

## Libraries, Librarians, and Booklists in the Progressive Era

We are in search of a third panelist for a session to be sponsored by RSS at the American Literature Association annual conference (Boston, MA, May 25-28 2017).

The U.S. public library has functioned as a significant agent of change and acculturation in the midst of major demographic and political shifts and economic turmoil. Librarians were expected to be teachers and role models for their juvenile and adult patrons alike; their reading recommendations carried the weight of propriety and intellectual heft. This proposed panel will look at the way libraries and librarians helped shape reading practices in the Progressive Era. Barbara Hochman will focus on taste in reading as an important criterion for determining the suitability of library school candidates. Analyzing a booklist that Nella Larsen compiled for her application to library school in 1922, Hochman will highlight tensions between public declarations about reading preferences and private uses of books. Amy Blair's paper will discuss the Winnetka Graded Book List (1926), an American Library Association publication that received widespread acclaim for its scientific researching of children's reading preferences, and its counter-recommendation of non-"trashy" books in each category of juvenile interest. We seek a third paper to complement these two, continuing the discussion of the cultural significance of libraries and the role of librarians and/or lists of recommended reading, in shaping literary canons and public taste.

Please send a brief abstract of 100-250 words by December 20, 2016 to Amy Blair <[amy.blair@marquette.edu](mailto:amy.blair@marquette.edu)> and Barbara Hochman <[bhochman@bgu.ac.il](mailto:bhochman@bgu.ac.il)>.