the library's catalogues. Prior to 1921, the catalogue was printed and published as a book at regular intervals and these still survive. But in order to use them effectively in this case we need to have some idea of which authors were considered problematic by other libraries at roughly the same time. Luckily, we have such a list in the form of a survey conducted by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1881.²⁵ The ALA wanted to find out what literature librarians found objectionable and compiled a list of potentially troublesome authors to which participating librarians were to indicate whether they were currently banned by the library, had been purchased, but later banned, or those purchased and kept. Seventy libraries were canvassed for their opinions and thirty responded. The results are reproduced in Appendix 1. This table includes both authors from the United States and United Kingdom. None of the American authors is represented in the Raffles Library collection. This is not surprising. Given the size of the library and its location in a British colony, it was likely that only books published in the United Kingdom would be purchased and similarly authors from the United Kingdom would also be favoured. If we

omit the American authors we find that the authors banned in a third or more libraries are as enumerated in Appendix 2. The Raffles library collected all seven: G. W. M. Reynolds, E. C. G. Murray, Helen Mathers, Mrs Forrester, Ouida, Rhoda Broughton, Mrs Henry Wood, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Substantial collections of Mathers, Forrester, Ouida, Broughton, Wood, and Braddon are attested to in the catalogues as Appendix 2 indicates. G. W. M. Reynolds and E. C. G. Murray are less abundant.

The work of Ernest Baker provides another indication that the Raffles Library fell on the liberal side of the fiction question. Baker was a librarian, according to Robert Snape, ‘of immense influence’ in the debate over fiction in public libraries in the early twentieth century.²⁶ In a 1907 article he advocated that fiction be arranged in a three-tiered hierarchy. At the top were those works he believed deserved a place in all libraries. Included among these were Balzac, Turgenev, James, and Conrad. Also deserving a place, although grudgingly, and not to the same extent as the first-rank authors, were those works he characterized as ‘popular mediocrities and doubtful cases’ — Marie Corelli, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, and Emma Worboise numbered among this class. Finally, at the bottom, and ‘below the standard admissible’, fell the works of authors such as Florence Marryat, Guy Boothby, Annie Thomas, and Dick Donovan.²⁷ In all, Baker enumerated a list of thirty-eight authors. Now, if we search the 1905 catalogue for each of these authors we find that, of the first category, only Bjornson is absent. Worboise is absent from the second category, while Evans Wilson is missing from the third. As well, many of these authors were represented in the library by a large number of titles (see Appendix 3). Again, the impression given is a library catering for a wide variety of tastes and not afraid of or condemning what many authorities at the time believed to be inferior or immoral literature.

Why did the Raffles Library collect fiction?

From the evidence presented it is clear that the Raffles Library was

not particularly interested in adopting a strict stance towards the kind of fiction it collected. But this is a rather surprising conclusion if we consider the social context in which the library was embedded. This was a society dominated primarily by wealthy British merchants wedded to the principles of free trade and low taxes.²⁸ They were not particularly prone to supporting government funding of projects, regardless of public utility. The construction of an adequate water supply system, for example, was debated from 1857 onwards, only being built in 1879 with a significant donation from a wealthy local Chinese merchant.²⁹ A similar negligence surrounds the history of fire-fighting, with the colony receiving the services of a professional fire brigade only in 1888.³⁰ The neglect of public hospitals in the colony was equally dismal.³¹

Yet despite the lack of interest in such eminently useful infrastructure, successive administrations supported the Raffles Library and its collection of fiction. Why? It is important here to distinguish between the funding of a library and the funding of a fiction collection for the library. A library could always be justified for the scientific or intellectual pursuits it allowed and in fact this was one of its roles in Singapore.³² But what of the fiction?

Of course, compared to fire brigades and water supply systems, the cost of supplying the library with novels was relatively small and partially borne by the subscribers to the library themselves. Appendix 6 displays an area chart of total book (fiction and non-fiction) and magazine purchases compared to subscription fees. From the chart we can clearly see a major division in time starting around 1901. Before that date, purchases were greater than subscriptions while afterwards the reverse was true. After 1901, in other words, the library was probably safe from criticism that it was misappropriating public money. However, before then it was potentially risking censure. Of course, this figure includes money spent on reference materials and other non-fiction items meant for lending so that we can likely believe the librarian who in the 1881

Annual Report was at pains to note that ‘the subscriptions cover the cost of providing the Library with works of fiction’ for much of the period under consideration.³³

However, the cost of supporting fiction amounted to more than just the purchase price of the books. In the tropical environment binding was a recurring expense and according to Hanitsch novels were especially problematic in this regard.³⁴ There was also extra labour involved in circulating the books that would have substantially inflated the costs of keeping novels in the library. Even the space on the shelves they occupied must have been seen as costly given that the library authorities were constantly complaining of cramped facilities.³⁵ Despite this, there appeared to be no concern voiced by the government or the general public over the collection. Other than its relatively light drain on the public purse, how can we explain the tolerance towards this expenditure before 1901?

It is argued here that the acceptance of fiction as part of the library’s collection prior to the turn of the century was due to the perception on the part of Singapore’s rulers that a regular supply of novels was necessary in order to recreate as far as possible an English atmosphere in the colony. The Raffles collection was to serve in the same manner as the circulating library did back home — a purveyor of entertaining books for the middle classes. In this sense, the fiction collection was the intellectual equivalent of the colonial ‘hill station’, a place where colonists could go to rest and recuperate from the rigours of an alien environment.³⁶

One of these rigours was the monotony of routine. In her account of life in rural Malaya in the nineteenth century, Emily Innes recounts the boredom endemic for whites and the relief that a library service would have brought her husband and herself. She writes that ‘Our lives were extremely dull — especially mine. We tried to get books from the circulating library in Singapore, but failed because there were only two Europeans (our two selves) in the district [...] Having failed in this direction we sent home for

books and newspapers. We ordered six of the latter, besides several magazines, to be constantly sent to us, but from various causes we did not reap the full benefit of this arrangement'.³⁷ Similarly, Winstedt recounts the lack of recreational options in his memoirs as a reason why white colonialists turned to Asian mistresses, bemoaning the lack of, amongst other things, libraries and long walks (due to the dense forest surrounding the village).³⁸ These two accounts, one from the wife of a minor functionary and the other from an official destined to one day become governor, suggest that boredom was a constant fact of life for colonialists and that books and reading appeared part of a solution. In such a situation it would not be surprising that a library catering to popular interests (fiction) would be seen as a worthwhile investment in any large community. But boredom was only part of the problem confronting state authorities, and not likely a major concern. A far worse fear and one far more likely to open the purse strings of tight-fisted colonial officials was that the tropical environment would weaken Europeans both physically and morally.

That the tropical climate was inimical to the health of white people was a view shared by many even after medical and public health technology had reduced the risks of bacterial and parasitic infection. Glenn Trewartha, in an article reviewing the state of contemporary research in the early 1920s, quotes Andrew Balfour, a respected expert on disease in the tropics: 'I am persuaded that the hot and humid tropics are not suited to white colonization and never will be with our present knowledge, even if they are rendered as free of disease as England'.³⁹ It was especially believed that prolonged exposure to the tropical climate would create a variety of mental symptoms including irritability, troubled sleep, headaches, lack of concentration, procrastination, depression, and a general inability to plan.⁴⁰ Initially labelled simply as degeneration, it was later decided that this amalgam of symptoms reflected a neurasthenia of the tropics.⁴¹ What made the condition a problem from the colonial state's point of view was its effect on 'formerly

disciplined, strenuous Anglo-Saxon males' who 'routinely became enervated, louche, and irresolute in the tropics' as a result.⁴²

But it was not just the loss of efficiency among the leadership of the colonies that was of concern here. White victims of degeneration or neurasthenia also represented a security risk for the colonial state. Harrison, focusing on British India, argues that 'the problem of degeneration attracted so much attention in India because it was widely believed that the British owed their paramount position to the figure they cut among natives. Indians were thought to respect their colonial masters because they were inherently superior', but this superiority would evaporate in the face of degeneration.⁴³ In south-east Asia similar concerns about degeneration or tropical neurasthenia existed. Stockwell, for example, notes that the Colonial Office was concerned about the level of suicide in the Malay states and that in south-east Asia 'being a "white man" was not, according to colonial literature, just a question of pigmentation. It was a moral condition. Belief in one's innate superiority was only half-belief. It had to be demonstrated. Superiority lay in deeds; it lay not just in power but in the way power was exercised'.⁴⁴

Given this concern for the degeneration of whites in the tropics, what could be done? Tropical neurasthenia was seen as resulting from 'a distance from civilization and European community and by proximity to the colonized',⁴⁵ so that the ultimate remedy was to ship sufferers back home as quickly as possible. But for those who remained, physicians recommended, until the development of psychoanalytical techniques in the 1920s, careful attention to diet and regular exercise. Good hygiene, personal, domestic, and public, was also stressed. What the doctor's prescriptions added up to was, 'the careful regulation of social life' and the building up of 'hermetic micro-environments'.⁴⁶ It was here that we can see a space developing for the library's fiction collection. Reading could directly help to create and maintain such a 'micro-environment' as it was a solitary activity that could serve to at least temporarily

remove the reader, at least in imagination, from the local, native surroundings that were draining his energy. This was precisely the advice given by Roland Braddell, an eminent lawyer and long-time resident in Singapore. His prescription for European happiness in the colony was to: ‘remember that the country is just round the corner waiting to black-jack you. Don’t admit that you are living in an Oriental country; live nearly as possible as you would in Europe. Read plenty, the mind needs more exercise than the body; keep yourself up to date [...]’.⁴⁷

Braddell was not an outsider or on the margins of colonial Singaporean society. His grandfather had in fact immigrated to the Straits Settlements in the employ of the East India Company in the 1840s and after having retired from company service practiced law in Singapore.⁴⁸ Roland Braddell can likely be considered as reasonably representative of elite colonial opinion on the matter of health in the tropics. And his views certainly explain the lengths to which the Raffles library committee went to accommodate library users in areas other than the collecting of fiction. Starting in 1877, for example, the committee advocated opening the library at night in order ‘to give those whose employment precluded them from using the Library, an opportunity to do so’⁴⁹ — a policy that was continued until 1893,⁵⁰ despite the small and consistently declining number of users who availed themselves of the opportunity. And in its toleration of breakages of the ‘moral code’ of the library (with the exception of overdue books), the committee also provided evidence that getting users to read was important by itself. When users complained of ‘the disreputable appearance of certain visitors to the library’, rules of dress were not tightened or more strictly enforced. Instead a separate reading room was created for non-subscribers (those thought most likely to offend).⁵¹ Even a far more serious offence such as creating a fire hazard through the improper disposal of matches on the library’s wooden floors was greeted not with immediate suspension of borrowing privileges, but a gentle letter of reprimand asking that the habit cease.⁵²

Given the medical views about the importance of creating a small Europe in the tropics to prevent neurasthenia in the white population around the turn of the century, the support of fiction in the library as well as the other user-friendly policies adopted by the library committee begin to make more sense. The provision of light entertainment in the form of novels was a means to bring a small part of Europe into the colonies, thereby avoiding mental illnesses that would cause the ruling race to lose face.

However, reading could also help the fight against tropical neurasthenia indirectly through its support of the colonial wife and her particular needs as commonly perceived at the time. Janice Brownfoot, writing of nineteenth-century British Malaya, tells us that white women were perceived as being able to safeguard men from degeneracy so that the emigration of European wives was seen as ‘a logical solution for halting this decline’.⁵³ White women, according to her, were viewed as having ‘carried with them to colonial territories [...] civilizing influences thought to be beneficial to white men’.⁵⁴ These influences were believed to have a substantial impact. According to Brownfoot, the prevailing view was that:

men actually took greater care of themselves, their language and their surroundings in the presence of wives [...] European men were more sartorially correct, better behaved and more polite with mems present [...] wives stabilized both the community and its standards and in so doing, helped prevent white men from going ‘troppo’ (mental) or ‘native’ or becoming alcoholics, behaviour which ‘let the side down’ and compromised white prestige.⁵⁵

But if matrimony was a solution to tropical neurasthenia, it was one with a cost. Of course, married men required higher salaries to support their wives, but the wives themselves also required more amenities than single men. It was believed that ‘European women supposedly required more metropolitan amenities’ and needed to be ‘cushioned with the cultural artifacts of “being European”’.⁵⁶ No

doubt the provision of light reading material counted among these amenities. Women in general in the later part of the nineteenth century at least were also seen as a major pillar of the market for novels and the basis for much of the commercial circulating library trade.⁵⁷ The perception was the same for their use of public library materials.⁵⁸ Even if they did not necessarily read novels to the extent popular opinion suggested, one study noted that reading in general was indeed a major occupation of the wives of colonial officials in the mid-twentieth century,⁵⁹ and there is no reason to believe that this would not be the case in the era before the widespread availability of radio and television. Certainly the management of the combined Raffles Library and Museum appeared concerned that the premises be perceived as a public space suitable for ladies. When the number of local visitors to the Museum threatened this perception, special times for only 'European and other respectable visitors and ladies' were scheduled.⁶⁰ And the Library Committee on another occasion devised a plan to serve tea for ladies in the afternoon. This service was not long-lasting, however, as demand for it was not strong and the library lost money as a result.⁶¹ Nevertheless, it suggests that those responsible for the Library were interested in encouraging women to use the facilities, rather than barring or segregating them as was the case for other colonial institutions such as the clubs. If so, the library could be said to number among those amenities that served to make Singapore 'liveable' for the wives of colonial officials who supposedly risked higher levels of mental and physical degeneracy without their presence.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that those responsible for the fiction collection in the Raffles Library were liberal in their selection of titles. The fact that the publicly supported library could entertain such a policy in a fiscally conservative environment such as Singapore suggests that the reading of novels was viewed as having

at least some value for society. This value lay in the perceived ability of leisure reading to help guard against the degeneration of the white rulers of the colonies. This it did directly, as a means to create a suitable micro-environment for officials, and indirectly, as a necessary amenity for the wives of these officials who were seen as being able to exert a strong beneficial influence on their husbands. This value was evidently enough to check the instincts of the merchant class that dominated colonial society and illustrates the key role social context played in shaping library policy at the time.

Appendix 1: Results of the 1881 ALA Survey of Potentially Objectionable Books

Author	Nationality	Banned	Banned after Purchase	Total Banned
G. W. M. Reynolds	UK	20	2	22
E. C. G. Murray	UK	14	0	14
Helen Mathers	UK	14	2	16
E. D. E. N. Southworth	US	11	6	15
Mrs Forrester	UK	10	2	12
C. Fosdick	US	9	2	11
Ouida	UK	9	5	14
C. L. Hentz	US	9	3	12
W. H. Thomes	US	8	8	16
Rhoda Broughton	UK	8	3	11
Mrs Henry Wood	UK	8	1	9
Mrs M. F. Finley	US	8	0	8
Mrs A. S. Stephens	US	8	7	15
W. H. Ainsworth	UK	7	1	8
G. A. Lawrence	UK	6	2	8
Mrs A. J. Evans	US	6	3	9
Miss M. E. Braddon	UK	5	7	12
Edmund Yates	UK	4	4	8
W. H. G. Kingston	UK	4	0	4
Miss F. Marryat	UK	4	1	5
H. Alger	US	3	3	6
Mrs M. J. Holmes	US	3	4	7
E. Kellogg	US	2	0	2
Oliver Optic	US	2	6	8
Miss J. Fothergill	UK	2	0	2
Marie Reid	UK	1	2	3
Wilkie Collins	UK	0	0	0
E. L. Bulwer	UK	0	1	1

Appendix 2: Top banned UK authors (taken from the 1881 ALA Survey of Potentially Objectionable Books)

Rank	Author	# of Libraries Banning the Author	Works of the author in the RLM Catalogue (1905)
1	G. W. M. Reynolds	22	1
2	Helen Mathers	16	12
3	E. C. G. Murray	14	3
4	Ouida	14	29
5	Mrs Forrester	12	6
5	Braddon	12	55
6	Rhoda Broughton	11	17

Appendix 3: Works of authors used by Ernest Baker as examples of his fiction classification scheme found in the Raffles Library as of 1901

'First Rank'	Number of Works
Balzac	11
Bjornson	0
Conrad	3
Ebers	9
Howells	17
James	20
Meredith	17
Raymond	2
Stockton	13
Turgenev	4
Wiggin	1

Appendix 3 (*Continued*)

'First Rank'	Number of Works
'Popular Mediocrities'	
Braddon	55
Barrett	12
Cameron	17
Cleeve	1
Corelli	14
Hume	18
Hungerford	13
Hyne	5
Oppenheim	4
Ouida	29
Wood	34
Worboise	0
'Below the standard'	
Boothby	18
Donovan	8
Gould	4
Gunter	3
Le Queux	13
Lee	9
Marryat	38
Muddock	6
Rita	20
Russell	2
Savage	9
Speight	5
Thomas	19
Wilson	0
Yorke	5

Appendix 4: Number of fiction titles acquired by the Raffles Library as percentage of total titles acquired (no data available for blank years)

Appendix 5: Fiction as percentage of total circulation of the Raffles Library for available years

Appendix 6: Subscription revenue versus book and magazine purchases, 1877–1912

Notes

- 1 E. Carrier, *Fiction in public libraries* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1965) 267–270; P. Sturges and A. Barr, ‘The fiction nuisance’ in nineteenth century British public libraries, *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 24:1 (1991) 23–31; R. Snape, *Leisure and the rise of the public library* (London: Library Association Publishing, 1995) 3–5.
- 2 Snape, *Leisure and the rise*, 45–51, 66–74, 76–79.
- 3 Sturges and Barr, ‘The fiction nuisance’, 25.
- 4 Snape, *Leisure and the rise*, 4.
- 5 R. Hanitsch, Raffles Library and Museum, Singapore, in W. Makepeace (ed), *One hundred years of Singapore* (London: John Murray, 1921) 546.
- 6 K. K. Seet, *A place for the people: the story of a national library* (Singapore: Times Books, 1983) 12, 17.
- 7 Ibid., 19, 22.
- 8 Hanitsch, Raffles Library, 547–548.
- 9 T. Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain* (London: The Library Association, 1977) 85.
- 10 Snape, *Leisure and the rise*, 51–52.
- 11 Raffles Library and Museum Committee (1878), *Minutes of meeting*, 2 December.
- 12 Raffles Library and Museum Committee (1876), *Minutes of meeting*, 6 March.
- 13 Raffles Library and Museum, 1893 *Annual report* (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum) 4.
- 14 Raffles Library and Museum, 1895 *Annual report* (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum) 2.
- 15 Raffles Library and Museum, 1893 *Annual report* (Singapore: Raffles Library and Museum) 6.
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