

Progressive Librarians Guild

providing a forum for the open exchange
of radical views on library issues

Statement of Purpose

Progressive Librarians Guild was formed in New York City on January 1990 by a group of librarians concerned with our profession's rapid drift into dubious alliances with business and the information industry, and into complacent acceptance of service to an unquestioned political, economic and cultural status quo. (See the 1997 Letter from Mark Rosenzweig to PLG members describing changes in the organization that had come about up to that point. <http://libr.org/plg/PLG-why.php>.)

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

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

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

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

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