LETTERS TO "MISS LEFTIST MANNERS"

DOUBLE FOLD CONTROVERSY

SCHOOL LIBRARY WOMEN & WORK

MYTH OF THE NEUTRAL PROFESSIONAL

INTO A GOOGLE WORLD

DOCUMENTS

NEW! A PRODUCT REVIEW
PLG's PURPOSE & COMMITMENT

Progressive Librarians Guild was formed in New York City on January 1990 by a group of librarians concerned with our profession's rapid drift into dubious alliances with business and the information industry, and into complacent acceptance of service to an unquestioned political, economic and cultural status quo.

We reaffirmed, significantly, that the development of public libraries was initially spurred by popular sentiment, which for one reason or another held that real democracy requires an enlightened citizenry, and that society should provide all people with the means for free intellectual development. Current trends in librarianship, however, assert that the library is merely a neutral institutional mediator in the information marketplace and a facilitator of a value-neutral information society of atomized information consumers.

A progressive librarianship demands the recognition of the idea that libraries for the people has been one of the principal anchors of an extended free public sphere which makes an independent democratic civil society possible, something which must be defended and extended. This is partisanship, not neutrality.

Members of PLG do not accept the sterile notion of the neutrality of librarianship, and we strongly oppose the commodification of information, which turns the "information commons" into privatized, commercialized zones. We will help to dissect the implications of these powerful trends, and fight their anti-democratic tendencies.

PLG recognizes that librarians are situated as information workers, communications workers, and education workers, as well as technical workers. Like workers in every sector, our work brings us up against both economic and political issues. Cataloging, indexing, acquisitions policy and collection development, the character of reference services, library automation, library management, and virtually every other library issue embody political value choices. PLG members aim to make these choices explicit, and to draw their political conclusions.

Progressive Librarians Guild is committed to the following:

- to providing a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues.
- to conducting campaigns to support progressive and democratic library activities locally, nationally and internationally.
- to supporting activist librarians as they work to effect changes in their own libraries and communities.
- to bridging the artificial and destructive gaps between school, public, academic and special libraries, and between public and technical services.
- to encouraging debate about prevailing management strategies adopted directly from the business world, to propose democratic forms of library administration, and to foster unity between librarians and other library workers.
- to critically considering the impact of technological change in the library workplace, on the provision of library services, and on the character of public discourse.
- to monitoring the professional ethics of librarianship from a perspective of social responsibility.
- to facilitating contacts between progressive librarians and other professional and scholarly groups dealing with communications and all the political, social, economic and cultural trends which impact upon it worldwide, in a global context.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN #24**  
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## EDITORIAL

- Miss Leftist Manners’ Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Communication with Right-Wingers  
  *by John Buschman*  
  
## ARTICLES

- The Controversy over *Double Fold* as a Battle of Elites, *by David Woolwine*  
  
- The View from the Intersection of School Library Women and Work, *by Linda Esser*  
  
- The Myth of the Neutral Professional  
  *by Robert Jensen*  
  
- Into a Google World: Rethinking Ubiquity  
  *by Peter McDonald*  
  
## DOCUMENTS

- Jailed for Dissent “In These Times”  
  *speech by Chris Gaunt*  
  
- Declaration from Buenos Aires, *by the First Social Forum on Information, Documentation & Libraries*  
  
## PRODUCT REVIEW

- HP Scanjet 4670C: A Review, *by Lincoln Cushing*  
  
## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

## PLG STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
Miss Leftist Manners’ Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Communication with Right-Wingers

The editors of Progressive Librarian have been inundated with mail from Our Readers, beseeching us for advice in matters of professional communication with some of our similarly politically-engaged colleagues...on the Right. None of our dear readers felt qualified to engage in the delicate matters of proper and polite communications with The Other of our Hallowed Profession, so they engaged my services (and properly so) – Miss Leftist Manners. Fortunately MLM (as she refers to herself) is quite familiar with all the newfangled aspects of our field – dreadfully and familiarly called information technology – as well as the honored traditions of organizing and housing and actually reading ink applied to paper. So, We put ourselves at the disposal of this honorable journal’s Gentle Readers, with the following results:

Dear Miss Leftist Manners,

Recently I innocently wrote an observation about a “news” website for our field – basically saying that the website operator outright characterized librarianship as too “liberal” and thereby shifting (or veering) his site very much toward a right-wing take on the field – supporting forms of censorship and all provisions of the Patriot Act, attacking activism as a professional diversion, and calling the ALA “radical” of all things. All the while this “news” site still maintained a claim of neutrality and an unbiased, evenhanded take on the field. I wrote that the stated reasons for heading rightward were pretty thin and could have holes poked in the argument pretty easily, and I did so in rather modest terms. Most librarians are moderately liberal and mainstream compared to a really Left vision of the field and, yet, even the moderates were tarred by the site as “radical” (really, a complement I happen to think). I touched off quite a donnybrook, with me signing my name to all my replies, but my critics remaining anonymous. It was all quite vicious and unnerving.

Was I wrong and impolite to do this?

Questioning in California
Dear Questioning,

What on Earth are you doing in California? Don’t you know that that blighted state elected yet another vapid and rich right-wing “actor” from its culturally bankrupt celluloid industry? Please, save yourself. Now that we have dispensed with this essential matter, MLM must answer forthrightly. No! You most certainly were not impolite or wrong to make your keen observations. We regret that our current political climate is such that these kinds of “populist” positions have taken firm root in our media. AM talk radio and Fox (Faux) “News” spring to mind, and it appears to us that this “site” (how MLM dreads the diminution of language by our culture, but we must use the current terms of art...) is emulating its Right Wing Big Media Brothers. Let me guess, they mischaracterized your argument, took quotations out of context, and misdirected the argument to somehow focus on your personality and personal flaws (in their eyes). Correct? It seems to me that you conducted yourself with honor and dignity, and they merely demeaned themselves. Since they cannot argue coherently as ethical librarians - supporting as they do secrecy and spying and censorship by the site they must wallow in the filth of what remains of their minds. MLM supports you fully, quaking, and she feels Our Enemies deserve their isolated, anonymous fates. Besides, you can’t have a battle of wits with unarmed adversaries.

Yours,

MLM

Dear Miss Leftist Manners,

I came to the defense of two colleagues who were attacked by right-wing “library” websites and weblogs. Basically, I thought the one guy in California did a pretty “fair and balanced” analysis of the rightward lurch of the one library “news” site, and I thought two other websites did a hatchet job on a good and decent colleague minding her own business on her website and weblog where she works in the “land of the hanging-chad.” She felt threatened, and I wanted to help them both. I waded in full force calling the Righties chicken sh*t anonymous weasels, and making fun of their anonymous “handles” with references to their (lacking) manhood and some dumb pooh-pooh puns. I also thought their comparisons of themselves to Madison, et. al. and their anonymous writing of the Federalist Papers was absurdly funny, and said so. Lastly, the biggest anonymous (some are admittedly semi-anonymous: you can find their identities if you dig hard enough) wing-nut defended his remaining so for fear of losing his administrative position to marauding liberals in the field. This inflamed and amused me, needless to say.

Did I go too far in defending honorable Left colleagues?

Jaded in Jersey

Progressive Librarian #24
Dear Jaded,

MLM is deeply troubled by any pooh-pooh language – or reference to fecal matter from domestic fowl if I decode your letter correctly. Our culture is already running at the moron level, and such language representing our Fair Principles cannot but trouble sensitive souls such as myself and our Gentle Readers. Your motivations – defending friends and colleagues – are faultless, of course. This is a difficult situation. You represent yourself as a sort of Left Merry Trickster, tweaking the brutes that deserve it so. They deserve it if only for comparing themselves to the deeply flawed geniuses of American Democracy. In MLM’s humble opinion – but perhaps not our Gentle Readers’ – the comparison is such patent pomposity of the highest order, that it cries out to be pricked. Rather, what is truly troubling in all of this is that the Righties deliberately sought out your hanging-chad friend to harass. MLM herself might well become inflamed in such a case. MLM suggests you search the inner reaches of your soul to see if you brought the defense of your friends into the cultural gutter, or was it there already and you merely utilized extant terms of art to be understood in their ‘hood. (MLM can adopt modern modes of expression when it is required for clarity’s sake.) If, Jaded, you can say in the clear light of reasoned reflection that the language of the moron and the gutter was required for the benighted and anonymous Right to understand you clearly in defense of your friends and colleagues, then MLM feels you deserve her absolution, but not her approval. Pray, try and refrain from pooh-pooh and lacking-manhood references in future (however essentially true they might be). However, even MLM must confess to the desire, every now and then, to give an atomic wedgie to the likes of Ann Coulter or Bill O’Reilly or some prominent Righties in our Fair Profession – ah, such are the indulgences of an wandering mind.

Yours truly,

MLM [aka John Buschman]
THE CONTROVERSY OVER
“DOUBLE FOLD” AS A BATTLE OF ELITES

by David Woolwine

In 2001 Nicholson Baker, a novelist, published a bombshell of a book entitled *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*. The book subsequently received the National Book Critics Circle Award and is today, ironically, out of print. (Perhaps future generations will read it only in microfilm or in digital form.) In *Double Fold* Nicholson gives a history (of sorts) of the decisions made by the institutional elite of the library science profession beginning in the late 1940s until 1980s or even until 1999 (depending on whose story you believe) to destroy large numbers of newspaper collections, and books, with the goal of saving them by microfilming. The destruction of the originals, once microfilmed, ultimately took place partly because it is quicker to produce readable microfilm when the book or newspaper is cut from its binding and laid flat. Then, because one did not want to reshelve (preferably boxed or reconnected in some form) a cut book or newspaper, it appears that much or most of the microfilmed artifacts were pulped or otherwise removed from library collections. Baker also makes an interesting side journey into early attempts by the Library of Congress and the Council on Library Resources to use a highly dangerous chemical, DEZ (diethyl zinc) as a way of mass deacidification. This peculiar sideshow makes the profession appear to have been populated at the time not by library scientists but by mad scientists.

This paper will not detail the various decisions made by various librarians and bureaucrats. What it attempts to do is use a set of sociological concepts, that of the battle of elites and that of the outsider, to tell a story of this episode in library history. Sociological history must necessarily generalize. The goal here is to give clarity to the picture and to show how specific historical episodes are made more comprehensible if they are explained by general concepts. From the many historical details major groups, influential moments, and influential public statements can be highlighted as representative.

I see in this episode of library history three major types of responses to the book *Double Fold*. These are the responses that played various roles in pushing the debate forward to a conclusion. These three response include, first those of scholars, secondly those of librarians in elite institutions (in print, one only wonders what they might have said in private), and, thirdly, the responses of journalists and of book reviewers to *Double Fold*.

Progressive Librarian #24
The scholarly response is perhaps best represented by Robert Darton (2001). I have selected his response because it is the most influential one among scholars at the time the debate was raging. The leaders and spokespersons of the professional library community are here represented primarily by Shirley K. Baker (2001, 2002), president of the Association of Research Libraries at the time and vice chancellor for information technology and dean of University Libraries at Washington University in St. Louis, and by Richard J. Cox (2001, 2002), professor of library and information sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. Cox is selected because he was not only an early respondent in the fray, but also because he has written a book length treatment of the claims in *Double Fold*. There were, of course, other important librarians writing about Baker at this time – but for the sake a clear and relatively brief argument I will limit it to these professionals as representative. The third type of response, which was the popular view of the controversy, is represented here by journalists and non-scholarly journal book reviewers. Here I have selected the writing of representative journalists during a brief period of the debate, most of whom wrote for major American newspapers, with one reference to a British publication for confirmation and comparison.

**Scholarly Response**

If we look at Robert Darton’s powerful review in the April 2001 edition of the *New York Review of Books*, we see that the review itself is sardonic and artful but, importantly, it ultimately came out supportive of Baker. Darton is a distinguished professor of European history at Princeton who has taught since 1968. His research mainly concerns eighteenth-century France, the history of books, and censorship. Darton’s review, I would argue, takes just the right tone of distance. He notes that Baker is not writing sophisticated history. He views it as more of a form of journalism, somewhat literary (which would be fine with the postmodernists with whom Darton is keeping company), but Darton clearly sees Baker having the general outline of the story right. For the academic elite, which uses the *New York Review of Books* for a broad spectrum of topics and opinions, Darton’s review was solid enough proof that Baker was, on the whole, correct.

Why should other academics accept Darton’s review as definitive? Darton’s position within the American academy is the reason. He is a major cultural historian, arguably the most revered of American cultural historians, and holds a position at a top academic institution. Obviously, this influence speaks volumes to a very special group among the readers of the *New York Review of Books*. The readership of the *New York Review of Books* contains the core members of an intellectual elite, an elite moreover more powerful, and influential, than librarians who may happen to work at elite institutions. The pages of the *New York Review of Books* publish the works of some of the most influential scholars in what was once called “the humanities” in the United States.
One way of reading Darton’s review, therefore, is to see it as part of a dialogue aimed at a broader discourse among this group of elite humanists. “Discourse” of course is a public cultural act, and one that, at heart, is an exercise in the power of ideas to influence. *Double Fold*, and the favorable review that followed by a leading academic, constituted a sort of one/two blow to the library professionals and experts whose authority to some degree had already been weakened by changes in the intellectual and political culture in which they operated. The excessive behavior of the librarian decision makers, as noted in Baker’s book, especially silly claims to dubious science, had already begun to be felt by the academic elite as a suspect problem. (The 1995 “Statement on the Significance of Primary Records” by the Modern Language Association of America indicates such unease). These are scholars who had spent the last few decades working with books, other original sources, and, to their discomfort, microfilm. It only took a reasonably well argued book (as unscholarly as *Double Fold* might have been) and a leading academic who would give the book an imprimatur, to convince the academy that there was indeed a problem here. The importance of Darton’s review is testified to by the fact that Shirley K. Baker (2001, 2002) and Richard J. Cox (2001) felt the need to respond either directly to Darton or felt obliged to crib from his review to support their own attack on *Double Fold*. Let me repeat: *Double Fold* alone would not have been able to do this job. Darton’s review proved necessary for this debate between clashing cultures.

*Journalistic and Book Review Responses*

Before we turn to the response of librarians, let us look briefly at journalists and some of the book reviews which got published on *Double Fold*, for these too played a role in the public discourse. In a brief period of time, from April 7 to April 15, 2001, four separate treatments of Baker’s book appeared in the *New York Times*. On April 7, Elaine Sciolino (2001) wrote a “balanced” article on the preservation crisis. It is balanced in that James H. Billington (the Librarian of Congress), Karin Wittenborg, and other librarians are given their say. For example, Wittenborg is allowed to say that Baker “doesn’t look at scientific evidence about paper” (p. B9). But the knife is in. Baker’s general argument is accepted inasmuch as the article assumes that microfilming large numbers of paper artifacts, then destroying those original artifacts, was a mistake. We intuit this because we are told that “the practice of destroying books to save them has stopped” (p. B7).

Billington moreover is mocked as the moral equivalent of the corrupt casino owner in the film Casablanca who is “shocked, shocked that the Library of Congress once destroyed books” (B7). He is also portrayed as someone who warns people off books that he has not bothered to read himself and to characterize *Double Fold* as advocating a conspiracy theory. Then on April 10, a low-key but supportive book review is also published (Kukutani 2001). And finally, on April 15, both a sympathetic interview with

The United Kingdom had by this time already heard sympathetically about the book in a review in the *Guardian* (Lazard 2001) in which the title of the review used the phrase “literary vandalism” (p. 11) to refer to the actions of library decision makers. Such popular treatments of the book, especially the remarkable amount of paper and ink expended on it by the *New York Times* in such a short period of time, indicate that a well-read middle class was likely educated on the questionable behavior of library experts.

**Librarians in Elite Institutions Respond**

Let us turn now to the response of the librarians most affected by the publication of *Double Fold*. First, as stated earlier, responses were varied even within the library world. For sake of brevity, I have chosen only a few librarians as representative who led the charge against the book. As I also noted earlier, this is an analysis of public discourse, thus words issued publicly as part of power struggle exemplify my core thesis, with no attempts made to investigate the voluminous private communications of the critical players. One can speculate that librarians who had either helped make the decisions described in *Double Fold*, or had carried them out, or defended them, felt themselves under personal attack by Baker’s thesis. Their personal feelings, and motivations aside, these are nevertheless not key to a sociological account of the public debate. Doubtless, a certain amount of circling the wagons occurred. Our focus here is on what arguments, once the wagons were circled, were issued and promulgated.

I would argue that their primary argument was a mischaracterization of both Baker and Darton’s arguments and, effectively, a sort of character assassination of Baker on the side. ARL President Shirley K. Baker posted a letter to the *New York Review of Books* on the ARL web page (2001). The letter was quickly summarized in one of the main journals of the library profession (Albanese 2001) and subsequently appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (2002). In the letter, Ms. Baker characterizes Nicholson Baker as having carried out “purposeful misrepresentation” (p. 48). (Clearly this is a personal attack, where Nicholson Baker’s intellectual honesty is called into question). She further states that the practices described have now stopped and only existed for a short period of time anyway. (Odd since the British Library as late as 1999 was still selling off complete newspaper collections.) She attempts to enlist Darton’s own words to support the above claim and also to argue that Nicholson Baker overstates his case – ignoring the fact that Darton finds it on the whole persuasive. And finally, a palm branch of sorts, a middling compliment is offered, in that she is happy that “(b)oth Baker’s book and Darton’s review have served
to bring the preservation of print artifacts to the attention of the public... We are glad to see the interest people have in this issue and hope that public discussion will elevate the importance of preservation and reaffirm the positive role research libraries play in this effort” (p. 48).

This, of course, ignores the role that films like “Slow Fires” had played earlier in bringing this whole matter to the attention of the public with a message, and with consequences, quite opposite to those of Baker’s book and of Darton’s review. Most striking is the absence in Ms. Baker’s letter, of any in-depth presentation of refuting facts or any substantive attempt to discuss in detail the main points which Nicholson Baker, or Darton, make. For regular readers of the letters section of the New York Review of Books, this must have stood out as an oddity since most letters printed there are usually lengthy refutations of claims made either in the books reviewed or in a subsequent review itself.

Richard J. Cox’s early response (2001) is also telling. Cox begins by saying that he is shocked that the “purpose of libraries and archives was being considered, anew, by social pundits through every conceivable media outlet” (p. 2). This is a sentiment opposite to the one expressed by Shirley K. Baker who welcomed public interest. What Cox does not seem to realize is that it is precisely the claims to authority by expert professionals that are under attack here. Clearly, since someone of Darton’s stature has already had his say, one may assume with equal clarity that it is not barbarians who are making such attacks, thus Cox’s claims are doubly perplexing. In his preliminary assessment of Baker’s book, Cox argues, misleadingly, that Darton holds that Double Fold is little more than an extension of Baker’s fictional work. Darton does note the similarities but he does not treat Double Fold as literature – indeed he wrote to the New York Review of Books precisely because the facts in Double Fold justified a review. Cox further notes that Darton sees the work as strongly journalistic, while ignoring the more troubling fact that Darton also sees Nicholson Baker’s arguments as largely correct. And finally Cox utters the ultimate anti-intellectual charge, that Baker simply sees the acts of librarians in their quest for preservation solutions as “a conspiracy.”

Of course, this is problematic in several ways. First Cox does not define what “a conspiracy” is, but he seems to see it as a charge of lying and concealing of misdeeds by a group of people. Be that as it may, conspiracies are not entirely definable as lying, still less of simply concealing of misdeeds. There must also be concerted secretive planning beforehand, and a concerted organized effort afterward to keep the group’s actions hidden from public view. Since this rarely occurs, and generally never at the level or with the number of participants that conspiracy theorists assert, charges of conspiracy are usually rejected by trained historians and social commentators as naive and anti-intellectual. It is with this brush (naive and anti-intellectual) that Cox appears to want to paint Baker. But Baker does not argue that this sort of conspiracy existed. Self delusion, arrogance, stupid professional decisions, refusal to ask tough questions which go against
pet theories and ideologies, all indulged in individually and in concert with others – these are what are described by Baker in *Double Fold*. These are not per se conspiracies in any meaningful sense of the word. They are rather all too often standards of detrimental organizational behaviors.

Cox’s second, and lengthier, response (2002) has been reviewed and commented on in *Progressive Librarian* by Lincoln Cushing (2003) and I essentially agree with Cushing’s views. Cushing notes that Cox, in this more moderately written work, nevertheless continues to claim that Baker blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, that Baker makes unrealistic demands on the profession, and that he is a conspiracy theorist. Cushing argues, as I do, that Baker is writing to expose an elite viewpoint – one purveyed by the policy makers within major research library institutions – not against the library profession as a whole. And Cushing sees strength in Baker’s position as an outsider as I do too, upon which I elaborate below.

To add just a few more examples, if only to show that Shirley Baker, and Richard Cox are by no means isolated in their responses to *Double Fold*, I would point out that another review of Baker’s book in a major academic journal, *College & Research Libraries* by Harlan Greene (2001) is equally extreme. The most unfair characterizations of Baker probably occurred in Barbara Quint’s review in *Searcher Magazine* (2001), which can be described only as “hysterical,” not least beginning with its title “Don’t Burn Books! Burn Librarians!”

**Sociological Reflections: Giving an Account**

I began by saying that two sociological concepts would be used to interpret this episode in recent library history, namely the concept of a battle of elites and secondly that of the role of the outsider. I would now like to offer a summary of that interpretation and to show how these two concepts work together to bring about what is, I would argue, a more thoughtful and well informed account of this unfolding debate.

First, it is probably true that the worst activities of the microfilmmers had stopped by the time Baker wrote *Double Fold*. The degree to which they had stopped, however, would require a thorough insider’s history of library practices throughout the United States – one that would be difficult, if not impossible, to write especially post-*Double Fold* since most libraries are probably not willing to divulge information which may open them up to further criticism themselves. Such a history would need to weigh a variety of events including the 1995 MLA’s statement on primary records. This, and other events, indicate that changes in library preservation and administrative practices, were afoot before the publication of Baker’s book. How important these changes were, at present, are hard to weigh. I would argue that none of this discredits Baker.
The final importance of Baker’s book lies not in whether he completely, and with unfailing objectivity, presents the activities of the past, or presents a list of changes that may already have been underway at the time of publication. His arguments are important because he was one of the first to influence the public view of librarians as decision makers, where it became apparent subsequently that the policies promulgated by library leaders ended up being largely discredited. With this disclosure came attendant loss of power and status at least in the eyes of that part of the public who cared about such issues, and these included scholars and no doubt an educated, well-read, middle class. What is at issue is clearly one of changing perceptions. Baker changed the perception among an important section of the populace on how library decision makers were viewed. This was essentially a battle of words between elites, with scholars and the concerned middle class on the one hand and librarians in elite institutions on the other. In this round, the librarians lost.

Further, on the issue of perceptions, I would argue that Baker’s story line is that of “experts run wild.” I think this story, coming in 2001, is one that the American public, and particularly its opinion setters, were more than willing to accept. Baker’s review of library preservation practices begins in the 1940s and continues into the 1990s. Furthermore, evidence suggests that this postwar period in American history is one in which Americans of all classes and groups became increasingly less trusting of experts, reaching an apex in the 1960s of course. Surveys of public opinion confirm this. A comparison with urban planner Robert Moses is a reasonable one. There is now almost universal agreement that Moses’ plans for the new American city in the 1950s where the automobile took precedence over community neighborhoods have produced at least as many, if not more problems in urban areas, than they solved. The Vietnam War and Watergate of course deepened American skepticism in “experts.”

Americans have also come to judge with some distrust the claims of “scientific experts” and whether these self-same scientists worked solely for the common good, whether in the area of genetically modified food, the creation of nuclear and biochemical weapons, or the “scientific” claims in the 1950s and 1960s by psychotherapists who believed they were able to “cure” homosexuals, indeed whether any of these sorts of claims make any viable scientific sense today at all. The sociology of science as a discipline, of course, has grown immensely during this period, such that most scholars today are conversant in its parameters and emerging conclusions. Michel Foucault and the deconstructionists had also become leading lights in the academy by this time, focusing, among many things, on the relationship of claims of knowledge to power. “Library science” somewhat obscure in the larger academic and scholarly world, and largely self-contained, was not considered all that important, not “hot” enough from the perspective of the postmodern scholars for study or attack and, therefore, had largely been left unstudied in its claims. But with Baker’s book, and with Darton’s review, attention began to be paid to the evolving sociological study of the profession as a whole.
As argued earlier, among humanists who were working with actual library materials, including microfilms, there probably had been an unconscious unease for some time. Once attention was paid to this obscure discipline, the account, not of a conspiracy, but of “experts” who claim more knowledge than they actually have, or of those who undertake large scale projects with unforeseen disastrous ends, or who are unwilling to listen to the concerns of the general public, sounded sadly similar to other disconcerting accounts of activities perpetrated by other elites in the last fifty years. In short, this new story was instantly believable. Librarian experts, however, seemed unaware, or, perhaps more likely, seemed shocked that such analysis should be applied to them, and thus simply accused Baker of being foolish, in short a naive journalist and fiction writer (i.e. an outsider) merely invoking conspiracy theories. Since they were not addressing the actual narrative which scholars, and the educated public were fitting onto Baker’s and Darton’s, accounts, librarians essentially lost the upper hand in the debate. Perceptions are important.

The second sociological concept invoked here is that of the “outsider.” Baker has been called by some a “whistleblower”. I think it is important to understand that he is nothing of the sort. A whistleblower works within an organization (or, in this case, discipline) about which he or she (and recently often it seems to be a she) blows the whistle. An older sociological concept is, of course, that of the “outsider.” As a term it actually helps us understand Baker more fully. He is not part of one of the elites in the battle described here. Indeed, it should be noted, he was often called an outsider, disparagingly, by his librarian critics.

What is interesting is that the sociologist Robert K. Merton’s (1973) major point concerning the outsider is that criticisms coming from outside a discipline often produce, in extreme cases, an epistemological conflict between the outsider and those challenged. The mutual distrust between the two becomes therefore so great that real intellectual engagement cannot occur. The arguments of the outside appear implausible, even absurd, to those being criticized and they respond, not with logical arguments, but with questions that ask how such criticisms could be advanced at all. The responses of librarians in elite institutions to Baker’s book are precisely of this type. Only by accusing him of inordinate love of paper, of writing fiction not fact, of being a naive journalist and believer in conspiracy theories, in other words of being an outsider, can these same critics make sense of his criticisms. The matter would have remained at a stage of mutual distrust, indeed at an epistemological impasse between outsider and those criticized, had not other groups, e.g. scholars, journalists, book reviewers, and parts of the reading public not taken up the issues. We have here, therefore, a telling episode in which the outsider, Nicholson Baker, with the assistance of elite allies, was able to prevail.

The ultimate outcome of this episode, beyond perhaps some temporary lowering of status and power in the public’s perception of librarians as meaningful decision makers in our more elite institutions, is not yet fully
played out. I would argue that how future decisions are made among academic research library administrators on broad issues of national policy as were exposed by Baker in *Double Fold*, will indicate whether Baker himself has had some long term influence on the profession. This will most likely play out around the current hot issue of digitalization. The issues here echo Baker’s thesis, for they too ask to what extent paper copies of journals now primarily distributed electronically will be kept, or whether the production and accessibility of a paper version of indexes will be superceded by only electronic copies, or they may question the use of digitalization as a preservation technique in archives. Only time will tell if lessons learned from Baker’s *Double Fold* will provide enough empirical data and reasoning so that scholars, the educated public, and librarians in the trenches will be given an opportunity to weigh in with their concerns — in short, who it is that will play a real part in the digitalization debate.

**Works cited**


THE VIEW FROM THE INTERSECTION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY WOMEN & WORK

by Linda Esser

This essay addresses some of the silences in the library literature regarding school library women. First and foremost, it is about the intersection of their identities as women and their identities as school librarians; the essay attempts to explain that their work cannot be, should not be, considered as separate from the women who enact it. These women are not taken off the shelf each morning and set in motion in school libraries, only to then be put back on the shelf when the last child or teacher leaves the building. Rather, school library women bring a biography of lived experiences to their work. Those experiences accompany them into the building in the morning, stay with them as they carry out their work during the day and leave with them at the end of the school day. They are women who have chosen to become school librarians, not school librarians who are coincidentally women — a subtle but critical distinction the profession has yet to make.

“Our Female Heritage”

“School librarianship—frequently regarded as a low status and alien activity by both the education and library professions.”

Reader in Library and Information Services, 1974, p. 57

In 1993, Grover and Fowler reviewed published research and doctoral dissertations written about school librarians and school libraries for a five-year period (1987-1991). They reviewed a total of 153 research reports covering 183 topics. Not surprisingly, more often than not, research emphasis in the field focused on profession processes rather than school library users or the individuals who carry out their work as school librarians. Forty-one reports categorized under the heading “Library Media Specialist” were “concerned with the preparation, role, activities, or professional status of a library media professional” (Grover & Fowler, 1993, p. 243). The list of topics within that category is wide-ranging, covering professional education, employment trends, role of the school library media specialist and necessary personality characteristics. During the last thirty years, Grover and Fowler explain, the predominant theme in the research has been the attempt to define the field, “to delineate the school library media program and the role of the school library media specialist by evaluating library
media programs, surveying the role perception and exploring the characteristics of exemplary programs” (Grover & Fowler, 1993, p. 242). This theme accounts for more than one-third of the research literature from 1987-1991.

Kenneth Haycock (1995), a noted scholar and researcher in the field, provides another comprehensive review of the research literature. His review of the research covers a range of topics that deal with issues as diverse as the school librarian’s role in student reading habits to public librarian/school librarian cooperation, but most focus on single aspects or roles of librarians and their work. He notes numerous studies document the effects of school librarians and libraries on student learning and achievement.

Perhaps the most gratifying aspect of the research literature on school librarianship is the virtual absence of discussion of school librarians as women, or school librarianship as a female-intensive profession. Jane Ann Hannigan and Hilary Crew addressed this issue in a 1993 article in Wilson Library Bulletin and Hannigan (1994) came back to it again in her “Keynote Address to the Association of Library and Information Science Educators” (ALISE). In the address, Hannigan describes the basic premises upon which the profession of library and information science have been built and the effects of these premises on women: “white, middle-class, male paradigms...have systematically, if unconsciously, silenced and excluded women” (p. 297). She recommends that “we re-examine our history and the basic premises, both of that history and of current theory and practice to include ideas, people, and practices that have been excluded” (p 297). In particular, she points to the example of school librarianship. She refers to its rich history of “innovative and creative women; yet they and their contributions are almost never discussed in either text or classroom” (Hannigan, 1994, p. 298).

Hannigan (1994) wonders whether this systematic exclusion of women from the history of librarianship limits the kinds of questions we ask within the discipline. Hannigan and Crew (1993) suggest that feminist scholarship can disrupt the silences in the literature regarding library women and their work. “Feminist scholarship reaffirms the need for situational/contextual explanations and acknowledges both difference and connectedness between women and the men with whom they work” (Hannigan & Crew, 1993, p. 28). Therefore, researchers need to acknowledge the authenticity of women’s subjective experiences and ways of knowing as inquirers and participants. Hannigan (1994) challenges each researcher in the discipline to break the present mold, take risks, and make clear to editors of journals and books the need to address the concerns of library women throughout the professional literature. “We simply must develop a body of literature for our field that is gender-fair and more truly representative of over half of the population” (p. 311).

However, Hannigan and Crew have overlooked difference and connectedness between library women and the library women with whom they work...
in their advocacy for feminist research scholarship. Research that accepts Hannigan’s (1994) challenge confronts the female-intensive character of librarianship and examines situational/contextual explanations as centered there rather than on the periphery.

Roma Harris (1992) places library women at the center of her work, *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman’s Profession*. An avowedly feminist scholar, Harris defines female-intensive professions as “occupations in which a very high proportion of the workers are women” (p. 3). Although women numerically dominate female-intensive professions, it is primarily men who exercise control by holding a disproportionate number of positions of authority. Technology and management are considered “masculine” domains of library work, while service roles and work with children are relegated to the province of library women.

Harris comments that the literature of female-intensive professions is saturated with “examples of what might best be described as an obsession with status” (Harris, 1992, p. 3). The author explores the topics of self-doubt and self-blame in female intensive professions. She suggests that this depredation does not come from the perspectives of outsider sociologists and theorists alone but that some of the most strident self-abnegation comes from within, with librarians blaming each other for their marginal professional status.

The author writes at length on Dee Garrison’s (1979) pivotal work, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and the American Society, 1876-1920*. Along with Suzanne Hildebrand (1995) and Christina Baum (1992), Harris reads Garrison from a feminist scholarship framework. According to these scholars, Garrison posits that women are responsible for the feminization of the profession and its attendant problems of low status and low pay. Further, Garrison contends that the predominance of women in library work is responsible for the hundred years’ war over the professional standing of librarianship.

*Apostles of Culture* (1979) made public what was obvious to the library workforce—that the workforce was, and continues to be, dominated by women—and placed that dominance in a historical context. However, Garrison’s work has had another, less salutary effect on librarianship. To be feminized is to be compared to masculinized and found wanting. Because of Garrison’s work, feminized and feminization have become words with negative connotations, a condition to be avoided by moving toward the masculine model of a profession and the technological domain. Garrison’s work seems to suggest that feminized and feminization are librarianship’s dirty words.

Clearly, librarianship, particularly youth services librarianship, is a female-intensive profession. In 1995, one out of five persons awarded the degree of Master of Library Science in the United States accepted positions connected to youth services in public or school libraries. Of that number, the
majority of those who accepted positions related to work in youth services in libraries were women: 94% in public libraries; 92% as teacher-librarians (Zipkowitz, 1995).

An analysis of the listings of secondary, middle and elementary schools taken from the Directory of Kentucky’s Libraries and Archives: 1994-1995 (Bank, 1994) reveals that, in secondary schools, approximately 97% (216 of 222) of school librarians were women; in middle schools, 95.5% (178 of 186); and in elementary schools, 99.4% (619 of 622). These statistics are probably similar to other states, with the substantial majority of school library women in positions at the elementary school level.

Daniel D. Barron’s (1995) “School Library Media Program Women: A Celebration of Our Female Heritage,” praises the many women who have contributed to the history of school librarianship. Barron presents an abbreviated chronological history of the development of school libraries and the major events and school library women that have shaped them. It is ironic that one of the few published articles on school library women is written by a male. While focusing on “our female heritage,” Barron ignores gender and claims that same heritage for both male school librarians and school library women. There are indeed male school librarians. Their numbers are few and they are more likely to be found working in secondary and middle schools rather than elementary (Bank, 1994).

Male school librarians may explain their work and their place in schools in very different ways from their women counterparts. Questions remain as to whether, as Barron (1995) suggests, a collective experience of “our female heritage” (p. 4) exists, one that is common to all school librarians. Where do the contributions of men to the history of the profession fit into “our female heritage”? If the research on school librarians is to be gender fair as Hannigan (1994) proposes, then school library men must be invited to explain their work and the place their work holds in their lives. The stories of both men and women should offer further insights into how professional practice is enacted in school libraries.

Sarah Innis Fenwick’s “Library Service to Children and Young People” (1976) in Library Trends presents a chronological, glowing “house-history” of the development of library services to children and young adults. Fenwick focuses on the changes in the education system and school curriculum that occurred in tandem with the growth of youth services in libraries during the Progressive Era. Surprisingly, she credits young people as “instigators of the development of library services to fit their needs” and remarks that the “spontaneous pressure of youth on community services can be traced throughout the history of the public library” (Fenwick, 1976, p. 330). Fenwick’s description of school libraries and their role in the education setting are nearly euphoric.

In many schools the library has become a media center in every dimension of the term—a learning center for students, a resources center for
teachers, a study center, a viewing and listening center, a communications center, and a variety of other designations that attempt to interpret to the school population what a library means to teaching and learning in today’s schools (Fenwick, 1976, p. 355).

In contrast, Elaine Fain (1978) takes a critical look at the history of youth services in libraries in “The Library and American Education: Education Through Secondary School.” Fain places the growth and development of public libraries as institutions committed to the education and acculturation of adults and children, particularly immigrant children, in social, economic, cultural, ethnic, racial and gender contexts. The author does not flinch from pointing out that this missionary-like zeal of children’s services library women was less than altruistic and deeply embedded in the biases of the dominant culture of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Effie L. Power, considered one of the early luminaries in the development of youth services, stated in a 1914 pamphlet that “what children read depends very largely upon temperament and racial tendencies” (Fain, 1978, p. 341). Power’s judgment of Jewish, German, and Slavic children was no less discriminatory and harsh.

Fain references the work of critical cultural and education historians David Tyack and Michael Katz and library historian Michael Harris in her reading of the history of youth services in libraries. She examines the role of progressivism in both librarianship and education, and discusses the effects of the acceptance of the first Certain Report by the National Education Association (NEA) and American Library Association (ALA), and its effect on the development of school libraries. Fain explains the changes in both education and school librarianship brought about by the launch of Sputnik in 1957, when school libraries moved from an emphasis on reading guidance and motivation to a curriculum centered place that supported scientific learning models in academic disciplines.

Commenting on the status of school libraries, Fain writes that school libraries and school librarians have failed to fulfill expectations. Bedeviled by budget constraints, controlled by state legislatures, departments of education and local school boards, exhorted to ever increasing responsibilities by leaders of national and state professional associations, and engaged in a near-constant identity crisis, the idyllic school libraries and school librarians described by Fenwick (1976) quoted earlier in this essay are largely the stuff of professional myth. Elaine Fain observes,

Throughout the literature on school libraries there runs an undercurrent of disappointment. It is over the disparity between the idea of the school library (and the school librarian) as being at the hub of a creative instructional program, and the actuality—the school library has frequently had only a marginal role....

On various occasions the blame for the failure to reach the ideal has been laid on teachers, administrators, school librarians, or stu-
The debate appears to be endless and rather futile, perhaps because so many unstated premises about education are assumed by all participants. In general, however, it seems to have passed into the library literature that school libraries are now or should be media centers; further, school librarians have on the whole ceased to question the wisdom of this progression (Fain, 1978, pp. 344-345).

Here, then, is Roma Harris’s (1992) blame game played out in the arena of school librarianship. Anyone who reads the literature of school librarianship cannot escape the finger-pointing in article after article and self-help book after self-help book. Teachers are blamed for not understanding the importance of information literacy and the school librarian’s role as “instructional consultant” or the recent, more palatable designation of “instructional partner.” Administrators are blamed for not understanding the role of the school library and school librarian in the instructional program of the school, and for lack of financial support for the library’s program. National and state professional association leaders blame building-level school librarians for lack of initiative in securing funding and an inability or reluctance to implement the proscribed tenets of *Information Power* (AASL & AECT, 1988, 1998), commonly known as “IP1” and “IP2.”

This particular blame game is not a new one. Rather, it is deeply embedded in the history of school librarianship, of school library women caught up in a game with rules not of their own choosing. Pearl Carson (1930) argues that school librarians should have “a rank on any school faculty equal to that of teachers, should receive the same salary as they if offering the same qualifications of education and experience as theirs” (p. 44). Thus, as early as 1930, the status of school librarians and the working relationships between school librarians and classroom teachers was a topic for discussion and, apparently, a site of conflict. In “The Librarian and the School Faculty,” published in *Wilson Bulletin for Librarians*, Carson makes a case for school librarians whose qualifications are at least equal to those of classroom teachers. Her advocacy for equality of salary, position and social privileges carries with it acceptance of responsibilities to attend the same meetings teachers are expected to attend. In addition to equal salaries, Carson advocates for the same vacation time as teachers with added salary for any additional weeks’ work done in the school. She laments the fact that these conditions do not always prevail and raises the question that, if school librarians and teachers are not treated equally, “is the failure due to the librarians’ offering insufficient qualifications or to the schools’ lack of recognition of what should be expected of librarians?” (Carson, 1930, p. 44). Even with equality, Carson explains, difficulties remain.

A change of attitude, it seems, is needed between librarians and teachers, if the two are to work together harmoniously and efficiently on a school staff…There prevailed, it seemed to me, in both librarians and teachers a lack of tolerance and bigness of spirit. Teachers refused to understand the necessity and reason-
ableness of many of the librarians’ requirements of them; and, on the other hand, too many librarians recognizing only the need for exactness, accuracy, and detail in their work, valuable as these are, were failing to look up and on out of the valley of their own narrow conceptions of life and duty (Carson, 1930, p. 45).

Searching for Perspectives in the Wider World of Women and Work

“There is much to be discovered where teacher identity and a person’s identity intersect.”

Maxine Greene

Maxine Greene’s (Greene, 1995, p. vii) statement is as relevant for school library women as it is for classroom teachers—both female-intensive low status professions. Much remains to be discovered where school librarian identity and a woman’s identity intersect. In order to understand the constraints and possibilities that operate around school librarians negotiating work relationships with classroom teachers, the profession must venture beyond the limited literature of school librarianship for fresh perspectives to where scholars in anthropology, sociology and education have researched the kinds of interactions and relationships that take place among women negotiating relationships with women within the wider world of work.

Women United, Women Divided: Comparative Studies of Ten Contemporary Cultures (Caplan & Bujra, 1982) is a collective work on the issue of solidarity of female workers. Ten feminist sociologists and anthropologists examine the concept of female solidarity, a product of the women’s movement, in very different cultural contexts. This concept assumes that women, as members of a biological “sisterhood,” have a necessary basis for solidarity. However, the biological fact of sisterhood does not automatically generate sisterly feelings among groups of women. Janet M. Bujra (1982) quotes Wallman, who suggests that we carefully examine this kind of thinking: “the significance of being female...varies with the technology, setting, class, context, task, rank, age, profession, kinship, wealth and economics” (p. 18). Bujra concurs with Wallman’s admonition for caution with regard to the use of women as an analytical category and comments on specific instances where the analytical category of women does not hold up under scrutiny. One of the instances described by Bujra is particularly enlightening when considering the relationship between school library women and classroom teachers: “within any one society women are often divided against themselves in terms of their differential relation to class and status hierarchies, as well as factors such as age and kinship affiliation” (Bujra, 1982, p. 19).

The notion of solidarity expresses itself in different ways in the research presented. These expressions range from “tacit moral support, through instrumental assistance, to organized cultural activities specifically focused
on women’s concerns” (Bujra, 1982, p. 14). Many of the participants described in the studies were in situations where they were oppressed as women. Bujra and her colleagues found that, rather than challenging their oppression, women often acted together in ways that reinforced it. In other situations, the forms of solidarity were imposed on women by patriarchal social and cultural constructs. Women in these situations “exhibited no unity whatever” and “were deeply divided among themselves” (Bujra, 1982, p. 15). From their research, the scholars perceived there is no cross-cultural female solidarity. “Gradually it emerged that, in considering women co-operating and supporting each other, we were facing a different analytical issue, which had to do more with the social and ideological manifestations of various forms of the sexual division of labor” (Bujra, 1982, p. 14).

The story of the Mathare woman is one of the ten ethnographies about women collected in *Women United, Women Divided*. Each day, the Mathare woman negotiates her work activities with an intricate network of women who brew an illegal beer called *buzaa* to eke out a subsistence living for herself and her children. Because she is one of the *buzaa* brewers and engages in the same kinds of work activities, she understands their needs and they, in turn, understand hers. These women give her assistance in numerous ways. If she requires equipment to brew *buzaa*, she calls on members of her production network. They warn her of imminent police raids, inform her relatives and friends when she is arrested or seriously ill, and care for her children if necessary. She cannot successfully carry out the work of production without their assistance (Nelson, 1979).

The Mathare woman has formed and holds membership in many networks. According to Barnes, anthropologists use the concept of networks to describe a “configuration of cross-cutting interpersonal bonds in some unspecified way casually connected with the action of this person and the social institutions of their society” (Barnes, 1972 : 3)” (Nelson, 1979, p. 79). Nelson (1979) comments that networks are not unique to women, that all individuals hold membership in networks. Nelson (1979) focuses on and distinguishes between two distinct networks formed by the Mathare woman. These are effective and extended. Effective networks are those “in which the members interact frequently, and links connect all the members” (p. 80). Effective networks are activated daily to cope with a variety of problems and are characterized by interacting members living and working in close physical proximity to one another. Extended networks are less structured. Members may be friends, relatives or acquaintances.

Reciprocal exchanges are integral to an effective network. Members of the network are expected to abide by the “ethic of neighborliness and friendliness” (Nelson, 1979, p. 88) when enacting these reciprocal exchanges. Members know that ignoring this convention is to risk sanction by others in the network and the ultimate sanction of deliberate exclusion.
Like the Mathare woman, Five Towns’ (Lortie, 1975) teachers have similar unwritten rules for reciprocal exchanges. In Five Towns, the etiquette rule seems to be “live and let live, and help when asked” (p. 195). Classroom teachers control the extent of their engagement with colleagues. Close-ness or distancing is a matter of individual choice. “The norms respect the individual’s right to choose between association and privacy; they also protect individual teachers against unsolicited interventions by others.… Those who want close relationships with peers can undertake them, but all are supposed to render assistance when asked” (Lortie, 1975, p. 195).

Considering school library history in the light of Fain (1978), Carson (1930) Bujra (1982) and the other writings discussed in this paper, an argument can be made that school library women and classroom teachers are deeply divided against themselves. School library women, operating under professional constructs not of their choosing, violate the “ethic of neighborliness and friendliness” (Nelson, 1979, p. 88) and break the rule of “live and let live, and help when asked” (Lortie, 1975, p. 195) in their day-to-day exchanges with classroom teachers. Perhaps it is not teachers who “refuse to understand the necessity and reasonableness of many librarians’ requirements of them” (Carson, 1930, p. 45) but school librarianship that disdains understanding how teachers’ effective networks operate.

Effective Networks as Collaborative Cultures

The research findings of Hargreaves (1994, 1991) suggest that collaboration among teachers takes place in one of two kinds of school cultures: one that supports teachers working together and one that imposes what Hargreaves terms “contrived collegiality” (Hargreaves 1991, p. 53). The author characterizes a collaborative culture as one that is spontaneous, voluntary, development oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable. In contrast, Hargreaves describes contrived collegiality as administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space, and predictable. Hargreaves explains:

Scheduled meetings and planning sessions may form part of collaborative cultures, but they do not dominate the arrangements for working together. In collaborative cultures, much of the way teachers work together is almost unnoticed, brief yet frequent, informal encounters. This may take the form of passing words and glances, praises and thanks, offers to exchange classes in tough times, suggestions about new ideas, informal discussions about new units, sharing problems or meeting parents together. Collaborative cultures are, in this sense, not clearly or closely regulated. They are constitutive of the very way that the teacher’s working life operates in the school (Hargreaves, 1991, p. 53-54).

Consider both the effective network of the Mathare woman (Nelson, 1979) and Hargreaves’ description of a collaborative culture. It can be argued
that a collaborative culture is a kind of effective network, one specifically related to the school setting and the work relationships teachers negotiate with each other. Both are an essential part of the way the school librarian’s and the Mathare woman’s work lives operate. In both the effective network and the collaborative culture, encounters among members may be brief and are often informal. Reciprocal exchanges in both the effective network and the collaborative culture are convention bound (Lortie, 1975; Nelson, 1979). Both the effective network and the collaborative culture cannot exist unless relationships are negotiated that form the links to complete them.

Collaborative planning between school librarians and classroom teachers appears to be a consistent site of conflict. The role of the school librarian as “instructional consultant” (AASL & AECT, 1998) or “instructional partner” (AASL & AECT, 1999) is central to what the published documents and public stance of the profession describe as legitimate activity for school librarians. The recent revision of Information Power (AASL & AECT, 1998) uses the more palatable instructional partner, replacing the off-putting instructional consultant (AASL & AECT, 1988). According to these documents, whether an instructional consultant or an instructional partner, as part of their work school librarians are directed to engage in collaborative planning with classroom teachers.

In 1998, Miller and Shontz reported the results of their research on high-service school libraries. The researchers collected data from 628 schools for the study. Of these schools, 141 (22.4%) met the authors’ criteria for high-service schools. These criteria include services traditionally provided by school librarians such as curriculum-integrated skills instruction, “collaborates with teachers,” “helps teachers develop/implement/evaluate learning” and “provides flexible [library media center] schedule” (Miller & Shontz, 1998, p. 31). Miller and Shontz (1998) compare data for informal and formal planning at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The authors conclude that school librarians in high-service school libraries spend significantly more time engaged in both formal and informal instructional planning than do their counterparts in non-high-service schools, making a case for collaborative planning.

Reading against the texts of the research report is instructive. The statistics reported by Miller and Shontz (1998) clearly connect high-service schools with formal collaborative planning between school librarians and classroom teachers. However, a reconfiguring of the statistical data appears to support the conclusion that, for the elementary schools included in the study, more collaborative instructional planning between school librarians and classroom teachers takes place informally than formally. This “read” on the data cuts across high-service and non-high-service schools. In high-service elementary schools, school librarians engage in informal collaborative planning with teachers 1.39 hours more frequently each week than they do formal collaborative planning and in non-high-service elementary schools, 1.24 hours.
Arguably, school librarianship is about service. Carrying out that service requires negotiating relationships with classroom teacher colleagues. The professional guidelines, standards, and self-help books tell us repeatedly that this is the case. It would seem, then, it is essential that we make sense of how these relationships operate, of the factors that enable these negotiations and the factors that interfere. This will not happen, however, as long as the profession continues to ignore the fact that these exchanges take place between school librarians and classroom teachers, both members of female-intensive, low status professions. As long as research in school librarianship continues to view these exchanges as decontextualized, isolated events referred to as “collaboration,” scholars in the field will continue to produce, as Michael Harris (1986) describes, results that are “professionally palatable” (p. 525) and that support what is already determined to be standard professional practice.

Dan C. Lortie’s (1975) *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, examines the world of classroom teachers and the meanings they give their work. Interviews were conducted with ninety-four classroom teachers selected by a random sampling procedure. Survey data from teachers in a second school district provided additional information for the study. Lortie’s research is exhaustive and is considered pivotal in the field of education despite its gender-biased texts. The author presents a chronological and sociological history of education in the United States. In addition, he examines the issues of recruitment to the field of classroom teaching and teacher retention. His perspectives on the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of teaching, and their effects on teacher sentiments and behaviors are crucial to understanding the constraints school library women face in their relationships with classroom teachers.

In some instances, Lortie (1975) finds the same kind of informal relationships that Hargreaves (1991) characterizes as a collaborative culture. Some of the teachers from Lortie’s “Five Towns” (p. 193) reported jointly planning classes and occasionally switching classes for short periods of time. The teachers who identified themselves as having a great deal of contact with other teachers were usually individuals who worked in a mutually agreed pair relationship initially based on friendship. While a great deal of cooperation occurred outside of the classroom, the teachers chose to maintain classroom boundaries when they worked with their students. Lortie suggests that this is a consistent pattern with teachers.

The pattern is striking; positive events and outcomes are linked to two sets of actors—the teacher and the students... But all other persons, without exception, were connected with undesirable occurrences. Negative allusions were made to parents, the principal, the school nurse, colleagues—in fact, to anyone and everyone who “intrudes” on classroom events. The cathected scene is stripped of all transactions save those between teacher and student (Lortie, 1975, p. 169).
Five Towns’ teachers described “a good day” in terms of having students to themselves, as a day when the classroom door could be closed and teaching was ascendant, a school day without interruption. The reason behind the teachers’ statements and Lortie’s conclusion is critical to understanding one of the fundamental barriers to achieving the kind of collaborative interaction dictated by the professional literature. Classroom teaching provides two kinds of rewards to teachers: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic rewards are usually considered those that are monetary in nature and individual teachers have little control over them. Salaries and salary schedule decisions are in the hands of bargaining units, local school boards and state legislatures. Intrinsic rewards are psychic in nature. Unlike extrinsic rewards, the degree and intensity of intrinsic rewards can vary. Psychic rewards accrue to teachers as a result of positive interactions with students. Increased efforts on the part of the teacher can increase those rewards. Lortie (1975) comments that “student affection and regard are…intrinsically rewarding; people normally enjoy being the object of affection and esteem” (p. 120). When students work with other classroom teachers, the school librarian, or special area teachers, the flow of psychic rewards to the classroom teacher is interrupted. The result, according to Lortie, is that teachers become competitors for the accrual of psychic rewards.

In trying to elicit favorable feelings from students (whatever the motivation), teachers are willy-nilly placed in competition with each other; some will obviously succeed better than others (Lortie, 1975, p. 120).

There is a very clear, unmistakable, message in Lortie’s work for school librarianship as a profession, school library women as individuals and, in particular, for the professional leadership and its continual quest for power and prestige in the education arena. It is a message that classroom teachers have been futilely sending to school librarianship for years. Classroom teachers have, through silent and persistent resistance, consistently opposed a contrived collegiality planning structure imposed by an outside force unrelated to the usual authority hierarchy in the school. “Given the linkage between cellular isolation and opportunities to optimize psychic rewards, it is not surprising that many teachers resist alternative instructional arrangements” (Lortie, 1975, p. 141).

There is little doubt that this oppositional reading of the texts discussed in this essay will engender much head-wagging in mainstream school librarianship and leave the taste of “bitter milk” on the profession’s palate (Grumet, 1988, p. xi). School library women, in particular, rarely question the pronouncements of national and state professional leadership, and the pronouncements progress unchallenged into standard professional practice. The multi-disciplinary perspectives on the intersection of school library women and their work suggest that there are situational/contextual explanations for the long, unsuccessful struggle to enforce a contrived collegiality instructional arrangement on classroom teachers. Why should school library women have control over classroom teachers’ work lives?
What are the political, economic and social rewards that would accrue to national and state professional organizations should school library women succeed? It is past time to dare disturb this particular universe.

Works cited


Footnotes


THE MYTH OF THE NEUTRAL PROFESSIONAL

by Robert Jensen

The rules of life in modern authoritarian and totalitarian states are clear. The state — which represents the interests of a particular set of elites — governs through a combination of coercion and violence that typically is quite brutal, and propaganda that typically is heavy-handed. In that formula, intellectuals have a clear role: Serve the state by articulating values and describing social, political, and economic forces in a fashion consistent with state power and its ideology. To the degree one does that, one will be rewarded. The Soviet Union was perhaps the paradigm case of this kind of system.

In a contemporary liberal, pluralist, capitalist democracy such as the United States, things are more complex. The state — which represents the interests of a particular group of elites — still maintains a monopoly on violence and uses it when necessary to maintain control. But because of the nature of the system and the advances made by popular movements in the past century, the state cannot rule simply by force or crude propaganda. Those who rule also realize that one advantage of a relatively open society is that it fosters a dynamic, creative intellectual climate that produces innovation. To elites, that innovation is desirable in certain realms (especially the sciences, both pure and applied) but potentially dangerous in other realms (especially the humanities and social sciences). How to encourage innovation in one arena but discourage it in the other? This requires the state to maximize social control through a more complex management of ideology and the institutions that reproduce and transmit that ideology.

In short, the liberal, pluralist, and democratic features of the system are constantly in tension with capitalism and the state (which typically serves the interests of capital). As Alex Carey put it: “The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.”

But propaganda in a liberal, pluralist, democratic system is not achieved by direct state control of the institutions in which intellectual work is done and through which ideas are transmitted. Intellectuals in the contemporary United States do not face the crude choices (subordinate yourself to the
state or risk serious punishment) that intellectuals in more authoritarian states face. While dissident intellectuals in the United States are not always treated well — they may risk not being able to find permanent employment in an officially recognized institution, for example — they are not at this point in history routinely subject to serious consequences. (Note: While that is true for those from the more privileged sectors of society, there are contemporary examples of harsh treatment. Sami Al-Arian, a tenured Palestinian computer science professor at the University of South Florida, was vilified in the mass media and fired in December 2001 for his political views. In 2003 he was indicted by the U.S. government on charges that he used an academic think-tank at USF and an Islamic charity as fronts to raise money for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. He was denied bail later that year and a judge set his trial for 2005.)

In a liberal, pluralist, capitalist democracy, the elites in the state and the corporation must adopt a strategy different from authoritarian states to contain the potential threat from intellectuals. Elites need intellectuals in some arenas to innovate, while in other arenas they need intellectuals to articulate values and accounts of reality that will support the system of concentrated power. But given the substantial freedoms in place in the society, allowing intellectuals to have the time and resources to pursue the truly independent, critical inquiry needed for innovation poses a risk: What if some of those intellectuals engage in that work and come to a critique of the concentration of power that elites want to maintain? What if, instead of articulating values in support of that power, intellectuals articulate other values? Even worse, what if those intellectuals use their privilege not only to talk about such things but to engage in political activity to change the nature of the system and the distribution of power?

In short: In a system in which intellectuals can’t easily be killed or shipped off to the gulag when they get feisty, how can they be kept in line?

The Neutral Professional

Enter the myth of the neutral professional, as a way to neutralize professionals. Here I will shift from the term “intellectual” to “professional,” because I want to focus on how the myth of neutrality works in specific occupational groups: journalists, university professors, and librarians, three of the most important intellectual positions in this society.

In the political and philosophical sense in which I use the term here, neutrality is impossible. In any situation, there exists a distribution of power. Overtly endorsing or contesting that distribution are, of course, political choices; such positions are not neutral. But to take no explicit position by claiming to be neutral is also a political choice, particularly when one is given the resources that make it easy to evaluate the consequences of that distribution of power and potentially affect its distribution.
Myles Horton, the founder of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee and a legendary figure in progressive organizing and adult education, is one of many who have critiqued the act of claiming neutrality, which he described as “an immoral act.” Neutrality, he said, is “a code word for the existing system. It has nothing to do with anything but agreeing to what is and will always be — that’s what neutrality is. Neutrality is just following the crowd. Neutrality is just being what the system asks us to be.”

Similarly, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said that neutrality is choosing the side of the oppressor: “If you are in a situation where an elephant is sitting on the tail of a mouse and you say, ‘Oh no, no, no, I am neutral,’ the mouse is not going to appreciate your neutrality.”

This same insight lies behind the title of Howard Zinn’s political/intellectual memoir, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train.* If a train is moving down the track, one can’t plop down in a car that is part of that train and pretend to be sitting still; one is moving with the train. Likewise, a society is moving in a certain direction — power is distributed in a certain way, leading to certain kinds of institutions and relationships, which distribute the resources of the society in certain ways. We can’t pretend that by sitting still — by claiming to be neutral — we can avoid accountability for our roles (which will vary according to people’s place in the system). A claim to neutrality means simply that one isn’t taking a position on that distribution of power and its consequences, which is a passive acceptance of the existing distribution. That is a political choice.

In the contemporary United States, professionals who want to be taken seriously in the mainstream political/intellectual culture (and have a chance at the status that comes with that) are encouraged to accept and replicate the dominant ideology. Two key tenets of that ideology are the claims of (1) the benevolence of the United States in foreign policy (the notion that the United States, alone among nations in history, pursues a policy rooted in a desire to spread freedom and democracy) and (2) the naturalness of capitalism (the notion that capitalism is not only the most efficient system, but the only sane and moral economic system). At the same time, those same professionals are encouraged to be politically neutral, but within this narrow framework that takes the legitimacy of state power and corporate power as a given. In practice, this means one is supposed to present material that takes no explicit position on which policies should be implemented in the existing system, but one is not supposed to step back and ask whether that existing system itself is coherent or moral.

I am not arguing that people who work within, and accept, the dominant ideology are by definition wrong or corrupt; reasonable people can disagree about how best to understand and analyze complex systems. My point is simply that it is not a position of neutrality. Those of us who routinely critique the dominant view are political; that is, the politics we have come to hold certainly has an effect on the conclusions we reach — but no more and no less than people who don’t critique. That is not to say that
journalism, university teaching, or library work is nothing but the imposition of one’s political predispositions on reporting/writing, research/teaching, or acquisitions/program design, but simply to observe that everyone has a politics that affects their intellectual work. The appropriate question isn’t “are you political?” but instead should be “can you defend the conclusions you reach?” It is interesting that the criticism I have received in my university career for “being biased” or “politicizing the classroom” almost never includes a substantive critique of my ideas or my teaching. It appears to be sufficient to point out that I deviate from the conventional wisdom, from which the conclusion can be drawn that I am bad.

To return to the train metaphor: When we ride on trains, we typically conform to the system. The trains run on a certain schedule to certain destinations. Once a person decides to take the train, it’s understandable why we typically focus on working within that established framework. We don’t tend to look at a schedule and then demand that the railway company route a train to a different location at a different time; in most cases it’s easier to fit into the system than to buck it. But that keeps us from asking important questions: Should this train be on another schedule? Should these tracks be ripped up and laid elsewhere? Or, maybe, should we not be riding trains at all in favor of some other transportation system?

The Rules

My adult life has been spent in journalism and academia. In journalism, the rules of “objectivity” keep reporters and editors hemmed in and discourage examination of those big-picture questions. Central to that is most journalists’ slavish reliance on “official sources” — those people in positions of some authority within the mainstream institutions. These people from government and the corporate sector are presumed to be credible sources and, hence, have great power to determine what will be a legitimate story and how it will be defined; they are news framers and shapers.

In university teaching, similar objectivity rules are in place, varying somewhat depending on the discipline. The primary vehicle for this has been importing the methodology from the physical sciences into the social sciences, in an attempt to give the study of humans and human institutions the imprimatur of “real” science. In such a system, political and moral choices are obscured by methodology.

The result is that both journalism and universities are, in general, overwhelmingly conservative spaces, in the sense that they function mostly to conserve the existing distribution of power. But because they also are liberal institutions (in the Enlightenment sense of adhering to broad values of free thought), they also allow critical inquiry that takes some people outside the consensus that favors the existing order. In my experience in both kinds of institutions, universities tend to be slightly more open to critique because there is more original work done there, which requires less stringent controls.
This argument about neutrality, and the assessment of modern U.S. journalism and higher education, can be applied to libraries and librarians. I speak here not as an expert or insider, but as a patron and citizen, someone actively involved in political organizing and eager to see a dramatic expansion of political dialogue and activity in the United States. My views are rooted not only in my status as a fellow professional in an intellectual field, but as a political activist.

**Librarians' Choices**

Two areas where these issues clearly are relevant for librarians are acquisitions and programming. Given limited resources and physical space, no library can acquire all possible publications and display them in the same fashion. Obviously, choices are inevitable. Those choices should be made on sound professional grounds, just as should choices about what perspectives a journalist includes in a story or what material a professor includes in a course. These professionals are trained to evaluate the quality of a book, source, or theory, and should be free to use that training and exercise judgment. But we also should not ignore that all those decisions have a politics to them. That does not mean they are purely political judgments, but that political and moral values — and the judgments that flow from them — inevitably affect the judgments.

To echo the arguments above, the attempt to cast such judgments as neutral merely accepts the conventional wisdom and existing distribution of power. Take a simple example involving the common assumption in the United States that the capitalist economic system is the only rational and morally defensible way to organize an economy. There can be, and often is, much debate about how to structure and administer a capitalist economy, but the system itself is rarely contested, despite centuries of resistance to capitalism around the world and considerable intellectual work underlying that resistance. Now, imagine that a librarian wants to produce a display of the library’s resources on economics to encourage patrons to think about the subject. In many libraries such a display would include no critiques of capitalism, but simply literature that takes capitalism as a given. Such a display that ignores critical material likely would produce no controversy (except perhaps a few complaints from anti-capitalists about the absence of critique, who could easily be dismissed as cranks). It is unlikely that school boards or city councils would take up the issue of the obvious bias against socialism and other non-capitalist economic systems. Consider what might happen if a librarian charged with this task actually produced a display that carefully balanced the amount of material from as many different perspectives as s/he could identify. In many places, that display would be denounced for its “obvious” socialist politics. Now, imagine that a librarian, observing the way in which Americans are systematically kept from being exposed to anti-capitalist ideas in the schools and mass media, decides to organize materials that compensate for that societal failure by emphasizing critiques of capitalism. That librarian could be guaranteed not only criticism and charges of political bias, but likely disciplinary action.
My point is simply that all of those decisions have a political dimension, which is unavoidable. My concern here is not which one is the right decision, but that the librarian whose display is in line with the conventional wisdom likely will escape criticism while any other choices will raise questions about “politicizing” what should be a professional decision. Unfortunately, this neutrality game will derail rather than foster serious discussion of the issues.

Programming is another important issue for librarians. In an increasingly depoliticized society in which there is less and less non-commercialized public space, it is crucial to claim as many venues as possible for public political interaction. We live in an odd time, when proliferating mass media channels flood us with more and more political talk, but there are few places where people can actually engage in politics as participants, not spectators. Libraries remain one of the few common spaces in the society where people come to engage ideas, and hence they are crucial sites where people looking for such engagement can find it, and where others can be encouraged to engage. Part of that can be accomplished by simply making space available. But librarians also can create opportunities for dialogue. Can that be done neutrally? The same analysis offered for the issue of acquisitions applies here. A professional librarian would make a judgment about what kind of programming is most needed in the community. While such programming shouldn’t be politically partisan, in the sense of advocating for only one viewpoint, the choices involved will be informed by political decisions.

In all of these situations, the question isn’t whether one is neutral, but whether one is truly independent from control and allowed to pursue free and open inquiry. In a healthy society, professionals would be given that independence — not just in theory but in practice — and out of the many choices that varied professionals would make, we could expect a rich cultural conversation and an engaged political dialogue.

The ideology of political neutrality, unfortunately, keeps professionals such as journalists, teachers, and librarians — as well as citizens — from understanding the relationship between power and the professions. Any claim to such neutrality is illusory; there is no neutral ground on which to stand anywhere in the world. Rather than bemoan that fact, I believe we should embrace it and acknowledge that it is the source of intellectual, political, and moral struggle and progress. If we take seriously this claim, then all people, no matter what their position, would have to articulate and defend the values and assumptions on which their claims are made. The other option is intellectual stagnation and political decline.
Footnotes

2 See webpage of United Faculty of Florida, http://w3.usf.edu/~uff/AlArian/
3 For details, see http://www.amuslimvoice.org/html/sami_al-arian_s_case.html.
6 Howard Zinn, You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

This is an edited version of a talk delivered to the Texas Library Association annual conference, San Antonio, March 19, 2004.

GOOGLE-LIKE PORTALS DO HOWEVER HAVE THEIR PLACE. AS THE UBIQUITOUS SEARCH ENGINES OF CHOICE THE WORLD OVER, THEY HAVE GRAFTED THEMSELVES ONTO THE INFORMATION SEEKING HABITS OF MOST PEOPLE AND ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN CENTRAL TO OUR INTERNET HABITS. I USE GOOGLE MYSELF. IT IS EASY, EFFICIENT, AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, RETRIEVES ENOUGH “USEFUL” INFORMATION ON ANY GIVEN TOPIC TO MAKE ALL OF US, MYSELF INCLUDED, GOOGLE JUNKIES OF A SORT. GOOGLE IS PURPORTED TO HANDLE 200 MILLION SEARCHES A DAY. INDEED 95% OF ALL WEB SEARCHES ARE HANDLED BY TWO PORTALS, GOOGLE AND YAHOO, WITH THE LIKES OF ASK JEEVES AND ALTAVISTA A DISTANT THIRD. FOR QUICK FACT-FINDING THESE SEARCH ENGINES ARE EXCELLENT. BUT WHEN WE CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF THESE COMMERCIAL PORTALS SOMEHOW REPLACING THE AVERAGE CITIZEN’S TRIP TO THE LIBRARY, THAT SURELY IS TROUBLING POSSIBILITY.

Hafner’s point is well taken. Neither Google nor Yahoo search on proper meta-data tags, still less on Dublin Core standards of indexing, the current library norm. Indeed these portals seem positively obdurate in their unwillingness to adopt Open Access standards of indexing that would reveal at least some of the “deep Web” to the average searcher. Sadly, the majority of the deep Web, which comprises tens of millions of pages of primary material digitized by universities, special collections, research centers, historical societies and scholars, is formidably invisible to the average Google neophyte typing away in her search-box. More to the point, commercial search engines have seemed equally reluctant to incorporate some sort of Z39.50 compliance standard that might allow a user to search through local online library catalogs. While this article was being written, OCLC announced that it would offer its entire collection of 53.3 million items connected to 928.6 million library holdings for “harvesting” by Google and Yahoo! And Google has launched a beta version of Google-Scholar intended to harvest just these sorts of resources. It’s unclear at this time whether the initiative began with OCLC or the search engine community, but regardless, if implemented, this is good news for Web surfers everywhere. It’s unclear at this time whether the initiative began with OCLC or the search engine community, but regardless, if implemented, this is good news for Web surfers everywhere.

There is also this to consider, that both Google and to a lesser extent Yahoo preside over what amounts to little more than an online popularity contest, arguably the biggest in history. Google’s innovation and success as a search engine rests on the fact that its underlying technology gathers data at lightning speed on the number of links between pages, rather than the actual pertinence of content requested. So a Google search becomes by default a sort of popularity vote, where the number of links far out-weigh content in retrieval algorithms. Matthew Hindman and Kenneth Cukier, joint fellows at Harvard’s Kennedy School, wrote in an insightful op-ed in the New York Times:

Behind Google’s complex ranking system is a simple idea: each link to a page should be considered a vote, and the pages with the most votes should be ranked first…. But what is good for Google is not necessarily good for the rest of the Web. The company’s technology is so strong that its competitors have adopted a similar approach to organizing online information, which means they now return similar search results. Thus popular sites become ever more popular, while obscure sites recede ever further into the ether. (NYT 8/23/04)

And there’s the rub, it’s a winner-take-all system. (See also: “How Google Works” The Economist, v. 372, no. 8393, Sept. 18th 2004 pp.32-34) In a corporate dominated society such as ours, where the voice of the marginalized and the revolutionary and the anti-establishmentarian go largely unheard, Google has the potential to aid the “do it yourself” web progressive with a message but meager resources to broadcast it. Web-casting becomes
the optimal vehicle for dissemination. But Google won’t get you there if
the link path is not already highly traveled to begin with, which may be
problematic on sites such as these. In this respect, Google is not much
different than other major media outlets, residing smugly in the middle
of a disquieting trend toward consolidation of information, managed by
the few at the expense of the many, where diverse radical voices are often
stifled. True, it is Google’s technology that makes it so, rather than its edi-
torial or political philosophy, but it nevertheless wields immense power in
the world of information management. In that capacity, it should be viewed
with rightful caution as an impartial information broker.

But there is room, I’d argue, for wider and closer collaboration between
libraries and commercial search engines where our joint interests should
intersect. There has been some movement in this direction. Google, for
one, has experimented with the term “searchable online database” with
quotation marks in its search string, which may or may not retrieve “deep
Web” material particularly well, but it is a start. All the same, one is left to
wonder why they shy away from indexing more thoroughly. Why not mine
our rich library collections now available online? Obviously this does not
apply to licensed databases, which are only accessible through login or IP
authentication.

On the flip side, it is also worth noting that to date, Google and its clones,
to their credit, have stood firm with libraries against filtering, despite the
hysteria surrounding CIPA and other anti-pornography rulings. Type “gay
sex pics” in Google and there they are, a feat even a six-year-old with some
typing and spelling skills can do. But Yahoo has admitted filtering some
bestiality sites, and just a few years ago bowed to Christian Right pressure
to block several gay sites (see below). As is common with the corporate
world, their bedrock commitment to “free speech” is uneven.

Somewhat more troubling, most of the major commercial search engines
(Google claims otherwise) have been shown to accept corporate funds to
place paying sites at the top of hot topic search retrievals. This is known
in the business as “paid placement”. How are we to know which ones are
which? Type in “insomnia” and doubtless the top ten sites retrieved will try
to sell you a sleeping pill to alleviate it. Well fact is, we won’t know which
sites paid for placement and which didn’t. Is that top site retrieved really
the most authoritative, or just the site with the deepest pocket? (See for
example: “Search engines charged with false advertising” Shimm, Suzy.
The Local Planet. Spokane, WA.: Aug 1, 2001 v.2/30, p.9) As for the brou-
haha over paid placements, the most quoted refrain in reply is that being
commercial entities themselves, these search engines have a right to turn a
buck too on the free enterprise flywheel, who are we to gainsay them?

In short we never know what we are getting from a random search on
a commercial portal. By way of example, type in “AIDS” in any search
engine and you will likely retrieve over 20+ million hits – can this truly
be useful? Is any of it authoritative? We have no way of knowing. But for
a person with AIDS searching at a public terminal at the branch library in Brownsville TX, say, these search results may well be worthless in practical terms. The number of hits is simply too large to sift through meaningfully especially given how many may indeed be “garbage.” In other words, if information literacy isn’t your long suit, how can you tell a good site from a bum one? (See for example: “Dotcom Doctors: Both useful medical advice and potentially dangerous misinformation are available on the Internet.” Strickland, Eliza. Gambit Weekly. New Orleans, LA: Feb 03, 2004. v.25/5 p.39)

But the NYT’s Hafner, an internet booster of long standing, has it wrong to suggest the “biggest” problem of these search engines is their poor indexing. Far more troubling is the fact that until recently, actually until August 2004 to be exact, Google was a privately owned corporation, beholden to no one except its owners. True it has largely been free of scandal, and Google is generally conceded to be reasonably democratic, though voices differ regarding its Google.news service. (See for example: “News at the Speed of Google” Columbus Alive. Columbus, OH: Jan 16, 2003. v.20/2 p.3) Conversely, library activist Chuck Munson notes that Google.news banned San Francisco IndyMedia over an Isreal/Palestine controversy, when the indy site used the term “zionazi” in an online article. The term was offensive to many, and Google blocked the site in March of 2004 after numerous complaints were lodged. However, as Munson notes, Google does not block sites that use derogatory terms for Arabs such as “towelhead” “raghead” or “Islamofascist”. (See: InfoShop.Org: http://www.info-shop.org/inews/stories.php?story=03/09/04/0267960)

Be this as it may, like so many other corporate firms, in late 2003, Google followed the industry norm, and opened its latest research and development facility in Bangalore. Bangalore of course is India’s Silicon Valley, where decent programmers come at a fraction of the cost of counterparts in San Jose, California. To date, no lay-offs at the Google headquarters at Mountain View, California, have been announced but the trend is obvious. But now that it is beholden to stock holders and their demand for return on investment, the future at Google is predictable. As the joke says: What do you call a Silicon Valley programmer? Waiter!

Further, what are we to make of the recent Google IPO offering? As one stock site gloved: “Seldom has a financial event been so eagerly awaited by the investing world… [I]t will be the culmination of years of anticipation by stock market participants.” But the dot.bomb explosions of 1999/2000 doubtless still reverberate despite the giddy projections for Google’s future. In typical Google fashion, the company did not follow normal IPO protocols when it rolled out its public offering in August 2004, but instead used an internet auction to set its share price, bypassing the usual Wall St. investment houses altogether. But Google did warn that, once listed on NASDAQ, its initial share price might plunge once the hoopla subsided. But should we not ask, amazing as Google is at searching the Web, what in fact is it offering? Where’s its marketable product? Advertising is at a
minimum. It sells nothing itself. It’s search engine is free. One is left to wonder, why is it worth billions, $27 billion in fact at last count?

Publicly-traded Yahoo and other similarly traded search sites have corporate shortcomings too of course. In 2002, Yahoo was accused of unfair labor practices when it supported the firing of janitors who tried to unionize Team Services Inc., a company that hires cheap migrant workers to scrub Silicon Valley’s toilets, Yahoo’s included. As noted, Yahoo has also disabled sites it was hosting on a number of occasions because they were deemed “objectionable” solely because of content. Gay sites have been particularly targeted, such as the Guerrilla Queer Bar in Los Angeles, which the Christian Right had called “amoral.” Yahoo blocked the site, only to turn it back on when the outcry from the gay community grew louder than the yelps from the Christian Right. And in the spirit of Enron-esque greed-head behavior, Yahoo Inc. Chief Executive Terry Semel exercised options to buy 2 million shares of his company’s stock this past July (2004), then immediately sold all of it for a profit of more than $42.8 million. Same as it ever was.

But there is another more troubling fact that should be of true concern to libraries, more alarming to my mind than the stock-cashing behavior of Yahoo’s CEO. Far back as 2001, in the wake of the shameful passage of the USA PATRIOT Act by our supine Congress, the Electronic Frontier Foundation warned:

Be careful what you put in that Google search. The government may now spy on web surfing of innocent Americans, including terms entered into search engines, by merely telling a judge anywhere in the U.S. that the spying could lead to information that is “relevant” to an ongoing criminal investigation. The person spied on does not have to be the target of the investigation. This application must be granted and the government is not obligated to report to the court or tell the person spied upon what it has done.

[EFF 10/31/01 post on: http://www.eff.org/]

The ACLU has seconded this word of caution, and has stated publicly that Google records can be summarily subpoenaed by federal authorities under provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act. Indeed, several reports in the alternative press revealed that Google had itself agreed in principle to abide by such rulings if and when they might be asked to turn over their (actually our) search records.

If this weren’t bad enough, countless hundreds of library home pages, from public libraries to those at private colleges, use the Google search box as their search engine of choice. What a Trojan Horse have we created here? We tout our staunch resistance to the USA PATRIOT Act as champions of civil liberties on the one hand, then give away the keys to the citadel by letting Google manage our patrons’ search habits. Ashcroft doesn’t have to
send some bumbling flatfoot to the nearest library of scrutiny, his investigators can just drop by Google’s headquarters and ask for the records of any library using the Google search box, and Google will doubtless comply. (See IndyMedia@UK: http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2003/10/278746.html )

But in some respects Google and its clones are merely the logical tip of the digital iceberg. It is no news to anyone reading the Progressive Librarian over these past years, that the civic commons our public and academic libraries represent, is being eroded in any number of ways by the onslaught of our online addictions. Certainly the gate counts at academic libraries have been going down steadily since the early 1990s, when access to electronic resources became ubiquitous at a distance. Don’t walk in, modem in! This is less true of public libraries, but in some respects the challenge to reclaim the physical library as the civic commons of our society remains just as pressing. One might well ask if the steady foot traffic heading to our public libraries is largely due to the fact that there are free internet service available. Is this really a public good? The point is surely debatable. But in an age when many studies show whitecollar workers stare at their monitors upwards of six hours a day, doubtless more than they engage the members of their own families, (it is certainly true in our family where face time is at meals), this rush to the keyboards is a trend worth examining with a critical eye.

Hard to say definitively where the Googlization of the world is leading us as citizens of an information saturated world. Doubtless it is a two-edged sword. Indeed this dichotomy should be the fodder for any number of master’s theses at our library schools. But where are the articles in the peer-reviewed press that ask critical questions on this topic? Many of the few citations on this topic in EBSCO Online’s Information Science Abstracts simply posit ways for libraries to mimic Google’s success but only to do it better. What are we to make of this? The paucity of critical analysis in these peer-reviewed articles seems to suggest a singular unwillingness among the status quo to really question where Google mimicry will lead the library profession as a whole. I would argue that this is a race librarianship will never win. Nor, perhaps, want to win.

Instead, in defense of libraries, let us ask: Where else but in our nation’s libraries do people gather freely with the sole purpose to educate themselves, entertain their minds, enrich their lives, and explore new horizons with willing guides at their elbows, namely exceptional reference professionals? Where else but in our physical libraries does serendipity, browsing, and discovery play such a key role in the betterment of people’s lives? Where else but in our libraries, and it certainly is not the mall, is the true civic commons of our society? I would posit nowhere. No matter how gussied-up Google and its cohorts get, they will never attain to these lofty achievements. They are a pale simulacrum of what began in 1731 in Philadelphia as the first public library in America, whose motto was: “To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine.” Libraries to this day hold that truth to be self-evident. The Googles of the world do not hold a candle to this rush light.
Thank you so much for this opportunity to share my experiences as someone who works in a library who has taken a stance against the war and occupation in Iraq.

Stirred by my country’s vengeful responses to the events of September 11, 2001, I have become a determined peace activist. There are many dimensions to story, and I’ve chosen to tell you about three recent experiences:

I was sentenced to jail for ninety days in early 2003 for peacefully protesting at the School of the Americas in Georgia.

I was wrongfully convicted of assaulting a police officer for going limp at a protest in Iowa against the occupation in Iraq in November 2003.

That same Iowa protest got national attention when subpoenas were issued to fellow peace activists in February 2004.

In spite of being treated as a criminal by the legal system, an overwhelming abundance of blessings has come my way.

With pain, I watched my beloved country’s response to the September 11th attacks – revenge. I believe that violence is a vicious circle that only creates more violence, and that there must be another path we can choose to follow. As I witnessed a wave of fear, threat, and loss of civil liberties spread across our land, I decided to refuse to live my life in fear.

One link between libraries and my activism is the PATRIOT Act. This 131-page document passed through Congress in the middle of the night on October 26, 2001, without most of our elected officials having time to...
read it, let alone try to understand it. It gives broad and frightening power to our government to crack down on dissenters in time of war. Many in libraries are concerned about the provision that gives the federal government access to our patron records, previously protected by law. According to the PATRIOT Act, “in these times” we are required to make patron records available on demand to law enforcement agencies, and to keep such demands a secret.

In the year following September 11th, I resolved to nonviolently disagree with my government on two issues. I wanted to change U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, and I wanted to stop our insane rush to war in Iraq.

A number of circumstances in my life started lining up that would enable me to take the risks and accept the consequences that go with nonviolent acts of civil disobedience. My faith plays a huge role in my decisions to take those risks. I have also felt my husband’s support of me grow stronger in recent years, and I have lived long enough to see our two daughters grow into independent young women. I decided it was now time for me to put my beliefs into action.

On October 26, 2002, the one-year anniversary of the PATRIOT Act, I was arrested for the first time in my life. A group of Iowa peace activists made a pitiful attempt to try to stop the Iowa Air Guard from flying another mission over the no-fly zones in northern Iraq. I knew how severely the eleven years of sanctions had already punished the Iraqi people. I believed that for U.S. planes to fly in those no-fly zones was illegal under international law. I knew that our bombs were killing innocent Iraqis on the ground. Even though the Iraqi air defense was so weak that it had never shot down one of our planes, I felt that such an event could happen. That, I feared, could be a precipitator to WW III. I felt a responsibility to try to do something to stop that.

So after a legal rally, about a dozen of us were arrested for trespass. The judge we came before to make our pleas told us that “in these times” we should not be protesting in this way by walking across lines in the grass! That is the same thing I would hear when I came before a Georgia judge two months later on a federal charge of trespassing. Both judges warned us not to exercise our first amendment rights “in these times.”

Only three weeks after my arrest in Iowa, I traveled to Ft. Benning, Georgia, to participate in the annual protest to close the School of the Americas (SOA). If you haven’t heard of the SOA, it is a small part of the army base at Ft. Benning where our taxpayer dollars are used to train Latin American soldiers to be international terrorists. The graduates of the School of the Americas have consistently used their skills to torture, “disappear”, and massacre their own people.

I first attended this protest in 1998 with the pastor of my church and our then 17-year-old daughter Jodi. The protest happens each November on
the anniversary of the time in El Salvador when six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter were brutally murdered by SOA graduates. About 10,000 people from all walks of life and from all across the United States gather for this annual weekend protest. On Sunday, those who are willing to risk arrest typically walk in a solemn funeral procession onto the base. In the years prior to 2001, those who crossed the line were placed on buses, driven two miles away, and released. I was deeply affected that first year when I crossed the line. I felt the pain of the victims. My presence was an attempt to be the voice for those who had been silenced.

Over two thousand of us crossed the line that year. We so overpowered them with numbers that only a few were arrested. We went back home and Congress failed by only ten votes to pass legislation demanding the closure of the school. When the next November rolled around I remember how pissed I was that we had to go back again to the annual protest. I had gone that first time with every intention of closing that damn school.

It was after my fourth annual trip in 2001 that I realized I was now part of a movement. This movement is committed to nonviolence, and it will not stop until the school is shut down.

By now over 170 people have collectively served over 78 years in federal prisons and jails for nonviolent protest calling for the closure of the School. My turn would come after the 2002 protest.

Police and military tactics at the SOA protest changed after 9/11. Spirit moved me and 85 others to cross the line in 2002. We were all taken to jail for two nights. No more short bus rides out of town. A tough new crackdown in time of build-up for war!

One of the things I’ve learned about doing an act of civil disobedience is that before I cross the line I must be prepared to accept all the consequences and potential consequences of my actions. I knew darn well I would go to jail for three to six months if I crossed that year. I made the decision in spite of the potential to risk my marriage, my family, and my job.

Once I had accepted the consequences of my actions, I was naïve enough to think that my family members would also. I was wrong! By the time I made it back home to Iowa, I was ready for a hug from my husband. Instead, he was so angry with me that he couldn’t look at me or speak to me for twenty-four hours. I decided to give him some space. My being incarcerated was much harder on family members than it was on me.

What I had done was just too far out of the box for an Iowa farm wife! Husband Jay and I are both third generation farmers. We raise hogs for a living. Why would an Iowa farmer be willing to go to jail for her beliefs “in these times”? Friends and relatives could not understand what possibly motivated me to do such a thing. I heard things like this:
“How can you expect your son to obey the law when you are breaking it?”
“Your mother will surely die if you go to prison.”
“Why can’t you just stay home and be a good wife and mother?”
“What are you doing to the Gaunt name?”

It was two months from the time of the protest before I went back to Georgia for my trial. I spent some time one-on-one with each of my seven siblings, asking and listening to how they felt about my actions in Georgia. It helped for them to hear that I had checked with my job about health insurance for my family, and that I had put some thought into this. Even though none of my sisters could ever imagine themselves leaving a husband and 16-year-old son home while they went to jail, they realized that perhaps I could. I felt a deep sense of being loved by my siblings, even if they did not understand my actions.

At the time of my trial I was sentenced to 90 days in prison and given a $750 fine. I forgave the judge on the spot, and it was my choice to do the time in a Georgia County Jail.

Let me tell you that jail is not fun. Our system is designed to dehumanize and diminish all who enter. And everyone on the inside was depressed.

Faith, love, and humor. These three things got me through.

I was determined to come out of jail physically and spiritually stronger than when I went in. My experiences as a Prisoner of Conscience can be summed up as profoundly positive, very educational, and transformational. I discovered that I lacked for nothing. I was provided plenty of opportunities to practice nonviolence with the jail staff. In return, I earned the nicknames “Smart-ass” and “Troublemaker” from them! I used humor, including playing an April Fool’s joke on the guards by pushing the intercom on the morning of April 1st and telling them that there was a dead mouse in my grits!

Once I was on the inside, I found that many of my cellmates also were not criminals. While I was wearing an orange and white striped suit designating me as a federal prisoner, my cellmates wore green and white stripes. INS, or Immigration Services was holding them. Most were seeking asylum. Their “welcome to America,” after arriving at the Atlanta airport with false documents, was to be shackled and chained and taken to jail. They were from Haiti, China, Ethiopia, Cameron, Egypt, Nigeria, and Brazil. They all had stories to tell, and they eventually trusted me with those heart-breaking stories. INS did not care to hear their stories. I kept telling them how sorry I was and how ashamed I was of my own country for locking them up in jail.

Let me share with you some of the outcomes from my incarceration:
One of those asylum seekers, Eleni, from Ethiopia, has become like a soul sister to me. Both she and her story are incredible. After 402 days in jail, a loss of thirty percent of her body weight due to stress, and countless dollars (which she did not have) spent on attorneys, she was finally deported to London. We are keeping in touch via telephone.

My employer, Grinnell College, granted me a 90-day personal leave. Probably never before in the history of the college has anyone asked for a leave to go to jail as a prisoner of conscience, but they did it for me! After I got home from jail I read the letter. The fine print at the end said, “Leaves of this nature may not be granted in the future.”

My mother did not die! In fact she celebrated her 80th birthday after I got out of jail by flying to Holland to visit my brother! What I suspected was true: my mother is spiritually stronger than most gave her credit for.

And my husband Jay and I are better friends today than ever before. I cannot explain that. But I will accept it!

I also learned an important lesson about taking really good care of myself. I worked out and meditated a couple of hours each day. I think that helped me find peace within myself. After I changed, things around me, including things I had been trying hard to force to change, just happened. I suppose that, in the everyday hubbub of life, women especially find it difficult to place our own health and well being as a top priority. Yet the results for me when I did that were fascinating.

I realized that I am a very fortunate and privileged person. My cellmates always had the threat of deportation in the middle of the night hanging over their heads. I would do my time, then go right back home to all of my advantages. I can name at least eleven of them:

I am an American citizen / I am white / I am middle class / I am married / I have children / I am educated / I am heterosexual / I am employed / I have health insurance, for my family and myself / We own our home / We own vehicles.

With this awareness of my own privileges comes responsibility. I became determined to do something to help create a more peaceful and loving world. I figured out that I should start by making peace with myself. Then I have a responsibility to try to make peace with those family members I am most intimate with. I believe that every human being has an important, unique and beautiful piece to bring to the mosaic that will make a more peaceful and just world. “In these times,” if I want my life to be about peace, and if I believe that peace happens one person at a time, then joining the 2.2 million people inside our U.S. prisons was, in fact, a good place for me to be.
People ask if I think my efforts have done any good. Well, I guess the School of the Americas isn’t closed yet, is it? I can only say that I am being faithful to what I believe. Maybe that is enough. I am convinced that LOVE will one day win, not hate. That peace can be accomplished through nonviolence. Reconciliation and forgiveness and reparations are possible, and that moving toward those goals – the journey – is what counts. Working for peace is amongst the hardest work I have ever done. And I was raised on a farm with a very strong work ethic.

I want to tell you about what happened in Iowa in November 2003.

Exactly one year after the Georgia protest, there was a protest at Iowa’s National Guard headquarters near Des Moines called “Stop the Occupation: Bring Our Troops Home.” Following a legal rally, ten of us agreed to “cross the line” and risk arrest. In Iowa we have a history of cooperation between the peace protestors and the local police. But something was different this time. When our group showed up for the legal rally, sixteen armed officers in riot gear greeted us! Our attempts to talk with the police were rejected. Someone had called for this change in police tactics, because, they believed, we are a country at war. Ashcroft has ordered a crackdown on dissenters. In fact, we have learned that there were two undercover police officers at our planning meeting the night before the protest. They came as husband and wife, gave us false names, addresses, and someone else’s phone number! Oh well, I thought, when I found out, surely they learned something about nonviolence by attending our meeting. Ha! Was I wrong. They described our preparations for nonviolent action to the police as potentially violent.

My personal response to the arrests that day was to increase my nonviolent resistance a bit. After we all walked across the line hand in hand, I chose to go limp at the time of my arrest. I trusted the officers with my body. Their plan was to have zero tolerance for line crossers that day, and to take everyone who crossed the line to jail for the night. So they took all ten intentional line crossers to jail, plus two women who accidentally crossed over the line. One was taking a photo and another was trying to help an elderly woman out of a car.

The authorities intended to intimidate. It was clearly an attempt to put a chill on the peace movement “in these times,” and to deter anyone else from considering attending a peace rally in the future.

Everyone was charged with trespass, except me. For going limp, I was also charged with interference with arrest and assault on a police officer! Immediately after the arrests, the captain of the police force told the awaiting television and newspaper reporters that this Grinnell woman, Christine Gaunt, had kicked an officer in the knee, and he had gone to the hospital with a possible dislocated kneecap.
At the jail they posted my bond at $2600. I chose not to bond out. That was fine because one of Georgia’s gifts to me is that I no longer fear being in jail.

What do I think happened? Maybe they were afraid they had hurt me by dragging me to the police van (they had!), and they overreacted partly because of that. The officers on duty that day had apparently been told by their undercover agents that we might become violent. Did the agents outright lie? Exaggerate? They had been present when we talked about and practiced going limp. Why the hell didn’t the police spend some of their time practicing carrying limp bodies? Instead they put on their riot gear. I believe that the officers on duty were told to be specifically on the lookout for something additional they could charge us with – like assault.

That one tiny act of nonviolent resistance, going limp (which I had no idea would be considered a criminal offense), was a spark to more events. I see it as a microcosm of what is happening to dissenters and “suspicious-looking people” all around this country “in these times” of war.

Because the PATRIOT Act is in effect, and because of John Ashcroft’s behind-closed-doors visit to the Des Moines police department to drum up support for – and even try to strengthen – the PATRIOT Act, because of the overkill and the attempts to intimidate, because human beings get crazy in time of war, and because nonviolence does indeed create chaos when those in power and control are confronted by something other than violence, … here I was, a peace activist facing a bogus charge of assault with a penalty of one year in jail if convicted.

Before trial, they offered to drop the assault charge if I would plead guilty to trespass and interfering with arrest. I rejected their plea bargain. I was determined to have a chance to speak the truth in court to a jury of my peers. I was taking full responsibility for all my actions that day. I wanted others to do the same.

To make a long, detailed courtroom story short, the jury believed the five uniformed officers who took the stand and lied, as opposed to the lone peace activist who spoke the truth. I still do not understand how my attorney and I walked into court with depositions in our hands in which all eight potential witnesses for the state (except the alleged victim) said they had not seen the alleged assault. There were no witnesses! How could anyone prove beyond doubt that I intentionally kicked an officer without a single witness? Neither my attorney nor I had ever been involved in a political trial, including selecting a jury for a political trial. Perhaps some of the jurors were biased against me as soon as they knew I had taken a stance against the war.

My husband insists that I was framed.

I was found guilty of assault, interference with arrest, and trespass. I was
given a 60-day suspended sentence, one year of probation, sixty hours of community service, a court order to take a class on assaultive behavior, plus fines and court costs.

What have I learned from this?

I learned that an anti-war stance is still not a very popular one. I cannot blame the jurors for believing the officers who lied, because I, too, still want to believe that our police officers would not lie!

I learned something about the power of the news media. My friends and family who know me well know that never in a million years would I ever assault anyone, especially not a police officer. Yet they tended to believe that I might have kicked him, though they thought he must have done something really bad to me first! All because they heard it on the news!

I learned that wrongful convictions happen. Period. I wonder how many are sitting in our prisons today because of that? My 21-yr-old daughter’s response at the shock of hearing my guilty verdict was to say, “Mom, now I know why you have always been against the death penalty.”

I do not think the officers who lied will go to hell for their lies. I would like to find a way to help them with their shame. That didn’t happen through the courts. I am still trying to figure out a way to do that.

Something else happened in Iowa last February that was directly related to this case of assault. An agent representing the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force delivered subpoenas to four peace activists who had attended a training session the night before that November protest. Drake University, the place where that meeting was held, was also given a subpoena and a gag order! The feds wanted all records and documents in Drake’s possession relating to the meetings that were hosted by Drake’s chapter of the National Lawyer’s Guild. That included names of all the people who attended any of those events. Whoa! Suddenly “these times” resemble the times from the McCarthy Era in the 1950’s. When a person is ordered to come before a federal grand jury for questioning, they must come without an attorney. The experience can be very intimidating. If people refuse to talk, they can be locked up for a long time. A couple of our people were prepared to do that.

There was a huge outcry against the subpoenas and gag order by the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU, and the National Lawyer’s Guild. Iowa Senators Harkin and Grassley demanded of Ashcroft why peace activists were being spied on and why Drake University was being gagged. From all appearances this was nothing but an attempt to stretch the PATRIOT Act into a force against peaceful protestors and potentially label them domestic terrorists. The word got out nationally and internationally. We had reporters in from the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, the National Catholic Reporter, the Progressive, the Nation, Salon, the Chronicle of Higher
Education, and the PBS program NOW with Bill Moyers. Most recently, a French investigatory television news program came to Des Moines to do interviews about the case.

I think that somewhere in those subpoenas the feds were looking for a conspiracy charge. Perhaps they wanted to find a conspiracy to hurt an officer? There was gross miscommunication between the local police force and the U.S. attorneys. U.S. Attorney Stephen P. O’Meara, from whose office the subpoenas were ordered, stated in a public meeting “a deputy sheriff was severely kicked and had suffered serious injury to a knee.”

Note: Many documents concerning this case can be found on the ICLU website, www.iowaclu.org, under news / documents / Drake protesters.

It was a victory for the peace movement when the outcry of injustice was heard round the world and the subpoenas were all quashed as a result. A real moment of truth came at the time of the next Iowa protest on March 21, 2004. Because of the media attention, a much larger group gathered this time to say “Stop the Occupation: Bring Our Troops Home.” We were surprised when we arrived at the site to find no police presence. None! No officers in riot gear. For a second time someone made a tactical decision to do things differently. This in itself is a major victory, won through nonviolent means. This change in police tactics toward protests certainly implies that intimidation was the intent just four months earlier.

Even though I was awaiting sentencing for my assault conviction, I crossed the line again. Actually, this time, we had to roll under a fence. I felt no need to go limp when they arrested me. We were not taken to jail, but were processed, and released on a promise to appear in court. In the end, most got a $50 fine or community service, plus court costs. I took a different path and did not sign my promise to appear papers. That means they took me to jail for the night. I wanted the opportunity to carry on positive conversations with the arresting officers, the jail staff, and anyone who might be in the holding cell. I think I was seeking redemption about the fact that I am not a violent person. I wanted to state boldly with my body that I still do not intimidate easily, and I want the occupation in Iraq to stop.

I believe that some day we will look back on “these times” and recall with absurdity the decisions to send peace activists to jail for crimes such as nonviolent dissent!

When I was locked up in Georgia, I found that my time in jail was not so much about closing the School of the Americas, but became a sharing of stories with my fellow inmates, of making human connections, and strengthening commitment to nonviolence. So too with my talk here at ALA. My presence here isn’t so much about libraries, but about sharing stories with others committed to social change and engaged in social activism. In the end, all I have is a story to tell. Please know that this opportunity to talk to you means a lot to me. Thanks for listening.
DECLARATION FROM BUENOS AIRES
On information, documentation and libraries

The attendees at the First Social Forum on Information, Documentation and Libraries: alternative action programs from Latin America for the information society, held in Buenos Aires from August 26-28, 2004, was called by the Social Studies Group on Library Science and Documentation (Argentina) and the Study Circle on Political and Social Librarianship (Mexico).

We recognize that:

Information, knowledge, documentation, archives, and libraries are communal cultural goods and resources. They are based upon and promoted by democratic values, such as: freedom, equality, and social justice, as well as tolerance, respect, equity, solidarity, communities, society, and the dignity of individuals.

Every document center contributes to democratic practice in the social and political spheres. Conscious of this dimension, the foundation and organization of these cultural goods and resources must be constructed under the principle of knowledge and information access that is free, open, and egalitarian for everybody.

Social and political elements also are present that librarians, documentalists, and archivists must take into account in order to contribute to the formation of cultural and civic identities sustained by civil and socially responsible values.

We consider that:

Librarians, documentalists, and archivists must participate in the social and political processes related to their cultural tasks, work environment, and professional practice.

These cultural workers are facilitators of social change, opinion makers, promoters of the democratization of information and knowledge, educa-
tional coordinators, and actors engaged with the social and political processes. Therefore, because the work that they carry out is of fundamental importance to society and the state, they must be granted full social recognition, as well as an equitable and just salary regulated by legislation in each country.

Professional solidarity and cooperation, like networking, are valuable tools that encourage the exchange of successful experiences and broaden the objectives and challenges in our daily work.

Libraries, archives, and document centers must be places that contribute to the development of human rights, the preservation of memory, and the rediscovery of the oral and written traditions that assure the self-determination and sovereignty of all peoples.

Librarian and information services, as well as unrestricted collection development, should be planned, constructed, and offered by librarians, documentalists, and archivists with the full collaboration of individuals, communities, and organizations, particularly the least socially and politically favored.

Both the theory and practice of library science, documentation, and archival studies are determined by the needs that these fields generate in the social sphere. Therefore, the creation and practice of these disciplines and professions must promote public opinion, critical judgment, free decision making, and actively contribute to the struggle against illiteracy in all its forms with the goal of improving life and the collective or personal environment of everyone.

Taking into account their neutral or non-neutral practice, individual thought, labor action, and citizen participation, librarians, documentalists, and archivists must construct public spaces in their communities for the exchange of information, thereby providing an incentive for the discussion of political, social, ideological, and cultural themes — themes inherent in governmental and societal problems.

Information, knowledge, documentation, and libraries are a public good that must not be governed or controlled by market dynamics, but rather orchestrated by public developmental policies, well being, and the defense of society’s cultural heritage, in the interest of insuring the public domain, diversity, plurality, and the equality of all sectors of the population.

Grounded in the global professional field of information, document centers, libraries, and archives, the construction of discourse, out of the Latin American and Caribbean reality, implies the use of national languages as a means of communication. Additionally, an awareness of indigenous languages as a social and political reality in numerous Latin American countries and the Caribbean requires their recognition as generators of oral and written discourse important to the preservation of these languages.
Peace is a necessary guarantor of, and condition for, the preservation and growth of information and knowledge repositories. In accord with this idea, we firmly condemn wars and all forms of violence that devastate the human species and their cultural heritage. The ongoing promotion of peace and the processes required must become a social commitment of librarians, documentalists, and archivists in their places of work and in the cultural, social, and political spheres that concern them as citizens.

In order to offer services to minority and socially vulnerable groups, it is necessary to eliminate all forms of discrimination in information, documents, and library systems: by sex, race, ethnicity, ideology, economic status, social class, disabilities, migration, sexual orientation, religion, and language.

The serious ecological deterioration of our planet affects life in general and, as a consequence, the well being and quality of life of the human species. We consider it essential that library and information professionals connect environmental problems to the development, organization, and diffusion of information concerning the environment.

We declare that the fair and just distribution of public documents, goods, and resources is essential to the achievement of freedom of access to information.

We invite everyone to contribute to the realization of the statements and propositions in this declaration.

From Latin America and the Caribbean to the information society.

Buenos Aires, August 28, 2004

Translated by Dana Lubow, M.L.S.
with help from Larry Oberg, M.L.S.
November 24, 2004
PRODUCT REVIEW

HP Scanjet 4670C: A Review

by Lincoln Cushing

Working in a small academic research library, I routinely came across situations where available and affordable image capture technologies did not exist. If a graduate student looking through our oversize bound volumes of 1930s labor newspapers found just the right article he wanted, all he could do was to take notes. If an independent scholar wanted an image of a portion of a local history map, a fuzzy camera snapshot might be her only option. Many relevant documents in collections are too fragile or too large to be flopped onto a standard flatbed scanner or copier. Existing scanners are designed to work facing up, and most affordable digital cameras offer resolution too low to adequately capture text. Conveniently, a new consumer electronics product appeared recently that offers tremendous opportunities for information management professionals—the HP Scanjet 4670, available for less than $200.

This scanner is very slender (less than an inch thick without its desktop base) and uses a USB 2.0 high-speed connector. A separate power supply must also be connected to the scanner head. Included software is compatible with both Macs and PCs, and it has an optical resolution of 2,400 by 2,400 dpi. It has not received very good reviews when compared to other flatbeds (the October 2004 MacAddict ranked it fifth out of five for bargain scanners), and has received bad marks about scan quality, color fidelity, and pixel noise. These are all true, but this device can do things no other device on the market can. Its best and most unique feature is that scanning takes place on top of a document. It looks like a small picture frame with an 8 1/2 x 11” capture field, and the scanner head runs between two clear panels. You look through the device, position the frame exactly where you want on top of the document, and hit the scan button at the edge of the frame. For larger originals, you can make multiple adjacent scans that can be later stitched into a larger whole with the included “Panorama Maker” software. For smaller areas, “Preview Scan” lets you select a portion of the frame to capture.

Like many scanners these days, it comes with optical character recognition (OCR) software that makes it easy to convert scanned documents to machine-readable text. Operation is pretty straightforward and after scanning an item in “Scan Document” mode it automatically opens Readiris Pro 7,
translates the scan, and opens it as a word processing document in the application of your choice. As with any OCR software, the better the input quality the better the results. Some text may require reformatting after converting, but that can be done manually by comparing text against the image scan. Another useful feature is “Make Copies,” which bypasses many of the usual scanning choices and steps and simply pops your scan out on your local printer. It’s just like having a photocopier on your desk. The scanner also includes a 35mm slide/transparency attachment. Although this produces lower quality scans than one would get from a dedicated slide scanner, it offers an adequate method for capturing satisfactory images from these formats.

This scanner should definitely be considered a unique and useful image capture tool for libraries and archives. Documents that were previously off limits to patrons for duplication can now be safely copied with minimal harm, and text can be generated in machine-readable format.

The HP Scanjet 4670C. Photo by Lincoln Cushing.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Lincoln Cushing, born 1953 is Havana, Cuba, is the Cataloging and Electronic Outreach Librarian at U.C. Berkeley’s Bancroft Library. He is involved in several projects to document, catalog, and disseminate oppositional political culture of the late 20th century. He is the author of a recent book on Cuban revolutionary posters and is currently conducting grant-funded research on a national database of American labor graphics collections. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/~lcushing/Home.html

Michael Donovan is a union organizer for UNITE!HERE, an artist, and former librarian living in Brooklyn, NY.

Linda Esser teaches courses in youth services librarianship at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Dr. Esser holds an MLIS and Ed.D. from the University of Kentucky. This paper was written under the direction of Dr. Wayne Wiegand, Florida State University, as course requirement for History of School Libraries, Winter 2004. Dr. Esser continues post-doctoral study under Dr. Wiegand with a focus on the history of youth services in libraries through multidisciplinary perspectives.

Chris Gaunt is a forty-eight year old married mother of three from rural Grinnell, Iowa. She and her husband are both third generation farmers. They raise hogs. Chris also works part-time weekends at Grinnell College at the library’s circulation desk and in cataloging. She writes, “I am an introvert, but my beloved country’s responses to 9/11/01 have pushed me to become an activist.”

Robert Jensen is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity and Writing Dissent: Taking Radical Ideas from the Margins to the Mainstream. He can be reached at rjensen@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Peter McDonald is a librarian at Syracuse University Library, and a founding member of the Progressive Librarians Guild. He currently lives in Ithaca NY.

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PLG’s PURPOSE & COMMITMENT

Progressive Librarians Guild was formed in New York City on January 1990 by a group of librarians concerned with our profession’s rapid drift into dubious alliances with business and the information industry, and into complacent acceptance of service to an unquestioned political, economic and cultural status quo.

We reaffirmed, significantly, that the development of public libraries was initially spurred by popular sentiment, which for one reason or another held that real democracy requires an enlightened citizenry, and that society should provide all people with the means for free intellectual development. Current trends in librarianship, however, assert that the library is merely a neutral institutional mediator in the information marketplace and a facilitator of a value-neutral information society of atomized information consumers.

A progressive librarianship demands the recognition of the idea that libraries for the people has been one of the principal anchors of an extended free public sphere which makes an independent democratic civil society possible, something which must be defended and extended. This is partisanship, not neutrality.

Members of PLG do not accept the sterile notion of the neutrality of librarianship, and we strongly oppose the commodification of information, which turns the “information commons” into privatized, commercialized zones. We will help to dissect the implications of these powerful trends, and fight their anti-democratic tendencies.

PLG recognizes that librarians are situated as information workers, communications workers, and education workers, as well as technical workers. Like workers in every sector, our work brings us up against both economic and political issues. Cataloging, indexing, acquisitions policy and collection development, the character of reference services, library automation, library management, and virtually every other library issue embody political value choices. PLG members aim to make these choices explicit, and to draw their political conclusions.

Progressive Librarians Guild is committed to the following:

• to providing a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues.
• to conducting campaigns to support progressive and democratic library activities locally, nationally and internationally.
• to supporting activist librarians as they work to effect changes in their own libraries and communities.
• to bridging the artificial and destructive gaps between school, public, academic and special libraries, and between public and technical services.
• to encouraging debate about prevailing management strategies adopted directly from the business world, to propose democratic forms of library administration, and to foster unity between librarians and other library workers.
• to critically considering the impact of technological change in the library workplace, on the provision of library services, and on the character of public discourse.
• to monitoring the professional ethics of librarianship from a perspective of social responsibility.
• to facilitating contacts between progressive librarians and other professional and scholarly groups dealing with communications and all the political, social, economic and cultural trends which impact upon it worldwide, in a global context.