

This article appeared in the June/July 2005 issue of *American Libraries*.

NOTE! For the record, the three film librarians cited here do not, in my opinion, reinforce the stereotype of the librarian as unassertive or dowdy - just the opposite. In fact, I believe Katharine Hepburn in *Desk Set* is the best screen representation of a librarian to date. There are other examples I would claim make that point (e.g., *Sophie's Choice* and *It's a Wonderful Life*), but no matter. My thanks to Leonard Kniffel and *American Libraries*.

~Ann Seidl, writer and director



HOOPING IT UP. Fifteen-year-old Akil Matas (right) shows off his copy of Walter Dean Myers's 1983 novel *Hoops* with Syracuse University basketball player Dayshawn Wright during Wright's April 11 visit to Onondaga County (N.Y.) Public Library's Betts branch. Part of the library's "Read It and Pass It On" campaign, 500 free copies of the young adult novel were placed in schools and community and youth centers.

John Gaumer said in the April 12 *Sun News* that Ling met Stanko when he was researching a book he wanted to write on prison life. He added that Turner often talked with Stanko and Ling when he visited the library.

"Laura met Stephen in the library, and their relationship grew from there," Gaumer said. "She was accepting of Stephen Stanko. She knew his background. He freely told people he was an ex-con."

Stanko was released from prison last year after serving eight-and-a-half years of a 10-year sentence for kidnapping. The library's copy of *Living in Prison: A History of the Correctional System with an Insider's View*, which Stanko wrote in prison with the help of two criminology professors, was given to police investigators, Gaumer said.

Police are examining computers Stanko had used at the library in search of clues to where he fled after the deaths. The *Sun News* reported May 7 that more than a month before the killings, a resident had filed a complaint that Stanko spent excessive amounts of time at the library and on library computers. "We were looking for things like plans or contact he might have made, or where he might have been planning to go," said Georgetown County Sheriff Lane Cribb.

Kansas Board Deselects, Restores ALA Bill of Rights

By a vote of 4–3, the Johnson County (Kans.) Library Board removed

IN PRODUCTION

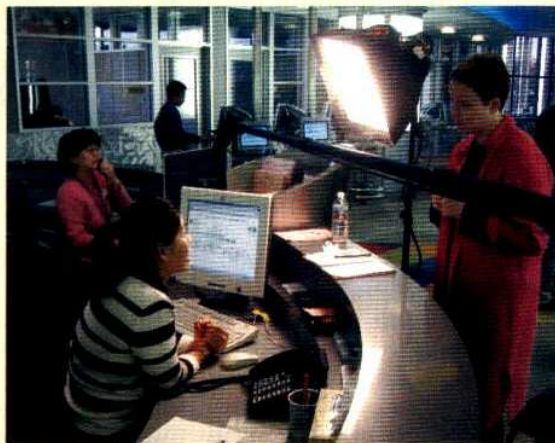
Hollywood Librarian vs. Real Thing

Librarian-turned-filmmaker Ann Seidl is passionate about movies—and equally passionate about the underrated joys of library work. By producing a documentary film called *The Hollywood Librarian*, she intends to bring the two together and spread her enthusiasm to TV and film audiences across America and beyond.

"The library profession, perhaps more than any other, is about human fulfillment," says Seidl. "People go to libraries to connect with other human beings. Words connect people; people connect through words. And it is in seeking that connection to others that we find them and we find ourselves. It's what makes us human. Librarians are in the word business. Which is to say, the business of humanity."

The portrayal of librarians in films, from *Desk Set* to *The Music Man* to *The Mummy*, has perpetuated a stereotypical image of meekness, timidity, and an unassertive nature, says Seidl. Motivated by those celluloid images, she began work on a documentary film in 2000 that would "for the first time examine the lives and work of librarians" as the very human business it really is.

What does she see as the goal of the film? "We must insist on our right assertively to define ourselves not only as more than a stereotype, but as a cultural imperative. We must share our positive self-image with our public," Seidl says.



Filmmaker Ann Seidl conducts an interview with new reference librarian Jocelle Liong on location at Cerritos (Calif.) Public Library.

Now taking the documentary into full production, Seidl is tracking down librarians and celebrities to capture on film, while she also crisscrosses the country with an 11-minute DVD sample of footage to raise money for the project, which has received a grant commitment from *Film International* in Wilmington, North Carolina. To help, contact her at info@hollywoodlibrarian.com. —L.K.