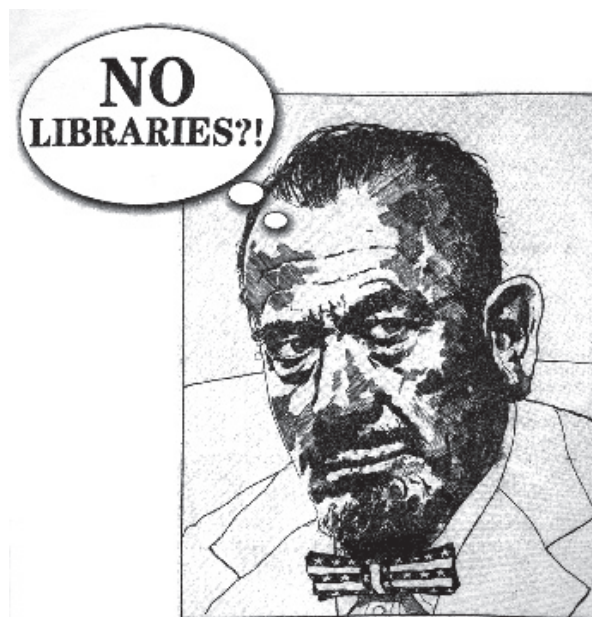


# PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN

A Journal for Critical Studies & Progressive Politics in Librarianship

Issue #25

Summer 2005



Tabloid Ethics & War Reporting  
Information Criticism  
Digital Divide & Public Libraries  
USA PATRIOT Act  
Ethics  
Braverman Student Essay Prize  
a poem, documents, reviews & much more

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John Steinbeck's name has been invoked in connection to the Salinas Public Library struggle because he was a local author who created numerous works about the plight of migrant workers, including his Pulitzer-prize winning novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

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# TABLOID ETHICS, NEWS REPORTING ON THE IRAQ WAR & THE SIMULACRUM OF OBJECTIVITY

by FRANK LOUIS RUSCIANO

Editor's note: This is a brief version of a paper originally prepared for and presented at the Oxford Round Table, Oxford University, August 5, 2004 entitled "The 'Right to Know' vs 'Knowing What's Right': Tabloid Ethics and News Reporting on the Iraq War." The editors of Progressive Librarian thank Dr. Rusciano for his willingness to allow us to publish that portion of his paper of compelling interest to our readers. The first sections of the original paper began with Russell Hardin's analysis of media ethics with his adaptation of the classic "prisoner's dilemma problem" through what he has called a "contract by convention" to uphold objective journalism. However, in recent years, the proliferation of media has changed the market for information, causing this convention to break down. In its place, a "tabloid mentality" has affected even the most respected media in the United States. This mentality relies upon deniability rather than authenticated sources, and entertainment models over the traditional conventions of news reporting. Nowhere is this change more evident than in the reporting of war news during the Iraq conflict.

*If once we were able to view the Borges fable in which the cartographers of the Empire draw a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly... as the most beautiful allegory of simulation, this fable has now come full circle for us, and possesses nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra.*

*Today abstraction is no longer of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance... The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory — precession of simulacra — that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map (Baudrillard, 1994:1).*

The major effect of what we know to be the prominence of tabloid ethics in journalism is not so much to destroy the illusion of objectivity as to rob it of its meaning and existence. Objective journalism never aspired to providing the comprehensive representation of reality, as did the map in the Borges fable; that would require allowing individuals to view a subject from all angles and in real time — an impossibility, just like the map in the story.

Instead, it was assumed to represent as well as possible the facts of a situation within the constraints of its medium, just as actual maps are assumed to represent the landmasses they depict. Indeed, the best of the social constructivist literature takes the perspective that if one discovers the underlying cultural, economic, and social factors behind the reporting on a subject, one may then understand how the reality represented therein was constructed.

The notion of “objective journalism” therefore never aspired to giving a complete representation of a subject — the truth, so to speak — but rather to construct its narrative out of what was true — i.e. facts. Walter Lippmann makes clear the difference between the media reporting what is “true” as opposed to reporting “the truth”:

The more points... at which any happening can be fixed, objectified, measured, named, the more points there are at which news can occur.

Wherever there is a good machinery of record, the modern news service works with great precision. There is one on the stock exchange... There is a machinery for election returns... In civilized communities, deaths, births, marriages and divorces are recorded... It exists for imports and exports because they pass through a custom house and can be directly recorded...

The hypothesis, which seems to be the most fertile, is that news and truth are not the same thing. The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light hidden facts, to set them in relation to each other, and to make a picture of reality on which men can act. Only at these points, where social conditions take recognizable and measurable shape, do the body of truth and the body of news coincide (Lippmann, 1994, 38-41).

Facts are matters of record that may be used in reporting the news in an objective manner. Truth, by contrast, is a collection and organization of facts that often includes previously hidden facts that are set into relation with each other, as did the map in the Borges fable.

Tabloid journalism, however, usually has neither time nor inclination for the rigorous verification required to declare something as “fact.” Instead, it substitutes a “simulation” of objectivity by “giving both sides of the story.” If a claim is made on one side of a report, a counterclaim, if one exists, is given equal time and emphasis. One sees this tendency in the reporting on political campaigns as described by Patterson. News analysis takes up more space over time than the candidates’ own words; news analysis, in order to be “objective” gives space to a candidate’s statements and his or her

opponents' responses. By the traditional standard of objectivity, one would report what the candidates themselves said, and let the reader or viewer sort the messages out themselves.

This simulation of objectivity in tabloid journalism easily becomes a simulacrum when one "side" is stating factual information that the other side wishes to deny. The following account of a television report on a videoconference at Rider University illustrates this point:

Just prior to the beginning of the 2003 war with Iraq, a group of students were videoconferencing with the Ambassadors' Club in New York concerning the upcoming hostilities. A statewide television network featured clips from the videoconference and interviewed students about their feelings about the impending war afterwards. All of the students interviewed opposed the war. In particular, one student who was a refugee from Afghanistan who had to flee the Taliban expressed concern for what would happen to the women and children as the result of a war, since she had witnessed wars in her native land.

When the segment aired that night, it showed the misgivings about the war stated by several students. When the Afghani student appeared on screen, however, the segment went to a voiceover, and stated how she was concerned for "the women and children suffering under Saddam Hussein." The professor who organized the videoconference immediately called the student and asked if she had actually said what the voiceover described. The student replied "No," and then added "that's really interesting; they do the same thing to the news in Afghanistan."

The story illustrates what occurs when objectivity is defined as showing two sides to the story; faced with a unified opposition to the war by the students, the editors merely altered one of their statements. While it is likely that most examples are not as extreme as this one, it does illustrate how the redefined notion of objectivity defeats the very purpose it was supposed to serve. The above simulation actually contradicts objectivity, creating, in effect, a simulacrum of objectivity.

A counter-argument might be that this analysis makes the issue too complicated; the case described is merely an example of mistaken reporting. But the motivation behind this mistake illustrates the complexity of the problem. Defining objectivity as reporting

multiple sides of a story without regard for whether different sides exist robs objectivity of its meaning. In the above example, the fact was that the students did not express more than one side on the war. As a result, the actual event, like the landmass in Baudrillard's example, must crumble under the simulated objectivity of the news report. Put another way, the very act of defining objectivity in this manner negates its existence, so we are left with a representation of something that does not exist—i.e. a simulacrum.

This tendency, while problematic in the course of a political campaign, can be even more damaging to the public's right to know in wartime. Wars necessarily involve a high degree of chaos and fragmented information, which along with the oft-stated desire to support one's troops in combat, make for even greater potential distortions of objectivity. Wartime creates a situation where citizens are most vulnerable to manipulation from the administration and military spokespersons. In such an emotional context, citizens are caught between the desire to support the troops and believe their motives and techniques are just (i.e. the need to assert "we know what's right") and the desire to have the facts about the situation (i.e. our "right to know"). The likelihood that simulacra of objectivity will occur increases proportionately as the facts conflict with our emotional needs and desires. We are thereby most open to being distracted by what we wish to be true, and often openly hostile to those who wish to defend our "right to know" the facts. Three examples from reporting on the 2003 war with Iraq serve as examples of this tendency.

#### *The Jessica Lynch Story*

The story of the capture and rescue of Private Jessica Lynch of the United States Army was one that provided inspiration during one of the bloodiest days for American forces in the Iraq war. Lynch was part of a supply convoy that was separated from the rest of their troops, and was ambushed by Iraqi forces. According to the initial accounts of the incident, Lynch fought bravely until her weapon was emptied and she was captured by enemy troops. She secured stab and bullet wounds, and was taken to an Iraqi hospital where she was "slapped about on her hospital bed and was interrogated... Eight days later US special forces stormed the hospital, capturing the 'dramatic' events on a night vision camera" (BBC News, 5/15/03). The footage of her rescue was then edited by the military and broadcast over American television networks, and detailed coverage

of her homecoming, magazine covers, a book, and a made-for-TV film followed.

The problems began when BBC news ran a story contradicting the story the American media were circulating. The details of Private Lynch's capture — confirmed by Lynch herself — were different from the original story. As it occurred, her weapon jammed, and she sat hunkered down in her military vehicle until she was captured; as a supply clerk, she had had limited experience in combat before being sent to Iraq. Similarly, while there was evidence that Iraqi soldiers had abused her, she was neither stabbed nor shot. Further, she was not interrogated violently at the hospital, but rather received the best of care the Iraqi doctors and nurses could provide at the time. As Dr. Harith a-Houssona, the physician caring for her noted, "I examined her, I saw she had a broken arm, a broken thigh, and a dislocated ankle" (BBC News, 5/15/03).

When confronted with these facts, Pentagon spokespeople initially responded by saying that they never stated for sure that the story circulating about Lynch's capture was true; rather, they had simply not stated that it was false. As Bryan Whitman said, "The Pentagon never released an account of what happened to Lynch because it didn't have an account" (BBC News 5/20/03). The resulting confusion, attributable to the press's desire for a heroic story and the Pentagon's desire to present events in the most positive light, illustrate the problem of non-verification in tabloid journalism—the absence of denial is assumed equivalent to the verification of truth.

Also included in the BBC News broadcast were details that made the story even more controversial; the story claimed that the rescue was "staged" as the American forces knew there were no Iraqi soldiers in the hospital at the time. The BBC News report concluded that,

The American strategy was to ensure the right television footage by using embedded reporters and images from their own cameras, editing the film themselves. The Pentagon had been influenced by Hollywood producers of reality TV and action movies, notably the man behind *Black Hawk Down*, Jerry Bruckheimer. Bruckheimer advised the Pentagon on the primetime television series "Profiles from the Front Line," that followed US forces in Afghanistan in 2001. That approach was taken on and developed on the field of battle in Iraq (BBC News, 5/15/2003).

Later, a reporter from MSNBC attempted to sort out the two versions of events. He discovered that there were "two sides to the story." According to the "Iraqi version":



The U.S. commandos refused a key and instead broke down doors and went in with guns drawn. They carried away the prisoner in the dead of night with helicopter and armored vehicle backup—even though there was no Iraqi military presence and the hospital staff didn't resist (Faramarzi, 2004).

In response,

Pentagon officials bristle[d] at any suggestion that Lynch's rescue was staged or that any details were exaggerated. They have never claimed that there was fighting inside the hospital, but stress that Nasiriyah was not a peaceful place... "You don't have perfect knowledge when you go in of what resistance you will face, so you prepare for the worst," [Pentagon spokesperson] Lapan said (Faramarzi, 2004).

Wars promote chaos and confusion that easily blur the facts of a situation, and while the Pentagon refused to allow the rescuers to be interviewed or the unedited tape of the rescue to be released, they could claim they did not wish to compromise the details of military procedures. The problem, though, is that many of the facts were wrong, nothing was done to correct them early on, and the result was two different "stories" of what actually occurred in Private Lynch's case. The media's rush to judgment, combined with their desire to please viewers by providing an emotionally satisfying story, left the public with two versions of the story that masquerades as a simulacrum of objectivity.

#### *The Nightline Story: The Faces of the Fallen*

On April 30, 2004, the ABC television news show "Nightline" produced a special program. Without commentary, music, or graphics, the host Ted Koppel read the names of the 721 American soldiers killed in Iraq to that date as their pictures were displayed, two at a time, on the television screen. The simple presentation was, according to the program's anchor, intended to "elevate the fallen above the politics and the daily journalism" (Elber, 2004). Its effect was just the opposite. Numerous conservative commentators decried the commemoration as an antiwar message, and the Sinclair Broadcast Group pulled the show from seven ABC affiliates around the country.

The context for this story was set in part by the Pentagon's policy, in effect since the Persian Gulf War of 1991, of not allowing the flag-draped coffins of war dead to be photographed as they arrived at Dover Air Force base before they were transported to their families. This policy, while in effect for nearly 13 years, had not often been

followed, especially during the Clinton administration when the President attended several memorial services for fallen soldiers (Stolberg, 2004). This policy became controversial as critics argued that the Bush administration was trying to hide the human costs of its Iraq policy.

David D. Smith of the Sinclair Broadcasting Group defended the decision not to air the program in the following statement:

Despite the denials by a spokesperson for the show, the action appears motivated by a political agenda designed to undermine the efforts of the United States in Iraq... Based on published reports, we are aware of [the widow of] one soldier who died in Iraq who opposes the reading of her husband's name to oppose our military action...we would ask that you first question Mr. Koppel as to why he chose to read the names of 523 troops killed in combat in Iraq, rather than the names of thousands of private citizens killed in terrorist attacks since and including the events of September 11, 2001. In his answer, we believe you will find the real motivation behind his action scheduled for this Friday ([www.usnewslink.com](http://www.usnewslink.com)).

Smith's justification first ascribes an unproven motivation to the news report, then reifies his argument by quoting a spouse who did not want her fallen husband's name used to this end, and finally concludes by linking the story in an emotional narrative to noncombatants killed in terrorist attacks.<sup>1</sup> Here, "knowing what's right" (i.e. the "correct" way to honor the war dead) and the "right to know" (i.e. to view the pictures of the fallen) conflict in a controversy created over a seemingly straightforward depiction of the facts. Moreover, the argument is advanced in the name of objectivity, the need to tell "two sides of the story," even though the motivations ascribed to Koppel are unproven. In this case, the accusation that the mere naming and depiction of the soldiers killed in Iraq has a political motivation is sufficient to redefine objectivity from the reporting of facts to representing "two sides" of the story. But the only manner in which one can present "another side" to those who were killed is to not represent it at all. The simulacrum of objectivity ultimately demands that the story and its opposite cannot co-exist, as when two objects cannot physically occupy the same space at the same time.

*The Iraqi Prisoner Abuse Story: The Use and Abuse of Objectivity*

Perhaps one of the most damaging stories to emerge regarding the American occupation of Iraq concerns the abuses of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison. Such techniques as forcing the prisoners to

simulate sex with each other, or be placed in seemingly dangerous positions, were photographed and videotaped; several of the pictures were shown on the news show 60 Minutes II. The response to these photos was swift; public officials in the United States expressed their shock at the incidents, while the rest of the world condemned them. The White House, though, was slower to respond. President Bush only apologized for the incidents after several days, and even then the apologies were initially indirect.

However, two different controversies quickly arose. Some politicians and commentators argued that the photos should never have been revealed to the world (and by inference, the American public) because it undermined the United States' war effort. Many of the same individuals even began to question whether the abuses actually constituted "torture," and whether they might be justified given the treachery of the enemy, and the manner in which American prisoners and hostages were allegedly treated.<sup>2</sup>

In actuality, 60 Minutes II had the photographs two weeks earlier, and refrained from airing the story at the request of the military while an investigation was allegedly pending. They went ahead with the story when it began to appear in other news outlets. Further, when the military revealed that there were other photos and videotapes of prisoner abuses, only members of Congress were allowed to view them; the general public and the media were barred from their display.

One sees the pattern here described in the case of the previous two stories. The initial question is whether it is right to inform the public of the abuses, for fear of undermining the war effort — the public's "right to know" once again interfering with "knowing what's right" about the moral certainty of the U.S. occupation. Next came the response that there were "two sides to the story"; Congressman Inhofe of Oklahoma complained that the outrage was being directed against the American soldiers, while several conservative commentators argued that the abuses were minimal, that no clear physical harm was done, and that the other side committed far worse atrocities.<sup>3</sup> These arguments were made again in the name of providing an objective context for the abuses — and again, in this simulacrum of objectivity, the solutions were either not to inform the public at all, or to state that there were "two sides" to the abuses that should be reported. None of those making these arguments seem to consider that by this logic, no one is ever responsible for their actions; the demand to present two sides to every story assumes

that providing material for viewers to make a moral judgment is an indication of bias.

*Conclusion: Can Objectivity be Regained?*

“No one likes to see dead bodies on TV.”

United States President George W. Bush,  
speaking at a White House press conference

In an essay on the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Bosah Ebo likened media coverage to a video game, in which participants were presented with images of destruction that distanced them from the actual casualties and damage caused by supposed “smart bombs” (Ebo, 1995). If the entertainment model in the first Gulf War was the video game, the model for the present war in Iraq is the reality show. “Reality shows” are actually simulations of interactions carried out by individuals who are conscious they are being filmed, and for whom the greatest risk involved is losing the prize at the end, even in a show with the ominous name of “Survivor.”<sup>4</sup> The structure of each show is the same — an artificial conflict is introduced by the producers of the show, and the contestants battle over who will emerge victorious, usually by the choice of one or more of the other contestants. But conflict assumes the creation of more than one “side to the story”; otherwise, there is no show. The main variation that these shows introduce from traditional game shows (which are, in effect more “real” than reality shows) is to remove the objective answer, skill, or lucky guess that guarantees the prize; instead, the reward is given through a selection process decided in part by the participants. In the same manner, tabloid ethics in journalism do not reward those whose reporting uncovers facts which others have been unable to find. Rather, it rewards those whose perspectives emerge victorious out of the simulated battle for “reality” in which conflicting sides are represented. Simulacrum as entertainment or simulacra in reporting both debase the very notion of objectivity in the information citizens receive.

Whether the traditional standard of objectivity can be maintained against the onslaught of tabloid ethics depends in large part upon how the rewards and punishments for different types of reporting are doled out. It is beyond the scope of this essay to prescribe means to redesign the matrix to these ends. However, there are several possibilities to consider. First, the Internet is a double-edged sword in the battle for objectivity; in nations where only one side of the story is presented due to government censorship, it can provide

alternative venues for individuals to speak truth to power. The challenge is to direct the Net to the same purposes in open societies. Second, citizens are not just passive participants in this process; the new technologies do socialize individuals to different expectations of where and how to find information. But it also allows them to place demands on the type of information they require in an open society. When citizens “vote with their mouses” for substance on the Net, substance will be provided. Finally, simulated objectivity need not chase out traditional objectivity. Citizens can learn that bias is not the only enemy to objectivity; reporting that chooses to remain “neutral” by generating opposing sides is, in its own way, even more dangerous. Media were never meant to be mere spectators in the battle of ideas; they also “referee” and “score” the opposing sides for fact in the traditional sense of objectivity, and the true spirit of unbiased reporting.

An open society must find a means to restructure rewards for traditional, as opposed to simulated, objectivity. The stakes are high at this juncture. The competition among media was supposed to prevent dictatorial or totalitarian manipulation of media messages by the government. A free and open media, unfettered by obligations to any power, was a major weapon against tyranny. It would be tragically ironic if a trend towards “tabloid objectivity” created a citizenry as uninformed as those in closed societies.

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*Footnotes*

1. Another relevant observation is that the individuals killed on September 11, 2001 had already been memorialized individually on television, first by having their names scrolled down the screen at the 2002 Super Bowl Game; and second, by having the names read at a memorial on September 11, 2002.
2. It should be noted that certain factions in Iraq and Saudi Arabia helped muddy the issue of moral equivalency here by executing American and other foreign hostages captured in these countries in supposed “retaliation” for the abuses.
3. Conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh stated that the pictures merely reflected the need for the soldiers to “blow off steam” and likened their activities to a fraternity initiation at college, prompting another commentator, Chris Matthews, to ask “what college did he attend?”
4. One of the more ironic aspects of this particular show is to observe individuals eating insects for food while the crew filming them is consuming catered meals.

# INFORMATION CRITICISM: WHERE IS IT?

by JACK ANDERSEN

Roughly speaking, one may say that the practitioners of literary theory are the literary critics; that is, those reviewing and critiquing works of fiction. But where, one may ask, are the critics of the functionality and legitimacy of knowledge organization systems? That is, for instance, bibliographies, classification systems, thesauri, encyclopedias and search engines – all systems that in some way or another mediate the recorded part of society and culture. Such knowledge organization systems are also the professional tools of librarians. Due to this fact, we should expect that librarians have a lot to say about the roles and doings of these systems in the mediation of society and culture, but it is hard within the public arena to trace and hear the critical voices of librarians grappling with knowledge organization systems. We are used to reading and hearing the voices of cultural critics, social critics and literary critics debating social and cultural issues – the kinds of criticism with well-established histories and adherents that exist in society. Jürgen Habermas (1996) argued, in his book on the structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere, that art criticism, social criticism and literary criticism developed in public spaces like the coffee houses, saloons and *tischgesellschaften* and became established schools of thought in written genres such as journals and newspapers. They became organized in the sense that criticism developed particular forms of communication in order to talk and write about social, political and cultural issues in society. These particular modes of communication were maintained because of their appeal to and belief in rational discussion within the public sphere. The forms of communication and the public sphere were dialectical in nature. The public sphere constituted the place and space for particular forms of communication, while the particular forms of communication contributed to materialize and shape the public sphere. The notion of the bourgeois public sphere, as argued

by Habermas (1996), rested on the assumption that private citizens had equal and free access to the public sphere.

Public librarians embrace this notion in that they provide the general public with free access to “information” and thereby identify public libraries as part of the public sphere. This is a widely accepted truism, but we seldom hear librarians participate in the public sphere by means of writing or talking about issues that are concerned with or that threaten this supposedly free access to information.

Insofar that knowledge organization systems do play a role in our late modern society, we should expect that critics who knew this would have an interest in discussing such systems in the public sphere in order to reveal their social, political and cultural consequences. But any explicit evidence of such a critic is yet rather invisible; that is, there remains to be developed a way of talking and writing about the role of knowledge organization systems in society and culture. For lack of a better name, I shall call such a person an information critic (or “public intellectual,” see e.g. Weisser, 2002) and such an activity information criticism. Thus, in this paper I will argue for a conception of the librarian as an information critic. Starting with a critique of the lack of an information critic, I shall next pinpoint what such an information critic ought to look like, why it is needed and how the modern librarian may fulfill this task.

#### *The lack of an information critic: the lack of a discipline*

Librarians, and library and information studies in general, have always had a paradoxical self-understanding or ideology. On the one hand, they have seen themselves as promoters of, for instance, democracy, free and public access to information, civil courage and literacy. Black (2001, p. 64; author’s italics) writes that

*Public librarians are especially keen to stress a natural correlation, as they see it, between their historic mission to democratize the dissemination of knowledge and the widening of access that the digitalization of information promises to bring about.*

But the apparent lack of active and critical librarians implies that they cannot be seen as advocates of democracy because democracy as a historical category demands constant analysis and critique in



order to be evolving and stable. Democracy is not given condition, no matter how much access to information citizens have.

On the other hand, librarians have usually portrayed themselves as neutral agents in social and cultural communication. That is, librarians claim they make a difference, but are neutral with regard to how this difference is to be understood. One reason for invoking neutrality is, according to Agre (1995, p. 225), the ideology of information, which

serves to position librarianship as a neutral profession, in two senses: (1) librarians minimize their participation in the internal disputes of other communities; and (2) librarianship does not define itself in relation to the ideology of any particular community of patrons.

If librarians would orient themselves to literatures and not information, Agre (1995) argues, they would be participating “in the internal disputes of other communities” as these make use of literatures and literature has a history and structure. As communities are constituted by literatures, they make use of literature with its history and structure in mind. By invoking “information,” librarians transcend the history and structure of literatures and, therefore, librarians are unsullied by any requirement to define themselves “in relation to the ideology of any particular community of patrons.” Could it be that, if librarians had to define themselves in relation to the ideology of particular communities, they would have to come out of the closet, becoming active agents, arguing for their position and ideology in relation to other ideologies?

What has contributed to this lofty, above-the-fray attitude among librarians? At this point we may take a look at what kind of “academic” tradition librarians are part of or the product of.

Library and information studies (LIS) is the field educating librarians. Broadly speaking, LIS is concerned with the production, distribution and use of recorded knowledge, and the role of systems of organized knowledge in this activity. The way librarians think, talk, write, read and understand their field is, of course, dependent on the hegemonic discourse in which they have been emersed during their education. That is, the prevailing discourse and schools of thought in library school forms librarians’ ideology. To a large extent, the curricula and professional literature of LIS are today filled with technical and

managerial language, and technical and managerial perspectives and writings. Thus, Pawley (2003, p. 426) states that "...the prevailing style of LIS discourse uses techno-administrative language to address technical and managerial problems." This discourse style is widespread in scholarly LIS literature and it inhibits the field's ability to engage in exchanges with other academic disciplines. Cornelius (2003, p. 612; emphasis added), among others, has commented on this when stating that,

If LIS is to be recognized as a constituent member of, say, the social sciences, *then at some level we must use the same language and engage in the same theoretical debates*. It is not as if there has been no discussion of theory, method, and philosophy in the social sciences, or that such discussions are irrelevant to LIS.

It is vital to LIS that it discursively connects with other academic fields as this paves the way for LIS to discuss its relation to, and role in, society and culture. Otherwise LIS becomes a free-floating field with no significance.

One main area of study in LIS is knowledge organization, an area filled with technical and managerial discourse. For instance, Andersen (2004, pp. 41-47) indicates the extent to which conference proceedings of the professional society for knowledge organization, ISKO, were dominated from the beginning of the conferences in 1990 by technical and practical issues. Recently, McIlwaine (2003) surveyed trends in knowledge organization research. These "trends" were largely technical, concerned with universal systems, mapping vocabularies, interoperability concerns, problems of bias, the Internet and search engines, resource discovery, thesauri and visual representation. The survey clearly revealed that recent "trends" did not discuss or even inquire into the role of knowledge organization activities in society and culture. Knowledge organization cannot currently engage at this level simply because it has not yet developed a discourse which privileges the information needs of society and culture. It is the technical and managerial nature of the prevailing LIS discourse that makes it difficult to engage in public discourse. The lack of a socially engaged discourse results in what Andersen (2004, pp. 218-219) has referred to as an "informational surgery":

If we only talk about it in the sense of referring to techniques, principles or methods we are in danger of presenting a picture of knowledge organization to students, researchers and the public that makes it look

like what might be called an “informational surgery.” That is, to view knowledge organization as an “intellectual cure” to society and its members and their interaction with systems of organized knowledge.

Such a view (i.e. “informational surgery”) conceals every critical activity and removes attention away from the postulated significance of cultural and social needs.

Furthermore, textbooks like Harter (1986), Lancaster (2003), Large, Tedd & Hartley (2001), and Svenonius (2000) can be characterized as texts that solidify the use of technical and managerial language in LIS in the sense that they are basically how-to books, constantly referring to techniques, standards, principles, methods and rules. If one’s professional knowledge base has such texts at its foundation, no critical attitude is developed nor demanded because these textbooks do not question at all the role of information seeking or of knowledge organization systems in culture and society. They do not provide students with a language, an understanding, a knowledge that make them capable of participating in public discourse debating the functionality and legitimacy of these systems. These textbooks present, at worst, an illusion to students as they foster the impression that once a student masters such-and-such techniques and principles s/he will become indispensable to society. But one is indispensable only if others recognize the vital relationship between information service providers and users. No one cares or values whether a librarian has mastered particular techniques or principles, because the latter do not demonstrate that they themselves can make a difference in the life of the user. To “make a difference,” to earn the status of being “indispensable” one needs an argument, and to argue is to be engaged in discourse. But by invoking such unengaged, technical language, LIS communicates an attitude to students that says: you do not have anything at stake; you are not a shareholder in this discourse simply because there is no discourse. Moreover, simply invoking techniques, standards, principles and rules in order to legitimate a certain practice does not justify that practice, but rather hides behind the practice. Technique is not an identity, and if you do not have an identity, who can identify you in order to see if you make a difference, that you really are indispensable? I claim that such a recognized identity can only be achieved when participating and addressing issues within the context of a public sphere.

The above has pointed to the reasons behind why librarians do not see themselves, and consequently do not act, as information critics. The discourse of their disciplinary background, LIS, is concerned more with prescriptive issues rather than descriptive and analytic issues. During their training, librarians are not introduced to the theories, schools of thought, academic disciplines and knowledge needed to engage in public discourse simply because LIS puts itself at a distance to society and culture through its technical and managerial discourse, although the field clearly does not hesitate from expounding on its own social and cultural significance. In that way, LIS has failed to produce information critics and, consequently, has also failed to develop a critical stance towards the objects of the discipline. In the following section I will argue for the education of a new information critic.

*Towards an information critic*

Society is the basic unit of knowledge organization. It has particular structures and spheres organized according to particular interests and activities (cf. Habermas, 1996). These have been developed and shaped historically by a variety of human agents, and the structures and spheres have in turn shaped human activity. Thus, society consists of forms of organized and mediated knowledge, which is produced, distributed and used by humans.

**SOCIETY AND ITS TEXTUAL MEDIATION**

Social organization  
GENERATES  
Religion, law, politics, science, economics, education, art,  
commerce, industry and administration, which  
GENERATE  
Documents and information affiliated with institutions that  
support & maintain social structures,  
power & influence, which  
GENERATES  
Produces & distributes, through a variety of genres:  
books, articles, journals, laws, reports, memorandums,  
advertisements, newspapers, pamphlets, and  
different communicative situations, which  
GENERATE  
Knowledge organization systems

The depiction of text generation and organization within society in the outline above illustrates the forms and layers of organized and mediated knowledge in society. Although the figure is rather sketchy, it nevertheless shows that broader forms of organized knowledge constitute knowledge organization systems. The part of society that matters most to librarians is the one where knowledge or information, materialized in a variety of genres, is circulating, and what role knowledge organization systems have in relation to that circulation, which implies concern with the impact the circulation of knowledge has on society. If this is the case, it stands to reason that every analysis and critique of knowledge organization systems must be addressed, and understood, in relation to the forms and layers of organized knowledge in society. Librarians cannot offer a view of knowledge organization systems as isolated from society's total communication structures. The practice of librarianship needs to be conditioned by an understanding of how knowledge and documents are socially organized, because this social organization structures and influences the possibilities of knowledge organization systems. Acting as information critics, librarians should demonstrate what Warnick has called "critical literacy" which is,

the ability to stand back from texts and view them critically as circulating within a larger social and textual context...It includes the capacity to look beneath the surface of discourse, to understand implicit ideologies and agendas... (Warnick, 2002, p. 6)

Knowledge organization systems are also a kind of text, at least in the sense that they make use of textual features in order to represent and organize documents. That means they are also circulating "within a larger social and textual context." This social and textual context is what constitutes the functionality of knowledge organization systems as they are developed as a response to other organized textual activities in society. That is, information critics should be concerned with analyzing what kind of influence knowledge organization systems have in society, compared with other modes of organizing knowledge as expressed through textual activities. Information criticism needs to look beneath the layers of organized and mediated knowledge in society, the "surface of discourse" as Warnick (2002) calls it, in order to point to how particular knowledge organization systems work, and to see what motivates particular forms of organized knowledge. This should provide citizens with an understanding of how they might apply

such systems when searching for knowledge or information, and of what they can expect of these knowledge organization systems, that is, what such systems can and cannot do.

Bibliographies provide an example here. The shift from print to electronic recording and distribution of knowledge has contributed to the detachment of bibliography from the larger history of documents and their role in society. This has caused a lack of awareness of the role of bibliography in society, as electronic databases seem to rest on an ideology of detachment that has supplanted the social grounding of bibliographies as documents with specific histories embedded in sociopolitical activities. If this activity of librarianship's past is no longer recognized and understood, it becomes difficult to conceptualize, much less argue for, the role of knowledge organization systems in general in society and culture.

Acting as information critics, librarians could contribute to the demystification of knowledge organization systems by participating in the public sphere, discussing and justifying why knowledge organization systems, and their functionality, should matter to the public. That is, librarianship must argue that these systems make a difference in society, and also show how they affect our professional and everyday activities. Librarians can and should actively do this by acting as critics of society's textually mediated communication structures.

One way of doing this could be to review and write about such systems in public magazines and newspapers, not only in the research literature. But, in order to do this, librarians need to develop a vocabulary, a discourse, that is not technical or managerial. Librarians as information critics need to address and discuss knowledge organization systems in light of what these do and do not do in people's lives. Such dialogue might contribute to the development of a popular conception that knowledge organization systems are an important – maybe even indispensable – part of society and culture. In so far as this is ever achieved, information critics can make an important contribution to the public's understanding of how the many knowledge organization activities going on in society operate and how these, in the long run, serve or suppress democratic purposes. This task would be, of course, conditioned by how knowledge organization activities are made visible to citizens

whose social actions depend on access to knowledge materialized in documents. One way of making these visible is to talk about them in a public discourse (or sphere), to relate problems with knowledge organization systems directly to social and cultural problems. Only in this way can the wider public recognize the potential value and doings of knowledge organization systems. If people can see that the functionality of knowledge organization systems is connected with social and cultural issues, then they might come to understand why such systems perform as they do and, thereby, people might also come to see that like other kinds of information, knowledge organization systems are always grounded in particular ideologies. Having a particular ideology is not necessarily bad. It is not being conscious of the presence of ideology that constitutes a problem. The basic social and cultural responsibility of the information critic should be to inform society about the existence of the ideologies embedded within systems of knowledge.

All this is to say that analyzing knowledge organization systems is much more than merely “evaluating,” for instance, databases or search engines and their technical capacities. It is to put the discussion of these entities into a critique of late-modern culture and society. This is not the first time such discussions have been called for. It has been suggested by Campbell (2002), for instance, in his review of Richard Smiraglia’s book *The Nature of “A Work”: Implications for the Organization of Knowledge* (2001). Smiraglia argues that “the work” is a cultural construction. Campbell agrees with this, but emphasizes that it implies a greater sensitivity “...to the social processes that fabricate our conception of the ‘work.’” (Campbell, 2002, p. 109). However, these processes are not, Campbell argues, articulated in catalogues. They are “...to be found in, or derived from, *closer and more comprehensive readings of social and cultural theory...*” (Campbell, 2002, p.109; emphasis added). The call sounded by Campbell for readings of social and cultural theory in order to understand what knowledge organization systems such as catalogs articulate, that is what catalogs do, represents another way of highlighting the significance of connecting studies into knowledge organization to broader theoretical horizons in order to raise consciousness about its activity.

The modern librarian envisioned as an information critic is sorely needed because systems of knowledge organization, in particular

with the rise of the Internet, are part of our everyday life and human activities. This means that we are more than ever dependent on such systems, but at the same time we need critical insight into how such systems work and why. Otherwise, our dependence becomes one of slavery and not active participation. Therefore, critical analyses and criticisms of the tendency of these systems to pretend to act as naturalized tools are constantly needed, because they shape society and culture and, in turn, are shaped by society and culture. The modern librarian should be providing such a critique of bibliographies, catalogs, and encyclopedias etc. because these are librarians' working tools, used daily when mediating society and culture. In this way we may consider the modern librarian as an information critic.

### *Conclusion*

The above discussion has focused on information criticism and information critics. I have argued that librarians are not the primary ones to blame for not displaying a critical attitude towards knowledge organization systems. The root lies in their professional training: library and information science (LIS). This field cannot be characterized as a field that engages heavily with other, related academic disciplines concerning social and cultural issues. Therefore, LIS does not share a vocabulary with related disciplines. LIS has managed to create its own "metaphysical" discourse that tends to favor technical and managerial language use. Such language does not invite critical consciousness and analysis as it stands at a distance towards the objects it is talking about. Indeed, technical and managerial language often stands in opposition to basic human needs, and is more concerned with how to do things rather than describe and critically discuss how these things (i.e. knowledge organization systems) work or do not. In that sense, librarians cannot function as information critics because they are not in possession of the appropriate vocabulary. Librarians' discursive framework needs to change if they are to have a social and cultural significance, which librarians now and then proclaim they have. In other words, if librarians are to act as information critics, they have to engage in and address their professional problems in relation to public discourse. Only then can their proper significance be estimated and recognized.



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# THE DIGITAL DIVIDE & PUBLIC LIBRARIES: a first-hand view

by DENISE E. AGOSTO

As a part of a research study I have been conducting over the past several months, I have visited branches of a large U.S. urban public library system and interviewed branch librarians about their resources and services. I've been to ten different branch libraries so far, and I have been stunned at the degree of variance in quality and quantity of digital resources. As a library school professor I have read numerous articles concerning the digital divide over the past decade or so and have always maintained that the problem is severe. I knew that poorer children were about three times less likely to have home computers than middle class children (Eamon, 2004), and that the Internet had served to widen the information gap between rich and poor, rather than bridge it as some had predicted (e.g. Wolf, 1998).

On the other hand, I knew that public libraries were playing a role in reducing the digital divide for poorer populations (e.g. Gates Foundation, 2004). It wasn't until I saw the digital resource discrepancies within one library system laid out so clearly before me that I came to understand the degree of unfairness that exists.

Consider two branches as examples of the inequities within this particular system:

## *Branch #1*

This first branch is located in a middle class neighborhood where most residents hold working class or professional class jobs, and most families live in single-family dwellings. The librarian I interviewed estimated that roughly half of the households in the community have home Internet access.

The branch serves a population of about 4,800. It has six computers for the public, each new, relatively high-powered, and equipped

with flashy, over-sized flat screens. There are also four Internet-access computers just for staff use, and one more computer just for OPAC access. There is almost always a waiting list for the Internet, and use is limited to 30 minutes per day per patron.

Overall, this library has adequate digital access and can generally serve the public's needs, although more computers and longer use times would certainly benefit patrons without home computers.

### *Branch #2*

This branch is located in an impoverished inner-city neighborhood where the average household income is well below the poverty level. It sits on a block in which a number of the buildings are abandoned. A large portion of the community is unemployed, living in government-assisted housing, and/or homeless.

This little branch library, no larger than a store in a strip mall, is the only local library for a community of 45,000 people, making its service area the largest of any branch library in the city. Although the librarian I interviewed stated that virtually no community households have computers, the library has dismal digital resources. It has only three computers available for public use, and no computers for staff use. These three computers are old cast-offs from another library, and only one of the three works. That means that this one, slow, out-of-date computer provides computer/Internet access for a community of 45,000, as well as for the entire library staff. Computer-assisted reference is out of the question since a member of the public is almost always using the computer. Few of the schools in the neighborhood have libraries, much less plentiful computers with Internet access, so the public library is really the only place to use computers. But there aren't any worth using.

### *The Digital Divide in Public Libraries*

Based on what I've seen, there are at least three factors leading to branch-by-branch inequities within this public library system. I know only part of the story, so there are probably additional factors, but these three were the most evident during my visits.

First, library resources are unevenly distributed among communities within the same library system. This may be due to increased community lobbying power, increased community voice, or increased community library use histories, but the libraries serving the neighborhoods with the most economic strength seem to get the best quality and greatest number of resources. This is true not just of the two branches I described above, but of all ten I have visited.

Second, private residents in communities with greater economic power augment library-provided resources. For example, the librarian at Branch #2 said that recent system-wide budget cuts were having a drastic effect on her collection development efforts; her subsistence collection was getting even thinner. I asked the librarian at Branch #1 about the effect of budget cuts on her collection. “There haven’t really been any,” she explained. “The Friends of the Library has donated money to make up for lost funds.”

Thirdly, local commercial entities support libraries in communities with economic power. Commercial businesses have an interest in promoting themselves to populations that can pay for their goods and services. At Branch #1, the beautifully decorated and furnished children’s area was called the “Verizon Children’s Area,” and a sign on the front door boasted about a recent \$1,000 donation from a commercial retail chain with a store in the area. Few large businesses and commercial chains open franchises in impoverished areas where there is little discretionary spending, so corporate donations to underprivileged urban libraries are much rarer.

#### *An Example of a Privileged Suburban Community Library*

As stunning as the digital inequities between Branch #1 and Branch #2 are, the situation is even more dramatic when these two urban libraries are compared to a public library in a privileged suburban area. Take my own local public library as an example. Located outside the city that is home to Branch #1 and Branch #2, it has median family income of about \$90,000. With average house prices at \$233,000, property tax support for public libraries (and public schools) results in relatively large budgets, enabling the purchase and maintenance of topnotch computers and computer resources.

At my library, which serves a population of about 28,000, there are 50 computers for the public (not including 12 OPAC-only terminals) as well as a large number of computers just for staff use. There are public computers just for checking e-mail, public computers just for accessing Web-based propriety databases, public computers for general Web surfing, and an entire room of public computers for all of these uses. There are almost always more public computers available than people who want to use them, partly because there are so many computers, but also because almost every member of the community has computer and Internet access at home. And at work. And at school.

*What Does it all Mean?*

It is not my intention to criticize the urban public library system profiled above; it is a good system that does the best job it can within its resource limitations. I am profiling these three libraries to show that the digital divide is more than just a question of fairness or convenience. With respect to public libraries, the digital divide means that the people who most need access are the least likely to be able to get it at their local public library. Looking just at population served per computer, my library offers one computer for about every 560 community residents, as opposed to one for every 45,000 in the case of Branch #2. That means that users of my library are about 80 times more likely to be able to find an available computer upon entering the library than users of Branch #2. And keep in mind that users of my local library are far more likely to have computers at home, work, and school. Computer and Internet access can make real differences in people's lives and can leave those without access at a serious disadvantage.

For example, while I was at Branch #1, I observed a man desperately trying to type a resume within his half hour computer time limit. He couldn't complete it in time, of course. He explained to the librarian that just that morning he had managed to get a job interview for that afternoon, and he wanted to bring a resume. Sadly, he left empty-handed after the librarian explained, apologetically, that there was a two-hour waiting list before she could let him have another half hour on a computer (and even that would have broken the 30 minutes per day rule).

If he had lived in my suburban town, this man would have had enough time on a library computer to complete his resume, and he could have walked into his interview much more likely to walk away with a job.

Anyone who says we don't have economic class privileges in the United States has never looked closely at, and truly seen, our public library system and the great digital divide it reflects.

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# LIBRARIES AND NATIONAL SECURITY LAW: an examination of the USA PATRIOT Act

by HEATHER PHILLIPS

“The final version of the PATRIOT Act that was passed into law was rewritten between midnight and 8 o’clock in the morning behind closed doors by a few unknown people, and it was presented to Congress for a one-hour debate and an up or down vote,” U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore,<sup>1</sup> said in a telephone interview from his Oregon office. “It was hundreds of pages long, and no member of Congress can tell you they knew what they were voting for in its entirety. It was time to be stampeded, and who wanted to be against the USA PATRIOT Act at a time like that?”<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, legislation was introduced into Congress that was designed to combat terrorism and increase domestic security. This legislation was entitled Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism,<sup>3</sup> and there were no hearings on it before its passage.<sup>4</sup> Quickly, people began calling it by its acronym: USA PATRIOT Act (hereinafter PATRIOT Act). However, nearly as soon as it was passed, people expressed concern over some of its provisions. This paper examines the PATRIOT Act, both in light of its historical predecessors in the field of national security law, as well as in its effects upon libraries.

This paper will examine national security statutes, which, like the PATRIOT Act, have had significant impact on libraries, or which impact libraries, such as regulations which affect the right to free speech and freedom of expression. This paper will show that, though the PATRIOT Act follows a well-established historical path in terms of the activities it seeks to regulate, it deviates in critical ways that call into question its constitutional validity. This paper will analyze the PATRIOT Act in terms of its ramifications in the areas of free speech and free expression, and will conclude with an

examination of the measures that libraries, Congress, and library-sympathetic nonprofits are taking regarding the PATRIOT Act.

### *Previous National Security Statutes*

#### Smith Act of 1940

One predecessor statute to the PATRIOT Act is the Alien Registration Act of 1940, commonly known as the Smith Act after the senator who sponsored it. Howard W. Smith (D-Virginia 1930-1965) is widely regarded as a compatriot of Joseph McCarthy, the Congressman who headed the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).<sup>6</sup> The Smith Act's main thrust was to require all non-citizens to register with the government.<sup>7</sup> However, it also contained provisions making it illegal to "distribute any written or printed matter which advises, counsels, or urges insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty by any member of the military or naval forces of the United States,"<sup>8</sup> or "to print, publish, edit, issue, circulate, sell, distribute, or publicly display any written or printed matter advocating, advising, or teaching the duty, necessity, desirability or propriety of overthrowing or destroying any government in the United States by force or violence."<sup>9</sup> The Smith Act required that the behavior it criminalized be accompanied by a particular intent; that the disloyalty action described above be paired with the "intent to interfere with, impair or influence the loyalty, morale, or discipline of the military or naval forces." The printing/distributing act, in other words, must be *accompanied* by "the intent to cause the overthrow or destruction of any government within the United States." The Smith Act, in its specificity regarding both the nature of the criminal act and the level of intent required, follows mainstream patterns of criminal law.

The Smith Act also provided that "Any written or printed material ...which is intended for use in violation of this Act may be taken from any house or other place in which it may be found, or from any person in whose possession it may be, under a search warrant."<sup>10</sup> By requiring a search warrant before the seizure of materials, the Smith Act is staying on very solid constitutional ground. Basic criminal procedure requires search warrants as a protection of the constitutional rights and civil liberties of the people.



The Smith Act, unlike its philosophical descendent the PATRIOT Act, falls very much within the mainstream of criminal law and criminal procedure. And in fact, although the Smith Act was technically repealed in 1948, it was codified in nearly identical language in the United States Code in 1956,<sup>11</sup> after the Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality in 1951.<sup>12</sup> Even though the sections of the code described above were revised in 1962 and 1994, for the most part some features of the Smith Act are still part of the law of the United States.<sup>13</sup>

#### Internal Security Act of 1950

The Internal Security Act of 1950, also known as the McCarran Act<sup>14</sup> (hereinafter Internal Security Act) criminalized more behaviours. Of specific interest to libraries was the provision which made it punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 or ten years in prison<sup>15</sup> for a person having access to or control over any document which they believed could be used to the “injury of the United States, or to the advantage of any foreign nation,” to “willfully or through negligence communicate or cause that document to be communicated,” or to “willfully refuse to surrender such information to an authorized official of the United States.”<sup>16</sup> In effect, it made it illegal for a librarian to circulate materials which she or he believed could be used either to “injure” the United States, or to be used to the advantage of another nation. Since the language of the statute is not specific, this means that the statute referred to any material that could injure the United States in any way, or could be used to the advantage of another nation in any way. For example, a librarian who circulated a travel guide to Rome might well be in violation of this statute, since the goal of the book is to increase tourism to Rome, thus aiding Italy economically. If the librarian believed that checking out this travel guide might result in a vacationer going to Italy, that librarian could have been sent to prison for ten years. And if the librarian in any way resisted an FBI attempt to seize that book, this would also be a violation of the law.

Under the Internal Security Act, it was also illegal to willfully make, obtain or copy any document of “anything connected with the national defense.”<sup>17</sup> Again, the language of the statute was so vague as to have encompassed nearly anything. This means that a wife who took a photo of her husband in military uniform – clearly

an image of something connected to national defense – would have violated the law. If her husband was killed in action, she could not give a copy of that photo to the newspaper. If the newspaper printed the photo, the newspaper would have violated the law. So would anyone who bought the newspaper. Reporting such as that we have recently seen out of Iraq would be illegal on many levels. Perhaps most disturbingly, the Internal Security Act also criminalized all intellectual work having anything to do with the military - anything from sophisticated scholarly critiques of the military-industrial complex to a 10th grader's history report on Pearl Harbor.

The Supreme Court began finding parts of the Internal Security Act of 1950 unconstitutional in 1964,<sup>18</sup> but the act was only completely repealed in 1990. It is no longer a part of the law of the United States. However, when it was valid law, the Internal Security Act<sup>19</sup> still required a warrant before the search or seizure of materials. No matter how vague it may have been regarding the actions it sought to criminalize, it stayed on firm procedural grounds regarding the actions required of law enforcement in pursuing those who engaged in those acts.

#### *USA PATRIOT Act and Libraries: Section 215*

While its predecessor laws stayed, more or less, within accepted legal and procedural norms, the PATRIOT Act does not. Notably, and of particular interest to libraries, are the problems caused by section 215 of the PATRIOT Act.<sup>20</sup> It amends the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1987 by inserting provisions allowing for the seizure of “tangible items” related to an investigation involving national security.<sup>21</sup> This alone is not disturbing.

What is troubling, however, is that the act changes “the level of proof necessary to obtain an order. Before the PATRIOT Act, agents had to prove ‘probable cause’ of illegal activity in a criminal court.” However, instead of requiring a warrant for search and seizure, the FBI may instead apply to a federal judge (who may be a member of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court,<sup>22</sup> which meets secretly<sup>23</sup>) for an “order.”<sup>24</sup> This order allows the FBI to search and take into custody “any tangible things”<sup>25</sup> which are related to, “an investigation to protect against international terrorism or clandestine

intelligence activities.”<sup>26</sup> The sole protection given is contained in a provision stating that the investigation may not be “conducted solely upon the basis of activities protected by the first amendment to the Constitution.”<sup>27</sup>

This language is worth analyzing, because it only forbids an investigation that is based solely upon constitutionally protected activities. If the FBI can present any other basis for the investigation, no matter how small, remote or insignificant, that investigation is allowed, even if it is otherwise based entirely upon protected activities. “[S]peech that potentially endangers national security”<sup>28</sup> is not protected by the First Amendment.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the rights of non-citizens are especially vulnerable, because “this limitation is not relevant when the investigation is of a foreign national.”<sup>30</sup>

Further, in an application for an order, the FBI need only “claim the order is needed to investigate activity that is merely ‘relevant to’ an ongoing investigation,”<sup>31</sup> or, in the words of the statute itself “are sought for an authorized investigation.”<sup>32</sup> No details of the investigation itself need to be disclosed in the application. The judge, therefore, is placed in a position of being forced to trust the motivations and truthfulness of law enforcement “despite the [FISA] court’s own statement that Department of Justice (DOJ) officials ‘had frequently misled the court.’”<sup>33</sup> This betrays a bias on the part of the PATRIOT Act toward acceptance of the validity and propriety of law enforcement’s requests.

In the event that a judge refuses to make an order, the judge must not only provide a written justification for the denial, but the judge’s decision is also immediately transmitted for an automatic appeal.<sup>34</sup> These provisions are unprecedented in the history of criminal law, and are further evidence of bias in favor of law enforcement’s wishes. In no other area of the law is a judge required to so thoroughly justify the denial of a procedural motion. Further, requiring an automatic appeal for all denials has a chilling effect on the judges reviewing the orders. It is an incentive for the judges to grant, rather than deny orders. By discouraging judges from denying orders, and requiring such a rigorous justification whenever an order is actually denied, this law diminishes protections for the public. Further evidence for PATRIOT’s bias can be found in its mandate that a court “cannot deny a request presented to it as long as it includes the required

information.” Never, in all of American jurisprudence has the success of a search-and-seizure order been mandated to rest on how fully the forms have been filled out.

When a judge enters an order, that order may not disclose the purpose for which it is created,<sup>35</sup> and it is unlawful for any person to tell any other person (except for those people whom it is strictly necessary to tell in order for the order to be executed) that the FBI has requested or obtained materials via such an order.<sup>36</sup> The secrecy under which an order be held, both officially and by members of the public, violates traditional notions of proper procedure and governmental conduct. Also, it is further evidence that the PATRIOT Act is biased in favor of law enforcement. Knowing all this, it is not surprising that Senator Russ Feingold (D-Wisconsin)<sup>37</sup> called section 215 “one of the most troubling aspects” of the Act.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps most disturbing is what all of these changes actually did to existing law. “The PATRIOT Act reverses controls placed on domestic terrorism surveillance guidelines adopted in 1976 after the abuses of the COINTELPRO were revealed.”<sup>39</sup> Under the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO),<sup>40</sup> civil rights and anti-war activists who were neither accused nor suspected of crimes became targets of government investigation simply because of their beliefs regarding, and criticism of, government policies. By removing post-COINTELPRO restrictions limiting domestic spying, it is probable that covert surveillance of political dissidents who are in no way connected to criminal activity is likely to resume.<sup>41</sup>

Another negative aspect of the PATRIOT Act is the chilling effect it has had on free speech. Given the ease and lack of oversight with which the FBI can obtain records regarding a person’s reading habits, internet searching patterns, religious affiliations, political and charitable campaign contributions, and other expressive activities, it is probable, even predictable, that people will change their behavior, or stop certain behaviors altogether. This is what legal practitioners refer to as a “chilling effect,”<sup>42</sup> Courts have ruled that laws having a chilling effect on free speech violate the constitution.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to note here the difference between potential application and actual application of a law. Even though a particular use might be technically authorized by a law, the provision might

not ever be applied. One of the reasons for this is benign: law enforcement officials have a limited amount of time and resources, and some situations will either fall through the cracks, or have such a low priority that they are simply not dealt with. Another reason, however, is not so benign: what legal practitioners refer to as “selective enforcement.” Selective enforcement occurs when law enforcement uses the law to target certain groups of people (especially minorities) because they have exercised, or are planning to exercise, a constitutionally protected right.<sup>44</sup> It is fear of such abuses of power, especially in regards to issues of free expression, which has placed librarians in the forefront of the opposition to the PATRIOT Act.<sup>45</sup> Attorney General Ashcroft attempted to allay this fear when he “sought to reassure the library community that such investigative measures are being used with great care and discretion.”<sup>46</sup> Regardless of Mr. Ashcroft’s reassurances, the library community has continued to believe that, “In a free society, we can’t always trust the government to restrain its own powers. Laudable goals like stopping terrorism may lead to terrible abuses unless laws are narrowly tailored to achieve specific objectives while preserving our Constitutional rights.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite Attorney General Ashcroft’s dismissal of librarians’ concerns over section 215 as “baseless hysteria,” and the initial claims that “the number of times section 215 has been used to date is zero,”<sup>48</sup> it turns out section 215 of the PATRIOT Act has, in fact, been used to procure library records on a number of occasions. In 2003 the number of secret surveillance warrants issued in federal terrorism and espionage cases exceeded the number issued through normal criminal procedures nationwide.<sup>49</sup> In a poll, conducted on December 4, 2001, by the Library Research Center at the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Illinois, it was discovered that over 200 public libraries had been asked for information by law enforcement, and that 40 of these had actually reported patron records or behavior to outside authorities.<sup>50</sup> In a subsequent and similar survey of 906 libraries by the same organization, 545 said that they had been contacted by law enforcement in the year following September 11, 2001, and that nearly half of them voluntarily complied with law enforcement’s requests.<sup>51</sup> Another survey conducted by the University of Illinois in January and February 2002 of 1,021 libraries across the state of Illinois found that 85 had been asked by law enforcement officials

to provide information about patrons regarding September 11, 2001. A survey conducted by the California Library Association, which was carefully crafted so as to make responses untraceable back to those surveyed, reveals that 14 library directors reported that FBI agents have formally asked them or their libraries for information since September 11, 2001.<sup>52</sup> This poll collected information from 344 libraries. In addition to the 14 who had been formally visited, 16 others indicated that they had been informally visited. Of this 16, half complied with law enforcement's requests.<sup>53</sup> Of course, as one author noted, "There is no way of knowing how many other library directors were omitted from the survey or declined to acknowledge such contacts for fear of violating the law."<sup>54</sup> Because of this, "The direct effects of the USA PATRIOT Act may not be known for some time."<sup>55</sup>

In addition to requests and visits, "libraries across the country are reporting incidents. Computers were removed from a library in Washington without a court order, and every public Internet-access computer was removed from a library in Wisconsin."<sup>56</sup> Such "incidents" are both mysterious and, at least in their immediate aftermath, largely untraceable. They also add to the public's fears regarding their privacy and the accountability of law enforcement. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that library patrons are more wary about using their public libraries, and have expressed the feeling that they can no longer trust libraries and are no longer willing to ask reference questions when they feel the topic to be controversial.<sup>57</sup> It is understandable then that "municipalities and city councils throughout the United States have passed resolutions opposing the PATRIOT Act – including Section 215. Plainly, public opinion is beginning to make a difference – and citizens are pressing for amendments to an Act that threatens to destroy basic civil liberties in America."<sup>58</sup>

### *The Response*

#### FOIA Requests & Lawsuits

When it began to become apparent that section 215 was being used, groups such as the ACLU began making "requests for information on how Sec. 215 has been applied"<sup>59</sup> via Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. One author describes the response that they got by

saying, “The [Department of Justice] refused to comply with these initial requests, until courts ordered them to comply. Even then, they provided reports that were almost completely redacted and therefore meaningless.”<sup>60</sup> Even after it received requests from members of Congress, such as Representative Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin, Chair of the House Committee on the Judiciary), about the number of times Sec. 215 had been used to obtain library records, the DOJ took nearly a year to respond.<sup>61</sup> This is not surprising, given that, “Attorney General John Ashcroft has gone to great lengths to keep secret even the most basic information about the FBI’s [use of the PATRIOT Act].”<sup>62</sup> When the DOJ finally responded, it claimed that, “The American people surrender their right of privacy when they buy books in bookstores or borrow them from libraries.”<sup>63</sup>

The DOJ’s response, dated May 2003 “claims that agents had sought information from libraries fifty times under Sec. 215, but those figures can be reconciled with the University of Illinois results only if they are limited solely to FISA warrants and do not include NSLs [National Security Letters] and other orders.”<sup>64</sup> Attorney General John Ashcroft has recently conceded that there were over 1,000 applications for FISA warrants in 2002.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to making FOIA requests, organizations such as the ACLU, the American Library Association (ALA) and the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression have begun filing lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of certain provisions, including section 215, of the PATRIOT Act.<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to note that due to provisions in the PATRIOT Act itself, the ACLU was unable to announce that it had filed this suit until it received permission from the Department of Justice.<sup>67</sup> Over two weeks after it was filed, a heavily censored version was released, and the lawsuit itself was announced to the public.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the ACLU, “a number of [other] organizations, including the American Library Association and the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, have launched legal challenges to the USA PATRIOT Act.”<sup>69</sup> Regarding their suit, the director of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression said, “What’s so frustrating is that we’re supposed to be watchdogs over the government’s use of power...But there is so much secrecy that we can’t even tell what the government is doing or how much it’s doing it.”<sup>70</sup>

## Legislation

Congressional opponents of the PATRIOT Act have begun introducing legislation aimed at ameliorating some of the objectionable effects of the PATRIOT Act.<sup>71</sup> This legislation includes the Freedom to Read Act (H.R. 1157), which would limit the government's ability to procure FISA orders to obtain library or bookseller records; the Library and Bookseller Protection Act (S.1158), which would exempt libraries and bookstores from orders requiring the production of "tangible things" under section 215 of the PATRIOT Act; and the Security and Freedom Ensured (SAFE) Act, which would require individualized suspicion for searches of libraries and bookstores, and would remove the ability to procure FISA orders to enact such searches.

## Internal Library Preparations

Whether or not they are engaging in legal challenges, libraries are concerned enough with the PATRIOT Act to begin making preparations in case they are ever visited by the FBI with an order requesting information under section 215. Many librarians are taking the position that, in the words of one librarian, "Patron information is sacrosanct here. It's nobody's business what you read."<sup>72</sup> The ALA, interpreting the Library Bill of Rights "as insisting on the privacy of library patrons as a condition of the freedom of expression guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution"<sup>73</sup> has taken a similar stance. It passed a "Resolution on the USA PATRIOT Act and Related Measures That Infringe on the Rights of Library Users" which says, among other things, that, "Privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association; and, in a library, the subject of users' interests should not be examined or scrutinized by others."<sup>74</sup> The ALA's resolution goes on to state that,

The American Library Association encourages all librarians, library administrators, library governing bodies, and library advocates to educate their users, staff, and communities about the process for compliance with the USA PATRIOT Act and other related measures and about the dangers to individual privacy and the confidentiality of library records resulting from those measures.....[and] the American Library Association urges all libraries to adopt and implement patron privacy and record retention policies that affirm that the collection of personally identifiable information should only be a matter of routine or policy when necessary for the fulfillment of the mission of the library.<sup>75</sup>



The measures that individual libraries have undertaken range from employee education programs to the purging of library records. Librarians in Texas were advised at the Texas Library Association's 91st Annual Conference that they should have a clearly designated way in which to direct law enforcement requests to directors, and to have a policy in place dictating how they would handle law enforcement requests for patron record information.<sup>76</sup> The ALA recommends that such policies require a verification of a written warrant or order as well as valid law enforcement identification, and that the librarian in charge review the court order with an attorney. The ALA advises that without some type of court order, law enforcement cannot compel cooperation with their requests. Other recommendations include planning for service interruptions if equipment is seized.<sup>77</sup>

Other libraries have changed their information gathering policies, restricting the information they collect to types that are necessary for the efficient operating of the library and by avoiding the creation of unnecessary records, or collection of unnecessary information.<sup>78</sup> In addition, "libraries have begun conducting privacy audits to be sure they really need to keep the personal information they have traditionally collected and to get rid of information they do not need,"<sup>79</sup> using the logic that "They can't find what we don't have."<sup>80</sup> The ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom has set up a hotline for librarians to call for assistance in case they are contacted by law enforcement. Librarians are advised that when they call the hotline that they should say nothing but "I need the assistance of an attorney." In this way, the secrecy clause of the PATRIOT Act is not violated. The hotline is specifically designed to put librarians in contact with attorneys who work with the ALA in matters concerning the PATRIOT Act.<sup>81</sup> If libraries prefer to find their own attorneys, they are advised to select attorneys who have attended the ALA's PATRIOT Act training seminar.<sup>82</sup>

Still other measures that libraries have taken seek to inform patrons of the potential uses of the PATRIOT Act before anything can happen. The Public Library in Santa Cruz, California, has posted the following public notice in order to inform its patrons of the ramifications of the PATRIOT Act:

Warning: Although the Santa Cruz Library makes every effort to protect your privacy, under the federal USA PATRIOT Act (Public Law 107-56), records of the books and other materials you borrow from this library may be obtained by federal agents. That federal law prohibits library workers from informing you if federal agents have obtained records about you.<sup>83</sup>

Other library systems are debating similar warnings.<sup>84</sup>

Though the PATRIOT Act follows a well-established national security path in terms of the activities it seeks to regulate, it deviates in critical procedural ways that call into question its constitutionality. It is deficient because it lowers search and seizure requirements and forces members of the general public, as well as law enforcement officials, to keep search orders secret. Moreover, the law is patently biased toward law enforcement, given the automatic appeals process should their requests be denied. Librarians feel that values central to the library profession are threatened by it. In particular, the PATRIOT Act threatens the value of patron confidentiality and its ties to freedom of expression. Librarians are not the only ones with misgivings about the PATRIOT Act either: from a nearly unanimous passage at its inception, the PATRIOT Act has fallen drastically in popularity and its provisions now face substantial bipartisan resistance. During the 2003 State of the Union address, the Democrats, lead by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass), burst into applause at the prospect of the PATRIOT Act's expiration.<sup>85</sup> Well known Republicans such as former House Majority Leader Richard Armey and former Congressman Robert Barr have begun to lobby the Congress against expanding the PATRIOT Act.<sup>86</sup> Barr has gone so far as to call the USA PATRIOT Act a "systematic dismantling of the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution" and warns that, "If we do not put some brakes on this freight train...we will wake up one day and find we have no privacy."<sup>87</sup>

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50 U.S.C. § 1803(a) (2001)

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*Footnotes*

- 1 DeFazio was one of only 66 members of the House of Representatives to vote against the Patriot Act. (Stanton & Bazar 2003)
- 2 (Stanton & Bazar 2003)
- 3 (Stanton & Bazar 2003)
- 4 (Sandwell-Weiss 10)
- 5 (Dierenfield, 1987, 43, 218)
- 6 (Dierenfield, 1987, 118, 153)
- 7 30A Fed. Prac. & Proc. Evid. § 6360
- 8 Smith Act, Title 1, section 1 (a) 2
- 9 Smith Act, Title 1, section 2 (a) 2
- 10 Smith Act, Title 1 section 4
- 11 18 U.S.C. § 2385
- 12 *Dennis v. United States*, 341 U.S. 494, 516-17 (1951) (upholding the conviction of eleven members of the Communist party for distribution of pamphlets and organization of classes to teach communist principles during World War II as violating the Smith Act of 1940).
- 13 18 U.S.C. § 2385
- 14 Called this after its sponsor, Senator Patrick McCarran (D-Nev. 1932-1954) (Architect 2004)
- 15 Section 18, revising 18 USC 793 (f)
- 16 Section 18, revising 18 USC 793 (c) & (d)
- 17 Section 18, revising 18 USC 793 (b)
- 18 *Aptheker v. Secretary of State* 378 U.S. 500 (1964)
- 19 67 Stat. 987 et. Sec
- 20 115 Stat. 272 § 215
- 21 115 Stat. 272 § 215(a)(1)
- 22 115 Stat. 272 § 215(b)(1)(A)
- 23 (Stanton & Bazar 2003)
- 24 115 Stat. 272 § 215(a)(1)
- 25 115 Stat. 272 § 215(a)(1)
- 26 115 Stat. 272 § 215(a)(1)
- 27 115 Stat. 272 § 215(a)(1)
- 28 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)
- 29 "In view of Attorney General Ashcroft's assertion to Congress that asking any questions about civil liberties is aiding the terrorists, I believe that he would consider public dissent to be outside the protection of the 1st Amendment and evidence of 'domestic terrorism.'" (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)
- 30 (Ramasastri, 2003)
- 31 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)
- 32 115 Stat. 272 § 215(b)(1)(b)(2)
- 33 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)
- 34 50 USC § 1803(a)
- 35 115 Stat. 272 § 215(c)(2)
- 36 115 Stat. 272 § 215(d)
- 37 Notably, the only member of the senate to vote against the USA PATRIOT Act. He has introduced legislation that would repeal parts of section 215. This legislation is entitled the Library and Personal Records Privacy Act (Ramasastri 2003)
- 38 (FBI Visited, 2003)
- 39 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

40 COINTELPRO is an acronym for Counter Intelligence Program, a project run by the "United States Federal Bureau of Investigation aimed at attacking dissident political organizations within the United States. Although covert operations have been employed throughout FBI history, the formal COINTELPRO's of 1956-1971 were broadly targeted against organizations that were (at the time) considered politically radical, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference." (MediaWiki, 2004)

41 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

42 (Garner, 1999, 233)

43 (Ramasastry, 2003)

44 (Garner, 1999, 1363)

45 (Sandwell-Weiss 10)

46 (McCoy, 2003)

47 (Ramasastry 2003)

48 these comments were made in late 2003 (Arena 2003)

49 (Eggen & Schmidt, 2004)

50 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

51 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

52 (FBI Visits, 2003)

53 (FBI Visits, 2003)

54 (McCoy, 2003)

55 (McCoy, 2003)

56 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

57 (FBI Visits, 2003)

58 (Ramasastry, 2003)

59 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

60 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

61 (Pinnell-Stephens, 2003)

62 (Herald Interactive Advertising Systems, Inc, 2004)

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65 (McCoy, 2003)

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67 (Arizona Interactive Media Group, 2004)

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69 (McCoy, 2003)

70 (McCoy, 2003)

71 Sandwell-Weiss 13

72(FBI begins, 2002)

73 (McCoy, 2003)

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82 (McLean, 2003)

83 (McCoy, 2003)

84 (McCoy, 2003)

85 2003 State of the Union Address

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87 (McDonald, 2004)

# ETHICAL REFLECTION ON 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY INFORMATION WORK: an address to teachers and librarians

by TONI SAMEK

*Author's Note: This "expanded paper" is based on a shorter invited talk I gave at the University of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada) on March 18, 2005 for an event called Conversations About Ethics sponsored by the School of Library and Information Studies, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education Graduate Student Associations. Portions of this address also draw on a paper titled "An Introduction to Librarianship for Human Rights" that I delivered on November 12, 2004 at the "Shared Dialogue and Learning: International Conference on Educating for Human Rights and Global Citizenship." The vast majority of both audiences were from the field of education. This is reflected in my choice of words and message.<sup>1</sup>*

UNESCO's statement on Human Rights Research emphasizes "the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, especially the right to education, the right to take part in cultural life and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications." In essence, it stresses "the indivisibility, interdependence, interrelation and equal importance of all human rights (civil, cultural, economic, political and social)."<sup>2</sup>

**M**y main intention for this address is to ask education students to consider re-conceptualizing their understanding of librarians in schools and in society. Of course, the library students present can also benefit by, for example, being open to such topics as inquiry-based learning, democratic education, curriculum reform, the politics of the textbook, and human rights education. My message is simple: the partnership of educators and librarians is a fundamental step in the path towards the development of education for human rights and global citizenship.

Alberta Learning is currently promoting inquiry-based learning, "a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge. That knowledge is new to the students and may be used to answer a question, to develop a solution or to support

a position or point-of-view. The knowledge is usually presented to others and may result in some sort of action.”<sup>3</sup> The benefits to students, community, and society are numerous, including: treatment of authentic/real-life problems within the context of the curriculum and/or community; promotion of student curiosity; active use and interpretation of data and information; teacher/students/teacher-librarian collaboration; connection of community and society with learning; and student ownership of learning.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, these benefits support UNESCO’s Human Rights Education (HRE) Program (1945-), which identifies the following as conditions to education for human rights and global citizenship:<sup>5</sup>

- Teacher-student society connections
- Advocacy
- Meaningful authentic learning experiences
- Engagement of students in knowledge construction
- Instructional accommodations to social transformations
- Access to education
- Quality education that addresses cultural diversity, multilingualism, intercultural understanding and exchange
- Curriculum reform
- Democratic school management
- Community involvement

However, as is the case with human rights, inquiry-based learning is difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons. For example, it requires: articulated administrative vision; commitment despite competing pressures; champions; resources and space; teacher collaboration; teacher-librarian cooperation; teacher, librarian, student, parent trust; small interdisciplinary teams; and intrinsic value for problem solving throughout the school/school system. In other words, “success with inquiry-based learning often requires a change in school culture [and the role of the library therein].”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine how teachers can effectively build a culture of inquiry without embracing some of the basic tenets promoted by the library community, such as access to information and intellectual freedom. Vice versa, the efforts of teacher-librarians and school library media specialists (and ultimately librarians in general) are at risk of being stymied within school culture, without broad teacher support for critical inquiry-based learning.

Christine Hopkins refers to this two-way street as “mutual political advocacy.” In a recent e-mail posting to the PLGnet-I listserv under the subject line “Librarians & Teachers?” Hopkins wrote: “Teachers’ unions, we all know, are extraordinarily powerful organizations with real political clout. Isn’t there some way librarians can get more connected with teachers’ unions and educate teachers to refer students to libraries and librarians and come out to support library bonds and staffing, etc. Couldn’t there be some kind of *quid pro quo* of mutual political advocacy?”<sup>7</sup> That is where we come in!

### *Introduction*

Even in Canada, a free country by world standards, books and magazines are banned at the border. Books are removed from the shelves in Canadian libraries, schools, and bookstores everyday. Free speech on the Internet is under attack.

Excerpt from Canada’s Freedom to Read Week Kit, 2004.

The theory and practice of intellectual freedom are essential underpinnings of critical inquiry and informed citizenship, both important goals of our education system. However, our teachers are hard-hit by related sensitive social issues, such as book challenges, Internet access and child protection, principles of intellectual freedom in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, the impact of cutting teacher-librarians, and working with community leaders to deal with concerns about school resources. English language arts teachers are the hardest-hit of our educators for a number of reasons:

- the resources and curriculum they use are challenged regularly,
- the intellectual works they choose are subject to broad interpretation,
- the students they teach represent every level and age group, and
- they are rapidly losing their best professional consultants on intellectual freedom issues – teacher-librarians. (Alberta currently employs only about 70 professional teacher-librarians; down from 500.)

In a nation where such cuts to our school systems have reached the point of national crisis, I cannot think of a greater threat to intellectual freedom and cultural democracy. For this reason alone,



teachers and librarians need to support one another all the more. Teachers need the library community's help with school policy, curriculum, resources, community relations, and media response in the context of sensitive community climates. And for the kids you will be working with, and who will grow up (we hope) to vote and participate in civic engagement, we need to come together to ask such questions as:

- What happens to intellectual freedom in an era of intense privatization and heightened legalistic atmospheres?
- What happens to the public's "right to know" in the context of society's competing political, economic, and ideological agendas?
- What happens to the notion of informed citizenry when informed consent is dubious?

These questions are not indicative of safe professional ground for any of us. Within librarianship, for example, Canadian Library Association (CLA) President Stephen Arbram recently described information professionals as "subversives."<sup>8</sup> This activist interpretation of the librarian in society is rooted in what pre-eminent American library activist E.J. Josey calls "positive aggression." So while you may have come here today thinking of librarianship as a quiet feminized profession, I hope you leave knowing that it is an outspoken vehicle for principled engagement – and at times, positive trouble-making. In this view, librarians self-identify as activists, freedom fighters, agents of democracy, watch-dogs of government, providers of space and place for public sphere, promoters of authentic opinion and the right to know, educators for literacy (in all its forms), advocates of cultural democracy, facilitators of active transparency (information meeting you fully at the time of need), preservers of cultural and civic identities, providers of access from all points-of-view – and at the core – supporters of human rights including the rights of the child and the girl-child.

### *Librarianship, Information Ethics, and Human Rights*

Libraries have emerged in different forms over the course of human history, yet their significance has never been more strongly felt than in the last twenty years with the increased central role of information technology and the explosive growth of the Internet. As a result, many

individuals feel lost and misguided among what seems to be a ceaseless flow of information, resulting in a social demand for librarians and information professionals. These professionals service the public by demonstrating the proper usages for information technology, providing order to the array of informational media, and accepting the responsibility of cultural preservation that the library traditionally maintains. By fulfilling these duties, librarians and information professionals become “*cultural warriors*” capable of defending the professional integrity of the industry amid profiteers of information technology, while simultaneously creating cooperative efforts between the technological productions of technologists and the public service unique to librarianship.<sup>9</sup>

*Librarianship* is a profession that, at its core, works in the foundation, organization, preservation, access, and control of cultural records.

*Information ethics* prompts library workers to be mindful of “unfettered cultural records” for all peoples, ethical and related issues, and implications for social change and the development of human rights.

*Intercultural information ethics* addresses social and political development, cultural development, and economic development. In each aspect, there is contestation and threats to social justice, especially in the contexts of pluralism, heightened legalistic atmospheres, and competing political, economic, and ideological agendas. The Internet, for example, has great potential for resistance, counter-dominance, and empowerment, but also serves as a powerful conveyor and perpetuator of flat culture, standardization, homogenization, consumption, colonialism, toxic trade, and perhaps most importantly deafening silence.

The international, intercultural ethics community is largely committed to an optimistic vision for an Internet culture that is grounded in public sphere, authentic opinion, community, human welfare, and ultimately human development at the local level. It embraces intercultural information ethics as a tool for bringing to light value choices in the power struggle over human need versus profit. It views cultural distinctiveness as a priceless foundation for a so-called knowledge society.

The direct implication for teachers is to be extra mindful, in general, of the contexts (e.g., historical, epistemological, political, social, ideological, legal, economic) of information and resources used

both formally and informally, both consciously and unconsciously, in schools. Examples of current related issues that impact on the daily work of educators include, monopolies in educational publishing, Internet filters, diversity, family-values/community values, hate speech, pressure groups, censorship, literacy (in all its forms), and imposed technology in schools. Emergent issues in the latter category include the experimental, imposed student wearing of radio frequency IDs:

A February 22, 2005, *L.A. Times* article reported that in the Northern California farm town of Sutter (population 2,885), “every student at Brittan Elementary School had to wear a badge the size of an index card with their name, grade, photo — and a tiny radio identification tag. The purpose was to test a new high-tech attendance system...Known as radio frequency identification, RFID for short, the technology has been around for decades. But only lately have big markets blossomed. Radio identification has been embraced by manufacturers and retailers to track inventory, deployed on bridges to automatically collect tolls and used on ranches to cull cattle. The microchips have been injected into pets. But applying that technology in conjunction with people prompts an outcry from civil libertarians and privacy advocates. Proposals to use the high-tech ID tags in U.S. passports, Virginia driver’s licenses and even San Francisco library books have drawn sharp fire... *Add schoolchildren to the list.*<sup>10</sup>

A library spin on the same technology:

A March 22, 2005, *Berkeley Daily Planet* article stated: “Facing growing anger from residents and librarians over plans to lay off workers and implement tracking devices on materials, the Berkeley Public Library Board of Trustees has selected a veteran of local political battles to join its ranks...Ying Lee, 73,...said she is opposed to the board’s decision last year to install radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs) on the library’s 500,000 volume collection. RFIDs are expected to make checkout more efficient, but opponents fear that they could be used by government authorities to track patrons.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Getting Down to Human Rights*

Ideologically, the international, intercultural information ethics community finds strong support in self-identified activist segments of the library community who share a special commitment to the protection of civil liberties and civic identities. But even in less activist contexts, such as basic library advocacy, from the umbrella organization, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), down to national, provincial/state, and

local associations around the world, library rhetoric and policy on intellectual freedom recognizes the inherent relationship between human rights and freedom of expression. This powerful connection is embedded in Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which states that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

Building on this, by virtue of our set of contemporary library core values (e.g., Access, Confidentiality/Privacy, Democracy, Diversity, Education and Lifelong Learning, Intellectual Freedom, Preservation, The Public Good, Professionalism, Service, Social Responsibility),<sup>12</sup> it is librarianship's responsibility to contribute critically to the global discourse regarding information ethics, as it pertains to the following articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which are of particular relevance to information work (noted by International Center for Information Ethics):

- Respect for the dignity of human beings (Art. 1)
- Confidentiality (Art. 1, 2, 3, 6)
- Equality of opportunity (Art. 2, 7)
- Privacy (Art. 3, 12)
- Right to freedom of opinion and expression (Art. 19)
- Right to participate in the cultural life of the community (Art. 27)
- Right to the protection of the moral and material interests concerning any scientific, literary or artistic production (Art. 27)

This emphasis reinforces UNESCO's statement on Human Rights Research. And in the library community (and elsewhere), these human rights have received increased attention since the events of September 11, 2001, which

triggered the adoption of legislation, policies, and practices in the United States and around the world, including Canada, the European Union, China, Russia and various African countries. The consequences of such initiatives are relevant not only to individuals and institutions in those countries but have broader and more far-reaching impacts as well. In particular, such legislation, policies, and practices have tremendous

implications for such issues as access to information, privacy, civil liberties, and intellectual freedom.<sup>13</sup>

The upcoming special issue of *Government Information Quarterly* (GIQ), for example,

focuses on how these recent security policies and practices affect research, publishing and generally how information can be used and shared in modern times. In the United States, for example, trade embargoes have affected the scientific community through the publication ban of authors living in embargoed countries, who are involved in certain types of research (e.g., the use of potentially harmful materials and technologies). In a broader sense, however, the global tightening of information and border controls affect many spheres of society (public sector, private sector, civil society) and have major implications for academic and intellectual freedom, freedom of the press, civil liberties and other democratic principles. As such these issues are of concern to all.<sup>14</sup>

The call for papers for this issue of GIQ states: “we seek articles that address any of the above issues as well as related concerns such as transborder data flow, information resource control, and professional moral and ethical issues.”<sup>15</sup>

In check, I am currently representing a group of approximately 60 Canadian and American library and information studies educators who, in March 2005, proposed the creation of a new special interest group on information ethics for the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). The idea behind the proposal is to give critical attention to “ethical reflection” in the context of LIS education. At this point in our Association’s history, there is a strong interest in creating a consistent, formal, dedicated space in the conference program for information ethics and related areas. The proposed charter (to be discussed at the April 14-15 ALISE Board meeting), identifies the interest group’s charge to:

- Promote the study of information ethics in the LIS curriculum.
- Support pluralistic dialogue about ethical considerations both within the global LIS community and with partner communities (education, journalism, computer science – informatics, philosophy, law, management, and so on).
- Serve as a clearinghouse for teaching, research, and service resources in information ethics.

In general, we aim to promote ethical reflection on 21st century information work to spark interest in and support of librarianship's responsibilities to the better attainment of human rights in the context of knowledge society. In specific, we care to promote pluralistic ethical reflection in LIS education with special emphasis on the following goals for ethics for information specialists, as outlined by the International Center for Information Ethics (ICIE):<sup>16</sup>

- to be able to recognize and articulate ethical conflicts in the information field,
- to activate the sense of responsibility with regard to the consequences of individual and collective interactions in the information field,
- to improve the qualification for intercultural dialogue on the basis of the recognition of different kinds of information cultures and values, and
- to provide basic knowledge about ethical theories and concepts and about their relevance in everyday information work.

Meanwhile, the subject of ethics is gaining momentum elsewhere in the library community. In the United Kingdom (U.K.), for example,

at its meeting on 1 March 2005, The Professional Practice Committee of CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) confirmed the appointment of Margaret Watson, former President of CILIP in 2003/2004, as the Chair of the new Ethics Panel...The main purpose of the Panel will be to provide confidential advice to CILIP members who are facing ethical problems...In addition...the Panel will keep the "Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Conduct," passed by CILIP's governing Council last year, under review and will oversee a project to develop a database of ethical cases for inclusion on the CILIP website...As well as the Ethics Panel, the Professional Practice Committee also considered the setting up of the new Disciplinary Committee.<sup>17</sup>

But while the subject of library ethics is on the rise around the world no sanctions are imposed when professional ethics are violated. A recent study by Pnina Shachaf indicates that only three places (Portugal, Sri Lanka, and the U.K.) have formal sanctions on their books for librarians who violate their code of professional ethics.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, library associations, such as our CLA and its American counterpart ALA, "have no authority over library administrations."<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, in the broader human rights picture, as Marti Smith noted, “although UNESCO seeks to influence members, it does not exert governing enforcement or authority, therefore persuasion and consensus building are its primary tools.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Persuasion and Consensus Building*

Persuasion and consensus building within librarianship are basic characteristics of the critical library movement (also known in North America as progressive librarianship, activist librarianship, socially responsible librarianship, and radical librarianship).<sup>21</sup> This movement has a network base in such nations as Argentina, Austria, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, the U.K., and the U.S. It is emergent in Canada through the online face of the website <http://www.librarianactivist.org/>. (Of audience note: this website draws attention to school library issues.) The critical library movement dates back to the 1930s in the North American context. Since then, it has had a slow and steady global evolution with occasional brief accelerations, but there is little doubt that the movement is building unprecedented momentum in the 21st century.

The newly minted August 28, 2004 manifesto *Declaration from Buenos Aires on Information, Documentation and Libraries* recognizes 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.<sup>22</sup>

Yet historically, it has been argued, marginalized populations, such as indigenous peoples, women, oral communities, and political radicals (i.e., “the least socially and politically favored”<sup>23</sup>) have not been “represented” by the world’s cultural and civic identities. In this critical view, cultural workers, such as educators, publishers, librarians, archivists, and documentalists have both consciously and unconsciously participated in tasks and policy elaborations that have resulted in absences, omissions, and negations (e.g., misrepresentation of racialized and immigrant cultures).

These records are not (until very recently in some cases) fully apparent in the cultural and literary canons, the subject headings of the Library of Congress, the Universal Decimal, or the Dewey Decimal Classification systems (which, critical library and information workers worldwide acknowledge, continue to discriminate by “sex, race, ethnicity, ideology, economic status, social class, disabilities, migration, sexual orientation, religion, and language”<sup>24</sup>), the mostly middle-class library systems worldwide that organize their collections by these knowledge systems, the epistemological foundations of these knowledge systems, global information policies informed by the discourses of capital, community value/family value based school curricula, propagandistic textbooks of political regimes, or the ashes of cultural destruction brought about by violence.

For example, the Progressive African Library & Information Activists’ Group (PALIAct),

recognises the right to relevant information as a basic human right. This right must be enshrined in the constitution of all African countries and be endorsed as an active programme by the African Union. The struggle for a relevant information service is intimately linked with the political struggles of the people for organising a society that ensures that material, social, cultural and political needs of the people are met. PALIAct believes that the opportunity for making fundamental changes created as a direct result of political victories in the early period of struggle for liberation was lost. The opportunity that history had brought to our doorsteps to provide a people-orientated information service was lost. Instead of challenging the very basis on which library and information services were built, we allowed ourselves to be manipulated into making merely quantitative changes in library services, but failed to make any qualitative changes. The classes who were served by the colonial library service continued to be served and the needs of working people who had always remained outside the remit of such services remained unmet. Their experiences, their cultures, their very language remained outside the walls of impressive library buildings. Thus the advantage gained in the early period of struggle for a society and an information system which served the needs of all its people was lost. The struggle for such an information service continues to date. (February, 2005)<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the following questions deserve our special attention:

- What are the implications (epistemological, institutional, societal, historical, political, economic, and legal) of the forgotten, buried, and contaminated memories of individuals, societies, and institutions? Of a flattened



cultural record that reflects standardization, generalization, and homogenization?

- How can opportunities provided by communications technologies, interconnectivity, and the global digital network be applied to improve upon discriminatory knowledge practices (collection, organization, access, preservation, and control) to make them for everybody, not just for some? To what extent can improved practices redress the failed promotion of cultural distinctiveness, cultural literacy, cultural democracy, and democratic education?
- Most importantly, how can people working in the information and communication technologies fields (and sharing the principle that knowledge and information access is free, open, and egalitarian for everybody ), consciously improve knowledge practices to facilitate human rights conditions, such as: critical and free inquiry, freedom of expression, authentic opinion, free decision making, free dissent, the democratization of information and knowledge, and the prerequisite promotion of literacy (in all its forms)? Note: this is of great significance to the rapidly expanding online education providers.

Strategies, of course, are both apparent and emergent. One concrete example (and there are many) is the direct collective scholarship based on the creation of free electronic databases, multimedia encyclopedias, and other resources to support critical, pluralistic, and egalitarian knowledge and inquiry – reflecting complex collaborative processes, in which social bonds, generosity and self-organization are conditions.<sup>28</sup> For example, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences' (CLACSO), under the UNESCO umbrella, innovation of knowledge works (such as RAECpedia) contribute to the rethinking of social problems from critical and pluralist perspectives in the context of global interconnectivity (e.g. governance, urban life, sustainable development, women and gender, the struggle against discrimination, indigenous populations, and multicultural and multi-ethnic issues.) This solution, and its wrinkles (e.g., the European Union attempt to enforce the 1992 directive to tax libraries to lend books<sup>29</sup>), interplay with the growing international interest in open access journals and open access online

archives (for scientific and scholarly publications) that “can be read by anyone free of charge and without restrictions on the internet.”<sup>30</sup> But there are threats on the horizon. CLACSO’s RAEC Coordinator Gustavo Navarro warned,

outside the software’s domain, open source projects remain relatively marginal and novel. Thus comes the question of how projects like RAEC and Wikipedia (an international project managed by volunteers, with the scope of creating a free and gratuitous encyclopedia) will be maintained in the future. To what extent will the generosity that is inherent in the domain of these networks at present become wealth in the future?<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the long-term success of such strategies depends upon the development and sustainment of virtual communities that support social change. For instance, the coalition and action of information ethics and global information justice groups worldwide – via cyber-activism/Internet activism, electronic citizenship, e-democracy/digital democracy, and other new forms of social movement, civic engagement, and community building – strive to accommodate social transformations and aim to harness knowledge to compel action rather than inaction. For example:

Dear colleagues,

I have endorsed the [following] letter to call UN-WIPO for substantial Reforms in its work: for TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION, BALANCE and ACCESS. And I strongly invite you to endorse it and promote it too, since WIPO’s policies also have devastating effects for users and workers of libraries and other public repositories of information and knowledge, for the public domain and the cultural commons.

Sincerely, Zapopan Martín Muela Meza  
Mexican librarian.

WIPO Manifesto for Transparency, Participation, Balance and Access

Dear Colleague: The following open letter will be sent to WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, calling for TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION, BALANCE and ACCESS in its work. Prior to a large and ambitious publicity campaign, your sign-on to this letter is essential. WIPO is locking NGOs out of its negotiations, using tactics to isolate those governments who stand up for you, and hiding the evidence by deleting it from their website. The mentioned letter goes into great detail on this. If you are a computer programmer or politician; if you are ill, if you have an audio/visual or motor impairment, if you are a student,

academic, information or knowledge worker, librarian, or citizen concerned about access to information and knowledge and the absence of balance between rightsholders and the public interest within developed countries and mainly in developing/least developed countries, please take a moment to read this and consider signing into it.

Things you can do:

1. sign onto the open letter (now available in English and Portuguese) by visiting this link: <<http://www.petitiononline.com/wipo/petition.html>>, and
2. spread it all over the world by sending e-mails and putting in your webpage a link to the online petition.<sup>32</sup>

Our Canadian Library Association's Statement on Intellectual Freedom directs that "Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of [our] responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups."<sup>33</sup> In my reading, the phrase "should resist" implies an activist agenda in which the library is a point of resistance.<sup>34</sup> It is here, for example, that librarians (in consultation with partners) can conceptualize and re-conceptualize their core values, issues, alliances, and where and how they can take stands on policy development for issues that are, not incidentally, of serious concern to teachers:

- negotiating corporate sponsorships,
- threats to library access,
- censorship,
- self censorship (or inside censorship),
- alternative catalogue entries and descriptors,
- public access to government information,
- small and alternative presses,
- meeting room policies and the politics of public space,
- Internet access and child protection,
- attacks on fair use copying,
- legislation,
- information rights
- right to read anonymously,
- impermanent and restricted access to purchased electronic records,
- academic freedom,
- freedom of expression on professional and policy issues,
- one voice,
- public forum,
- systemic racism,
- international relations,
- labour,
- outsourcing,
- GATS,
- cutting of teachers-librarian positions,

- intellectual property,
- serving the poor, homeless, and people living on fixed income,
- media conglomeration,
- socially responsible investing,
- anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality,
- humane library space,
- human security,
- national security policies,
- the global tightening of information and border controls,
- transborder data flow,
- library disaster relief,
- and so on.

In closing, Will Weaver (Professor of English, Bemidji State University, Minnesota) recently posted the following to the SRRT listserv:

The Bemidji, Minnesota, school board hearing on *Plainsong* was held last night. A packed house, a three hour meeting, lots of passionate testimony. It was a general victory for free access to reading, though with some loss: the book was removed from the 9th grade classroom but retained for 10-12. Its place in the school library was secured as well. However, the book challenge was a wake up call to those of us in this community who take good books – and freedom to teach them – for granted. Nowadays everything is political and ideological. Past freedoms that we assumed must be re-visited and re-articulated. This whole incident has had a galvanizing effect on we who write and teach. We will be increasingly watchful of candidates for ANY elected office – especially school and library boards.<sup>35</sup>

Weaver’s words bring us full circle to the opening of this address. The work of teachers and librarians share overlapping ethical ground and are inextricably linked, as are “*the indivisibility, interdependence, interrelation and equal importance of all human rights (civil, cultural, economic, political and social).*”<sup>36</sup>

Librarians and teachers co-exist front and centre in life, not on the margins of society. Librarians and teachers in Canada (and elsewhere) are in the midst of post 9-11 surveillance, the firebombing of the United Talmud Torah School library in Montreal, and other forms of cultural destruction, hate speech, pornography, Internet access and child protection, family values, pressure groups, censorship, imposed technologies, access to government records, privatization, and, of course, just recently the case of “Vancouver gay bookstore Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium” and its challenge of the censorship powers of Canada’s Customs department.<sup>37</sup> The list goes

on and there is much work to be done in the attainment of education for human rights and global citizenship.

Studying library activism worldwide has taught me that our “mutual advocacy” depends upon such conditions as:

- intention,
- ability to publicly finance our work,
- freedom of expression within our own ranks,
- increased support for teacher and librarian employees who take risks in the defense of academic freedom and intellectual freedom,
- respect for cultural distinctiveness, cultural literacy (in all its forms), and cultural democracy,
- desire to redress omissions, absences, and negations in history, memory, human legacy, and cultural and civic identities, and
- progress in opposing commodification of information, “corporate globalization, privatization of social services, monopolization of information resources, profit-driven destruction (or private appropriation and control) of cultural artifacts and the human record.”<sup>38</sup>

That said, it is evident that librarians have two “highly loaded” challenges:

- our action, coalition, and alliances in a profession that is largely guided by an ethical framework that carries no sanctions when violated, and
- our ability to negotiate the enduring dilemma about what constitutes library work.

In her November, 2004, plenary at the at the “Shared Dialogue and Learning: International Conference on Educating for Human Rights and Global Citizenship,” Ratna Ghosh (McGill University) firmly

cautioned that access to education is not enough, if the message of education is not what it should be. The message of inquiry-based learning is a good one – but only if educators and librarians share in the telling.

#### *Acknowledgements*

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#### *Footnotes*

- 1 <http://www.ualberta.ca/~hre04/>
- 2 [http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3515&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3515&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- 3 Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg. *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2004, 1.
- 4 Ibid, 4.
- 5 [http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3516&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3516&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- 6 Branch and Oberg, *Focus on Inquiry*, 2.
- 7 From: "Christine Hopkins" ch2yes@yahoo.com. To: <plgnet-1@listproc.sjsu.edu>Subject: Librarians & Teachers?.
- 8 Stephen Abram. "President's Message – Influence: It takes A Fine Hand." *Felicitier* 50,5 (2004): 173.
- 9 Save Library and Information Studies: Research and Rescue, a non-profit organization in the state of Georgia, U.S.A, was recently created "to support and uplift one of humanity's most important social institutions— the library." <http://www.savelibinfostudies.org/index2.htm>
- 10 From: "Dana Lubow" danalubow@hotmail.com.To: SRRT Action Council srrtac-1@ala.org.Subject: [SRRTAC-L:15950] RFID's in the schools.Date: Fri, 25 Feb 2005 06:35:50 -0800.from the *LA Times* <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-sutter22feb22,1,1317634.story>. CALIFORNIA Town Gives Brave New World an F. When an elementary school required students to wear radio frequency IDs, some parents saw the specter of Big Brother. By Eric Bailey. Times Staff Writer. February 22, 2005.
- 11 Date: Wed, 23 Mar 2005 13:58:13 -0500. To: SRRT Action Council srrtac-1@ala.org. From: Mark Rosenzweig iskra@earthlink.net. Subject: [SRRTAC-L:16189] Berkeley Fighter against RFIDs.
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- 15 Ibid.
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CILIP. Wednesday 9 March 2005. For immediate release (Please copy to  
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- 37 <http://www.indexonline.org/en/indexindex/articles/2005/1/canada-gay-bookshop-denied-court-funds.shtml>. Date: Wed, 23 Feb 2005 10:42:28 -0600. From: "Don Wood" <dwood@ala.org> . To: Intellectual Freedom Action News ifaction@ala.org. Subject: [IFACTION:9704] Vancouver gay bookstore Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium has abruptly had its legal funds denied.
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## OUT OF THE CLOSET...BUT NOT ON THE SHELVES?

an analysis of Canadian public libraries' holdings of gay-themed picture books

by VIVIAN HOWARD

*For those of you who do not want children exposed to [picture books such as Heather Has Two Mommies and Daddy's Roommate], I ask this: what leads you to believe that every child sitting in your child's classroom or library comes from a home with a mother and a father? Why do you think that there are no children in your child's classroom or library with lesbian or gay parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors and friends? What messages are you giving to all children, when you pretend there is only one type of family, and render the rest invisible*  
from Lesléa Newman, "Heather' and Her Critics."  
*Horn Book Magazine* 73.2(1997): 149-154.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, it would appear, superficially at least, that gay culture is gaining increased acceptance in North American society. Television shows, movies, and magazines feature openly "out" gay characters or personalities. Canada and the state of Massachusetts have recently recognized the legality of gay marriage. In recent decades, LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender)-related fiction and informational books for adults and young adults have also become more numerous. A relatively new category of gay-themed material consists of picture books written for preschool and elementary school children. These books frequently normalize gay and lesbian relationships by presenting positive depictions of same-sex partners and their children. As Spence<sup>1</sup> notes, these homo-positive picture books are a significant resource for families in which children are raised by LGBT parents as well as for all families wishing to teach their children understanding and acceptance of diverse lifestyles. Evaluating public library collections for the inclusion of gay-themed picture books provides a means of assessing how well libraries are

servicing the needs of both these user groups. This study aims to provide an impetus to librarians to ensure that the needs of these groups are met and that bias does not influence selectors to under-represent or exclude picture books with gay content.

The purpose of this study is to analyze selected Canadian public libraries' holdings of picture books with gay and/or lesbian content published between 1989 (the publication date of Lesléa Newman's pioneering picture book *Heather Has Two Mommies*) and 2002 in order to measure access to such books and to determine whether any evidence of bias on the part of selectors exists. For the purposes of this study, a picture book is defined as a highly illustrated book in which the illustration is an integral component of the story or message. Books appropriate for children from preschool to elementary school are included. In terms of content, all English-language picture books featuring either implicitly or explicitly gay or lesbian characters in either central or supporting roles are included in the study.<sup>2</sup>

The study answers the following questions:

1. What English-language picture book titles published between 1989 and 2002 can be identified as having lesbian and/or gay content?
2. How many reviews in total for each title are listed in *Book Review Index*?
3. How many copies of each identified title are held in the Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax public libraries?
4. Does the frequency of reviews alone account for the likelihood of the selection of gay-themed picture books by the libraries?

#### *Methodology*

The first task was the identification of picture book titles with gay or lesbian content published between 1989 and 2002. Google and AltaVista were used to search the web using combinations of the search terms "gay," "lesbian," "picture books," "juvenile fiction," "booklist," and "library." This search strategy generated dozens of library and non-library booklists on gay and lesbian topics. Amazon.com was also used to generate lists of titles related to titles

previously identified, and the booklists created by amazon.com users were searched. These lists were merely a starting point for identifying titles; no authority was attributed to them. Titles with publication dates of 1988 or earlier were eliminated from the lists, when publication dates could be determined. Titles were also taken from Day's bibliography<sup>3</sup> and from Spence's list.

Next, each title was searched in *Book Review Index* (BRI) database available through Dialog. If no reviews for a title were found in BRI, that title was eliminated from the study. If the book was published in that period and not reviewed, it was not reasonable to expect any libraries to have purchased it. Thus Lois Abramchik's *Is Your Family Like Mine?* (1993), Sarita Johnson-Calvo's *A Beach-Party with Alexis* (1993), Jeanne Arnold's *Amy Asks A Question* (1996), Eric Hoffman's *Best Best Colors* (1999), and Bobbie Combs' *1-2-3 Family Counting Book* (2000) and *A-B-C Family Alphabet Book* (2001) were all eliminated from the study.

It was then important to verify that the titles were picture books and that they had gay and/or lesbian content. To verify the content of the books, reviews of the books appearing in *Booklist* or *Publisher's Weekly* and information about the books available on amazon.com were consulted. *Caleb's Friend* by Eric Nones was eliminated because no available review or summary information identified any gay or lesbian content. Through this process, 30 picture book titles with gay and/or lesbian content published between 1989 and 2002 were identified. These titles are listed in the "Results and Discussion" section which follows. Next a list of control titles was created. For each gay-themed picture book reviewed in *Booklist*, a picture book title without identified gay or lesbian content reviewed in the same section of *Booklist* or *Horn Book Magazine* was selected. The random selection was performed by assigning each title in the review section a number and randomly selecting a number using randomizer.org. The control list (see Appendix on page 75) amounted to 22 titles.

Finally, data was collected from the web-based catalogues of the selected libraries and the number of copies in each library (for both gay-themed and control titles) was recorded. Lost, withdrawn, trace, on order, and large print books did count toward the number of copies held, because they did indicate that the library purchased

the copy, although we did not know the policies of each library involved regarding the replacement of lost or withdrawn copies. Audio books, talking books, and French translations did not count toward the total number of copies held, with the exception of *Red Ribbon* by Sarah Weeks, which exists as a book and accompanying song recording on audiocassette.

### *Results and Discussion*

The results have been organized under four headings: publishing output, review data, library holdings, and library rankings.

**Publishing Output** — This study identified 30 gay-themed picture books published in a thirteen-year period (1989-2002), or an average of only 2.3 titles per year. No gay-themed picture books were identified as being published in 1997, 1999, or 2000, but for most of the early 1990s, three gay-themed picture books a year were published with a modest peak occurring in 1991, with the publication of five such books.<sup>4</sup> A slow decline in publication output can be noted in the years since 1997. In contrast, Boon and Howard<sup>5</sup> identified an average of 7 young adult (YA) novels with LGBT content being published per year between 1998 and 2002 and Jenkins<sup>6</sup> counted 38 YA titles in the previous five-year period (1993-1997), or 7.6 titles per year. Clearly, there is a relative lack of output of picture books with lesbian and/or gay content and this output appears to be on the decline as we enter the twenty-first century. Another trend, and perhaps a more positive one, is that more publishers are now producing gay-themed picture books. Whereas Alyson Press virtually monopolized this publishing output in the early nineties, there now appears to be a greater diversity of publishers, including major mainstream publishing houses, occasionally producing gay-themed picture books.

The list of titles follows, grouped by year.

1989

Newman, Lesléa. *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Alyson Press.

1990

Elwin, Rosamund. *Asha's Mums*. Women's Press.

Jenness, Aylette. *Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment and Love*.

- Houghton Mifflin.  
 Willhoite, Michael. *Daddy's Roommate*. Alyson Press.
- 1991  
 Brown, Forman. *The Generous Jefferson Bartleby Jones*. Alyson Press.  
 Heron, Ann. *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?* Alyson Press.  
 Newman, Lesléa. *Belinda's Bouquet*. Alyson Press.  
 Newman, Lesléa. *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride*. Alyson Press.  
 Valentine, Johnny. *The Duke who Outlawed Jelly Beans and other stories*. Alyson Press.
- 1992  
 Alden, Joan. *A Boy's Best Friend*. Alyson Press.  
 Valentine, Johnny. *The Daddy Machine*. Alyson Press.  
 Valentine, Johnny. *The Day They Put a Tax on Rainbows, and other stories*. Alyson Press.
- 1993  
 Jordan, Mary Kate. *Losing Uncle Tim*. Albert Whitman.  
 Newman, Lesléa. *Saturday is Pattyday*. New Victoria.  
 Valentine, Johnny. *Two Moms, the Zark, and Me*. Alyson Press.  
 Willhoite, Michael. *Uncle What-is-it is Coming to Visit!* Alyson Press.
- 1994  
 Quinlan, Patricia. *Tiger Flowers*. Dial.  
 Valentine, Johnny. *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads*. Alyson Press.  
 Wickens, Elaine. *Anna Day and the O-Ring*. Alyson Press.
- 1995  
 Newman, Lesléa. *Too Far Away to Touch*. Clarion Books.  
 Vigna, Judith. *My Two Uncles*. Albert Whitman.  
 Weeks, Sarah. *Red Ribbon*. Harper Collins.
- 1996  
 Greenberg, Keith. *Zack's Story: Growing Up With Same-Sex Parents*. Lerner  
 Willhoite, Michael. *Daddy's Wedding*. Alyson Press.
- 1998  
 Kennedy, Joseph. *Lucy Goes to the Country*. Alyson Press.  
 Skutch, Robert. *Who's in Family*. Tricycle Press.
- 2001  
 Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to be Different*. Megan Tingley.
- 2002  
 Haan, Linda de. *King & King*. Tricycle Press.  
 Fierstein, Harvey. *The Sissy Duckling*. Simon and Schuster.  
 Newman, Lesléa. *Felicia's Favorite Story*. Two Lives Publishing.

Three gay-themed picture books have been published very recently: one in 2003 and two more in 2004. However, these titles are apparently still unreviewed (according to BRI) and do not appear in any of the library catalogues examined. Therefore, they were not

included in this study, although the titles are listed below.

Aldrich, Andrew. *How My Family Came To Be: Daddy, Papa and Me.* (New Family Press, 2003)

Garden, Nancy. *Molly's Family.* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004)

Haan, Linda de. *King & King & Family.* (Tricycle Press, 2004)

Review Data — Picture book titles with gay content receive, on average, significantly fewer reviews than a control group of non-gay-themed picture book titles—30% fewer reviews, in fact. The gay-themed picture books averaged 6.4 reviews per title, with a range of 1 to 18 reviews, whereas the control group averaged 9.14 reviews per title, with a range of 4 to 30 reviews. Although previous studies have shown that titles with gay content, when they are reviewed, tend to receive positive reviews<sup>7,8</sup> the data from this study suggest that gay-themed titles are less likely to be reviewed than titles without gay or lesbian content. If libraries undercollect in the area of gay-themed picture books, the comparative lack of reviews must be taken into account. Furthermore, as Spence notes, many of the reviews of gay-themed picture books are to be found in sources such as *Lambda Book Report*, *The Advocate*, and *The Bloomsbury Review*, none of which are core collection development review sources for most children's librarians. He concludes, "The librarian with a concern for collections in a specialized area will probably, then, have to work a bit more diligently to determine what suitable titles are available." (358)

The correlation between number of reviews and number of copies in libraries, however, is by no means clear. For example, in the gay-themed group, five books received between 8 and 11 reviews each, but the total number of holdings for each book was, variously, 1, 4, 13, 61, and 80. In the control group, one book receiving 9 reviews had a total of 23 copies in the nine libraries, whereas another book receiving the same number of reviews had 73 copies in the libraries studied. Quantity of reviews alone seems unlikely to define the likelihood of purchase by libraries. Other variables affecting sales to libraries may include:

- other marketing efforts by publishers
- buzz or lack of buzz around a title
- attractiveness of cover art

- content of the review
- content or perceived content of the book
- price
- discussion of a title on librarian listserves and similar “grapevine” activity

As Spence notes, “In Canada, a recent school challenge in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey over the titles *Asha’s Mums*, *Belinda’s Bouquet*, and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads* led to a provincial Supreme Court decision rejecting the book ban.” (355). Similarly, *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy’s Roommate* are both high on the ALA’s list of most frequently challenged books. In this study, four of these five challenged titles are at or above the average in terms of number of Canadian libraries holding copies.

Another trend in Canadian public libraries’ holdings of gay-themed picture books is a preference for books in which a child protagonist comes to terms with the illness or death of an adult character from AIDS. MaryKate Jordan’s *Losing Uncle Tim*, Lesléa Newman’s *Too Far Away To Touch*, and Patricia Quinlan’s *Tiger Flowers* all explore this theme and all three are near the top of the rankings for total overall holdings and for total numbers of reviews. These books are, in reality, more about the acceptance of death than the acceptance of a gay lifestyle.

The data also demonstrate, in both the gay-themed and control lists, a predictable bias toward Canadian authors, regardless of content. *Asha’s Mums*, with 7 reviews, has 50 copies in the libraries studied (in contrast with Ann Heron’s *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?*, which has only 17 copies with the same number of reviews).

*Table 1: The relationship between number of reviews and library holdings*

TITLE	# of REVIEWS	# of COPIES
The Sissy Duckling	11	80
Tiger Flowers	15	78
Daddy’s Roommate	18	66
Heather Has Two Mommies	10	61
Asha’s Mums	7	50

Too Far Away To Touch	13	48
Losing Uncle Tim	6	38
Who's in a Family	5	33
My Two Uncles	7	33
It's Okay to be Different	4	29
Families: A Celebration of...	13	28
King & King	4	26
Daddy's Wedding	6	24
One Dad, Two Dads, Brown...	3	22
Zack's Story	3	21
How Would You Feel...Gay?	7	17
Uncle What-is-it is...Visit!	8	13
Lucy Goes to the Country	3	11
Saturday is Pattyday	5	8
Red Ribbon	8	3
Felicia's Favorite Story	1	7
The Day They Put a Tax on...	2	7
Anna Day and the O-Ring	2	7
A Boy's Best Friend	4	4
The Duke Who Outlawed...	10	4
The Generous Jefferson B...	2	3
Gloria Goes to Gay Pride	3	3
Belinda's Bouquet	4	2
The Daddy Machine	2	2
Two Moms, the Zark & Me	8	1
AVERAGE	6.4	24.5

Library Holdings — As with the data on number of reviews, it is the averages that speak most strongly: the average number of copies held in all nine libraries was 24.5 for the gay-themed picture books (with a range from 1 to 80 copies) and 60.5 for the control titles (with a range from 16 to 172 copies). Randomly-selected titles are held in much greater quantities than gay-themed titles. A copy of a randomly-selected title without gay or lesbian content was approximately 60% more likely to be purchased by these libraries than a copy of a title with gay or lesbian content and it is unclear whether this difference in holdings can be explained by the increased frequency of reviews alone. See Appendix for a complete list of control titles, number of reviews, and holdings.



Library Rankings — The following table records the percentage of titles on each list of which the library holds one or more copies.

*Table 2: Comparison of holdings in Canadian Public Libraries*

Column A = % of Control Titles Held  
 B = Copies of Control Titles Held  
 C = % of Gay-Themed Titles Held  
 D = Copies of Gay-Themed Titles Held  
 E = Ranking in Control Holdings  
 F = Ranking in Gay-Themed Holdings  
 G = Spence (2000) Ranking

Library	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Vancouver	91	101	80	162	3	2	2
Victoria	91	17	50	39	3	3	5
Edmonton	82	96	37	32	7	9	8
Regina	59	79	43	42	9	5	3
Saskatoon	95	112	43	62	2	5	1
Winnipeg	82	154	43	20	7	5	9
Toronto	100	435	83	247	1	1	4
Ottawa	91	168	40	83	3	8	6
Halifax	91	108	50	47	3	3	6
Average	86.9%	60.5	52%	24.5			

This comparison proves the importance of using a control group when examining collections for possible bias. Sheer quantity is not enough of an indicator. A low percentage of gay-themed titles is not an indication of possible bias when the library holds approximately the same percentage of the control titles. Regina, although it only has 43% of the gay-themed picture books in its collection, also has a relatively low percentage of control titles. It is thus likely that Regina does not demonstrate a bias against gay-themed titles, but likely has less purchasing power or seeks less variety in its purchasing than most of the other libraries studied. Winnipeg, on the other hand, manages to collect 82% (and 154 copies) of the control titles, but only 43% (and 20 copies) of the gay-themed titles, a significant difference.

Another observation of interest is the fact that two libraries (Vancouver and Victoria) actually have more overall copies of gay-themed picture books than of control titles, although the percentage of individual control titles is higher. This is explained in two ways. The Victoria Public Library has very few multiple copies of control titles, but it has a broad range of these titles in its collection. The Vancouver Public Library, in contrast, has a high number of multiple copies of some individual titles of gay-themed picture books. For example, 22 copies of *Heather Has Two Mommies*, 20 copies of *Daddy's Roommate*, and 15 copies of *Asha's Mums* are listed in the Vancouver Public Library online catalogue, but no copies whatsoever of 6 gay-themed titles and only 1-3 copies of 12 others are listed, indicating possible lack of balance in its collection.

The changes in rankings since Spence's 2000 study are interesting to observe for the libraries involved, but no meaning can be attributed to these rankings without a great deal of comparative data, such as budgets, staff size, collection policies, city population, and demographic attributes of the city population.

An interesting comparison with the results of this investigation can be made with the recent parallel study conducted by Boon and Howard, which investigated holdings of LGBT-themed YA fiction at the same nine Canadian libraries. This study also concluded that LGBT-themed YA fiction receives fewer reviews and is less likely to be collected than a randomly selected control group of titles. However, a comparison of these two studies (summarized in Table 3 below) demonstrates that although gay-themed books for youth appear less often in review sources and in library collections than a control group of titles, picture books fare significantly worse than YA fiction in both quantity of reviews, total number of copies, and percentage of checklist titles collected.

*Table 3: A Comparison of Reviews and Library Holdings of Gay-Related Picture Books and LGBT-Related YA Fiction*

Column A = Gay-Related Picture Books  
B = Picture Book Control Group  
C = LGBT-Related YA Fiction  
D = YA Fiction Control Group

	A	B	C	D
Number of Reviews	6.4	9.14	8.125	13.9
Library Holdings copies per title	24.5	60.5	39.83	68.14
Percentage of Checklist Titles	52%	86.9%	73.47%	80.94%

Table 4 summarizes the relative ranking of the libraries in their holdings of gay-themed YA fiction and gay-themed picture books.

*Table 4: A Comparison of Canadian Public Libraries Holdings of Gay-Related YA Fiction and Gay-Related Picture Books*

A = Ranking in Gay-Related YA Fiction Holdings  
B = Ranking in Gay-Related Picture Bk Holdings

Library	A	B
Vancouver	1	2
Victoria	9	3
Edmonton	1	9
Regina	7	5
Saskatoon	4	5
Winnipeg	7	5
Toronto	3	1
Ottawa	5	8
Halifax	6	3

While some libraries are rather consistent in their rankings in these two studies, other libraries demonstrate some surprising differences. The Victoria Public Library came out at the bottom of the rankings for its collection of LGBT-related YA fiction, but fared much better in its collection of gay-themed picture books. In contrast, the Edmonton Public Library came out at the top of the rankings for its collection of LGBT-related YA fiction, but dropped to the bottom of the list for its collection of picture books with lesbian or

gay content. Further investigation is clearly needed to explain these apparent inconsistencies in collection practices.

The averages again demonstrate that gay-themed picture books are less likely to be collected than a randomly-selected control group of titles, with the nine libraries holding on average 86.9% of the control titles but only 52% of the gay-themed titles. Furthermore, the data show that access to picture books with lesbian or gay content differs considerably depending on location; children and families ought to have equitable access to such fiction regardless of whether they live in Victoria or Vancouver, Ottawa or Halifax. Clearly, the public libraries of Vancouver and Toronto far outstrip the collection of gay-themed picture books at other libraries studied in terms of both percentage and number of checklist titles held. These two libraries serve the two largest populations of the nine libraries studied, populations which include sizeable gay and lesbian communities. Further investigation is needed to determine whether the high ranking of the Vancouver and Toronto public libraries in terms of their holdings of gay-themed picture books results from the sheer size of their user community, from the sheer size of their overall collections, or from selection librarians' perceptions of particular community need.

### *Conclusion*

This study has found evidence of several factors which may limit access to picture books with gay or lesbian content in public libraries. The study identifies 30 English-language titles published between 1989 and 2002. These titles attracted on average 6.4 reviews per title, as compared to an average of 9.14 reviews for a randomly-selected control group of non-gay-themed picture book titles. The reasons for this comparative lack of reviews are unclear; bias on the part of review periodicals or inadequate marketing by publishers may be factors. Furthermore, many of the reviews of gay-themed picture books are to be found in specialized sources, sources not commonly used as collection tools by public librarians working with children and youth. This relative lack of reviews in mainstream reviewing sources may be sufficient to explain at least some of the differences in library holdings between the gay-themed group of titles and the control group. On average, in the nine Canadian public libraries studied, 24.5 copies of each gay-themed

title were held, as compared to 60.5 copies of each control title, a significant difference in the collection and availability of these titles. In terms of the availability of a single copy of each title at the libraries in question, the two groups of titles are still far apart, with the libraries on average holding 86.9% of the control titles and only 52% of the gay-themed titles. Without further analysis, it is unclear whether this difference constitutes evidence of significant bias or self-censorship on the part of selectors in general. However, the data do show that certain libraries are significantly more likely to purchase the control titles than the gay-themed titles, and that access to these titles varies according to one's location in Canada. This trend is disturbing, particularly since children are frequently more dependent upon libraries for their reading material than are other user groups. If a library fails to acquire a gay-themed book intended for an adult or teen reader, adults and teens can find the book elsewhere, probably in a bookstore or through inter-library loan. The same is not so for children. Further research is definitely needed into the marketing practices of publishers of gay-themed material, librarians' access to specialized reviewing journals, and librarians' perceptions of community need.

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APPENDIX: The relationship between number of reviews and library holdings (control titles)

TITLE	# OF REVIEWS	# OF COPIES
Horace	15	117
Slobcat	9	31
Red Day, Green Day	8	21
Into This Night We...	7	31
Birthday Blizzard	6	28
Hattie Baked a...Cake	5	30
Humphrey Thud	6	62
No Nap	8	76
What Planet Are You... Bean?	9	73
Red Hen and Sly Fox	7	59
Hello! Good-bye!	6	79
Mama Cat Has Three Kittens	10	172
Mommy's Hands	4	50
The Hen That Crowed	7	16
Amanda's Perfect Hair	6	64
Stella and Roy	12	70
Welcome Back, Sun	15	78
Swamp Angel	30	87
Outside, Inside	9	23
Little Caribou	10	53
Little Clam	9	28
Tom's Rainbow Walk	4	22
AVERAGE	9.14	60.5

## **FREEDOM OR MICRO-FASCISMS: debates in ethics & information studies**

**by NATASHA GEROLAMI**

In his book *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Public Philosophy*, John Buschman links librarianship to Jurgen Habermas theory of the development of the public sphere. In so doing, he argues that “all librarians are Habermasians: the mere act of organizing and purpose of informing are inherent rejections of postmodernist notions and an affirmation of the idea of making rational meaning through communication.” (47) Postmodernists in Buschman’s view, unintentionally collaborate with the capitalist enterprises that threaten the values in librarianship. But, as Bernd Frohmann suggests, Jürgen Habermas is not the only theorist who may instruct us on issues in library and information studies (LIS) (86). The following paper will not offer a defence of postmodernism or post-structuralism as such, these being categories that comprise a wide variety of themes, issues and strategies. Instead the paper will offer an elucidation of some of the concepts created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, particularly their reformulation of the concepts of power and freedom. Their unique articulation of these concepts has had considerable impact upon traditional ideas of ethics and political action. Consequently their concepts will have considerable bearing on recent attempts to find foundations for values in librarianship as well as debates in information ethics.

The common mantra in LIS is: “the more information, the more power.” The ultimate value ascribed to library and information services is to protect the public’s interest in access to information. Access is a value that is articulated frequently in LIS literature. But a precise elucidation of the relationship between increased access and power has not been offered. Buschman argues that access to information is directly connected to democratic ideals but notes that, until now, the relation has not been defended in any intellectually

rigorous manner (46). He employs Habermas' theories of the public sphere and communicative action to establish a foundation for values in librarianship and to defend publicly funded institutions committed to ensuring access to information. Access to information will help move citizens in a democracy more toward the "ideal speech situation" where debate is not stifled by inequalities in the wealth and status of the citizenry. The Habermasian public sphere is distinct from both the state and capitalist enterprises. Within a non-governmental realm, public debate and the resulting consensus making occur in the public sphere given a reasonable degree of freedom from domination and influence. Libraries, according to Buschman, play an active role in the public sphere. They are places where we can work to create democratic institutions and processes through rationally organized discourse, as well as provide the resources to check validity claims (Buschman, 170).

A reader familiar with postmodernist writers will not be surprised then that Buschman discourages any attempts to incorporate their work into LIS debates. As critics are fond of pointing out, the postmodernist thesis about the downfall of meta-narratives poses serious problems for anyone developing an emancipatory project such as Buschman's. Postmodernist writers have been considerably skeptical of emancipatory projects founded on universal human values that are, in fact, the values of only one group or culture. Yet Buschman believes that truth claims (as Habermas formulates them) are necessary for rational discourse and to facilitate consensus building.

Buschman also sees postmodernism aligned with capitalism in so far as both celebrate fragmentation, indeterminacy and discontinuity; these being the very characteristics that have permitted capitalist expansion and the erosion of public institutions such as the library. He claims that postmodernists do not have the tools to critique capitalism because they have focused on the danger of totalizing theories without realizing that the power of capitalist mechanisms is not solely due to totalization but also to capital's flexibility. He enlists Fredric Jameson to defend his claim that postmodernism is an outright celebration of the market (46). Arguing that postmodernism is not a break from capital, but an expansion of it, Jameson had instead characterised it as stage in capitalism defined by rapid technological change, integrated world markets and increased



capital expansion into all realms of social life. Postmodernism is not something to celebrate or reproduce since it offers no “foothold for resistance” (Buschman, 45).

It would be inaccurate to suggest, as Buschman does, that postmodernists uncritically champion the adoption of information technology. It is necessary to distinguish between empirical claims about the changing structure of society in an information world and imperatives to adopt certain economy models or social practices. Jean-Francois Lyotard, a leading theorist and writer of one of the seminal texts in postmodernism, claims that the collapse of meta-narratives due to the proliferation of media images does not necessarily, but only potentially, have liberatory effects (67).

Deleuze and Guattari have co-authored numerous collaborative works in philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics and culture, but their status as postmodernists is seriously debatable (De Landa 2). Regardless, their work has been challenged on the very same grounds as postmodernist work. Deleuze and Guattari’s celebration of transformation, becoming and decoding has also been construed as a celebration of capital’s tendencies. In the words of one critic: “There are, effectively, features, that justify calling Deleuze the ideologist of late capitalism” (Zizek 183-184). It is an oversimplification of their work to suggest, however, that celebration of becoming and decoding is a celebration of market forces. Also, the lack of universal truth will not necessarily deny us the chance of resisting the encroachment of capital. In part, due to the constant focus upon truth, we have missed some of the most intriguing aspects of writers like Deleuze and Guattari.

What Deleuze and Guattari offer goes far beyond what Buschman recognises as the possible, though small, contribution of postmodernism. He acknowledges that postmodernist writers have contributed valuable insights by emphasizing the importance of marginalized voices and multiple and contradictory forms of power (153). But Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of freedom goes far beyond an empirical claim about the plurality of identities and multiple forces operating in the constitution of the individual. It is not merely a matter of questioning the notion of universal human attributes and replacing it with multiple identities or multiple truths. It is instead a matter of recognizing that in our quest to reproduce

identities and truths we enslave ourselves. Deleuze and Guattari provide us with theories of freedom and power which permit us to ask radically different questions. Their theories do not lack an ethics, although value, in their sense, is radically different than what we have encountered in the history of philosophy. The following analysis of the concepts of freedom, power and value will provide different ways of tackling problems in LIS.

### *Self-Determination or Critical Freedom*

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that, because the customary conception of freedom is far too limited, many critical questions remain unaddressed. Traditionally, the problem of freedom is couched in terms of autonomy and determination. Freedom is defined as autonomy from external forces that prevent our self-determination. Liberal thinkers frequently remain unconcerned about external forces, believing whole-heartedly in the individual's capacity for self-determination. Marxists, on the other hand, have focused on the manner in which economics determine social relations. While challenges to the notion of the completely sovereign individual have come from many directions, the postmodern critique was primarily aimed at Marxists who emphasised economic determinism.

The response from traditional Marxists has been comprehensive and decisive: there is no need to abandon Marxism in order to acknowledge that there are many determining factors beyond the economy. David Harvey admonishes postmodernist thinkers for not understanding the intricacies of Marxism: "The [Marxist] meta-narratives that the post-modernists decry were much more open, nuanced, and sophisticated than the critics admit" (Harvey 115). Many Marxist writers understand that a model does not explain numerous social forces where the economic base determines the social superstructure. Vincent Mosco holds that society is "overdetermined or multiply determined. [D]etermination means setting limits and exerting pressures" (5). Society is, according to Mosco, a set of given circumstances or limits within which individuals make choices autonomously.

Similarly, much of the political literature in LIS also presupposes the major political problem to be one of determination by external forces, such as the market or the state, and the solution to be

autonomy. Buschman, for example, notes that library administrators have been under considerable pressure from the private sector to justify expenditures according to economic models of efficiency, to constitute library users as customers, and to adopt technology uncritically. Librarians, he argues, should battle for more autonomy so that they and library patrons determine the future of the institution.

Michael Harris expresses a similar hope for LIS. He is quite critical of librarians' "apolitical" stance because a free market ideology underpins many of the decisions made in libraries. Their attempt at neutrality masks the structural influences upon "institutions dedicated to the creation, transmission, and reproduction of hegemonic ideology" (Harris, *State* 241). Yet Harris believes that there is empirical evidence that it is possible to escape ideology. He intimates that librarians must reject a neutral stance and must clearly articulate values in librarianship in order to promote the autonomy of the institution.

The autonomy of the institution is not the only concern if Roma Harris' analysis of librarianship is correct. She analyses the external forces that operate on the library. Her main concern is the influence of market forces and the imperative to legitimize the profession (Harris, *Librarianship* 2). The search for professional status, according to her analysis, has resulted in the erosion of librarianship's service ethic. The service ethic is essential to the values of librarianship because it requires librarians to serve needs that are determined by the library patrons themselves. The ideology of professionalism contradicts these values because it associates power, status and remuneration with autonomy and control. Harris therefore concludes that, according to this ideology, librarians are more likely to be considered professionals if they determine the needs of patrons rather than serving needs that patrons determine for themselves.

Given these conceptions of libraries and librarianship, the success of the profession can be measured in part by librarians' ability to determine the direction of their institution in the service of their patrons whose research is also self-determined. Yet, the reliance upon a conception of freedom defined as self-determination leaves many questions unanswered.

Deleuze and Guattari note that the problem of freedom has always been discussed as a matter of determination versus autonomy. They turn the concept of determination on its head. Self-determination, generally regarded as a form of freedom, is in fact a form of determination since an individual is limited to realizing only that which she or he already is (Evens 273). The true terror of freedom is due to its indeterminacy. If truly free, we do not know what we will become; we must affirm chance (Deleuze 44). Deleuze and Guattari's concept of freedom, in the words of Paul Patton, is "critical": "critical freedom thus concerns those moments in a life after which one is no longer the same person. It is the freedom to transgress the limits of what one is presently capable of being or doing, rather than just the freedom to be or do those things" (85). In the words of Deleuze and Guattari:

Why do people fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation? How can people possibly reach the point of shouting: "More taxes! Less Bread!"? As Reich remarks, the astonishing thing is not that some people steal or that others occasionally go out on strike, but rather that all those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, and all those who are exploited are not continually out on strike. (29)

Deleuze and Guattari sum up the problem with one simple question: "Why is it so difficult not only to win but to bear freedom?"

*Ethics: Emancipation or Micro-fascisms*

Deleuze and Guattari want to avoid theories of false consciousness or mass hysteria when explaining why people fight for servitude. Yet their theory of freedom threatens traditional agendas for human emancipation. If the end of the emancipatory project is spelled out in advance, then the freedom of those one intends to liberate is already curtailed. The political projects of librarians which involve championing the self-determination of patrons, or the democratic ideal through access to information, already determine the people those policies are meant to liberate. Yet it is often assumed that freedom is impossible without a specific set of values, goals, or an agenda, and that the purpose of critique and the search for truth is to understand who we are, what human potential has not been fully realized and how to progress toward good and overcome evil. Liberation then consists in removing false premises and realising ourselves. Yet in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of freedom, the

elusive search for truth and essential human characteristics is not a form of liberation. But they do not leave us without an ethics. They make an ethical claim: things of value are those that leave open possibilities for alternative ways of organizing rather than limit us to what we already are.

The traditional definition of emancipation is freedom from the forces that bind, affect or determine us. We judge a political system, for example, according to the manner in which it exerts its power and the manner in which it dominates us. According to Deleuze and Guattari, power is not about domination. It is defined as both the capacity to affect and to be affected (Patton 50). From their definition of power alone, therefore, we cannot derive an ethics. Freedom is not freedom from forces that affect us. To be able to be affected is also a form of power. Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, make no ethical judgment on the basis of the mechanisms that limit human capacity for self-determination. Instead Deleuze distinguishes between active creative forces which can act of their own accord and the reactive forces which operate only by limiting and resisting the creative potential of other forces (Nietzsche 39-71). Deleuze attributes value to the active forces which can permit transformations and creativity and thereby the development of new values.

In his reading of Nietzsche's controversial notion of "will to power, for example, Deleuze claims: "Against the image of a will which dreams of having established values attributed to it Nietzsche announces that to will is to create new values" (Nietzsche 85). Nietzsche's misunderstood idea of "will to power" is not a will to dominate others, as it has so frequently been interpreted to mean. It is a will to produce something new. "Will to power does not mean that the will wants power... [T]he will to power is essentially creative and giving: it does not aspire, it does not seek, it does not desire, above all it does not desire power" (Deleuze, Nietzsche 85). That which is of value is that which produces something new and it is directly tied to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of power. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari are said to have abandoned a representational notion of power (Evens 50), meaning that power is not a matter of showing that one has a superior capacity. If power is representational then we have to work with a set of static ideals that define superiority. There is then an imperative to represent oneself

as powerful by appealing to an already established set of values, leaving little room for creativity and critique.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of power can help to shed some light on the relationship between access to information and power. The battle for open access to information is, as noted above, frequently deemed to be the duty of librarians. Yet the power of texts continues to be debatable. In *Fear of Words*, Alvin Schrader analyses attempts to censor texts in Canadian libraries. He argues for complete, open access. To placate those parents who fear, for example, that children will become homosexual or violent from reading "inappropriate" material, Schrader argues that we should not be afraid of (mere?) words. Yet all texts must have the potential to be powerful if there is any rationale for open access. The tension in his work is very well illustrated by Susan Madden who is quoted by Schrader as saying:

I was a juvenile court librarian for 7 years. During that time I saw literally thousands of kids, but I never saw one who was in lock-up because of something they had viewed or read. In fact, I would say that over 80% of them were there because they could not read. (119)

Her argument implies that literate children have more opportunities and therefore need not resort to a life of crime. It is not the literature they read but lack of opportunities that leads them to crime. Yet might we not want to ask why reading does not lead to more delinquency? What is it that books do to us that we readily adhere to social norms, capitalist modes of production or the disciplining mechanism of institutions? Madden would like books to give children the power to act and a larger set of choices in life. The question remains: do books give children the ability to once again express their power or superiority according to a pre-existing set of norms, or challenge those norms?

In the case of censorship, we may wish to heed Deleuze and Guattari's warning against micro-fascist agendas. It is very easy, they argue, to resist totalitarianism (state sanctioned burning of books, for example) because the control mechanisms of this form of organization are transparent, unified and centrally organised. But fascist organizations operate when individuals or groups themselves demand the continuous reproduction of traditional values. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is easy to oppose totalitarian agendas

and “not even see the fascist inside you” (215). A new research agenda may therefore be called for which could break away from the traditional assumption in librarianship that more information will provide power to individuals and groups. We instead could ask how texts give us power to affect and be affected. When do texts aid us to reproduce norms, when do they discipline us and when do they move us to create new values?

### Conclusion

Buschman’s analysis of the library’s role in the public sphere makes an exceptional contribution to discussions in LIS. His suspicions about postmodernism reflect serious concerns about the uncritical adoption of a capitalist mandate. A closer look at specific concepts and specific writers has demonstrated that Deleuze and Guattari can provide us with an ethics and insights into questions that have, as of yet, not been asked in LIS.

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## **BRAVERMAN PRIZE ESSAY**

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# **PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT ISSUES REGARDING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF GLBT PATRONS**

**by JENNIFER DOWNEY**

**D**espite the surge in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) awareness and resources that has occurred over the past several decades, the GLBT community often remains the “invisible minority” (Loverich & Degnan, 1999), especially in the public library setting. Even when librarians work to develop collections that reflect the diversity of their communities, the GLBT segment of those communities often goes unacknowledged (Loverich & Degnan, 1999). Librarians have a responsibility to provide quality, fair service. Being public in nature and identification, it is reasonable to expect public library collections to reflect the diversity of their communities.

### *The Current Situation*

Our society has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Fifty years ago (and more recently in many cases), books dealing, either directly or indirectly, with homosexuality tended to present it as a medical or psychological condition needing to be cured or repressed (Oberg & Klein, 2003). Today, the situation is much better. GLBT-themed books and magazines were published in record numbers throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Joyce, 2000). Unfortunately, libraries have not evolved alongside the publishing industry, and GLBT patrons are still not adequately represented in many public library collections. Despite the fact that GLBT people make up a substantial percentage of the overall community (Greenblatt, 2003), many librarians choose to take a passive stance when it comes to collecting GLBT-themed materials, thus perpetuating

the heterosexist status quo and allowing the GLBT population to remain ignored and invisible (Joyce, 2000). Over half of gay males in a 1997 study by Joyce and Schrader reported dissatisfaction with their library services, and many suggested that the GLBT-themed collection needed to be larger and more current. Improved GLBT-themed collections and a more sensitive library staff were the most common suggestions among lesbian library users in a 1993 study by Whitt.

Loverich and Degnan (1999) conducted a study in which 33 of the 92 finalists for the American Library Association's (ALA) Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Book Award were selected, and a random sample of 136 public libraries with a patron base of over 50,000 was drawn. The goal of the project was to determine whether the books could be found on the shelves of the average public library. The results indicated that large libraries held more of the titles than did smaller libraries, and that titles receiving a greater number of reviews were more likely to be found. However, 5 of the 76 libraries held none of the titles at all, and only 3 of the 21 libraries serving over one million patrons held only one, two, or three titles. On a positive note, several of the smaller libraries were found to hold over half the titles. This indicates that it is not the size of the library, or its budget, that determines the acquisition of GLBT-themed books.

Sweetland and Christensen (1995) compared the GLBT-centered *Lambda Book Report*-reviewed titles, including 1992 Lambda Book Award Winners, with titles reviewed in the mainstream book-reviewing source *Publisher's Weekly*, and found that while the Lambda Book Award winners were reviewed about as often as the titles in *Publisher's Weekly*, the non-award-winning books listed in the *Lambda Book Report* were reviewed less frequently. Furthermore, the GLBT-themed books were found to be held in public libraries much less frequently than the *Publisher's Weekly*-reviewed books.

While historically, a correlation exists between the number of reviews a book receives and the inclusion of that book on public library shelves, Sweetland and Christensen concluded that this does not appear to be the case with GLBT-themed books. This suggests that librarians (and book reviewers) routinely reject GLBT-themed titles. Some GLBT-themed books do manage to make it onto the

library shelves regardless of their number (and source) of reviews, usually well-known books with a previous reputation or current notoriety (Sweetland & Christensen, 1995).

One recent study indicates that progress is being made. Ritchie (2001) conducted a study of Illinois public libraries to determine whether collection development efforts were resulting in adequate GLBT representation in the collections. She found that Illinois libraries were doing fairly well, providing a substantial amount of GLBT-related fiction and non-fiction books. She also found that staff attitudes in these libraries were generally positive. Despite these promising indicators, it is clear that work still needs to be done to improve and expand the GLBT-themed collections in public libraries.

#### *Barriers to Inclusion and Expansion of GLBT Materials*

There are many myths and misconceptions about GLBT library patrons. In fact, one of the biggest problems in GLBT library service is the vast amount of prejudice and misinformation. Librarians are often misinformed or indifferent regarding the issues and needs of their GLBT patrons (Greenblatt, 2003), and this often manifests itself in the form of explanations or excuses for why a public library maintains inadequate GLBT-themed resources. For example, librarians often assume that their libraries do not have any GLBT patrons, or that no GLBT individuals exist within the community (Gough, 1990; Greenblatt, 2003; Joyce, 2000). Some librarians believe that collecting GLBT-themed books serves as an endorsement of a GLBT lifestyle (Greenblatt, 2003; Joyce, 2000), and that GLBT-related books are too difficult to find and purchase (Gough, 1990; Joyce, 2000). Others insist that GLBT-themed materials can just as easily be obtained through interlibrary loan procedures and are therefore not needed at individual sites (Gough, 1990; Joyce, 2000). Children's librarians sometimes believe that young adult readers are either not interested in GLBT-themed resources or are at risk of being traumatized or harmed by their content (Joyce, 2000). Some librarians are simply uncomfortable with GLBT topics and believe that avoiding the issue altogether will prevent controversy (Greenblatt, 2003). It is important to remember that librarians have a professional obligation to avoid exclusion and censorship of materials, regardless of their personal feelings.

The fact that GLBT patrons are often quite private about their information needs, undoubtedly due in part to societal stigma, might make their needs less obvious to library staff than those of other patrons. GLBT patrons may feel uncomfortable checking out materials or discussing their information needs with library staff. This might lead some library employees to believe that there are no GLBT patrons using their libraries (Greenblatt, 2003).

Some librarians consider GLBT-themed materials a “special needs collection” and insist that they are not appropriate for a public library, and others feel that GLBT-themed materials are too technical in nature to be housed in a public library collection. They may also believe that their vendors do not handle GLBT-themed materials or that there is no room in their budget for GLBT-related resources (Gough, 1990). As we will see in the “Suggestions and Solutions” section of this paper, there are ways to overcome these obstacles and provide proper service.

#### *Internal Censorship*

While most librarians have been educated about the perils of censorship and book-banning, many unwittingly practice a subtle form of censorship during their day-to-day collection development strategies. Berman (2001) labels this practice “inside censorship,” and defines it as the failure to select certain categories or genres of materials, despite public desire or demand. “Inside,” or internal, censorship, also may involve irresponsible weeding of the library’s collection, inadequate cataloging, and denying library staff the opportunity to express themselves by creating an atmosphere of intimidation (Berman, 2001). Internal censorship is often unacknowledged and difficult to prove. For a librarian who feels uncomfortable or homophobic about GLBT-related materials, this form of neglect is easier, and appears more innocuous, than outright book-banning. Internal censorship, which may be either deliberate or unwitting, is a problem in many public libraries (Tsang, 1990). It is therefore crucial for public libraries to collect and properly catalog GLBT materials, thus saving them from invisibility.

The creation of barriers, such as sequestering “controversial” books in guarded areas and requiring patrons to specifically request them, contributes to an overall atmosphere of restriction. This can be a

compounded problem for GLBT patrons, for whom the simple act of borrowing a GLBT-themed book might be a coming-out activity. Having to request a book from a restricted area or through inter-library loan makes this act less likely to occur (Tsang, 1990).

As Loverich and Degnan (1999) point out, librarians are gatekeepers – the people who decide what their communities would like to read. This is a serious responsibility, and one that must take the entire community into account – not just the most visible segments thereof. Librarians have a professional responsibility to realize that censorship does not only come from outside forces. Sometimes the most destructive forms of censorship are the subtle ones taking place every day within the library itself.

#### *Young Adults' GLBT-Related Information Needs*

Adolescence is tough, and this is especially true for GLBT young adults. GLBT youth experience frequent isolation, which places them at risk for violence, homelessness, substance abuse, and suicide (Hughes-Hassell & Hinckley, 2001), as well as academic failure and dropping out of school (Jenkins, 1990). Librarians are in the powerful and important position of being able to help reduce these risks by providing access to quality GLBT-themed young adult (YA) materials, and by helping direct young adults to GLBT-centered organizations and agencies. Jenkins (1990) states: “Young people often gain their first information about homosexuality from books.” Considering the many risks GLBT adolescents face, the importance of providing adequate GLBT-related YA resources cannot be overestimated. It is no exaggeration to say that the right resources could save a life.

GLBT young adults deal with constant ignorance and homophobia, and many learn to cope by becoming as invisible as possible (Jenkins, 1990). High schools are notoriously homophobic in atmosphere, and staying below the radar is sometimes a necessary survival skill. This self-imposed invisibility is compounded for these vulnerable young adults by the frequent practice of teachers and other adults of ignoring GLBT issues. Librarians contribute to this atmosphere of ignorance when they do not supply adequate GLBT-themed YA books and materials. This not only deprives GLBT youth of finding materials they can relate to, it also means that heterosexual and

simply curious patrons will be less likely to come across information providing insight into GLBT life, thus contributing to heterosexism and societal ignorance (Clyde & Lobban, 2001).

Since the YA book *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip*, by John Donovan, was published in 1969, there has been an explosion of GLBT-themed books for young readers (Jenkins, 1990), but these books are still in short supply in libraries and are disproportionately likely to end up on lists of challenged and banned books (Clyde & Lobban, 2001). Many of these books are difficult to find in trade bibliographies and are often available only through small presses or as trade paperbacks (Clyde & Lobban, 2001).

GLBT-themed YA books have come a long way since *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip*, which portrayed homosexuality as negative and had an unhappy ending. *While I'll Get There* was a groundbreaking book – one of the first well-known YA books in which a main character explored his attractions to the same sex – the YA books being published today tend to present a more positive view of GLBT life. Early GLBT-themed YA books were heavy on violent themes, indicated that homosexuality was related to family dysfunction or early childhood trauma, were discouraging of GLBT life, and presented GLBT characters as predominantly white, male, and middle-to-upper class (Mulholland, 2003). While today's GLBT-themed YA books still feature characters who are disproportionately white and male (Clyde & Lobban, 2001; Mulholland, 2003), they represent a departure from those somber cautionary tales, and are often funny, positive, and uplifting (Pavao, 2002). Books such as Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind*, Alex Sanchez's *Rainbow Boys* and *Rainbow High*, and David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* present GLBT characters as complete and complex people, not stereotypes whose lives revolve around sexuality or who are surrounded by violence and a lack of acceptance. In addition, GLBT parents are now more recognized in YA literature (Mulholland, 2003). Unfortunately, GLBT-themed YA books are still being challenged and censored, even when they are critically well-reviewed (Pavao, 2002).

It might be tempting for librarians to believe that GLBT-themed YA books are not often used because of the fact that they do not always have high circulation rates. Young adults may feel reluctant to check

these books out, but this does not mean they are not being used. The librarian's role is to provide access, whether the materials circulate or not (Jenkins, 1990).

GLBT young adults are an at-risk group, who must deal with discrimination and stigmatization. Teachers often compound this problem by continuing to believe that no GLBT students exist within their classrooms. Positive GLBT-themed YA literature is essential to these students.

### *Suggestions and Solutions*

While many libraries have inadequate GLBT-themed collections, there are some that stand out as examples to follow. The Berkeley Public Library and the Oakland Public Library, both in California's Bay Area, have been proactive in their efforts at building extensive GLBT-themed collections (Bledsoe, 1995). The Oakland Public Library marks its GLBT-themed books with a rainbow sticker on the spine for easy identification. The San Francisco Public Library is home to possibly the largest and best collection of GLBT-themed materials in any public library, with a thriving Gay and Lesbian Center containing books, magazines, films, sound recordings, photographs, and other materials. A library in need of improved services to GLBT patrons might do well to follow and expand upon these examples.

GLBT-themed collection development efforts must be proactive. Berman (2001) suggests that librarians "consciously and energetically identify, secure, and publicize much more non-conglomerate, diverse, and lively material." Oberg and Klein (2003) state: "If we do not systematically and adequately collect gay-themed materials, we ignore a literature of growing importance and the immediate needs of a considerable segment of our user community." They recommend that libraries conduct an environmental scan of their communities to determine the needs for GLBT-themed resources, make collection development of GLBT-themed resources an item in their policy statements, set aside part of the budget for GLBT-themed materials, make librarians responsible for improving GLBT-themed collections, publicize GLBT-themed materials to the community, not rely so much on interlibrary loan and consortial collections for

GLBT-themed materials, and consult specialized resources such as the *Alternative Press Index* to improve their collections.

Loverich and Degnan (1999) suggest bringing more people into the collection development process, and suggest that librarians need to be proactive and make an effort to find alternative sources, such as the *Lambda Book Report*. Similarly, Sweetland and Christensen (1995) suggest that librarians should regularly turn to the *Lambda Book Report*, as well as the American Library Association's Gay and Lesbian Round Table Awards, in addition to their usual selection guides, to help ensure that GLBT-themed books receive proper attention.

Regarding YA resources, librarians must challenge the idea that young people can and should be sheltered or "protected" from information about GLBT issues and same-sex attraction. This dangerous notion of "appropriateness" makes YA collections especially vulnerable to censorship and challenges (Jenkins, 1990).

Avoiding myths and traps involves a proactive approach as well (Greenblatt, 2003). Heterosexist attitudes among library staff are common, and this may be evident in how GLBT patrons are treated. Quantity and quality are important in a GLBT-themed collection, as are availability and user-friendliness. Special displays, handouts, tours, and instruction sessions are all ways a public library can highlight its GLBT-themed collection. Special bookmarks with information about the collection may be handed out, book lists with titles of GLBT-related books may be displayed and distributed. Study guides and pathfinders may be made available, lists of GLBT organizations may be displayed, and the library's cataloging system may be revamped to adequately represent GLBT-themed holdings. Libraries may also offer meeting space for GLBT groups and actively promote the library in the GLBT community.

Librarians have an obligation to challenge the myths and misconceptions that prevail about GLBT patrons and their information needs. Selection must not be influenced by homophobia or discomfort. Internal censorship can only be stopped through library workers' proactive stance and creativity (Tsang, 1990). Learning more about GLBT people and their information needs is part of a librarian's responsibility. Idly assuming that one's library has no



GLBT patrons, or that they are perfectly happy using interlibrary loan services, is a neglectful stance that must be resisted.

All of the suggestions and solutions listed above have one element in common – they take effort. Being proactive is clearly the key to providing an adequate collection of GLBT-themed materials.

GLBT issues have grown in acceptance as society has evolved, and libraries must keep up with the times. In a spirit of partnership and proactive thinking, librarians can help ensure that the “invisible minority” receives the attention and information it deserves.

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## FROM THE ALTERNATIVES LIBRARY

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### Update on Prison Projects

by Lynn Andersen

**D**uring the past year, the Alternatives Library programs for prisoners have expanded and evolved. Our initial program, focusing on enrichment programs for incarcerated youth, is now one that is giving attention to parole preparation and aftercare. Our national prison program, Prisoner Express, remains mainly one of sending out hundreds of books to prisoners. In addition, there has been an effort to start pen-pal programs and to offer special writing and art programs to prisoners.

The juvenile program at MacCormick Center is now being developed by an AmeriCorp VISTA volunteer who is expanding what was done by the previous VISTA person. The VISTA, Sherry Tackill, is in charge of creating a volunteer base and training volunteers to help incarcerated youth at the facility prepare to go before the parole board with a detailed plan for what they will do upon release. A volunteer acts as a mentor who can help one of the young men at the Center discover what resources are available for his benefit in the community where he will be returned upon release.

Part of the work is putting together a database of community organizations that are doing youth advocacy programs in the urban centers where most of the youth were arrested. I've been working closely with an inmate who was in juvenile corrections and who has related some great ideas to help the residents upon release.

The good news is that there is a growing interest in New York State to put more resources into this type of program. Since we have a

head start doing the research and program creation, what we are doing has the potential to become a model for other facilities. With the New York State changes to the Rockefeller Laws calling for reduced sentencing for nonviolent drug-related crimes, there will be more people released from prisons and juvenile facilities. This will create a demand to meet the growing need for individuals and programs that can shepherd young men who have no idea where or how to begin putting their lives back together.

One area that we feel needs a lot of work is all aspects of computer training. Without knowledge of the technology of today, there is little chance that the kids coming out of prison are going to find work that will keep them interested enough to remain off the streets. We have focused a lot of time on upgrading computers and finding people who can teach all levels of use. Upon release, we recommend that the youth utilize the public libraries near home. This may be the only access some of the young people we work with will have to computers. Unfortunately, the services provided by libraries in different areas are uneven and sometimes quite deficient in computer technology areas. Though the state has identified the problem, the reality still remains that many inner city and poorer rural areas do not have adequate services to meet the needs of today's youth. This will be one of the areas we address when offering recommendations to youth advocates and juvenile detention administrators regarding necessary services to urban and rural youth being released from the prison system.

These young people will get out of prison. When they do, there needs to be in place all the possible resources to help them remain free and move on with their lives.

In our other area of prison work, we are dealing with a completely opposite problem. Most of the men and women who write to us from corrections facilities all over the country are in for the long haul. The challenge here is to help prisoners have better access to printed materials, outlets for their creativity, and activities that can help pass the time in a meaningful way.

As I said above, our main work is getting books into the hands of prisoners. The challenge is that each state has different regulations regarding how and what can be received. To make matters more

difficult, the rules can change from facility to facility within the same state. Trial and error has been the name of our game. We maintain a database with information on the different prisons and their requirements.

Because we are a library, we are able to get books into the prisons with a minimum of problems. Since there are rules governing who can send items into a maximum security prison, programs like ours are only possible when done through libraries or non-profit agencies set up to do the specific task of book mailing. Books thru Bars is one such organization. Also, libraries always have a constant stream of book donations and discards that aren't used by the institution but are much needed in prisons.

As a first contact, we have gone directly to prison libraries to find out what services they offer to inmates. There again, it is different from one facility to another. Prisoners on lockdown and in maximum security facilities have less access to books, while medium secure prisons often offer regular access to library materials. Since many of our prisoners are in max facilities, we mail most of our books to individuals. Many of those individuals have no other contact with the world outside. They have been abandoned by friends and family.

In addition to books, the Alternatives Library publishes a newsletter, *Prisoner Express*, 3-4 times a year. We bulk mail it to prisoners for free. Those who choose to do so, can share their writings through our newsletter. Inmates are given a questionnaire with choices about programs of interest, and they decide whether or not they want their names or writings used. We never want them to feel coerced about what is theirs, and we make it very clear that their decisions one way or another will not affect their getting books.

Gary Fine, who oversees the program, has been successful at raising money as it is needed to do the different programs we are offering. He has also found a number of dedicated volunteers and school groups that bring ideas, energy and fundraising efforts to the program. A number of the volunteers write and receive letters from prisoners. The library is the receiving and mailing center for this pen pal program. The outpouring of support from the community has been incredible. Our last fundraiser included local musicians, poets

and former prisoners who talked about the importance of having contact from the outside world. Our next community fundraiser will be a reading of prisoners' writings by community members.

There are over 2,000,000 people locked up in this country today. Somewhere, not far from each and every one of our homes, there is a prison where men and women live and hope they won't be forgotten, disappeared. So, in the end, the programs have very little to do with books or writing. These are just ways we can reach out and say you're human, you're known, you're not forgotten.

## ADDED ENTRIES

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### Inaugural by Peter McDonald

Ask not  
why in the subway  
the old man sleeps in the cold

Nor why  
the child's back  
is pocked with phosphorus burns

Ask not  
why bloated fish die  
floating on rivers of foam

Nor why  
a nine caliber bullet  
ripped rapper Ray-Z's throat

Ask not  
why the leopard pads  
through stumps by a dry logging road

Nor why  
nine body bags  
lie rain soaked by the troop plane home

Ask not  
why the convict tycoon  
smokes hand-rolled cigars in the exercise yard

Nor why  
in bleak February  
pipes freeze in the projects impoverished

Nor why  
such a cold rage seers  
the heart with self-inflicted burns

Nor why in the end  
the thorn-crowned man  
hangs so helpless on a gibbet-splintered pole

## DOCUMENTS

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### Salinas Public Library Support

Saturday, April 2nd, 2005, I drove a group of librarians and fellow travelers to Salinas, California, to protest the closure of the public library. The event was a 24-hour read-a-thon, timed to coincide with celebrations of the Cesar Chavez holiday. Salinas, a Spanish-speaking agricultural community and home of John Steinbeck, had shut down its entire library system due to budget shortfalls, making it the largest city in the country without a public library.

The event was spectacular, with kids, and dogs and “books not bombs” placards, and speaker after speaker exhorting City authorities to find some way to keep these vital community centers open. Authors, musicians, and Hollywood stars took their turn at the podium. Local schoolchildren read poems, and unions expressed solidarity. As a listed speaker I had the opportunity to talk about the issue from a librarian’s point-of-view. This is a reconstructed summary of my remarks.

Buenas tardes, compañeras y compañeros de Salinas.

First, I want to let you know that I came with a delegation of Bay Area librarians. I also bring formal support of the Progressive Librarians Guild, a national activist organization of library workers affiliated with the American Library Association (point to colleagues holding PLG banner at back of crowd, applause). The Progressive Librarians Guild wishes to let the people of Salinas know that we see this issue as being at the forefront of public access in this country, and support your actions to reinstitute this system.

Second, I want to let you know that these cuts are not just aimed at Salinas, or even just at poor communities. Many people might think of academia as an ivory tower exempt from this sort of abuse, but last year I was laid off as a labor librarian at the University of California at Berkeley. I was paid through a statewide labor research program that was whacked by the Governor’s mid-year budget cuts, straight out of the gate in January, as his way to hurt labor for fighting the



recall of Gray Davis. Now, we all may have different opinions about how good or bad a governor Davis was, but I think we all agree about how Schwarzenegger is doing. My job involved outreach to the community about labor research resources at the University – your university, your tax dollars at work. The labor community has a long history of resisting abuse, and one of the slogans is “An injury to one is an injury to all.” Salinas may be taking the hit now, but we are all vulnerable.

Finally, I want to tell you some things about the library community you might not know. Most people think of a librarian as the person that checks out their book or answers a reference question, but there’s more to it than that. Many people work in libraries that are not “librarians” – that do not have a library degree – yet contribute mightily to the functioning of the institution. Also, many of us work behind the scenes, like the brothers and sisters you were just introduced to here working on this event. My job right now is cataloging Spanish language materials that come into the Bancroft Library at U.C. Berkeley – again, your public institution, your tax dollars at work. The materials I catalog include everything from rare 18th century manuscripts to books published last year in Honduras, and Guatemala, and Mexico. Most of these don’t already have existing catalog records, which means that if I don’t catalog it, you can’t find it. Other colleagues do things like conserve damaged documents, so that, say, you wanted to come to our library and look at an actual decree from the Mexican revolution, you could hold it in your hand without damaging it. Our work helps to make these resources visible. This is also a predominately female profession, which means a generally underpaid one – no one becomes a librarian to get rich. People do this sort of work because we care about serving the public good. These are all tasks that make the library community, the faces you never see, but we are all vulnerable.

And we must fight back.

Venceremos, Salinas!

Lincoln Cushing



photo by Eli Edwards

PLG members attending Salinas Public Library rally:  
Eli Edwards, Lincoln Cushing, Jane Glasby, Gillian Boal

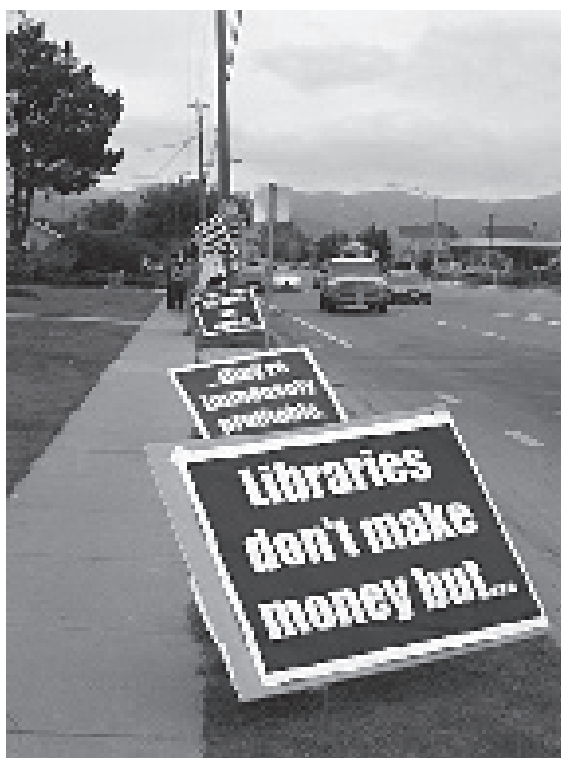


photo by Eli Edwards

## **RESOLUTION ON THE FEDERAL LIBRARY DEPOSITORY PROGRAM AND THE PRINT-ON-DEMAND ALLOWANCE PROGRAM**

### **Documents Association of New Jersey**

WHEREAS, the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), established more than 150 years ago, secures the right of the citizens of the United States to access materials published by the Federal Government through systematic distribution of materials to libraries throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ), supports the American Library Association Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) Resolution of January 2005; and

WHEREAS, the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ), supports the Resolution on the Federal Library Depository Program by the New Jersey Law Librarians Association, March 14, 1005; and

WHEREAS, the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) supports the sentiment expressed by James Madison: "A popular Government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives;" and

WHEREAS, the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) recognizes its particular constituencies, both urban and rural, consisting of academic and legal researchers, the popular audience, civil libertarians, the journalism industry, and those interested in the freedom of information, both today and in future years; and

WHEREAS, we support the sharing of and access to information among unique libraries within the Depository Program, including regional libraries, selectives, academic libraries, law libraries, public libraries, and state libraries; and

WHEREAS, the reference specialists in each of these libraries that provide access to government information are available to all citizens due to the open access mandate of the Federal Depository Library Program. There is a need to recognize this core of experts, including the legal reference specialists, who serve as the intermediaries, the specialists with the contextual understanding of government material and its organization. They are a group of librarians committed to service who offer a specialized knowledge to all of our citizens, not merely to a select group. The need

to continue to provide this government information reference specialty is emphasized; and

WHEREAS, in order to provide adequate access to government information, documents need to continue to exist in both print and electronic formats, as both librarians and users recognize that access to information is frequently enhanced by its format, for contextual purposes and for ease of access; and

WHEREAS, although archiving options have been proposed, they are not yet in place, concerning the document librarian community about access to information for the future researcher; and

WHEREAS, concerns over the privatization of government information exist – a concern that flies in the face of the citizens' right to access government information through the Federal Depository Library Program; and

WHEREAS, an allowance of \$500 per depository library would be insufficient to provide adequate access to print documents. In this period of budget cuts to libraries, few libraries could purchase print documents beyond the allowance; in fact, the Print On Demand (POD) Allowance Program would require additional workload hours by document librarians due to the revised selection process, forcing a justification by library administrators for remaining members of the Federal Depository Library Program; and now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) strongly endorses the continued support of the Federal Depository Library Program, recognizing the benefits it provides to the citizens of New Jersey and the United States, by providing access to Federal government information in both print and electronic formats; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the proposed cuts to print distribution be recognized as a threat to the Federal Depository Library Program and a threat to the continued freedom of access to information that our citizens deserve; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to those representatives to the Spring Federal Depository Library Program Conference, April 2005, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Approved by the Executive Board of the  
Documents Association of New Jersey,

April 8, 2005

## **SECURITY REPORT CARD: quantitative indicators of secrecy in the federal government**

EXCERPTS from A Report by OpenTheGovernment.org —  
Americans for Less Secrecy, More Democracy

August 26, 2004  
Executive Summary

Government data now confirm what many have suspected: Secrecy has increased dramatically in recent years under policies of the current administration.

Whether measured by the number of documents stamped secret, where agency heads put their dollars, or trends over time, the numbers reflect the extraordinary growth in secrecy in the face of increased public demand for information from government. Secrecy's recent growth started in the Clinton administration and accelerated under the Bush administration.

For example:

- The federal government spent \$6.5 billion last year creating 14 million new classified documents and securing accumulated secrets – more than it has for at least the past decade.
- Agency heads are shifting taxpayer dollars from efforts at declassifying pages of documents to efforts to secure its existing secrets.
- Last year, agencies in the executive branch spent an extraordinary \$120 to make and keep documents secret for every dollar spent on declassification.
- Public demand is rising with over 3 million requests for information from government agencies under the Freedom of Information Act last year alone. At the same time, resources devoted to handling public requests for information has held steady.

This report is an initial step toward establishing measurable benchmarks for regularly evaluating the level of secrecy in government.

### **Why a Report Card Now?**

Recent events add to the growing sense that government policies and practices since 9/11 and under the Bush administration have dramatically expanded secrecy. Journalists investigating the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal discovered classified documents that revealed that the Pentagon had known for months about the problem. The Senate Intelligence Committee's report on pre-war intelligence on Iraq was delayed when the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) initially sought to keep half the document classified. Yet when it was finally released to the public, as Steve Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists noted in recent testimony before a House subcommittee, CIA reviewers had redacted (blacked out) information in one section, which they had inconsistently approved for public release in another section of the same report.

Given that such recent events highlighted secrecy as a key problem, the question arose: could government secrecy be quantified?

### **A Note on the Indicators**

OpenTheGovernment.org sought to identify measurable indicators of secrecy that could be used as a benchmark to evaluate openness and secrecy in government in the United States. We sought data easily available primarily from government sources. There are many indicators out there that could be included; this is not intended to be comprehensive but rather first step toward quantifiably measuring the scope of secrecy under the policies and practices of the current administration. There are myriad ways in which government interacts with the public, and secrecy in the federal government extends far beyond the executive branch. Over time, our intention is to expand this initial compilation to reflect the many topics on which public access to government information and secrecy affect policy decisions.

### **Other Indicators of Openness and Secrecy in Government**

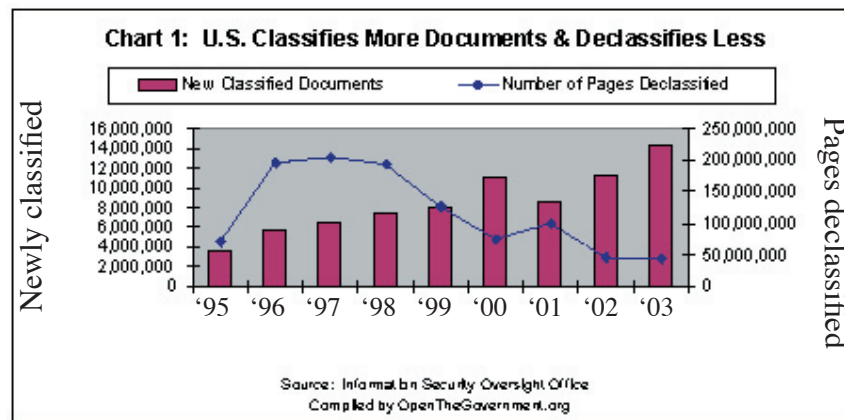
These indicators do not account for the proliferating, often ad hoc, policies for restricting or limiting public access to information that is not classified. Controls on information hinder information sharing between the government and the public. These controls include expanding, broadly defined classification categories such as:

- Sensitive Security Information
- Sensitive Homeland Security Information
- Sensitive But Unclassified and
- For Official Use Only

Some of these new regimes that limit, or have the potential to limit, the public's right to know were established by Congress. Other regimes, apart from the classification system, are created by the agencies, which employ them. Such vague restrictions on information previously available to the public hinder the ability of the public to make their communities healthy, safe places to live and strengthen government accountability.

In addition, the public has grown accustomed over the last decade to looking to government websites as a source of information. This is a crucial aspect of open government not measured in this set of indicators.

What follows is a brief look at how the main indicators we examine have changed over time.

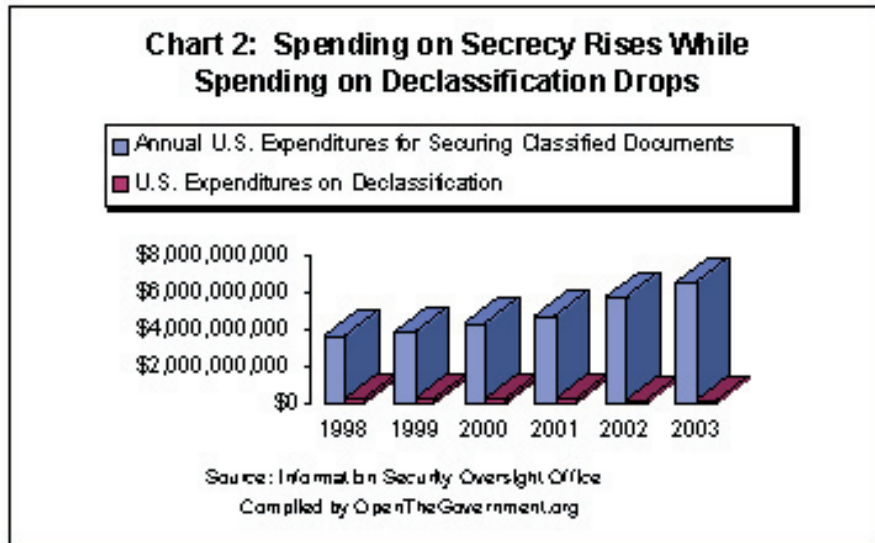


Years	New Classified Documents	Number of Pages Declassified
FY1995	3,579,505	69,000,000
FY1996	5,790,625	196,058,274
FY1997	6,520,154	204,050,369
FY1998	7,294,768	193,155,807
FY1999	8,038,592	126,809,769
FY2000	11,150,869	75,000,000
FY2001	8,650,735	100,104,990
FY2002	11,271,618	44,365,711
FY2003	14,228,020	43,093,233

With 14 million new documents stamped secret in fiscal year 2003, the federal government created 60 percent more secrets than it did in the year (FY 2001) prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. While some increase in classification is to be expected in wartime, this dramatic rise runs counter to recommendations by the 9/11 Commission and the congressional Joint Inquiry into 9/11, both of which recommended reforms to reduce unnecessary secrets.

The numbers in Chart 1 show that the rise in government secrecy, as measured by the number of newly classified documents, accelerated, but did not begin, during the current administration. In fact, government secrecy rose during much of the Clinton years.

And yet far more information could be made available to the public without harming national security. For example, the CIA took only two days – remarkably quick by agency norms – to review and release publicly, almost in its entirety, the controversial President’s Daily Brief (PDB) of August 6, 2001 regarding al Qaeda. And yet it is only one of 13 PDBs that have ever been released publicly during the entire past four decades the CIA has delivered these daily reports to the president. Based on this example, it raises the question whether most could safely be declassified now.



EDITORS NOTE: For complete report and updates see [OpenTheGovernment.org](http://OpenTheGovernment.org)



## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC LIBRARIANSHIP, by Kathleen de la Peña McCook New York: Neal-Schuman, 2004**

**reviewed by Mark Hudson**

The scholarly and practical literature on public libraries and librarianship is extensive, but for many years now there has been no adequate single-volume introduction to the field. Kathleen de la Peña McCook's *Introduction to Public Librarianship* not only provides a readable introductory textbook for library students and experienced practitioners alike, but does so in a way that challenges us to think beyond narrow institutional concerns and objectives and ground librarianship in our commitment to cultural democracy and social justice.

A library educator at the University of South Florida, McCook is perhaps best known as the author of *A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), and the vision of public libraries as community-building institutions is a central theme of this book as well. By functioning as a commons where community voices can come together in authentic dialogue, by developing current collections of titles for the general reader, and by providing readers' advisory and reference/information services, libraries sustain and enhance the public sphere without which grassroots democracy cannot survive and flourish. McCook rightly emphasizes the need for librarians to develop a "philosophical and sociological" understanding of reading and book culture if we want to shape balanced collections that promote "introspection and understanding" and thus enhance the public sphere (p. 192). For the poor in particular, the "power of reading to change lives through cultivation of the public sphere in libraries is mighty" (p. 193). Through reading and the reflection it

engenders, poor and other working-class people excluded from the dialogue of the commons have the power to enter and transform that dialogue and the public sphere itself.

The book opens with an extremely thorough review of the history of public libraries in the United States, which covers not only the emergence and development of public libraries but also the efforts of public librarians to shape that development through organized activity in the American Library Association, state library associations, and state and federal library agencies. The achievement of a national voice and message over the course of the twentieth century enabled public library leaders to establish standards, facilitate local planning and expand access to library services nationwide, although the goal of equal access for all has yet to be realized. McCook identifies the “overarching issues that librarians used to shape public policy” (p. 70) as lifelong learning and literacy, libraries as the cornerstone of democracy, and the defense of intellectual freedom. She traces the shift in public library philosophy regarding collection development and intellectual freedom between the First World War, when librarians willingly participated in censorship and book banning, and the years following the Second World War, when they responded to new threats “with a renewed commitment to fight censorship activities” (p. 74). Thus, the public library “gradually made a transition from an agent of social stability to one that supported all points of view” (p. 73), and “adherence to the ideals of intellectual freedom . . . has come to define the core of the profession’s ethical stance” (p.72).

Subsequent chapters on the organization, administration and staffing, and structure and infrastructure of public libraries are equally comprehensive and bolstered with detailed statistics and numerous primary documents. Even when discussing library management and administration, McCook never loses sight of her commitment to social justice, and she writes sympathetically about unions for library workers and the ALA Better Salaries project initiated by 2002-2003 ALA President Mitch Freedman (p. 158). She is similarly unequivocal about the unfulfilled promise of equal access and service for all, insisting that serving poor and culturally different communities “requires a commitment by librarians for social justice and equity” and that librarians “must consider all aspects of the human condition” (p. 202). This is a radically humanist and transformative librarianship that goes well beyond the abstract

commitment to intellectual freedom practiced by the mainstream of the profession, because it recognizes that intellectual freedom is a vacant ideal for people who lack the resources to use it.

The book is thoroughly indexed and referenced, and the lengthy bibliographies of books, articles, websites and statistical reports will make it an invaluable resource for librarians and library educators developing collections and curricula in the field of public librarianship. It deserves to be read and reread by every library student and practicing public librarian, and it will almost certainly be the standard introductory text in the field for many years to come.

**ON BULLSHIT, by Harry G. Frankfurt.  
Princeton University Press, 2005.**

**reviewed by John Buschman**

On the theory that, with the possible exception of people who routinely deal with used car sales managers, librarians might be the audience most in need a volume dedicated to the topic of b.s., I decided to review Frankfurt's book. This slim volume (67 short pages) is not a prank or a gag-gift book (it is also priced accordingly at \$9.95). Frankfurt is a Professor Emeritus of moral philosophy at Princeton University, and while the tongue may occasionally be in the cheek, the discussion and the distinctions made about what bullshit is, and is not, is serious and informative. The book begins with the observation that "one of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit. Everyone knows this." However, the topic per se has received little formal attention – "a conscientiously developed appreciation" as he calls it – and therefore "we have no theory" of bullshit.

Frankfurt goes on to explore the links among and distinctions between common terms and understandings of them like humbug, bull, bull sessions, bluff, falsehoods, and outright lies in order to arrive at a tentative definition of what bullshit is. It is the distinction between bullshitting and telling a lie that is a key to his conclusions: the teller of truth and the liar respect the importance of the truth, they're just sitting on opposite sides of the same table. The honest person "says only what [is] believe[d] to be true [and] for the liar it is correspondingly indispensable that [the] statements be false" to deceive and/or achieve a certain end. Lying, he notes, takes a certain ascetic discipline to do it well. Hence to the core of the issue: "It is impossible for someone to lie unless he [or she, of course] thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction." It is this tenuous, careless connection with fact, truth (inadvertent or not), and falsehood that is the hallmark of bullshit.

To illustrate, Frankfurt discusses the typical bombast of a 4th of July political speech: the intoning of reverence for the Founding Fathers, the rule of law, the sacrifice of patriots, and the role of a divine in guiding the nation to its present exalted state. It is not

the case that the speaker wants to convince the audience of his true feelings about the Constitution, nor necessarily to deceive the audience about them either – the speaker may in fact make more than a few true statements along the way. Rather, the speaker’s purpose is to convey to the audience an impression of him through such vagaries whether true or false. The bullshitter “does not reject the authority of truth,” it is just that she/he “pays no attention to it at all. By virtue of this, bullshit is the greater enemy of the truth than lies are.” Hence we arrive at the corrosiveness of bullshitting in the form of the fine craftsmanship of market research and focus groups and image-meistering that are the stock-in-trade of our politics and consumer culture.

If you’re thinking that this has a tenuous bearing on librarianship by now, just pick up some “analysis” of the field, the future, or the past by a library administrator. The various pronouncements about Google’s digitization project will do fine: “This is the day the world changed. [T]his is something we have to do to revitalize the profession and make it more meaningful” (from an associate director at the University of Michigan Library in the 12-20-04 *Information Today* News Release). Or: “*The Matrix* has started already...Next we’ll need to install...Web cams on our public access computers [which is] not only recording your image, it will be able to tell whether you are angry or sad, reading or watching the screen, and more or less what you are doing...I know this has tremendous surveillance implications, but it’s not all bad” (in the January 2001 *Computers in Libraries*). These kinds of pronouncements from our “leading lights” are commonplace – not the exception, and they are the essence of bullshit. This leads us to Frankfurt’s final point of particular salience for librarians: “Rather than seeking primarily to arrive at accurate representations of a common world,” the bullshitter goes for sincerity. Since, in a postmodern understanding of the world there is no way to know truth or facts, “it makes no sense to try to be true to the facts [and the bullshitter] must therefore try instead to be true” to him or herself. Touché. Our leadership doesn’t lie – they’re just making it up as they go along in a series of rolling expediencies, being true to themselves.

This is an excellent and thoughtful little book on an overlooked subject. Take up a collection, read it and pass it around, and then give it to your local library administrator – soon.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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