

Special Collections and Archives: the Science Fiction Collections at the University of Liverpool

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Abstract

Libraries are science fiction, and none more so than a science fiction library. To be more precise, libraries and science fiction function in analogous ways, for better or for worse. Both are structured by Western ideologies of domination and order – science fiction is structured by colonial narratives of exploration and othering of the alien (Chattopadhyay 2021: 8); libraries are premised on hierarchies of knowledge which work to exclude certain voices (Alexander and Baker 2023: 3).

Yet at the same time, they function as Other Spaces –imaginary or concrete – from which vantage point readers can critically reflect on society. Michel Foucault named these concrete spaces ‘heterotopias’ and used libraries as one of the key (1986: 26). For Foucault, such heterotopias hold up a mirror to our society and in doing so offer a “contestation of the space in which we live” (24).....