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EDITORIAL:

POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS IN LIBRARIANSHIP

Most American librarians today take it for granted that our profession stands for the unequivocal defense of intellectual freedom, freedom of speech and a number of other very fine principles. It is surely among the best things about us that we now see ourselves as being almost definitionally committed to democratic values. But in the last decades we have perhaps grown too used to casting our profession in this heroic mold, as if historically it has always been true that librarians as a profession and en masse have opposed censorship, bigotry and intolerance and held tenaciously to intellectual freedom as our cardinal professional value.

This static image of librarianship is, however, a myth (comforting though it might be) as any objective examination of library history would demonstrate. Those who take it as reality are likely to lose sight not just of where we’ve come from but of how we must proceed. Among those who apparently take the myth for the reality are librarians who are presently railing against the intrusion of “politics” and the destruction of “neutrality” in ALA, provoked by the recent (barely successful) effort to get the association to take a stand against the Persian Gulf War and the censorship it would inevitably entail, as if this were a betrayal of our traditions and of timeless professional values.

History, however, reminds us, with regards to neutrality, that the very emergence of the library profession was intimately associated with ideologically-informed efforts to place the whole development of education and mass enlightenment under the aegis of elite business interests. These interests envisaged systems of rationalized schools and libraries as powerful instruments of social integration and control and our profession consciously placed itself at the service of this eminently ideological project. This is not, of course, to say that the organization of libraries in the public sphere in this era—which was the great impetus to the development of the entire profession—did not have a significance which transcended these ideological limits. It certainly represented a potential extension of democracy for masses of Americans. But we would do well to remember that, if libraries as institutions implicitly opened democratic vistas, our librarian predecessors were hardly democratic in their overt professional attitude or mission, being primarily concerned with the regulation
of literacy, the *policing* of literary taste and the *propagation* of a particular class culture with all its political, economic and social prejudices.

In fact, the idea of the neutrality of librarianship, so enshrined in today’s library ideology (and so often read back into the indefinite past), was alien to these earlier generations. The origins of the ideas of impartiality and neutrality, which come to fruition much later, are perhaps more connected to the historical process of institutional rationalization and bureaucratization (of which the new librarians were enthusiastic exponents) than to a preoccupation with intellectual freedom. If we have become more democratic, more concerned with equity and social justice it has been because of a political process not because of a hewing to imaginary first principles of neutrality.

No fair historical examination of librarianship in America could fail to note as well that its annals are replete with examples of partisanship, albeit not necessarily (as one would like to believe) of free thought or the rights of minorities, but too often of the causes of the powers-that-be and the forces of order, sometimes taking the form of a passive defense of the status quo, sometimes taking shape as an active campaign for a new cause.

It is no secret, for example, that in seeking recognition of its identity and acknowledgment of its importance the profession energetically curried favor with business and government by actively endorsing World War I. Libraries were made veritable instruments of propaganda with librarians zealously weeding and censoring all unpatriotic material, promoting pro-war views, and persecuting anti-war librarians. What precluded librarians being *anti-war*? Not an aversion to politics!

During the witchhunts of the fifties, didn’t librarians at New York Public Library (and elsewhere) dutifully remove the books of blacklisted authors from the shelves (though supposedly putting them in storage rather than burning them as librarians in other countries might not have been loath to do)? This cowardly political act was considered consistent with the prevailing notion of professional responsibility. Who can say politics has been alien to librarianship? But did they have to be *those* politics?

If we are inclined to believe that we have completely overcome our “political” past, we should consider that many ALA members
are fighting against implementation of a poor people’s policy, that there is resistance at the highest level to discussing censorship in Israel, that effective action against South African apartheid was blocked by Council, and only months ago our association turned a blind eye to members who censored material going to troops in the Persian Gulf.

The question, as a glance at our history reveals, is not whether politics enters into professional matters (it always has), but rather what politics, and to what effect. We should remember too that it was only since the sixties, largely under the political impetus of activist librarians fighting for a substantive (rather than merely formal/legal) concept of intellectual freedom based on engagement with civil and human rights issues and a politicized sense of social responsibility, that the notion of our commitment to democratic values has been moved to the central place in librarianship and given the expanded meaning we are all apt to take for granted today. It may be convenient for some librarians to ignore or forget all this and assert that politics has no place in our profession, but such a view can only be predicated on historical amnesia.

As the chilling specter of a campaign against the fashionable bogey of “political correctness” descends on ALA, PLG maintains that every new problem which arises, whether it has to do with a new technology or responses to a new social crisis, involves questions of the library’s relations to the rest of society which cannot but have a political dimension. Every such problem challenges us to live up to our sometimes all too complacently assumed and (despite our rhetoric) sometimes rather tenuous commitment to democratic values. Any stifling of political debate in the name of an ahistorical notion of professionalism would mean not the supression of divisive politics, but only the unthinking acceptance of a particular politics.

In defiance of phony neutralism, this issue of Progressive Librarian investigates several aspects of the politics of librarianship: responses to homelessness, the ins-and-outs of international library cooperation with the Third World, and more general questions of the role of librarianship in creating a new, more just, international communications environment. We hope this issue is a contribution to keeping alive political debate, which alone ensures that our profession’s developing principles are continuously infused with real content and meaning.

— Mark Rosenzweig

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TOWARDS A NEW WORLD INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION ORDER: A SYMPOSIUM

This is a transcript of a PLG-sponsored panel at the 9th Annual
Socialist Scholars Conference held in New York City on April 7,
1991. Speakers were Colleen Roach of Queens College and John
Buschman of Rider College. Mark Rosenzweig of PLG was the
panel's moderator.

Mark Rosenzweig: Welcome. We've chosen to focus on issues
raised by that UNESCO initiated set of proposals called the New
World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) because
we believe that, as the bipolar Cold War framework of global
relations dissolves, the issues raised in the late 1970s and '80s by the
proponents of a more just global order in the economic sphere and
in the increasingly interrelated information sphere will gain renewed
relevance. None of the problems underlined by the advocates of
either the slightly earlier New International Economic Order or the
New World Information and Communication Order have been ef­
fectively addressed in the past decade. Even as George Bush, after
hijacking the United Nations to prosecute his war, proclaims his
"New World Order," the fact that many of the problems of global
inequality, dependency, underdevelopment and distorted develop­
ment are intensifying, even deepening, makes it all the more im­
portant that we keep alive and extend these initiatives, which sought to
suggest new paradigms of global relations.

The UNESCO report on the NWICO, prepared by a commission
headed by the late Sean MacBride, was called Many Voices, One
World. In a sense, the institution of the library, at least in its ideal
self-image, represents the vision of Many Voices, One World in
microcosm. But even at the level of the individual library, we find
that many voices are excluded, or simply not present, and that the
"one world" is bifurcated into the information rich and access­
enabled and the information poor and access-restricted.

The Progressive Librarians Guild was founded to promote the
realization of the vision of "many voices, one world," i.e. of cultural
democracy, through radical action in the library community. We
hope that this panel we are sponsoring helps to show the connection
between the mega-issues of global communications and the issues
of access at the micro-level of libraries and their communities,
because in a real sense the level of library development an index of the popular and democratic efficacy of communications policy.

I'd like to introduce our first panelist, Colleen Roach, from Queens College Communications Department. She worked for UNESCO in the 1970s and '80s at which time the whole discussion of the New World Information and Communication Order was going on.

Colleen Roach: Thank you, Mark. I’m going to talk about three main points related to the New World Information and Communication Order. Most of what I’m going to talk about will deal specifically with what the New Order was all about, its past and present, and the question of whether or not it has a future. Secondly, I’m going to make a few remarks connecting Mr. Bush’s “New World Order” to the movement for a New World Information Order. Finally, I’ll make a few comments on what I think organizations such as PLG might do to help implement this order.

The inter-governmental history of the NWICO, which up until now has been the most important part of it, had two main actors: the first was the Non-Aligned Movement and the second was UNESCO. (Unfortunately, we are missing at this conference one of the most important chroniclers of the Non-Aligned Movement, Archie Sin-gham, who was a regular at the Socialist Scholars Conference for many years. He, with his wife Shirley Hune, wrote one of the definitive histories of the Non-Aligned Movement called Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignment. His was a very valiant struggle for the Third World, anti-racism and anti-imperialism. Unfortunately, he just passed away about a month ago.)

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formed in 1955 by the heads of state mainly of Asian and African countries who came together to define a policy of non-alignment for Third World countries in order to steer a different course of action between the superpowers. After the decolonization of Asia, Africa and the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s, the NAM became progressively more involved in questions of international equity in terms of both economics and information.

UNESCO, the second player in NWICO's history, has a rather colorful past. UNESCO was founded, like most UN agencies, after the Second World War. Its constitution specifically stated
that UNESCO was to be devoted to the “free flow of information” which is the official US policy on international information exchanges. It was the US, in fact, that inserted this phrase into UNESCO’s constitution. In the 1970s, like many UN agencies UNESCO took a pro-Third World stance and became involved in the NWICO debate when in 1974 it elected an African Director General, Mr. M’Bow of Senegal.

So, in the history of the NWICO you have these two actors: the NAM and UNESCO. The 1960s were an era of decolonization in the Third World, particularly in Asia and Africa. (Most Latin American countries achieved political independence in the 19th century.) The 1970s were characterized by a Third World recognition that, in spite of formal political independence, these countries were still very much dependent on the West. Therefore, a number of different activities were launched within inter-governmental fora. Mark mentioned one of them, the New International Economic Order, which is also an essential part of the pre-history of the NWICO. In 1974 the NAM at the United Nations sent out a call for a New International Economic Order, basically saying that global economic relations should change because, in spite of independence, the economic situation in the Third World was getting worse. There was no doubt that, after the so-called “decades of development” of the ’60s and ’70s, terms of trade were grossly unbalanced and Third World debt was mounting. It was clear that a different type of economic arrangement was necessary at the international level.

When the call for a new information and communication order was launched in 1976, it made the very important link with the New International Economic Order. I think this is one of the most significant contributions of the whole debate on global information—to put information squarely in the context of economic relations. This became increasingly important as we moved into the “information society” in the 1980s.

It was in 1976 at a Non-Aligned seminar in Tunis, Tunisia that the non-aligned countries first used the term “new international order” in information relations. After this, UNESCO got so involved in communication issues that it became more closely identified with the movement than NAM. This close identification posed a particular problem for UNESCO and, in fact, accounts for the reason that the NWICO became so controversial. UNESCO, after all, had a mandate
to defend the “free flow of information” and in the 1970s was moving away from US information policy and towards a pro-Third World perspective.

Now, what exactly was the NWICO? First of all it is important to situate it in the context of the whole movement against cultural imperialism in the 1960's and '70s. There is a being written a revisionist history of the NWICO that omits this important part of the intellectual history of the movement. But if you go back and read the literature of the Non-Aligned Movement, in particular in the 1970's, it is very clear that they were using the concepts of media and cultural imperialism. NWICO advocates were clearly using Marxist concepts. They were talking about imperialism, core/periphery analysis, etc. This was, of course, fueled by the work of many Marxist scholars, both from the Third World and from the West. The criticism of Western control of information focused mainly on four different items: news flow, television flow, advertising, and information technology.

The news flow question got the most attention. The Third World complaint was that their own information systems were dwarfed by news from the big world agencies. They provided statistics showing us how many words a day Third World countries received from AP and UPI, for example, and how little they were able to give back. The complaints had a qualitative dimension also, because people living in Third World countries were obliged to see themselves through the eyes of the West. They would learn about events happening in neighboring countries, not through their own eyes, but through the eyes of the West. And there was, of course, the “Coupes and Earthquakes” syndrome, i.e. Third World countries were always being portrayed as places where nothing but disasters took place.

The television flow debate dealt with the same kinds of issues, but in the context of TV programs. There were studies done in the 1970s showing how the US dominated the export market of global television. There was a famous UNESCO television study done by Varis and Nordenstreng in 1974 showing how, particularly in Latin America, but also in many other countries, the West (with the US at the top of the list) really was flooding the world market with cultural television products.
Advertising was also tied into the whole issue of the flow of information. Research was published showing how the global advertising agencies (mainly based in the US) were the mainstays of an increasingly transnationalized economy. Media industries and communication technologies also became an important part of the debate in the 1980s when questions of equity in informatics, computers, and access to satellites arose. In short, the Third World call for a NWICO was based upon a critique of the transnational control of global information flows. It was very much tied up with the work of Herbert Schiller in the US, for example and Armand Mattelart in Latin America, which focused on the way that big transnational corporations control global information. And again, it should be emphasized (because of the revisionist history of NWICO that is being written) that this movement clearly had an anti-capitalist thrust. That is a big part of the reason that the US and the West reacted to it so strongly.

The US reaction to the NWICO, from the very beginning, was extremely hostile. Why did the US react so harshly to demands for global equity in information and communications? First of all, because there was, until recently, a Socialist/Third World alliance. The Socialist countries supported Third World demands. There was also the new Cold War context of the early 1980s. The Reagan Administration characterized the NWICO as, basically, a Communist plot to shackle the "free press" because it was supported by Socialist countries with state-run media. The main argument used to attack the NWICO was the government-control-of-the-media argument. Detractors argued that since certain Third World countries promoted or had government-controlled media anything that they tried to set up along the lines of a new world information order would necessarily support government control of the media.

There are many different analyses of why the "government-controlled media" aspects of the debate became so important. One can talk about the traditional American defense of the "free flow of information", the "freedom of the press", and the First Amendment. But these arguments have so many different contradictions, even if you just look at the ideological level, that I think the clearest reason for the US attack was economic interests. At the very same time the NWICO was gaining ground in the 1970s and '80s, there was another movement: a movement of capital, and a movement toward the "information society." Increasingly, it became clear in the West,
particularly in the US that their economies were going to rely more and more on the production and export of information/media services and products.

Now, the NWICO was short on programmatic suggestions, long on rhetoric, and didn’t have too many prescriptions on what the New Order would look like. Opponents of the NWICO were reasonably sure, however, of one thing: if the NWICO ever did become implemented, it would definitely mean more public or government control of the media and information. This did not square at all with the needs of the “information society”, which has relied more and more (much as the literature of PLG points out) on the privatization of information. So, in my analysis, the reasons for the US attack on NWICO were not just ideological, but also, economic. The NWICO did not meet with the expanding needs of capitalism in the ’70s and ’80s, which was relying increasingly upon the production and circulation of information. So, throughout the ’70s and ’80s, there was a very strong coalition formed of the Western press, the government, the State Department, and private sector lobbies such as the Heritage Foundation and the World Press Freedom Committee (an American organization that claims to be international, but isn’t, as is often the case). These groups lobbied the press, they lobbied the government, and had influential allies in the academy. As a result, the US withdrew from UNESCO in 1985—a major event in the history of international relations—and everyone knew that the main reason for this withdrawal was that the US felt very threatened by the proposal for a New World Information Order. In 1986 the United Kingdom, the US’s closest ally, also withdrew.

Where does the debate stand now? Since 1985 a number of different things have happened. First of all, UNESCO has completely backtracked on the NWICO after several years of strong support. For instance, when I was working at UNESCO as a project officer, my job description said: “Work on the New World Information and Communication Order.” This is what I was hired to do, but, since 1985, UNESCO has backed off of this project. You see this new position in UNESCO’s general conferences, in the kinds of resolutions they’ve adopted, and especially in the position of the new Director General, a Spaniard named Federico Mayor. Since his election in 1987, Mayor has been going all over the world and has
come to the US many times stating specifically that the NWICO was illegal and that it violated human rights charters.

Mayor stated in one famous interview with the *Washington Post* that “UNESCO defends the free flow of information—full stop.” He was here in New York just a few months ago down at the Gannett Center attending a seminar on the New Order and again he preached the same message, trying to get the US back into UNESCO (in, I think, a rather craven fashion) by disavowing what had happened in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1989 at its last general conference, UNESCO adopted what it’s calling a “new strategy” which, in the words of Leonard Sussman of Freedom House was so replete with “free flow” that “it was repeated to the point of boredom.” This from a conservative critic.

So, UNESCO has adopted a strong anti-NWICO position now and not just a passive one—it actively tried to suppress information on the NWICO. For example, there was a book put out by the Institute for Media Analysis (they’re here at this conference) called *Hope and Folly*, by Bill Preston, Herbert Schiller and Edward Herman, that had been contracted by UNESCO under M’Bow. Under Mayor, UNESCO actually tried to sue the Institute in a court of law to prevent the book (which talked about NWICO) from appearing. Finally, after the Institute smartly raised a big fuss and went public with this attempted censorship, UNESCO backed down [but insisted that a disclaimer be printed removing UNESCO's sponsorship from the book].

In another instance, I coedited an issue of an academic journal on the NWICO and UNESCO got wind of it. I heard from one of the editors that UNESCO tried to exert pressure on him not to bring out the journal. They made it very clear that they didn’t want this information published.

The reason why UNESCO is taking this position against the NWICO is very clear: people are still interested in the concept and the issues that gave rise to the NWICO are very much alive. In the last few years, there have been innumerable meetings, sponsored by a variety of organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the International Organization of Journalists, and the World Association of Christian Communication. Here in the United States, the Union for Democratic Communications, a group of critical communications scholars, held its annual meeting in 1990 on the theme of the
new order, with Mustapha Masmoudi (often referred to as the “father” of the NWICO) in attendance. There have been two MacBride Round Tables on the NWICO in Harare and Prague. The third Round Table will take place in Istanbul in June of this year.

Now, some people may say, “Well, what do all these meetings mean?” I suppose you could say that they are not necessarily important, but in a certain sense they are because they reflect a degree of public opinion in the world about the importance of information and communications equity. Most significant, however, is the new line that the most recent discussions are taking: the era of intergovernmental organization involvement in these issues is now passé. If there is to be a renewed movement for the New World Information Order, it’s clearly in the hands of grassroots groups. This position was clearly articulated in the declaration adopted at the last MacBride Round Table, held in Prague, in September 1990, as shown in the following passage:

The debate on the NWICO has thus returned to where it started. It is now in the arena of professional organizations, of communications researchers and most importantly in the arena of grassroots movements, representing ordinary men, women and children who are directly affected by our current cultural and communications environment.

The reason why people are still interested in the NWICO, as evidenced by these meetings, is because the issues have not gone away: transnational control of information is still with us and in many cases the TNCs are, in fact, increasing their hold on global information. There are some improvements, but they are just drops in the bucket. We have organizations such as IPS (Inter-Press Service). We have PeaceNet, which is giving out information on the Third World. We have CNN’s World Report. But we still have, by and large, a huge amount of information produced by the transnational corporations.

If you look at news and television flows, advertising and information technology, the areas that the Third World complained about in the 1970s and ’80s, the statistics show that things haven’t really changed and in some cases have actually gotten worse. Just to give you an example of what I’m talking about: AP produces about 17 million words per day—that’s what it sends out to the rest of the
world. The Non-Aligned pool, which is supposed to promote the ideas of the NWICO, produces about 100,000 words per day. The Pan-African News Agency sends out about 20,000 words per day. (PANA was set up specifically to counter the flow of the transnational agencies).

In television flow, Aggrey Brown of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication in Jamaica, did a study published just last year where he looked at four countries in the Caribbean over the last decade—since the “MacBride Report” was published. He concluded that the situation has gotten much, much worse in terms of television flows. It’s the worst in the world: four countries in the Caribbean import about 87% of their TV films from the West, mostly from the US.

Then, of course, you have everything that’s been going on in Western Europe. I’m sure a lot of you are aware of the recent privatization of broadcasting there, which has resulted in what the New York Times referred to as a “real bonanza, a real gold mine for the transnational corporations now in Europe.” Europeans, in fact, have even tried to take legislative action at the regional level to stem the tide. Thus, the same issues are surfacing there too. People everywhere are concerned about American culture being spread across the globe.

If indeed there is to be a new wave of support for the NWICO, I think that one should take a look at what happened in UNESCO prior to 1985 during the NWICO debates and try to do a self-critique. One important element lacking was a class analysis of information and communications issues. Such an analysis would help us particularly in understanding the role Third World national elites played in promoting the NWICO and would also help us to understand why the UN organizations flip-flop like they do—I know because I was there—as they are mainly made up of members of all countries’ national elites.

I think that the need for a class analysis of elites and the NWICO is most apparent in terms of women’s issues. The NWICO was notorious for ignoring women: there are all sorts of statistics showing that women were never invited to meetings; the “MacBride Report” hardly talked about women; many say that the NWICO has really been an old boys’ club.
I also think we have to go back to some of the Marxist concepts behind the NWICO. It's very clear to me that, although everyone who supported the NWICO was not a Marxist or socialist by any means, the basis of the analysis was Marxist and made use of concepts such as the core/periphery and imperialism. Certainly there are different ways we can make these arguments more sophisticated now, for example, by refining our analysis of cultural imperialism and looking more closely at the role of the national elites in the NWICO (many of whom did control and muzzle the press to the detriment of the New Order). But I still think the basic arguments are very valid and I still think we have to argue that, if you push things to their logical conclusion in talking about creating a New Order, you must talk about Socialism in some form, that is public control of information.

Now, I'd like to make just a few comments on Mr. Bush's "New World Order" and its connection to our topic. The most flagrant aspect of Bush's call for a "New World Order" is that there's absolutely no sign of historical memory at all of the Third World call for a New Order. You read article after article in the very same newspapers that lambasted the NWICO in the 1970s and '80s and, though these papers know very well what NWICO was all about, I have yet to see an article anywhere in the mainstream press that even mentions it when talking about Bush's "New World Order." The press would just as soon forget about the Third World, just forget about what nonetheless continues to be a very important historical movement.

Of course, it's not yet fully clear what Bush's "New World Order" is all about, but people in the Third World know that the war in the Persian Gulf means more exploitation, more military incursions. It is extremely important for progressive people in the US to remain in solidarity with people in the Third World and to get out as much information as possible on popular Third World struggles. This is especially needed because the West was united against the NWICO and is now united behind Bush's "New World Order." I just returned from France and was struck by how easily Western neo-imperialist powers got off the hook in respect to their involvement in the Persian Gulf war. There's a "French connection" to the NWICO and it's not by accident that two of the main Third World spokespeople for the "New Order", Masmoudi and M'Bow were
from Tunisia and Senegal—both former French colonies. There’s a lot to be said about the effects of French colonialism in Africa.

One final point on the “New World Order.” I think it’s ironic that the US attacked the NWICO for promoting government control of information while it is very certain that (judging from the experience of journalists during the Gulf war) a prominent feature of Bush’s “New Order” will be more control of information.

What is to be done? I think we should be hopeful here in the United States. The left has a tendency towards self-flagellation; we’ve seen this recently in the separatist tendencies in the anti-war movement. But I think there’s a lot going on in the US and people just don’t realize it. I saw Archie Singham about 6 weeks before he died. There he was, seeing the war come to fruition, even as he was dying, and yet he said he never felt more hopeful, because he saw so many people struggling for change in the United States.

I’d like to quote someone from the Progressive Librarians Guild. Henry Blanke wrote that “we must find ways to resist corporate domination of the cultural-information sphere and devise strategies to directly intervene in the development of an ‘information society’ in ways which would further democratic empowerment and social solidarity rather than private wealth and privilege.” That’s probably the best way of answering “What is to be done?”

We must promote the New World Information and Communication Order here in the United States. We can do this in part by supporting the work of organizations like Paper Tiger, the Alliance for Cultural Democracy, the Union for Democratic Communications and by constantly thinking of ways in which groups like PLG can contribute to a democratic, grassroots movement for a socialist society. Thank you.

Mark Rosenzweig: Thank you Colleen. Next we’ll hear from John Buschman who’s a reference librarian at Rider College in New Jersey.

John Buschman: Press coverage of Mr. Bush’s splendid little war provides a broad metaphor for what has been happening to information (formerly knowledge and wisdom) since the early 1980s. Put succinctly, information about the war was centralized and controlled as a strategic economic, military, and political resource in support of the war. This happened in spite of the fact that, technically,
coverage of the war could have been far more immediate and thorough than the coverage of the war in Vietnam. Information, in the parallel I am drawing, has become corporatized, centralized, privatized, and public outlets of information are in decline. I will move quickly through four illustrations of these points, from the broad to the specific and local manifestations of the New World Information and Communication Order.

First, and Colleen mentioned this, information and information technology are very big business. By the corporatization of information, I do not mean the former familiar scale of family publishing corporations like Knopf or Scribners. Some selected figures illustrate the new economic scale of the information industry:

The electronic information industry is projected to grow from $7.5 billion to $19 billion from 1989 to 1994.

The database industry grew from $127 million to $2.5 billion from 1982 to 1989.

Sales of computers in 1990 were expected to be $80 billion and corporate expenditures on networking alone is expected to reach $18 billion.

Citicorp spent $200 million on putting together a databank to link the names and addresses of customers to specific item purchases in supermarkets. In other words, your name enters a database along with Folgers or Maxwell House, Pampers or Huggies, Cheerios or Fruitloops, the information all gets put into a huge database and sold to various competitors. This project now covers 2 million households, but the goal is to cover 10 million.

This leads me to a second example. Very closely related to the large scale corporatization of information is centralization of ownership and distribution. Read Ben Bagdikian’s watershed article in the June 12, 1989 Nation. He names five “planetary corporations” which own, control, or distribute a disproportionate amount of the world’s information resources. For instance, one advertising agency, Saatchi & Saatchi, brokers 20% of the world’s broadcast commercials. Time-Warner owns companies on five continents and claims 120 million worldwide magazine readers, four publishing houses, the second largest cable system, and Warner Brothers pictures. All of these five planetary corporations, as well as those aspiring corporations a rung or two down the ladder, are controlled by the developed
First World. Elsewhere, two-thirds of the world’s computers are made by IBM, and four companies control almost all of the market for workstations. Lastly, by 1986 ten firms controlled 75% of the college textbook market and eight firms controlled 53% of the elementary and secondary textbook market. The scale of the corporatized information economy is very much linked to the move toward centralized corporate control.

Another closely related development is the privatization of US government information. The Reagan Administration’s “war on waste” resulted in the Office of Management and Budget’s Circular A-130 in 1985. This circular limited the government’s efforts to collect and disseminate information and called for a “maximum feasible reliance on the private sector for dissemination.” Government information, collected at taxpayers expense, is becoming less accessible in both the physical and economic senses: 25% of the government’s publications have been eliminated; by the middle-1980s, there was an 83% growth in the monetary amount of government contracts to privately distribute government data, but by the late 1980s, there was no budget savings from these moves; costs of government information distributed privately have risen —an agriculture database went from $42 per hour to use to an $1,800 per year subscription from Martin Marietta, and a House committee concluded that the Patent Office allowed contractors to reap a $3.2 million windfall at the cost of public access to patent data.

Growth in the database industry has been fueled by turning over cheap government information to be repackaged and sold privately as the sole outlet. The responsibility to make all government information available at an affordable price and reasonably accessible is not transferred with the data. The result is that the information industry skims only the marketable information to sell, leaving the more expensive areas to the government. Not surprisingly, the subject of most of this data has been in the areas of business and economics.

Borrowing a nice phrase from Mark Rosenzweig, I consider the character of library culture to be the critical measure of freedom of information in American society. Libraries are the places where private information is mediated and the public is given access in something approaching an equitable manner. This ideal makes libraries, to use Henry Giroux’s words, critical democratic public
spheres. When I look at the library profession, however, I find this sometimes-reached, sometimes-not ideal in decline. The vast majority of librarians accept the hype of the “Information Society” and the assumptions that follow. Only a very small amount of the professional library literature critically questions technology, or the role it has come to play. Instead, librarians have been relatively easy to co-opt since the new glamorous technology promises higher status to library work after years of undervalued work. Librarians have rushed wholesale into investing in libraries as “information centers” to ensure a niche in the coming information economy. I would characterize my own profession as “happy technologists” who insist that information technology will transform libraries and librarians for the better.

Within the context of buying into information technology public and institutional support for libraries has either slipped or stagnated in recent years. Libraries have, in turn, increasingly stepped up private fundraising and entrepreneurial management techniques, offering fee-based services to area businesses, for example. A recent nationwide study of public libraries found that 77% of those doing fundraising contacted local businesses, and 53% who raised money used it for “equipment.” Within library budgets, which are shrinking, expenditures on technology are growing 25-30% per year, and libraries are still major customers of databases, despite 12% per year inflation. All of this translates into spending less on print sources in order to support the relatively new high tech habit of libraries. “Visionary” library administrators are, to put it bluntly, nearly technopornographic in their lavish descriptions of future “libraries.” Further, entrepreneurial management and private funding will further tie libraries to the agendas of those who donate money. It is not a leap of imagination to state that, as libraries become more dependent on philanthropy, they will need to be more responsive to the wishes of that constituency and less responsive to the abstract ideal of the democratic public sphere. Finally, the library profession has not, in any serious way, assessed the inherent bias of all of the published and electronic information that is purchased. The fact that 17 out of 25 subject areas in DIALOG’s 1990 database catalog are exclusively or primarily related to business and economics is not a matter of wide reflection. Nor is the central ownership and distribution of books and journals a matter of much concern. Librarians are far too busy eagerly buying or anticipating the next software release
or new database to question the larger context from which they purchase and pass on information.

Libraries as market-neutral public spheres for information are declining. The longstanding commitment to print literacy in the profession has quickly taken a back seat to keeping up with technological-economic developments. At the same time, what has happened to the economics, ownership, and distribution of global and government information has made basic freedom of information something of a joke. Libraries, like schools, are becoming linked to specific business and economic issues. Those issues will come to dominate the purchasing and administrative actions of libraries in order to fulfill the economic agenda now set for them. Perhaps most disturbing, most of this has begun unquestioned. We must assess our basic commitment to print literacy, and the relationship of that specific kind of literacy to a democratic society. There is much more at stake in the transformation of libraries into “information centers” than replacing card catalogs with terminals. Libraries as mediators of private information are still functioning, but I believe my profession should act to preserve and increase its role as a critical public sphere rather than sell it out for a niche in the “information economy.”

DISCUSSION

MR: You suggest, Colleen, that the NWICO deserves a thorough going critique at this point and I couldn’t agree more. But there’s one element of the critique which I think might be in order that you didn’t mention. And it’s suggested by Gabriela Garcia Marquez and Juan Somovia in the appendix to the “MacBride Report”:

There's a tendency in different parts of the report to glorify technological solutions to the contemporary communications problems. We want to emphasize that the technological promise is neither neutral nor value-free. Decisions in this field have enormous political and social implications. Each society has to develop the necessary instruments to make an evaluation of alternative choices and their impacts. The insistence on the need to develop communications infrastructures in the Third World should not be overstated. It's not possible to solve contemporary communications problems through money and training alone. The idea of a "Marshall Plan" for the development of Third World com-
munications is inappropriate and will tend to reproduce Western values in Third World societies. Actions in this field should be carefully selected so as not to reinforce minority power structures within Third World countries or serve as a vehicle for cultural domination.

Now, I think that what they’ve put their finger on is a tendency in the “Report” to take a very uncritical approach to information technologies, in terms of their own intrinsic qualities, and not to see them as shaping in very powerful ways, by their very nature, whole sets of ideas, attitudes, priorities and political decisions.

Along with John Buschman, I see that librarians on a small scale are acting as pimps for the information industry when we propose that what’s really in order for library development is simply the extension of information technology. And, through the United States Information Agency in particular, librarians are becoming international spokesmen for the spreading around of the same sort of technology as a panacea. We must also consider the way they can reinforce existing social relations and promote acceptance of the global order to which their production and control are linked. I think it is a weakness in the “MacBride Report” that it sees merely a kind of redistributive side to this whole thing without any kind of internal critique of the technology itself. What do you think?

CR: I share your concerns about information technology, but within the Third World countries there are a whole range of different positions and part of the problem is that very often the national elites in the Third World want the technology. There’s no question that they want a “Marshall Plan”, because they view it as in their national interest and they’re tied in very often to the interests of transnational corporations. Within the field of critical communications there is a range of positions. I recently had occasion to look at this. There’s one school, say of Dallas Smythe, who’s considered the grandfather of critical communications research, and Herbert Schiller. They’re very skeptical of communications technology and advocate a “go slow” policy at the very least. They suggest that Third World countries look more at the implications of these technologies.

Then there are other less skeptical people. Personally, I used to be much more anti-technology until I got a computer. I was hooked up on PeaceNet recently. Maybe it’s just a phase I’m going through, but it’s really been very useful. Now I can send FAXes and all of
that. Sometimes I think it’s a generational question, with people like Schiller and Smythe and this older generation being more critical of technology. There are some younger people like Vinnie Mosco in Canada. He has a whole list of suggestions for a democratic information policy. What he tries to stress is technological literacy. We’re not going to be able to get rid of the technology, it’s here. We should try to distribute it more equitably and improve access to it.

Comment: I think that we really have to put the technology to work for us. There’s no way to say that we’re going to get rid of it. It can be used very positively. Someone from New York On-line, which is an alternative news service, went down to El Salvador and worked for the guerrillas and set up communications for them so that they could publish their own journals, so that they could communicate in the jungles, etc. He also went down to Namibia and set up a desk-top publishing system for the ANC. So it can be used very positively. I’m working with New York On-line now to help expand it so that there can be better communications over the whole country for grassroots activist groups. And also to make print copies of this available because although more and more people have computers, it’s still a very elitist thing to expect people to have computers and modems. So we feel that we should make a lot of this information available by printing it out. One way to do this—PeaceNet tried this—is to use camera-ready copy that can be downloaded onto things like the Alternative News Service. Also, each grassroots group, in whatever area, in or out of the country, can use this to compile their own periodical or whatever they want to produce and add their own things. This is something that we’re working on now.

Al Kagan: I’d like to get back to the UNESCO question and what our relationship should be towards it. Some of us have been working, trying to get the US to go back to UNESCO, because it has done some very important work in the past and is suffering now for lack of resources. I’m still trying to figure out what our strategy should be. Should we be working very hard to get the US back into UNESCO? Under what conditions? And how would that effect what we’ve been talking about, given the fact that the US has succeeded in undermining NWICO?

CR: I’ve switched my positions on this issue. A while back I was thinking: well... who are the “we” that are going back in? I don’t know if you know how the US delegation works, but it’s made up of
State Department people, representatives of corporations and mainstream, establishment academics, most of whom are consultants to these corporations. One position is that we should try to get back in, but try to exert pressure to get Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status for progressive groups like the Union for Democratic Communications and PLG and form ourselves into a group so that whenever the US speaks at UNESCO the only spokesmen won’t be from corporate sectors.

JB: Getting back to the issue of information technology, I have a fundamental question as to whether or not these technologies can really be used to support print culture. Here’s an analogy: the values of print journalism were projected onto television when TV news began to grow. Someone who lived during that time, who was politically aware, told me he was overjoyed at this development because he thought that politicians could no longer accuse newspapers of misquoting them and, because their actual speech or comments would be on videotape, with their lips moving, politicians would become more publicly accountable to the agenda that they projected. Well, this hasn’t happened. Television has its own agenda and that’s advertising.

Joseph Reilly: What was said about PeaceNet, about setting up desktop publishing for the ANC, the idea of setting up some friendly software moving in positive directions—for example, Ralph McGehee now has a database where you can study the CIA, or I can FAX things instantly to a COSATU office in South Africa, or Palestinians can send things to each other—this is all well and good, a useful aspect of some of these technologies. But for me this is a separate issue in NWICO from satellite communications, from larger issues of dataflow, of technology transfer, of capital transfer, wholesale stealing of raw data out of a country. The important issues that I get out of NWICO are dealing with the limited number of “parking” slots in the atmosphere for satellites. I understand what we are saying about useful aspects of technology, but I see NWICO’s propositions as being a bit different than this.

CR: You can use the technology for good things in progressive movements, but the larger issue in the NWICO debate has been the global inequity in satellites, computers, the use of satellites by the US to spread its culture.
Comment: There seems to be some confusion over the products of the technology compared to the technology itself. Anybody who thinks that print medium is not going to be available on-line in the future is kidding themselves. It’s going to happen. The whole issue should be how we are going to get it to people, making sure that people get access and that all information gets included.

Bill Stack: I agree. I don’t think it’s a question of whether we’re going to have print culture or electronic culture. It’s a red herring, like painters getting together and quibbling over whether painting is dead. It seems like we could break this into a smaller discussion of whether or not we have preserved the beautiful domain of books. It reminds me of Fahrenheit 451 when the characters say, “remember books?” I think we’re forgetting that we’re dealing with a flow of information that’s as egalitarian as possible.

JB: I would disagree. There’s more than just a “flow of information” going on. There is a rational element, a line of logic, a permanence. There are a number of things inherent in print culture that mean it is not just a matter of transferring information. A recent study demonstrates that computerized information is often given a higher status. The value of computer printouts seems higher. But there is a world of difference, and we’ve got to be aware of it. Scholars and faculty come to me all the time and say: “librarians don’t understand what they gave up when they gave up the card catalog.” They were a pain, took up a lot of room, but the fact is that the card catalog cannot be replicated in an electronic form.

MR: I agree with Buschman. I think part of the problem is the nature of the computer industry. For instance, the databases have private commercial interests determining their content. And that content is not something in which, for instance, librarians have any input. On another level, Third World countries have no input as to what goes into these databases. So when they buy into these systems, under the present circumstances they’re getting information which does not reflect the needs of the Third World, of their own scholarship. They’re getting strictly material which has been pre-determined for them and this has important consequences.

—transcript by Joseph Reilly
NOT THREE WORLDS BUT ONE!

Manjunath Pendakur

There are three self-evident truths or experiences common to all us who live in the belly of the beast that is monopoly capitalism:

1) Monopoly capitalists have historically been very adept at conquering each and every new innovation in communication technologies for their own ends. 2) Just a capital has always been global, media technologies seldom respect national boundaries and media corporations look at the world as one large market. 3) In general, corporate media are racist, sexist and homophobic.

Now that you know where I come from, let me begin my talk.

The title of my talk is drawn from an African song that was played on a student-run radio station, WNUR at Northwestern University. The host of the show, an African-American student of mine introduced the song by saying that the three world dichotomy - First World, Second World, and Third World - does not make sense. In fact, he went on to say, “We were there before, so why are we not the first world?” Such idealistic conceptions are not new in the dominant media, but what is new is that artists and many Third World people are refusing to accept the category called the Third World. Such reaction may have come about primarily because of another media representation of the Third World as nothing but problems—famine, pestilence, coups, earthquakes, dictators, wars, sources of drugs, boat people, and so on! As such reports are stripped of their particular historic context, they quickly become two dimensional narratives.

The concept of Third World, however, is rooted in a particular history and, for nearly a generation, has meant something quite specific. What I am going to argue here is that we need to return it to its original conception.

The concept “Third World” goes back to 1955 when in an Indonesian city called Bandung several leaders of the former colonial possessions met to discuss the world situation and the possibility of creating a forum in which the Western colonial powers would have
little control. Led by Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nasser of Egypt, and Tito of Yugoslavia, this group created the Non-Aligned Nations Movement (NAM) as a countervailing force to the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union.

It is important to note here that high on the agenda of this group were information and culture as issues related to neocolonial domination. National control over these resources was seen as essential to the independence and well-being of their respective nations.

Furthermore, this essentially anti-imperialist group was seeking access to trade and investment and balance in media flows from a world that was hardly equitable. Quite significantly, these leaders articulated not only an independent existence from the superpowers but tied their information/cultural needs to economic development issues.

This group of nations seeking economic and political independence came to be known as the Third World and the term found currency in media coverage around the world.

While the many newly-born nation-states of Asia and Africa contemplated independence in global affairs, the United States latched onto the doctrine of “free” flow of information. The opponents of the free flow—several NAM nations and the USSR—argued correctly that free flow simply enhanced the power of the transnational corporations and their allied states.

There is actually nothing free about the “free” flow doctrine! In fact, it is a self-serving doctrine because it is an ideology which helps keep world markets open for US goods and services in the name of freedom, an old mercantilist idea in a new costume. The trouble with the concept is that its proponents don’t practice it in their own home territories. While the US keeps out ideas that it considers dangerous by using immigration laws, State Department lists, and even outright censorship, the dominant media preempts oppositional voices within the country, be they people of color or women or indigenous people. In the NAM countries, with a few exceptions, a similar marginalization of “other” voices occurs—particularly in their broadcast media.
As many of you know, the struggle for a New World Information and Communication Order in the UNESCO, limited as it was, resulted in the Reagan Administration’s withdrawal from that organization. Reagan had to give something to the conservative lobby led by the Heritage Foundation and demagogues like Pat Buchanan and George Will. In the last five years, it appears as though the whole agenda in UNESCO has been modified to fit the imperatives of the US as it has begun to tout the free flow doctrine again.

This post-World War II ideological struggle dealt with some nettlesome questions: Who should produce information? What kinds of information should be produced for peace and understanding in the world? How should it be distributed? By whom? When information crosses national boundaries, how should nation-states behave?

These questions will not go away because the post-WWII international structure of domination led by the United States still persists with some modifications. Yes, the superpower conflict has been terminated, at least for the time being, largely due to the initiatives undertaken by President Gorbachev. The US may even be forced to withdraw its military from Europe, but that’s hardly the case in other parts of the world. According to a Senate report, by the mid-1960s the US had by treaty or agreement committed its forces and equipment to 43 countries at some 375 major military bases and 3,000 minor military facilities.1 These guns, we may remember here, are all turned against people of color, both at home and abroad! Just as the Berlin Wall was coming down, the US poured millions of dollars into Nicaragua to defeat the Sandinistas. Such wars against national liberation movements will continue, I am afraid, including blatant ideological aggressions such as Radio Marti in the case of Cuba.

The US is also clearly consolidating its hegemonic status over the North American continent by way of free trade treaties. Canada has already signed such a historic treaty. US power, while it seemed to be on the decline since its defeat in Vietnam, may once again be on an ascent. What may be happening, quite clearly, is that we have moved toward a world of three gigantic, economically powerful, continental blocs—US, Europe, and East Asia—each with its own "south."
All of these changes may mean significant reductions in development assistance to countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In the case of the US, the disappearance of the communist enemy will accelerate the decline in development assistance. The mind set in Washington has for long been, when presented with the aid budget, "Who is the enemy?"

Reverse flow of funds from the Third World to industrialized countries of the West has continued and, in fact, appears to have grown since 1982 when it became apparent that Mexico was going to be unable to service its debt. The International Monetary Fund was accorded the new role of debt collector and enforcer for the major banks. The debtor countries made heroic efforts at adjustment but were ever deeper in trouble. Net payments from all developing countries reached $36 billion in 1985. They totalled $242 billion by 1988, most of it paid out to commercial banks. By 1987, the World Bank was receiving more in interest and repayment than it was disbursing in new loans. The only region of the world which has not been affected by the disorders of the international system of trade and payments and associated debt problems of the 1980s is South Asia. Even there, for example in India, growing foreign debt is widely discussed as a major national problem of the nineties.

This systematic impoverishment of the Third World, on such a massive scale, and the resulting austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund cannot promise a society where all people have access to information.

I believe that the NWICO debates offer us an important lesson. The nation-states became the principal articulators of what it is that human beings in different parts of the world wanted. As loci of power, they inevitably constructed the argument and articulated it in ways that would not challenge that power. The right to communicate, to receive knowledge and to live without fear are as fundamental as any other basic human rights such as access to food, water, clothing, education, and housing. What history has taught us is that nation-states do a miserable job of meeting these fundamental needs of human populations all over the world. We have to figure out ways to move these debates out of organizations such as the UNESCO and into other public spheres where we could mobilize a countervailing
force to imperialism. Every time President Bush speaks of a "new world order", we must ask him if it guarantees our basic needs as well as our right to receive information and our right to communicate.

This paper was presented at a plenary session on "Global Crisis: Media, Democracy and the Left" at the Midwest Radical Scholars and Activists Conference held in Chicago on October 19, 1990.

Notes
NWICO: BACKGROUND READINGS


An anthology in three volumes: Capitalism, Imperialism (v.1); Liberation, Socialism (v.2); New Historical Subjects (v.3). One article of particular note in volume 1 is Herbert Schiller’s “Genesis of the Free Flow of Information Principles”. Schiller exposes one of the library world’s favorite myths and provides an excellent and brief historical account of the economic and political interests behind the ideology of the “free flow of information.”


Articles include “The Mass Media, New World Information Order and a New Look at the First Amendment” by Peter Franck (also printed in Berman and Danky’s Alternative Library Literature, 1988/89); “Peoples’ Rights and the Media” by Colleen Roach; and three others on international law, women’s rights, and media accountability.


Three essays on the history of relations between UNESCO and the US, the mass media’s coverage of US withdrawal from UNESCO, and US information policy.


Known generally as the “MacBride Report”, this book covers the development of communications, describes the impact of technology on communications, documents the growing information disparities which have resulted from developed nations’ control over the means of communications technologies and proposes a new, democratic information order.
Includes a particularly insightful article by Terry Hubbard entitled “United States Telecommunications Policy: Latin America, the International Telecommunications Union and UNESCO.” Available from: Pierian Press, P.O. Box 1808, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.
INTRODUCTION

As homeless people seek a "safe" space to escape from the harsh conditions of living on the streets, public libraries are increasingly having to face the problem of homelessness. Should public libraries welcome people who come to the library to rest, stay dry, get warm and not necessarily to use library services? Experts writing in the field of librarianship express diverse opinions on the role public libraries should take in serving homeless patrons. There must be a distinction made between homeless patrons who may be considered a nuisance but who are harmless and homeless patrons who are potentially harmful to themselves or to others. This paper will focus on how public libraries deal with the former type of patron. The use of the public library by homeless people involves issues about the role of the library in society, the rights of library users, and the issue of access. These issues are discussed and examples of a variety of programs designed to address homeless patrons are presented. The conclusion focuses on what approaches seem to work and suggestions of how public libraries can address the issue of homeless patrons.

THE HOMELESS/THE NEW POOR

Estimates of the number of homeless people in the United States range from a conservative estimate of 2 million by the US Department of Health to over 4 million by the National Coalition for the Homeless. There are many social, economic, political, and personal reasons for homelessness. Deinstitutionalization of mental health patients, unemployment, and cuts in federal spending under Reagan left many people without residences. Elaine Landau in her book The Homeless describes America's new homeless as people from all ages, races, and religions.

[They] are families who were forced from their homes as a result of floods, fires, or other natural disasters and who are unable to afford another residence. [They] are elderly victims of urban renewal. . .[they] are young mothers with few or no marketable skills, who fled with their children from
intolerably abusive home situations. . . [they] are the newly unemployed. . . [they] are runaway children and teenagers, who tried to escape from unfit homes, seeking refuge on the streets.2

The homeless of the 1980s are referred to as the “new poor” since many were formerly part of mainstream America. The “new poor” according to Landau includes more people under age forty, more blacks, and more children than ever before. Many people refuse to face the fact that homelessness can happen to anyone. Rather, middle-class America tends to think of homeless people as somehow essentially different from themselves and as being personally responsible for their situation.3

The library profession is becoming increasingly concerned about the issue of homeless patrons and the need to address this issue. At the 1986 annual conference of the American Library Association in New York City, there was a program presented on serving the homeless entitled “Patrons in Crisis: Where They’re Coming From—Where We’re Sending Them—A Call for Library Intervention.” In 1989 at the ALA national conference in Dallas, the late Mitch Snyder, director of the Community for Creative Nonviolence and an advocate for the homeless, was one of the Public Library Association’s key speakers. Professionals who propose that libraries ignore the problem of homelessness are increasingly in the minority. An example of this opinion is expressed by Herbert S. White who believes that if libraries refuse to deal with the issue then the government will be forced to deal with it. “We must never accept as our own a problem that is not ours,” advises White.4

This position is being drowned out by the majority of public library professionals who recognize the need to do something to address the issue of homelessness. An example of this concern by public libraries and the library profession in general is the “Poor People’s Policy” adopted by the American Library Association at the 1990 annual conference in Chicago. This policy is very clear on the role libraries must play in empowering poor people. Objectives include:

Promoting the publication, production, purchase and ready accessibility of print and nonprint material that honestly address the issues of poverty and homelessness, that deal
with poor people in a respectful way, and that are of practical use to low-income people.5

Concerns are expressed both by librarians and by library patrons about the presence of homeless people in the library. These concerns range from librarians who do not want to assume the role of social workers to patrons who are offended by the smell of some homeless patrons. Some patrons resent the homeless using all the chairs in lounge areas and dislike sharing library equipment with the unkept who are feared to be carriers of communicable diseases. Glenda Rhodes, director of Public Services at the Salt Lake City Public Library, found that the library staff is effected by the increasing number of homeless (or transients as she refers to homeless patrons) using the library.

After they [librarians] realize the futility of referral to community agencies whose resources are severely taxed and after they remind themselves that appearance and economic status are not criteria for use of the library, the librarians become demoralized. Staff members get tired of awakening people and are frustrated by the complaints of other patrons.6

Joy Greiner describes the conflict in this way: “On the one hand there is a responsibility to maintain a safe, pleasant and non-disruptive environment for all patrons in the library while on the other there is a responsibility of the library to act as a democratic social agency.”7 It is important to note, as Patsy Hansel, president of the North Carolina Library Association, reminds us: “Some of our homeless patrons use the library appropriately and some do not, just as some of our more affluent patrons use the library appropriately and some do not.”8

There is no common practice in the way that public libraries deal with homeless patrons. In some libraries there are as many ways of dealing with these patrons as there are librarians. This variation in treatment occurs because many public libraries lack a formal written policy on how to deal with homeless patrons. Many libraries fail to recognize the special needs of the homeless and group these people into the category of problem patron. Some libraries recognize that homeless people have special needs and attempt to refer the homeless to community agencies which might be able to assist them and to
otherwise inform homeless patrons on available services. Some libraries focus on creating special library facilities for homeless patrons and sometimes get outside sources of funding for these special services. Other libraries focus on outreach efforts to the homeless while others network with community groups to advocate for the homeless.

REFERRAL AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Public libraries are committed to meeting the information needs of the community. Does this include the need to know where shelter and food can be found? Greiner solicited the professional views of PLA representatives on the role of libraries in providing referral information to the homeless. The consensus was expressed by Patrick O'Brien, director of the Dallas Public Library.

"The library's responsibility to provide referrals and emergency shelter to the homeless is secondary to that of other social service agencies which exist specifically to perform these functions. The library should be designated as a specific referral agent for a clientele that requires information to enable them to cope—and possibly to survive—only if no other social agency exists to provide that service."

The Dallas Public Library is a member of Dallas Agencies Serving the Homeless (DASH), a coalition of city-wide community agencies formed to coordinate service to the homeless. The library maintains a database listing agencies offering services to the homeless.

Another issue of access to information is the increasing trend in libraries to charge for access to computerized information. Fay Blake points out, "Fee-based information changes the very nature of information. The special kinds of information poor people need are least likely to be collected for commercialized databases." Blake warns that denying access to information because of inability to pay will ultimately damage our entire society. She suggests that library professionals get to know the poor as "specific information clientele" and try to meet their specific information needs.

Library school students could, and should, be exposed to information problems of the poor through courses... through seminars exploring library services to the
Mary Bundy followed Blake's advice and taught a course on meeting the information needs of the poor at the University of Maryland College of Library and Information Sciences. In a class project "to determine how responsive, in information terms, government agencies (including libraries) are regarding the homeless," her students were frustrated by the lack of cooperation they received when requesting referral information from government agencies such as the welfare department. They noted in their report that they found the Pratt Library to be the most cooperative agency that they contacted but that they learned the most from meeting with private social service providers. They concluded:

"From identifying and collecting and organizing information bearing on this community problem, we learned how important it is to build information resources to support positive community change. . . . We found that information can be a strong force in the lives of people and communities."  

SPECIAL FACILITIES, SERVICES AND OUTREACH

An example of designing library facilities for the homeless is the new public library building in Haverhill, Massachusetts due for completion in 1992. Haverhill is a town with about 150 homeless people. The new library will include a room designed specifically for the homeless and accommodating up to twenty people. A January 19, 1989 New York Times article describes the room as conceived by its designers:

"The furnishings will include sofas, easy chairs, a television and a coffeemaker. On the tables will be newspapers, paperbacks, magazines, and brochures on social services offered by the community."  

A peer tutoring project for the homeless is operated by the Milwaukee Public Library. This program, operated at a daytime center for the homeless, includes a browsing library and is funded by a Library Services Construction Act Title VI grant. The participants have access to information on jobs and on developing job skills. Other such programs include the creation of a reading room
in an inner city homeless center by Multnomah County Public Library in Portland, Oregon and the Memphis/Shelby County (Tennessee) Public Library’s efforts to supply reading material and library information to temporary residences for the homeless.

Alan Jay Lincoln, a library crime specialist, suggests that social work professionals come to the library to meet with homeless patrons. Lincoln’s reasoning is that this would demonstrate “the magnitude of the problem... allow the mental health professional access to a large number of clients... free the library staff from the role of monitor and look out, and patrons could gradually be diverted from the library to other more appropriate settings without being thrown out into the streets from which they are trying to escape.”

Mario Gonzalez and Harriet Gottfried of the Office of Special Services at the New York Public Library organized an outreach program to serve homeless families living in welfare hotels in New York City. Initially, librarians were asked to participate on a volunteer basis. Some key aspects of this program were that the coordinators had the full support of the administration; the different offices and departments within the library cooperated; and participating library staff attended sensitivity training workshops (offered free to people working with the homeless by the School of Social Work at Columbia University). In the future this program hopes to operate a bookmobile to bring books to all the shelters and hotels in New York City. The New York Public Library’s philosophy on how to deal with homeless patrons is expressed at the end of the Gonzalez and Gottfried report:

*The problem of homeless people will be with us for some time to come... we, as librarians, cannot provide homeless people with shelter or food, but if we can mobilize ourselves as a profession, we can, on a modest scale, provide access to books and other library services. We can make a difference.*

ADVOCACY

Some public libraries are going as far as to organize food and shelter facilities for the homeless. In response to the increasing problem of homeless people sleeping and causing problems in the library, Pat Woodrum, director of the Tulsa Public Library, called together a group of concerned citizens to find a solution. Woodrum
proudly states: "Less than a year after I first called on the community for help, a day shelter for the homeless opened its doors." During its first year of operation, 87,000 people used the day shelter's services of food, shelter, laundry facilities, free clothes, recreation and, of course, a depository library provided by Tulsa Public. As a result of the library's advocacy efforts, the number of street people in Tulsa's library has diminished.

As mentioned earlier, the Dallas Public Library is a member of a city-wide coalition that advocates for homeless services. The library worked with other community groups "in pushing for the establishment of a day resource center where the homeless can shower, wash clothes, obtain counseling, etc." Also, the library donates surplus shelves and furniture and supplies books and magazines to the center.

At the 1986 ALA conference in New York City, a program on serving the homeless patron was presented. Perhaps, libraries like Tulsa and Dallas Public heeded the words of E.J. Josey, a past president of ALA, who called for libraries to form coalitions for the homeless. Josey strongly defended the view that homelessness is a library issue.

...they [the homeless] are human beings. They are potential users of libraries, and they are potential tax payers, who will support libraries, and more importantly, when they were working they contributed to the growth and development of libraries through their taxes and even if they were not employed, they have a right to the access of information to help them alleviate their plight. And libraries have a responsibility to help and to aid them.

ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN SOCIETY
AND ISSUES OF ACCESS

Libraries were begun as social change agencies. The purpose of public libraries was to achieve a more equitable access and distribution of information. If libraries are to continue to be "of enduring importance to the maintenance of our free democratic society" then we must reach out to those, such as the homeless, who are being denied fruitful participation in society. In contrast to the Carnegie Public Library staff who informed me that homeless people are given the same treatment as other problem patrons, Josey emphasizes:
"These people are not problem patrons, they are patrons in need of your help." Elaine Landau emphasizes that homeless people are not "other" for no one is immune to the possibility of someday being homeless. Homeless people need advocates because the experience of homelessness is dehumanizing and leaves people feeling powerless to change their situation.

The public library Statement of Principles is clear about the library's efforts to serve all of society.

*Only the public library provides an open and non-judgemental environmental in which individuals and their interests are brought together with the universe of ideas and information. . . . Public libraries freely offer access to their collections and services to all members of the community without regard to race, citizenship, age, education level, economic status, or any other qualification or condition.*

Certainly, homeless people are members of the community. If public libraries were to follow this ideal then the homeless patron would have every right to feel welcome in the library.

Yet, many public libraries have adopted policies that specify standards of behavior, dress, and hygiene. A recent *American Libraries* news article dealt with the Morristown, New Jersey public library's adoption of such a policy. The American Civil Liberties Union intervened when the Morristown Library implemented their policy and asked a homeless patron to leave the library. The policy was subsequently modified. The Ann Arbor Public Library has come under heavy criticism for its rules over behavior which ban problem patrons. The ACLU fears such rules would discriminate against homeless patrons. The Ann Arbor "policy prohibits the disturbance of other library patrons and interference with other library patrons' use of the facilities through their [problem patrons] extremely poor personal hygiene." According to the Ann Arbor rules, if the library is crowded patrons may be asked to leave for sleeping more than ten minutes. The bottom line is that the individual's personal hygiene must pose a public health hazard for there to be grounds for expelling the individual.

Randall Simmons sees the issue of access as bordering on elitism.
The crux of the issue is whether or not the library profession is willing to make the value judgements about an individual’s right to be in a public library or to make value judgements about the conditions necessary (both in terms of what the patron is doing and physical/mental state of being) for an individual to be in the library. . . . The issue borders on elitism. . . . It beckons the library to appease politically powerful segments of society while at the same time neglecting the powerless. 24

Simmons suggests that librarians provide community leaders with research on the homeless to assist city planners in providing social services and housing for the homeless. He concludes after reviewing the literature that “the homeless come to the library, not because they want to be in a library, but because it is a means of survival.” 25 If other community support systems were provided then the library might be alleviated of some of the planning involved in serving the homeless patron.

Susan Poorman of the New York Public Library surveyed public libraries in the hundred largest US cities. Her survey showed that large urban libraries are being frequented by many homeless patrons. She found that “many library staff members are working as volunteers at local social service agencies and churches and would like to have more administrative support and training in how to aid the homeless.” 26

CONCLUSION

There is an increasing need for public libraries to deal with the issue of homeless people coming to the library. How can public libraries reach out to the homeless? First, as Prof. Josey suggested and the Tulsa Public Library so effectively practiced, public libraries must form coalitions to advocate for the homeless. Second, as Lincoln suggests in “Crime in the Library”, libraries can arrange to have a social worker present in the library to meet the “other than informational” needs of these patrons. Third, as the Haverhill Public Library plans to do, public libraries should have referral information on available social services. Fourth, as was done in New York City, library staff can be trained on how to deal sensitively with the homeless. Fifth, public libraries should initiate and encourage programs which are preventive measures against some of the sources
of homelessness. Examples include adult literacy classes, workshops on the importance of parents reading to their children, story hours for “at risk” children, etc. Sixth, libraries should make an effort to understand the issue from the point of view of the homeless patron. Most importantly, libraries should focus on gathering, maintaining, and providing free access to the information that potentially has the power to change the lives of homeless people.

In summary, there is a need for public libraries to establish written policies for dealing with homeless patrons who are not behaving as problem patrons. To address the frustration of having library facilities used for non-library purposes such as sleeping and washing, librarians can initiate programs requiring homeless patrons to attend career counseling programs or read referral information on available social services. But beyond the need to establish written policy, there is the need to establish principles that support efforts to change the conditions that create homelessness and to establish alternative “safe” places for these patrons. Joy Greiner reminds us that “homelessness is more a reflection of our society than it is of the character of the affected individuals.”27 Librarianship as a profession must ask itself if it is willing to take a reactive or proactive role on the issue of homeless patrons. A reactive stance would focus energies on developing standards of behavior and dress that control the potential problems homeless patrons can cause. A proactive role would advocate for a change in government policies that create homelessness and, following the example of Tulsa Public, organize community groups to address the problem.

In not taking a clear position on the need to advocate for the homeless patrons and in continuing to treat them as problem patrons, public libraries are making a choice. The library is choosing an elitist attitude and allowing the ever widening gap between rich and poor to continue unimpeded. Public libraries exist to narrow the gap between the information rich and the information poor. Perhaps, libraries cannot change the economic conditions that lead to homelessness but at the very least we can provide people with information resources that have the power to change their lives.
Notes

3. Ibid., p.7.
8. Ibid., p.141.
11. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p.255.
18. Greiner, ibid., p.138.
25. Ibid., p.118.
27. Greiner, ibid., p.141.
In October 1985 the International African Institute (IAI) in London organized a symposium on “The Book Famine in Africa.”¹ The problem was placed before the Africanist community by comparing the “terrible dearth of books and other teaching materials that afflicts nearly all African countries south of the Sahara” to the food crises in Ethiopia and Mali, with the conclusion that though less “newsworthy” it would, unless remedied, “do incalculable long-term harm to Africa and the ability of its people to deal with the problems that beset it today.”²

One would have expected problems in Uganda, ravaged by civil war, and indeed in 1982 it was reported that texts in many schools had been handed down for ten years and many school libraries had not had a new book since 1972.³ In the above symposium it was reported that not only universities like Makerere in Uganda but also Ibadan in Nigeria, once as good as their counterparts in Europe or America, were “falling back to the standard of rural junior colleges in the Deep South of the United States before the Second World War.”⁴ Nigeria has seen its Naira so devalued that 50,000 Naira which bought $69,000 worth of UNESCO coupons in 1983, bought only $6,000 worth in 1990.⁵ These coupons are used to pay for photocopies requested from abroad.

Publishers spoke at the IAI symposium saying the market for books on Africa has so diminished that “only books of relevance to the North Atlantic market are still considered viable publishing propositions.” Hans Zell, speaking of the reference works on Africa that he publishes reported that books that a few years before would have sold 1,500 to 2,000 copies now sold only 700-800 copies, and “this was largely attributable to the virtual collapse of the African markets.”⁶

What was and is to be done? Subsidies to buy books and subscriptions. Projects to encourage indigenous publishers. Donations of newly published books and periodicals by publishers. Donations of used books and periodicals by individuals, groups, and libraries. All are being tried with varying degrees of success.
In 1988 Bade Onimode, professor of economics at Ibadan University and chairman of the London-based Institute for African Alternatives, spoke of effects of the “book famine” on a whole generation at school today. “The poorly-trained graduates would be the ministers and technocrats for the next 50 years...” He concluded that “without doubt, the long-term solution to the book crisis was printing in Africa. But there was short-term need for aid to ship books for all levels of education in Africa.”

A CONSORTIUM OF AFRICAN PUBLISHERS

The May 1991 catalog for the African Books Collective (ABC) has just arrived at my desk. It includes books from twenty African publishers in eight African countries on subjects from history to medicine as well as music and literature. It is a self-help project for distribution of African books in which one-third of the cost is retained for non-profit operation and two-thirds is sent to the African publisher. US customers are billed in dollars and receive only one invoice, no matter from how many different African countries they order. All titles are held in the ABC warehouse in Oxford, England, so orders are turned around within fourteen days.

Two catalogs were issued in 1990, the first year of the project, the first catalog showing pictures of the modest ABC showroom and of its warehouse at Burford. Though donor funded to start, African publishers pay a membership fee and comprise the Council of Management. While providing an outlet for African publishers and opportunities for Africans to be published, this project helps counter the consequences of what has been called the “reverse famine” of Africa-published books abroad. Africanists in Africa rose to leadership in African Studies in the 1960s, but in recent years they have “slipped back” feeling isolated from and resentful of the scholars of the Western world.

JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) developed the African Journal Distribution Program at the request of African scientists who had been unable to subscribe to journals at their institutions. The Program has grown from a group of seven societies in 1985-87 supplying twenty-six titles for forty recipient institutions to one hundred organizations supplying 191
titles for over 250 institutions in 1990. All journals are sent air
freight, with 85% sent by the publisher and about 15% sent free of
charge by the United States Information Agency and the United
Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development.
Volume one, number one of Notes, a biennial newsletter for
recipients was recently published by AAAS. 10

Project coordinator, Lisbeth Levey, recently told Africana
librarians about a planned pilot project to aid medical schools in
Nigeria and about a just completed survey of recipient institutions to
determine their computer and CD-ROM capabilities. 11

WILL THE THIRD WORLD BYPASS THE BOOK?

F. W. Lancaster continues to predict the paperless society and
as a consultant in many developing countries he has promoted
computers and telecommunications. They will, he believes, “provide
an unprecedented opportunity for rapidly narrowing the gap between
the information rich and information poor.” 12 The information needs
of the Third World have touched off a debate reminiscent of that after
World War II about steps necessary to prepare for independence of
colonies and trusteeships. World events overtook the debaters as the
people involved could not wait.

The same is true of this debate. Anthony Olden argues from his
eight years of experience as a librarian in Nigeria that promoting
literacy among the majority of the people is more important than
providing a “service for a tiny elite.” 13 A Nigerian library school
student responds that planners need information technology as part
of their attack on the illiteracy of some sixty percent of adult Africans
as well as for preparing the managers of tomorrow in the schools.
Africans must make a “selection of what is appropriate for Africa,
rather than being welded to either the blanket policy of ‘only the best
or most modern technology is good enough for Africa’ or the
alternative blanket policy of ‘nothing at all from the West is good
for Africa.’ ” 14

Support for African trade books raises little objection as it
supports self-help. Its future, however, depends upon support by
librarians in Europe and America through purchase of books written
by Africans, a perspective that should add to the cultural diversity of
our collections resulting in mutual benefit. The donation of subscrip­
tions to African universities is aid and therefore, though desperately
needed, must be temporary. An interesting new proposal offers a “barter” system for periodical subscriptions.

THE CURRENCY QUESTION

The African Imprint Library Services (AILS) supplies African publications of all types from some 40 African countries to libraries or individuals in this country on an approval basis according to a subject and/or country profile. They will also search for an individual title. Under this mutually beneficial proposal developed by AILS and Faxon, an African library would choose up to a certain dollar amount from Faxon’s list and pay AILS the subscription price in local currency. AILS would pay Faxon in dollars and use the local currency to purchase local publications for export. This plan seems simple but may have complications with regard to central banks and government currency restrictions. It also depends upon the demand in America for publications from that African country.

TEXTBOOKS AND LANGUAGE, CONTINUING DILEMMAS

In one of a series of commentaries in West Africa about the book famine, it was noted that over two-thirds of the texts used for journalism in West Africa came from the US. This is not a problem unique to Africa, for as Altbach and Kelly note, most Third World nations are dependent upon texts produced in Western countries, and for the sciences usually upon works in English. Translation is not always the answer because Western texts are often translated complete with foreign examples. The domination of the paper market by Canada, Sweden and the US and inadequacies of the educational support structure and the printing facilities, may make even works by indigenous authors better and more cheaply produced abroad.

A number of publishers and organizations, here and abroad, are involved in supplying millions of surplus and used books to the developing world. As noted in West Africa “the result as usual, is that what arrives in Africa is what some people wish to give away, not what Africa needs.” He cites an example of British texts no longer used being sent to Africa. His comments are illustrated with a loader dropping books at what is labelled a “dumping ground.” Speakers at conferences have cited many other examples of dumping books originating here as well as overseas. While our West Africa commentator would advocate refusal of book/food aid, most speakers on the
subject emphasize instead the importance of selection of materials
by the recipients from what is offered.

SMALL PROJECTS CAN BE MUTUALLY REWARDING

More than a thousand books from the pupils at the pioneer
Elementary School in Olympia, Washington were sent in 1987/88 to
schools in the island country of Mauritius. An ALA library book
fellow working with the Mauritius Ministry of Education wrote
home about the need for books and suggested a “sister library.”19
This project was educational for the American children as well
because they studied a country about which they had previously
known nothing. Also present were contacts at each end to communi­
cate needs and handle what are often complicated and expensive
procedures. The idea of a “sister library” is a good one and its
development could benefit from the experiences of sister city
projects.

The New York African Studies Association (NYASA) in 1990
sent the books of a professor, who no longer taught about Africa and
whose titles were already in his college library, to a university library
in Argentina that was just beginning a program on Africa. The appeal
for books had been seen in the ALA News by a member who knew
of the collection and the NYASA president suggested the organiza­
tion pay for shipment. A list of titles was sent to the university which
accepted them all. Eleven boxes were mailed in April and received
in July. The professor received a formal letter of thanks for his
donation.20 Out of print books are hard to locate even when libraries
have adequate funds.

Librarians contacted by faculty or others to donate books or runs
of journals often find that most of the titles are already in the
collection. This may not so often be true in the future. To aid in this
the International Council for Scientific Unions is preparing a set of
guidelines for donation of scholarly materials. Still in draft form they
will advise how to assess the relevance of materials, tell how to
contact potential recipients, and discuss arrangements for packing a
shipping. The African Studies Association Archives-Libraries com­
mittee is preparing a handbook and directory to be for sale in a few
months that will also contain these guideline.21
GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH

Upon returning from an ASA panel in 1989 on the book famine, an Indiana University librarian matched a long run of Biological Abstracts to a willing university recipient in Nigeria. She contacted several donor organizations like those listed in the directories at the end of this article. She learned that most do not pay for shipment in the US, some will only send to countries where they have projects at the time, some consider a ton of books as in the case of the Biological Abstracts too few to send, and with some you pay all costs—they handle packing, shipping, and other arrangements. The librarian after a year of effort paid for the transportation in the US herself, but found an organization that would cover shipping to Nigeria. She reports that donations can involve much time and many phone calls.

Donations of materials weeded from state university collections in New York, or even gift books and journals never added to the collections, cannot be given away due to provisions of section 178 of the New York State Finance Law. As state property they must be advertised for bid and if no bid is received they are sent to a landfill or recycled. Some state funded libraries have ignored these provisions with no problems, while others have been audited and forced to comply. In one such case a donating professor complained after finding at a local library fair items he had given to a local university and in another case books sent to a landfill provoked letters of outrage to newspapers and officials. To remedy this I was able to have introduced into the current legislature a bill that would exempt library books and journals.

A RATIONALE FOR BOOK AND JOURNAL DONATIONS

In the “viewpoint” article in a recent library publications, Steven Smith, a Texas A & M librarian, writes of the value placed by the public on the printed word and the ambivalent position of the librarian. A friend contacted him while searching for a home for his treasured collection of forty five years of National Geographic magazines. Offering no solution, the librarian fears he has doomed what his friend calls a cultural treasure to the dumpster and imagines “stacks and stacks of glossy print soon to become plumes and plumes of black smoke.” In the same journal issue is an article recommending library recycling. Not a bad idea for everything except books and journals.
There is a circular on my bulletin board for a donor organization soliciting funds that begins “Does it bother you to throw a book away?” Yes it bothers me. It also bothers me when my library and many others recycle last year’s journals replaced by shelf-saving microform. What we should be talking about is resource-sharing. The librarian’s need to find a home for a book or journal that the library does not want or need should be as great as the need of that other library to receive it and the results seen a mutually beneficial. The librarian should support projects that will make materials authored by Third World writers available in order to develop a much-needed cultural diversity in our collections as well as to promote publishing in Third World countries. The International Relations Committee of the American Library Association has discussed the problem and the need for guiding librarians, but has so far taken no action. Meanwhile, the following directories list organizations that should be of help.

DIRECTORIES

Book Network for International Development and Education, *Guide to Networking*, Ottawa: Canadian Organization for Development Through Education, 1988. CODE has had an extensive book program of its own since 1959. They prepared this guide to locate and work with counterparts. It is available for $5.00 from CODE at 321 rue Chapel, Ottawa, Canada K1N 7Z2.


Notes

3. Ibid.
5. Presentation by Mrs. Adebimpe O. Ike, University Librarian, Tajewa University, Bauchi, Nigeria, at a meeting of the African Studies Association Book Famine Task Force in Baltimore, November 1990.
8. For a catalog write the African Books Collective Ltd., the Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU, England.
10. For more information write the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H. Street N.W., Washington D.C. 20005.
13. Ibid.
15. For information write the African Imprint Library Services, P.O. Box 350, Fest Falmouth, MA 02574.

21. Gretchen Walsh, chair of the African Studies Association Book Famine Task Force, is editing this handbook and directory. To receive notice upon publication write the ASA, Emory University, Credit Union Building, Atlanta, GA 30322.


23. New Yorkers wishing to support passage of this bill should write their Assembly and Senate representatives citing A.4555 or S.2860.
BOOK REVIEW

HENRY T. BLANKE

The Right to Know, volume 3, edited by Zoia Horn and Nancy Gruber (Oakland: DataCenter, 1990)

Among the many baneful policies of the Reagan administration was the systematic effort to restrict public access to information. While governmental efforts to censor and control information are not new in American history, the Reagan era saw a significant escalation of such attempts to undermine the conditions necessary for informed public debate. From the Office of Management and Budget's efforts to privatize government information to the obfuscation and distortion of facts concerning the Iran-Contra scandal, attacks on the public's right to know have been staged on many fronts.

That the Bush administration has continued this pernicious legacy was made all too clear by the tight management of the media during the Persian Gulf war. Well rehearsed during the invasions of Grenada and Panama, Pentagon strategies for controlling and shaping the news were highly effective in the Persian Gulf. The success of these strategies was insured by the docile compliance of the corporate-owned media. Only a handful of news organizations objected strongly enough to the government's handling of the press corps to join a lawsuit challenging the restrictive pool system.

The chilling effect that the combination of government control and media self-censorship has had on the political and cultural climate in this country is amply documented in The Right to Know, volume 3. Like its two predecessors, this is an anthology of articles from sources ranging from the New York Times and Harpers to In These Times and The Nation dealing with attacks on freedom of information. The material is divided into nine sections whose headings give a good indication of the book's content: "Secrecy and Suppression of Information" (censorship of government documents and policy coverups); "Dissent Control" (FBI surveillance of activists, banning of foreign radicals); "The Press and the Media" (self-censorship, underreported stories, biases); "Propaganda, Disinformation and Misinformation" (government manipulation and ideological distortions of the media); etc. All is not quite so bleak,
The final section is devoted to “Affirmations of Our Right to Know” and includes articles on the release of health records of atomic workers, the efforts of the National Security Archive to insure public access to important foreign policy documentation, and other positive developments.

Of the many outstanding articles a few deserve to be singled out. Ben Bagdikian discusses the destructive impact Cold War thinking has had on our political and social life. He shows how this warped legacy remains with us in the form of governmental secrecy and a shallow and subservient press corps. Bagdikian also makes the important point that the accelerating trend towards concentrated corporate ownership of the media is at least as detrimental to freedom of information as are governmental restrictions. While this point is touched on in several other pieces, *The Right to Know* would have benefited from further analysis of the political economy of the mass media.

Marc Cooper and Laurence Soley present the results of a two year study of the “expert” commentators used by the major network news programs. The results reveal this group to be remarkably homogeneous. Those analysts relied on by the media to interpret national and world events are largely male East Coast conservatives, often former officials of Republican administrations.

Also a must read is the “propaganda model” provided by Edward S. Herman and the indefatigable Noam Chomsky. The authors identify several factors such as the concentrated ownership and profit orientation of the mass media, advertising, and reliance on government sources which have the effect of filtering the raw material of news and rendering it sanitized and distorted.

Much of the material included in this volume of *The Right to Know* is as insightful and informative as the few articles mentioned here. One wishes that introductory essays had been provided for the different sections, but this hardly detracts from the admirable achievement of editors Horn and Gruber in bringing together the voices of those few journals and writers who take seriously the independence and critical role of the news media.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Henry T. Blanke is a reference librarian at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City and a member of the Progressive Librarian editorial collective.


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Manjunath Pendakur is an associate professor and director of the Program on Communication and Development Studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He teaches courses in the political economy of communications and international media and is author of Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry from Wayne State University Press.

Colleen Roach is an associate professor of communications at Queens College in New York City and from 1975 to 1985 she worked at UNESCO on several communications projects. She is co-editor of a special issue of Media, Culture and Society on the New World Information Order and author of the forthcoming book The United States and the New International Information Order (Sage, 1992).

Mark Rosenzweig is a reference librarian at the Mid-Manhattan branch of the New York Public Library and a co-founder of PLG.

Karen M. Venturella is a social science reference librarian at Queens Borough Public Library in New York. Before becoming a librarian she worked with homeless people in Philadelphia.

Michael Donovan is a librarian at heart, unemployed union organizer and usually irreverent artist living in New York City.
PLC STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (DRAFT)

The Library has long been assumed to be the bastion of liberty and learning, where people are free to reflect on the past and converse with the present in one of the few settings where commercial speech is muted. Signaled by the change in the name of what we do from librarianship to "information management", we may be giving up our professional responsibility to protect free public access to the knowledge generated in this society. We also seem to be forgetting that the library is an agent of democratic education and cultural development, and have instead embraced unthinkingly the idea that libraries must transform themselves into "competitors" in the "information marketplace."

We must dedicate ourselves to the renewal of the democratic ethos of library service, combat the attacks on library service that emanate from the various sectors of the information industry and work to restore libraries as socially progressive educational institutions. We must attempt to make known and to change the disparities of information provision for different sectors of our society and oppose and attempt to roll back the pervasive imposition of fees for library service. Above all, we will dispute the claim for the library as a neutral, non-political organization that serves best when preserving the status quo, and attempt to renew the library as an agent for progressive social change.

To accomplish these goals we have established this organization. Its purpose will be to:

• Provide a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues
• Conduct campaigns to support progressive and democratic library activities locally, nationally and internationally
• Defend activist librarians as they work to effect changes in their own libraries and communities
• Bridge the artificial and destructive gap within our profession between school, public, academic, and special libraries
• Encourage the debate about prevailing management strategies adopted directly from the business world and propose democratic forms of library administration
• Consider the impact of technological change in the library workplace and on the provision of library service
• Monitor the professional ethics of librarianship from a socially responsible perspective
• Facilitate contacts between progressive librarians and other professional and scholarly groups dealing with communications worldwide.