PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN
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GARLIC, VODKA, GENDER & LIBRARIANSHIP
COMPETING VISIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICE
COMMUNICATIONS FUTURE: ACCESS OR WIRES?
THE "INVISIBLE" — LESBIAN LIBRARY USERS
OUTSOURCING FEDERAL LIBRARY SERVICES
LIBRARIANS AGAINST WAR
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Articles, book reviews, bibliographies, reports, documents, and poetry that explore progressive perspectives on librarianship and information issues are wanted for future issues of Progressive Librarian.

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EDITORIAL:
Institutionalizing silence within ALA?

Appearing in the “Documents” section of this issue of Progressive Librarian is “Librarians Against War: an open letter.” This letter expresses opposition to the US-planned bombing raids against Iraq that seemed imminent in mid-February. Written by PL editor Mark Rosenzweig and initially circulated for signatures over the Internet on listservs maintained by PLG, the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) and the Council of the American Library Association (ALA), the letter was signed within a few days by 107 librarians across the U.S. Released under the auspices of SRRT’s governing Action Council, the letter appeared in both electronic and paper formats and was distributed to the library press, President Clinton, Secretary of State Madelaine Albright, and to members of both houses of Congress.

Within a week of distribution, and just days before United Nation’s General Secretary, Kofi Annan, successfully brokered a diplomatic settlement to the stand-off, SRRT’s Action Council Coordinator was telephoned by ALA headquarters in Chicago with the request that SRRT not issue the anti-war statement on SRRT letterhead. Headquarters also wanted a disclaimer indicating that views expressed did not reflect any official position of either the Executive Board or the Council of ALA. It was feared that readers might believe the letter was issued by ALA, although it clearly states that signers are members of SRRT Action Council and supporters.

The day following the telephone conversation, the SRRT Action Council coordinator received an e-mail message in which the request was changed – at the advice of ALA legal counsel! Now, headquarters desired “that [SRRT] include the following phrase ‘...the Action Council of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association voices its opposition to the planned US-led attacks on the nation of Iraq.’” The message, from acting ALA executive director
Mary Ghikas, concluded, “I anticipate that the ALA Executive Board will address the broader issue beginning this spring.” The “broader issue” is understood to be the issuance of statements of a political nature by bodies within ALA.

Those within the library community who appreciate the freedom SRRT exercises to express “the conscience of ALA” should follow closely the Executive Board’s pending deliberations on this matter.

Recent experience leads us to anticipate a further tightening of bureaucratic and procedural mechanisms within ALA designed to rein-in those voices within librarianship that insist on expressing support or opposition to social and political issues as the need arises. Two examples from the not-so-distant past will remind us of the extent to which ALA will attempt to temper, alter, inhibit or control such expressions.

Recall the debate that arose, during the January 1993 ALA midwinter convention, after librarians around the country received packages of posters, bookmarks and other materials promoting a joint ALA-McDonald’s campaign “Together is better...let’s read!” All materials prominently featured the McDonald’s “golden arches” logo. Sanford Berman, PLG and SRRT member, drafted a resolution that received immediate support from SRRT Action Council. The resolution noted that the program “has resulted in an advertising windfall for McDonald’s” and called upon ALA “to avoid collaborations or funding arrangements in the future that in effect equate books, reading, and libraries with hamburgers or other commodities.” (from Resolution on the “Together is Better” Reading Program, SRRT Action Council, 1/25/93.)

As soon as supporters of the ALA-McDonald’s project got wind of the SRRT statement, they countered it with one of their own and prevailed upon ALA Council to convey to McDonald’s Council’s sincere appreciation of [McDonald’s] support, (past, present, and anticipated future), our assurance that the SRRT speaks for itself in this matter and not for the Association, and our hope that libraries that voluntarily decide to use the materials that have been sent to 16000 of them and order others through ALA Graphics, will find that the materials do indeed achieve their purpose: to encourage more and more “reading together.” (from ALA Council Doc. #48, Midwinter 1993.)

While, on one level, the action and reaction generated by this lively debate can be seen as evidence of a healthy democratic environment within ALA, it is disturbing that the substantive issues raised by SRRT (free advertisement and product identification with libraries) and the widespread anger expressed by many librarians who had received the unsolicited materials were completely ignored in the Council statement.

More disturbing was ALA Council’s recommendation, also in January 1993, to increase quorum at ALA Membership meetings. This move came six months after the infamous Resolution on Israeli Censorship was passed, first by SRRT, then by ALA Membership, and finally by ALA Council—only to be rescinded by Council in January 1993. Many believe the recommendation to raise quorum was a direct result of attempts to keep “controversial” issues from Council’s agenda. So far, it’s worked fairly well, and not one ALA Membership meeting has taken place since.

The ALA Executive Board’s upcoming deliberations occur as ALA’s president-elect (and, therefore, Exec. Board member) Anne Symons is circulating for discussion the draft of a document intended for the general public that outlines ALA’s commitment to intellectual freedom. At press-time the document concludes:

...libraries in the U.S. can contribute to a world free of fear and want, a world which values and protects freedom of speech, a world which tolerates cultural differences and respects individual beliefs, and a world where all are truly equal and free.

How can libraries make any such contribution, if within ALA itself an atmosphere is created that causes librarians to become hesitant, cautiously circumspect or even fearful of voicing opposition to those political, social or “market” forces often responsible for generating, maintaining and promoting fear, want, intolerance and inequality around the globe?

Being debated on the Internet right now is a resolution concerning the Boy Scouts of America and its discriminatory policy prohibiting atheists, agnostics and homosexuals from membership. ALA continues to maintain official relations with BSA, in spite of ALA policies against affiliating with organizations that practice discrimination.

Another hot topic is the planned official visit of Anne Symons to Turkey, a
country mired in some of the worst human rights abuses. Nothing in Symons’ description of her proposed trip indicates even any awareness of the state of intellectual and civil rights in Turkey, much less any plans to take the opportunity to meet with human rights supporters, or to establish relations with those who struggle against a repressive political regime.

These will certainly not be the last controversial issues debated within ALA. If ALA members, officers, staff and divisions are truly committed to a world free of fear and want, one characterized by commitment to intellectual freedom and human equality, then we must not be afraid to support those beliefs in word and deed – consistently. We must ally ourselves with others who share those beliefs, and we must not let self-interest, political expediency or economic pressures provide excuses to restrain the expression of views that seek to put into practice our profession’s highest values.

Elaine Harger

GARLIC, VODKA, AND THE POLITICS OF GENDER:
Anti-intellectualism in American Librarianship

By Michael Winter

The topic may seem surprising, because librarians are so obviously intellectual, or at least bookish, although they have been called, perhaps unfairly, enemies of books (Adams 1937). They are, to use Seymour Martin Lipset’s nice neutral phrase, culture distributors (Lipset 1981: 333). But as Richard Hofstadter pointed out in his famous 1963 book, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life, intellectuals sometimes show a fundamental hostility to the life of the mind, even though it is allegedly more common in people of action. No one is startled when executives denounce the study of history as a waste of time, or when politicians ridicule the efforts of scholars to understand human behavior (Shaffer 1977). Nonetheless, intellectuals occasionally do this too, and sometimes writers duke it out in publishers’ offices. Indeed, it may be one of the favorite occupations of the intellectual classes to show occasionally their anti-intellectualism as a kind of badge of authenticity to the gatekeepers of mass culture. Recently David Bromwich (1996), has suggested that part of the heritage of McCarthyism – a favorite subject of Hofstadter’s also – is the internalization of this hostility (see also Woolf 1964).

Hofstadter’s discussion, however, has a broader sweep. He is concerned with the recurrent cycles of anti-intellectualism that pervade American life, and documents the trend in four basic fields: religion, politics, business, and education. It is, in some periods, much more prevalent than in others (for example, the Ages of Jackson, Harding, Nixon, and Reagan, as opposed to the Ages of Jefferson, Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy). And while it may
not be all that revealing to find this trend in politics and business, a few eyebrows were raised by Hofstadter's discussions of religion and education. Surely if there is any room in our society for tender-mindedness, it would be here, but as he shows quite convincingly, in a narrative that is not only highly engaging but closely-argued and rigorously documented, even in the church and in the school a tough-minded pragmatism often drives out the reflective impulse.

Hofstadter and others are quick, of course, to point out that there are reasons for this. The period just following the Revolution was tumultuous in the extreme, and the famous disunity became enshrined as a highly competitive pluralism of interests. Nowhere is this clearer than in our religious history, where denominationalism replaced the established churches of Europe. With vast numbers of the people unchurched, an often brutal competition for converts became the rule: “In a society so mobile and fluid, with so many unchurched persons to be gained for the faith, the basic purpose of the denominations...was that of gaining converts.” (84)

This is the heart of the famous enthusiastic zeal of American Protestantism, and it survives today in many forms. One of our professional favorites is the evangelical Church of High Technology, with its Liturgy of the Digital Sublime. But more on this later.

In the American Grain: Utility and Decadence

An overriding theme pervades Hofstadter’s argument: in America the supreme value is utility, we play the Philistine as part of our emancipation from the dead hand of European decadence. This was true in the 18th century, when a Federalist named Joseph Dennie attacked Thomas Jefferson’s thought as the philosophical equivalent of reeking French garlic, and in more recent times when right-wingers accused anyone even vaguely left-wing of having added their brains with too much cheap Russian vodka. For the American philistine, Hofstadter suggests, the European is wholly Other, a kind of voodoo babydoll to be needled with endless scorn.

We might suspect this from the fact that our great contribution to philosophy is a movement called pragmatism, but Hofstadter goes much further than this, and I think we should follow him at least part way along to see how this might apply to our own situation. Utility is a very important value, and no one, least of all Hofstadter, would despise it. But somewhere in the pursuit of practicality a transformation of attitude occurs, and we shift from valuing the useful to worshipping it, and taking it as a kind of substitute for thinking. This of course is Hofstadter’s central concern, and it is one that we should share with him.

Hofstadter draws a very broad distinction between two types of intellectuals: the ideologue and the expert. Librarians have much less trouble with the first kind, and even show a kind of constant affection for the moralist (witness our embrace of various forms of identity politics and our love of intellectual freedom), but have a suspicion of expertise which shows up most dramatically in our attitudes toward professional education and in our readiness to embrace general management as a kind of value system.

Librarians on Library School

We are a sizeable group; standard data sources reporting occupational distributions show that there are a few hundred thousand of us, a substantial number of which are members of the American Library Association (ALA counts, roughly speaking, between 40,000 and 56,000 members). And like any group of that size, there is a reasonable spread of opinion on matters professional and otherwise among us. But however different we may be, one thing seems certain: many of us didn’t and don’t care much for library school, as it used to be called, or library and information science education, as it is now more commonly called, or information management studies, as the cutting-edge “digerati” call it now.

In one sense, this is unsurprising, since schooling in America is so often seen as a one-way ticket to prosperity. And of course no professionals harbor much love for the academic bootcamps they attended. Even so, it is surprising to learn from Samuel Rothstein, that this carping at library schools has been going on for well over a hundred years; it may well be our most durable tradition. An anonymous student at the Albany School in 1902 felt that the requirement of a second year of instruction was an invitation to a nervous breakdown. Practically everything, noted a library educator in 1949, has been said about library schools in the past five years except a kind word. It would be a bright day for library schools, volunteered a 1966 graduate in a Library Journal survey, if a public bonfire of teachers’ old lecture notes...could be lit. (Rothstein 1985: 4). Others continue in a less incendiary vein, but the litany of lament, as Rothstein calls it, rolls on.

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In looking at these findings more closely, there is a persistent suspicion of
theory that is unmistakable. It seems like the professional equivalent of the
garlic and vodka that so troubled the anti-intellectuals of our political
culture. In 1906, for example, a student confessed in a letter to a profes­
isonal journal that the trouble with library school is impractical professors
and courses. Similar complaints are found in 1946 (too much theory), 1949
(library school isn’t educating for managerial leadership), 1960 (too theo­
retical), 1966 (too academic). Still others fault the professional school for
librarianship’s perennial crises of self-doubt. No wonder Phyllis Dain
concluded, writing in 1980, that one of the signatures of librarianship is a
contempt for ivory-tower theoreticians who are not in the real world (43).

Three Kinds of Anti-Intellectualism

More recently it has been pointed out that Hofstadter, having distinguished
between ideologue and expert, identified three generic styles of anti-
intellectualism and it is instructive to look at these here. Daniel Rigney’s
1991 discussion identifies 1) religious anti-rationalism, 2) populist anti-
elitism, and 3) unreflective instrumentalism. The first of these doesn’t apply
much here, except in the figurative sense mentioned above in the Liturgy of
the Digital Sublime, but populism and instrumentalism are much more
closely-related to developments in contemporary librarianship, and in fact
they sometimes go together. The populists want to serve the tyrannical
majority that writers like De Tocqueville and John Marshall feared (for an
extreme example see Pearl 1996); and the instrumentalists are often tech­
nocrats or members of a large and growing group showing the symptoms of
a raging epidemic disorder, which we may refer to here as CWS, or
Corporate Wannabee Syndrome.

Librarianship’s Love Affair with Corporate America

If librarians don’t much like library school, there is a popular infatuation
with corporate America and its no-nonsense focus on calculation, bureau­
kratization, and tough-minded attention to the bottom line. In the icy grip of
the management ethos, and encouraged by official pronouncements, they
must love Richard M. Dougherty’s (1966, 1982) Tayloristic approach to
libraries as work organizations, although many librarians would, no doubt,
rather see his Fordist vision restricted to support workers and library
assistants. The history of library administration since the late 1960s is in
part a succession of cookie-cutter management philosophies: remember

Management by Objectives, the cult of excellence, and more recently Total
Quality Management and the various habits of the highly successful. Can
twelve step programs be far behind? When do we get to nurture our inner
child?

Typical signs of CWS include the Board Room Look, admiration for glossy
magazines reporting the brave exploits and huge salaries of CEOs, an
excessive preoccupation with image, much emphasis on official secrecy,
and a deep-rooted suspicion of reflective thought. Other observable symp­
toms can also be noted by the alert diagnostician and fall into familiar
categories. I’ve collected a few of these over the years. Job security is for
wimps, I once heard a tenured administrator say. But my personal favorite
is: I can’t meet with you on Thursday afternoons because that’s when I get
my massage. Consider also certain typical behaviors (moving freely
throughout a large organization but requiring all visitors to one’s own space
to run a gauntlet of clerical gatekeepers while publicly announcing an open
door policy); occupying palatial private offices overlooking deep green
lawns and tree-lined quads while herding others into windowless cubicles
that allow for easy surveillance of their activities; and of course the
economic benefit of a salary which is only three or four times the average
employee’s income. And don’t forget the stale and self-serving observa­
tions about how executives make so much more in the corporate sector.

Librarians and the Digital Sublime: The Lure of New Technologies

Closely-related to CWS, we have adopted corporate America’s uncritical
love of high technology. To borrow here from American historians David
E. Nye and Roland Marchand, we have made the transition from viewing
technology as useful to technology as sublime. With its luminous promise
of mystical belonging it has acquired a totemic significance, a talisman that
we touch and fondle at frequent intervals.

According to Nye and Marchand, the roots of this lie in the cultural
transformations that marked the arrival of mature industrial society in the
1920s, with the arrival of fabulous technologies framed and staged by the
political theater of big advertising, later harnessed to radio, movies and
television. What American is not moved, they argue, by the sight of the
Golden Gate Bridge, the Hoover Dam, and the extraordinary spectacles of
Hollywood and Broadway? By extension, who does not admire the
highways, the ocean liners, the trains, the airplanes, and the skyscrapers of

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the American megalopolis? They induce in us a feeling of reverential awe; this is our glittering Babylon, our city on the hill.

And now, just when we were beginning to feel jaded and spent, here is a deus ex digita to our rescue, giving us a new shrine. The excitement which has greeted the arrival of these new technologies is nothing short of erotic, but that is clearly a subject for another discussion, one which is unlikely to be convened. I'd like to close with a suggestion of historical sweep, even though I can't match Hofstadter here and won't even try. But I can't resist entertaining the thought that one of the more obvious tropes in the current technological environment is the recasting of the gender politics of librarianship.

Dee Garrison's work reminded us that this was part of a larger feminization of American culture in our recent past. In some of the more recent work on librarianship and gender, there is a suggestion that the feminization process may have peaked and perhaps even reversed (Williams 1995). And of course this reversal, if that is what it is, is linked to the coming of new technologies, in ways that writers like Roma Harris have indicated. In her book *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Women's Profession* this is discussed at some length, and can best be summarized here by her use of Michael Gorman's observation that an information scientist is a man who doesn't want to be called a librarian (Gorman 1990: 463; Harris 1992: 36). This suggests that our dislike of ideas and theory, and our current fascination with corporate culture, may be more than temporary spasms of anti-intellectualism; they may also indicate some seismic shifting of what have been, for the last hundred years, the foundations of our gender politics.

What does seem clear is that the newest areas of our field, those involving networked digital technology, are looking much more male-dominated than the older types of information work. In a recent set of case studies, for example, Schneider (1994) reports that women trying to move into these areas are met with much more resistance than they get when they stay in traditional specialties. Technology-oriented jobs, Suzanne Hildenbrand recently noted, are identified as male and service-oriented jobs as female (Hildenbrand 1997: 45). And while Schneider is certainly progressive in urging women in libraries to become amazons with laptops, it is evident that many men on the computing side of information-handling do not share her enthusiasm. This is not surprising, given computer science's affiliation with engineering, which remains even today a tightly-controlled bastion of reactionary gender politics. Thus the pursuit of this new, very avant-garde technology may, in other ways, be moving us backwards.

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COMPETING VISIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICE

by France Bouthillier

Long ago before the service revolution, often presented as the cornerstone of the post-industrial society, there was a service profession: librarianship. The service revolution means that nowadays, most of us are now involved directly or indirectly in the production and consumption of services. Librarians have been involved in service delivery for quite a long time. Today, we are told that we are in the midst of another revolution: the spreading of information technology in our lives. The development of information technology and the service sector are now closely tied. The introduction of new technology is shaping and transforming the delivery of various types of services and the nature of the work of service providers.

One could argue that the most important service that librarians are providing is to play a role in the distribution of information and knowledge in society. A concomitant dimension of this role is librarians’ concern for intellectual freedom. Indeed, providing and preserving access to various types of information and knowledge is an everyday challenge for librarians. The service ideal of librarians can be easily found in the professional literature. For example, the role of academic librarians “consists of assessment, advanced information provision, resource identification and development, collection development, knowledge management and education. All of these should be done in the context of the educational role, rather than the reference or collection development role. The education role predomi­nates because education is the overarching library activity” (Stoffle 1995: 9). However, what is less known is the service ideal of other library service providers such as clerical and technical workers. In a workplace which is dominated by professionals such as a library, can they really express their service ideals and values? What exactly are those ideals and values?
Moreover, assuming that in order to achieve an ideal, individuals must access some types of knowledge, can service providers easily access the types of knowledge they need?

According to Barbara Gutek (1995), a management specialist, there are two main social mechanisms for delivering services: relationships and encounters. Relationships imply repeated contact between service providers and customers. This contact leads to the construction of a history of shared interaction and shared knowledge, and this facilitates transactions. This is the type of interaction that we can have with our hairdresser, travel agent or lawyer. Encounters, in contrast, are interactions in which providers and customers are strangers and each provider is expected to be functionally equivalent. For instance, we have encounters with the hotel employee at the reception desk or with the airline employee at the airport. Which type of mechanisms do we value in libraries: do we try to deliver services through relationships or encounters?

To provide some answers to those questions, a portion of the findings of a study undertaken in a Quebec public library is briefly presented, and is followed by a discussion of the implications for the management of library services.

The Study

The main objective of the study was to understand the role of the public library in a society where this institution had difficulty evolving. Public libraries are a relatively recent phenomenon in the province of Quebec in Canada, the majority established within the last thirty years. Their role has never been explicitly defined in legislation, and their resources have always been minimal in comparison to libraries in other Canadian provinces. Because libraries should be considered as connected to larger social, political and economic phenomena, to understand their role in society, an ethnographic study seeking to investigate the systems of meanings developed by library employees was designed and conducted in 1994 as a case study.

The conceptual framework for this case study consists of (among others) Bourdieu's theory focusing on the role of culture in the reproduction of social structures and Giddens' structuration theory. According to Bourdieu, culture plays a critical role in the reproduction of social structures. Unequal power relations are embedded in the production, diffusion and consumption of art, literature, etc. There is a struggle to determine which cultural products are legitimate. Within this struggle, individuals are competing for the control of certain resources. Those resources can be material (economic capital) or symbolic (forms of knowledge, prestige and recognition) and this leads to the construction of symbolic power. Individuals, struggling over valued resources, are actually engaged, consciously or not, in the construction of symbolic power, which consists of imposing systems of meanings and classifications upon social groups in such a way that these systems are perceived as legitimate.

Bourdieu views the field of cultural production as an economy of cultural exchanges involving a specific division of labour: the production of cultural goods by creators who seek to accumulate symbolic capital (prestige, celebrity); the diffusion of cultural goods sustained by an industrial and institutional framework (editors, bookstores, libraries, museums, galleries, schools, etc.); and the consumption of symbolic goods by individuals, who have acquired specific types of knowledge or cultural capital through family, school and social education, to appreciate cultural goods. Hence, libraries participate in this economy by giving access to what constitutes legitimate cultural products. On the other hand, library decisions and practices are developed by individuals who have various stocks of knowledge or cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory suggests, for example, that within a library individuals use various kinds of resources and are engaged in an economy of cultural exchanges where those resources are negotiated and gained. For instance, library employees need to have and gain knowledge for doing their work and for gaining and maintaining their status.

Giddens' theory on structuration also seeks to explain the reproduction of social structures by the use of various resources (allocative or material and authoritative such as authority, knowledge) and rules. However, for Giddens, individuals are knowledgeable and give meanings to their actions on the basis of the intended consequences or intended impact of those actions from which meanings are derived. To understand individuals' actions, it is then necessary to discover the meanings they give to the resources and rules they use to conduct their actions.

With this conceptual framework in mind, I wanted to identify the meanings given by library employees to the various resources that they use to do their work and to the issues related to their environment.

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When the study was undertaken, there were 43 employees working in the library. The majority of them were paraprofessional and clerical workers. Only two employees were professional librarians. The methodology, an ethnographic approach, involved 200 hours of participant observation, 36 interviews in which 28 employees participated as well as municipal representatives, and the analysis of various library documents.

Findings

The data revealed two basic visions of service or service ideologies comprising different set of values. Those visions and values are presented in the table below.

For most employees, the two visions are the extreme ends of a spectrum involving different types of service interactions. Although some employees expressed a preference, they all acknowledged that both visions guided their everyday activities at work.

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<th>Visions of Service/Service Ideologies from Service Provider’s Perspective</th>
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<td>Service for Education</td>
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<td>Vision of provider’s role</td>
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<td>Valued service approach</td>
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<td>Vision of programming</td>
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<td>Vision of users</td>
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The ideology of service for education assumes that most users are dependent and need help. Therefore, services such as reference and readers’ advisory are highly valued. In terms of library resources, books are valued because they are viewed as the most important resource of the library while other multimedia resources are seen as secondary. Within this perspective, the service approach should be personalized and warm because developing a meaningful relationship with users is a condition for being able to educate them and to guide them in the library. Programming is then perceived as an important means for promoting reading and books in general. Within this ideology of service, service providers see themselves as guardians, missionaries, or militants for the library. They are also engaged in the preservation of a particular culture. In the context of Quebec where the dominant language is French, preserving the French language and promoting Quebec culture and authors are clearly identified as critical roles to be played by the library and its employees. However, regarding intellectual freedom, employees are aware that there is a fine line between the promotion of a culture and propaganda, and this is why the ideology of popularization is seen as a means to counterbalance the ideology of education.

The ideology of popularization suggests that the basic role of service providers is to give people what they want, assuming that library users know what they want. Therefore, the services that allow users to be autonomous and to express their cultural tastes are valued such as reservation systems, best-seller sections, suggestion boxes, etc. Within this perspective, popular resources such as videos, cassettes, compact discs, and light fiction are crucial library materials. The book is not seen as meaningful as it is the case within the ideology of education, in fact a multitude of resources are considered important as long as they meet popular requests. Regarding the interaction with users, an efficient and rapid approach is valued because it is believed that the only thing that matters for people is to avoid waiting. Talking to users or recognizing them can take up too much time and employees will tend to avoid such interactions. Programming is perceived only as a means to entice people to come to the library and not as a means of critical education. Programming activities can then vary and do not have to be related to library resources. The ideology of popularization, from a management perspective, is considered as essential for the survival of the library. Indeed, if statistics do not show that library resources are well used (for example lending videos of popular films were presented as a good means to obtain interesting statistics and to show how library resources are well used), the library will face an image problem. Service providers are

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perfectly aware of this issue, and this is why several employees expressed their disappointment regarding their position because they felt that their “real” role was education but that they had to behave in a “popularization mode.”

The popularization ideology in the context of Québec can raise conflicting goals because it can mean giving access to popular materials which are not necessarily produced in Québec. In fact, cultural products in high demand are very often those which receive significant attention in the media. American and French products, for example (especially movies, music and best-sellers), are very well advertised in the media because cultural industries in both countries (United States and France) are much larger than the one in Québec, and consequently often generate higher demand than local products.

The coexistence of these ideologies generates tensions and a number of ambiguities for service providers when they have to deliver services. For instance, structural ambiguities arise when occupational boundaries are unclear. Although the responsibilities of professional, technical and clerical staff are broadly defined, the division of labor does not take into account the necessary shifts in service priorities that need to be done in the course of day-to-day operations. Boundaries regarding the work of part-time and full-time staff are also an important source of confusion, because when part-time and full-time employees work together there is a certain division of labor, but part-time employees work alone at certain hours (during evenings and week-ends), and then they inherit most of the responsibilities of full-time staff.

There are also occupational ambiguities which are related to the question “how and when should it be done?” For instance, problems can arise when different employees (part-time, full-time, professional, para-, temporary, clerical, etc.) are faced with deciding which service approach to take (personalized or efficient?), how to assist users in their searches (educating or giving them what they want?), or how to apply library rules (being flexible or inflexible?).

Finally, there are ideological ambiguities which relate to the function of the library and raise the question “what should be done?” There is no consensus regarding the library mission and the roles of individuals. Service providers experience frustrations when they are not sure whether they are doing the right thing, but they also face tensions because they might disagree with their colleagues as to what they should be doing. Negotiating values and meanings is then a constant activity, and clearly employees having more experience and knowledge (full-time and senior) will tend to impose their values over those who have less experience (junior and part-time).

Access to knowledge is problematic because it is related to the division of labor, and, as suggested before, this division implies ambiguities. Unclear occupational boundaries create the need for most service providers to possess a large stock of knowledge because they might need it in certain circumstances. But the fact that junior employees are in the process of gaining knowledge and part-time employees might have limited access to knowledge given that they work only a few hours per week creates a situation in which the library becomes a setting where people have unequal stocks of knowledge. The difficulty is that when interacting with users, employees will tend to deliver the service even though they do not possess all the necessary knowledge and skills, because delivering the service is also a means to gain new knowledge. As a result, service delivery might vary from one employee to another, and this might in turn affect user expectations and service quality. In addition, the division of labor creates a vicious circle where people who have fewer skills and knowledge, will have more difficulty in gaining new skills and knowledge.

Discussion

These research data reveal that the service interaction involves a set of organizational processes, themselves linked to social processes, and that it is an arena where meanings, service ideologies, and service practices are negotiated. Obviously, one could argue that the ideologies of education and popularization are two sides of the same coin, and that it is impossible to select only one mission for a public library. If this is true then what can be done to alleviate the problems they raise and to foster their expression?

Interestingly, these ideologies reflect a basic dilemma in librarianship and especially in public librarianship: the tension between educating and responding to patrons’ requests has been, and is still, well documented in the professional literature. This study shows that non-professional employees do experience the same dilemma. They have not, however, the same means (professional journals, annual conferences, professional associations) to express it. In fact, they are rarely considered as having something to say
about the library mission or library resources and practices.

The two service ideologies identified are closely related to Gutek's typology of service interactions. Indeed, library service providers seem to be torn between developing encounters (popularization) and relationships (education) with library patrons. Unfortunately, the administration offers little help in making the decision simply because the final decision depends on the employee's analysis of the situation and judgement.

Therefore, the administration can only recognize that a basic dilemma exists, and encourage discussions and identification of relating problems. There is, however, a need to clarify the library mission and to make sure that everyone understands its implications and, perhaps, its contradictions. In fact, it is necessary to develop skills among employees to enable them to manage ambiguities. This implies encouraging people to talk about the problems they encounter in delivering services and to facilitate discussions about the solutions they use. Another important issue for the administration is to realize the need for the staff to access various types of knowledge about library procedures and tasks, and approaches to take when interacting with users. It is clearly inappropriate to assume that all employees will naturally share what they know with other workers. This knowledge transfer is far from being straightforward in a hierarchical environment. Sharing knowledge is difficult because it means that someone has to express his/her lack of knowledge, and this might have as a consequence a questioning of his/her status and ability to do the work. Hence, developing an organizational ethos where sharing knowledge for improving service should be seen as an important challenge for library managers.

Another area of concern regarding the management of library services, is to recognize that the introduction of information technology in a library has the potential to facilitate the development of encounters instead of relationships with users (for instance at the circulation, reference and information desks). Then the question is: what do we really seek to achieve with that technology? This tool is useful to achieve which service ideal? If libraries, librarians and other service providers are expected to play a critical role in the distribution of knowledge and information in society, it should be essential before introducing new technology to discuss how this role can be achieved from a service perspective. Unfortunately, it seems that in many instances, we let the technology shape our service ideal rather than promote a vision of service (or two) through technology and other means. Perhaps this is a way to avoid confrontation between differing visions of service but this is certainly not the best way to facilitate the work of library service providers who are left with the management of conflicting goals.

**WORKS CITED**


I have to admit that I'm really sick and tired of the Information Highway. I feel like I've already heard so much about it that it must be come and gone already, yet there is no sign of it. This is truly a piece of federal vaporware.

I am a librarian, and it's especially strange to have dedicated much of your life to the careful tending of our current information infrastructure, our libraries, only to wake up one morning to find that the entire economy of the nation depends on making information commercially viable. There's an element of Twilight Zone about this because libraries are probably our most underfunded and underappreciated of institutions, with the possible exception of day care centers.

It's clear to me that the information highway isn't much about information. It's about trying to find a new basis for our economy. I'm pretty sure I'm not going to like the way information is treated in that economy. We know what kind of information sells, and what doesn't. So I see our future as being a mix of highly expensive economic reports and cheap online versions of the National Inquirer. Not a pretty picture.

This is a discussion on “access.” But I am not going to talk about access from the usual point-of-view of physical or electronic access to the FutureNet. Instead I am going to talk about intellectual access to materials and the quality of our information infrastructure, with the emphasis on “information.” Information is a social good and part of our “social responsibility” is that we must take this resource seriously.

From the early days of our being a species conscious of its own history, some part of society has had the role of preserving this history: priests, learned scholars, archivists. Information was valued, valued enough to be denied to some members of society, and to possess information was to be part of the ritual of belonging to an elite.

So, I find it particularly puzzling that, as we move into this new “information age,” our efforts are focused on the machinery of the information system, while the electronic information itself is being treated like just so much more flotsam and jetsam. This is not a democratization of information, but a devaluation of information.

On the Internet, many electronic information sources that we are declaring worthy of “universal access” are administered by part-time volunteers, graduate students who do eventually graduate, or network hobbyists. Resources come and go without notice, or languish after an initial effort and rapidly become out of date. Few network information resources have specific and reliable funding for the future. As a telecommunications system the Internet is both modern and mature; as an information system the Internet is an amateur operation.

Commercial information resources, of course, are only interested in information that provides revenue. This immediately eliminates the entire cultural heritage of poetry, playwriting, and theological thought, among others.

If we value our intellectual heritage, and if we truly believe that access to information (and that broader concept, knowledge) is a valid social goal, we have to take our information resources seriously. Now I know that libraries aren't perfect institutions. They tend to be somewhat slow-moving and conservative in their embrace of new technologies; and some seem more bent on hoarding than disseminating information. But what we call “modern librarianship” has over a century of experience in being the tender of this society's information resources. And in the process of developing and managing that resource, the library profession has understood its responsibilities in both a social and historical context. Drawing on that experience, I am going to give you a short lesson on social responsibilities in an information society.

Here are some of our social responsibilities in relation to information:

- Collection
- Selection

Progressive Librarian #14
It is not enough to passively gather in whatever information comes your way, like a spider waiting on its web. Information collection is an activity, and an intelligent activity. It is important to collect and collocate information units that support, complement and even contradict each other. A collection has a purpose and a context; it says something about the information and it says something about the gatherer of that information. It is not random, because information itself is not random, and humans do not produce information in a random fashion.

Too many Internet sites today are a terrible hodge-podge, with little intellectual purpose behind their holdings. It isn’t surprising that visitors to these sites have a hard time seeing the value of the information contained therein. Commercial systems, on the other hand, have no incentive to provide an intellectual balance that might “confuse” its user.

In all of the many papers that have come out of discussion of the National Information Infrastructure, it is interesting that there is no mention of collecting information: there is no Library of Congress or National Archive of the electronic information world. So in the whole elaborate scheme, no one is responsible for the collection of information.

Selection

Not all information is equal. This doesn’t mean that some of it should be thrown away, though inevitably there is some waste in the information world. And this is not in support of censorship. But there’s a difference between a piece on nuclear physics by a Nobel laureate and a physics diorama entered into a science fair by an 8-year-old. And there’s a difference between alpha release .03 and beta 1.2 of a software package. If we can’t differentiate between these, our intellectual future looks grim indeed.

Certain sources become known for their general reliability, their timeliness, etc. We have to make these judgments because the sheer quantity of information is too large for us to spend our time with lesser works when we haven’t yet encountered the greats.

This kind of selection needs to be done with an understanding of a discipline and understanding of the users of a body of knowledge. The process of selection overlaps with our concept of education, where members of our society are directed to a particular body of knowledge that we hold to be key to our understanding of the world.

Preservation

How much of what is on the Net today will exist in any form ten years from now? And can we put any measure to what we lose if we do not preserve things systematically? If we can’t preserve it all, at least in one safely archived copy, are we going to make decisions about preservation, or will we leave it up to a kind of information Darwinism? As we know, the true value of some information may not be immediately known, and some ideas gain in value over time.

The commercial world, of course, will preserve only that which sells best.

Organization

This is an area where the current Net has some of its most visible problems, as we have all struggled through myriad gopher menus, ftp sites, and web pages looking for something that we know is there but cannot find.

There is no ideal organization of information, but no organization is no ideal either. The organization that exists today in terms of finding tools is an attempt to impose order over an unorganized body. The human mind in its information seeking behavior is a much more complex question than can be answered with a keyword search in an unorganized information universe. When we were limited to card catalogs and the placement of physical items on shelves, we essentially had to choose only one way to organize our information. Computer systems should allow us to create a multiplicity of organization schemes for the same information, from traditional classification, that relies on hierarchies and categories, to faceted schemes, relevance ranking and feedback, etc.

Unfortunately, documents do not define themselves. The idea of doing
WAIS-type keyword searching on the vast store of textual documents on the Internet is a folly. Years of study of term frequency, co-occurrence and other statistical techniques have proven that keyword searching is a passable solution for some disciplines with highly specific vocabularies and nearly useless in all others. And, of course, the real trick is to match the vocabulary of the seeker of information with that of the information resource. Keyword searching not only doesn’t take into account different terms for the same concepts, it doesn’t take into account materials in other languages or different user levels (i.e. searching for children will probably need to be different than searching done by adults, and libraries actually use different subject access schemes for children’s materials). And non-textual items (software, graphics, sound) do not respond at all to keyword searching.

There is no magical, effortless way to create an organization for information. Today the best tools are a clearly defined classification scheme and a human indexer. At least a classification scheme or indexing scheme gives the searcher a chance to develop a rational strategy for searching.

The importance of organizational tools cannot be overstated. What it all comes down to is that if we can't find the information we need, it doesn't matter if it exists or not. If we don't find it, we don't encounter it, then it isn't information. There are undoubtedly millions of bytes of files on the Net that for all practical purposes are non-existent.

My biggest fear in relation to the Information Highway is that intellectual organization and access will be provided by the commercial world as a value-added service. So the materials will exist, even at an affordable price, but it will cost real money to make use of the tools that will make it possible for you to find the information you need. If we don't provide these finding tools as part of the public resource, then we aren't providing the information to the public.

**Dissemination**

There’s a lot of talk about the “electronic library.” Actually, there’s a lot written about the electronic library, and probably much of it ends up on paper. Most of us agree that for anything longer than a one-screen email message, we’d much rather read documents off a paper page than off a screen. While we can hope that screen technologies will eventually produce something that truly substitutes for paper, this isn’t true today. So what happens with all of those electronic works that we’re so eager to store and make available? Do we reverse the industrial revolution and return printing of documents to a cottage industry taking place in homes, offices and libraries?

Many people talk about their concerns for the “last mile” — for the delivery of information into every home. I’m concerned about the last yard. We can easily move information from one computer to another, but how do we get it from the computer to the human being in the proper format? Not all information is suited to electronic use. Think of the auto repair manuals that you drag under the car and drip oil on. Think of children’s books, with their drool-proof pages.

Even the Library of Congress has announced that they are undertaking a huge project to digitize 5 million items from their collection. Then what? How do they think we are going to make use of those materials?

There are times when I can only conclude that we have been gripped by some strange madness. I have fantasies of kidnapping the entire membership of the administration’s IITF committees and tying them down in front of 14” screens with really bad flicker and forcing them to read the whole of Project Gutenberg’s electronic copy of *Moby Dick*. Maybe then we’d get some concern about the last yard.

So, where does this leave us?

- no amount of wiring will give us universal access;
- just adding more files and computers to gopherspace, webspace and FTP-space will not give us better access;
- commercial information systems can be expected to be — commercial.

**Growing Our Communications Future**

Let me take you into the future — the year is 2015. The Universal Network, or Unet, has been operating for about ten years. Everyone (well, nearly everyone) has access to high-speed, global communications. They also have access to digital television, huge libraries of information, and a gazillion chat groups where conversation runs to: what are *you* wearing tonight?
It took a good long while to get the Unet up and running. The main problem was how to pay for high-bandwidth wiring for the nation’s homes. The government didn’t want to foot the bill, that’s for sure. Some folks even thought that it could all be done with ISDN, until the World Wide Web came along and made ISDN look like a drippy faucet rather than a fire hose.

The trick was to get consumers to pay for the installation of a network that they hadn’t seen yet. The obvious solution of starting off with an all-pornography network wasn’t going to sit well with middle America. The religious right proposed LordNet, with prayers available in increments of $1, $25 and $100, depending on their desired return. This, however, didn’t catch on.

The big irony was that at the beginning of the Net, when it was still the Internet, no one had figured out how to make money off it. Even though hardcopy money had long ceased to be the primary exchange of value, and most money was being transported as streams of ones and zeroes, people were floundering on the implementation of electronic Net cash. To make matters worse, Net cash was tied up in the encryption debate, so the same technology that would make the Net a neat, taxable revenue source was also what was going to turn it into a seething mass of criminal activity.

Fortunately, this was resolved in the year 2000. A horde of programmers hired in 1998 to resolve the “millennium problem” (that is, all of the millions of lines of code in existence that couldn’t handle dates that began with anything but “one-nine”) found themselves unemployed in January of the year 2000, and set themselves to developing a program that could encrypt numbers, but not letters. Thus, transactions could be sent that maintained the alphabetic portion of their message, but securely scrambled credit card numbers and Net cash.

The Internet, back in the 80’s and 90’s, had mainly offered dull government documents, the inept writings of graduate students and the professors they wished to become, and the sexual fantasies of 18-22 year old virgins. The new Unet is now a riot of entertaining and desirable fare. Big boys, like Disney and Time/Warner/Turner put out snippets of their films and have enticed viewers to upgrade their connection to digital movie quality. News programs have truly found their place on the Net, offering up-to-the second views of events happening all over the world, perfectly selected for your interests. One only has to look at the difference between the dreary network news of latter half of the 1900’s and today’s selection of individualized multimedia offerings to see how our lives have improved. It’s amazing that we made it this far as a society when each evening we were presented with such depressing stories of war, crime and death. Today, you never have to encounter stories you don’t want to hear.

Online shopping allows 3-D views of products and virtual walk-throughs of vacation paradises.

It’s not all commercialism though — the Unet is quite dedicated to public service. For example, in 2012 a highly advanced tracking system was installed that would allow you to know the precise moment that the city bus would arrive at your bus-stop. And highway metering systems make it possible for commuters to choose the best moment to enter the flow on their way to work. The bus tracking system, however, failed to make enough money to pay for itself, so it was rightly concluded that people didn’t need bus information or else they would have been willing to pay for it. This service was eliminated in 2014, but the highway metering is a great success, and is being expanded to major thoroughfares in the larger cities.

What makes the Unet such a perfect system is that the success of a product can be measured in precise increments. Each second of each day the producers know exactly how many viewers they have. They can weed out not only unpopular programs or resources, but even the unpopular portions of popular products and replace them with sure-fire audience grabbers. And they can tell immediately if their information is being viewed by the audience they want to reach: no use advertising a BMW to households with an annual income less than the price of the car, or sending stock market information to people without bank accounts.

Even the government is playing the game. The “Cost Recovery Act of 2007” required each government agency to bring in revenue based on its information offerings. So in Congress, copies of bills are available for a small fee. Ten percent of the revenue from a bill goes to the party of the sponsor of the bill, and five percent goes directly to the office budget of the sponsor. The remainder helps pay for general running of the Congress, such as the gourmet cafeteria, the Congressional health plan and, of course, their official email accounts.
Being a clever bunch, the Congress-critters have been able to re-align their politics toward revenue development. Popular bills are... well, very popular, and a good, juicy bill can turn around a flagging party. Today, no one would be caught dead writing a bill entitled “Act to Extend Yam Surplus to American Samoa” or “Intrastate Truck Transportation Technical Correction Act of 2006.” Bills that sell best are those that appeal to large interest groups, especially those with money and the time to lobby. Seniors with pensions are doing quite well and a number of bills have been passed in their favor. Of course, other groups, like children and the unemployed, have pretty much fallen off the Congressional map. You can’t expect the Congress to represent people who don’t contribute to the government.

Essentially, everything on the Unet is now making money. And consumers are upgrading their equipment and their online connections almost faster than companies can lay the fiber or roll out the new products. Thanks to the Unet, the average credit card unpaid balance has risen 300%. The Unet is a success, and the economy is safe.

OK, all of this sounds a bit silly, doesn’t it? But it’s all based to some degree on reality.

The Clinton administration did promise us a National Information Infrastructure in its 1994 NII platform. That same platform made it perfectly clear that this upgrade to our telecommunications system would not be created with federal money, but would be left to a competitive marketplace. The government’s role would be to eliminate regulations that hindered the commercial development of these new technologies. It would also need to strengthen domestic copyright laws to prevent piracy and protect the integrity of intellectual property. In other words, make it possible for the information society to become the information economy.

But this information economy could have a greater impact on our society than we are anticipating. To begin with, while most people are focusing their concern on how we will wire-up our nation’s homes, few people are looking at what the market economy will do to the actual information availability, not to mention content and quality. There is very little commercial incentive to provide information to low income or minority segments of our society — the profit margin is just too low. So we are more likely to have information that benefits car owners than public transit users. And we have already seen that government is moving toward a revenue model for its information, where information gathered and organized with our tax dollars is sold back to us at money-making rates.

Yet, the administration’s NII plan promised us the following:

- universal access;
- seamless, interactive, user-driven operation of the NII (not a Turner/Disney platform);
- a system that will ensure that the immense reservoir of government information is available to the public easily and equitably.

This is already in contradiction with what’s happening today, much less in the future.

The Clinton administration is responding to a particular problem — economic decline and a flagging marketplace. Information industry is expected to bring us out of this “recession.” Social good is not part of the package, unless it comes about as a by-product of the economic growth. A good example of this is the recently proposed change to the copyright laws. This law is being amended to give additional protection to intellectual property in the electronic world, which is considered necessary for the online marketplace. But in doing so, it also essentially eliminates the possibility of free lending of electronic works. When members of the Department of Commerce task force that proposed the rulings were faced with the accusation that this could practically eliminate the public library as we know it in the digital future, they replied, “Saving the public libraries was not in our charge.”

I’m not trying to imply that the commercial marketplace is evil. I am saying that it has primary interests other than those of free speech and democracy and it would be even unnatural for us to expect it to put these before profit. There are profound moral questions that arise relating to communication and these will not be answered by a free-market. Like the effect of copyright laws on free access to information in libraries, we might find that what seems like a straightforward decision has great implications for non-market aspects of our society.

It isn’t just a matter of laying new wire and moving into new markets. Communication is the very stuff of society. It’s what we have built our
civilization on. If you look at the social role of telecommunications system, rather than its technology or its market, you can come up with a set of requirements. I'll lay out some examples here:

- The telecommunications system should be equally available to all (universal access); rural as well as urban; poor as well as rich; for persons with disabilities; of different ages, and with differences in language skills. It is only under this condition that we can even strive for some semblance of democracy, because this communications system will probably be an important part of how people participate in political and social debate in the future.

- It should foster diversity of information and communication equal to the diversity in our society. This means having information that relates to a community, however that is defined (it can be geographical — a town or neighborhood or parish; a community of interest — knitters to poetry enthusiasts). Since many communities are too small to be a viable commercial market, the best way to accomplish this is to make it possible for communities to provide their own information. They know what it is, they know the audience, they may be the only ones who care.

- Communication over this technology should be protected by the first amendment (free speech). This means that we must have public space, not further privatization of our means of communication.

- It must be possible for all users of the system to be providers of content as well as recipients (true interactivity). This is the "freedom of the press only relates to those who own the press" cliché. But it's also the question of "interactivity" — where some define the ability to click on a "yes" or "no" button on the screen as interactive, I think interactive means being able to alter the content and provide new content.

- The system must be based on an open access model, where all resources are available regardless of their originating system (open access) — otherwise we'll end up with information enclaves that can't cross borders.

What I'm talking about here are moral decisions. And there is room to make them. The technology itself is very flexible. If we lose freedoms because we haven't grown a communications system that supports them, it will be extremely hard to recover those freedoms in the future, especially since any negotiation would have to go over the very telecomm systems that may be denying free speech. No, we have to build it in from the beginning, like a kind of Bill of Rights for the cyber-future. Rather than letting the technology determine what culture we can have, we need to decide what culture we want the technology to support. And that means we've got to do it now, before this technology is in place.

NOTE: This is a talk given at the seminar on the Ethics of the Internet, sponsored by the University of California Extension and the School of Information Management and Studies, Berkeley, Nov. 18, 1995 ©Karen Coyle, 1995
THE “INVISIBLES”: Lesbian Women as Library Users

by Heike Seidel

Animated by the articles of Kerstin Schroeder (1993) and Alisa J. Whitt (1993), I became further engaged with the topic of “lesbians and libraries.” Is it the duty of libraries to supply media for homosexual women? What could libraries do, if need be, to improve collections, services and training for lesbian users and staff?

These questions became the starting point for several events during the first Women’s Summer University in Munich and for the 10th Berlin Lesbian Week in July and October 1994 respectively. Lesbian library staff as well as lesbian library users participated in these events. This article summarizes the topics discussed in Munich and Berlin, suggests changes in libraries thought necessary by the meeting participants, and gives an update on activities initiated.

Do Libraries and Lesbians Need Each Other?

Absolutely, yes!

Libraries have the opportunity and the duty to supply materials for all people in their communities. According to the Kinsey Report, homosexual women and men represent about 10% of the entire population. They can be found in all age groups, in all sectors of society, and they live everywhere – not just in the “metropolis.” Lesbians and gays are often “invisible” in their communities because, for fear of verbal abuse, discrimination, and physical violence, they often set great store in not being recognizable as homosexuals. Therefore, they hardly announce their information needs to libraries.

Libraries can, and should, understand themselves, especially in our times, as “social motors” (Andersson and Skot-Hansen 1994). Library staff can choose to take part in discrimination against parts of the population or single user groups. In the extreme libraries purge collections and services of any reference to groups discriminated against, as happened, for example, in England in the 1980s when libraries cleared shelves of materials dealing with homosexuality (Schroeder 1993: 69 and Parkinson 1987: 93). But libraries can also see a social opportunity, if not a responsibility, to aid in the struggles of groups discriminated against by positively serving these groups with high quality library services.

Also, libraries have the opportunity to (re-)gain active women readers. Lesbian women, for instance, who discover that their local library can offer them (almost) nothing, might very well decide to use mail order book providers, and become a user group lost to libraries.

Of course, lesbians need libraries too!

Like all other social groups, lesbian women have widespread information and entertainment needs to which libraries should respond. The women interviewed by Whitt (1993) and Raaflaub (1991) listed a wide range of materials they would like to see in libraries: poetry, fiction with lesbian topics and/or lesbian protagonists, autobiographies, self-help literature for lesbian mothers, and information for lesbian employees. To summarize, one can say that lesbian women also but not only want to read about heterosexuals. Lesbian women want to find themselves and their situations in the materials to which they have access in libraries.

Almost all women describe the time of self-discovery of being lesbian and the experience of being recognized as lesbian by others (coming-out) as extremely difficult. During this time, information is mostly needed about the following topics:

- “How do I find out about and accept my sexual orientation?”
- “How do I tell my environment that I am a lesbian?”
- “How do I make contact with other lesbian women?”

While other individuals ask people (family members, friends, etc.) for advice and help, lesbians look for assistance in the privacy of libraries (Creelman 1990) – especially in rural areas where the only available source of information is in libraries.
Materials about lesbian specific topics should be up-to-date, realistic, and positive. Positive in this case means that the lesbian way of life is shown in a realistic way and is treated as a valid and valued lifestyle.

It is necessary to stress that libraries should provide and index appropriate media for young adults. Especially during puberty, many boys and girls find out about "being different" and are confused about it. They hesitate even more than adults to look for orientation and advice from other people (of authority), because they fear lack of understanding and rejection. They especially need the comparatively anonymous offers of information a library can supply. Such services should not be at all considered to implicate libraries in sexual development, because the "seduction theory" is no longer accepted. Nobody is "made" lesbian or gay by others, or by the materials one might read.

Libraries should not only provide materials for lesbian women themselves. Materials should also be made available for people who are interested in lesbian life such as the parents, brothers and sisters of lesbian women, educators, colleagues, co-workers, etc. My mother, for example, found the advice book Eine Liebe wie jede andere (Grossman 1984) very helpful. But I am sure that she would not have borrowed the book if she had had to ask for it or had feared the reaction of the library staff when requesting it.

Problems and Possible Solutions

Next we examine two points which lesbian women see as problems when using a library: collections and staff (see also Gough and Greenblatt 1992).

Collections

Concerning the collections of local libraries, lesbian women state that they:

- often do not offer material for lesbians and find material about homosexuality primarily of concern to gay men;
- often contain out-of-date material which shows lesbian love as something in need of medical treatment or as a passing phase in the life of an "actually" heterosexual woman;
- are badly cataloged and indexed with little consideration of appropriate access points, so that even intensive and well-informed use of the library catalog proves fruitless;
- seldom present holdings related to lesbians to the public in the form of new book displays, exhibits, bibliographies, programs, etc.

Suggestions for improvement of this situation include: a critical examination of collections, regular weeding and updating; the physical consolidation of media for lesbians under an appropriate title; the use of category labels (lesbian, gay) as well as the "making visible" of lesbian topics in classification systems and subject heading lists. Global indexing under the terms "homosexuality" and "homosexual" is frequently rejected because these terms are usually applied to male homosexuality and, therefore, become to unspecific. Also the SWD (subject heading list) with entries under "lesbian," "lesbian - sub-head," and "lesbian love" should be improved.

It has also been suggested that new lesbian-specific acquisitions to the library be announced in local or regional lesbian publications.

Staff

Lesbians often look for interesting media in the library on their own. Only few dare to ask for help from library staff. Critical points are especially the areas of reference, circulation and inter-library loan.

Many lesbians fear subliminal or openly discriminatory behavior (remarks, gesticulation, miming) by library staff. Some explicit examples of this fear and behavior can be found in Whitt (1993), and are experienced by many German lesbians with whom I've spoken. Lesbians feel discriminated against when made "invisible" in library collections and catalogs and some fear that the library staff could make their knowledge of a women being lesbian publicly known. On the other hand, lesbian library staff fears that their "coming-out" at work could lead to problems with colleagues, supervisors and/or users.

From all this follows the need for libraries to adopt a liberal attitude towards lesbians and gays, and to train staff appropriately. To improve the general atmosphere a library could:

- make it clear that lesbian/gay staff is not discriminated against
display information related to the lesbian/gay scene (calendars of events, journals, newspapers, etc.);
organize exhibits with lesbian/gay topics (and not only on AIDS!)
plan events with lesbian/gay speakers or writers dealing with lesbian/gay topics.

It should be one further duty to stress discretion among the library staff and reinforce commitment to the rights to privacy of library users.

There could be internal training, conducted, for instance, in cooperation with women’s bookshops, AIDS organizations, associations of lesbians and gays to improve the understanding of homosexuality among library staff.

Update

Discussions from the 1995 meetings in Munich and Berlin led to a November 1995 article in *Buch und Bibliothek* (Seidel 1995), one of the leading German library journals. A student of librarianship who read this article decided to write her diploma-thesis on lesbian and gay materials in public libraries (Warnke 1996). She visited four public libraries in the area of Nordrhein-Westfalen and found there were few materials on lesbian and gay issues. The librarians she interviewed were not well-informed about gay and lesbian material, but they stated they would purchase (more) lesbian/gay books, journals, videos, etc. if there were patrons asking for them. The only exception in Warnke’s survey was the Stadtbücherei Münster, which had at one time been asked for a bibliography of gay/lesbian holdings by a local lesbian and gay community center. This library contained a lot of new media in its collections, which was highly appreciated by the local gay and lesbian community.

So, we – lesbian and gay librarians and library users – should learn that we have to inform librarians (and keep them informed!) about “our” media, and we have to ask for all those materials we think the library should provide.

On another front, our initiative to improve the so-called ASB (Allgemeine Systematik für Bibliotheken – a classification scheme widely used in public libraries in the western states of Germany) was successful. The editorial board of the new edition decided to add “homosexual expressions” to the subject index and to include several scope notes.

In February 1997, lesbian librarians and archivists met at Wuppertal in Germany. The women decided to organize a (social) meeting at the Deutscher Bibliothekskongreß (the German version of the American Library Association’s Annual Meeting) in May 1997 in Dortmund. At their third meeting, which took place in August in Hamburg the group members decided to establish a lesbian book award and to provide public libraries with a list of recommended lesbian related media. Fundraising has begun for both projects.

Brief reports on our “Lesbians & Libraries” meetings and activities were published in the library journals *Bibliotheksdienst, Buch und Bibliothek* and *Laurentius* as well as in lesbian media like the *Lespress* magazine. We received letters from lesbians (and gay men) interested in our group after each of these short articles.

A gay librarians’ group is also being organized by a librarian who lives in Hamburg. One lesbian and one gay out of these groups attended the 1997 ALA Annual Conference at San Francisco. They were impressed by the several activities conducted by the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table’s Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Task Force, they enjoyed meeting so many U.S. colleagues and joining the ALA contingent in San Francisco’s annual Gay Pride Parade.

The next “Lesbian & Libraries” meeting is scheduled for March 14, 1998 at the Gay and Lesbian Center (called SCHULZ) at Cologne, one of the G/L/B “metropolises” in Germany. At the Cologne meeting we will discuss detailed plans concerning the recommended acquisition list for libraries and the book award. Furthermore we will keep working on improvements of the ASB indices as well as lesbian-related entries in subject headings lists.

translated by Kerstin Schröder

WORKS CITED


**“LESBIANS & LIBRARIES” RESOURCE LIST**

Abbreviations: G = Gay (men)  L = Lesbian  B = Bisexual

**AUSTRALIA**

The Bookshop Darlinghurst (G/L/B)
207 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010
FAX: 061 (02) 9331 7021; Phone: 061 (02) 9331 1103

**CANADA**

Ex Libris Used & New Books (G/L/B)
467 Church Street, Toronto, ON M4X 2C5
Fax & Phone: 416 975 0580; e-mail: exlibris@clo.com
URL http://www.clo.com/~exlibris/

Little Sister’s Book & Art Emporium (G/L/B)
1238 Davie St., Vancouver, B.C. V6E 1N4
FAX: (604) 669-1753; Phone: (604) 669-1753; e-mail: lsisters@lsisters.com
URL http://www.lsisters.com

Orlando Books Ltd.
10640 Whyte Ave., Edmonton, Alberta
Phone: 403 432 7633
e-mail: orlando@compusmart.ab.ca.; URL http://www.compusmart.ab.ca/orlando

**DENMARK**

Pan Bogcafe (G/L/B)
Knabrostraede 3, Copenhagen

**FINLAND**

Baffin Books (G/L/B)
Erikinkatu 15 -17, 0010 Helsinki FINLAND
Fax & Phone: +358 9 694 7078; e-mail: baffin@seta.fi
URL http://www.seta.fi/baffin
FRANCE
Les Mots a la Bouche (G/L/B)
6 Rue Sainte Croix de la Bretonnerie, Paris 04

GERMANY
Frauenbuchversand und Frauenbuchladen (W/L - Mail Order!)
Luxemburgstr. 2, 65042 Wiesbaden
Fax: +49 0611 37 19 13; Phone: +049 0611 37 15 15

Ganymed (G)
Kettengasse 3, 50672 Köln (Cologne)
Fax: +49 0221 25 11 10; Phone: +49 0221 25 11 06
URL Network of Gay Bookshops in Germany http://www.gaybooks.de

A List of all German Women's Bookshops can be found on the Web-Site of "Virginia" a journal with critics on women/lesbian literature. Included are also addresses of some shops in Autria and Switzerland. URL http://www.oeko-net.de/virginia

IRELAND
Other Place (G/L/B)
7/8 Augustins Street, Cork

ITALY
Libreria Babele (G/L/B)
Via Paola 44, Roma

THE NETHERLANDS
Vrolijk (G/L/B - Mail Order welcome)
Paleisstraat 135, 1012 ZL Amsterdam
Tel: +31 (0) 20 623 5142

SPANISH
Berkana Bookstore
Calle Gravina 11, 28004 Madrid

UNITED KINGDOM
Gay's the Word Bookshop (G/L/B)
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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e-mail: amazon@amazonfembks.vom; URL http://www.amazonfembks.com

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- West Hollywood
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Phone: 202-462-6969 (or toll-free from the US and Canada at 1-800-621-6969)
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URL http://www.dnai.com/~seajay/fbn/index.html
OUTSOURCING FEDERAL LIBRARIES

by R. Lee Hadden

Outsourcing, privatization or contracting has been growing over the past two decades in libraries all across the country. In the Federal government, many libraries have been contracted out entirely. This started under the Office of Management and Budget’s Circular A-76, which included libraries as a subject for contracting out on Federal installations, along with janitorial services, laundry and street maintenance.

There are a large number of contracted libraries in the federal system, including the Department of Interior library, the EPA Regional libraries, Dept. of Energy and many others. Aspin, Anderson-Lamont, Garcia and other contracting companies will take over all or part of any of these library operations.

Contracting-out practices are also coming to private institutions and universities. In Florida, OCLC’s TechPro contracted to supply acquisitions and cataloging for the entire university library system. Others will follow.

Contracted libraries are different from corporate libraries. In contracted libraries, the books, equipment, etc. all remain the property of the organization, but the staff are hired and report to someone outside the organization. Staff are generally contracted for terms up to five years, and at the end of the contract there is generally no provision to hire the current staff if a new company comes in, or that there will not be a break in service between the completion of one contract and the beginning of another one.

What are the results? Fewer federal libraries are suppliers on OCLC or mailed ILLs. Since contractors are not paid to provide services to the public, they don’t. Hours are cut, and some refuse to supply reference services to walk-ins who are not part of the federal agency.

Wages and staff are the one area in which contractors can cut, and they often do. As a result, the libraries suffer from lack of adequate staff and resources. Often when a library is within six months of completing a contract, library staff begin to look for other jobs, since they are not guaranteed a job should the contractors change, or when there is a gap between the completion of an expiring contract and the beginning of a new one. If a staff member quickly finds a new job and leaves, it is usually hard to hire new staff for a position that will only last six months.

Rather than be responsible to the federal agencies, the library staff are responsible to their company. Thus, in any ethical question, the library staff is expected [by the contractor] to support the company and not the agency. If the federal agency requests a service that is not spelled out in the contract, it should not be supplied, especially if it would cost the company anything at all in hours, resources or money. Service can be added to the contract, which takes time, some dickering, and lawyers.

Are contracted librarians professional and responsible people? Of course they are. I was one once, myself. They are regular librarians simply hired by a contractor. However, under the contract, the librarians must choose to support their company, not the owner of the materials or the library patrons. This makes their point of view very different (both overtly and subtly different) from other librarians.

For example, if they are not specifically paid to provide services to the public, such as reference or ILLs, then often they do not provide this service. If there is an ethical action that is profitable to the company, but not in the best interests of the agency, what would you, if you were a contractor, do?

If you were not paid specifically to provide ILLs to the public, simply because this was an oversight on the part of the agency, and it would cost you to do so, should you provide this service and cut into your company’s profits? Or, if you were paid per item to borrow through ILL, and you see an item is borrowed often, would you purchase a copy for your library, and thus cut down on a possible continuing source of revenue, or would you continue to borrow through ILL and make a small profit off each transaction? Would you screw the company that hired you, or the agency that hired your company? Now, what would you do if there were only six months to go on the contract, and you knew that your company wouldn’t get the new contract, and that you may not be hired by the new company? Would you...
still purchase the book for the agency?

Anyway, as a result of contracting out so many federal libraries, and downsizing, and eliminating the collections, federal representatives on the OCLC Advisory Council dropped 30% last year.

What are the results of contracting out? Mainly there is a drop in expenses. Without long term obligations to employees, contractors can hire at lower costs, pay fewer benefits, and recoup savings from the employment relationship. Obligations to pensions are reduced, hiring costs and firing costs are reduced, insurance coverage can be reduced. Since contracted librarians are hired for five years or less, vacation time and salary step increases are kept low. Pay increases can be based on performance, on inflation or can be non-existent.

To bean-counters who know nothing about libraries, this drop in expenses can be very appealing. Managers and others get big awards for cutting costs, and far too often personal desires for these awards and promotions outweigh the greater good of the organization.

However, during times of reduced budgets, these are decisions that are being made all the time. After all, in a world where professors can be given tenure without a job, is a contracted university library that hard to imagine?

We speak to you as librarians, members of a humanistic profession whose practice implies commitment to openness, democracy and freedom. We speak to you as believers in the superiority of reason over force and dialogue over violence.

Dedicated to an ideal of human progress which attends to preservation and continuity, librarianship is committed to patient, constructive work for a better future. A profession which helps create and maintain space for discourse and argument, for the free speech and dissent so important to a robust democracy, librarianship is also a profession based on mutuality. This includes international cooperation in the service of a world of knowledge which knows no borders. Educators and public servants, scholars and researchers, we are above all a profession of nurturers.

Hear us out, though we speak for the moment not of books and databases, but on an issue implicitly our legitimate professional concern.

We speak to you of war and of the threat of war. Not of a battle joined of necessity, in self-defense, but of war, planned and plotted with cold calculation against another nation and – less abstractly – against another people. As we write, our government is preparing an air assault on Iraq which will be devastating to the already suffering Iraqi people and which will contribute nothing to the cause of democracy or peace. We do not accept the planned death of countless civilians, the destruction of the infrastructure of their lives and society, as an “acceptable price to pay” or as “collateral damage.”

We speak in solidarity with our colleagues in the nation of Iraq, in its libraries and schools and universities, who strive for freedom and the end of oppression but in no way wish to see their people suffer another round of punitive military attacks and destruction.
No one can truly believe that a “message sent to Saddam Hussein” in the blood of innocents has any effect on the heart of Iraq's dictator. It would be only another macho demonstration of military superiority, an object lesson in U.S. willingness to use any means, no matter how disproportionate, to pursue its ends.

There are forces, among them the United Nations, which are striving for a diplomatic solution to the impasse over site inspections in the sovereign nation of Iraq. We support all such efforts.

With colleagues whose names are signed below, the Action Council of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association voices its opposition to the planned US-led attacks on the nation of Iraq. We do so as professionals concerned not only about the health, welfare and development of the Iraqi people, but also with the degrading effects that violence has on the United States itself.

Sincerely,

Mark Rosenzwieg, SRRT Action Council, Hofstra University — and —

Jos Anemaet, SRRT Action Council, Oregon State University Library; Carol Barta, SRRT Action Council, Barton County Community College Library; Samuel Bennett, SRRT Action Council, Kansas City, KS Public Library; Sanford Berman, SRRT Action Council, Hennepin County Library; Kim Edson, SRRT Action Council, Hennepin County Library; Yvonne Farley, SRRT Action Council, Kanawha County Library; Dorothy Granger, SRRT Action Council, Pacific Oaks College; Elaine Harger, SRRT Action Council; W. Haywood Burns School, PS/IS 176, New York; Steven R. Harris, Action Council, Louisiana State University; Al Kagan, SRRT Action Council, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Mark Martin, SRRT Action Council, Temple Archives; Michael Miller, SRRT Action Council, Columbia University; Veronnda Pitchford, SRRT Action Council, University of Illinois at Chicago; Frederick Stoss, SRRT Action Council, SUNY/Buffalo; Wendy Thomas, SRRT Action Council, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College; Jessamyn West, SRRT Newsletter co-editor; Charles Willett, SRRT Action Council; Editor, Counterpoise

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Archive “Memorial” St. Petersburg, Russia

Address: Russia 193194 St. Petersburg a/ya 199
Tel/Fax: 7-812-246-19-28
Email: memstp@glas.apc.org
Director: Vitaly Viktorevich Ioffe
Staff: 1 librarian, 2 archivists
Hours: Tuesday, 11-18, Saturday, 11-18
Material topics: Political repression in USSR (History); History of USSR prisons and work camps
Holdings: 4000 Books; 2000 items from personal collections; 1300 samizdat documents. Materials are in Russian, English, French and German

The Memorial center was founded thanks to citizen initiative, with financial support in the form of a grant from the Soros Foundation. Offering a reading room, assistance in creating a bibliography and locating materials, assorted archival information as well as a catalog of victims of repression, Memorial serves a wide range of people -- from researchers and academics to journalists and students. While items cannot be taken out of the library, there are copy services available on-site.

Much of the material in the archive has been collected from private donations and publishers’ gifts. The archive’s primary goals presently are to increase the library collection as well as to create a bibliographic database of materials available regarding the archive’s two areas of interest. The archive maintains a cooperative relationship with the Memorial branch in Moscow.

The library has indicated that it is always in need of help locating and copying appropriate books, articles and materials held in libraries and archives in Europe and the US. Additionally, they are interested in developing cooperative projects (exhibits, publications) with partners in the West.
St. Petersburg Center for Gender Issues

Address: Russia 195196 St. Petersburg, Stakhanovtsev St. 13, room 407
Tel/Fax: 7-812-528-18-30
Email: pgci@sisters.spb.ru
Director: Olga Gennadievna Lipovskaya
Librarian: Irina Dmitrievna Merenko
Open: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday
Material topics: Russian and foreign gender research; Human rights; Independent women's organizations; all other aspects of women's lives (health issues, history, violence against women, stereotypes and deviation, etc.)
Holdings: Over 2000 books, videos, legal materials/documents, periodical publications, audio recordings from seminars and conferences. Materials are in Russian, English, German, French, Turkish, and Portuguese.

The St. Petersburg Center for Gender Issues, founded in 1992 with support from a grant from the German foundation “Frauen Anstiftung” maintains a library/archive. The main goal of the archive is to collect information on women’s organizations, feminism and gender research and to make it available to the general public. Materials are obtained both by purchasing directly from publishers and stores as well as through private donations. Many of the materials can be borrowed; there are copy services available for other documents.

The archive, as well as the center as whole, is open to the public; the primary users of the archive are independent researchers and university students. The center is supported by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, and maintains connections with analogous centers for gender research in Moscow and Kharkiv (Ukraine). The next project that the archive staff plans to embark on is a computerized database of its holdings.

As the search for material on these topics is highly labor-intensive in Russian libraries, the archive staff is interested in cooperating with western libraries and archives that have more systematic methods of locating materials. They are always interested in developing new relationships for exchange.

Hilka Leicht, Kiesa Malen
Notes on Contributors

France Bouthillier is assistant professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at McGill University, Montreal. She is the editor of Documentation et bibliothèques and has authored several articles for the Canadian library press.

Karen Coyle is a librarian with nearly 20 years experience developing computer systems for libraries. She currently works at the University of California in the Library Automation Unit that develops the online access system used by libraries on the nine UC campuses. While active in developing digital libraries, she is outspoken about the effects, both negative and positive, electronic information is having on the social role of libraries. Her recently published book, Coyle’s Information Highway Handbook, is available from the American Library Association. She is currently on the board of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, and in this capacity she speaks and writes on the impact of computer culture on privacy, intellectual property, social equality and gender image. Her essay "How Hard Can it Be?" appeared in the book Wired_Women: Gender and New Realities in Cyberspace in 1996.

Robert Lee Hadden has been a Federal government librarian for the past 15 years with special assignments in the Far East and South Pacific for the US Department of Defense (“be a librarian and see the world”). Currently he is a reference librarian at a large Federal science facility. Prior to working with the Federal government, he worked as a contracted medical librarian and free lance indexer, and as a pharmaceutical corporate librarian as well. His most recent library publication is a 1994 article on library patron saints. It was picked up off the Internet, then translated and published in the Estonian Library Association publication Raamatuogu.

Hilka Leicht and Kiesa Malen A native Berliner, Hilka Leicht has spent two years in St. Petersburg — working on various free-lance projects, teaching German, and completing research for her Master’s degree in East European Studies and Russian Philology. In Berlin, Hilka has coordinated and organized various projects in cooperation with the hearing-impaired lesbian community. Presently residing in St. Petersburg, Kiesa Malen works for CEC International Partners’ “St. Petersburg 2003” project, which focuses on developing partnerships and exchange programs between Russian and American cultural institutions. Earlier, Kiesa spent two years working for the American Collegiate Consortium at Middlebury College, both in Vermont (USA) and Voronezh (Russia), which facilitated exchanges of Russian and American undergraduates. Hilka and Kiesa are both active members of “Labrys,” a Russian-German lesbian organization; recently their joint efforts have been focused on developing and realizing the first lesbian newsletter in St. Petersburg.

Heike Seidel was born in 1960 in Bremen, Germany. Trained as a library assistant she has worked at a school library and two small town public libraries for several years. Since 1990 she has been a library assistant at Zweigbibliothek Chemie of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (Library of the Chemistry Department of the University of Münster). She has written on library issues as well as on lesbian and gay issues in Germany and has contributed to Liberating Minds, ed. by Norman Kester (McFarland, 1997). She serves as coordinator of the “Lesbian & Libraries” group in Germany.

Michael Winter is currently Behavioral Sciences Librarian at the University of California, Davis, where he has been since 1985. He is the author of a 1988 book, The Culture and Control of Expertise: Toward a Sociological Understanding of Librarianship. He has also written on labor process theory in librarianship and information work, and more recently on patterns of social control in the formation and dissolution of academic disciplines. He be reached at mfwinter@ucdavis.edu.
The Progressive Librarians Guild has been established to:

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