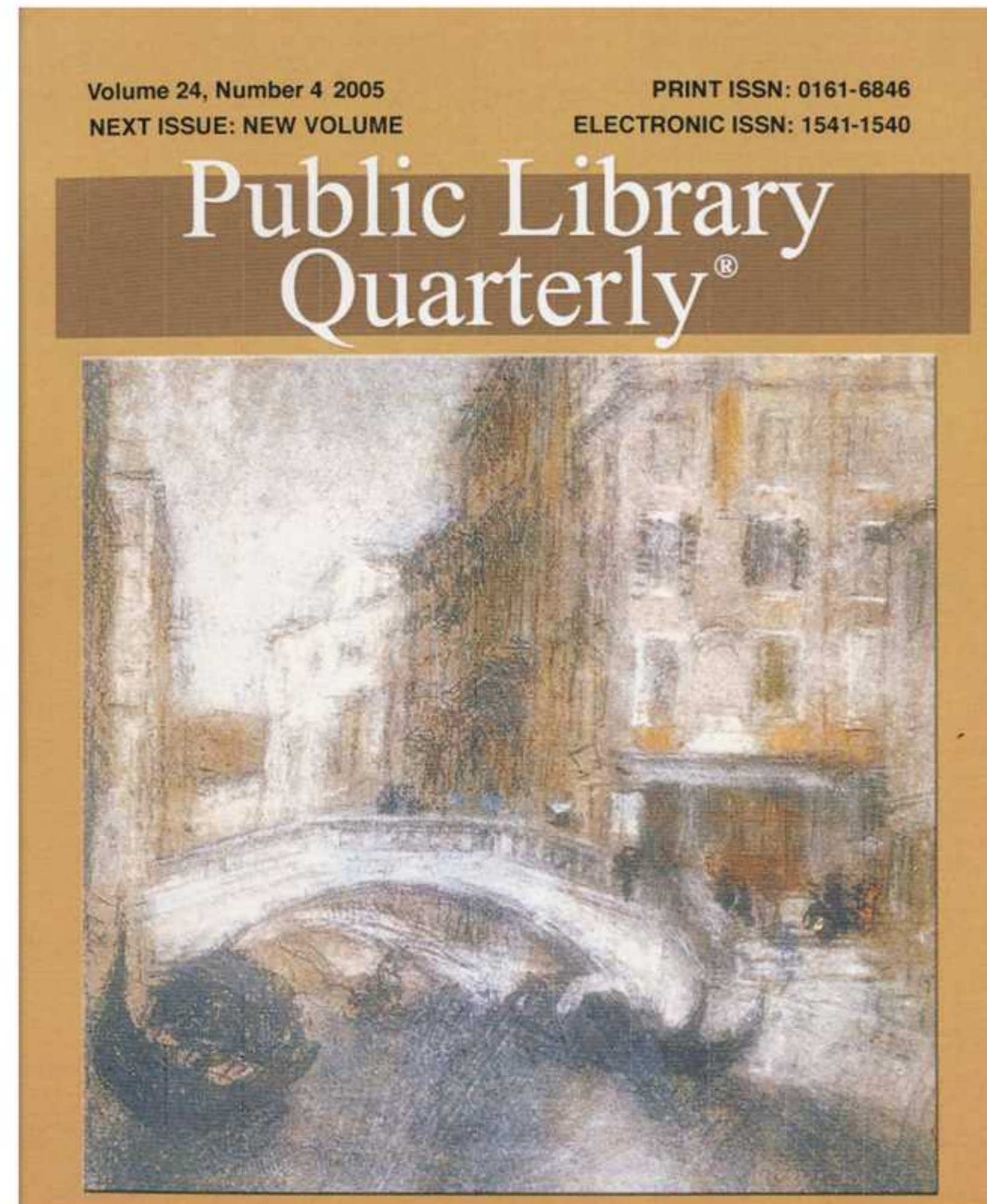


Making History:

Senior Theses and Undergraduate Historical Research

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Our Community, Our Library: Women, Schools, and Popular Culture in the Public Library Movement

Jolie Valentine

ABSTRACT. The American Public Library came into prominence as a social institution during the second half of the 19th century, as thousands of individual libraries sprang up across the country. This paper argues that the majority of American public libraries were local creations, often founded by women's organizations. The paper also explores the ties between the histories and missions of public schools and public libraries. Finally, the paper examines how popular culture has been a key factor in the development of public libraries. These three components help define the current role of the public library and offer suggestions for strengthening its future. doi:10.1300/J118v24n04_03 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Public library movement, women in public library movement, schools in public library movement, communities, libraries in

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An earlier version of this paper was titled, "Advancing the Community: Women, Schools, and Popular Culture in the Public Library Movement" and was written as a senior thesis in History at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, in 2001, under the name Jolie Valentine Matedne with advisor Zuoyue Wang. The author wishes to thank Jean L. Preer, Suzanne Stauffer, and Zuoyue Wang for reading the original version and offering suggestions.

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Project Description

Every history major writes a senior thesis on a topic based on primary source research with the guidance of a faculty member as a two-quarter capstone experience.

Learning Objectives

- Learn by doing; critical thinking and improved writing; culmination and assessment of past learning

Assessment

- Written critique by supervising faculty
- Oral presentations of student theses with critique by supervisor and other faculties
- Discussion at annual department retreats on assessment
- Review of select theses by departmental Brundage Senior Thesis Award Committee
- Presentation of select theses at Southern California Phi Alpha Theta (History Honors Society) Conferences; three students have won awards in the last five years—Lisa Calahan on women workers during WWI; Lauri Howe on US recognition of Israel; and Josh Roche on 1920s US-Japan diplomatic relations
- Presentations at National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)—in 2007 Leo Covis presented on Los Angeles Catholic Worker during the Cold War
- Submission and publication in scholarly journals (see below)

Dissemination

- Feedback on senior theses applied in other classes
- Encouragement of students to continue research and writing after graduation

A Successful Story

- Jolie Valentine completed Senior Thesis "Advancing the Community: Women, Schools, and Popular Culture in the Public Library Movement" in Winter 2001, which won departmental Brundage Thesis Award and helped Jolie to gain admission to University of Michigan School of Information
- Supervising faculty Zuoyue Wang put thesis on course website as a model for other students in Senior Thesis class (www.csupomona.edu/~zywang)
- Editor of peer-reviewed *Public Library Quarterly* read thesis online and contacted Jolie to encourage her to submit it to journal
- Thesis published in journal in 2005 following peer reviews and revisions!