the ruling class, whether in a Honduran sweatshop or on the internet. Class consciousness, the awareness of in whose interest information should be developed, is the only defense. The information age has not reached beyond the class struggle, rather it has created new arenas for it.

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Information Liberation by Brian Martin. London: Freedom Press, 1998

Reviewed by Rory Litwin

Freedom Press, the anarchist publishing house founded in 1886, has published a book on the issues of the information society from a radical democratic perspective. "Information is power" and "power corrupts" are two apothegms that deserve the intelligent coupling that Brian Martin, the Australian writer active in the environmental and radical science movements, has given them in *Information Liberation*. As Martin shows, the corruption of power is not merely a potential danger but a fact of life in the areas of mass media, intellectual property, surveillance, bureaucratic organizations, libel law, and the world of academic research. These are frequent topics of discussion on the left, but not often leading to the radical conclusions that Martin refreshingly draws, opening up new spaces for left-of-center thinking. The book is for a popular audience, and suitable for public as well as academic libraries.

Chapter 1, "Power tends to corrupt," expresses this basic premise, illustrating it with historical and psychological insights. Chapter 2, "Beyond mass media," discusses modern mass media, which Martin finds undemocratic by nature, because of its control by a group of people that is small in comparison with its audience. He cites numerous publications that expose media bias and advocate grass-roots action to create fairness and accuracy, but perceptively notes that these publications rarely find the root of this media bias in the basic structures of mass media control or advocate replacing these structures. Alternative mass media, though the imbalance of power between its audience and producers is moderated by its smaller scale, falls into this assessment of corruption by power, with powerful publications such as *Mother Jones* and *The Progressive* serving

as examples of the impossibility of democratically run mass media. The idea of participatory media, with David Andrews' concept of "information routing groups" given as an example, is offered as a replacement for mass media. The chapter also includes an outline of several strategies for achieving this replacement. Martin's radical position makes possible avenues of perception that are perhaps not open to reform-minded media critics, and asks questions seldom heard on the left that are critical of reformist and government-reliant strategies. Cynical readers like myself will begin to find that a leap of faith is required in order to follow Martin all the way to his conclusions, but this leap appears to have the character of a necessary courage against the backdrop of the status quo. A shift of mind is precisely what is required by any radical solution.

Chapter 3, "Against intellectual property," is concerned with the concept of intellectual property and argues for the alternative, "that intellectual products not be owned, as in the case of everyday language." Strategies for challenging intellectual property are outlined, including "civil disobedience, promotion of non-owned information, and fostering of a more cooperative society." The arguments against intellectual property in this chapter center on the corrupting influence of the ownership of ideas and the harm it can do to democratic relationships. Edwin C. Hettinger's responses to the standard justifications of intellectual property are summarized. The alternative to intellectual property (non-ownership of ideas) is discussed with reference to the perceived needs for it: protection against plagiarism, protection of royalties, and stimulation of creativity. Each of these is shown to be either answerable in other ways or not actually protected by intellectual property laws. Ironically, a copyright on this book is held by Brian Martin and Freedom Press. This is discussed at the end of the chapter, with permission given to copy the work for non-exploitative uses. It is plain that Freedom Press copyrights their publications out of a need to compromise with a world that has not moved "beyond intellectual property."

Chapter 4, "Anti-surveillance," examines the issue of the growing use of various surveillance technologies, including types of data collection not thought of as "spying," as an issue of power imbalance. Martin claims that the regulation of surveillance by professional ethics and by govern-

ment only create an illusion of protection. Grass-roots activist alterna-
tives to reformist solutions are outlined, including various forms of
surveillance disruption and a larger program of replacing the social
institutions that have a need for surveillance stemming from their mode
of organization. The suggested methods for surveillance disruption are
particularly timely and exciting.

Chapter 5, "Free speech and bureaucracy," is concerned with the bureau-
cratic control of information flow in organizations and with workers'
rights of free and open communication. Martin takes the position that the
bureaucratic mode of organization is prone to corruption by systems of
power due to its hierarchical nature, and is interested in alternatives to it.
His particular concern about bureaucratic systems is the way that they
tend to lead to secrecy and restrictions against free speech (as we are
aware of in the recent events at the Hennepin County library and perhaps
in our own lives) and create an environment that leaves the lone whistle-
blower isolated and disempowered. Martin finds it difficult to challenge
a bureaucracy effectively, the only solution being collective action to-
wards a clear alternative and a long-term vision. The role of information
exchange in challenging bureaucracy is given special attention. Martin
also invites action research into ways of challenging bureaucracy and
alternative ways of organizing work.

Chapter 6, "Defamation law and free speech," is concerned with the way
defamation law, or slander and libel law, are used oppressively, and how
to challenge its oppressive uses. Martin takes the position that defama-
tion law is not used primarily to protect people from unfair attack but to
hinder free speech and protect the powerful from scrutiny. Attention is
paid to the practical issues of defending against a lawsuit under defama-
tion law.

Chapter 7, "The politics of research," is about the economics and organi-
zational structures that support professional researchers, and determine
what knowledge is created and how it will be used. Strategies for
challenging existing patterns are given, including critical teaching and
research and community participation in research for practical ends.
Some of the potential problems here go unexamined, such as how to
fund, disseminate, and lend legitimacy to community-generated and

directed knowledge, and how the corrupting influence of power would be
avoided if these practical goals were attained. These problems are of the
type faced at any point along the front lines of radical democratic work,
and could be addressed specifically by less general, more action-oriented
works. The implicit answer to this type of question seems to be that by
replacing the structures that lead to power imbalances new conditions
would apply.

Chapters 8 and 9, "On the value of simple ideas" and "Celebrity intellec-
tuals," are concerned with the practical question of how people think, and
offer potentially helpful insights. Martin finds it important to begin with
simple ideas that can be directly applied to empower people where they
are, and to build a social theory only secondarily, if at all, on the basis of
the simpler, functional ideas. The phrase "ivory tower" is not used, but
the image is clear. Complex ideas are inaccessible and not as readily
applicable as simple ideas. The implications of this chapter are not as
clear as the implications of the rest of the book, as the point is somewhat
abstract. I find myself wishing Martin had taken greater care here to
discourage anti-intellectualism and the irrationality that can accompany
it. Related to his point in Chapter 8 is the idea in Chapter 9 that people
must think for themselves and in relation to their own needs rather than
following the orthodoxy of celebrity intellectuals.

Chapter 10, "Toward information liberation," is the concluding chapter,
and treats general issues such as how to move towards an alternative to
oppressive modes of information creation and use, working both inside
and outside the system, and working with others. The spirit of this
chapter is encouraging and practical. It is worth noting that in this work
of radical democracy, with its cautions against the pitfalls of reformist
thinking, the idea of revolution doesn't arise, the idea of gradually "living
the alternative" thoroughly in its place.

Martin's radical democratic position, like any political position, leads to
its share of difficulties and contradictions (such as how exactly a free
people can be restrained from exploiting one another). Martin deals with
these to the limited extent that it is appropriate in a book written for a
popular audience, going far enough to sketch the outlines of a radical
alternative but not far enough to fill in the details or answer potential

critics with the depth that one would find in a more narrowly focused or scholarly book. The annotated references to other works are plentiful and helpful in this light.

Information Liberation is an excellent example of a book that libraries should own, but probably will not. By taking an admittedly extreme position relating to the information society, the book functions as a tent post, without which a library will be less capacious of mind and less able to fulfill its purpose. Aside from that, Martin might be right, and we would be selling ourselves short to pursue a society where information is any less free than he envisions.

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Poor People and Library Services edited by Karen M. Venturella. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 1998.

Reviewed by Linda Pierce

This work is a great start to filling the need for professional material on delivering library services to the poor, disadvantaged, minority and other marginalized groups in our society. In this age of increasing focus on professional writing on technology, and library applications of technology, it is essential to have books such as this that focus on the core values of library service, and most importantly on library service to those that have no political or economic voice in our society.

For the most part the book contains first person accounts or descriptions of library programs for the poor. The book is divided into sections including Poverty Programs for Children, Access to Technology for Low Income Groups, Neighborhood Coalition and International Organization, Programs in Shelters and Public Housing and Rural Poverty Programs. These chapters are preceded by a forward by Sandy Berman focusing mainly on the American Library Associations positions regarding library services to the poor and the need for a renewed commitment to that by the Association and the need for evolving and changing subject headings dealing with the poor.

The first article provides the context for the book and it does that admirably. The article is "History and Theory of Information Poverty" by John Buschman. Buschman does an excellent job of putting into an historical context the role of the library in working with the poor and more importantly the changing political and social climate that has made that much more difficult to accomplish. Buschman chronicles the early commitment of public libraries in the area of literacy, uplift and working with immigrant groups. He quite rightly also includes a review of the revisionist library literature that puts the traditional views of library service in a broader social context. He concludes, however, that no matter how much the library at the turn of the century might have considered itself a venue for the poor and downtrodden the shifting towards an era where economics are the new polity there is a new public policy that has radically changed how libraries view themselves and their patrons. The need for revenue generation and the vision of library as and economic entity have lead to a new reality of more fee based service, increased fines and oter ways to make the library pay for itself. This has consequently lead to an even great disparity in access to and use of library services between the affluent and the poor. Buschman's challenge to have the library serve all is a fitting opening to the rest of the book which documents various library services which meet that challenge

All of the library programs described in the book provide good information about the impetus, development, funding, relevance, and in many cases results of innovative programming to serve economically disadvantaged areas and for the most part groups that were not already library users. These programs all acknowledge the problems that exist in beginning service to a new area and groups of users, they also focus on problems specific to introducing library services to individuals and groups who may not have used libraries in the past or in some cases had negative experiences with libraries or other governmental agencies.

The article by Denis Creitnon and Carl Egner "Libraries in the Streets" was particular interesting in that the program described was not originated in a library or by librarians. The Street Library program was started by a group called the Fourth World Movement. Volunteers from this group take books and reading to children where they live and begin to develop reading skills and a love of books. The leaders also discovered