



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Library & Information Science

WALKING LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS – AN STUDY OF EFFORTS BEING MADE BY CITIZEN’S OR LIBRARIANS

KEY WORDS: Walking Library, Walking Librarian Mobilising books, places, readers and reading

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ABSTRACT

This Research Paper aims to showcase the work of citizens of India for uplifting the reading campaign in India through own walking for books at readers door steps. This paper highlights the Special case studies from different states.

INTRODUCTION: THE WALKING LIBRARIAN

In India, it is observed that many of the Peoples are unable to join the public libraries due to some physical illness or distance issue or economic issue but many of the pioneer librarians or active readers are engaged to door to door supply of books. The people who help people wanted to read the books are called as walking librarians.

In Rajsthan Mr. Moti lal Sanghi was the Example of Pioneer Walking Librarian and he was the person who served the people at your doorstep for books. Sanmati Pustakalay Jaipur honored the Active librarian in loving Memory of Master Moti lal sanghi best Young librarian Award or Best Librarian Award every Year.

for the Sideways Festival, a peripatetic, ecologically-focused month-long arts festival that aimed to re-mark the old pathways of the Flanders region of Belgium by walking them. Our library of books was carried in backpacks by volunteer librarians along the 334 kilometers of the festival's route in the company of and for use by the other commissioned artists of the festival.



Introduction To Walking Libraries

The Walking Library brings together walking and books; in its simplest conceptualization, it is a library that carries books by foot. The idea for The Walking Library was prompted initially by our encounter with repeated references to books carried on long walks during the nineteenth century; for example, in 1818 Keats walked across the Lake District and to Scotland with Dante's Divine Comedy and John Muir, on his thousand mile walk to the gulf in 1867, carried Robert Burns' poetry, Milton's Paradise Lost, William Wood's Botany, and a small New Testament.

We became interested in the relationship between mobility, place and books, how the experience of reading is changed by the journey and the places where a book is read and vice versa. These historical experiences were the catalyst for the question: what book would we choose to carry with us? Not only was the response to this question informed by the context of the walk, but also by a sociable impulse; we extended the question to others as an invitation to join us in assembling a library and exploring another question collectively: what happens when a book is taken on a walk?

Chronological Journey Of Walking Libraries

The Walking Library was initiated in 2012 as a mobile library

This event prompted specific engagements with books, documented in our essay 'Stories from The Walking Library', an account and analysis of the relationships engendered between walking, journeying, reading, writing and landscape. Similar to anthropologist Tim In gold we recognized ourselves and our companion walkers and readers as way finders, with walking and reading acknowledged as modes of ambulatory and ambient knowing, the book and environment existing in and approached as a dialogic becoming-in-process. Thus, we offered 'Stories' as a meshwork of occurrences or topics constructed as we moved along different lines of enquiry relating to reading, walking and writing, including how a walk, as a space of knowledge production, is written and read. We aspired to an epistemological practice of the emergent and the encounter, 'knowing as we go' rather than presuming to know before setting off. We came to understand The Walking Library as an entanglement of interwoven and coexisting pathways, 'trails along which life is lived'.

Stories Of Walking Libraries

If in 'Stories' we proposed that The Walking Library offered itself as a mobile laboratory for exploring relationships between walking, reading and writing, in this essay, a sequel of sorts to 'Stories', we seek to engage further with that laboratory, drawing subsequent Walking Libraries into our discussion. Our focus in 'Stories' was primarily on the relationship of walking to texts, positioning the peripatetic less as a mode of transport than a particular modality of mobile attention. Here, prompted by the theme of this journal, we turn our attention to The Walking Library's function as a library, asking: 'What sort of library is a walking library? What does a walking library do -- for its books and its borrowers and the places through which it moves? And what can it reveal or teach us about libraries, books, reading and environment?'

This turn foregrounds the fact that the books carried by The Walking Library are mobile in multiple ways: like those accompanying Keats and Muir, they can be carried; but they are circulated and shared rather than owned. Instead of archiving books for perpetuity, The Walking Library depends upon and promotes the movement of books amongst social networks through gifting, lending and borrowing. It is the social capacity -- the social capital -- of The Walking Library, and of walking and reading, which concerns us most here.

The Walking Library, dependent as it is on specific books, people and places, is thus a contingent staging of an encounter of mutual and dynamic relations. It reveals itself as a temporary structure of transitory affordances, a shifting constellation of seemingly equal agents: a collection of people, books and places constantly responding and rearranging or corresponding.

Mobilising Attributes Of The Walking Library

Our attention to the mobilising attributes of The Walking Library is made at a pivotal moment in the histories of libraries and reading, where forms, practices, behaviours, infrastructures and relationships between libraries, their holdings, their spaces and their temporal frames are in transition. The history of reading practices and mobile libraries reveals that reading is a complex endeavour and the species of libraries are just as diverse. Understanding and exploring that diversity at this moment of change is important; The Walking Library has offered both a unique concept and form of library and practice of reading alongside a mode of researching and understanding the varied practices and forms of reading that libraries offer.

The Mobility Of Books

Books and travelling have a long-conjoined history. The very desire for mobility, for carry-ability, is encoded in the modern -- print -- book's design. Aldus Manutius invented the first octavo sized edition precisely so it could fit into a gentleman's pocket. The book's portability is pivotal to its lend-ability. Once mobile, the book could travel both with and to people, spurring technologies for its wider distribution and greater accessibility, which developed in turn new geographies and demographics of reading.

Sociable Books And Words

The mobile books of The Walking Library are not just vehicles for mobilizing thought, but are engines for sociability, material objects 'central to specific social networks [which] entail a temporary occasioned encounter'. The encounter, here, is with and between other people, places and texts. The Walking Library thus has a particularly social architecture. In his study of British Public Libraries since the 1850s, social historian Alistair Black reveals the impact of library architecture on reading practices; for example, the imposition of silence in public libraries prohibited readers from discussing their reading and the ideas it prompted. With its invitation to participants to share extracts from books selected and carried, The Walking Library provides a stage of sorts for improvised readings. In this respect, it is a determinedly generative and intentionally playful practice, aiming to transform thought by association. Figurative and literal paths are created through and between the folds and passages of ears and books' pages, as ideas and information are mobilized into collages or bricolages of different texts read alongside one another.

The Walking Library has revealed itself as a wholly collaborative and distributed performance, dependent on the generosity not only of the donors of books, but on those who donate readings, with this offer of 'reading to' seeming to prompt not just reciprocity, but also mutual and layered attentiveness: to the reader, the text, and the environment with (in) which it is deliberately placed. Listening becomes a multi-directional and multi-directed activity: listening to the

recite, to the recitation and to the site. The Walking Library creates a space for paying attention and for intentional hearing. In their reading to others, our readers also seek to do justice to the book they have selected and carried -- often protectively, sheltering it from the wind or rain -- and perhaps to those who have donated it; and then, in turn, to the extract they have chosen to share, whether randomly or deliberately. A generous reading is enacted, mirrored by a generous listening -- which is to suggest a reading and listening that are expansive and engaged.

Walking Library For Women Walking

As part of the Walking Library for Women Walking in Bristol, we ambled along Convocation Walk in the city's Royal Fort Gardens. At a large wooden installation, which resembled a group of people (just like our group), Katie climbed onto a plinth to share from her selected book, which also happened to be the book she had donated to the library: Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country* (1992). Katie's rationale for donating this book is written on the library card attached inside its front cover: It's a book about how important it is to follow your own truth, and what you risk in doing so. There is a line at the start that plays over in my head; it's the best sentence I've ever read. 'On the Suffolk farms, a light wet snow began to fall like salt.'

Place-making Of Reading

Participatory readings offered and placed in situ, function simultaneously as sites of dwelling and travelling; we dwell in the word and the space whilst also following or creating other trajectories, undoing and redoing the word and the text as we unmake and remake the world through this interrelationship. The text is a tool of socialization, but it is also socialized in its performed collaboration and extension literally into the world.

Temporalities Of Walking And Reading

If The Walking Library is a spatial practice, it is also a temporal one; it takes and works with time as much as with space. The temporalities of the project are remarked in recurring words, including ephemeral, contingent, provisional, temporary, happenstance, becoming. Time is foregrounded as the structural and aesthetic material of some Walking Library editions, with one library created and carried for an overnight walk, and another curated to prompt thinking about deep time. All the libraries are made for specified walking durations, ranging from long-distance, long-duration walks in the company of mostly the same group of people (for example, The Walking Library for Sideways Festival and The Walking Library for Bedrock Walk), to walks of just 90 minutes (such as The Walking Library for Women Walking).

Read Aloud

Read Aloud to us, Massey's words and ideas time-travelled, shaped by and shaping the site of their enunciation. The chaos of chance connections and accidental neighbors, of pasts, presents and as yet unwritten futures was observed in Parliament Square's configurations: the overbearing presence of the Palace of Westminster; the statues of eleven statesmen; a temporary and vernacular memorial to the recently murdered female Member of Parliament, Jo Cox; numerous groups of tourists, international students, families, and stragglers left over from an anti-austerity/anti-racism/anti-Tory demonstration; and us, a collection of mostly women carrying a collection of hand-picked books. There was something like happenstance too in the gathering of readings and authors that accumulated along the length of our communal walk: the spectres of Virginia Woolf and Doreen Massey walked this way together now, changing the journeys of each other and our own.

CONCLUSION

The Walking Library is a mobile library physically carried by walkers. Its mobility, however, is directly proportional to the shape (content and actions) the library takes in relation to its

context and to the dynamic, interdependent relationships it sets up between people, places and books. Along with place, objects and corporeal bodies, the library also mobilizes ideas and imagination. The term 'mobile library' is perhaps becoming most readily thought of as a library held within an electronic device, as books transform into mobile text. However, as noted above, in some contexts where communications infrastructure is either not in place or economically unviable, text held on electronic devices is not necessarily mobile in itself, but relies upon the historical role of mobile libraries as a key democratizing tool of library services. It is imperative that such contexts and implications of digitized text are not neglected or threaten the historical advancement of democratic access to knowledge. To date, The Walking Library has been committed to carrying paper books to enable the movement of and engagement with physical manifestations of texts. The Walking Library has offered temporary spaces for sociality, for shared contemplation, poetic spatiality and kinaesthetic comprehension. In doing so, it has generated a heightened sense of books' sociability, spatiality and mobility through a stronger understanding of the inter-dependencies of reading, walking, time and place. This might in the future further inform and facilitate the uptake of new digital forms of writing and books unhindered by social, economic and geographical barriers.

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