Consider the f-structure:

(1) \[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{OPER} \quad f \\
\text{SUBJ} \quad \{\text{“the librarian”}\} \\
\text{TENSE} \quad \text{PAST} \\
\text{PRED} \quad \text{put} \left\langle (\uparrow \text{SUBJ})(\uparrow \text{OBJ})(\uparrow \text{OBL}_{\text{Loc}}) \right\rangle' \\
\text{OBJ} \quad f \\
\text{OBL}_{\text{Loc}} \quad \{\text{“on the shelf”}\}
\end{array}
\]

\[ f = \{\text{“what”}\} \]

From a realizational perspective, this raises a question: In which position should the multifunctional element appear? The “minimalist” assumption would be that both positions are available.

In fact, there are languages in which the multifunctional element appears in the canonical position of the locally licensed grammatical function. This kind of construction has been given the unfortunate name “in situ wh”.

Why is this name unfortunate?

Mandarin Chinese

Classification: Sino-Tibetan, Chinese; 873,014,298 speakers. Official language of China and Taiwan and Singapore. Also spoken in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Thailand


(2) a. Zhangsan wen wo shei mai-le shu
   Zhangsan ask me who bought books
   ‘Zhangsan asked me who bought books.’

b. Zhangsan xiangzin shei mai-le shu
   Zhangsan believe who bought books
   ‘Who does Zhangsan believe bought books?’

c. Zhangsan zhidaoshei mai-le shu
   Zhangsan know who bought books
   ‘Who does Zhangsan know bought the books?’
   ‘Zhangsan knows who bought the books.’
Japanese
Classification uncertain. 122,433,899 speakers. National language of Japan

(3) Mari- ga depāto- de dare- ni ranpu- o eranda ka?
Mari- NOM dept.store- LOC who- DAT lamp- ACC choose.PAST Q
‘Who did Mari choose a lamp for at the department store?’

Kikuyu (allows either construction)

(4) a. Oywefji:ria Goye oiyire mahire ke’na’i o?
you.think Ngugi said they.gave crab who
‘Who do you think Ngugi said they gave a crab to?’
b. Noo oywefji:ria Goye oiyire mahire ke’na’i?
FOC.who you.think Ngugi said they.gave crab
‘Who do you think Ngugi said they gave a crab to?’

Egyptian Arabic (unlike most dialects and unlike Standard Arabic)
Classification: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, West, Central, Arabic. 46,321,000 speakers. In addition to Egypt, spoken in Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

(5) a. Fariid ḥatt ʔeeh ʕala l- tarabeeza.
Fariid put what on the- table
‘What did Fariid put on the table?’
b. Fariid ḥatt kitaab miin ʕala l- tarabeeza.
Fariid put book who on the- table
‘Whose book did Fariid put on the table?’
c. Fariid ḥatt kitaab Mona ʔeeh.
Fariid put book Mona on what
‘What did Fariid put Mona’s book on?’
Hindi (with scope marker)

(6) a. Jaun kyaa socta hai Meri kis- se baat karegii ?
John what thinks AUX Mary who- with will.talk
‘Who does John think Mary will talk to?’

b. Jaun kyaa socta hai Meri kahaan jaayegii ?
John what thinks AUX Mary where will.go
‘Where does John think Mary will go?’

English
Classification: Indo-European, Germanic, West, English. 309,352,280 speakers.

(These are non-echo questions.)

(7) a. A: Well, anyway, I’m leaving.
B: OK. so you’ll be leaving WHEN exactly?

b. A: I’m annoyed.
B: Aha. You’re annoyed with WHOM?

Also…
“wh-in-situ” obeys (at least some) island constraints. This is illustrated here for the Complex NP Constraint:

Kikuyu
(8) a. *Mati:e mo:do orea otoniri:e mahao mareko?
they.not.know person DEM cut flowers which
‘Which flowers did they not know anyone who cut?’

b. *Mo:niri:e mo:do orea otoniri:e mahao mareko?
they.saw person DEM cut flowers which
‘Which flowers did they see the person who cut?’

c. *Kamau o:niri:e mo:do orea oringiri:o?
Kamau saw person DEM hit who
‘Who did Kamao see the person who hit?’
Egyptian Arabic (* for conservative speakers)
(9) *Fariid simiʃ iʃaaʃ it inn Mona yimkin titgawwiz miin?
Fariid heard rumor that Mona might marry who
‘Who did Fariid hear a rumor that Mona might marry?’

But…

In some languages, “in-situ wh” constructions are not subject to island constraints.

Egyptian Arabic
The sentence above is grammatical for more liberal speakers.

English
(10) (A question to a guest on a radio show about the interim chief of the US Attorney’s office)
This is a position that is how important in your judgment, Rory?

In these cases, the “in-situ wh” constructions are not true wh-type constructions.

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[SUBJ | “the librarian”]
TENSE | PAST
PRED | ‘put (↑SUBJ)(↑OBJ)(↑OBL-LOC)’
OBJ | [“what”]
OBL-LOC | [“on the shelf”]
```