PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN

CULTURE WARS
LUDDITES ON THE REFERENCE SHELF
POST-APARtheid LIBRARIES
LEFT BOOKS LEFT OUT?
VDTs: DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH

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(over)
EDITORIAL: THE CULTURE WARS

The rhetorical tone surrounding the current furor over "political correctness" has been shrill and overblown even by the standards of the glossy infotainment magazines which crowd our newsstands. Our colleges and universities, we are told, are being overrun by a new fundamentalism, a new McCarthyism, even a new totalitarianism. A Newsweek cover story concluded by likening the "tyranny of PC" to the dictatorship of the proletariat and New York's contribution to the debate featured photos of the Chinese Red Guards and book-burning Nazi youths. At stake, apparently, is American education, free speech, democracy, and the very future of Western civilization. Some of the more serious journals of opinion have joined the fray with somewhat less hyperbolic but equally hostile polemics against the "multicultural cult" supposedly advanced by the politically correct. This periodical literature has supplemented a trio of books (Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, Roger Kimball's Tenured Radicals, and Dinesh D'Souza's Illiberal Education) attacking, from various angles, an imagined takeover of the academy by an insidious coalition of feminists, Marxists, gays, African-Americans and various left-leaning faculty members and administrators. In fact, the university, while hardly dominated by radicals, is perhaps the last sector of American life where the left has some significant presence. Even this small influence is too much for those intent on purging this country of all elements of progressive thought and action.

These attacks on academic multiculturalism indiscriminately conflate and vilify under the "PC" label a considerable diversity of ideas, issues, and movements (from literary deconstruction to date rape to gay student organizations), but three broad sites of conflict can be identified: faculty hiring and student admissions, curriculum revision, and the codes and customs of campus life. Affirmative action policies designed to redress the traditional exclusion of women and minorities from faculties and student bodies are criticized for substituting quotas for considerations of merit. Efforts to insure that curricula represent the cultural achievements of Africa, Asia and Latin America are perceived as diluting what should be an emphasis on Western civilization. Attempts to create a campus environment where students are free from harassment on the basis
of race, gender, or sexual orientation are opposed on First Amend­
ment grounds.

Common to many of the critiques of multiculturalism is the
complaint that higher education in the United States is becoming
increasingly politicized. Counterposed to the diverse and contentious
place that the academy has become is an idealized image of the
pre-1960s university where, high above the turmoil of politics, eager
students were initiated into the system of universal values and
timeless truths comprising the core of Western culture. Of course,
the reality behind this idyllic image is that until well after World War
II the student bodies and faculties of most American institutions of
higher education were overwhelmingly white, male, Christian, and
middle to upper class. Those today who complain of preferential
admission policies for minority students ignore the fact that histori­
cally college admissions have been based not solely on merit, but on
race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and family background. Not
surprisingly the traditional curriculum of the American university
reflected the homogeneity of the campus population. As women and
minorities made gradual and hard-won progress on social, political,
and economic fronts their presence in higher education increased.
Quite naturally they have struggled to make the curriculum more
representative of the multicultural diversity of both the contemporary
United States and the world, as they have fought to make the campus
a more hospitable environment for its newly heterogeneous popula­
tion. Just as naturally those whose values and interests have tradition­
ally been embodied in academic culture have fought to maintain
the status quo. However, the status quo, whether that of the academy
or the wider social world, is rarely perceived as representing a very
particular, historically contingent set of socio-political arrange­
ments. The ubiquitousness of the assumptions of the existing social
system renders it an invisible natural fact, such as the air we breathe.
When movements emerge—such as those aiming to reform aca­
demic culture—which radically challenge political, economic, or
cultural orthodoxies their visibility is dramatic by contrast and they
are immediately perceived and derided as being “ideological.”

One of the most remarkable and irritating aspects of the whole
PC controversy is the way that the opponents of multiculturalism
have attempted to portray themselves as being without ideology or
political partisanship and as being motivated by nothing less noble
than the custodianship of civilized standards and democratic values. Meanwhile those on the left are treated as nihilists or fanatical ideologues as if objecting to fraternities staging mock slave auctions or arguing that Wollstonecraft and Hurston belong alongside Coleridge and Hemingway on college reading lists is tantamount to trashing the First Amendment and defiling intellectual standards. To be sure, the left has its share of self-righteousness, zealousy, intolerance, and plain silliness, but are these qualities restricted to only one end of the political spectrum? Instead of meaningfully addressing the pressing issues of racism, sexism, and class inequities, the assailants of multiculturalism focus their energies on the occasional excesses, real or imagined, of those trying to do something about these problems. Of course, there are those in the multicultural camp who have yet to learn that purifying language or adopting a radical posture is no substitute for the hard work of critical thought and political action. The real danger to American society, however, is not in the lapses of people trying to promote social and cultural change, but in the ways in which the discrimination and inequality against which they are fighting are ingrained in our institutions.

This debate over political correctness and multiculturalism should be of more than passing interest to librarians not only because our profession involves us closely with education and intellectual culture, but because librarianship has its own version of the PC wars. The current uproar over efforts to get ALA members to take progressive positions on international issues (South Africa, Israel), to implement a Poor Peoples Policy and to challenge the Columbus Quincentennial celebrations, points to the likelihood that virtually any attempts to critically examine library matters as they connect with broader social currents will likely be resisted on the grounds that politics and librarianship shouldn't mix. If, however, insisting that library staffs and collections reflect the diversity of American culture, if redressing the mainstream bias in our collections by fighting for the presence of material from the “alternative” US and international press, if promoting access to library meeting rooms and exhibit spaces for controversy and debate, and if demanding that the information needs, for example, of workers and labor organizations be given the same attention as presently given to business, are denounced as politically correct, then so be it.
As protest against the so-called tyranny of “political correctness” in our educational institutions engages a wider audience, those of us who insist on exploring the relationship between information, knowledge, and power as it expresses itself in library and society will inevitably be tarred with the PC brush. But we, like our counterparts in the field of education, journalism, the arts, etc., must recognize that what is at stake is more than malicious name-calling. Behind the anti-PC campaign is the political agenda of those who would halt and reverse the momentum of cultural democratization in America and re-impose the old uniformity, intolerance and chauvinism on our institutions. One can anticipate as well that the effects of this campaign will not be confined to the halls of academe for long as the flap over political correctness begins to fuel the passions of right-wing book-burning types, anti-abortion fanatics and assorted bigots.

The editors of Progressive Librarian therefore applaud and endorse the initiative taken by a group of prominent academics including Henry Louis Gates, Stanley Fish and Wayne Booth in organizing Teachers for a Democratic Culture, an organization which is outspokenly challenging the “mischiefous misinterpretations” promoted by the anti-PC squad. Along with them we “support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship, and education to politics — not in order to shut down debate on such issues, but to open it.”

We believe librarians have an obligation to widen and invigorate a “public sphere” of discourse. We must therefore make sure that, in our own field, controversy over the parameters of a democratic culture is not muted by fear of the snide—and dishonest—epithet “PC.”
When either a casual reader or serious student comes upon an unfamiliar work and is prompted by curiosity or need to find out what it means, that is, to "look it up," the common response is to turn to the library's reference books for authoritative and objective definitions. After all, our dictionaries and encyclopedias are widely thought of as value-free sources of meaning, perhaps even the source of TRUTH! The child who argues, "It's not a word; it's not in the dictionary!" and the Scrabble player who calls in the Webster to challenge the validity of an opponent's layout of letter tiles are both responding to the special place these mostly anonymous entries in their unabridged thickness and multi-volumed erudition hold for us. These are the sources the non-professional researcher turns to, not the extended histories and nuanced discussions found in specialized works. For many, looking something up in a dictionary or encyclopedia is all the research they will ever do.

But how reliable are these sources; are they consistent; are they objective or are there editorial perspectives embedded in the entries? To answer these questions, I recently visited the library of a major research university to see what the reference books had to say about the word "Luddite." I became interested in the use of this word a few years ago upon reading Ian Reinecke's discussion, in Electronic Illusions, of how our culture enshrines technological developments while discrediting those who resist or question their implementation. As he points out, a Luddite is widely thought to be "a machine-breaker, one who stands in the way of progress, an ignoramus, an untutored primitive who resorts to instant violence" (25). [The author's references are grouped alphabetically at the end of the article. The numbers in the text indicate which item is being referred to. When several editions have been studied, each is listed separately.] How, I wondered, did this meaning come about, and who were the people who first bore this name? Historians of early 19th century England report that the Luddites were an unorganized group of textile workers in a few shires in England who, between 1811 and 1816, took it upon themselves to attempt to destroy the machines that were costing them their jobs. Their efforts failed: some were exe-
cuted and others were deported; new framing machines were in-
stalled; jobs were lost (26, 27). And before long the term “Luddite,”
which had been used with a sense of mocking pride by the laborers
to represent their defiance of authority, came to mean mindless
machine breakers. Lost from the semantic environment, at least in
colloquial usage, were the sentiments of the day captured in the folk
ditty:

Chant no more your old rhymes about bold Robin Hood,
His feats I but little admire.
I will sing the Achievements of General Ludd,
Now the Hero of Nottinghamshire.

While some 19th century workers may have considered “General
Ludd” a hero, such is not the case today. If a curious reader encountered
“Luddite,” a fairly widely used allusion, in a magazine and turned to
the “standard” references for explanation, what would be found? Do
the reference works support the devaluation of the term or do they set
the record straight?

Having examined all of the available English language diction-
aries and encyclopedias in the university library I visited, the follow-
ing is a report of those findings.

The material included thirty different books: eleven works iden-
tified themselves as encyclopedias, most in multi-volume sets and a
few in single volume, concise editions; different editions were ex-
amined to check for longitudinal change; six unabridged dictionaries
were also examined.

Four of the works contained no entry on the Luddites or Luddism
(4, 5, 18, 22). Two of these were single volume desk references for
popular use. Omission of information about early 19th century
English history is not surprising in the case of concise editions.
However, its omission from the 1976 Collier’s and the 1966
Compton’s is noteworthy especially as the Compton Company iden-
tifies itself as a “Division of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.” which
means it had easy access to the Britannica’s detailed Luddite entry.
The Compton’s title page proclaims a lofty mission, “To Inspire
Ambition, to Stimulate the Imagination, to Provide the Inquiring
Mind with Accurate Information Told in an Interesting Style, and
Thus Lead into Broader Fields of Knowledge—Such is the Purpose
of This Work.” One is left wondering what it is about the history and
purposes of the Luddites that disqualifies them from inclusion. Did the people at Compton's not wish to inspire the ambition to question technological change or to stimulate the imagination to ponder the consequences of the introduction of mechanical devices into the workplace?

Obviously, asking why something is left out is a speculative endeavor, so let us turn to the works that do include entries. The language in these is sometimes suffused with attitudes and judgments toward the subject. And since standard reference works commonly violate the norms of scholarship by not telling the reader where the information comes from, it’s often impossible to check the primary sources to ascertain whether the judgements are those of the editors or their sources. Therefore, a few more details about the historical events themselves should help set the scene for an examination of the entries.

Historians of the period generally agree that the origins of the term Luddite and who Ludd was have not been conclusively established. Some say a young man, perhaps with a cognitive disability, named Ned Ludd once misunderstood an order and accidently smashed his framing machine. Others contend it was done purposely in a fit of anger. Whatever the impetus, it seems that it became a joke line that whenever a machine got smashed, for any reason, one might say something like, “Ludd must have been here.” From this construction it’s a short step to ironically applying the name of Ludd to vandalism for political purposes. To further invest the idea with irony and humor, those engaged in the acts referred to their make-believe leader as King Ludd or General Ludd, thereby mocking the title of esteem by associating it with a story of one whose disability made him the target of ridicule.

Given how little has actually been discovered about the original Ludd, it is interesting to see how he is characterized in the reference books. The entries in these works contain descriptive language about Ludd himself as well as about the movement that came to bear his name fall roughly into three value categories: Those which present the Luddites, their actions and their plight in a somewhat sympathetic way; those which strive for neutrality; and those which are hostile toward them.
To begin with, there’s some question as to whether the person in question was even named Ludd. Thomis suggests it was actually Ludlum, and that Ludd was just a convenient abbreviation (26). But, whether Ludlum or Ludd, consider how the person whose name came to be a short-hand reference for either a skeptical or reactionary (take your pick) response to new technologies is described. In three entries he is “an imbecile” (2, 23, 28), in one he’s “an idiot” (20), in another he’s “half-witted” (29), and in two he’s “a person of weak intellect” (10, 21). On the other hand, some sources choose not to engage in such denigrating characterizations but rather strive for neutral phrases like “a person who broke stocking-frames in 1779” (30) and one “who had destroyed some stocking-frames thirty years before” (18). Close to these is the Random House Dictionary description which calls him the “worker who originated the idea of machine breaking” (24), which attributes inventive qualities to the same person others call an imbecile.

Another set of Ned Ludd descriptions questions whether he even existed. One calls him “possibly imaginary” (17), another “probably mythical” (10), and two “mythical” (6, 9) with no qualifier. In one he is elevated to the status of a “legendary apprentice” (16).

Not only does Ned Ludd’s intellect and very existence vary from source to source, but he undergoes transformations from one edition to another. In the 1890 and 1911 Britannica Ludd is “a person of weak intellect” (10), but by the 1929 edition he has become “probably mythical” (12), a characteristic he has maintained through the most recent edition. The four editions of the Americana also contain changes. The 1938 edition makes no mention of Ludd, but in 1984 he appears as the “mythical leader ‘Ned Ludd’ or ‘King Ludd’ of Sherwood Forest” (9).

There are other interesting ways that the Luddite entry varies from edition to edition of single titles. Consider what happens in the Britannica and the Americana, the two works which I examined that were available in several editions. The brief 1938 Americana entry consists of the following 61 words:

LUDDITES, in British history a name given to rioters in 1811-16, in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire, in England, who attributed the prevailing distress to the introduction of machinery in manufactures, and did a great deal
of damage in destroying it. For a time these counties were in a perpetual state of disturbance, but on the return of prosperity the riots ceased.

The vagueness of the entry borders on evasion. What was the "prevailing distress" and how much is "a great deal of damage"? The closing sentence loses sight of the Luddites and shifts to concern for the counties which are perpetually being disturbed. And the claim that prosperity brought an end to the "riots" overlooks the possibility that executing groups of Luddites and transporting others to the colonies may have also had a dampening effect. But no matter how soft the 1938 treatment was, it provided more information than the 1964 edition for in that year the Luddites disappeared completely. Future research might reveal if the political climate of the late 50's and early 60's accounts for this omission, but by 1984 the Luddites were rehabilitated by the Americana in a long entry by Harvey L. Friedman of the University of Massachusetts, as the end-of-entry identification describes its author.

This entry, which is repeated in the current (1989) edition, is among the most historical of all the entries that I read. By "historical" I mean not only that Friedman gives the usual dates and details, but that he is concerned with context and cause. He indicates that both changes in working conditions and lack of government action to help displaced workers contributed to the problems, and he avoids the easy label "riots," instead calling the events "direct industrial action," a term which invites more thought as to their etiology. This entry is unique in that it describes the events in such a way as to capture their organic nature, stating that "the movement succeeded partially and temporarily in intimidating employers and improving conditions." Most other entries imply that since this particular labor movement failed and faded from the political scene, at least in its guise du jure, it was, therefore, over and of no consequence. Such writing, it seems to me, is essentially ahistorical. I am curious to see if future Americana editions, edited by scholars schooled in the Reagan/Bush era's "end of history" view, return to the perspective of the 1938 or 1964 version.

Another valuable and unique quality of the Friedman entry is its addition of a two sentence reference to a similar response to industrialization that occurred in France where some workers threw their wooden shoes (sabots) into machines, thereby giving us the word
sabotage. This passing etymological fillip elegantly links the plight of the Luddites to that of workers throughout rapidly industrializing Europe.

The changes detected in the Luddite entry over five editions and eighty-four years of the Britannica are less dramatic than those in the Americana but interesting none the less.

Although historians such as Thomis and Thompson contend that there is little to support the belief that the angry workers were part of any kind of mass movement, the Britannica begins every one of its entries with the assertion that the Luddites were “organized bands” who “rioted.” If “organized” means that the actions they performed required planning when to get together and where to go to bust-up some textile machinery, then I suppose the term fits. But I wonder if the word “organized” doesn’t exaggerate both the extent of the activities and the magnitude of the threat posed. The continued use of the word “riot” or “rioters” in every opening sentence gives the Luddites an anarchistic cast which invites the reader to feel relief that they are no longer about; no one, after all, wants to live in a time and place in which rioters are constantly on the loose.

Over the years, the Britannica has changed its mind about why the Luddites were rioting in the first place. The 1890 edition contends that “riots arose out of the severe distress caused by commercial depression and the consequent want of employment. . . [and the] widespread prejudice that [machinery] directly operated in producing a scarcity of labour.” But in 1911 we find that, “The riots arose out of the severe distress caused by the war with France.” By 1929 (in Volume 14, Libido to Mary Queen of Scots), the war with France is no longer a cause, the focus is limited to mechanization, and “distress” returns: “Great distress had been caused by the dismissal of handicraftsmen in the areas in which such machinery was introduced.” This sentence remains virtually unchanged forty years later in the 1969 edition, but there’s a subtle shift in the description of local support for the Luddites. In 1929, “The rioters were supported by local public opinion,” but by 1969 they were merely “sometimes supported,” a clear erosion of their mandate. Finally, the 1974 Micropaedia edition tells the reader that Luddites were “noted for the destruction of the textile machinery that was displacing them,” while the Macropaedia edition, strangely, has no entry at all for Luddites.
As one might expect, such shifts, contradictions and disagreements occur among the various sources as well as within the different editions of one source. Sometimes the editorial voice intrudes blatantly as the mostly anonymous writers state their own views of the wisdom and purpose of the Luddites' actions. One 1961 compiler patronizes the poor, benighted Luddites by telling his readers that they acted "from the mistaken notion that the introduction of machinery tended to lessen the demand for manual labor" (17). Similarly, in 1902 a writer states that they were "under the delusion that these [machines] diminished employment" (2). Most references are more subtle or seemingly neutral in their descriptions, stating that the Luddites "attributed" (6, 9, 18) their unemployment or other problems to the introduction of new machinery, thereby the editor avoids appearing to take a position on the effects of industrialization but leaves the impression that these "rioters" were misdirecting their energies.

Some entries go so far as to say that unemployment was actually "caused by the introduction of new machines" (17) or that machines were responsible for "underpricing the wages of the skilled workers" (3). Another in this category employs that peculiar oxymoron, "labor-saving" to describe the Luddites' intent "to prevent the introduction of labor-saving machinery by burning factories and destroying machines" (28).

While the entries described above share an implied pro-machine—which is to say "pro-capital"—perspective, the entry in the English translation of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, predictably, presents the Luddites in the context of class struggle: "... the first spontaneous workers' outbreaks... against the introduction of machines and capital exploitation in Great Britain. ... It was a... mode of struggle of the still-forming industrial proletariat against intolerable labor conditions, wretched wages and unemployment..." (16).

Regardless of political perspective or date of publication, almost all of the entries are wrong, or at least sloppily inaccurate, on one important point. Consistently they state or imply that the Luddites were opposed to machinery. This simply is not so. In fact, many of the textile workers who engaged in the Luddite raids were themselves skilled machine operators. They earned their living by working the various stockingframers and other devices used in the textile industry as it functioned in the homes and factories being built in
their communities. Neither the Soviet work which says the workers were opposed to "the introduction of machines" nor the many American and British volumes which declare they "set themselves to destroy manufacturing machinery" (21), "organized for the destruction of machinery" (20), "attempted to prevent the use of machinery" (30), "attempted... to destroy textile machinery" (1), took "part in the machine-wrecking riots of 1811-16" (17) get the point right.

The Luddites had nothing against machines per se; they just didn't want to lose their jobs! However, given the distorted picture presented in this collection of reference books, it's understandable that the Luddites would get a reputation akin to primitive anarchists. This is eloquent testimony to the strength of the role of the machine in industrialized society (both East and West) and the lengths taken to dismiss those who have raised challenges to the preponderant authority (dare I say hegemony?) of the machine.

Finally, what do these entries say about what happens to those who do break the machines which threaten their livelihoods or disorder their communities? To put it mildly, they don't get off easy.

The Britannica in 1890 said that there was "severe repressive legislation" and "vigorous repressive measures," phrases that remain in use to the most recent editions. We are also told that there were mass trials "which resulted in many hangings and transportations" (10). Three other works include the fact that machine breaking was made a capital offence (9, 16, 17) and that hangings ensued. The Chamber's Encyclopedia is less precise but more colorful and judgemental: The Luddites "were savagely repressed... The government used spies and even agents provocateurs against the movements, and special commissions... extracted savage sentences" (3). Moving in the direction of more vague and less severe terms, two references describe the hangings and transportations as "harsh repressive measures" (1) or the riots as "harshly suppressed" (6). The statement most supportive of the government's actions comes from the Century Co. whose editors report that the "conspiracy" and the resulting riots "required stern measures for their repression" (2). The damning word "conspiracy," the parental authority of "stern," and the objective inevitability of "required," combine effectively to condemn those uppity Luddites.
Given the special respect which "standard" reference works receive from many users, the findings which this article reports are practically troublesome. With other books teachers and professors encourage readers to view the contents as the product of one or a few authors' thought and subject to challenge, and even in those cases the persuasive power of the bound and printed page to convince the reader that the contents are true is hard to resist. But in the reference section we tend to let down our guard, to think that those heavy volumes, so much a part of the library itself that they may not be removed from the room they reside in, are as sacrosanct as the very institution in whose presence we are taught to lower our voices, to be respectful, to assume behaviors otherwise reserved for the presence of God or the dying.

Perhaps it's time we demystify the reference room. I don't know if the abuse the Luddites receive in the stacks is typical of what a thorough examination of reference entries on other words would reveal, but it seems to me to at least warrant some disclaimers prominently posted over the arches. What's the Latin for "Let the Reader Beware"?

Notes

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES: A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Christine Stilwell

The criticism levelled by the late Mary Lee Bundy (one-time professor at the University of Maryland) at the American public library for treating equally a request for a book on flower arranging and the plight of a hungry child encapsulates the challenge facing South African public librarians. The poverty figure for South Africa is 44.5% of the population. Black people living in shacks and other temporary shelter outnumber the total number of whites in the country. The current rate of illiteracy is in excess of 60% of the population; 63% of last year's matric students failed. In Alexandra (a Black township near Johannesburg) the percentage reached 80%. Further, many people between the ages of 18 and 25 have been excluded from the formal schooling program and will need to be drawn into meaningful employment if South Africa is to move towards stability.

This paper argues that community librarianship provides an appropriate vehicle for social concern and is eminently suited to serving South Africa emerging from apartheid. The terms, however, need definition. “Community” can be best understood as an image of coherence, a cultural notion which people use to give reality and form to their social actions and thoughts. The sociological existence of communities is founded on social interactions among members, which inevitably produces social boundaries which define them and give them identity. The boundaries of communities are symbolic and exist by virtue of people’s belief in their existence. Communities are made, engaged and believed in. Appeals are made to them which depend on the belief of most people that communities ought to exist, that they are the legitimate goal of all political action. However, while the goal might be the achievement of community, the painful truth is that communities are the result of complex political processes and exist in history, not above it. This recognition indicates important limitations on the kind of community librarianship possible in South Africa at the present time. The racially-determined identities of the geographic entities that make up communities will limit neighborhood-based libraries to serving a particular racial grouping. On June 5, 1991 the Group Areas Act was abolished.
Neighbourhoods and schools should integrate more rapidly but integrated housing will come more slowly because a vast number of poorer people will not be able to purchase houses, either in the townships or the formerly white areas.

Thomas Childers, a pioneer of community information provision in the United States, has used the term “information poverty” to describe the lack of basic survival information experienced by large numbers of people. Ward of the British National Consumer Council points out that a lack of information on how to obtain basic services is tantamount to lacking the services themselves. W.H. Martin, who has described the benchmark Highfield community library in Belfast (a war-torn area like South Africa) states:

I have no doubt as to the validity of that essential connection between community information and disadvantage. Indeed, a lack of information or access to it is frequently found within a cumulative syndrome of disadvantage which includes poverty, unemployment, poor housing, limited access to social services and the social pressures of living in districts where the incidence of crime, disease and misery is well above average for society.

There is also the frightening possibility that those who already command better than average sources of information and are able to use these productively for the benefit of only a small minority of the population will be able to increase the range of information to which they have access and to apply this knowledge to the advantage of a few; those who are already disadvantaged by not commanding good information sources will become increasingly disadvantaged. In other words, the information rich will become richer and the information poor will become poorer. Add to this the growing practice of paying for the use of a library and the problem is exacerbated. Information deprivation can be accelerated by the introduction of sophisticated computerized information systems that place information at a further remove from all but the initiated. To a large extent we are all looking for simple tracks in an information forest growing more and more dense and strange.

“Information” too requires definition. Reid distinguishes in an important way between information and data. Data only becomes information by the act of imparting it and receiving it:
Thus if we wish to provide information services we have to understand first of all that while the collection and ordering of data—at which librarian's are adept—is a prime requisite, it does not in itself provide information, information is primarily a process, a process which goes on in many different ways.  

There are needs for information which may be unexpressed and inarticulate, and questions for which no printed or organized answers exist.

Community information can be defined as information that is in essence survival information, needed for participation as a full and equal member of society. Community Information Service, drawing on the British Library Association definition, is different from reference and local materials provided by public libraries. Community information assists individuals and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. It entails a positive decision to concentrate on empowering people and requires several things—a radical re-definition of the library's purpose first of all. Reid states: "I see the modern public library as a vital element for social change. The library has always has this role—it's just that the light has grown dim." 

In speaking about Australia (but it applies perhaps with even greater clarity in South Africa), he states: "I want to sound a warning, that unalloyed and narrow professionalism could be a major barrier to the future vitality and relevance of the public library."

The rationale for community libraries, whether as part of the public library, as a separate entity or as part of a local or international network, lies in their essentially different sense of social purpose. They differ from traditional libraries in that they are pro-active about their sense of social purpose. These centers reject the idea of neutrality as being neither desirable nor possible and further acknowledge a political connotation to the use of information. This could be described as political in the ideological sense. The primary stimulus is humanitarian and it is social intervention in support of a positive prejudice. According to Barugh it is positive discrimination based on an approach to information provision which addresses the real problems of people in need rather than a supplier-oriented approach.
These services show a radical difference in their approach to defining community needs. Traditional libraries intentionally or by omission essentially protect the status quo and by default link themselves with the interests perpetuating social inequality and injustice. Community information services gather, organize and seek people (therefore not only published materials) as sources of information, and repackage with the aim of changing social conditions. Community information necessitates a radical re-definition of the purposes and function of the public library. What is called for is essentially a system-wide approach rather than a piecemeal tinkering with existing services.

Community information services involve changing public expectations of the library, not only by increasing the range of formats of the available information, but by significantly altering the way in which librarians present themselves to the public with regard to the handling of inquiries. There must be a positive identification of specific needs within a community and the provision of materials to assist individuals and groups to meet these needs in a form and language that is useful to them. Its success depends on the active promotion of the information available and requires follow-up action of various sorts. Close personal contact between the librarian and the groups served is essential. Ideally the librarian/worker should be one of the community. Community librarianship aims at information provision in the crucial areas of people’s lives and at those who have limited access to other sources of help.

Community information can be provided from within a library or from a separate center. There are various opinions about which is better, but what comes across is that librarians are skilled in the type of information storage and retrieval work required. Librarians need to reaffirm this sense of what they are good at. They may, however, depending on their outlook, need to go through an adjustment process. A major part of the problem is to free one’s mind of the old compartmentalised way of thinking.

All libraries can give some information in the course of their ordinary work that would be of the sort provided by a community information service, but it is the re-orientation and preparedness to do the follow-up, in the form of referral, escort or advocacy that make the real difference. Community information services differ as to which of these functions they provide and there is a great range.
depending also on the type of community served. It is hence not really possible to generalize a type. Pat Coleman usefully sees community librarianship as having 4 distinguishing characteristics—offering different materials to those usually provided by a public library, having a different relationship between librarian and user, relying on close links with other agencies (not those that caused the user's problem in the first place) and having an overtly political nature.21 Aitchinson reviewed the incidence of community information services in South African libraries up to mid-1989. She argued that, laudable as these services are, they are not community information services in the sense of Childers or Bundy or Martin. They do not show the radical re-definition of purpose and neither do they perform the follow-up actions, such as escorting a client or even arguing their case in an interview.22 A possible exception is Miriam Khunou's library at Vosloorus in the Transvaal.23 Apart from the lack of community information service, access for black people to some public libraries has to be fought for bitterly. At Vryheid in Northern Natal, two Black residents threatened Supreme Court action unless their application for membership was accepted.24 In July 1990, at Ashton, in the Cape, violent confrontations between Black residents and the police resulted in July 1990 from the former's attempts to put the Freedom Charter into effect and open the library's "doors of learning."25

Elsewhere in Africa, particularly in Tanzania and Nigeria, a strong case is being made for community librarianship as a form of public library service. Anxiety about the vast percentage of the population not served is a reason. A Nigerian pilot project has shown that these methods can serve the illiterate and literate alike.26 Over the last 30 years countries with such diverse systems as Algeria, Brazil, China, Cuba, India, Iran Jamaica, Mali, Somalia and Tanzania have launched successful literacy campaigns on a national scale. Such countries are now concerned with the most effective way to provide continuing education for new literates. In Tanzania, where adult literacy was raised from roughly 25% in 1971 to about 60% in 1976, the follow-up program included setting up simple village libraries to provide reading material to adults who have attained literacy, a radio program to encourage the development of the reading habit and a writers' workshop to encourage the development of suitable reading materials and rural newspapers.27
All these activities put the public library within every person’s grasp. Martin has asked: Who is to serve the public if not the public library? He states with reference to the British:

I believe in public libraries and in their mission as a reforming and interventionist agency. My benchmark is the poverty and deprivation that continues in our society today and the apparent lack of concern about this fact in library circles. 28

“Carnegie libraries” epitomize for the United States, Britain and South Africa a library model that is not suited to either the developed or developing countries. 29 For one thing (and vitally important) this model has lost its education function. In Africa this imported library model, a public library norm, is a relic of colonial times when the concerns of local people were not uppermost in the colonisers’ minds. The role of the library as coloniser has been documented. 30

A crucial area for exploration is what people want of libraries. Firstly the community/communities must be consulted through their accepted leaders. Librarians have many skills to help in this task such as participative research (and participative management) techniques. Libraries need to be established where people of all classes can use them. The pattern of building Carnegie-type mausolea should not be repeated. Kingo Mchomvu states, with relation to Tanzania, that one should not try to construct buildings modeled on those of the United States and Britain. If resources are severely limited it means that only one or two of these imposing structures can be erected in a decade. 31 If cost effective methods (such as those explored by the local Department of Architecture at the University of Natal) are used, it may lead to the discovery that the cheap, small and well-maintained buildings made of inexpensive materials are the key to the growth of information services (or perhaps the community could provide a building as happened in Highfield, Belfast).

The pattern of library services needs to be approached from the bottom upwards rather than from the top downwards. Small, cheap, attractive units close to where people actually live must come before large sophisticated libraries. Community libraries of this sort would be suited to all communities and should not be reserved for some rather than others. Failure in community librarianship can be traced to failure to consult the community properly. Highfield, for example, has an impressive record of serving groups traditionally recognised
as non-users. Libraries that are organically linked to their own communities and their vital structures need to be set up, although examples from other countries may be helpful. A priority will be overcoming the municipal and other boundaries that cordon off South African cities and rural areas into a patchwork of divided responsibilities and consequently of neglect. The neglected area is always regarded as the responsibility of another authority. The formal and informal settlements of South African cities should be targeted for service, and not just the magic circle within the mainly White borough or municipality.

If the communications system is to be successful the existing communications network in the community must be taken into account. The potential of the tape cassette has been recognised widely. Drawing on the experience of Kenya, Durrani sees tape cassette recordings as important in expressing the grassroots culture of the people and so getting a two-way communication going—in other words the process is not top down. 32 Martin points out the part played by the humble tape-cassette in the Iranian revolution when all the might of the Shah’s military and political machine proved useless against the words of an 80 year old man purveyed in oral form. 33

Gassol de Horowitz suggests that what is called for is a new type of librarian and for a bold, non-traditional library service that cuts across the compartmentalization imposed by tradition to meet the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves. 34 What could be more challenging or exciting? The new orientations suggest that the role of librarianship may lie in conscientizing the individual in the sense of Freire. Enabling people to “read the world”—to recognize their plight and consciously act upon it. Participation in the social and political processes means being able to decode the social realities codified by others as well as being able to encode and structure for transmission the realities personally experienced. Why do South African public libraries not reflect the growing sense of a people’s culture, for example? Plays such as those of the South African Workers’ Co-operative drama group have been seen by more people than any others in South Africa. Thousands of people see them at sports stadia but public libraries tend to ignore them. 35

Today’s public library should be inextricably bound up in the daily life of the community. The library must become an arena, not
only for local cultural expression but for the equalizing and democratizing function. Local librarians must become highly visible in their communities as participatory rather than mandatory providers. For many this will be a difficult change. South Africans, generally, are unused to democracy and its processes in spite of the prevailing sentimentality about the Western way of life.

Research done by Nyongwana in Lamondville, by Mini in various parts of Edendale and by Lategan in Tembis suggest that there is an urgent need for community information services to provide survival information. In the Northern countries the information needs of disadvantaged groups have been identified as including general health, nutrition, family planning, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, alcoholism, mental health, home and family, consumer matters, housing, employment, welfare benefits, the law, the political process, transport, education and recreation. The everyday information needs of the average citizen are very similar. It can be said that the disadvantaged and the average citizens in developed countries share much the same problems. In many respects the information needs of those in developed countries and in developing countries are also similar. The main difference lies in their differences of priorities and emphases, since the disadvantaged in developing countries are most concerned with the basic needs of food, shelter, jobs and health. There are also differences of scale since in the developing countries the disadvantaged would represent the majority of the population.

In the survey of Tembisa respondents saw a great need for adult education, literacy training and vocational training. Lategan perceives these as generally improving employment prospects and giving a better quality of life. An article in the *Weekly Mail Review of Books* quotes the public library motto, “Curl up in bed with a book,” only to point out its inappropriateness to our society. So many people do not have homes, never mind beds and at least half of the population cannot read.

Soweto has 5 libraries (excluding those of Dobsonville and Diepmeadow which are administered by their own city councils) with a total stock of 34,500 books for a population estimated at close to 3 million. It is not as if the other media, besides radio, are in plentiful supply. Patience Maisela, head librarian of Diepkloof Library (under Diepmeadow council) has 10,000 books for a population of 325,000 people. The library is well used by adults and
children. To meet the critical shortage of library facilities a group of librarians and academics have set up a Workers’ Library in the central business district of Johannesburg after the example of the 19th century British Workers’ Libraries. The Congress of South African Writers has taken to operating with suitcases full of books in Kroonstad, Harrismith and Welkom in an effort to promote reading and writing.

The greatness and the urgency of the need to address South African library and information services and to make them effective, democratic and able to support development that is worthy of people makes librarians fearful of this task. The knowledge and the resources to embark on it are to hand. This is a real opportunity to provide, within the public library structures, a new beginning. Much of the work has been done with great dedication and for very little reward, by the progressive resource centers. There is a considerable network of these in the country, all with a keen sense of the potential of information work. Perhaps this is one of the most obvious differences between public librarians and resource center workers at present—many public librarians seem to have lost their way.

In all developing countries the literacy rate is lower for women than for men. Women in our society bear the double disadvantage of their position in an unequal and a male-dominated society. In East Java it was found that wherever village women’s clubs grew in strength, villages came to life. Infant mortality rates fell, there was micro-economic development around the village homes—better fish ponds, better fruit trees, better gardens, more poultry, more handicrafts such as weaving and making pots. These pursuits may seem very hearth-oriented but this example raises the key role of women in moving out of a situation of disadvantage. It is also related to the crucial environmental issues of our time and to the pressing need for us to teach each other “to live lightly on the earth.” Community libraries could play a large role in bringing about and supporting such initiatives.

To some extent it is up to librarians whether there will come a time when South African society will be regarded as normal; when the children who would have been the street children of the present time have had the opportunity of sitting, as children should have, on a beloved person’s lap, listening and talking and being read and listened to. Then public librarians can afford to be generous about a request for a book on flower-arranging.
Notes

11. Ibid, p.35.
13. Ibid, p.35.
15. Ibid.
17. Referred to by W.H. Martin in “Librarianship without buildings.”
33. W.H. Martin in “The potential for community information services in a developing country,” p.390.
38. Lindsay Lategan, “Analysis of a community survey conducted by the Lebohand Community Centre, Tembisa,” Read, Educate and Develop (READ) photocopy, 1989.
POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL MONOGRAPHS

Charles Willett

This article explores the hypothesis that book selection and acquisitions policies and methods used in most academic libraries of the southeast United States have the result, intended or unintended, of failing to acquire many politically controversial monographs. It goes on to examine whether small presses and distributors market these books effectively to libraries and then considers how review journals, especially Choice, influence the selection process. The study concludes by emphasizing the librarian’s professional responsibility to seek out and acquire books on politically controversial issues.

SAMPLE STUDY

In order to test the hypothesis stated above, a representative sample was gathered of 32 English-language monographs published between 1981 and 1987 by Africa World Press, Amana, Claremont, Cleis, Earth Resources Research, Latin American Bureau, Lawrence Hill, Marram, Monthly Review Press, Orbis, and Zed.

Subject areas included Africa (three titles), Latin America (six titles), the Middle East (four titles), Southeast Asia (two titles), United States or international matters (seven titles), women (six titles), and literature (four collections of essays about Africa, the Caribbean, and Argentina).

The titles were found in a US distributor’s catalog which appeared in Fall 1987. Descriptions accompanying the citations were used to select titles of broad, current interest that seemed appropriate for undergraduate collections.

During business trips through Alabama, Georgia, and Florida in early 1988, the titles were searched against the holdings of 45 general academic libraries, ranging from small community colleges to major universities. The findings were as follows: (see chart on next page)
Libraries with 90 - 100% of the titles: none
80 - 89%  2
70 - 79%  2
60 - 69%  2
50 - 59%  none
40 - 49%  1
30 - 39%  1
20 - 29%  3
10 - 19%  7
1 - 9%    15
0%        12
Total     45

The figures form two clusters: six large research libraries hold 60 to 89% of the titles; 39 smaller libraries hold few or none. No title is held by more than 18 libraries; two are held by only one; the median held is seven; the mean is five.

BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Book distribution has been described metaphorically as many streams constantly flowing from publishers to libraries and readers. But unlike "mainstream" books from large commercial and university presses, books with alternative socioeconomic and political messages encounter obstacles. To examine these difficulties, six small, progressive, American publishers—not the same group that produced the titles discussed above—were asked in 1988 to describe their marketing strategies. Initial letters with questionnaires were followed up by telephone calls.

Mailings—The presses reported annual budgets of $80,000, $40,000, $25,000, $20,000, $2,000, and $0 for mailing flyers and catalogs. Most of these promotional materials, however, are sent to private individuals, not to libraries.

Salesmen—Only two presses employ sales representatives. One spends $25,000 annually for a salesman to visit librarians at medium-sized and large universities after searching their card catalogs. The other pays a 14% commission to an agency that sends salesmen to visit professors at medium-sized and large universities.
Exhibits—Five of the six presses exhibit occasionally at specialized meetings of librarians and professional societies. All avoid large general conferences, where they “get lost” among the large corporations.

Approval Plans—Three of the small presses market books to libraries through approval plans. One bookseller includes all titles from three presses in its approval plan. Another includes all titles from one press and about 70% from a second. Other than these arrangements, the presses reported no marketing arrangements with approval plan vendors.

Distributors—The only distributor contacted reported no library mailings and no use of approval plans. Occasionally the firm has exhibited at ALA conferences. Its salesmen visit upper-division and higher institutions in some parts of the country but not others.

To look back at the two clusters of libraries in the Southeast for a moment, we can see how little they are helped by these marketing strategies. The librarians and faculty at the 39 undergraduate and master’s level institutions probably are not on the publishers’ mailing lists, rarely meet their salesmen, do not attend the specialized conferences where they exhibit, and cannot afford comprehensive approval plans.

At the six research libraries, chances are not much better. They too do not get the mailings; sales representatives seldom visit the Southeast; travel money to specialized conferences is scarce; and even large approval plans cover small presses very inadequately.

BOOK REVIEW JOURNALS

Let us turn now to reviews. Five of the small presses send galley proofs or hardbound copies of all their new books to Choice, Library Journal, and Publishers Weekly. They estimate that 2% to 50% of these are reviewed, with a median of 20%. Some of these presses suspect, without hard data, that they are getting fewer reviews now than they did five or ten years ago. The sixth press, the smallest, sends books to Choice, but few are reviewed.

Patricia E. Sabosik, editor and publisher of Choice, said in 1988 that her staff was conducting a study of small presses. Preliminary results showed that Choice was doing about as well as it could. She said that the chances of a small press book being reviewed in Choice
are better than in other review journals. She noted, however, that space limitations permit only 6,600 books to be reviewed each year. Foreign books, primarily of British and Canadian origin, now comprise 25% of Choice's total. As the total number of books published or distributed in the US continues to rise, she said, small presses may be reviewed in Choice even less often.

Exactly half the titles in the sample were reviewed in Choice, 16 out of 32. The Choice titles were found in Southeastern libraries almost three times more often than those that were not reviewed: 210 holdings as against 75. Three titles in the sample received special commendation from Choice as "outstanding academic books." These were the first, sixth and seventh most frequently found books, appearing in 18, 11, and 10 libraries, respectively. On the other hand, one book that received a very unfavorable review in Choice also found its way into six libraries.

The Choice selection policy, adopted in 1983, states that subject matter must be relevant to undergraduate courses or to non-curricular student interests. It must be appropriately presented for undergraduate use and must demonstrate effective command of the subject and the methodology employed. In carrying out this policy, reviewers see themselves as gatekeepers guarding college libraries across the country from inappropriate books. But who guards libraries from the gatekeepers?

Review journals reject controversial books by (1) giving them very negative reviews, (2) ignoring them, and (3) recommending the book for graduate use only.

**Frontal Attack**—Three books, two of them from the sample, illustrate biased approaches by Choice (and other major review journals) to politically controversial material. For example, South Africa's Transkei: The Political Economy of an "Independent" Bantustan by Roger Southall (Monthly Review Press, 1983) is a model of good scholarship: 338 well-documented, well-organized, well-written pages, full of tables, maps, notes, followed by an index and an extensive, up-to-date bibliography.

The Choice review (November 1983) is negative throughout. The anonymous reviewer labels Southall a "neo-Marxist" and attacks him for daring to criticize a book by "a recognized authority," Newell Stultz. The reviewer quotes Southall out of context as fol-
The actual passage, following two pages in which Southall objectively summarizes Stultz's work, reads:

*Stultz's assessment of Transkeian independence is undoubtedly a thoughtful piece which reflects a clearly humanitarian motivation, yet its political premises are so profoundly conservative (and many would use unkind terms) that there is little point in confronting this analysis here. That task has already been undertaken elsewhere, and readers may themselves prefer to make their own judgements as to the relative merits of his own and the present author's widely contrasting approaches.* (Emphasis added. A footnote cites the journal article where the discussion can be found.)

The reviewer then urges scholars “seeking a more balanced perspective” to consult an older work by three other men instead of Southall’s book. In citing the older work, however, he omits its subtitle, which states that it concerns two other South African homelands, not the Transkei.

The most extraordinary statement in the review, however, reads, “It is unfortunate that the author’s point of view is allowed to intrude so forcefully on the description of events, personalities, and even other authors.” Does the reviewer believe that authors should *not* express their point of view forcefully? Southall is indeed guilty of this charge. He unabashedly states his point of view quite forcefully on the very first page:

> the implication of my study is that the bantustan policy is devoid of all progressive political potentialities, and that consequently, support must be unambiguously given to the forces of liberation which are struggling to overthrow apartheid rule.

I suspect that Southall’s unambiguous support for “the forces of liberation” is the real reason why the reviewer does not want this book in our college and university libraries.

*Ignore the Book*—Perhaps a more effective way of keeping politically controversial books out of libraries is simply not to review
them at all. *Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World* by Noam Chomsky (Claremont, 1986) is an example of this approach. The opening paragraph explains the title:

St. Augustine tells the story of a pirate captured by Alexander the Great, who asked him "how he dares molest the sea." "How dare you molest the whole world?" the pirate replied, "because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an Emperor."

This is a book that grinds the teeth and sickness the stomach. Chomsky has assembled page after page of well-documented evidence of terrorism conducted in the Near East by the United States and its client states. Worse then his attacks on our government, however, is the biting scorn that he aims at us—the citizenry, the academic establishment, the press, the Congress—whose gullibility, hypocrisy, subservience, acquiescence, complicity, and jingoism have made these crimes possible. He shows again and again how our vast public relations industry employs Orwellian Newspeak techniques in the "manufacture of consent." When we bombed Libya, for example, newspapers said it "played well in Peoria" and "should strengthen President Reagan's hand in dealing with congress on issues like the military budget and aid to the contras." The book's final paragraphs read:

The fraudulence and cynicism of the propaganda campaign about "international terrorism" has been exposed to the tiny audiences that can be reached by dissident opinion in the United States, but the campaign itself has been a remarkable public relations achievement. With the mass media committed to serve the needs of the state propaganda system, systematically excluding any commentary that might expose what is unfolding before their eyes or any rational discussion of it, the prospects for future successes remain impressive. This service of the educated classes to wholesale international terrorism contributes to massive suffering and brutality, and in the longer term, carries with it serious dangers of superpower confrontation and terminal nuclear war. But such considerations count for little in comparison with the need to ensure that no threat to "stability" and "order" can arise, no challenge to privilege and power.
There is little here to surprise any honest student of history. It is also not surprising that *Choice* did not review this forceful attack on the American propaganda system. It might be disturbing for young people to learn in college that the free press in this democracy deliberately lies to them.

**Recommend for Graduate Study Only**—A third and more sophisticated approach that *Choice* employs is illustrated by another recent Chomsky book, *On Power and Ideology: The Managua Lectures* (South End Press, 1987), which discusses US foreign policy in Central America. A generally favorable review in *Choice* (October 1987) recommends the book, but only for graduate collections. Reviewer J.D. Martz notes:

Chomsky’s ideological position is admittedly revisionist and differs from more orthodox views. . . . This slender volume deserves a thoughtful reading, but readers who lack background in the subject matter may come away with a distorted understanding.

“Orthodox views”? “Distorted understanding”? What nonsense! Is Martz recommending books for American college students or for the Ayatollah? The anonymous reviewer of Southall’s book makes similar remarks urging “scholars seeking a more balanced perspective” to read a less offensive book and defending Stultz as “a recognized authority.”

Such reviewers should be fired. One of the most important objectives of a college education is to develop the intellectual capacities required for the effective exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship. This is best accomplished in an atmosphere of free inquiry and expression, supported by the widest range of library materials. To deny our college students that freedom in the name of some arbitrary authority or orthodoxy is a form of tyranny.

How is it that we are subjected to such questionable review practices? The *Choice* Selection Policy Draft 1983 declares under its subject guidelines for political science that “strong efforts are made to ensure that all viewpoints on controversial or sensitive topics are represented” (emphasis added). That goal has not been achieved. Reviewers, acting with the power of medieval censors under the authority of the American Library Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries, can relegate contro-
versial books to the dim cloisters of graduate libraries. They can put them under the interdict with harsh reviews. Or they can simply leave them in limbo by not reviewing them at all.

These biased judgements by *Choice* have enormous consequences. They affect hundreds of undergraduate and graduate collections. They influence members of the public who consult reviews to determine the relative place of a title in this subject field. They are even canonized in *Books for College Libraries*.

In recent years, *Choice* has begun a program of exporting its reviews to foreign libraries in the United Kingdom, the European continent, India and Japan. The United States Information Agency (USIA) has given grants to ALA to carry out USIA projects abroad. Sabosik said one USIA proposal involved distributing *Choice* cards to foreign libraries, but the project had been shelved until after the 1988 national election. So ACRL, ALA and *Choice* have ties to the propaganda ministry.

That *Choice* has been singled out for criticism here does not imply that it rejects politically controversial ideas more than do other review journals. *Library Journal, Kirkus Reviews, American Book Review,* and ALA's *Booklist* may be as bad or worse. For example, all those journals published negative reviews of a highly controversial book by Margot Harry, *Attention, MOVE! This is America!* (Banner Press, 1987), an exposé of the Philadelphia Police Department's bombing of the MOVE house in May 1986. *Choice* simply ignored the book. *Attention, MOVE!* received balanced or positive reviews in several other publications, including *Small Press, "the magazine of independent book publishing"* (Sept/Oct 1983), formerly published by Bowker, now by Meckler. An objective study comparing the treatment of politically controversial books by various American review journals is badly needed.

Gary Sanders, President of Liberation Distributors, wrote to me in a personal letter:

If college librarians do not read [Small Press], it seems to me that they should, for it comes out bimonthly and gives its pages to books that are seldom reviewed in *Publishers Weekly* or *Library Journal.* . . . Its pages are open to small progressive publishers to a significant degree. . . . If academic librarians were to grasp the built-in biases in some of
the major traditional review publications, they might begin to understand the importance of paying more attention to publications like Small Press.

VALUE OF POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL BOOKS

Politically controversial books are different. They produce ideas, not profits. They are not filtered, sanitized, and packaged by the giant corporations that deliver most of the information we receive. These books are our glasnost, our samizdat, our free voice. Every participant in the chain linking author and reader has a responsibility to bring them into college and university libraries. Publishers and distributors should tell librarians what titles are available and why they are significant. Booksellers should include them in their approval plans, even if they are not big money makers.

Review journals should put aside ideology and guarantee that all viewpoints on controversial or sensitive topics are fairly evaluated. Comprehensive bibliographic essays and collection management reports should consider the whole world, not just the West. They should consider all points of view, not just academic and political orthodoxy. Studies and reviews that fail to consider honestly the intellectual contributions of socialist countries, third world countries, and Western dissidents are instruments of propaganda. The "manufacture of consent" is not a legitimate goal of collection management or the college curriculum.

Regardless of how well publishers, distributors, booksellers, reviewers, and professors call attention to politically controversial materials, the ultimate responsibility for acquiring them remains with librarians. In almost all the 45 libraries studied here, and probably in hundreds more across the country, we have failed in our professional duty to seek out diverse political views.

These books are not expensive. Their absence from our libraries makes a mockery of ALA's vaunted "freedom to read." But we do not even notice that we are censoring our collections. Complacently, we watch our new automated systems stuff the shelves with Henry Kissinger's memoirs.

The following are three documents which should be of particular interest to readers of Progressive Librarian.

The first, a draft “Declaration of Cultural Human Rights” proposed by the Alliance for Cultural Democracy outlines a program of progressive cultural demands which we feel may be of great relevance to librarians. We hope you will read it, think about it, discuss it, critique it and write up for Progressive Librarian your ideas of how (or whether) you think such a declaration is of value to our work.

The second document, “Few Voices, Many Worlds,” represents the work of the Third MacBride Round Table. We publish it as a follow-up to our discussions in the preceding issue of the New World Information and Communications Order and a contribution to our ongoing debate on the international dimensions of the struggle for democratization of communications.

We next offer an important statement by our sister organization in South Africa, Library and Information Workers, which they submitted to the August 1991 Moscow convention of the International Federation of Library Associations. It describes the current state of affairs in South Africa and calls on IFLA to unambiguously align itself with the democratic forces in South African librarianship.

Finally, we present a document on the official position on the South African cultural boycott taken in August 1991 by the African National Congress’ Department of Arts and Culture. It expresses clearly that all cultural contacts with South Africa must still be undertaken, as PLG has stated over and again in ALA, through consultation with anti-apartheid groups and at the invitation of the democratic movement in South Africa and be manifestly directed to strengthening the supporters of the alternatives to apartheid.
PART I: THE FOUNDATIONS

In order to advance the struggle for those political and economic rights recognized by all people in pursuit of a democratic, just and peaceful world;

In order to make that world manifest through the perpetuation and unfettered expression of creativity from all our peoples and cultures in a common wealth of wisdom, vision, knowledge, and means;

In order to supplant passivity with creative action, desecration with beauty, waste with husbandry, alienation with community, exploitation with cooperative harmony, and cultural chauvinism with appreciation and respect for human diversity;

In order to secure our very existence as we preserve and nurture the living planet that sustains us, WE DECLARE AND NOW ACT TO GUARANTEE THE CULTURAL RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLES.

Among these rights are:

Participation

All people—as groups, communities, or individuals—possess the right to participate in the creation of their own cultures. All people must be guaranteed the right of access to their own and others’ cultural heritages. Culture is used here in the broadest sense, as the entire fabric of life, which would include social traditions, religious belief and practice, values, ethics, ideologies, material and technological possessions, written and oral histories—and all the arts. The creation of cultural expression should be a social process open to all. It must not be abridged socially, economically, or educationally by another or a dominant culture. The means of production, distribution and communication cannot justly be monopolized by any elite.

Community and Peace

A major part of cultural expression is the traditional and the innovative interplay between people and their environment or place. Each environment is a unique pattern of animals, plants, soils,
climate, terrain, and other natural resources, as well as human technology, history, and surrounding communities—local, national, and international.

The suppression or destruction of cultural expression—like the violation of the natural, economic, social, or political rights of any community—upsets the delicate balance between people and place and can push a culture toward extinction.

Therefore, everyone has a right to community and place. Forced removal from community or place, loss of control over its resources, and the destruction, alteration, and pollution of place by the capricious, careless, self-serving, or hostile actions of a ruling elite or a foreign power violates that right.

Language

A culture's visual and verbal language is its most profound and vital means of expression. It enables people to name and define the world they experience or create. It embodies the history, values, orientation, and traditions of a people and provides a critical means to express ideas and organize action in the face of present and future challenges.

Language evolves as people interact with each other, with their environment, and with other cultural groups. Language binds people together and, as such, is a crucial instrument of survival. Therefore the expression of a people's language must never be denied or discouraged by another or dominant culture.

Cultural Exchange

Each culture discovers truths, gains perspectives, produces goods and technology, or creates universally powerful imagery simultaneously unique to that culture and potentially valuable to others.

The peaceful resolution of all conflict is facilitated by mutual understanding and communication. The growing technical and economic interdependence of the world's peoples and the need to bear mutual responsibility for global problems and to share insights and solutions require continuous and complex exchanges of information.
Therefore all peoples are entitled to interaction with people like and unlike themselves, to the knowledge, beauty, and resources freely shared by cultures other than their own.

**Redress of Cultural Grievances and Conflicts**

All communities of people have the right to a formal means of local, national, and international redress of grievances and conflicts. Such redress must be offered within a framework of jurisprudence built upon principles of cultural as well as political and economic human rights.

**PART II: PREPARATION FOR ACTION**

A precondition of a just and peaceful world is a climate in which all people, as groups, communities, or as individuals can assert with pride their own cultures and actively respect the cultures of others.

Above, in THE FOUNDATIONS, we have articulated fundamental human cultural rights to which all people are entitled. We have done so in the knowledge that our multicultural life and expression is unduly determined by a profit-directed elite. The corporate, social, religious, artistic, and civic institutions it creates and controls comprise a “dominant culture” which owns or dominates most of the means by which cultural expression is created, defined, taught, communicated, and rewarded in our country and much of the world. Its expression is predominantly commercial and is often militaristic, sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic.

Cultural chauvinism is a hallmark of the dominant culture. It supports and promotes expression that reflects the values and tastes of those who have dominated urban European-American life and culture. It limits or misrepresents the multicultural expression of other peoples, including those of the working classes and the poor, people of the Third World, people of color, and people who reside or participate in rural, regional, or alternative communities—in short, any who represent other traditions and values.

Now, as residents of the United States in the late 20th Century, we identify some of the public arenas in which our people must take action to secure their cultural rights.
Education

Universal public education for children is required by law in most nations. In the schools children are formally and systematically exposed to mass-cultural values. Early learning informs a child about the proper way to speak, dress, and behave in order to win broad social acceptance. Yet American public education predominantly reflects those values of the dominant culture and children are easily bewildered about the value of their own personal, familial, or cultural identities, especially if they diverge from the so-called “norm.”

State and local school district policies must create a curriculum in which cultural pluralism is nurtured and respected. The climate of each school must be conducive to each child’s assertion of her or his cultural identity, and must encourage intercultural respect.

At present, through both curricula and climate, schools tend to reinforce a value system in which questioning and criticism of authority are discouraged; in which competition is fostered and cooperation is discouraged; in which single standards of excellence are accepted; in which the arts and other creative explorations are considered “leisure” or “entertainment” or are reserved for “gifted” students; in which passivity is learned behavior; and in which students are consumers of curriculum rather than creative collaborators in the learning and teaching process.

We believe that written and unwritten policy must acknowledge that all students are entitled to their rights: to an education shaped by local cultures and needs; where numbers warrant, to an education that is bilingual or multilingual; to a curriculum which actively teaches and values the stories and images of the many cultures that have shaped human history; to a learning climate in which critical thinking is encouraged along with the creative assertion of identity; and to a curriculum that celebrates and reinforces cultural diversity and respect.

Public Communications

The information that people receive enables them to make decisions about what the world is like and what they themselves are like. The advent of sophisticated, centralized information-dissemination systems means that millions of people can be exposed simultaneously to a single piece of information. While this can potentially
draw the people of the planet together, all too often it promulgates a single notion of “reality.” If cultural democracy is to flourish, people must have access to multiple sources of information, and must be able to produce as well as to consume them.

In public communications, as well as in education, people should have access to all information, and above all, should be equipped to respect passion and subjectivity and personal experience, as well as objectivity. Currently, centralized network media, like the educational system, promotes the dominant culture, and offers either stereotypes or absence for all “others.” News reporting suggests that questions, opinions, criticism and dissent reflect disorder rather than the characteristics of a democracy at work.

Within the public communications arena the legitimacy of alternative media and points of view, as well as the right and ability of all people to exercise and express critical judgment, must be recognized.

We believe that written and unwritten policy must acknowledge that all people are entitled to their rights: to an opportunity to share in the ownership, operation, and policy development of local television, cablevision, radio, press, and electronic information networks; to wide public awareness of local access laws, adequate information on the use of equipment and the broadcasting process, and access to the airways at times when broad audiences can be reached; to the ability to narrowcast to people of shared culture or interest as well as to broadcast to a wide audience; to regional or national media in which multicultural imagery and multiple viewpoints are visible, so that a wide range of options are available without cost differential.

Arts

Through the arts individuals and groups can uniquely communicate experience, perspectives, beliefs, hope, outrage, despair, desire, problems, and solutions. For cultural democracy to flourish, every cultural group, community and individual must have the means, opportunity, and public arena to make and to exhibit its arts, and to interact with its audiences. Participants, audiences, producers, and funding sources must acknowledge multiple standards of excellence and recognize the value of the creative process which emerges directly from cultural tradition and is a powerful instrument for cultural change.
Currently, the dominant culture attempts to define “the arts” and then dissociate them from the cultures of our people in two prime ways. First, they are considered commodities, generally marketed to and primarily accessible to college-educated, middle- or upper-class people. The dominant culture tends to house its art in specialized arts centers which isolates them from daily life and alienates them, through rarification, from most people’s culture. Second, public funding agencies tend to support a single standard of so-called “quality” in the arts that reflects the values of the dominant culture and rarely fund artists or arts organizations critical of the dominant culture and political status quo, or simply peripheral to them.

We believe that written or unwritten cultural policy must acknowledge that all people are entitled to their right to make art, regardless of economic or cultural situation. This implies access to opportunity, instruction, materials, tools, space, public display, and to both critical and unspecialized feedback. It includes the rights: to take for granted the respect of other cultural groups and of funding sources for excellence internal to any culture; to make and participate in the arts in the workplace, the park, the shopping mall, or anywhere that people gather, as much as in specialized art spaces; to compete for public funding in an arena in which the art of dissent or of varied cultures is considered a valid and valuable form of public expression.

Participation in the Creation of Public Cultural Policy

The participation of every individual in setting policy for his or her society is theoretically guaranteed by many governments, but is often neither supported nor encouraged. The right to social participation and straightforward access to the process are hallmarks of cultural democracy, as are the subtler means of engendering the desire and power to participate.

Currently, those who find it easiest to effect the public process of cultural policy making at the Federal, State and local levels tend to be supporters of the dominant culture and those who monopolize the resources necessary to frame both the issues and solutions within a lopsided public debate. People without access to information, funds, attorneys, or the media are therefore indirectly barred from the participatory process. There is a pervasive assumption that those who do manage to voice dissent are troublemakers. Such people are
dismissed rather than acknowledged as partners in a dialogue. There is no arena for resolving conflicts in which one culture is threatened by another.

At the Federal level perhaps the greatest obstacle to participation in cultural policy development is the official and false assertion that there is no U.S. cultural policy! Written or not, a policy is in place and is used to unjustly allocate public cultural resources.

We believe that written and unwritten public policy must acknowledge that all people are entitled to their rights: to choose to participate in public debate, regardless of gender, sexual preference, income, class, ethnicity, geography or culture; to information that encourages participation and conditions which enable people to participate without fear of being excluded; to publicly provided resources which enable otherwise disenfranchised people to participate equally in public process; to the expression of dissent in an arena in which dissent and challenge are valued; to access to an articulated legal process of resolving conflicts arising from cultural differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and to a formal means of national and international redress of cultural grievances and conflicts.

Public Services and Funding

Publicly funded institutions have a direct responsibility to taxpayers and to the people whose lives they affect. Clients must play a role in shaping the policy of service organizations. Public funding agencies must develop guidelines providing a genuinely equal opportunity for people of all cultures and viewpoints to compete for funding. Universities, [libraries] and other public institutions must articulate policy for interaction with the communities in which they are located.

Currently, clients of public service agencies receive services that they are rarely given the opportunity to help define according to their own needs, and they seldom have any opportunity to challenge the status quo. Public funding bodies tend to fund generic, “model” projects in preference to locally or culturally-specific or experimental or radical solutions to problems. Universities and other institutions are de-emphasizing community service and local interaction. They increasingly ignore the communities to which they should be responsible.
We believe that written and unwritten policy must acknowledge that all people are entitled to their rights: to participate in setting policy for those public service institutions that affect their lives; to a democratic tax structure that equitably returns tax dollars and services to communities; to public support for local initiative in solving problems of local concern in all arenas from education to economic development to public art.

CONCLUSION

A society in which a single culture or a single set of standards flourishes is a society both weak and impoverished. The potential collective strength of this country lies in our ability to recognize and be inspired by our diversity. We are people of different histories, languages, traditions, skills, values, ideologies and tastes. Our social life must be constantly challenged and reinvented as a collective project. There is no preordained system that will produce adventure and joy. All people have a right to cultural as well as to political and economic democracy. The three are mutually reinforcing and all three are necessary to the survival of any one of them as well as to the survival of society itself.

Within a structure of cultural democracy and self determination, however, each culture must maintain the right to challenge racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism internally and externally.

With the establishment of cultural democracy, we can truly contemplate the possibility of a world free from violence, contempt, and fear.

Alliance for Cultural Democracy ©1988

The preceding is a “living document,” still in progress. It’s a huge job, but we have to start somewhere. Criticism, commentary, and contributions are not only welcome, but necessary for its completion.

This draft incorporates the editing work of Lucy Lippard, Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard—including the comments of Bernie Jones—of an original draft by Mark Miller and Maryo Ewell.
FEW VOICES, MANY WORLDS

Istanbul Statement, Adopted June 21, 1991

The Third MacBride Round Table met at the end of a conference (News Media and International Conflict), sponsored by the IAMCR (International Association of Mass Communication Research) and the ILAD (Turkish Communication Research Association), which critically assessed the roles the mass media played in the war in the Persian Gulf. Following the MacBride Roundtables of Harare (1989) and Prague (1990), it met on June 21, 1991 in the ancient city of Istanbul, Turkey at the crossroads of East and West, North and South. The 24 participants, coming from 14 countries, in an endeavor to debate and pursue the thoughts and values of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), as advanced by the Non-Aligned Movement and inspired by the ideals of the late Sean MacBride, make the following observations on the current state of communication and mass mediated culture.

We observe with growing concern the rapidly increasing concentration, homogenization, commercialization, and militarization of national and world cultures.

The principles of the MacBride Report (*Many Voices, One World*), have been countered by the virtual monopoly of global conglomerates over the selection, production, and marketing of information and entertainment products, including crucial scientific and technical data and informational rights; by the transnational industrial-media complex under its American military protectorate; and by the weakening of multilateral relations and international organizations. This trend has further widened the inequities of resources within and among nations.

We are confronted, therefore, with media coalescing into a centrally manufactured, symbolic and cultural environment. That environment permeates every home in an ever growing number of countries. It is displacing parents, schools, communities, publics, and even nations as the originator of messages and images that define our lives and our relationships with each other. It serves marketing strategies and government priorities that are increasingly out of reach of democratic policy-making.
Great efforts must now be made to develop a culture of non-violence, of dialogue and negotiations, practicing the art of democracy, and promoting a culture of peace. This effectively means to demilitarize cultural products and processes.

Politically, alternative systems of peace and security need to be established, both on the global and regional levels. The United Nations, and especially UNESCO, should play a central role in this, thus becoming what they were always meant to be, peace-making and peace-keeping bodies.

The challenge before us is to build new peoples' coalitions and constituencies that can help regain a significant measure of participation in cultural policymaking, nationally and internationally.

The coalitions should include a broad range of public groups, social movements, and organizations. They should enlist media professionals, citizen activists, consumer groups, women's, minorities, religious, labor, environmental, and other organizations in the new cultural struggle.

The democratization of communication should be built on the strength of national coalitions entering into international cooperation on the basis of independence, equality, and mutually beneficial objectives. The new frontier for the advancement of human values and rights is the cultural frontier. It is there that the MacBride Principles have to be recognized as more essential than ever.

In pursuance of these and other relevant objectives, the MacBride Roundtable will publish a collection of Roundtable documents, support the development of and communication amongst groups concerned with media democratization, and organize further meetings to facilitate the work of the Roundtable and related coalitions.
STATEMENT AND RESOLUTION TO THE IFLA CONFERECE, MOSCOW, AUGUST 1991

Adopted by the Library and Information Workers Organization (South Africa) at its first AGM, Pietermaritzburg, 27 July 1991

Background

Since late 1989 certain important changes have taken place in South Africa. During that year organizations of the liberation movement, through mass protest and presence on the streets of South Africa’s towns, declared themselves unbanned. The response of the South African’s government to this action and to international economic and political isolation, and its inability morally and militarily to rule, resulted in further changes to the apartheid scenario. Today some of the legislative basis of apartheid has been removed, and locally and internationally people speak of a “new” South Africa.

As far as libraries are concerned, the Separate Amenities Act, which barred blacks from using public libraries established and funded by white local authorities, and sanctioned the occasional establishment of inferior facilities in townships, has been removed from the statute book. As a result, many librarians have claimed that libraries are now freely available to all. Eloquent supporters of this view will make themselves heard at this gathering of the international library community. Many librarians, with the best of intentions, will want to believe this. The international community, along with the majority of South Africans, want to wipe the scourge of apartheid from the record of humanity at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is important to point out that apartheid is nowhere near dead. At the national level only the whites have a meaningful voice. Increasing numbers of black South Africans are moving into what were formerly white towns, but they are not permitted to vote in local authority elections; nor are those people formerly classified “Coloured” and “Indian”. A new constitution, drastic overhaul of local government and the election of a democratically based government will not be achieved quickly. We have yet to see legislation which extends rights to all the people of South Africa. In our sphere of interest, for instance, there is no right to quality education, any more than there is a right to information. If the present situation remains unaltered it will be perfectly possible to maintain the apartheid status...
quo without the help of legislation. The death of apartheid will not be in sight until the people of South Africa are empowered politically, legally and economically.

Those of us living in South Africa, who have witnessed and experienced the deprivation of apartheid know that its effects cannot be wiped out at will, nor overnight. Apartheid’s racial discrimination permeates the ways in which South Africa society is ordered in every dimension—political, social, economic, religious, etc.—producing a social system which involves amongst other injustices, structural poverty and deprivation. This will take decades to remove. The legacy of Bantu education ensures that millions of black children continue to struggle for an education with inadequate schools, and without teachers, books, pens, pencils, paper, laboratory equipment, playing fields and sports equipment, and libraries.

Likewise, years of separate amenities leave us with public libraries in white residential areas, in the centre of towns and cities, far from the township where most blacks live and go to schools. In most cases this means that people cannot borrow books from these, even if they raise the busfare to travel to them, for residents of townships are not ratepayers in municipal areas and in terms of by-laws are not entitled to free membership of the public library. If libraries have been established in black townships they are often housed in inadequate buildings, have inferior bookstock, and most importantly, may be seen to be part and parcel of government structures and thus viewed with suspicion by black residents. Having said this, it is important to remember that the legislative picture is complex and the precise situation will vary from place to place.

Given this context, LIWO notes with concern

1. IFLA’s difficulty in the light of insufficient information in arriving at a decision on South African libraries’ institutional membership of IFLA both now and in the past;

2. the fact that while some South African librarians have opposed apartheid structures, some of whom have been detained or deported, many have supported the apartheid regime;

3. the continuing existence of a well-entrenched system of censorship, both formal and informal.

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LIWO requests that IFLA

1. recognize the fact that apartheid is far from dead;

2. acknowledge the need for massive political, economic and social reconstruction in South Africa;

3. support through contact, encouragement of research, and training programmes those librarians, libraries and resource centres and their associations (LIWO, Transvaal Resource Centre Network, Natal Resource Centre Forums [Durban and Pietermaritzburg], and Cape Resource Centre Forum) which clearly support a democratic South Africa;

4. withhold recognition from those institutions and associations which have upheld white privilege in the past and continue to do so using tactics such as privatization;

5. to implement the conclusions of the IFLA working group on South Africa’s report.
THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT

The African National Congress’ position on the cultural boycott has come under increasing attention. Mayibuye asked the ANC’s Department of Arts and Culture to outline the organisation’s position.

At a Consultative Conference hosted by the ANC’s Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in April this year, the following position on the cultural boycott was outlined:

“Our cultural boycott policy aims primarily at affirming the illegitimacy of the apartheid regime. We do not regard the government as representative of the people of South Africa, the majority of whom, black and white, reject this racist ideology.

“Rather we are promoting the sovereignty of the South African majority and their right to steer the course of the destiny of our country in the direction of a united, non-racial democratic South Africa.

“The overwhelming thrust of the cultural boycott therefore is to keep out foreign performers and academics who do not come to South Africa at the express invitation and consent of the democratic movement. This means that visits to South Africa by foreign artists and academics must be realised and sanctioned through consultation with the relevant organisations, including anti-apartheid movements at the country of origin. In this way we can ensure that the emerging democratic structures are developed and supported as an alternative to apartheid agencies.” [Emphasis added]

This position was endorsed at the “Cultural and Academic Links With South Africa Symposium” held in Los Angeles, hosted by the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid.

DEMANDS

It would be incorrect to see the cultural boycott policy in isolation from the rest of the approach being used by the DAC. The April Consultative Conference also adopted the following demands which political organisations involved in the process of negotiations should, in conjunction with the cultural movement, table:
that the government must abolish the racially constituted cultural departments and structures so that a national Arts and Culture body, which is democratic and non-racial, can be formed;

that this body should reflect the reality of the diversity of our culture and work towards the development of a national identity.

For this it was agreed that a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-sexist cultural organisation needs to be established. It was also decided that the establishment of an Arts and Culture Foundation be investigated. This foundation would have the task of addressing the imbalances created by apartheid and to enforce the cultural boycott.

Funding was raised as a crucial issue. It was felt that central funds must be distributed fairly among cultural structures. Visiting artists and academics must contribute towards the coffers of the democratic cultural structures.

In October 1989 AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] 2477 and AFSCME 2910 issued a survey to the majority of bargaining unit members who work in the Library of Congress. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the health and safety conditions of Library employees who work at video display terminals (VDTs). Three hundred and fifty-five employees answered the questions and returned the survey to the union office. Some of the surveys included written comments and we are including a sampling of these at the end of this report.

Because of our inexperience in designing surveys, some people who responded found our answering method confusing. We asked “yes” and “no” questions on one page of the survey and “often,” “sometimes,” “never” and “not applicable” questions on the next. In this report we are providing you with the total number of respondents to each question we are reporting on.

After compiling the results, we decided to correlate the responses with the amount of time people actually work at their VDTs. Many health and safety specialists believe that the longer you work at a VDT the more likely it is that you will receive one of the injuries that are associated with this type of work. We discovered that this was true at the Library of Congress also.

We have chosen to report on selected data which we feel reflects the health concerns of VDT users who work in the Library. These are: visual complaints (eye fatigue, burning and itching); musculoskeletal problems (body aches and pains, lower back pain, repetitive motion injury); stress (headaches); and pregnancy concerns.

Pie charts are provided to illustrate the responses. We are commenting on the results of each question in the hope that the health and safety problems that are identified can be corrected. If the Library of Congress is to meet this challenge, it must begin by filling the industrial hygienist position which has been vacant since June 1989.
As the Library continues the automation of its operations, more and more employees will be working at video display terminals for longer hours. We are convinced that, unless solutions are found, VDT-related complaints and injuries will increase. We are publishing the results of the survey with the expectation that managers and employees will take the necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the health and safety hazards that are caused by VDTs.

With proper workstation design, ergonomic skills training, meaningful participative management and a serious commitment to VDT health and safety, we believe this can be done.

Do you spend more than 4 hours a day at a VDT?

Comment: As automation continues, increasing numbers of people will be working longer hours at their computers. In the coming years these figures will probably be much higher.

Do you get headaches at work?

Comment: Headaches are often the result of tension, anxiety, and frustration that is associated with the routine and heavy workload demands associated with prolonged VDT use. Stress may be caused when the organization of work is based on quotas and statistics in an atmosphere where employees are not allowed to participate in decision-making. Headaches may also be caused by disturbances of the visual system.
Do your eyes feel fatigue at the end of the day?

- Sometimes: 43%
- Often: 46%
- Never: 9%

298 Respondents

Do your eyes burn, itch or tear at work?

- Sometimes: 47%
- Often: 27%
- Never: N/A
- 1%

297 Respondents

Comment: Glare and reflection on the VDT screen is a major cause of visual complaints. Overhead lighting that is too bright and not diffused properly is the major culprit. Lack of glare screen, task lighting and adjustable document holders also contribute. Since uncorrected or improperly corrected vision is extremely detrimental to VDT workers, we urge employees to have professional eye examinations at least once a year.

Do you experience body aches or pains at work?

- Sometimes: 50%
- Often: 23%
- Never: N/A
- 2%

299 Respondents

Do you experience aches or pains in the lower back?

- Sometimes: 41%
- Often: 15%
- Never: N/A
- 4%

294 Respondents

Comment: Musculo-skeletal disorders—pains in the neck, shoulder, back, arms and wrists—can be eliminated by providing furniture that adjusts to the needs of the individual VDT worker’s body. Adjustable chairs, adjustable tables, footrests, document holders and task lighting all help reduce this type of injury.

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Have you ever experienced numbing, pain or tingling in your hands or wrists? 
Comment: Repetitive motion injury—tendinitis, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc.—is a serious problem for library employees who work at computer keyboards or perform other tasks that require frequent use of hands and wrists. The high number of employees who reported complaints in this area is disturbing and reflects the need for education and training.

Are you able to take rest breaks that you feel are adequate? 
Comment: It is heartening that the large majority of those reporting are taking advantage of the break times that industrial hygienists recommend for VDT users. Since many injuries are attributable to sitting for long hours in awkward positions, it is a good idea to perform varied tasks or just get up and walk around.

Have you received any training which explained the health and safety problems associated with intensive VDT work? 
Comment: Only 35% of those who answered this question received training in this area. Since we know of very few departments where this has occurred, we suspect that some of this training was obtained independently and away from the worksite.
If you worked at a VDT while pregnant, did you experience any problems with your pregnancy? Responses to the question: not applicable—173; no response—87; yes—11; no—86; total number of responses—357.

Comment: We regret that we did not frame this question more carefully as many women have been concerned about “clusters” of miscarriages and birth defects that have been discovered among certain groups of pregnant VDT workers in North America. In our survey we failed to define “problem pregnancies” and we did not ask employees to identify where they worked in the Library.

At present there is no available research that proves a causal relationship between reproductive problems and VDT use. While there has been debate and speculation concerning this issue, it is presently unknown if VDTs are a risk to reproduction.

We do not know the significance of the data we received from this question and are reporting on it without drawing any conclusions.

The Congressional Research Service

In August 1989 the Congressional Research Employees Association (CREA) surveyed bargaining unit employees in the Congressional Research Service. Approximately 200 surveys were returned and the results were strikingly similar to those reported in the AFSCME survey.

Survey results pertaining to headaches, eye strain, lower back pain, and repetitive motion injury were compared. The number of VDT-related complaints reported in the CREA survey appear to be approximately 10% less than in the AFSCME survey. In some areas the results were approximately the same, or higher.

Written Comments from Survey Respondents

Since many employees already have eyeglass prescriptions, the cost of purchasing yet another pair of glasses would be prohibitive.

I can read a yellow-on-black screen for hours at a time; green-on-black for only minutes.

The glare from the shiny keys severely hampers my typing.
Switching keyboards—from typewriter to computer—prevents me from adjusting to the computer keyboard.

Perhaps more input would help to get something done about the horrible bright lights in my division.

I use an Apple Macintosh with a black-on-white screen, lucky me!

I was issued a glare screen without asking; I use prescription sunglasses all day instead.

The cubicles catalogers must work in are uncomfortable when it comes to doing work on a VDT along with occasional typing on a typewriter and handling printed matter.

Have any employees developed bumps or nodules on their wrists? I have developed two (one on each wrist) on the underside, just below the palms. My doctor said it is probably work-related.

There should be “eye breaks” or at least some formal training on how to cope with VDT-induced stress.

“Down time” on a computer is still time spent at a VDT and this isn’t taken into consideration.

My doctor says that my next eyeglasses will need to be bifocals. I have heard that VDT work needs a different focal point than reading. Are special glasses needed? Does AFSCME or the Health Office have any information on this?

My right hand (3 fingers) has begun to hurt. I’d like to suggest that the keyboard have the numbers also on the left side so I can alternate hands when inputting numbers.

Thanks go out to the dues-paying members of AFSCME 2477 and AFSCME 2910 for funding the publication of this report. Special thanks go to Philip Melzer, Richard Henthorn, Tim Saffell, Martez Baker and Mary Ann Joyce for their advice, support and long hours spent computing results and tabulating statistics. Without their assistance this report could never have been issued.
The materials listed below are recommended for all reference collections. Libraries should have circulating copies of the SEIU Safety + Health Manual, Turning Things Around, and A Troublemaker's Handbook. A directory of committees on occupational safety and health (COSH groups) follows.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


A manual for workplace organizing culled from the experiences of rank-and-file unionists. One chapter is devoted to organizing around safety and health. Appendices include guides on researching your employer, publishing rank-and-file newsletters, finding information. Includes good bibliography.


A completely bi-lingual bibliography organized by subject and occupation. Sections include: agriculture, biological hazards, hazard control, ergonomics, first aid, general safety and health, law, occupational diseases, hazard recognition, stress, toxic substances, workers’ compensation. Provides addresses for publishers, distributors and other information sources.


A thorough bibliography on medical investigations into the impact of computers on human health. Chapters cover studies of radiation emissions from VDTs; work-related health problems (cancer, pregnancy, repetitive strain injury, etc.); legislative and regulatory issues; monitoring and epidemiology; safety in the use of computers; and workers compensation for computer-related health problems. Includes author and subject indexes,
glossary, and lists of organizations and periodicals concerned with safety and health.


A very useful manual in dealing with job safety and health in service industries. Provides background information on hazards such as asbestos, cleaning compounds, noise, stress, hand and wrist problems and discusses methods of control. Chapters deal with collective bargaining, laws and government agencies, occupational medicine, safety and health committees, and resources, including non-governmental agencies, printed and audio-visual material.


Excellent coverage of wide variety of health issues (including work-related ones) from an organization devoted to challenging the “medical industrial complex” and to educating the public.

*Occupational Safety and Health: A Sourcebook* by Elizabeth Sue Pease (New York: Garland, 1985.)

An excellent reference source. Contains the text and legislative history of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and bibliographies on OSHA, collective bargaining, hazard and disease identification, women’s safety and health, toxic substances, safety and health in specific occupations, and training. Provides a list of general reference works, indexes, periodicals, statistical sources, reporting services, databases, audio-visual material and a directory of associations and organizations.


Another excellent guide by three health care professionals. Chapters cover occupational health issues (stress, hazardous materials, reproductive hazards) and environmental ones (pollution, multiple chemical sensitivity, hazards to children and hazards at home). Gives suggestions for action and organizing. Provides a list of resources and guidance on how to use them. Includes bibliographies and a glossary.
COSH GROUPS

COSH groups are small, non-profit organizations formed in the late 1970s to educate workers, provide technical assistance to unions, and organize grassroots activities on workplace safety and health issues. A few of the groups listed below are not COSH groups, but can provide occupational safety and health information, referral and training. This list was compiled by the staff of NYCOSH.

CANADA

Ontario

WOSH (Windsor OSH)
1731 Wyandotte Street, East Windsor, Ontario N8Y 1C9
(519)254-4192.

UNITED STATES

Alaska

Alaska Health Project
1818 W. Northern Lights Blvd.
Suite 103
Anchorage AK 99517
(907)276-2864

California

BACOSH/Worksafe
(Bay Area COSH)
8400 Enterprise Way, #104
Oakland CA 94621
(415)638-1174.

LACOSH (Los Angeles COSH)
600 South New Hampshire
Los Angeles CA 90005
(213)383-4416.

Labor Occupational Health Program
Institute of Industrial Relations
University of California
Berkeley CA 94720
(415)642-5507.

SA-COSH (Sacramento COSH)
c/o Fire Fighters, Local 522
3101 Stockton Blvd.
Sacramento CA 95820
(916)444-8135 or 924-8060.

SCCOSH (Santa Clara COSH)
760 N. 1st Street
San Jose CA 95112
(408)998-4050.

Connecticut

ConnectiCOSH
(Connecticut COSH)
P.O. Box 31107
Hartford CT 06103
(203)549-1877.

District of Columbia

Alice Hamilton Occupational Health Center
410 Seventh Street, SE
Washington DC 20003
(202)543-0005.
Workers Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
1126 16th Street NW, Room 403
Washington DC 20036

**Illinois**
CACOSH
(Chicago Area COSH)
37 South Ashland
Chicago IL 60607
(312)666-1611.

**Louisiana**
Labor Studies Program
Institute of Human Relations
Loyola University, Box 12
New Orleans LA 70118
(504)861-5830.

**Maine**
Maine Labor Group on Health
Box V
Augusta ME 04330
(207)622-7823.

**Massachusetts**
MassCOSH
(Massachusetts COSH)
555 Amory Street
Boston MA 02130
(617)524-6686.
Western MassCOSH
458 Bridge Street
Springfield MA 01103
(413)247-9413.

**Michigan**
SEMCOSH
(Southeast Michigan COSH)
2727 Second Street
Detroit MI 48206
(313)961-3345.

**New Hampshire**
NHCOSH
(New Hampshire COSH)
c/o NH AFL-CIO
110 Sheep Davis Road
Pembroke NH 03275
(603)224-4789.

**New Jersey**
New Jersey Work Environment Council
452 East Third Street
Morristown NJ 08057
(609)866-9405.

**New York**
ALCOSH (Alleghany COSH)
100 East Second Street
Jamestown NY 14701
(716)488-0720.
CNYCOSH (Central NY COSH)
615 W. Genessee Street
Syracuse NY 13204
(315)471-6187.
ENYCOSH
(Eastern NY COSH)
c/o Larry Rafferty
121 Erie Blvd.
Schenectady NY 12305
(518)393-1386.
NYCOSH (New York COSH)
275 Seventh Avenue, 8th floor
New York NY 10001
(212)627-3900
(914)939-5612 (Westchester)
(516)755-2400 (Long Island)

ROCOSH (Rochester COSH)
797 Elmwood Avenue, #4
Rochester NY 14620
(716)244-0420.

WNYCOSH
(Western NY COSH)
450 Grider Street
Buffalo NY 14215
(716)897-2110.

North Carolina
NCOSH (North Carolina COSH)
P.O. Box 2514
Durham NC 27715
(919)286-9249.

Ohio
Greater Cincinnati Occupational
Health Center
10475 Reading Road
Cincinnati OH 45241
(513)541-0561.

Pennsylvania
PhilaPOSH (Philadelphia Area
Project on OSH)
3001 Walnut Street, 5th floor
Philadelphia PA 19104
(215)386-7000.

Rhode Island
RICOSH (Rhode Island COSH)
741 Westminster Street
Providence RI 02903
(401)751-2015.

Tennessee
TNCOSH (Tennessee COSH)
1515 East Magnolia
Suite 406
Knoxville TN 37917
(615)525-3147.

Texas
TexCOSH (Texas COSH)
c/o Karyl Dunson
5735 Regina
Beaumont TX 77706
(409)898-1427.

Washington
(A COSH group is being
organized. Contact Pam Deutsch
for information, 206-632-0105)

West Virginia
Institute of Labor Studies
710 Knapp Hall
West Virginia University
Morgantown WV 26506
(304)293-3323.
I don't know my name but you sure know me. I work in New York, Boston, and D.C. I used to be a typist. I'm a secretary but now I enter data on a typewriter. I tell you it's not like they show on TV. It's hell to earn a living on a typewriter.
Well you don’t know my name but you sure know me,
I work in New York, Boston and D.C.
I used to be a typist, a secretary,
but now I enter data on a VDT
I tell you it’s not like they show on TV,
it’s hell to earn a living on a VDT

You won’t hear me say that typing was fun
but at least I could see the work that I’d done
And the boss couldn’t test my productivity
by punching up my number on his VDT
I swear the screen is staring back at me,
it’s hell to earn a living on a VDT

My supervisor says it’s safe for me,
she shows me a study done at MIT
you can see what it’s done to my eyes,
heaven only knows what it’s doing inside
I tell you it’s not like I thought it would be,
it’s hell to earn a living on a VDT

When you think of union what comes to your mind,
a guy driving a truck or working the line
but if you ever spent hours behind a VDT,
you know no one needs a union more than me
I tell you its not like I thought it would be,
it’s hell to earn a living on a VDT.
BOOK REVIEW

ELAINE HARPER


The theme of the upcoming American Library Association annual convention in San Francisco, "The Right to Know," focuses on librarians' commitment to the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech, a commitment based on the premise that citizens have a right, and a responsibility, to be informed about all issues, especially those pertaining to the operation of a democratic society. Increasingly, however, the rights of US citizens to information are restricted or denied. Mechanisms of denial range from fees for information to library closings to illiteracy to censorship. As librarians we are professionally responsible for ensuring the public's right to know and, it would seem, for sounding the alarm whenever that right is placed in jeopardy. However, for at least the past 70 years librarianship has been relatively mute and sometimes downright complicit (see, for instance, Wayne A. Wiegand's An Active Instrument of Propaganda: The American Public Library During World War I; New York: Greenwood, 1989) in serious legislative infringements on rights to the free exchange of ideas both within and beyond our national borders. Elizabeth Hull's new book, Taking Liberties: National Barriers to the Free Flow of Ideas, is a welcome addition to several recent examinations of Western-style censorship which challenge the US government's "free-flow" information and communications policy. This is a highly informative, well-written examination of the laws and court decisions that keep us all poorly informed.

Hull, a professor of political science at Rutgers University, examines the McCarran Act, the Internal Security Act, the Foreign Agents Registration Act, Export Control Laws, and other legislation which inhibits dialogue between writers, scientists, artists and ordinary citizens in the US and their colleagues in other countries. Taking Liberties describes the origin and implementation of each law, then provides examples of the manner in which each restricts information flow in ongoing governmental efforts to control material which, if
freely distributed and discussed, might cause people to question US
domestic and foreign policy.

The book opens with an examination of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, notorious for physically barring from the US individuals such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Pierre Trudeau, Graham Greene, Yves Montand and Yasir Arafat on the grounds that their visits “would be prejudicial to the public interest, or endanger the welfare, safety or security of the United States.” Banned under McCarran are communists, anarchists, drug dealers, polygamists, sexual deviants, and anyone else the government suspects might “engage in espionage, sabotage, public disorder or other activity subversive to the national interest.” In 1975 the US signed the Helsinki Agreement which requires the unhindered movement of people and ideas across national borders. US courts and legislators, however, have found means to circumvent this international agreement. “The US is the only democratic country in the world that refuses to admit anyone who does not pass a test for ideological and moral fitness,” writes Hull, after describing the legal contortions and loopholes law enforcers and courts resort to in “protecting” the public from foreign visitors and views. Until very recently the government officially maintained a list of some 8,000 names of people from 98 countries who were permanently denied entry into the US because of their political views.

Another chapter of Taking Liberties deals with restrictions on foreign travel. During the heyday of the Cold War the State Department refused passports to many citizens on the grounds that it judged their travel not to be in the best interests of the US. In a 1958 decision the Supreme Court ruled that the Secretary of State could not restrict international travel, but in 1965 partially reversed itself and permitted restrictions when they serve “important national interests.” More recently, a Supreme Court decision involving the denial of a passport to ex-CIA agent Philip Agee suggested, says Hull, that:

the executive can deny passports to individuals who are vocal in their opposition to the administration’s Latin American policy, for example, or its stance on apartheid. The Wall Street Journal observed that in Agee the chief justice “raised the possibility that Americans mightn’t have free speech rights when they are abroad.” The holding goes even further, however, suggesting that Americans may not exercise free
speech rights even at home without possibly forfeiting their right to travel.

Hull next covers the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). Enacted in 1938 on the recommendation of the House Un-American Activities Committee, this law also "protects" US citizens by alerting them to foreign propaganda. FARA enforcers are responsible for officially designating books, periodicals and films as "political propaganda" and for maintaining records on individuals, organizations, and businesses that disseminate, display or sell material deemed to be propaganda. The designation of material as "political propaganda" and intimidating registration requirements, of course, inhibit distribution in spite of the fact that the Supreme Court (in the best "doublespeak" tradition) defines propaganda to be "a neutral phrase, a legislative term of art, intended neither to denigrate the material nor stigmatize its distributors." The courts have also argued in support of FARA that the government itself enjoys the right to free expression, but, as Hull correctly points out, individual rights are no match for a government with access to virtually unlimited resources. She then argues that government expression must be tempered with a sense of responsibility. The courts, however, do not acknowledge any need for restraint and insist on equating government rights with individual rights.

Other chapters in Taking Liberties deal with export restrictions imposed on domestic films and with legislation used increasingly to control scientific exchange. In the case of films, the United States Information Agency (USIA), charged with certifying domestic films as "educational, scientific, or cultural" for tariff exemptions under the Beirut Agreement of 1949, refuses certification to about 30 every year. One example Hull provides to illustrate USIA's control over foreign access to US films concerns the Emmy Award winning The Killing Ground. The film, which alerted the American public to environmental threats posed by hazardous industrial waste, was refused certification in 1979 when, after consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the USIA determined:

that the documentary was "mainly of historical interest" because the United States has "made great progress in managing hazardous waste." Further, "the tone of [the film] would mislead a foreign audience into believing that the
American public needed arousing to the dangers of hazardous wastes" when "this is no longer the case."

Scores of other examples in Taking Liberties show conclusively that the flow of ideas into and out of the United States is hardly as free as government propaganda and the mainstream media have led many to believe.

Hull expertly navigates the reader through the maze of legislation, civil suits, high and low court decisions, and judicial opinions. Her exposition is fascinating, jargon-free and scholarly. One reviewer writes that the book reads like "a call to action." It is not. It is, however, a convincing exposé of shameful laws.

Taking Liberties' only shortcoming is Hull's unqualified admiration of librarians' opposition to censorship. In her conclusion, Hull cites ALA's report Less Access to Less Information By and About the United States Government: A 1981-1987 Chronology. "America's informed citizenry is a population at risk," primarily because of its heavy reliance on domestic sources of information that are increasingly subject to government manipulation." True enough, but libraries frequently contribute to misinforming the public by, for example, relying almost exclusively on information provided by mainstream US publishers. ALA's own cozy relationship with the USIA speaks volumes of our profession's tolerance of censorship. Hull would be shocked to know the extent to which the culture of censorship has permeated the very institution and profession dedicated to the preservation of American's right to know.
Librarian Ludd Smashes Another VDT
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Donovan is an artist and temporary, part-time reference librarian at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Elaine Harger is a co-founder of Progressive Librarians Guild and librarian at the Empire State College School of Labor Studies.

Tom Juravich is a songwriter and assistant professor at Penn State’s Department of Labor Studies and Industrial Relations in Philadelphia. His recordings include A World to Win; Out of Darkness: The Mine Workers’ Story; Rise Again; and Sing a Song of Unsung Heroes and Heroines.

David Linton is an assistant professor of Communication Arts at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City.

Saul Schinderman is a Copyright Office cataloger and shop steward for AFSCME Local 2910 at the Library of Congress.

Christine Stillwell is a lecturer in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and a member of LIWO.

Charles Willett is the president of Crises Press, a non-profit corporation in Jacksonville, Florida, which markets small and alternative press publications in the social and environmental sciences.