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OCCUPY WALL STREET LIBRARIANS SPEAK OUT

by Daniel Norton, Mandy Henk, Betsy Fagin, Jaime Taylor and Zachary Loeb

Following is the text presented at the American Library Association’s Midwinter Conference Saturday January 21, 8:30 am at the Dallas Convention Center Theater.

Good Morning ALA Midwinter 2012 Dallas! My name is Daniel Norton, I am a student of Library Science, and I am both proud and honored to introduce to you a group of professionals who have not only impacted me in very meaningful ways as a future professional, but who have an inspiring and interesting story to share with you today...

Mandy: On Sept. 17th of last year [2011] a group of committed activists, activists diverse in age, race, and social class, taking their inspiration from the Arab Spring, “occupied” a public space in New York City’s financial district. They rejected the legitimacy of the existing authorities and engaged in direct action to build a new and better world. A world based on old principles. Principles embedded deep in the American psyche, but lately forgotten. Solidarity. Mutual aid. Equality. Autonomy. Democracy – real democracy based on consensual, non-hierarchical self-governance. The activists of Occupy Wall Street built a People’s Kitchen so that no one need know hunger. They built a Comfort station so that no one need suffer the cold. Medical care, Arts and Culture, a Spirituality Space, even a phone charging station . . . .all of the necessities of life—including a library. Occupy Wall Street is about creating a new and better world ourselves. As a free people united for justice.

Occupiers have faced repeated police brutality – peaceful Occupiers have been arrested, maced, gassed, attacked with police scooters and sound canons. On November 15th, our occupation and our library were destroyed in a brutal, early morning raid. Our colleagues and comrades were arrested, our collection tossed into a dumpster, our tent cut apart with a chainsaw. But we are here, we are strong, and we are committed to the fight for justice. We are the Librarians of Occupy Wall Street and we are committed to using the tools of our profession – books, literacy, bibliographic control, reference, and readers advisory in that fight. As librarians we understand the vital role libraries play in society and in a healthy democracy and our library stands as our living commitment to fulfilling that role. We’re each
going to give a brief reflection and then we’ll have a presentation on our library and time for questions.

Betsy: One of the unique characteristics of Occupy is how it is a very local expression of a group of people in any particular place, but the impulse to build a library, to share knowledge and resources is universal.

In November there was a brief article in the *Guardian* with a slide show of other Occupy Libraries in Washington DC, Vancouver, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Toronto, and London that gave us one of our first glimpses of how Occupy libraries were multiplying.

The Biblioteca Acampada Sol in Madrid that grew out of the M15 movement has been a particular inspiration to us and I want to read some of a letter they sent to us in early October as it mirrors our own experience at Occupy Wall Street and expresses some of how we are bound together whether we know it or not:

Hi Peoples Library! Cheers from the public library of the Spanish revolution occupation at Madrid!

We are the Acampada Sol Library, the library that was formed during the occupation of the Puerta del Sol Square here in Madrid, Spain, last May. We have been following OWS from the very first day and let’s say we are glad to see that you found the way out to organise you up almost in the same way we did while we were camping at the city hall square in Madrid at Puerta del Sol.

What we saw [in] the pics of OWS was quite impressive, but you couldn’t imagine how surprised we were when we knew that OWS has also a library. It may sound stupid but when we knew that, we celebrated it as the birth of a new one in the family.

Why? Well, it’s difficult to explain, but during the nearly seven weeks we lived there hearing the rain fall over the piece of plastic that barely covered our books (not us) we had a lot of time to think about what we were going through. The media described us as bums, the government as the most dangerous kind of terrorists (the pacifist’s kind) and we slept always waiting for the final police riot that would throw everything down. We had time for joy and also for despair. We never knew what we were doing, we only knew that it was right. People said it was useless to demand a U-turn in local politics in a country with a globalized economy. We replied if so, that we expected to make our demands go global then, they said it was a childish dream and they laughed...

We only want to thank all of you to be there, because maybe you don’t realize it, but you’re making our dream come true... Obviously to do the right thing, far from being a utopia or related to culture is a matter of common sense.

We should say that none of us decided to open up a library during our occupation, it appeared by itself. People who came to support us wanted us to have some of their books, they wanted
us to read and to take care of them. We started out only with forty titles. People came up to rest from the everyday routines, trying to find a shelter in the written words under our blue tent, poets showed up to read them their works and free thinkers their essays...The manager of one major corporate library in town gave us book-carts and everything we needed. “Just don’t tell anyone” he asked. One donation came after another and in a few weeks we reached nearly four thousands titles at our outdoor library. A funny heritage to save considering that we were waiting to be bludgeoned and evicted from one minute to other...

We love to hear from you to know how all of you guys are going and we hope you’ll find inspiration in our little story to realise that you are not alone in this.

Thank You!
P.S. Sorry for our lousy English.
Bibliosol – Biblioteca de Acampada Sol

During the time we held the park, we were so busy organizing and running the library, arranging events, talking to people and trying to evade arrest that we didn’t have much opportunity to reach out beyond Zuccotti Park. Since the raid, connecting Occupy libraries together has become one of our primary aims.

We are still in the early stages of forming a consortium of Occupy libraries (and if anyone would like to get involved, please get in touch with me), but have already been in touch with libraries that are still active despite many of the camps being shut down. As of today, we’ve had enthusiastic response from about a dozen libraries and we are beginning to share our experiences and resources to strategize future steps and clarify the roles of libraries within the Occupy Movement. One particularly exciting development has been the role our library can play assisting educators. Many college professors have begun teaching courses on Occupy and who better to help them find accurate, timely information than the libraries and librarians who have been there.

Jaime: I want to make it very clear that the People’s Library is not like most other libraries. Most libraries, at least those in places like the United States, have walls and roofs and doors and shelves. They have regular electricity, bathrooms, call numbers, hours of operation. They don’t have, for the most part, rain and snow inside them, or giant papier mâché bulls on Sunday afternoons, or constant police presence and the threat of arrest or violence that comes with it. Your library has probably never had anything to do with a tent, nor is anyone living in it, and while some of you have had the occasional visit from the authorities, your disaster plans don’t stipulate what to do when hundreds of cops come calling, tear down the whole thing, and arrest anyone inside. Let me also be clear that none of this is hyperbole.
One aspect I particularly want to touch on is the decision-making process we use. The Library Working Group works on consensus. When I was in library school, we talked about horizontal structures and consensus as a cutting edge way of organizing library work and staff. Please throw that all out the window. Please. The meaning of “consensus” used in my library school classroom and the meaning of it at the Occupation and in radical politics generally are not the same. For us, consensus requires that nearly everyone support a decision. If there are people with serious concerns about a proposal, what we call a “block,” we need at least 90% those present to be in support of it. Degreed librarians have no more weight in making decisions than an 18-year-old college student, an underemployed actress, or a crusty traveling kid. At the same time, individual librarians are empowered to act autonomously to a large extent; if a librarian had a good idea, and an action wouldn’t greatly affect the library as a whole, that person was welcome to make it happen, barring serious concerns from others, without seeking permission as such. The flip side of that autonomy is that an individual librarian need not involve themselves with a library project they don’t like or agree with, that in Occupation terms they “stand aside” from. This is in severe contrast to even the flatter organizational structures in normal libraries, which remain hierarchies and for which we might say about consensus, “you keep using that word; I do not think it means what you think it means.”

When formulating policies and procedures for the Library, we considered not only library best practices, but also the ideological nature of our existence, and the unique practical realities of our operations.

There are some aspects of the Occupy Wall Street Library that are easily recognizable: we have an OPAC of sorts on LibraryThing; we have master’s degree holding librarians doing library work, as well as what could be termed paraprofessionals, techies, and friends of the library; we have books and – had – computers.

Our OPAC, as I’ve said, is on LibraryThing. We already had several hundred books when the catalog began, and so we retroactively cataloged everything in the collection at that point, and then cataloged new arrivals as they came in. Some books were added through barcode scanning, but most were done by searching the ISBN. Chapbooks, older books, and other items without ISBNs were cataloged by hand. We’d then mark the books as having been received and cataloged. At times when we didn’t have available internet – which is often – we’d write down ISBNs and enter them into LibraryThing when internet was again available.

For most of the library’s existence, we didn’t have actual shelves. The first volumes were placed on a stone bench at the northeast corner of the park. Then they were put in cardboard boxes. Which melted in the rain. Then they were covered by tarps and put in plastic bins. Sometimes the bins could be on the bench and the ledge above it, sometimes the cops told us they couldn’t be. Very often – especially when it was raining – we were
told we couldn’t cover them with tarps. You know, because we might be hiding bombs under there. Or something. So we got clear plastic sheeting instead. Which was acceptable slightly more often than the opaque tarps. But, back to shelving.

Our books don’t have call numbers, and therefore don’t have exact locations. They were broadly sorted into categories and topics – fiction and non-fiction, non-print, history, economics, poetry, education, women, queer, people of color, non-English, etc. We performed what I liked to call “directly democratic shelving.” That is, whoever was sorting books was empowered to put items where they thought they best belonged. And then if someone found a book in a certain place, but they thought it might be better elsewhere, they were welcome to move it. Personally, and as I would suggest to anyone who asked for advice on shelving, I tried to keep the principle of use in mind. If I was of more than one mind about where a book might belong, I’d consider where our readers might think to look for it, if they wanted that particular book. Or, I’d think about what section they’d be delighted to find it under. Use says that it goes where it will be most and most happily read.

The LibraryThing catalog is a record of the books that have ever been a part of the collection. It does not reflect what might be actually available in the library at any given moment. Circulation is one of the places where ideology and practicality met harmoniously. Given that our library in Zuccotti Park had no building, no call numbers, and no library cards, we did not track circulation. Like maintaining a strict shelving order, it would have been nearly impossible to do, and certainly beyond the power at our disposal. There was never a formal method of borrowing and returning books. The only method was to find a book you wanted to read, pick it up, and walk off with it. We asked only that the reference collection, which included traditional reference materials such as dictionaries as well as copies of our most popular books – Howard Zinn’s *People’s History*, for example, not leave the library. Returns are most welcome, but not required. Readers are welcome to pass books along to friends, take them to other Occupations, or hold on to them. We suggest that somehow, though, the book continue to be used.

This method, aside from being practical, given our resources, was ideologically sound. First in mind is that we are the People’s Library. The librarians are caretakers and facilitators. Also, the library was created in a climate of surveillance and a growing police state. Many libraries are very careful about how they keep records and who has access to those records; we circumvented the point by never keeping any. The only way anyone might ever know who read what book would be to see them doing it.

Lastly, there is no collecting policy. Or, rather, there is, and it only has two points: everything we have was donated to us, and we accept everything. We buy supplies, but we never buy books. Every single volume is in the library because some person thought it should be. And although many of
us have disdain for some authors or viewpoints, or the quality of some literature – and being readers as well as librarians, it’s our movement, too, after all, are welcome to say so – we never recycled a book on account of its content. This means that not only was the Library for the people, but, as they are responsible for its creation, that it is of the people.

Zachary: The People’s Library represents a collection of thousands upon thousands of books, it ranges across all genres, publication dates, and target audiences. To date over 9,000 books have been cataloged in our group’s LibraryThing – and this is a number which is probably several thousand books lower than the true number of books that have come through the library. While the number of books is impressive in terms of quantity and variety, what makes it truly remarkable is that it is a collection built almost entirely by the library’s patrons (we received some generous donations from publishers).

Books would get placed in the donation box and we would process them: mark them OWSL (or stamp them, back when we had the stamp), write down the ISBN number, sticker them so we knew the volume was “processed,” and shelve them. When we were asked “How does this work?” (which we were asked constantly), we replied: “It’s a library. Take a book, read it, bring it back, or lend it to a friend, so that the library keeps spreading.”

In the library we were commonly asked “What books do you need?” To which we typically responded: “What do you think we need?” or “What book changed your life?” or “Whatever you want to give.” Although, at a certain point we added to the third response, “but we don’t really need more fiction.” True, the library was built by a steady flow of fiction (popular and classics), but the library sections most heavily perused and borrowed from were: politics, history, biographies, philosophy, ecology, and spirituality. It is a, shall we say, diverse collection. Our collection was as varied as the library’s patrons, who – after all – built the collection. We have Milton Friedman and John Maynard Keynes. We have Ayn Rand and George Orwell. We have Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Michael Savage, and Ann Coulter. We have Howard Zinn, Frances Fox Piven, Naomi Klein, and Noam Chomsky. We also have Stephen King, William Shakespeare, Dr. Seuss, and a book by the library’s star patron Michael Bloomberg. We built a reference collection of books that were highly demanded (based largely on request) and F.A. Hayek was in there right next to Karl Marx...though we probably should have known better than to ask people not to remove the reference copy of “Steal this book.”

Due to the ever changing nature of the collection, it could be quite the challenge to help patrons find books, but in the process it provided a real look into what brought people to the occupation. Working in the library involved: searching for books to fit a lot of bizarre requests, listening to a lot of life stories, getting to know the regulars and their book tastes, being yelled at for random things, tidying, processing a ton of books, doing data entry, it was a lot like...working in a library.
Danny: Disregarding personal opinion on the matter, Occupy Wall Street, as well as other occupations worldwide, are happening, and they’re inspiring discourse, debate, interest in political spheres and a renewed sense of the power that knowledge holds. The unifying theme of the occupy movement is dissatisfaction, and the result of people gathering to take part in the democratic process of their nation is a rekindling of interest in the early ideas and protections afforded us by our forefathers. This is America, and we The People are our own government. With the ubiquity of information access via the Internet, and the perception that people have the power to access knowledge that suits their needs, what is it that a library affords a populace? A place of community, sharing, conversation and insight. Libraries unite through educational outreach and conservation of those aspects of ourselves and society that represent our culture. What the People’s Library has afforded her patrons is a place to engage with what’s happening in our country, a means to contribute their own sentiments through the donation of materials, and the literacy to see other view points, perhaps form one of their own, and to express criticisms in an effective way. I’ve heard vicious and unapologetically ignorant statements made about the work being done here, even from members of this professional community, and it needs to be recognized that not everyone has the luxury of camping out in Liberty Plaza in order to take a stand, not everyone agrees with the tactics of the Occupy movement, but far more people than is represented are dissatisfied, feeling victimized or are otherwise feeling unfulfilled by the present state of our world, and they’ve chosen the library as a place of solace, and as a means of joining the conversation. The People moved to create a central place of collaboration and equal representation, and (of all things) they built a library as a symbol of such legitimacy.

What does this mean for librarianship? I believe that there is much to be learned from an organizational structure that eschews traditional approaches to educating and informing. I believe that there is insight to partnership in information-seeking in a scenario where there is no circulation desk creating a physical barrier between “librarians” and information seekers. There is an obvious wisdom to be gleaned from the concept of bringing the information to the field as opposed to idly standing by and waiting for the opportunity to field queries from a position far removed from the place in which information is most needed. Our archival team is archiving history in real-time, instead of trying to piece it back together in preservation of retrospect. The precedence here is that librarianship is now this dynamic and engaging vocation that is changing even faster than current professionals believe. The people we serve are redefining us and demanding that we assume our roles as beacons of intellectual freedom and the physical embodiment of American democracy that our education tells us we are. Pertinent to the people in this room, something proven to be most confronting, and a prime example of the ways in which The People’s Library is challenging present structures, is that their resident pre-professional, who is the designated student outreach appointee speaking as a guest at library schools nationwide, is not enrolled in a Master’s program at all, he’s an undergraduate obtaining his bachelor of science in information...
and library services through a degree offering at the university of Maine at Augusta; a statement whose reception I’ve had run the gamut from an unanticipated hug, to even further unanticipated outright hostility.

What I’m trying to say is that this is such an exciting time to be involved in librarianship. We are existing in a generational instance laden with economic turmoil, burdened with recession and depression, yet people have risen to say that they love their books, they love their right to know, they love their librarians and (most importantly), they love their libraries and that it’s on us. The moral of the story is that we shouldn’t – we can’t – let them down.

Mandy: It was Jesse Shera, one of the foremost American library theoreticians of his or any generation, writing almost 50 years ago, who said, “The aim of librarianship, at whatever intellectual level it may operate, is to maximize the social utility of the graphic records, whether the patron served is an unlettered child absorbed in his first picture book or the most advanced scholar engaged in some esoteric inquiry.” He goes on to say, “The storage and retrieval of information, of facts, however expertly done, are valueless if those facts are not used for the betterment of mankind.”

At Occupy Wall Street, the People’s Library evolved, as did the Biblioteca Acampada Sol in Madrid and the other Occupy libraries, because libraries are necessary to the betterment of humankind.

As a profession, librarianship has had a long history as a liberating force in society. Going at least as far back as the working class Chartist movement in England, people seeking their own freedom have built libraries. Libraries offer universal access to recorded knowledge, they offer access to truth, they offer the intellectual means to liberation. That a library should sit at the center of a movement for American liberation, for a revolution in American politics and values is perfectly natural. Libraries, after all, are one of the few sites in American society where that uneasy, yet revolutionary, alliance between working class and intellectual class finds common ground.

Still though, why today, why now? Why has a collection of some 7,000 books managed to create such a stir. How have we come to a place where the sharing of books, the gathering and disseminating of knowledge, has come to be such a revolutionary act? One that brought the full force of the militarized New York police department down upon it. I think the reason is that today we see an all out assault on exactly what libraries stand for and what they do. Libraries are struggling today, not because our services and collections are no longer relevant, are no longer needed, (there is more than ample evidence proving the opposite) but because the very thing we stand for, the very thing we represent, is itself under assault. The idea of a common, of shared resources, of equal access—access not mediated by a market, but granted as a fundamental right, one all human beings share by the virtue of being a member of the human family – is under assault. Libraries are valuable to society and promote the betterment of humankind.
because they serve as an intellectual and physical common, a shared collection and shared space that allows people to gather and educate themselves – to debate, discuss, and through the joint exercises of reading and conversation devise for themselves the kind of world they want to build and the way they want to build it.

In times like these, times when economics has been converted to a religion and leaders promote the doctrine of the free market as a panacea, librarianship is a radical profession. Unavoidably, our profession is political, is radical. It’s political because we stand at the juncture of people and knowledge, and knowledge is power. It is radical because people with access to knowledge and the means to understand it are a powerful people, they are a people who have the means to liberate themselves and to fight for their own freedom.

I see librarianship at a crossroads, we face a choice: do we continue down the road of unfettered markets constructing our relationships and communities or do we step back from that false vision and its unfulfilled promises of a golden future and fight for a different future, one based on our fundamental principles, on the idea that all people have value–that all people have inherent worth and dignity? Our country is facing multiple existential challenges–income inequality, climate change, economic catastrophe. We are living in a time when the future looks bleaker everyday.

But we have a choice. We can decide to shun cynicism and hopelessness. We can choose instead to look to our roots, to our radical role as supporters of equality and democracy, and work together within our institutions and cities and profession to carry our libraries into the future, not the technoptopia often held out as the future, but a real future where we tackle our social problems through the provision of knowledge to all and by fiercely defending the common that we and those who came before us have worked so hard to build.

I joined the People’s Library, I slept out at Zuccotti, in a fort built of boxes of books – of ideas, of stories, of hope, watched over by police wielding clubs and guns, to defend that common, and for the opportunity to build a collection and a library based on the principles that I hold dear. I joined because building a library in times like these is an act of resistance and protest and hope and love.

Jaime: On Monday, November 14, I went to Zuccotti after work to spend a few hours in the library, as I’d been doing almost every day since October 2nd – it was, basically, a second full-time job. That day I was there until 9 or 10 at night, and then went home to Brooklyn. At 11:30 I went to bed, looking forward to being getting almost enough sleep that night. Sleep is in chronic short supply at the Occupation.

At 12:53 am on the 15th, an hour and a half later, I got a text message from one of the half dozen live-in librarians, just saying, “Police are here.”
Unable to get back in touch with him or any other librarians on site, I called a friend from the jail support team who works overnights and knew would be awake. By ten after 1 he’d confirmed that it was for real this time. I rolled out of bed, put on my boots, and started calling and texting the other librarians while grabbing the day’s necessities. I got on a train, and got to the financial district at 2 am.

Even making it in that quickly, I couldn’t get within two or three blocks of the park. There were barricades and cops – whom Mayor Bloomberg has since called his “own army”– on every street. As we quickly learned, there was a general media blackout. Reporters were not allowed within sight or hearing of the park, supposedly for their “safety,” which is belied by the fact that news helicopters were also grounded.

It hardly mattered what our emergency plan had been. Of the five librarians who were inside the park that night, two elected to stay, and the three others were only able to remove what they could carry in one trip; once they left the park they could not return to retrieve either personal possessions or library materials. Given that restriction, they carried out our emergency plan, devised after the city’s previous attempt to remove us, admirably.

The two librarians who stayed ended up being beaten, pepper sprayed, and arrested with more than 150 other Occupiers. Those who were by computers at the time could see them retreat to the Kitchen, which was at the center of the park, as the livestreams and other social media stayed up as long as they could. Within a couple hours, the library, along with the rest of the camp, and been torn down, loaded into city sanitation dump trucks, and carted away. In video from that night you can see tents being taken down with chainsaws.

As the sun came up, those of us still free gathered in Foley Square. Breakfast appeared from somewhere, the medics continued to clean people up, and working groups and friends tried to figure out who was missing. Around 8 am we heard that the park was cleared and we could go in. A couple of us walked back down, where we met up with a handful of other librarians. We put the books we had on our person back on the bench where the library had been just a few hours earlier and declared the People’s Library open once again. We were there only a half hour or so before the cops completely barricaded the place off and kicked us all out. For the rest of the day, the park was closed off like that, the mayor and the police department directly ignoring a court order to allow the people access to the park.

When we finally were allowed back, under heavy security, we set up the library over and over. Those actions have resulted in additional confiscation of books and threats of further arrests. The rules under which police and security have allowed us to operate shift constantly. Aside from the library as place, we’ve taken it mobile, for our own actions as well as in support of other groups’ actions.
During the days after the Occupation’s eviction, Library recovered what we could from the city. That amounted to very little, as Zachary will tell you. We demanded restitution and apologies from the city, which were not forthcoming. We are now pursuing legal action, which will take time, and we will certainly keep the library community up to date as things happen. Our librarians who were arrested that night have just had their first court appearances, but this, too, will take time. In the meantime, we are doing our best to continue providing library services in support of the movement.

Zachary: Shortly after the raid the Mayor’s office sent out a picture via twitter of some books on a table, saying that the People’s library was safe, and that we would be able to go recover it. It was a small picture, hardly panoramic, but it was obvious that the books in the picture were far less than what was taken. Still, we were hopeful that there were just more books off camera. When they finally let out information about recovering materials, members of the work group rushed to get back the books. Librarians went to the specified sanitation garage with a print out of the catalog, ready to recover everything that was lost. What was lost? Our tent, our shelves, tables, chairs, bins, archival materials, laptops, miscellaneous office supplies, oh, and around 4,000 books. What was waiting at sanitation was... a few broken bins filled with books, a severely broken chair, and a folding table. The materials were taken back to a safe storage location, and then I began to sort them. I’m a librarian, but my focus in library school was actually archiving. I’ve done preservation assessments before, and before I went to storage I looked over my notes on conducting such assessments. I went in ready to triage 4,000 books. There weren’t 4,000 books.

There were 1,275 books. I divided these into three categories. Fine, the books that were not damaged, or just lightly so – these were books that could easily be circulated. Damaged but reusable, for books that had taken a beating but which could still be re-read, this was the qualifier for books that had ripped covers, heavy spine damage, light water damage, or some other malady that nevertheless did not keep them from being readable. And then there were the destroyed, books ripped in half, books that had been warped beyond readability, and books that were more mud than book. The break down of this was 579 were fine, 389 were damaged but reusable, and 308 were destroyed. But that’s not where this story ends. Earlier, when I discussed the collection I mentioned that we would mark all of the books so that we knew they were ours...and I was coming across a lot of books that weren’t marked. I also found a lot of journals...and a broken kindle. Sanitation, it seems, didn’t just give us the library books. They gave us every book they found. And thus I re-sorted and re-ran the numbers. It turned out that 272 of the books we got back were not actually library books. Meaning we got back 1,003 library books – about a fourth of what was taken. The break down of those books was that 504 were fine, 298 were damaged but reusable, and 201 are destroyed.

Personally, I hope that Mayor Bloomberg just wanted to do a lot of reading – as all but two books from the reference collection vanished – he certainly got an interesting selection. But, I kind of doubt that’s the case.
Betsy: One of the primary characteristics of our library is its fluidity. Every day we re-invent ourselves. What we’re doing right now at the People’s Library is streamlining our mobile library project and finding interim physical space for the collection. We are building alliances across the Occupy movement, with educational institutions, and strengthening our ties with allies in public and academic libraries. Books are being published about the Occupy movement, professors are teaching courses on it, and students are studying what we have already done. We mean to be an integral part of these conversations.

What I see in the future is another physical occupation, re-establishing the common. Over the winter we’re strengthening our roots. We are empowering the decentralized network of people and institutions who are committed to realizing social and economic justice, addressing climate reality and confronting the host of other issues we’ve gathered to address. Together we are willing and able to take our power and insist on necessary, revolutionary change. Join us!

Zachary: Despite “the protester” being named the person of the year by *Time* Magazine (and the article containing a reference to the people’s library), the People’s Library found itself ranked quite differently by another publication. The *Village Voice* put together a list of the 100 most powerless New Yorkers – yes, powerless. “The Librarians of the Occupy Wall Street ‘People’s Library’” came in 34th. Here’s what the *Voice* had to say about us,

One of the most fun aspects of Zuccotti Park this fall was the “People’s Library,” a wide selection of books that sparked free-wheeling discussions. Volunteer librarians (like Bill Scott [who was on the cover]) guarded it with professional care. Although they protected it from Mayor Bloomberg’s first threatened raid on the park (by taking the books away via Zipcar to an “undisclosed location”), the librarians were rendered utterly powerless after the city launched its surprise raid and returned the collection looking like shit.

It’s an odd feeling to see yourself called one of the 100 most powerless people, just as it’s odd to see a magazine like *Time* declare the protestor to be the person of the year. But what’s really odd, isn’t that the People’s Library came in 34th (though it’s worth noting that “The Occupy Wall Street Crust Punks” came in 40th [and if you’ve ever listened to crust punk music you know that calling a crust punk powerless is like calling a chainsaw a feather duster, but I digress]), it’s who came in 13th. Any guesses? The 13th most powerless person/institution in NYC: “The NYPL’s Librarians,” of whom the *Voice* said:

Perhaps the only people less powerful in the library system than the homeless patrons are the librarians themselves. Gone are the days when a master’s degree in library science and a job in
the nation’s largest public-library system meant that you would spend your days helping writers to research and mesmerizing people with your encyclopedic knowledge of the Dewey decimal system.

Today’s NYPL librarian needs to be a social worker, a specialist at dealing with the homeless and the severely mentally ill, a computer tech wiz at solving people’s Wi-Fi problems and a job (and suicide-prevention) counselor helping people look for jobs that simply don’t exist.

Even those librarians at the flagship Fifth Avenue main branch (who have been inoculated to some degree from the shit storm of the branch libraries) are preparing for it. As a recent article in the Nation reported, the 3 millions books beneath the Rose Reading Room will soon be shipped off to a storage facility in New Jersey and replaced by seven floors of computer terminals. As a former NYPL librarian said of the branch across the street and the main branch’s future: “That place is utter chaos. And it will all come here – the noise, the teenage problems, the circulating DVDS.”

Zounds. It seems like the Village Voice wants to give the impression that being a librarian in NYC is to consign yourself to being powerless.

Luckily, this is only relevant to NYC. Right? Surely, nobody could say this of librarians in Chicago? Or, California? What about in Michigan? How about Missouri? It’s getting tough out there for librarians. Powerless? It certainly seems that way. But even as librarians have fought, and rallied, they have still seen library hours reduced, budgets cut, and so forth. And it doesn’t look like those attacks are stopping, no matter how many hours our read-ins last, or no matter how many people we get to hug the library. Heck, the “library” section on The Huffington Post is actually called “Libraries in Crisis.”

After the raid on the park, we heard from many people who were horrified by what had happened. And, honestly, it was pretty horrifying. But let’s be honest, libraries were under attack by mayors before the People’s Library, and they will be after. Bloomberg was cutting the New York library budget’s before, and he’ll probably do it again in his coming budget. Rahm Emanuel in Chicago...the same. The discussion around libraries these days seems to be about cuts, and about whether or not libraries are relevant in today’s world. Librarians – who frequently find themselves in the ranks of those evil “public service workers” – are regularly under assault, and thus it is understandable if a feeling of powerlessness can begin to sink in.

I don’t agree with the Village Voice’s placement of the people’s library at 34. Were we technically powerless to stop Bloomberg’s “private army” from tossing the books in the dumpster? Yes. But the library is much more than that, the movement is much more than that, and in the end they’re the ones powerless to stop it.
Powerlessness is what happens when you sit behind your desk and do nothing. Powerlessness is signing an online petition, or commenting on an article, or forwarding an e-mail. Powerlessness is doing nothing. And I can honestly say that the moments in my professional life when I feel the least powerless, occur when I’m doing OWS library work.
INFORMATION RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND POLITICAL RIGHTS: A PRÉCIS ON INTELLECTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

by John Buschman

The conference call for papers for the 2011 Information Ethics Roundtable on Information Rights as Human Rights asks a series of non-rhetorical questions such as: are information rights best conceived merely as liberties; are information rights instrumental; what are the possible conflicts between intellectual property and information rights; and what are the drawbacks of taking a human rights approach to information ethics? A prominent author on information ethics in the library and information science (LIS) field like Mathiesen (2008) works on information rights from the vantage of moral theory, and thus casts access to information as a welfare right. That is, as an obligation of the state. Another prominent author on information ethics in the LIS field – Samek (2007) – views information rights as a core value of librarianship to be put into action in a meaningful and global way. Both believe that other rights – human, educational, expressive, and political – are essentially fallow at best, or meaningless at worst without this primary right. Both also subscribe to an extension of the postwar global political settlement that Rawls describes: an agreement that war is justified only to protect international security and that state sovereignty is limited by human rights (Beitz and Goodin 2009, 1). Therein lies something of our quandary: rights (including informational rights) are formed, enforced, and come to life in political contexts. We should then query political theory – specifically the resources of democratic theory – as to the intellectual and contextual issues surrounding human and information rights because “it is now virtually axiomatic that constructive theorizations about politics must take their bearings from an acceptance of the priorities and principles of democratic theory” (Mara 2008, 1). Essentially, we should interrogate that central theoretical source that grapples with the fundamental political contexts of rights of any sort. That is the purpose of this paper, and it addresses a version of the last of those questions noted: what are some of the drawbacks to taking a human rights approach to information rights?
To begin, if we take the formulation of the “right to have rights” (Benhabib in Catiglione 2005, 20) as foundational, then rights are fundamental and universal, they are often theorized to exist independently of particular legal and political systems, they are normative and binding on their face, they must be asserted and occasionally politically protected in some instances, and they are minimal (Brown 1993, 1-14). In other words, rights are enacted politically, but do not originate politically. Sitting lightly behind this conception are metaphysical or religious ideas: that a relationship to a higher or purer plane of existence is the source of what makes humanity special, and thus the repository of rights exists outside of any human political or social structure (Brown 1993). This tradition is not to be taken lightly. Man in the image of God was the source of ideas as basic as natural rights, the dignity of the human person, and the right to a living wage (Brown 1993, 25-36). The resolutely secular democratic theorist Sheldon Wolin notes that “the historical contribution of western religions to the political education of ordinary and poor people is almost impossible to exaggerate,” leading to enhanced roles for women, an advocacy for the poor, and social solidarity (1996, 37). But, with this come all of the problems of belief and faith: lack of proof of the existence of the source of those rights, conflicting values that cannot be adjudicated because faith cannot be compromised, and so on. In a now-humorous illustration of this conundrum, the French representative to the UNESCO Commission in 1948, having agreed to support the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man along with the Soviet Union and other representatives of wildly divergent political perspectives, said that “we agree on these rights, provided we are not asked why” (in Brown 1993, 25). Ignatieff writes that “Unless you think that human beings are sacred, there seems no persuasive reason to believe that their dignity should be protected with rights” (2000, 340). To have to rationally justify universal rights in 1948 would have descended into arbitrary dogmatism or the agreement itself would have been stopped by irreconcilable differences (Brown 1993, 25).

The famous counterarguments parallel the refutations of proofs of faith. Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th and early 19th century wrote two early and famous rebuttals: "right is with me a child of the law; a natural right is a son that never had a father" (in Brown 1993, 9). That is, rights are man-made and based in law. As Dewey put it, inhering negative rights are mythical and philosophically indefensible: the individual and her/his rights are "nothing fixed, given ready-made" and "already there" (1935, 227; 1960c, 268-269). Even more famous is Bentham’s retort that "reasons for wishing there were such things as rights, are not rights; … want is not supply – hunger is not bread. That which has no existence cannot be destroyed. … Natural rights is … nonsense upon stilts" (1961, 347). Two hundred years later, MacIntyre famously wrote that “there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with the belief in witches and unicorns. The best reason for asserting so bluntly that there are not such rights is … the same … reason … for asserting that there are no unicorns:
every attempt to give good reason for believing there are such rights has failed” (in Dembour 2010, 17). At best, human (or natural) rights end up in an uneasy, untenable, or insoluble tension between metaphysical and secular bases (Dembour 2010, 6; Rorty 1990, 6-8, 22-23; Ignatieff 2000, 340). At the same time, post-metaphysical justifications (and there are several) seemingly avoid articulating the actual needs and responsibilities defined by belonging to the human species that moral traditions precisely draw upon to bolster human rights and human dignity (Mara 2005, 22). Ignatieff further points out the morally and ethically dubious result that such a grounding of human rights privilege humans above all other species by, for instance, allowing medical experimentation on the non-human (2000, 341).

Rights: Intellectual-Practical Issues

If those are the broad theoretical conundrums concerning human rights at the heart of democratic theory, there are a number of intellectual, practical, and theoretical issues as well. First and foremost, it is widely agreed that for rights to be truly universal, they should be minimal in order to “respect the right of those groups to define the type of collective life they wish to lead,” and the illimitable variety that humans exhibit (Ignatieff 2000, 298; Nickel 2010; Mathiesen 2008). This means that rights are “more concerned with avoiding the terrible than with achieving the best,” and so forbid slavery, genocide, rape, torture, discrimination, and so on (Nickel 2010). Three things flow from this. First, many societies and their religious and ethical traditions often limit the rights of women, children, orphans, un-dowered brides, and so on—yet those societies do have a right to self-define their collective lives (Ignatieff 2000). Second, the stateless do not have rights and are essentially abandoned, without rights (Bernstein 2010; Young-Bruehl 2010). However, those who advocate for human rights among the dispossessed, stateless, and dominated are, effectively, politically speaking for another group. They tend to be based in western societies both wealthy enough to support such advocacy, and where rights are both honored and legally protected. How far that representation extends goes to the heart of the question of just how far universal human rights extend and where political self-determination kicks in (Ignatieff 2000, 291-292). In contemporary terms, do they (the wealthier and more powerful) have the right to speak for them (the poor and powerless)? Is this just western cultural imperialism? Third and last, if rights truly are universal and thus minimal, extrapolating from expressive and conscience rights to education and access to information is open to charges of hostility to other traditions: “moral globalization—human rights—follows behind as the legitimizing ideology of global capitalism. ‘Given the class interest of the internationalist class carrying out this agenda, the claim to universalism is a sham. Universalism is mere globalism’” (Ignatieff 2000, 332).

The universalism of human rights stands as a challenge to state sovereignty— as noted earlier. Yet the political reality is that democratic states are the most likely to actually protect and promote human rights generally
and vitally protect the most basic ones: “No substantial famine has ever occurred in any country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press” (Sen in Ignatieff 2000, 346). Human rights in those states take the form of individual citizenship rights, developed in concert and in contention with capitalism and its legal structures and protections. In other words, the most successful models of human rights are deeply entangled with the development of capitalism, leading to pragmatic problems, contradictions, and tensions within democratic societies (Somers 1993, 587-588, Marshall 2009; Howard 2006). To give just one instance, Locke – the source of so much that came to fruition in an American Constitution and the original Bill of Rights – roots an enormous amount of his political thinking in property rights: only the propertied had the free time, education, and judgment for citizenship, and thus rights. “The working class was, in effect, in but not of civil society” for Locke; property accumulation (via competition) was rationality in its essence, and civil society was established to protect unequal holdings of property – there was no assumption that rights, rooted as they were in Locke, would or should be inherently respected (Macpherson 1966, 67-72; Locke 1996). Locke’s thinking – the substantial basis of what we now experience as actual rights – would now fail as justification for universal human rights since they are fundamentally unequal based on property and there is no inherent human obligation to respect them (Macpherson 1967, 11). Rooted as we are in Locke, this is not an anomaly. Corporations are deemed to be persons for the purposes of equal protection (Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Co. 1886) and free speech rights: long before Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010), the Supreme Court declared that “the inherent worth of the speech in terms of its capacity for informing the public does not depend on the identity of its source, whether corporation, association, union, or individual” (First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti 1978). In contrast, citizenship guarantees (in the form of equal protection) and its necessary conditions (such as a minimum and equalizing education) were undermined for African Americans in the aftermath of Reconstruction (Liu 2006-2007, 353-356) and education is resolutely deemed not a right by the Supreme Court (San Antonio Independent School Dist. v. Rodriguez 1973). Furthermore, intellectual property is rooted in Locke (Biron), thus claims to share it as a human right (the core idea behind information rights), and obligations to limit accumulation based on intellectual property have a tenuous hold – mostly moral, but not political.

On the opposite end of the spectrum (and in tension with these intellectual trends), historically democratic citizenship rights have broadly extended beyond the merely basic to “rights of social citizenship” that have enabled some claims on the state like welfare and public education (Somers 1993, 587-588, Marshall 2009). Social citizenship rights are intellectually most comfortably situated in Marxist traditions that stress “positive entitlements to participate fully in the public life of society”; Marxist societies were admittedly friendly to human rights only to the extent that they were “consistent with the building of socialism,” but that tradition did point out the hypocrisy of “allowing” the poor meaningless social, housing,
nutritional, and educational choices they could not afford (Hollenbach 1979, 20-24). Thus in the United States, there is no national right to an education, let alone an equal basic education for citizenship (Lui 2006-2007; Katz 1982; 2008). It is a good idea, but not a right. The Lockean trumping of economic rights over social citizenship rights can be seen in the advance of neoliberalism over the last thirty five years—and contemporarily in the Tea Party movement. We are seeing a sustained political attack on equal education and the social safety net in the name of economic competitiveness (King 2011; Bourdieu 1998). Closely related, we have seen a reaction against what has been called “rights talk” (Glendon 1991) itself: the “tendency to define anything desirable as a right ends up eroding the legitimacy of a defensible core of rights” (Ignatief 2000, 346; Bryner 1987, 20-21). Hollenbach sensibly points out that the “heady rhetoric of … human rights … is frequently the language of protest, of the manifesto and of the political broadside. The appeal to rights has a flamboyance and volatility which make its use especially congenial in political conflict,” but such rhetoric can quickly expand and come unmoored from its grounding concepts and its logical chains of connection (1979, 11-12). Glendon has argued that rights used as trumps—something asserted that one can’t argue with or against—has led to an “intemperate rhetoric of personal liberty [which] corrodes” the discourse foundations on which democracy is built and operates, leading to standoffs politically (1991, 62) and Sandel sees in the rights-based discussion of citizenship the social dissolution of community (1987, 146-149). In more practical terms, new rights are rarely no-cost, and in providing them or enforcing them the public does not always acknowledge those costs, nor does the public particularly like the inevitable tradeoffs inherent in choices among a growing number of rights (Bryner 1987, 8-9). In this way, traditional arguments in favor of rights from the Left have come to characterize the aggressive, argumentative stance of the Right (an intemperate rhetoric of personal liberty corroding discourse), while at the same time drawing theoretical responses which advocate a slowing of the growth of rights to protect the ones in existence. That is a powerful combination ready to be deployed against information rights as human rights.

A Theoretical Approach for LIS

LIS arguments for informational rights reflect this broader context. Reviewing a sampling of the LIS literature on such topics as information ethics and the Library Bill of Rights (Fricke, Mathiesen, and Fallis 2000), information work (Samek 2005), the practical application of information work (Samek 2007), and information equity and democracy (Lievrouw and Farb 2003; Doctor 1992; Reynolds 1992) along with those noted earlier, reveals many of these same tensions shot through their analyses. Does that mean that our literature and any notion of human information rights are fatally compromised? No, I make these observations from a friendly perspective and I support a broad concept of open, public, cultural institutions, and believe that, in choosing to have such institutions, we enact a certain set of expectations about their role and their relationship to
individuals and their communities. That is a rather abstract way of saying that our best approach to human information rights – from the vantage of democratic theory – is pragmatic. Information rights as human rights begins with the example of what was taken away from African Americans for one hundred years after Reconstruction (Liu 2006-2007), and the practical problems for women and children when concepts of human rights elide their particular vulnerabilities (Bunch 1990). After all, if human rights can encompass a violently patriarchal society or one based on race, are they universal? If those rights are universal and human, it must extend to minorities, women and children as “the only universally available moral vernacular that validates [their] claims” – as it should have for African Americans 100 years ago (Ignatieff 2000, 330). Information rights thus begin in a form of reciprocity: we would not wish to be abused in mind or body, and so should not do so to others – strongly implying a freedom of thought and expression (Ignatieff 1999). From there, Rorty urges us not to appeal to reason, justice, or a contrast to a described reality to realize rights – all such bases have been fundamentally contested; rather, he urges us simply to make “invidious comparisons” and “invent a reality … by selecting aspects of the world which lend themselves to … the worth-while life” (Rorty 1990, 21-23). When we realize that laws and government are only legitimate when they earn our recognition and assent, and that human rights are at the core of that legitimacy (Habermas 1998), then the right to the means to support and inform common deliberative experiences should be “extensively empowered … and widely dispersed throughout the institutions of state, economy, and civil society” (Warren 1996, 242). In other words (and bringing these strands together), information rights as human rights are pragmatic assertions of a better social order and better arrangements for and among individuals through such state institutions as schools, universities, and libraries. These institutions and the rights they might pragmatically instantiate are not done for citizens, but by citizens for themselves. We have learned from the need to pragmatically look at the needs for human rights not among the powerful, but the disempowered, and to root those rights in particularity of those needs in the interests of invidious comparisons of an unrealized but possible future. This represents a brief sketch of at least one way to avoid the theoretical entanglements of human rights stopping information rights in their tracks.

Note

1 An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the 2011 Information Ethics Roundtable on Information Rights as Human Rights, held at the University of Arizona, April 15 (http://sites.google.com/site/informationethicsroundtable/Home/conference-call-for-papers). This paper makes a distinction between those who link Information Ethics (IE) to rights (that is, they conceive of it in broad political terms), and those who contextualize it less politically, like Robert Hauptman (arguably, the founder of IE) who tends to focus on the application of regular ethical theory in new technological contexts for plagiarism, or Mark Alfino, Luciano Floridi, Adam Moore, Kit Wellman or Tony Doyle who all take different approaches (like utilitarianism or privacy theory or censorship). The contents of The Handbook of Computer and Information Ethics edited by Kenneth Einar Himma and Herman T. Tavani (Wiley, 2008) give a good indication of how I arrived at those distinctions. I am grateful to PL editor Susan Maret for raising this point with me.
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COLLECTION MANAGEMENT, CONCEPTUAL ANACHRONISMS, AND CIPA

by Jeremy Mauger

…the claim that cyberspace is deeply and essentially different from “real space” was a compelling one for many scholars. Even though conventional wisdom now rejects the initial exceptionalist claim that cyberspace is inherently more free than “real space,” the belief that it is nonetheless inherently different has persisted. At the same time, however, court decisions in cases challenging unauthorized access to web-based information have invoked place- and space-based metaphors to serve a variety of far more pragmatic purposes relating to the demarcation of virtual “property.” Perhaps predictably, the tenor of the judicial embrace of “cyberspace” has caused some cyberlaw scholars to rethink their own metaphoric commitments. What began as a relatively narrow critique of the property metaphor’s doctrinal and political entailments has now blossomed into a full-blown debate about the merits of cyberspatial reasoning and rhetoric.

from “Cyberspace as/and Space” by Julie Cohen

Simile, metaphor, and analogy help us shape and make sense of the world around us. These conceptual tools give us a framework to compare one item to another or, more importantly, one idea to another. As legal scholar James Boyle has noted, “There is nothing wrong with analogies. They help us understand things that are new by comparing them to things we think we understand better. Analogies are only bad when they ignore the key difference between the two things being analyzed” (Boyle, 2008, p. 107). In the legal sense, analogy gives our judicial system the ability to group seemingly disparate actions or concepts under a unifying and (hopefully) consistent set of rules. This is how precedent is set; by using lessons learned in previous disputes judges, lawyers, and juries are able to create an internally consistent structure for laws which then provide a functional guide for legally acceptable practice. However, this mechanism of metaphor and analogy can have a detrimental effect when applied to circumstances beyond the scope of what has been seen and ruled on before.

Precedent is a powerful tool in the analog world, but in our increasingly digital lives it can hinder progress and even damage our ability to think in new ways. Specifically, the use of physical metaphors to describe virtual circumstances can be inadequate and, quite often, misleading. For the purposes of this article, this kind of comparison will be referred to as a
Conceptual Anachronism. This term will be used to discuss the traditional, precedential analogies and metaphors used to describe, categorize and regulate contemporary technology, digital information, and virtual environments. The use of these archaic, physical metaphors can lead to misapplication of the law and the misapprehension of technology.

In *Free Culture*, Lawrence Lessig describes just such a Conceptual Anachronism. In the realm of intellectual property the debate, legislation, and jurisprudence have all made the mistake of falling into a very specific kind of conceptual trap. Lessig advances the idea that, in the case of patent and copyright, the law turns the intangible into property (Lessig, 2004, p. 84). This, in itself, is not necessarily bad or untrue but, when the scope of this analogy is extended into the technological realm, it results in an overly restrictive and Byzantine set of regulations that stifle creativity and curtail the free expression of ideas. The metaphor itself rests on sound reasoning and logical principles but, when extended into our digital lives, it ceases to provide structure and begins to impose limitations on our ability to act in the ways the law originally intended and behave in new ways that only technology can allow. The very word *property* implies a concrete reality which can be weighed, counted, and measured but this "*thingness*" (Id.), as Lessig puts it, is a conceptual dead end in the context of the Internet. Digital objects are non-rivalrous goods and can be shared and copied *ad infinitum* with no loss to the owner. If I steal a copy of a novel from your bookshelf you no longer have that copy, but if I take a digital copy from your website and share it with two thousand friends, your copy still exists and no harm has been done. The issue of compensation to the creator of that copyrighted work is a different story, but I use this example to make an important point. When we use analogies from the physical world and apply them to the Internet, we risk creating a “conceptual muddle” (Moor, 1985, p. 266) which distorts how we understand virtual circumstances. This is what Alfred North Whitehead referred to in his philosophy as the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” – the “error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete” (1925, p. 51). Not only are these analogies sometimes false, they can result in regulations and legislation which deny us the ability to explore the potential of new technologies. By legally tying the virtual to the physical, the law may limit us.

*Conceptual Justification of CIPA*

The debate around CIPA (the Children’s Internet Protection Act, Title XVII, 2000) has raged for a decade now – the merits and application of this law have been argued again and again. The aim of the law is not necessarily a bad one and it is difficult indeed to disagree that the Internet contains a vast amount of material that is inappropriate for children. Shielding children from violent and pornographic content online is an admirable goal, but the mechanism for accomplishing this, specifically Internet filtering, is what is at issue. Public libraries have largely been caught in the middle of this debate and libraries risk forfeiting federal funding if they do not apply some technological protection measure to filter “obscene” or “harmful”
content when patrons are online (CIPA, 2000, p. 7). The constitutionality of this practice has been a central question in the CIPA debate. Can public institutions such as libraries limit the right of adult patrons to receive information on the Internet? Can constitutionally protected speech be filtered because it may be deemed harmful to minors within the definitions of CIPA? Should the Internet, in a sense, be managed and monitored and are adult patrons harmed by this management? The answer of the judiciary to these questions has rested heavily on a conceptual framework that attempts to reconcile past practice with current technology. This reconciliation in turn rests on extending an analog metaphor into the digital world and the courts have by no means been consistent in their view.

In the eyes of the courts, the constitutionality of Internet filtering in general and CIPA in particular rests primarily on two assumptions. First, even constitutionally protected speech may be filtered and access to this material, even by adult patrons, may be restricted in the interest of protecting children from obscenity. However, the Supreme Court ruled emphatically that any such restriction of adult access must be removed at the request of an adult. The filter must be disabled immediately in order to ensure that the rights of adult patrons are not being trampled.

Justice Kennedy concluded that if, as the Government represents, a librarian will unblock filtered material or disable the Internet software filter without significant delay on an adult user’s request, there is little to this case. There are substantial Government interests at stake here: The interest in protecting young library users from material inappropriate for minors is legitimate, and even compelling, as all Members of the Court appear to agree. Given this interest, and the failure to show that adult library users’ access to the material is burdened in any significant degree, the statute is not unconstitutional on its face. If some libraries do not have the capacity to un-block specific Web sites or to disable the filter or if it is shown that an adult user’s election to view constitutionally protected Internet material is burdened in some other substantial way, that would be the subject for an as-applied challenge, not this facial challenge (U.S. v. ALA Syllabus, 2003, pp. 3-4).

From a purely conceptual point of view, this rationale does not appear to offer any problems – there is no misleading metaphorical extension of the physical world into the digital one. However, as will be described below, even this straightforward constitutional argument can be subverted when confronted with a Conceptual Anachronism.

The second basis for the Supreme Court’s decision assumes, and indeed requires, that past practice guide a public library’s use of Internet filters. In order to remain constitutional, the Court concluded that Internet filtering must not be a means for excluding or restraining protected speech, it should instead be viewed as a mechanism for selecting desirable speech which the
library deems to be of value and worthy of inclusion in its collection. The historical practice of precise and careful collection management has been a hallmark of good librarianship for decades, if not centuries. Consequently, the Supreme Court heavily relied on this practice when justifying the use of Internet filters. The Court needed a way to legitimize content restrictions in a public venue without exercising Strict Scrutiny and, therefore, latched onto a convenient and superficially sensible metaphor supplied by the plaintiffs. Specifically, the government argued and the Court agreed that public libraries have a long tradition of managing their physical collections by making decisions regarding which items to include or not include based on merit, and tailoring their collections to suit the needs of their audience. The Court reached back to the 1930’s to illuminate this historical practice of book selection quoting Drury’s treatise on the subject, “It is the aim of the selector to give the public, not everything it wants, but the best that it will read or use to its advantage” (Drury, 1930, p. xi). The Court also borrowed from a slightly more contemporary work (only 23 years old at the time); “The librarian’s responsibility . . . is to separate out the gold from the garbage, not to preserve everything” (Katz, 1980, p. 6). These citations served the useful function of justifying the Court’s analogy that collection management (that is the selection of physical items) is directly comparable to filtering Internet content (that is the exclusion of digital information). Inappropriate content was simply not being included in the collection and Internet filters accomplished this goal. Tradition dictated, in the context of the metaphor, that libraries continue the practice of selecting only the “gold” while filtering out the “garbage” (Id.). Free speech and the unfettered access to information were not being restricted because, within the structure of this analogy, libraries were simply continuing to do something they’d always done.

A library’s decision to use filtering software is a collection decision, not a restraint on private speech…a public library does not have an obligation to add material to its collection simply because the material is constitutionally protected (U.S. v. American Library Association, 2003, p. 210).

As Congress recognized, ‘[t]he Internet is simply another method for making information available in a school or library…It is no more than a technological extension of the book stack” (U.S. v. American Library Association, 2003, p. 207).

A library’s need to exercise judgment in making collection decisions depends on its traditional role in identifying suitable and worthwhile material; it is no less entitled to play that role when it collects material from the Internet than when it collects material from any other source. Most libraries already exclude pornography from their print collections because they deem it inappropriate for inclusion. We do not subject these decisions to heightened scrutiny; it would make little sense to treat libraries’ judgments to block online pornography any differently, when
these judgments are made for just the same reason (U.S. v. American Library Association, 2003, p. 208).

Thus the Court relied extensively on a misleading Conceptual Anachronism to legitimize its position as to the constitutionality of CIPA. This rationale is problematic at best and was not, even within the Court, universally accepted. In fact, in a lower court’s discussion of the same case, the decision explicitly rejected this analogy and emphasized the important differences between the physical and the virtual. This lower court described at length the participatory and open nature of the Internet – a feature that has no relationship (metaphorical or otherwise) to traditional collection management.

The fundamental difference between a library’s print collection and its provision of Internet access is illustrated by comparing the extent to which the library opens its print collection to members of the public to speak on a given topic and the extent to which it opens its Internet terminals to members of the public to speak on a given topic... Any member of the public with Internet access could, through the free Web hosting services available on the Internet, tonight jot down a few musings on any subject under the sun, and tomorrow those musings would become part of public libraries’ online offerings and be available to any library patron who seeks them out (American Library Association v. U.S., 2002, pp. 128-129).

It should be pointed out that the Supreme Court here has grossly mischaracterized the purpose and intent of collection management. Traditional collection management is intended to allow public libraries with both limited funds and limited space to choose items that add worth to the collection as a whole while representing the interests of the community they serve. “Librarians have an obligation to... select and support access to materials and resources on all subjects that meet, as closely as possible, the needs, interests, and abilities of all persons in the community the library serves” (ALA Council, 1990). The Court seems to have missed the point that collection management is designed to maximize resources and filtering Internet access is actually more burdensome than not filtering.

Unlike outright book purchase, no appreciable expenditure of library time or resources is required to make a particular Internet publication available to a library patron. In contrast, a library must actually expend resources to restrict Internet access to a publication that is otherwise immediately available (Mainstream Louden v. Board of Trustees of the Louden County Library, 1998, p. 793).

If a library were to have an unlimited budget and an infinite amount of space to house items, then it would surely include a much wider range of material.
The purpose of any collection management policy is to include books that are of the greatest interest and utility, not to remove material that may be contentious or unpopular. “[Evaluation of library materials] is not to be used as a convenient means to remove materials presumed to be controversial or disapproved of by segments of the community” (ALA Council, 1981). This Conceptual Anachronism not only ignored this important point, it actually disempowered librarians from making true collection management decisions.

The analogy between traditional collection development and text-based Internet filtering is flawed. While the analogy has a certain facial appeal, it fails when applied to text-based filtering because librarians are not making judgments about the sites blocked by the filter, but rather, are using filters as a blunt instrument to avoid making judgments. In doing so, they undoubtedly deprive library patrons of many valuable information sources that are authoritative and fit well into their library’s collection and collection goals. At the same time, many sites that escape the filter may have little or no value to the community being served, may be of questionable authoritativeness, and in other ways may be outside the scope of the collection development objectives of the library (Laughlin, 2003, p. 259).

Unfortunately, in the Supreme Court case, the more archaic view prevailed. The Internet was, for legal purposes at least, no different than physical items occupying space on library shelves. The authority librarians have traditionally enjoyed in selecting material for their collections was subverted, by virtue of this Conceptual Anachronism, to exclude digital material.

**Extension and Misapplication of the Conceptual Anachronism**

The metaphor of Internet filtering as collection management delineated by the Supreme Court has since led to constitutional difficulties in the application of CIPA. In May of 2010, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled on a matter directly related to this Conceptual Anachronism. In the case of Bradburn et al v. North Central Regional Library District, the court rejected plaintiffs’ argument that adult patrons were indeed guaranteed the right to access constitutionally protected material on a library’s Internet terminals. The Court’s decision again rested heavily on the supposition that the exclusion of digital content via Internet filtering was no different from the selection of materials for a library’s print collection. In this instance, the Court extended the metaphor to deny adult access to speech that was clearly protected by the Constitution (specifically, speech related to the Second Amendment). Because the library deemed this material to be detrimental to the education of children and antithetical to the mission of the library, it refused to allow adult patrons to view this content. The Washington court agreed and, despite the Supreme Court’s suggestion to the
contrary, ruled that the library had no obligation to disable Internet filters and allow access to material that they deemed unworthy of inclusion in the collection. Again, the Conceptual Anachronism of collection management was used as the basis for the exclusion of online content, constitutionally protected though it may be.

A public library has traditionally and historically enjoyed broad discretion to select materials to add to its collection of printed materials for its patrons’ use. We conclude that the same discretion must be afforded a public library to choose what materials from millions of Internet sites it will add to its collection and make available to its patrons. A public library has never been required to include all constitutionally protected speech in its collection and has traditionally had the authority, for example, to legitimately decline to include adult-oriented material such as pornography in its collection. This same discretion continues to exist with respect to Internet materials—we answer that in accord with our analysis in this opinion a public library may…filter Internet access for all patrons without disabling the filter to allow access to web sites containing constitutionally protected speech upon the request of an adult patron (Bradburn et al v. North Central Regional Library District, 2010, pp. 29-30).

This is an extraordinary extension of the Supreme Court’s ruling and would have been impossible without the underlying metaphor of collection management. The comparison of physical items to online content allowed the Washington court to expand and stretch the rationale of the Supreme Court beyond recognition. It bears repeating that the Supreme Court ruling requires that the constitutional application of CIPA must include the immediate unblocking of Internet filters at the request of an adult patron. As the Supreme Court noted, a challenge to the law is necessary “…if it is shown that an adult user’s election to view constitutionally protected Internet material is burdened in some substantial way” (U.S. v. ALA Syllabus, 2003, p. 4). Arguably, if access to protected speech were being so limited in any other context, or under some other metaphor that does not rely on physicality, such limitations would immediately be ruled unconstitutional.

The Bradburn court has not only misinterpreted the Supreme Court’s intent but has further limited the ability of patrons to fully access the unprecedented resources available on the Internet. The Conceptual Anachronism inherent in the analogy of collection management may confine adults—it may confine them to accessing only those materials the library deems suitable for its physical collection. Internet filtering through CIPA was never intended to constrict adult access in this manner. It was solely meant to shield minors from harmful content, not to create a burden on the right of adults to freely receive information—especially constitutionally protected speech. Only through this Conceptual Anachronism was the Bradburn court able to make this leap. Collection management allowed the library
and the Court an excuse to impose a government-mandated restriction on constitutionally protected speech without invoking Strict Scrutiny.

As noted at the outset of this piece, “Analogies are only bad when they ignore the key difference between the two things being analyzed” (Boyle, 2008, p. 107). The Bradburn decision ignores the unique, open, and participatory nature of the Internet. It ignores the unprecedented opportunity which public libraries now have to circumvent the traditional constraints of budget and shelf space. It ignores the legislative intent of CIPA and the Supreme Court’s requirement that filters be disabled for adults. In short, this Conceptual Anachronism has limited our ability to freely access information in public libraries.

Notes

1 For the purposes of this article, I’m deliberately setting aside the detailed and extensive analysis of what kind of forum a public library actually is. My point here is to describe the Court’s basis for relying on a physical and historical metaphor to conceptualize a modern, technological issue.

2 Strict Scrutiny would have required that CIPA address a compelling government interest (such as protecting children from material deemed harmful to minors as confirmed by Justice Kennedy), be narrowly tailored, and be the least restrictive means for achieving the government’s interest. It could easily be argued that filtering software is neither narrowly tailored nor the least restrictive means for protecting children from material that is considered harmful to minors. For instance, a lower court strongly implied that filtering would not pass the test of Strict Scrutiny. “First, the installation of privacy screens is a much less restrictive alternative [to filtering software] that would further defendant’s interest in preventing the development of a sexually hostile environment...Second, there is undisputed evidence in the record that charging library staff with casual monitoring of Internet use is neither extremely intrusive nor a change from other library policies...Third, filtering software could be installed on only some Internet terminals and minors could be limited to using those terminals. Alternately, the library could install filtering software that could be turned off when an adult is using the terminal...however we do not find that any of [these alternatives] would necessarily be constitutional if implemented” (Mainstream Louden v. Board of Trustees of the Louden County Library, 1998, p. 567).

References


TRANSMITTING WHITENESS:
LIBRARIANS, CHILDREN, AND RACE,
1900–1930s

by Shane Hand

Following the 1954 U. S. Supreme Court’s decision in Brown vs. Board of Education, the South embroiled itself within a vicious contest of white aggressive resistance against African Americans’ non-violent protest for freedom, equality, and dignity. American memory would be scarred for years to come with images of bombings, beatings, and white brutality exhibited during the modern Civil Rights Movement. In retrospect, however, the U. S. historian faces an inevitable, yet disturbingly difficult task of unraveling how white Americans burdened themselves with such a vindictive hate for black America.

Part of the answer may be hidden within the history of America’s free public library. The advent of the public library movement was imbued with the lofty objective of shaping a body politic worthy of democratic rule; however, a residual racial bias that grew out of the late nineteenth century tainted the public library’s bourgeoning culture of literacy and readership. By the early 1900s children’s librarians had taken up the noble charge of shaping a better tomorrow by guiding a child’s reading. However, as local librarians developed collections, maintained segregated spaces, and cooperated with the community, they inevitably fostered the transmission of a racial ideology based on white superiority, privilege, and black subservience.¹

Libraries have long been cited as evidence of developed and civilized societies, though they remain a relatively new phenomenon within the history of the United States. The institution’s traditional meta-narrative places libraries in the context of the development of Western Civilization. Stemming out of Egypt, scholars trace the evidence of impressive libraries into the gymnasiums, bathhouses, and personal collections of the Greco-Roman world. Following Rome’s fall, libraries persisted beyond late antiquity into the medieval period via Europe’s monastic tradition and continued to hold a place of prominence during the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution.² Finally, from the shores of the New World, Benjamin Franklin heralded the first colonial library that he termed “mother,” The Library Company of Philadelphia.³ Yet, library development within the United States remained the privilege of a cultural elite able to afford subscription costs until 1854.
Marketing itself as “the first large free municipal library in the United States,” the Boston Public Library opened its collection of over 16,000 volumes to the public in March 1854. However, the ensuing popularity of the public library movement, beginning around 1876, did not develop within a cultural vacuum. The materials collected, catalogued, and circulated by public librarians were intended to meet local needs. The public, in turn, provided the local library with its staff, placing the librarian in a unique, familiar relationship with the patron. The common culture shared by public librarians and library patrons enhanced the librarian’s ability to meet the ever-evolving institutional objective of providing local user-communities with the intellectual materials requisite for the public’s personal enlightenment, education, and entertainment. Thus, public libraries never operated as a neutral zone free from their unique socio-political cultures. Rather, the library would be encumbered with its respective community values and social mores through the library staff, policies, and within the collections’ content.

While the public library movement gained popularity throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the southern United States suffered significant delays in developing free public libraries. These delays were attributed to the financial, material, and human devastation resulting from the U.S. Civil War. However, by the early 1900s, some Southern cities were offering remarkable public library services for their communities which proved to be quite popular. For example, the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) began providing free library access to New Orleans citizens as early as 1907; on Halloween in 1908, the library unveiled a branch system that included a central building, three neighborhood branches, and a children’s department. Henry M. Gill, the city’s head librarian, described the grand opening of the library’s new Central Building as “an occasion of unusual interest. The building was brilliantly lighted, handsomely decorated, and a large audience filled the great reading room to the doors.” In fact, the grand opening for each branch attracted large crowds (with the exception of the Napoleon Branch, which opened during “a steady downpour of rain”). However, in spite of the city’s impressive branch system, fully operational by 1908, the library did not grant access to African Americans until late in 1915.

Closely shadowing the South’s celebration of public libraries emerged a new national literature written with the exclusive purpose of instructing children with amusing stories. Librarians responded to the needs of an expanding readership; and, as a greater number of children’s departments opened, the young readers proved themselves to be lovers of books. Thus the children’s department, complete with specially trained children’s librarians, was established alongside the region’s newest peculiar institution, the public library. The growing interest in children as readers, driven by a vision of the child as tomorrow’s hope, expanded the role of the virtuous Mother and it thrust her out of the home into a socially accepted professional role within the library to care for the new child patron.
Complicating library progress down South was a virulent form of racism among the South’s white population who were still reeling from the Emancipation of their ex-slaves. As the city’s library became an obvious venue for public discourse and socialization, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) allied with local libraries, and launched a literacy campaign to vindicate the South while preserving its heritage of white supremacy. As this white racial ideology found its way into the regional and national literature, it soon revealed itself within the new genre of literature being written for children readers and collected in libraries. Southern librarians developed collections peculiar to their user populations, maintained segregated spaces, and aligned themselves ideologically with community activists to ferment a cultural revolution of literacy, readership, and open access to information for children. However, in doing so, they fostered the transmission of a stubborn, yet aggressive, racial ideology of white superiority, privilege, and black subservience.

In that the public library is a predominately local community institution, the New Orleans Public Library serves as an excellent focal point for historical inquiry. The city of New Orleans wholeheartedly embraced the Southern public library movement in the early twentieth century, and with a keen attention to detail, the staff preserved valuable internal reports, minutes of meetings, and correspondence. In addition to the NOPL’s archive of internal documentation and records, the fundamental objective of the library to provide “every book to its reader” required these library professionals to engage in demographic studies, termed community assessments. The community assessments were regularly employed by the librarians, and they utilized multiple methods of inquiry which reveal important details about the early twentieth-century New Orleans citizenry, such as their reading preference, values, and customs. However, these continual assessments of the New Orleans Public Library user community also serves as a powerful tool for the historian in evaluating to what degree, if any, the NOPL was successful in effecting social change by “preaching its gospel of good books and public libraries.”

As the public library solidified its permanence in America’s urban and rural landscape, it functioned as a powerful catalyst for social change in the southern United States. Writing in the New Orleans’ Public Library’s twenty-fifth Annual Report, Gill predicted that “the historian of the future will find in this present day library movement one of the main currents of American life.” This project endeavors to uncover that force by examining the continued oppression of black Americans.

The breadth of this argument encompasses multiple historiographical threads, including: Southern history; the public library movement; and, children’s librarianship, all of which are viewed through the bi-focaled lens of gender and race. Yet, absorbing this project through purpose, theme, and argument lays the development of Whiteness in the twentieth-century United States. Whiteness studies have proved a remarkably significant thread of U.S. historiography feeding questions driving this study.
Two scholars trace the origins of modern white racism back to the era of Jim Crow. In *Making Whiteness* Elizabeth Grace Hale brings the discussion of Whiteness much closer into modern times. Hale examines a consumer culture that muddied the color line while simultaneously advocating racial distinctions. Jennifer Ritterhouse, in *Growing Up Jim Crow*, also looks at the segregated South. While she contends that white racism was taught to children, it nonetheless remained an unobserved, unwritten lesson promulgated by parents. This project, based on the idea that a racial ideology was taught to children, turns to the era’s public librarians, who were not only educators but the most disciplined in archiving their institutional records.

In section one, I examine the culture of literacy that New Orleans public librarians tended from 1900 through the 1930s. By gearing their energy towards the city’s children, they attempted to shape a progressive moral economy by guiding the reading interests of their youngest, most malleable of readers. Section two looks at representative examples of early twentieth century children’s books, including picture books and materials collected for both younger and juvenile readers. The picture book extended the genre’s potential impact on children who were too young to read, as well as those who had never learned. The NOPL defined the young reader as being less than fifteen-years old. Third, the juvenile reader ties the project together. Written for older children, these didactic examples clearly expressed the basic tenants of the Lost Cause racial ideology, which were boisterously espoused by the UDC in their work with children. Ultimately, librarians successfully molded the cast of mind for two generations of American children by developing peculiar collections for their local community, maintaining segregated spaces, and aligning their institutional focus on children with the Daughters’ fierce community activism. Children’s librarians, although driven by an egalitarian, progressive ideology of literacy and readership, ironically fostered the cultural transmission of a nineteenth-century white racial ideology memorialized within books sitting on the library shelf.

**A Culture of Literacy and Readership**

Childhood is a tender thing and easily wrought into any shape.

Yea, and the very souls of children readily receive the impressions of those things that are dropped into them while they are yet but soft; but when they grow older, they will, as all hard things are, be more difficult to be wrought upon.

—Plutarch, from Olcott, Frances J. The Children’s Reading, 1912 & 1927

Public librarians in the Southern United States struggled to foment a cultural revolution of literacy, readership, and open access to information amongst their communities’ most precious resources: children. Following closely in the wake of the Southern public library movement during the
early 1900s, librarians began developing collections, spaces, and services for their cities’ youngest readers. While the definitions of both children’s literature and the children’s department varied from library to library, most librarians tended to separate their young patrons into two groups. The first group, and the one more commonly associated with children’s literature, consisted of children in the seventh grade and below. Older children above the eighth grade tended to be regarded as juvenile readers. Children’s librarians targeted both groups of children in their mission to create a better or more civilized world for tomorrow by inculcating their community’s children with collections and spaces specially designed for their use and that would appeal to their interests. By tapping into children’s curiosity and the Southern region’s impressive literacy rates in the early twentieth century, children’s librarians began shaping their communities by developing special collections and reading lists that would not only shape a child’s reading habits but would form the child’s worldview.11

The South’s literacy rate is commonly perceived as inferior because the public school system was not introduced until Reconstruction. Thus, there is reason to question whether librarians and their collections had any real potential to shape a region suffering from supposedly high rates of white illiteracy. Unfortunately, while little work has been done on the topic, Southern illiteracy remains the common assumption. However, the evidence suggests that Southern literacy rates ran much higher than historians tend to assume.12

Writing for the Confederate Veteran in 1928, D. W. Dyer argues, “the character of the white illiterates of the South has been grossly misrepresented and is much misunderstood.”13 While Dyer admits that the South was behind the North in the early twentieth century, he faults the War Between the States as destroying the South’s efforts at public education in the second half of the nineteenth century. For example, Dyer states that “in 1860 there were 27,582 public schools in the Southern states with an enrollment of 954,728.14 Yet, even with the setbacks from war, Dyer claims that “in the towns and cities of Virginia in 1900 there was only one white man out of every 42 who could neither read nor write.”15 Unfortunately, Dyer’s article comes with a heavy prejudice against the North. He believed that the South’s highest illiteracy rates were found in the region’s mountainous and sparsely populated areas, and argued that towns people were more intelligent and progressive, and “as a rule joined the Confederacy.” The profound illiteracy of the approximately 35,000 Unionists in Tennessee becomes for Dyer the reason for their not supporting the Confederate South. Fortunately, less biased and more recent work on Southern literacy rates during the antebellum era give credence to claims of a literate South.

Economic historian John E. Murray argues in “Family, Literacy, and Skill Training in the Antebellum South: Historical-Longitudinal Evidence from Charleston” that literacy rates for Southern Whites in the antebellum period were much higher than previously thought. Murray draws his conclusion from what he qualifies as a unique source of data related to “apprenticeship
Based on this data, Murray claims that even the poorest mothers in Charleston taught their children not only how to read, but how to write. He said parents naturally showed a strong interest in their child’s education due to a strong positive correlation between literacy and wealth.

Murray prefaces his study by noting there is no question of the North’s higher literacy rate, but he claims that large percentages of literate Whites in the North in combination with a general lack of public education in the South created the misconception that illiteracy abounded in the South. Interestingly, Murray’s study of the poorest White children in Charleston reveals that White literacy levels in the South were comparable to corresponding levels in the North.

Unfortunately no one has analyzed literacy rates for the first fifty years of the twentieth century; however, the United States Census Bureau began collecting illiteracy statistics in the 1870 census. Subsequent censuses show a general trend of comparable improvement in the North and the South through the 1950 census. Whiteness, regardless of gender, class, or regional differences, is isolated in this study because the racialized books being collected by local librarians to effect cultural change were written by White authors for White children. While African-American children would have likely read such books, the literacy rates relevant to early twentieth century librarians, and hence this study, are those of the white population.

A gradual rise in national literacy levels begins after the 1880 census. In fact, the national level of literacy increased by ten percent from 1880 to 1910. The data suggest the increase resulted from comparable improvements in literacy attainment in the North and the South. Isolating Whiteness in the population reveals how close the literacy levels were for the two regions. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies only 4.3 percent of the entire Northern population as being illiterate by 1910. The Southern rate is shockingly lower with 15.6 percent of the entire population qualified as illiterate; however, isolating Whiteness drops the Southern rate to 7.7 percent bringing it within four percent of its Northern counterpart. This means more than 92% of White Americans in both the South and North qualified as literate by the end of the twentieth century’s first decade.

Twenty years later the total percentage of the illiterate Northern populace remained close to three percent while the total Southern percentage had only decreased four tenths of a percent. Yet, the Northern and Southern literacy rates for whites were above 96 percent for both regions. Finally, the census data compliments Murray’s claim that Southern mothers were responsible for their region’s remarkably high literacy rates. Although the U.S. Census Bureau did not collect literacy data before the Civil War, the censuses following the war through the 1950 census show an interesting trend when the gender qualification is isolated. Regardless of a person’s race, geographical location, or class status, the difference between female and male literacy is not significant.
The booming national business of producing children’s books in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also hints at a significantly literate population of children in the Southern states. In *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children’s Literature*, Leonard Marcus traces the rise of the major publishing houses in the early twentieth century from their nineteenth century roots. Children’s literature emerged as a respected genre of American literature in the 1830s. Marcus begins his study by noting the didactic nature of children’s literature written before 1860. Concentrating on the interrelationship between librarians, educators, and the publishing houses, Marcus argues that by 1830 the production of children’s literature was recognized for its potential profitability, but the American public would soon learn to value the amusing books written for children because of their potential to instruct. The volume of the books being published significantly increased following the Civil War. The nation’s first public library was established in 1852, but only twenty years later there were 2,500 libraries representing a total collection of over 12 million titles. The number of libraries doubled and the number of titles tripled by the close of the century. The first children’s literature association was started in 1887, and in 1895 the American Library Association (ALA) formally recognized the title of children’s librarian as a specific specialization of librarianship.

Children’s librarians were enjoying a new era of professional respectability and prestige by the end of the 1920s. A New England bookseller, Frederic G. Melcher, proposed at the 1921 ALA Conference that “the time had come for children’s literature to have its own Pulitzer Prize.” The bookseller’s proposal was met with overwhelming support at the conference, and in the following year the ALA recognized excellence in children’s literature with their new John Newberry Medal. Turow notes that the major publishing houses noticed an increasing demand for children’s books along with the literature’s notable prestige. MacMillan was the first of many publishers to create a separate and autonomous department specifically for publishing children’s literature.

The Great Depression slowed the genre’s growth only slightly during the 1930s. New book production dropped by fifty percent from 1931 to 1933; however, Marcus notes that most children’s literature departments experienced a marked improvement as early as 1935. Following the return to profitability, the Caldecott Medal was created in 1937 to honor excellence in picture books herald the profession’s coming of age.

Public librarians in the early twentieth century often spoke and wrote of the library and their profession as fundamental to a healthy society. To strengthen their arguments, librarians colored their rhetoric and scholarship with religious vocabulary and concepts. At the American Library Association’s (ALA) annual conference in 1923, the association’s president, George B. Utley, loaded his speech with spiritual language in order to express not only the necessity of public library services but to convey their society’s imminent and pressing need for the librarian who
“assumes the halo of a holy office.” Yet, ALA President Utley relied on more than religious imagery to convey America’s need of library services to his attentive army of public librarians who overwhelmingly believed that “the most civilized gesture that it is possible” was to offer free library services. Utley argued that the war had reduced demand for librarians, and called on librarians to begin “preaching the gospel of good books and public libraries.” But one may ask why librarians in the early twentieth-century felt so strongly about the value and necessity of a public library as well as their drive to invent local, regional, and national literary cultures?

Librarians define their institution, not as a place, but as a space that fosters an intellectual and abstract exchange of ideas. One can see entrenched within the ALA’s 1939 definition of a library evidence of the librarian’s ethical values: “all libraries are forums for information and ideas.” In other words, the library can be thought of as a part of the public discourse. Thus, censorship becomes nothing less than a limitation or restriction on public conversation and understanding. To censor materials from the library’s user community, constitutes an egregious attack on a democratic society’s reliance on an informed public. In light of such firm beliefs regarding the importance of a library as a fundamental and necessary component of a free, democratic, and high society, it certainly follows that early twentieth-century librarians raised the status of their profession to a “holy office.”

As the public library movement spread throughout the United States with greater speed at the turn of the twentieth century, it did not take long for librarians to begin preaching their gospel of readership and literacy for their community’s most precious resource: children. Jill Lepore, in “The Lion and the Mouse: The Battle that Reshaped Children’s Literature,” returns to the traditional moment of what many today consider the birth of the modern children’s librarian. Examining the work of Anne Carol Moore, the NYPL’s undisputed pioneer of children’s librarianship, Lepore identifies librarians’ new emphasis on children as beginning during the second decade of the twentieth century, “After the [NYPL] library opened in 1911, its children’s room became a pint-sized paradise.”

Donnarae MacCann in The Child’s First Books: A Critical Study of Pictures and Texts describes children as “quick in sensing and accepting” information with instinctive responses to a book’s text and pictures. MacCann argues that children easily receive and construct new information into what becomes “some of the most important human characteristics.” Likewise, author Lillian Smith in The Unreluctant Years contends that a child’s underdeveloped reasoning skills prevent the children from critically analyzing the value of a story’s lessons. Smith describes the sense of “wonder and question” exhibited by children; but warns they are “uncritical in judging literature.”

Acknowledging the impressionability of children is not new, children’s librarians in the early 1900s were well aware of the child’s highly impressionable nature and that the books a child read would significantly
affect his or her development and perception of the world. The moralistic and didactic quality of American children’s literature before 1860 illustrates a long use of books by Americans to teach their children important cultural values and moral lessons. While explicit moral piety gradually disappeared from the American genre following the Civil War; new works emerged with themes focused on “social problems” that were delivered within a narrative intended to entertain the child reader. Smith notes the genre “now has value as social history” because of the loaded messages that persisted well into the twentieth century.

Early twentieth century librarians believed it was both their moral and professional duty to guide their young readers. For example, Anne Carol Moore’s protégé (who eventually replaced Moore as the head of the New York Public Library services for children) forcefully declared that, “I hope for that day when we shall be called the belligerent profession; a profession that is informed, illuminated, and radiated by a fierce and beautiful love of books – a love so overwhelming that it makes the culture of our time distinctive, individual, creative, and truly of the spirit.” Anna P. Mason (1923), librarian of the St. Louis Public Library, in her article “The Children’s Librarian in the Community,” wrote that she was “bursting” with excitement over the importance of the library to its community for fostering “intelligent citizenship.” Regarding how the individual librarian should structure their efforts, she advised her professional and scholarly audience to place their “emphasis upon the reader rather than the book, and the institution of work with children as a specialized department is the most fundamental evidence and demonstration of this conception. All consideration of plans for the reorganization of society begins with the children.”

The New York Public Library (NYPL) and the work of Ann Carol Moore remain central themes to historical scholarship examining the efforts of children’s librarians in shaping their communities. Yet, as the public library movement spread throughout the southern half of the United States, librarians quickly established children’s departments in their communities’ libraries as well.

Southern librarians were very sensitive of the South’s failure to maintain the pace of public library development in the Northern States. The librarian at the Carnegie Library of Nashville, Tennessee, argued that the South’s slower pace was due to the Civil War that “left the South impoverished” and not to be erroneously blamed on “a lack of sufficient culture or a non-appreciation of the value of literature and the advantages of its general dissemination. Causes of a peculiar character have operated to retard library growth in the South.” But while the South’s public library movement lagged behind the North’s by approximately twenty-five years, the same cannot be said for the South’s development of separate library services for children readers. In fact, as early as 1908 the NOPL first began providing separate collections and spaces for the city’s children. Surprisingly, historians often ignore the role of the public library in their studies of the past. Librarian Christine
E. Jenkins, Ph.D., professor of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, states that “in considering the historiography of youth services librarianship, one is struck by how often a call for further research in this area has been sounded and how limited the response to that call has been.”

Henry M. Gill, the head librarian and director of the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) from 1906 to 1927, left a remarkably detailed record of the library’s emphasis on children. In 1907, after receiving a $250,000 gift from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, Gill noted that the money would be gratefully employed in one of the library’s three critical, and official, objectives: towards expanding the library’s scope and usefulness; increasing the NOPL’s dignity and importance in the eyes of its user community; and, increasing the recognition of the library as being a “handmaid to our excellent public school system.” As the quote implies, Gill and the NOPL were working with children indirectly through the public school system in 1907 before the library officially opened a children’s department. However, it would not be long before Gill and his fellow librarians realized, with greater depth, the importance of their work with children.

It is hard to overemphasize the New Orleans Public Library’s concern with the quality of literacy of the children in their city. In his first annual library report for the NOPL in 1907, librarian and director Henry M. Gill insisted the library was fundamental for social progress and that directing the reading habits of children was essential to their institutional mission. He wrote: “It is our belief that progress can be made and that the advancement of civilization is possible only through the culture of the moral and intellectual powers of the people at large . . . and the public library labors with this same noble purpose . . . [The Library] is indeed, second only to the church and the school in strengthening the mind and character of our fellow men.” Even while operating without a catalogue of any kind or being able to spare the necessary staff to devote to such a project as cataloging the library’s collection, Gill made sufficient appropriations from a limited annual budget to send one of his few librarians to the New York Public Library for “acquainting herself with work in children’s libraries.”

Considering the significant labor and financial investment devoted to sending the New Orleans librarian to New York, it is not surprising that the children’s department the NOPL revealed to the public in November of 1908, bore a striking resemblance to the recommendations made by Anne Carol Moore only five years before. Writing for the Library Journal in 1903, Moore prescribed one of the earliest recipes for what she maintained was the essential components “for the work of the children’s library.” The NOPL closely followed Moore’s advice. By 1908, New Orleans’ public librarians had created a children’s department that was unique unto itself; a trained librarian was selecting new children’s books; duplicates of popular titles were purchased; the children’s librarian visited other children’s departments to foster professionalization; and, finally, funds were made
available to improve both the aesthetics and comfort of the environment as well as the quality of the collection.\textsuperscript{54}

Moore’s 1903 \textit{Library Journal} article bears further consideration for a couple of reasons. First, while writing at the beginning of what would become an important and lengthy career, Moore described their profession in the early 1900s “at the end of an experimental stage of a work which has been of such recent and such rapid growth.”\textsuperscript{55} She intended her article to both encourage new interest in children’s librarianship as a legitimate profession and to cite recent improvement in the field. While Moore admitted that the prospects of a children’s librarian paled to that of a public school teacher, “they are very much brighter than they were in 1896, when none of the children’s librarians of my acquaintance were receiving more than $600 annually.”\textsuperscript{56} By 1928, children’s librarians could hope to earn between $1,200 and $2,400 annually.\textsuperscript{57}

The second significance of Moore’s 1903 article concerns the gender specific role of the children’s librarian. In every primary source article reviewed for this project, including Moore’s, the children’s librarian is overwhelmingly assumed to be a female. In fact, Moore used the children’s department to enhance the significance, education, and reputability of the female in the workplace. Moore wrote, “While the children’s librarian may be virtually free to develop her own work in her own way, she is much stronger and more valuable assistant if she is made directly responsible to the chief librarian for the development of her work.”\textsuperscript{58} Twenty years later in 1923, the gendered selection of children’s librarians showed no signs of diminishing. Librarian Anna P. Mason of the St. Louis Public Library, in describing the importance of the children’s librarian for the community, claimed that:

\begin{quote}
As the office of the children’s librarian becomes an increasingly respected one in the eyes of the public, as her position grows in dignity, there are larger opportunities for her own personal development and for those compensations which are so essential to the heart and soul of womanhood. I think that we may say that, if the financial side is properly met, the outlook for the interest in this field of library service is very bright, for the growth of work with young people has created an enlarged field of dignified service which calls for the best qualities of womanhood and a higher order of intelligence and education.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

By tying the ideal of the virtuous Mother as the guardian of the home to the community’s need for children’s librarians, Mason ably demonstrates the means by which women assumed a respectable public role in furthering their professional opportunities. Furthermore, that Mason wrote of the woman’s importance to children’s librarianship only twenty years after Moore first suggested the position might improve women’s public and professional opportunities reveals the speed of women’s increasing success at professionalization.
In addition to the main library, the City of New Orleans had three fully functioning branch libraries in 1908. The city’s branch libraries provide further evidence of the NOPL’s desire to shape the reading habits of their city’s children. Although the library operated without an official children’s department (until late in 1908) Gill made new policies specifically for the branch libraries to ensure they reached as many children in the city as possible.

In the branches particular attention will be paid to the children. A large percent of the books is for their use, tables and chairs especially designed for the little ones have been placed in each building, picture bulletins are liberally employed to stimulate the desire to read and to direct their reading to certain channels.

Yet, by the fall of the following year the NOPL had relegated a separate collection and space in the new central library for their children readers. Opening in November of 1908, the books selected for the department’s collection were at a seventh-grade reading level or less. The department boasted a children’s collection of 4,340 works with a circulation during its first two months, November and December of 1908, of 5,885. The total circulation after only one year of service amounted to almost 60,000. Gill and the librarians at the New Orleans Public library had tapped into what seems to be a preexisting desire of the children to read and learn. This impressive beginning speaks to city’s and the South’s impressive literacy rates for children at the turn of the century. But, the children
of New Orleans quickly outgrew their allotted space and Gill was soon expanding the space, collection, and services for their young readers. “We are confronted with the serious problem of finding at least half again as much space as it occupies at present,” he wrote in 1909.65

By 1910, only three years after making the library’s services available for children, it can safely be said that the NOPL’s children department had come of age. The library was busying itself extending its services and responsibilities to the city’s children. For example, Gill worked hard to align the library’s work with children to the city’s public education system. A special library card, called a teacher’s card, was created to allow for special borrowing privileges for instructors in the city school system.66 The teacher’s card allowed educational professionals to borrow a greater number of materials for the purpose of facilitating classroom instruction. As the library improved its relationship with the city’s public school system, teachers began bringing entire classes to the library.

As the children’s department continued to grow in popularity, Gill began listing the books most frequently checked out for children in his annual reports. The list included the top twenty-five works for boys as well as girls for each year. Furthermore, story hour had become a regular feature of the children’s department. Readers would often structure their story to leave the children in a state of climax to increase their desire to read more books. One of the more popular activities, “Chalk Talk,” was given by Mr. Charles Beard. While telling a story Mr. Beard would draw a picture

This is a photograph of New Orleans Public Library’s Royal Branch. Library director Henry M. Gill arranged for most of the branch’s books and space to be for the children. Each of the branch libraries purchased the smaller chairs and tables for the comfort of their younger readers.
with chalk and give it to a lucky child at the end of the story.\textsuperscript{67} The Boy Scouts were involved as well. In 1910, Boy Scout leaders developed a camping exhibit that was immensely popular with the children. The children’s department was a certified success by 1910.

By the close of the twentieth century’s first decade, public librarians in Southern cities had made monumental progress in substantiating children’s librarianship as a permanent component or function of the public library as well as a legitimate profession within librarianship. Children’s librarians, by tapping into a preexisting regional network of white literacy while harnessing the child’s natural curiosity, had created a new public forum for cooperating with local schools to increase their influence upon the city’s children. However, while librarians increased their children’s collections along with the space allotted for their use, these professionals began looking at other community and local institutions outside the library and school system to supplement their work and influence. One such group that worked with the New Orleans Public Library’s mission to the city’s children was the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).

\textit{Collecting Whiteness}

\textit{You gwine ter see a gent’ man’s nigger an’ a nigger gent’ man drive his Master’s kerridge to-day, an’ his wife on de driver’s seat wid him, an’ you ain’ gwine see him notice a’ y a common nigger ‘twix’ heah an’ town an’ back.}

\textemdash Ned to Mr. Standwick\textsuperscript{68}

The literature written, published, and collected by librarians during the early twentieth centuries reflects the increasingly anti-black prejudice that followed the emancipation of the slaves. Eugene D. Genovese’s brilliant of Southern slave society, \textit{Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made}, illustrates change in whites perceptions of blacks as well as themselves. Genovese argues that slaveholders genuinely believed and insisted that the “slaves constituted part of the family and these expressions of belief in their loyalty lay at the heart of the master’s world-view;” but this was only a self-delusion on the part of the master.\textsuperscript{69} Genovese continues that the “defection of their most trusted and pampered slaves” served as a psychological trauma changing white attitudes about blacks. One Southerner remarked that “I am beginning to lose confidence in the whole race.”\textsuperscript{70} Another described his slaves reaction when he attempted to maintain order noting he said that he had “talked to the slaves ‘as a father’ but they had laughed.”\textsuperscript{71} The War, Emancipation, and the following period of Reconstruction served as the ultimate lesson hardening white opinion and attitudes against blacks. The trauma inflicted on their psyche when they realized that their slaves did not really love them convinced many Southerners of the “perfect impossibility of placing the least confidence in the Negro.”\textsuperscript{72}
The bitter resentment Southern whites harbored against freed blacks manifest itself in their regional literature. And, with the increasing focus on the child’s welfare in the early twentieth century, books written for children would be tainted with the same begrudging, negative depictions of blacks - and in some cases pure hatred. Yet, the racial themes, pictures, and lack of realistic black characters in children’s books was enhanced by a book market with national distribution, an exploding public library movement, and a population of literate white children interested in reading. Thus, the culture of literacy and readership, propagated by Southern librarians, allowed for the transmission of a white racial ideology. Increasingly biased children’s literature transmitted a blistering white trauma as paternal regard for slaves withered.73

Scholars are increasingly devoting greater attention to the racial content found in children’s literature that originated during the nineteenth century and persisted well into the twentieth century. For example, Donnarae MacCann, in White Supremacy in Children’s Literature: Characterizations of African Americans, 1817 – 1914, offers a substantial analysis of the racial content shaping books written for children during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. MacCann’s synthesis of two U. S. historiographies into a single work, the evolution of a white racial ideology along with the establishment of children’s literature, provides this project with important background material. Although her study ends by 1914 much of the racial bias remained in children’s books written in the following decades. Furthermore, several of the works she examined remained popular well into the twentieth century.

MacCann begins her study by juxtaposing the progressive character of the nation’s most liberal Northern Whites against the racial bias of Southern Whites. For evidence she turns to examples of children’s literature written by both nineteenth-century anti-slave writers and authors of a pro-slavery persuasion. MacCann concludes that the individual politics were irrelevant as both groups of authors tended to use the same negative and degrading depictions of African American characters. Her study relies heavily on works from the following well-known authors: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jacob Abbott, Joel Chandler Harris, Mark Twain and Lydia Maria Child. In addition to citing their use of racist depictions of African Americans, MacCann extends her argument by correlating their racial bias to the sympathies the authors shared with the American Colonization Society.74

that the use of the unrealistic and racist depictions of African Americans by White egalitarian writers actually “undermined the theme of Black emancipation.” She uses both individual and institutional authors to substantiate her claim. For example, to illustrate her point, she claims that although Jacob Abbot saw himself as “the quintessential liberal” and John T. Trowbridge “considered himself an energetic emancipationist,” both Abbot and Trowbridge consistently portrayed Blacks with negative and demeaning stereotypes. MacCann notes as well that textbook writers, who “resided overwhelmingly in the New England states,” used blatant depictions of Black inferiority. She contends that northern progressives writing for children did not erase the stock minstrel character but, instead, dehumanized Blacks with “increasing severity.”

In addition to identifying the prevalence of racial attitudes among White Northern progressives, MacCann also maintains that the anti-Black sentiments in children’s literature served as a catalytic factor fostering the reunion of regions following the U. S. Civil War. For example, Northern federal judge, Albion W. Tourgee, summed up “the entire overall character of the national postwar literature… when he said, ‘Our literature has become not only Southern in type but distinctly Confederate in sympathy.'” MacCann also refers to C. Vann Woodward’s description of the postwar period as the moment when “Yankeeism took to its heart the lost cause.” She claims that this unprecedented expansion of Whiteness continued to increase in quantity and severity well into the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, MacCann’s exceptional analysis of white racism within children’s literature ends by 1900. However, Michelle H. Martin, in *Brown Gold: Milestones of African American Picture Books, 1845-2002*, carries the discussion much further. Although Martin’s work mostly examines the children’s books written by black authors to be read by black children, she devotes a chapter to those works by white authors “written for white children with the intention of – at best – patronizing blacks, or – at worst – depicting them as ugly, ignorant, simple-minded, humorous fools at whom readers were invited to laugh unabashedly.” Of the three types of children’s books available in the early twentieth century, picture books, texts for younger readers, and texts for juveniles, Martin’s chapter on picture books provides the most impressive demonstration of the virulent literature being published, a literature that even three- and four-year-old children could have processed.

Although Leonard Marcus, in *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children’s Literature*, tends to ignores social concerns (as his focus is on the business of children’s literature and not its reception) he also refers to the period’s racial emphasis. Marcus contends that white authors continued to depict black Americans as inferior, comical, and helpless during the first half of the twentieth century: “when it came to portraying, or even to referring to people of color,” most writers did “no better than to perpetuate the worst impulses and ingrained prejudices of White American Culture.”

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Picture Books

Picture books first became available by the 1890s, and they extended the anti-black message to non-literate children and those too young to have learned to read. One such example published in New York by the McLoughlin Brothers, notable for its long publishing history from the “1860s to 1980s,” is the Mother Goose rhyme *The Ten Little Niggers*. This educational picture book taught the youngest of children to read while developing in them an unhealthy opinion of black Americans. The book counts down from ten to one while each of the children dies or disappears.

The publication, with its cartoonish depictions showing the degeneration of the black male, reflected contemporary attitudes about the decline and disappearance of African Americans. As George Fredrickson has observed, it “coincided with the full triumph of Darwinism in American thought...As a result, the 1890s saw an unparalleled outburst of racist speculation on the impending disappearance of the American Negro.” Half of the boys in this story die, and each death speaks to the impossibility of African Americans ability surviving in the New World. The significance of these deaths apparently concerns the danger of a black individual outside of his socially relegated role. The rhyme implies that destruction will follow the Emancipation of blacks.

This story in song, while instructing the young reader how to count, is done so at the expense of black people’s integrity by mocking their social condition. And the song’s final line, “and then there were None,” illustrates the dark bitterness and resentment brewing in the minds of many whites at the turn of the century. Children reading it would have invariably learned that blacks were not a part of white society, while its comedic delivery would have assured the child that the black community was not a threat.

Michelle Martin reviews another picture book which remains a well known title today, *Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman. Bannerman’s short, controversial story concerns a small black child who outwits four tigers by giving them his new clothes and umbrella. The tigers proceed to chase themselves in a circle, churning themselves into butter. Sambo triumphantly recovers his property and he uses the butter on pancakes that his mother makes for him.

Martin is somewhat less critical of this “‘smiling darkie’ caricature” and proposes that “while many white Americans early in the twentieth century considered black people invisible within culture, Sambo made whites acknowledge the humanity in black people.” True as that may be, the importance of historical perspective demands appropriate contextualization. Consider once more Eugene Genovese’s *Roll Jordan Roll* as he quotes a freed ex-slave who offered material and financial assistance to his old master during Reconstruction:
Mrs. Chestnut told of an old black man who comforted his destitute master at the end of the war: “When you ‘all had de power you was good to me, and I’ll protect you now. No nigger or Yankee shall touch you. If you want anything, call for Sambo. I mean, call for Mr. Samuel – that’s my name now.”

While Martin is certainly correct in identifying the varying degrees of racial content within these late nineteenth-century works, the depersonalization of blacks’ humanity should not be disregarded, most importantly, because the slaves and freed blacks recognized the degradation implied by whites when they named their slaves. Thus, for the slave, he was no longer Sambo but Mr. Samuel. Furthermore, that white children and their parents adored the cute and heroic Sambo does not make it appropriate; it remains both an ahistorical interpretation of the past that allowed for the transmission of anti-black sentiment amongst white children. And Little Black Sambo was wildly popular. Martin has observed its “overwhelming reception” after publication. In fact, Bannerman’s Little Black Sambo made a regular appearance on the New Orleans Public Library booklist of most frequently circulated selections listed as a part of the library’s Annual Reports in 1910.

Books for the Young Reader

The second general type of children’s book available during the early twentieth century was for the young reader. The New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) actually changed their definition of the young reader over time; however, this age group rarely included those over fifteen. If there is one striking factor found in these works, beyond the glaring racial bias, it would be the terrifically grim narratives authors penned for their child readers. In other words, these stories are not composed of fairytales, rainbows, and cookie monsters; rather, they are blatantly didactic and meant to construct a world view resistant to what Southern whites would have considered dangerous progressive racial ideologies.

Louise-Clarke Pyrnelle’s Diddie, Dumps, and Tot is one such example, and the second title that Pyrnelle gave her work speaks of the author’s belief in the narrative’s historicity: Plantation Child-Life. Consider how Pyrnelle introduces her collection of stories in the work’s preface:

There are no more dear old “Mammies” and “Aunties” in our nurseries, no more good old “Uncles” in the workshops, to tell the children those old tales that have been told to our mothers and grandmothers for generations . . . Nor does my little book pretend to be a defence of slavery. I know whether or not it was right or wrong (there are many pros and cons on the subject); but it was the law of the land, made by statesmen from the North as well as the South, long before my day, or my father’s or grandfather’s day; and, born under that law a slave-holder, and the descendant of slave-holders, raised in the cotton section, surrounded by negroes...
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from my earliest infancy, ‘I KNOW whereof I do speak;’ and it is of to tell of the pleasant and happy relations that existed between master and slave that I write this story of “Diddie, Dumps, and Tot.”

Within this single paragraph, Pyrnelle informs her little readers that whether slavery is right, wrong, evil, or good remains of no consequence because it is of a long standing tradition for the North as well as the South. She then established herself as an authority of those sublime plantation days, while she packaged her tales with the language and imagery meant to ensure the transmission of white supremacy, privilege, and black subservience.

Pyrnelle preaches her revision of Southern history through the perspective of three young white girls on a family plantation. The young ladies, named Diddie, Dumps, and Tot were nine, five, and three-years old, respectively. Pyrnelle’s plot came thick with lessons over wrought with Lost Cause ideology. For instance, even when she describes a slave auction, she portrays the slaves as content with their social status. “The Negroes were well clothed, well fed, and the great majority of them looked exceedingly happy.” The author even gives considerable agency to some slaves, as long as they “know their place.” Consider the naming of Diddie, Dumps, and Tot as an example.

Pyrnelle states that Diddie, Dumps, and Tot were the “pet names that Mammy had given them; but they had been called by them so long that many persons forgot that Diddie’s name was Madeleine, that Dumps had been baptized Eleanor, and that Tot bore her mother’s name of Eugenia.” Mammy had adorned Diddie, Dumps, and Tot with names that would be used by both friends and family, and the names even superseded those given through baptism and inheritance. This speaks volumes towards Mammy’s status and prestige within the family hierarchy as Pyrnelle taught it. Genovese wrote of this attitude when he quoted a plantation mistress, “It is the slaves who own me.”

However, Pyrnelle did not ennoble the enslaved African American; rather, she exploited, in narrative, the slave’s relegation to subservience and oppression to teach her young readers. One of the book’s more didactic features concerns the author’s treatment of the slave community as a foil for the wise, if parochial, Mammy character.” In fact, Pyrnelle warned her readers to not be shocked by “the seeming irreverence of her book.” For example, for fun, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot would sneak off to the slave quarters to watch the slave children recite their prayers with the hope of seeing a couple of the black children punished for praying incorrectly. During the mornings, the three girls enjoyed watching “Aunt Nancy give the little darkies their ‘vermifuge,’” described as a nauseous concoction meant to supplement the slaves health and growth. Pyrnelle consistently employed her narrative to demonstrate that “the little nigs” were wicked, depraved, and ungrateful, and to show the joy the little white girls found in observing the distribution of punishment.
Diddie, Dumps, and Tot watching the slave children struggle through their evening prayers. The white child giggling on the right looks to be the eldest and she must be Diddie, leaving Dumps on the far left, and Tot in the middle. The scene reveals the stark contrasts in treatment of the black children who are continually scrutinized with the threat of the switch while the white children are left to enjoy themselves.

Within Pyrnelle’s blatant, if clumsy, attempt to instruct young readers with amusing stories lays a short tale of two “little woolly poodles.” The puppies serve as a metaphor intended to illustrate the slaves’ paradoxical status on the plantation as both members of the family and “property in man.” It is the puppies’ wooliness that identifies the figurative conjunction linking the poodles to the plantation slaves. The author consistently refers to the slaves’ woolly hair and their woolly clothes to complete the correlation.

The lesson reveals itself in a debate over what the puppies should be named. After Papa, Christopher Columbus, and Pocahontas proved unsuccessful as potential names, Diddie announced, “I think, Dumps, we had better name ‘um Cherubim an’ Seraphim, for they continually do cry.” The “puzzling question” was settled with the father’s approval and Pyrnelle concluded that the woolly and ungrateful poodles “became great pets in the household.”

The puppy tale communicated three fundamental, yet interlaced, social principles from the Southern post-bellum perspective. First, the family plantation was a benevolent system; second, white southerners had willingly and joyfully accepted the burden of racial uplift; and lastly, by ‘continually crying’ blacks demonstrated their ingratitude to their white benefactors.

*Diddie, Dumps, and Tot’s* conclusion remains faithful to Lost Cause history. The antebellum period, along with the plantation system, were presented by authors such as Pyrnelle as being the epitome of high civilizations. Thus, the destructive Civil War left the South, as well as the book’s reader, with a sense of woe, regret, and nostalgia. By the end of *Diddie, Dumps, and Tot*, the master has died, the grief stricken mistress has been sent to an asylum,
and the land is left “just lying there useless, worthless.” Diddie becomes a young widow, forever haunted by a vision of her Confederate husband’s dead and “cold white face, with its hair dabbled in blood.” Tot died nondescriptly before the war began. And the story ends by revealing Dumps as an old-maid caring for her traumatized mother in the asylum, following instructions she recalls hearing from one of their long-gone faithful slaves by “doing what Uncle Snake-bit Bob told the Sunday-school children that God had made them do: ‘De Bes’ She Kin.’”

Pyrnelle’s *Diddie, Dumps, and Tot’s* repackaged the white trauma of Emancipation and delivered it to the twentieth century child reader. From these stories, children learned of a Southern tradition founded on progressive notions of racial benevolence, harmony, and interdependence. Furthermore, this fictional revision of antebellum history was linked to the nation’s history by noting that slavery “was the law of the land, made by statesmen from the North as well as the South, long before my day.” However, the only tangible theme from this work that translates beyond the nineteenth century is white disgust with black ungratefulness. Any remaining pretense of paternalism or racial benevolence hinted at within the story merely explicated itself as the great white mistake; namely, the error of whites placing any trust in the black community’s loyalty.

*Books for the Juvenile Reader*

Donnarae MacCann’s formidable study, *White Supremacy in Children’s Literature*, ends with the close of the nineteenth century. However, white authors continued to pen revisionist tales of a fictional antebellum era for children readers. These were collected, catalogued, and circulated by public librarians throughout the South. The plantation system all too often was based on familial interdependency between the noble, gracious slaveholders and those who they believed to be their grateful “woolly pets.” One such example is *Ned: Nigger an’ Gent’ man, A Story of War and Reconstruction Days*.

The Texas Federal Judge Norman G. Kittrell raised the bar for children’s literature regarding the traditional theme of a North-South reunion in *Ned*, published in 1907 by the Neale Publishing Company. Kittrell, while offering a defense of the South’s secession predicating the U.S. Civil War, in effect, constructed a model for social etiquette and normalcy for juvenile readers in the New South.

The contemporary scholar and historian, Benajah H. Carroll, claimed that the book “was dramatized for a time and had great success.” Kittrell’s renewed model of Southern social relations, while complicated and full of logical leaps, epitomizes the Lost Cause Ideology promulgated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) as well as that seen in earlier examples of the plantation narrative. What emerges is a didactic story of
children’s literature narrated by an exslave, Ned, who not only loves and adores his master, but despises those “mizzerbul new free niggers.”

Ned exemplifies the common model for the plantation narrative as described by MacCann. Thus, older children reading the story would have learned multiple lessons from the affable, loyal exslave Ned, that blacks were: simple-minded; self-deprecative in nature; happy to be slaves; and, not desirous of Lincoln’s style of Emancipation. Ned, by functioning as both a loyal exslave and narrator, ostensibly enhances the credibility of this fictional children’s tale when he defends the Southern tradition of white supremacy and black subservience. Whether Kittrell knew of an Uncle Ned during his own youth in the South is not certain; however, in the Confederate Veteran there are frequent tributes to faithful slaves, variations of Uncle Ned, who demonstrate his “fidelity to his old mistress...loyalty to the Confederacy...and his devotion to our soldiers.”

The basic plot involves a Northern stranger travelling through the South after the Civil War. Within the first couple of pages, the stranger, Mr. Standwick, meets Ned, a “slave” to the wealthy Confederate Officer Colonel Marshall. Though the colonel happened to be away on business, Ned, left to care for his master’s property as though it were his own, invites the reluctant “Yankee . . . beneath the Rebel’s roof.” What follows are over 200 pages of Kittrell’s political discourse on the causes of the War, justifications of slavery, and textbook-style lessons for juvenile readers on Southern customs, culture, and etiquette – all of which are inseparable from the region’s peculiar race relations.

As a justification of antebellum slavery in the Old South, Kittrell used Ned to demonstrate his contentment with being his master’s slave, despite Emancipation. For example, when Colonel Marshall offered Ned, and his wife Hester, a Sunday afternoon to spend as they pleased, Ned insisted:
We don’ keer nuttin’ bout gwine nowhars, thankee, Marster. Dar ain’t no niggers in dis toen dat Hester an’ me ‘soshates wid. Ef you please, we’d rudder set here on de steps an’ heah our white folks talk. 117

Thus, according to Ned, his place as servant on the family plantation is where he wanted to be. In fact, Ned cared for the Marshall family so much, that he sacrificed his own son for the Confederate cause.

However, the cynical and legal mind of Judge Kittrell utilized other means to justify the South’s cherished system of slavery. Kittrell was fond of taking Northern critiques and interpreting them in a light favorable to the South. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, well known as an abolitionist text that served as an indictment of slavery’s brutality, is used as a defense of the South’s peculiar institution. Kittrell claims, through the voice of Colonel Marshall’s neighbor and friend Captain Alston, that ninety-nine percent of the brutal slave owners were transplanted Northerners seeking quick riches who did not inherit their property.118 These Northern slaveholders residing in the South lacked the paternal spirit requisite for uplifting the slave. The belief in the brutality of the Northern slaveholder rested on the contention that a master could only respect those slaves he inherited. Captain Alston instructed the malleable Mr. Standwick:

In Colonel Marshall’s library I see a book which you have doubtless seen, one that fanned the sparks of sectional strife and bitterness into a consuming flame and ‘wrought woe’s unnumbered, ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ Whether it occurred by accident or inadvertence, or whether for a purpose Mrs. Stowe so designed it, the hardest, most cruel and unworthy character in that remarkable book, Legree, was born in the North and came South and trafficked in slaves and maltreated them; while the two most lovable characters, Uncle Tom and Eva, were reared amid slavery, one having been a slave, the other his mistress.119

Kittrell’s critique of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* served two purposes. First, the work’s antagonist, Simon Legree, is identified as a transplanted Northerner seeking wealth in the South through his investment in slaves. Kittrell’s revelation of Legree’s northern origins was an attempt to support the South’s contention that its peculiar institution was really a benevolent, paternal system that benefitted the slaves both materially and spiritually. Second, the revelation of Legree’s origins enhanced another Southern argument that Northerners, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, were woefully ignorant of the true Southern condition; therefore, the War Between the States was unfounded, aggressive, and destructive.

It is important to remember that Kittrell, a lawyer and judge, penned these nuanced arguments for juvenile readers. The southern school children reading the story of Ned would have received it as authoritative and indicative of the true history of the Confederate South and not a
sly revisionist history meant to vindicate the South, justify slavery, and ennoble the Civil War. Another of Kittrell’s clever attempts to turn Northern critiques into a favorable Southern interpretation involves Colonel Marshall’s dizzying interpretation of President Abraham Lincoln, his war, and his memory. The Colonel argued that Lincoln’s death was the “darest calamity that ever befell the South” because the “force of his great character, and the extent of his influence” would have spared the South the horrors of Reconstruction.120

Kittrell’s book conveys much more than a revision of U. S. Civil War history. Writing for the benefit of older children, Kittrell looked forward to a renewed South by instructing his young readers with lessons on Southern culture, customs, but most importantly, racial etiquette. Kittrell fondly contextualized the antebellum South’s social hierarchy as divided by class before race, and explained his model in the terms of quality versus scrub folks. This dual standard served for whites and blacks alike throughout the work. As Kittrell describes him, Ned, “like all Negroes of his class… was an aristocrat of the aristocrats.”121 The Yankee visitor, Mr. Standwick, thus learns through his tutor Ned (in tandem with the twentieth-century child reader) that “in the South, social distinctions do not rest on a financial basis . . . but on instinct, inheritance, and association.”122 Thus Kittrell was able to claim toward the novel’s end that Ned, and his wife Hester, “by their lives and characters they set examples that even the best of whites may well imitate.”123

While Colonel Marshall and his wife impress Mr. Standwick with their devotion to the welfare of their black servants, one should not be misled by this apparent demonstration of Southern progressivism. In fact, while Kittrell hoped his work would function as “an earnest, heartfelt, and appropriate plea for peace” between the North and South, the child reader would have finished this work with a reinforced notion of white superiority, privilege, and black subservience. Kittrell reinforced the South’s preferred racial divide both plainly and repeatedly:

No power in all the earth can keep the white man in subordination to the Negro. Intellectually, physically, and morally, the white man bears the divine stamp of superiority to men of every race! He is the Heaven-endowed leader of the forces of civilization and progress and Christianity; and judged by ethnological and all other tests and standards, the Negro is his inferior and can never rise to his level. There is no bridge that can span the gulf which God has placed between them.124

By the end of the story, Mr. Standwick had certainly learned much about Southern history, and subsequently apologized to the Marshall’s for his regions “unnecessary, unjustifiable and cruel” invasion of the South.125 Although the book failed to enjoy a lengthy shelf life, it certainly made its
mark on both the South and the North. In fact, Kittrell’s juvenile novel was interpreted into a stage play titled *The Southerner* and was performed in New York City only one year after its publication.126

These children’s books depicted blacks in a degrading stereotypical manner that welcomed and encouraged white children to laugh at black characters. The virtual exclusion of realistic portrayals of black Americans in books written for children was coupled with the South’s *de jure* styled segregation limiting white and black interaction. It then should come as no surprise that children readers, from 1900 to the 1930s, would grow up with a deficiency of respect for the black population. However, the role of the children’s librarians in enabling the transmission of the South’s conservative tradition of white superiority, through the new genre of literature written explicitly for children, is somewhat unexpected.

It would be difficult to believe that these titles would not have found their way into the New Orleans Public Library in the early 1900s. Demonstrating the presence of these works in the library’s children’s department is incredibly difficult, as the library was operating without a catalogue during that time. However, *The Ten Little Niggers*, while likely a vexing example for the modern reader, could not have been denied a shelf-life at the NOPL as it was a part of the Mother Goose collection. And, Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo* appeared in at least one of the NOPL’s “popular reading list.”127

The list of popular children’s books only contained the top twenty-five circulated books for boys and girls, while the department had collected over 15,000 titles by the mid-1920s. But, these books were not simply placeholders on the library shelf. In demonstrating the children’s love for
reading as well as the library’s success in mobilizing the entire collection of children’s books, Gill noted that in a single year that “on three occasions . . . so many books have been issued that the shelves were swept entirely bare of books of the first, second, third, and fourth grades.”

*Diddie, Dumps, and Tot* as well as *Ned* are representative of the children’s plantation story, which paralleled the revisionist history being pushed through the local school system by the UDC during the early twentieth century. That the two stories never made it on the library’s list of popular children’s book is of no consequence because the racially-biased content encouraged by the UDC certainly found asylum within the NOPL. The Daughter’s campaign for good textbooks and ‘true’ history in local schools brought the UDC’s version of history inside the New Orleans Public Library along with the Daughters’ fundamental focus on white superiority, privilege, and black subservience. When a New Orleans public school made course changes the library responded, “We have been purchasing these books as rapidly as we could.”

Children’s books such as those surveyed here proved to be entertaining reads for Southern children at the turn of the twentieth century. As their authors intended, however, these books conveyed instructive lessons of morality, etiquette, and an unabashed racial justification of white superiority, privilege, and black subservience. The white children who read these works would have finished reading with an elevated ideal of white Americans, which was coupled by a strong bias against black Americans. With this literature filling library collections, bookstores, and classrooms, one may rightfully wonder whether white children readers in the early 1900s ever had a chance in throwing off the prior generation’s anti-black prejudices.

**Notes**

1 The era scrutinized here stems from three dramatic developments marking the years 1900-1939 as unique, namely increases in: book distribution; readership; and a white racial ideology marring the era’s literature, book lists, and user community. Furthermore, the impact of such biased library services for children had only begun to be realized by 1954. Indeed, white children reading library books during the twentieth century’s first four decades grew into the white racist communities who resisted the modern Civil Rights Movement actively, systemically, and violently. On the other hand, scholars such as Michelle Martin have revealed that significant progress for black children reading library books was not made until the 1940s, “parents who wanted to seek out good books about black life written by African Americans had almost no options at all.” See Michelle H. Martin, *Brown Gold: Milestones of African American Children’s Picture Books, 1845-2002* (New York: Routledge, 2004): xi.

Augusta Baker, children’s librarian pioneer, made remarkable headway against the racial bias of the literary and cultural institution to which she was introduced. However, by the time Baker took up her mantle, the period addressed in this article had ended, and the damage had been done. Therefore, this article offers an analysis of the gross racial inequities of early twentieth-century children’s librarianship, which Baker’s work addressed. Only when we situate the emergence of professional children’s librarianship within its racialized context will a greater respect for the pioneering work of Augusta Baker be possible.
7 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1908, 21.
10 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1920, 7.
25 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 64.
26 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 85-86.
27 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 85-86.
28 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 79.
29 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 110.
30 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 123.
31 Leonard Marcus, Minds of Make-Believe, 135.
34 George Utley, “The Expanding Responsibilities,” p 452.
36 George Utley, “The Expanding Responsibilities,” 452.
38 Donnarae MacCann and Olga Richard, The Child’s First Books: A Critical Study of
40 Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years, 34.
41 Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years, 34.
42 Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years, 146.
52 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1907, 12; 14.
53 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1907, 16.
59 Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, 111.
61 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 41.
62 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 42.
63 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 61.
64 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 70.
65 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 73.
66 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 125.
67 MacCann, White Supremacy in Children's Literature, 127.
68 Michelle H. Martin, Brown Gold: Milestones of African American Children's Picture
89 Martin, Michelle, Brown Gold, 7.
90 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1908, 18; Annual Report for 1921, 11.
92 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot, 95; This line actually describes the poor slaves being sold at auction. However, Pyrnelle used the “exceedingly happy” condition of these slaves on the auction block to reinforce the sublime condition of those slaves residing on the family plantation.
93 Historians such as Eugene Genovese in Roll Jordan Roll have described the limited measures of resistance employed by Southern slaves to maintain some degree of self-respect, dignity, and autonomy. But here I do not mean that Pyrnelle has imbued her slaves with a resistive agency that countered the normal production and culture of the plantation system. Rather, Pyrnelle has drawn an image of the Mammy character who demonstrates an agency that forwards the plantation mission and worldview while being respected, revered, and even loved by the white slaveholders.
94 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot.
95 Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, 79.
96 Donnarae MacCann, White Supremacy in Children’s Literature, 95; MacCann argues that the Mammy character complemented the South’s post-bellum faithful black servant; although, she contends that Mammy often had a brutal side when dealing with slave children.
97 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot vi.
98 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot, 17.
99 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot, 16; 18; 21
100 Louise-Clark Pyrnelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot, 28.
101 Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, 76.
102 “Our Sacred Cause at Dallas, Tex. – Dedication of the Grand Monument,” Confederate Veteran 6 (1898): 299-303; Judge Kittrell and the UDC did not only share an ideological doctrine and methodology of targeting Southern children as a means of shaping the future. The “Our Sacred Cause” article reveals that both Kittrell and the Daughters labored together. After the UDC formed in 1894, their first monument was constructed in Dallas, TX honoring: the private; Jefferson Davis; Robert E. Lee; Stonewall Jackson; and, Albert Sidney Johnston. The daughters referred to the day, 29 April 1897, as a “love-fest:” Judge Kittrell “paid a masterly tribute to... the gallant Albert Sidney Johnston, and the veil was drawn away by the granddaughter of Stonewall Jackson.”
104 Donnarae MacCann, White Supremacy in Children’s Literature, 85.
114 “Tributes to Faithful Servants,” Confederate Veteran 8 (1900): 399-400.
115 “Tributes to Faithful Servants,” Confederate Veteran 8, (1900): 400.
116 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 40.
117 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 41.
118 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 98.
119 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 100.
120 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 122-123.
121 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 11.
122 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 240.
124 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 119.
125 Norman G. Kittrell, Ned, 119.
127 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1927, 12.
129 Henry Gill, Annual Report for 1913, 10.
MOVING ON — or how I left a truly great job for extraordinary insecurity

by Lynn Andersen

[...but, first, some words from Progressive Librarian]

The Durland Alternatives Library: 15 Years of PLG Partnership

To this day, the Durland Alternatives Library (DAL), located on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca NY, remains one of the America’s most unique and radical libraries. Founded in 1973 through a generous endowment, it was dedicated to Cornell student Anne Carry Durland, who had recently drowned, as a living memorial by her parents Margaret and Lewis H. Durland. The intention of the gift was to further the concerns of community and ecology which were important to Ms. Durland in the heady days of the early 1970s.

What is most remarkable about this little library is that its sole purpose is to collect and provide access to the widest variety of contemporary issue-oriented resources from progressive and radical points of view. Surprisingly, many of these zines and tracts and start-up journals are unavailable in research and public libraries anywhere.

The essay that follows is by Lynn Anderson, who served as director of DAL from fall of 1991 through to the winter of 2012, a 21 year career of exceptional service. Interestingly, the year 1991 corresponds roughly with the formation of the Progressive Librarians Guild several years earlier, and the publication of the first Progressive Librarian (PL) in the summer of 1990.

In the summer of 1994, Cornell librarian and PLG co-founding member Peter McDonald, joined the board of the Durland Alternatives Library, a position he held both as board member and later chair through to 2007. Indeed, DAL was one of the first libraries in the United States to carry PL, and with McDonald on the board, and Lynn Anderson always the fierce advocate for partnerships between DAL and any number of progressive organizations, in 1999 the DAL board approved a partnership between the two organizations, committing annual funding in support of the printing costs of the journal.

The first issue of our collaboration with the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) rolled off the presses in fall 1999, as a double issue. Accompanying the main issue was a supplement entitled Anarchism & Libraries. The second joint issue came out at the end of June, 2000, and included an article on the Durland Alternatives Library and its mission to provide resources that give voice to underrepresented communities.
With the help of DAL in publishing the Progressive Librarian, PLG was able to grow its financial base, which in turn provided funding for significant PLG programming at ALA conferences over the years including Winona LaDuke in 2000 at Chicago and Nicholson Baker in 2001.

In looking at the finances of the annual reports of the library, it looks like DAL stopped contributing to the publication of PL in 2008 when the massive downturn in the economy shrank its endowment significantly and the board again voted but this time to suspend the partnership in order to focus its dwindling resources on the core mission of the library.

One of the projects Lynn and the Alternatives Library were involved with over the years was a literacy project with the youth offenders at the MacCormick Secure Center outside Ithaca NY. These young males incarcerated here came from all walks of life, where sadly some were sentenced for life. It was therefore fitting that the cover of the double issue of PL (no. 19-20) in the Spring of 2002 was done by one of these talented inmates, a drawing in fact that served also as the cover art of the first chapbook of poetry by the residents of MacCormick. Several other books of their wonderful poetry followed over the years. This then is the brief story of this remarkable collaboration between PLG and DAL.

Therefore be it resolved, that the editors of the Progressive Librarian, and the Guild which it represents, wish here to thank Lynn Anderson formally for her long years of work assisting in the publication of the journal. Thanks also to the Board of the Durland Alternatives Library for its generosity and vision and to the almost ten years of a partnership that was both mutually supportive and collaborative for our two hard-scrabble organizations, allowing the journal to grow, PLG to thrive and the magnificent little DAL to publish this the most progressive scholarly journal on librarianship in the world.

The Durland Alternatives Library (DAL) was founded in 1973, during a time of social upheaval over the US involvement in Vietnam and the ongoing civil rights struggles for women, gays and lesbians, and minorities. It was a time of experimentation with different lifestyles and of challenges to the norms that had been so vigorously inculcated through the school system and societal pressures. What began as a collection of books on intentional communities, donated by Reverend Paul Gibbons, grew into a forum for the collection of materials and ideas that had the audacity to question the status quo. Through the generosity of Margaret and Louis Durland, the Anne Carry Durland Memorial Alternatives Library was officially established on the Cornell campus as an affiliate of the university and as a project of the not-for-profit organization, the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy (CRESP), now renamed the Center for Transformative Action (CTA).

While all this was happening in Ithaca, NY, I was doing my own experimenting with an alternative lifestyle, living in a cabin in the Catskill Mountains, about 125 miles from the Ithaca action, with a group of like-
minded people who were trying to figure out a more sustainable way of life. I could not have known it at the time, but as with many paths we choose in our lives, my choice to be a part of a community was a segment of the trajectory that would lead me to Ithaca and eventually to the Durland Alternatives Library. By the time I accepted the position as head of the library, I had a long-time understanding of the library collection which was a bigger, more organized version of my own personal collection. The DAL felt like home.

When I was hired in October, 1991, the staff who had preceded me, had moved the library from its original location in Anabel Taylor Hall, to a larger and better lighted room that allowed for expansion and better organization of the collection. Luckily for me, though the head librarian had already left his position and moved out of town, two staff remained to help me through the transition. Jackie Stahl spent two weeks showing me the basics before leaving to take a job with New Society Publishers, and David Elliott stayed on as my assistant for a number of years and was an incredible support as we experimented with different programs and changes to the collection. I inherited a great advisory board made up of librarians and community members who were open-minded and supportive of me, the library, and the possibilities for programming that I was hoping to implement. Over the years, the board changed, always attracting creative and dynamic people to help create and implement a variety of programs and policies that expanded the work of the DAL. All that the library was able to accomplish during the years I was in charge happened because of the strength of its advisory board and the close ties to the greater organization, CRES, then CTA, a long-time force for social change and justice through its many and varied projects.

My final 6 months as library director was spent putting all the archives of library programs and activities in chronological order and organizing the material for my final annual report, 2011, which is a 20 year history of the work and people who were part of it – staff, advisory board, patrons, programs, collaborations and affiliations, the highlight of which was becoming part of the public library consortium, the Finger Lakes Library System. Details of library activities are included in the annual reports, so I won’t take up space here repeating what is available on the library website—www.alternativeslibrary.org—newly conceived, designed and implemented by the new DAL Director, Ryan Clover-Owens and friends. To see the 2011 and other annual reports, just click on the About the Library link and scroll down to the chronological list.

There have been a couple of stand-out, special collaborations that have been meaningful to the work of the DAL, and, though they do appear in the reports, I would like to mention three here. The first is the long-time collaboration with the Progressive Librarian’s Guild and the inspiration I have gotten through knowing that there are so many progressive thinkers and doers active in libraries across the country. In addition to the people of PLG, I have been grateful for a chance to express some of my thoughts on
the DAL and its programs through the *Progressive Librarian*, in particular, the prison programs which are dear to my heart and have been such an important part of our work over the last 10 years. That leads me to the second collaboration—the DAL work over the years to support enrichment and educational programs for incarcerated youth and its counterpart for adult prisoners, Prisoner Express, conceived and run by Gary Fine, my long time co-worker and Assistant Director of the library. And last but not least, the 1996, DAL twinning with the Bibliothèque Ousmane Sembène* du Yoff (BOSY), through the UNESCO United Nations Network of Associated Libraries, continues to be an important partnership between the DAL and the community library in Yoff, Senegal, West Africa. Throughout the years, the library has supported many programs, but those mentioned above have been on the top of my list of wildly satisfying and rewarding.

So, here it is, 20 years later, and I am both reflecting on an incredibly fun, exciting and challenging time as well as looking forward to the 21st century possibilities that will direct the DAL in the future. You may well ask why anyone would leave such a great job—and, for me, it really was the best job imaginable. The answer is quite simple. My hopes and dreams for the future of the library did not include me. I felt it was time to find the next DAL director, someone who was inspired by the collection and possibilities for the future of the library, and who had the media and technology savvy to move the library into the digital world while still having a deep appreciation for the value of the print collection and other archival materials reflecting the many important social movements that had taken place locally, nationally and globally over the past half century. While I saw the need for someone to expand the programs and function of the library, I clearly knew that it was not me. The time had come to step aside and open up to change and new possibilities, a whole new world of alternatives.

Over the years, I have often been asked what makes the DAL an alternatives library. The good news is that what was once considered alternatives when the library was created, like ecology, sustainable living, gay rights, traditional healing, organic agriculture, diversity, etc., are the new normal. The rest of the good news is that the term alternatives continues to function in the DAL as a challenge to seek out and provide a forum for new ideas, philosophies, and materials—the stuff that is on the edge, exciting, daring to defy the dictates of the status quo. Ryan Clover-Owens is the perfect person to do the work ahead. That is obvious from the new website which reflects his social conscience and work. The truly valuable alternative aspect of the DAL is that it provides a place to explore the less widely heard yet equally important answers to the pressing issues of the times. That has been Ryan’s life work, long before coming to the Durland Alternatives Library. He embodies the spirit of the place, and the physical and collection changes he has already implemented in the DAL feel really good to me when I go there as a patron, now that I actually have time to relax more, read more, and take in the wealth of the collection from a whole new perspective. Beyond that, you can find me in the garden, in
the forest and in the mountains. I wish every one of you the joy and peace that I feel in starting this next phase of my life and absolutely not knowing where it will lead.

* Only because I am writing to librarians, do I take this opportunity to set the record straight. For some bizarre reason, publishers and cataloguers continue to record the books and films of Ousmane Sembene by reversing his name to Sembene Ousmane. Ousmane Sembene himself never corrected this mistake, in fact, found it amusing. Speaking as a librarian, it drives me nuts. Ousmane is a common first name in West Africa, never a last name. So enough with the cultural imperialism.
Collective Bargaining is a Human Right: Union Review for 2011

by Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Article 23. - Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. (United Nations)

Librarians in public sector unions were among those targeted in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Florida in 2011 by Republican governors and legislatures. Workers in education, training, and library occupations had the highest unionization rate in the United States at 36.8 percent (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2012). The most recent mean annual wage reported in the U.S. Occupational Employment Statistics data is $55,300 (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2011). In 2011 a variety of laws were introduced in several states to limit the strength of unions.

The necessity of collective bargaining is underscored by this anti-union legislation. Collective bargaining is recognized internationally in numerous conventions, constitutions, and courts as a human right (Boccardy, 2011). In Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back (Yates, 2012) labor journalists examine the causes and impact of events as workers in Wisconsin shook the nation with their colossal display of solidarity and outrage in 2011 (Monthly Review Press). Kimberly Freeman Brown, Executive Director, American Rights at Work, noted best moments for workers in 2011 were: the 99 percent fights back; Ohio voters repeal SB 5; and NLRB rules help protect workers’ rights (Brown)

Writing about librarians and labor that appeared during 2011 included multiple articles on the Wisconsin protests. Most notably Joyce M. Latham’s essay, “Walkerville, New Democrats & ‘Wishes in the Wind’: Rolling Back
the 20th Century in Wisconsin,” placed the Wisconsin spring 2011 protests in the context of the path to participatory progress in the twentieth century. Dr. Latham focused on the role of the Wisconsin Education Association as well as librarian involvement (Latham, “Walkerville,” 2011). Other coverage of librarians and the Wisconsin protests is included in articles by Barbakoff, Berry, Goldberg, McCabe, and McQueen.

Mike Hall’s entries at the AFL-CIO blog provide details about labor actions in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and elsewhere. They are a detailed and compelling story of action on the front lines. The complete analysis of union response to anti-labor legislation is yet to be written, as push-back by unions and their supporters including recall votes against bad laws and other grassroots protests are still in progress at this writing. (I am writing this summary in January 2012). 2011 is the year that labor took center stage in the fight for income equality.

Gerry W. McEntee, President of AFSCME exclaimed “We haven’t had this kind of energy, this kind of spark, in our union in decades….Look at the crowds that came out to protest in Wisconsin: 50,000, 70,000, 100,000. These people are jazzed up. They’re ready to do battle.” (Greenhouse, “Countering the Siege,” 2011). Emphasizing this direction we find Linkon and Russo asserting the need to organize in a time of class war.

Gerry W. McEntee, president of AFSCME for 30 years announced retirement in June 2012.

Other library and union related publications in 2011 include:

Tracy and Hayashi address perspectives of academic librarians in Florida’s public universities concerning library work and advocacy for workplace rights by professional organisations and the statewide faculty union — the United Faculty of Florida.

Latham and Ditzler investigate the structures of unions within the public library in the United States by highlighting the complexity of composition, variance of relationships to library administration, and the simplicity of mission of the union leadership.

Latham wrote an important historical essay analyzing the history of the South Chicago Branch Library in the context of U.S. cultural change following the Great Depression and the “Age of the CIO (the Congress for Industrial Organization).” (Latham, “Memorial Day to Memorial Library,” 2011).
Worman and Samek discuss the new divide in LIS education—the digital labor shortage: looking at the shifting balance between management and labor in a computerized work environment.

McCook wrote the 2009-2010 review of librarians and unions for *Progressive Librarian* #34-35.

Two major labor history books were published in 2011 that PLG members will find of interest:


The PLG Project, Union Library Workers—a blog of library union news, is written by Braden Cannon as of January 2012. Braden is co-founder of the first Canadian PLG chapter at Dalhousie University in 2008 and co-founder of the chapter in Edmonton. He is an archivist at the Provincial Archives of Alberta and has been a member of the Industrial Workers of the World since 2002.

**January 2011**

§ Union activity was central to PLG action at the ALA Midwinter Meeting 2011. Mark Hudson, member of the coordinating committee of the Progressive Librarians Guild sent an e-mail to members to “Join Unite Here Local 30 on the Picket line at the Manchester Grand Hyatt on Friday, Jan 7th from 3:00-5:00pm and Saturday, January 8th from 11:30 am-1:30 pm.” Mark announced that representatives from UNITE HERE would attend the PLG meeting and a PLG dinner would follow the meeting at the Bandar Restaurant from 7-9. Kei Nagao, research assistant with SEIU Local 721 and Cindy Singer, public librarian in LA County spoke to the group about the rash of library privatizations by LSSI. They have started an anti-privatization movement and awareness campaign called Privatizationbeast.org. The group intends to highlight librarians and libraries, so elected officials don’t make decisions without knowing all the facts. They said that with budgets continuing to fall, this could become a bigger issue in the future. (SRRT Minutes). Letter by Gregory Horn in *American Libraries* provides additional reflection.
§ Resolution at ALA Midwinter relating to labor and unions. The resolution failed at Council, and is discussed at SRRT website: http://libr.org/srrt/news/srrt174.php

Resolution on Notifying Conference and Meeting Attendees of Hotels Named on “Do Not Patronize” Lists

WHEREAS, In 2009, about 25% of librarians were union members, about 24% of library technicians were union members, and about 19% of other education, training, and library workers were union members (Bureau of National Affairs, 2010 Union Membership and Earnings Data Book, Table 8a, Washington, DC);
WHEREAS, The American Library Association (ALA) recognizes the right of library employees to organize and bargain collectively with their employers (ALA Policy 54.11, “Collective Bargaining”);
WHEREAS, The ALA’s essential set of core values for its members include working for “The Public Good” and “Social Responsibility” (ALA Policy 40.1, “Core Values of Librarianship”);
WHEREAS, The fair treatment of workers and their families is a considerable public good and a social responsibility.
WHEREAS, Workers at union establishments, including union hotels, are far more likely than their non-union counterparts to be paid a living wage, to receive employer-paid family medical benefits, and to enjoy freedom from work-related illness and injuries (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Union Members Summary, 2009; National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2009, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2009. Bulletin 2731);
WHEREAS, Convention centers and hotels with labor disputes and picket lines would likely be disruptive settings for many ALA members, and could easily delay or prevent those members from participating in conventions and exhibitions, major meetings, and other organizational activities;
WHEREAS, The First Amendment protects the right of an association and its members to support a union’s request for a boycott. There are no statutes or case law that indicates the First Amendment does not protect the right of an association and its members to support a union’s request for a boycott;
WHEREAS, National and local labor organizations maintain “Do Not Patronize” lists of hotels that are involved in labor disputes, and
WHEREAS, Library employees who believe very strongly in the right of workers to organize, picket, and strike need advance notice of labor disputes so that they do not plan to attend ALA events at a hotel that is on a “Do Not Patronize” list; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That the American Library Association Executive Director, to the extent known at the initial announcement of conference registration and prior to the conference taking place, will inform attendees of conferences and exhibitions if a hotel is on the “Do Not Patronize” list of the local labor body during an ALA event, or is the object of a boycott because of the unfair labor practices of the hotel.

Page 72 Progressive Librarian #38/39
February 2011

§ February may go down in library labor history as the single most intense month of activism since public sector collective bargaining began. Thousands of people protested in Wisconsin. (Latham, Walkerville; Barbakoff; Berry; Goldberg; McCabe; McQueen) opposing the proposed Budget Repair Bill and diminishment of the collective bargaining rights of public employees.

Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda-February 18, 2011

§ Not only did librarians play active roles in protests, but solidarity actions took place and statements were issued by the Library of Congress Guild, the American Library Association, the University of Wisconsin School of Library and Information Studies, the Progressive Librarians Guild and the Wisconsin Library Association.

American Library Association president, Roberta Stevens, made a strong statement on behalf of workers’ rights.

American Library Association President Roberta Stevens on proposed collective bargaining legislation. February 24, 2011.

CHICAGO - As thousands protest proposed collective bargaining legislation in Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana, American Library Association (ALA) President Roberta Stevens released the following statement in support of those standing up for workers’ rights.

“While governments are facing financial challenges, addressing deficits should not serve as an opportunity to strip away the hard-won right of workers to collectively bargain,” said Stevens.

“As library visits continue to soar, with job seekers and families turning to our libraries to gain new skills and free access to education resources, the value of library service and staff should be recognized and protected.

“The ALA supports library employees in seeking equitable compensation and recognizes the principle of collective bargaining as an important element of successful labor-management relations. We affirm the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively with their employers, without fear of reprisal. These are basic workers’ rights that we defend for thousands of academic, public and school library professionals.

Letter of support from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Library and Information Studies. Feb.25, 2011.

…We stand in solidarity with our sister universities throughout the state, and with the teachers, teaching assistants, office workers and many others who clear our roads, guard our prisons, keep us safe, and educate our children. We want a Wisconsin that looks forward, toward a bright future in a 21st century economy. And we also want a civil Wisconsin, where critical decisions concerning hundreds of thousands of citizens aren’t made overnight by fiat.

The Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) stands in solidarity with public employees in Wisconsin and in all other states across the nation where workers’ rights to collective bargaining are under attack by governors and legislatures determined to use budgetary exigencies as a pretext to try to decisively break the back of the public-sector unions as a key part of an ideological agenda which
seeks to fundamentally remake America, taking the country back to a pre-New Deal, pre-Progressive era regime of unfettered, rapacious corporate rule.

The attack on the public employees unions is only part of a broader assault on all aspects of democratic society aimed to turn the clock back on issues like women’s rights, civil rights, education and culture, environmental protection, social welfare and insurance, and the very existence of a public sector. Preventing this overturning of all the gains made through struggle and sacrifice in the previous century will require above all, the mobilization of a broad people’s movement of a kind heralded by the sustained demonstration in Madison and spreading across the country as people begin to awaken to what is at stake.

§ The Wisconsin Library Association opposes the proposed Budget Repair Bill and affirms the collective bargaining rights of public employees. February 28, 2011.

…The Budget Repair Bill is certainly frugal, but it is also certainly unfair. The bill has been promoted as a means of making the compensation of public employees fair when compared with the private sector. Librarians will be glad to direct legislators to the many studies which prove that public employee compensation including pensions and health insurance is below compensation for comparable private sector jobs, both nationally and in Wisconsin. Inaccurately portraying public employees as being overpaid is unfair. It is also unfair to include sweeping policy changes in the areas of collective bargaining rights, Medicaid eligibility, and the sale of public assets in an emergency bill designed to strictly limit debate on these important issues.

The Wisconsin Library Association supports the Wisconsin traditions of frugality and fairness. We are proud to stand with those who oppose this unfair legislation.

Ron McCabe, President-elect, WLA

March 2011

§ Audrey Barbakoff, librarian at the Milwaukee Public Library wrote an editorial for American Libraries: “I’m Not Your Scapegoat. A Unionized Librarian Refuses to Play the Dues-paying Villain” stating: “The poisonous idea that librarians and libraries steal from their communities—and the consequently heighten need to shout our worth from the rooftops—is not confined to the states in which union-busting laws have been introduced. Ideas do not respect legislative borders. Bad budgets and bad legislation will hurt us for a time. Silent acquiescence to the idea we are valueless to our communities will hurt us forever.” Barbakoff drew many comments (March 7, 2011).
§ On March 8, the Librarians Guild of Los Angeles Public Library, Local 2626 were cheered by the success of the Save Our Library Campaign. Director Martin Gómez also credited the Friends groups, the Librarians Guild, and other unions, who came together to advocate for passage of the charter amendment that will secure Los Angeles Public Library’s funding for years to come (Kelley; Librarians Guild).

§ The Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) commended the action taken by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Library and Information Studies, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Faculty Senate, and others who have shown public support of those standing up for workers’ rights. We applaud the support shown for our colleagues in Wisconsin as they seek to protect the right to collective bargaining. March 10, 2011. (ALISE Board of Directors.)


§ The Russell Library of Middletown, Connecticut was the 2011 recipient of the John Sessions Memorial Award [see below] for their successful Business & Career Programs. The Russell Library provides 10 to 12 workshops annually that aim to help individuals find jobs or change their careers. Programs include job searching, interview coaching, computer classes and stress reduction during job searching, among other topics. With this programming, the library has done significant outreach to union and community members by providing services of special interest to the labor community, as well as connecting with local organizations to publicize their services to job seekers. The award committee selected the library as this year’s recipient for these notable efforts that are vital in today’s economic climate and for the value the programs hold for the local labor community. (Russell Library selected, 2011)

§ 2011 marked the 30th anniversary of the John Sessions Memorial Award, an honor presented by the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the American Library Association and named for John Sessions, former American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) co-chair of the AFL-CIO/ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups. The Sessions Award recognizes a library or library system that has made a significant effort to work with the labor community and by so doing has brought recognition to the community through the library of the history and contribution of the labor movement to the development of this country.
In recognition of the 30th Anniversary we note the annual winners from 1981-2011 (John Sessions Memorial Award website).

2011  Russell Library, Middletown, CT, Business & Career Programs
2010  Murray-Green Library at Roosevelt University, Chicago
2009  Wirtz Labor Library
2008  Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Union Affairs, Wayne State University
2007  James B. Carey Library
2006  Joan Cassidy - New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) headquarters librarian for creating the Albert Shanker “Where We Stand” database.”
2005  Bridgeport (CT) Public Library’s Historical Collection
2004  Ruth A. Haas Library, Western Connecticut State University
2003  Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library
2002  The Web Design Group for the Allegheny County Labor Council
2001  Duane G. Meyer Library, Southwest Missouri State University
2000  Lodi Memorial Library of Lodi, New Jersey
1999  Libraries for the Future
1998  The Institute of Industrial Relations Library
1997  Englewood (NJ) Public Library
1996  Metropolitan Detroit Professionals Library, UAW Local 2200
1995  Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries and Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, Labor History Collection, Butte, Montana
1994  Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University
1993  Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington
1991  Department of Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries, Athens, Ohio
1990  Hennepin County Library, Minnetonka, Minnesota
1989  Citizens Library (Peter G. Sullivan, Director), Washington, PA
1988  Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University
1987  Lorain (Ohio) Public Library
1986  Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, New York
1985  Birmingham (Alabama) Public Library
1984  Jackson-George Regional Library System, Pascagoula, Mississippi
1983  State Historical Society of Wisconsin Library
1982  Wagner Labor Archives, Bobst Library, New York University
1981  Muncie (Indiana) Public Library

§ The Holt Labor Library (San Francisco) re-opened in March. The Holt Labor Library was established in 1992 to provide a working library for labor and progressive studies accessible to the general public.
April 2011

§ Thousands seeking to repeal Ohio’s new collective bargaining law rallied April 9th at the Statehouse, vowing to get a referendum on the next ballot and promising to remember the political fight over the measure when they choose which candidates to support in future elections. The crowd was the largest since the debate over Senate Bill 5 began in February. Many also signed up to help collect the 231,000 signatures needed to get a referendum on the November ballot. Melissa Cropper, a librarian for Georgetown schools in southwestern Ohio, said killing the law “is about saving the middle class and protecting the rights of workers. Corporations are getting all the breaks, and they’re trying to balance the budget on the backs of the workers.” (Opponents of new union law rally in Ohio’s capital).

May 2011

§ Union officials with the Wichita teachers union say a plan to replace high school librarians with unlicensed clerks will shortchange students. (Tobias).

June 2011

§ Opponents of Ohio Governor John Kasich’s push to strip public employees of collective bargaining rights needed to collect 231,000 valid signatures to force a referendum that would override anti-labor legislation enacted by Kasich and his allies…. But the labor and community groups that have come together to defend public employees, teachers, schools and services have exceeded it — by more than one million signatures — representing one of the most remarkable examples of petitioning for the redress of grievances — and of popular democracy — in American history. (Nichols).

§ The Florida Education Association filed a lawsuit in June 2011 in Circuit Court in Tallahassee seeking to stop the 3 percent pay cut on teachers, school employees and other workers imposed by the Florida Legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Scott. “This pay cut was used by legislative leadership to make up a budget shortfall on the backs of teachers, law-enforcement officers, firefighters and other state workers,” said FEA President Andy Ford.

§ Public Librarian Association of Youngstown, affiliated with Service Employees International Union District 1199. The board of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County has ratified an agreement with its librarians that includes a pay freeze and reductions in vacation and sick time. (New Library Pact, June 11)

§ Over 250,000 New York City Residents Voiced Support for their Public Libraries! June 16, 2011, Queens Library, New York Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library gave officials over a 1/4 million petitions and
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postcards signed by the residents of New York City. Local 1321 members held rallies throughout Queens to highlight the drastic impact these cuts would have on public libraries and library users responded in a big way. (Queens Library Guild)

§ The American Library Association Conference in June 2011 featured several programs reflecting aspects of labor and unionism.

Library History Roundtable (LHRT) Research Forum

Ellen Pozzi, Rutgers University, “The History of the Business Branch of the Newark Free Public Library.”


David M. Hovde and John W. Fitch, “Reading for Those Who ‘Labor with Their Hands and Earn Their Living by the Sweat of Their Brows.’”

LIBRARIES FIGHT BACK! Organized by: AFL-CIO/ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups. Program examined inventive ways that library workers combat the erroneous belief that their work is “nonessential” or “extra” and provided tools for those who wish to fight back for their library community. A special focus was the relationship between union advocacy and library advocacy. Speakers: Elissa C. Cadillic, President of AFSCME Council 93 Local 1526 Boston Public Library; Amy Fry, Bowling Green State University (BGSU which recently voted to unionize), and Jason Neely of the Career and Business Resources Librarian at the Russell Library in Middletown, Connecticut.

July 2011

§ Toronto Public Library’s union launched a campaign called Project Rescue on July 13 to fight the threat of outsourcing. “The cuts would be devastating to the library system,” says union president Maureen O’Reilly, who’s running Project Rescue. She says the library’s budget has already been cut 10 per cent since amalgamation. (Toronto Public Library Workers Union).

§ Utah teachers held a rally to Save Our Schools. A crowd of about 50 people gathered at the Salt Lake City Main Library July 29 to rally around
elected leaders and activists who talked about taking back schools from politicians and corporate interests. The group then marched to the nearby State Office of Education. (Schencker).

August 2011

§ Philip Levine, best known for his “big-hearted, Whitmanesque poems about working-class Detroit,” is the new poet laureate. He was selected from a long list of nominees by James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, who said, “He’s the laureate, if you like, of the industrial heartland.” (McGrath). Levine is author of many books of poetry including What Work Is: Poems (1991). In 2010 Levine’s poem “Library Days” appeared in M.L. Liebler’s anthology, Working Words: Punching the Clock and Kicking out the Jams (Coffee House Press).

§ Unionized librarians and archivists at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, set a strike deadline for September 8 — the first day of classes at UWO — as bargaining continues with university administration over staffing and compensation. UWO librarians and archivists, represented by the UWOFa (University of Western Ontario Faculty Association) bargaining unit, have been without a contract since June 30, and have been in ongoing negotiations with UWO administration since April. (Rapp)

September 2011

§ The University of Western Ontario (UWO) Board of Governors and the UWO Faculty Association Librarians and Archivists (UWOFA-LA) bargaining unit announced that they have ratified a new collective agreement, in which the 51 librarians and archivists represented by UWOFa-LA will receive a 1.5 percent base salary increase each year for four years. The agreement ends a strike by the librarians and archivists that began on September 8, the first day of classes at UWO. (Rapp, September 23).

§ Sixty workers at the New York Public Library were awarded a total of $200,000 in retroactive Sunday overtime pay under an arbitration ruling. The arbitrator ordered the library to reinstate its longtime practice of premium pay for voluntary overtime work on Sundays and give the affected members back pay from Aug. 1, 2010, when the union filed the grievance, to July 19, the date of the decision. AFSCME. DC 37. Local 1930 (Arbiter).

§ On September 25th, delegates from Vermont’s AFL-CIO State Labor Council elected Ben Johnson as President. Ben is a librarian at Vermont Technical College, a member of the Vermont State Colleges Faculty Federation, AFT local 3180, and head of United Professions AFT Vermont. In a time of unprecedented attacks on the middle class, working people, and unions, new Vermont AFL-CIO President Ben Johnson called on members
of all unions to keep organizing. “The only way for us to move forward is organize a mass grassroots movement to change what’s politically possible.” (AFL-CIO state labor council).

October 2011

§ PLG Statement on Occupy Wall Street. 10/06/11. The Progressive Librarians Guild issued a statement supporting the Occupy Wall Street protest and the movement it has sparked. “PLG applauds the commitment and creativity being shown in providing a place for the articulation of opposition to the whole apparatus of the one-sided class war against workers, unions, the poor, immigrants, minorities, people of color, women, students and other sectors...We note that the Occupy Wall Street community has seen the need to create a ‘library’ as part of its essential infrastructure...We call upon members of the Progressive Librarians Guild and all librarians of conscience to assist the movement with resources and technical aid.”

§ The University of New Hampshire and its faculty reached an impasse in salary negotiations for the second time in a year, as the school struggles to cope with a steep cut in state funding. The university and a union representing its 630 tenured and tenure-track professors will now go to mediation in an effort to agree on a new four-year contract, Deanna Wood, a reference librarian and president of the faculty union, said many faculty members may opt not to accept the contract that has been offered. (McClure)

§ Chicago librarians, clerks, and pages filed petitions to Mayor Rahm Emanuel in opposition to cuts outlined in his proposed 2012 city budget. Dubbed “Story Time at City Hall,” library employees read Halloween books to children outside the mayor’s office in City Hall. They presented thousands of signatures against reducing library staff by more than 550 positions and against cutting hours that would close branches for two half-days per week. “They are trying to cut $10 million from the libraries, but a prior appropriation already put $11 million in library building and renovations,” said Anders Lindall, a representative of AFSCME. “They’re going to have nicer libraries with less services and less stuff.” (Balde and Kaplan, 10/31/2011).

§ Carl Sorrell, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) local union representing city librarians, argued that “without the Chicago Public Library, the city of Chicago won’t be as great as it is.” On Halloween morning, several dozen pre-school and early elementary-age children, many in their costumes, sat on the floor outside Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s fifth floor City Hall office. There they listened excitedly to a group of librarians read children’s books, such as *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Go Away, Big Green Monster*. The “green monster” in their real lives — aka Mayor Emanuel — recently proposed a budget that would cut a third of the full-time equivalent library staff. (Moberg).
November 2011

§ The Detroit Public Library Commission voted on November 15 to close four branches effective December 22. The decision will leave the city’s library system with 20 locations. “In closing libraries, it is always with despair,” said Jo Anne Mondouney, the library’s director. “In many areas, the library is an iconic place for the community, and we recognize that. So, to close any library is a painful thing,” she said... “I’m heartened to hear that our director states that there will be no more layoffs as a result of the commission’s decision,” said Laurie Townsend, who has worked at the library for 34 years and is president of UAW Local Union (LU) 2200, which represents 106 employees, including librarians. The library has five bargaining units represented by three unions: LU 2200, AFSCME 1259, and AFSCME 1231. (Kelley, Detroit).

§ New! Hashtag for Union Librarians news #unionlibrarians (twitter).

§ Workers win in Ohio. In the end, more Ohioans cast votes against Governor Kasich’s top initiative than they did for Governor Kasich a year earlier. It was a blow away election, with workers winning 61.3% of the vote, including the majority of the vote in 82 out of 88 counties. Participation was higher in this off-year general election than in any other in the history of Ohio. (Ryan).

December 2011

§ Facing a $150,000 shortfall for 2012, the City of Plattsburgh (NY) Library Board of Directors has opted to cut four employees. The move is not sitting well with the union. “We don’t agree with their numbers, and we have asked them to sit down with us before they do anything, and they haven’t,” said Denise Nephew, president of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees union. (LoTempio, 2011). Several weeks later, however, AFSCME accepted an agreement proposed by Councilor Tim Carpenter (D-Ward 1), unanimously approving a four-year contract. AFSCME President Denise Nephew said. The new contract, OK’d by the Library Board and pending approval by the Common Council, will prevent layoffs of four library employees.(Clermont, 2011).

§ Fresno County, CA. The Board of Supervisors imposed a nine percent pay cut on more than four-thousand workers on 12/6/2011. The county has imposed a nine percent pay cut on more than four thousand county workers in the Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.). The union represents most county non-management workers, janitors, clerks, librarians, and social workers. Their pay ranges from $20,000 to $60,000 per year. (Haagenson)
Norma Rae named to the National Film Registry.
December 28, 2011. (Library of Congress)

“There is Power in a Union”

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Early, Steve. Goodbye to the ‘Middle-Class’? A Lesson for Labor From Occupy Wall Street. In These Times (November 15, 2011). http://www.inthesetimes.com/working/entry/12299/good-bye_to_the_middle-class_a_lesson_for_labor_from_occupy_wall_street/


Horn, Gregory. I am lodging a formal complaint to ALA’s leadership about its choice to use the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego for Midwinter. It is a hotel that organized labor is asking people to boycott due to labor practices. *American Libraries* 42, no. 3/4 (March/April 2011): 6-7.


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Project Rescue. Toronto Public Library. OurPublicLibrary.to is a network of people dedicated to preserving the integrity of one of the world’s greatest public library systems, the Toronto Public Library. Toronto Public Library Workers Union. http://ourpubliclibrary.to/


Sessions (John) Memorial Award. Website. http://www.ala.org/rusa/awards/sessions


Twitter. Got news about unions and librarians. For twitter use #unionlibrarians.


Wisconsin Library Association. ALA Statement in Support of Workers’ Rights to Collectively Bargain. Note: On 2/28/11, the WLA Board voted unanimously to endorse ALA’s Statement in Support of Worker’s Rights to Collectively Bargain.


JOINT CONFERENCE OF LIBRARIANS OF COLOR (JCLC)

The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC), September 19 – 23, Kansas City, MO, is sponsored by the five caucus associations of color of the American Library Association (ALA). The conference will serve as a forum for library staff from all types of libraries and backgrounds to discuss issues of diversity in U.S. libraries.

The JCLC will offer four days of tracked programming for a wide audience of attendees who serve diverse populations. The conference will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on how to better serve diverse communities, offering 75 sessions that will foster discussions on best practices, collection development, recruitment, early literacy advocacy and delivery of service. Speakers include Emmy winner Sonia Manzano, best-selling authors Sharon Flake, and Lauren Myracle and many others.

The conference sponsors are the American Indian Library Association, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, the Chinese American Librarians Association, and the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking.

The American Indian Library Association (AILA)

The American Indian Library Association (AILA) is a membership action group that addresses the library-related needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. AILA was founded in 1979 in conjunction with the White House Pre-Conference on Indian Library and Information Services on or Near Reservations. AILA members are individuals and institutions interested in the development of programs to improve library and information services in all types of libraries that serve Indian communities.

Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA)

Founded in 1980, the Asian/Pacific Librarians Association (APALA) was incorporated in Illinois in 1981 and formally affiliated with the ALA in 1982. A predecessor of APALA, the Asian American Librarians Caucus (AALC), was organized in 1975 as a discussion group of the ALA Office for Library Outreach Services reflecting the interest in library services to minority communities and professional support of librarians of minority ancestry that prevailed in the ALA in the 1960s and 70s. APALA and AALC before it was organized/founded by librarians of diverse Asian/Pacific ancestries committed to working together toward a common goal: to create an organization that would address the needs of Asian/Pacific American
librarians and those who serve Asian/Pacific American communities.

**Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA)**

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) serves as an advocate for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services and resources to the nation’s African American community. Founded by ALA Past President E. J. Josey in 1970, the organization provides leadership for the recruitment and professional development of African American librarians, and also serves as a clearinghouse for information about Black Librarians in promoting their wider participation at all levels of the profession.

**Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA)**

Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) started in 1973 as Mid-West Chinese American Librarians Association, a regional organization in Illinois. A year later, Chinese Librarians Association was formed in California in 1974. In 1976, Mid-West Chinese American Librarians Association was expanded to a national organization as Chinese American Librarians Association. By 1979, CALA had five chapters in Northeast, Mid-West, Atlantic, Southwest and California respectively. Chinese American Librarians Association and Chinese Librarians Association were merged in 1983. The merged organization retains CALA’s English name and Chinese Librarians Association’s Chinese name (hua ren tu shu guan yuan xie hui).

**National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA)**

Dr. Arnulfo Trejo founded REFORMA in 1971. As an affiliate of the ALA, REFORMA has actively sought to promote the development of library collections to include Spanish-language and Latino oriented materials. The organization works to recruit bilingual and bicultural library professionals and support staff, and the development of library services and programs that meet the needs of the Latino community. REFORMA supports efforts to educate the U.S. Latino population in regards to the availability and types of library services, as well as efforts to preserve existing library resource centers serving the interests of Latinos.

**Joint Conference of Librarians of Color : Talking Point**

Key messages

- The most recent Census analysis tells us that minority groups make up an increasing share of the population in nearly every state. Every year, libraries expand their collections and services to meet the changing needs of our users.
The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) will serve as an opportunity for library staff from all types of libraries and backgrounds to come together to share successful strategies on how we can best serve our increasingly diverse communities.

The goal of the conference is to network and share strategies, effective practices, and expertise on how to better serve increasingly diverse populations.

Because libraries offer free access to all, they bring opportunity to all.

To be their best, our libraries and profession must reflect both the communities we serve and the larger global community.

About the JCLC

The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) is a conference for everyone!

Hundreds of library staffers from all types of libraries and backgrounds, diversity advocates and educators will gather in Kansas City, Missouri from Sept. 19 – 23, to network and exchange ideas on how to better serve increasingly diverse populations.

The conference’s theme is Gathering at the Waters, Celebrating Stories, Embracing Communities and includes 75 sessions featuring speakers, skills building workshops, research based panels and networking opportunities.

Conference speakers include Emmy winner Sonia Manzano, best-selling authors Sharon Flake, and Lauren Myracle among others.

Key issues of discussion will include advocacy, outreach, multicultural collection development, diversity best practices, recruitment, delivery of service and much more.

The JCLS is sponsored by the five ethnic caucuses of the American Library Association that include the American Indian Library Association (AILA); Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA); Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA); Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA); and National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA).
Libraries & Diversity

- The strength of our nation has always been the diversity of its people. The strength of libraries is the diversity of their collections and their commitment to serving people of diverse backgrounds.

- Children and adults of all ages need to see themselves when they walk into the library.

- Today’s libraries provide a wide range of opportunities for people with diverse needs and interests. These include cultural heritage collections, materials in alternate formats such as large print, multilingual Internet training, bilingual story-hours, English as Second Language classes and many other creative and resourceful programs.

Minority librarian recruitment

- Founded in 1997, the Spectrum Initiative’s major drive is to recruit applicants and award scholarships to American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students for graduate programs in library and information studies.

- Since 1998, more than 700 new librarians of color have entered the profession and continue to receive leadership and professional support through the Spectrum Initiative.

- The Spectrum Initiative was awarded nearly $1 million in 2004 to expand its outreach efforts, and just this year again received funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services for a new Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship. The fellowship will provide full tuition support and stipends to 10 full-time library and information science (LIS) doctoral students for all four years of study.

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Declaration of the Occupation of New York City

This document was accepted by the NYC General Assembly on September 29, 2011. Translations: French, Slovak, Spanish, German, Italian, Arabic, Portuguese. http://www.nycga.net/resources/declaration/

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.
They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.
They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one’s skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.
They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.
They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.
They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.
They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.
They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers’ healthcare and pay.
They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.
They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.
They have sold our privacy as a commodity.
They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.  
They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.  
They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.  
They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.  
They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.  
They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people’s lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.  
They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.  
They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.  
They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.  
They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.  
They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.  
They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.*

To the people of the world,

We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!

*These grievances are not all-inclusive.
PLG Statement on Censorship and the Tucson Unified School District

Recent media reports regarding the mass removal of books from classrooms in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) demand a response from librarians, charged by our professional ethics to oppose censorship and restriction on information.

After reviewing publicly available materials documenting the process leading up to this TUSD action, the Progressive Librarians Guild believes a challenge should be issued regarding not only the onerous situation, but the politics underlying the decision to cut District’s Mexican American Studies program (MAS) program.

At issue is the supposed violation by TUSD of Arizona state law prohibiting classes in public or charter schools from instructions that:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States Government
2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people
3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.

A.R.S. §15-112

The books in question include the following titles used in conjunction with courses taught throughout the TUSD as part of the District’s MAS program:

- Critical Race Theory by Richard Delgado
- 500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures edited by Elizabeth Martinez
- Message to AZTLAN by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales
- Chicano! The History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement by Arturo Rosales
- Occupied America: A History of Chicanos by Rodolfo Acuna
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire
- Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years by Bill Bigelow

On December 27, 2011, Lewis D. Kowal, Administrative Law Judge, ruled in favor of Arizona’s Department of Education Superintendent’s allegation that MAS courses violated the law, and on January 10, 2012, the Board of TUSD passed a resolution requiring the immediate suspension of MAS classes. Had TUSD not suspended the program state funds would have been withdrawn from the District.
The Board’s resolution did not address the removal of books from classrooms, yet TUSD officials removed and stored books even while one class was in session. News of this mass removal of books from schools traveled, and TUSD found itself confronted with accusations that it had “banned books” from the schools.

On January 17, 2012, the District issued a statement saying, “Tucson Unified School District has not banned any books as has been widely and incorrectly reported.” The press release described the removal as simply a move of the books to storage and further noted that all of the titles removed from classrooms were available to students through TUSD school libraries. A check of the online catalog verified that at least one copy of each title is, indeed, available.

The fact that these titles are available through the school libraries has minimal bearing, however, on the extreme and censorious behavior of school officials in at least three respects:

1. Neither A.R.S. §15-112 nor the TUSD Board resolution requires the removal of books in order to set the District into compliance with the law.
2. The act of removing books from a classroom during a class session clearly has a chilling effect on students and the entire educational community. Further, removal of materials from classrooms impinges on teacher freedom of speech.
3. TUSD can quibble over whether or not it banned any books, but it certainly cannot state that it did not ban all the courses being taught through the MAS program. Compliance with the order to suspend the program is in itself an act of censorship and a violation of academic freedom.

Regarding the political aspects of this situation, A.R.S. §15-112 was signed into law in the spring of 2010 on the heels of the state’s anti-immigration law, considered by many to be racist and neocolonial. The law is currently being reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court. PLG considers A.R.S. §15-112 to have arisen from a climate of racist sentiment among lawmakers in the State of Arizona. This sentiment has been promoted by Judge Kowal in his siding with Department of Education expert witnesses against TUSD and MAS, which placed TUSD “between a rock and a hard place”—either suspend MAS or lose state funding for the entire school district. Given the budgetary problems facing school districts across the nation, TUSD’s decision to sacrifice MAS over funding is understandable, but unacceptable.

TUSD is aware its MAS program did not teach “racial resentment” but historical literacy. It is also is aware there is absolutely nothing in the MAS curriculum that affronts civic values or clashes with classes that teach “ethnic solidarity.” In the face of absurd, draconian laws, the only ethical position to take is one of complete opposition. Today’s capitulation to
A.R.S. §15-112 will be tomorrow’s capitulation to the next absurd, racist law enacted by the Arizona legislature. The law should be abolished.

The Progressive Librarians Guild opposes the actions of all officials in the State of Arizona responsible for the passage, enforcement, and/or compliance with A.R.S. §15-112.

Progressive Librarians Guild
Coordinating Committee (PLG-CC)
January 21, 2012

Bibliography


First, a few huge truth-in-reviewing notes: Norris’ book, on first blush, would seem to significantly overlap my own Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy: Marking the Limits of Neoliberalism, to be published by Scarecrow Press/Rowman & Littlefield this year. Second note: both volumes are revisions and updates of dissertations (note bene on keyword searching: Norris’ dissertation did not come up when I looked to find other similar work at the beginning of my project). Third, and this is the good news: both of us have taken very different approaches to the topic, and the differences are very instructive. Much like jazz, we are playing many of the same notes, but holding them differently and longer with different ends in mind. Now to Norris’ book.

The table of contents gives as good an idea as anything of what the books covers, and how: Introduction: Consumerism in Our Own Schoolyards; 1) The Origins and Nature of Consumerism; 2) Consuming Schooling: Whose Schools Are They?; 3) Hannah Arendt: Consuming the Polis; 4) Jean Baudrillard: Consuming Signs; 5) Resisting Consuming: Ruin or Renewal; Conclusion: “What Is to Come.” Instead of mechanically walking through the book, I’d like to discuss some salient points and strengths of Norris’ work, and some areas where we diverge a little. The first thing to say is that Norris’ overview of the origins and nature of consumption is probably as good a brief overview of the topic as I’ve read. He approached the issue and the sweep of the literature differently than my own related chapter, and I found it very productive to read and a real help to reflect on the phenomenon, as well as a guide to some of the literature I was not as familiar with. And he makes an important series of clarifications very useful for any of us who would wish to think about and discuss consumption and consumerism (quoting British scholar Frank Trentmann to begin): “‘By nature all human beings are consumers, but the political meaning and identity attached to consumption varies in history.’ In this book the word consumerism refers more broadly to the larger ideological framework, while consumption refers to more specific individual acts” (p. 16). In other words, his work models the way to think and talk about the ideology of consumerism without the need to denigrate or attack specific acts of consumption. How many of our conversations about this topic have devolved into defensiveness about the purchase of a new coat or music recording, etc. when the real issue lies in the ideology that surrounds it? This alone is a significant contribution for readers of this journal.
Aside from the theoretical and practical interests in understanding, analyzing, and perhaps countering consumption, readers of this journal should be interested in an analysis that deals with the larger context that envelops much of the field of librarianship. As I have written elsewhere, education and librarianship are largely (and productively) symbiotic in both practical terms and in the theoretical-analytical framing of democratic theory. There are often parallel examples or an important point for both institutions best illustrated by one field. Their separation tends to isolate each to their detriment, and both will benefit from a mutual theorization and engagement with broader themes. Such entanglements are productive and, conversely, maintaining divisions and distinctions are counterproductive and we share a fate more common than those on the top rungs in both fields might want to admit. Classrooms are never far from my mind when I write of libraries, and libraries are never far from my mind when I write of classrooms. Both are important parts of an ensemble of educative institutions in democratic societies. We separate them theoretically or separate them as classes of institutions at our peril. One of those common interests is democracy and it’s functioning and non-functioning.

Toward that end, Norris turns to and grounds much of his analysis and critique of consumerism in schools (and he provides a fine overview of that phenomenon as well) vis-à-vis democracy in the work of Hannah Arendt. Arendt is both a seductive and a difficult thinker: one can become immersed in her sometimes entrancing words and concepts and lose or blur some of the key distinctions she wishes to make. Norris provides as clear a brief overview of Arendt as I’ve read. This too is worth the read alone, and would be an excellent introduction to Arendt’s political ideas for the beginner. Her relevance to the topic at hand can be summed up as her analysis that “Consumption becomes a self-perpetuating dynamic: just as the rise of consumption erodes the public realm, consumerism is strengthened when we are denied meaningful political life” (p. 103). Unpacking what that means in terms of democracy, schools, and democratic action considerably deepens the political meaning of that culminating statement (something I too obviously have an interest and stake in advocating), and Norris pulls it off. I have quibbles with his treatment of Baudrillard, but I understand why he included his analysis: “commercial discourse [is] a language of signals,” and Baudrillard takes us into the process whereby such signals “animate” an object for sale and it is thus “endowed with simulated meaning” and the consequent “re-enchantment of the world through animating objects and turning them into signs” (pp. 116-117). Norris does acknowledge the controversies and extremes to which Baudrillard pushed his language, and how silly and/or hopeless some of it became, but his conceptual tie to Arendt saves it. He will not abandon Arendt’s positing of our ability to act and think politically and to disrupt hegemonic forces (her concept of natality), but he uses Baudrillard to warn us that “it is not a question of being for or against ‘agency’ but a need to address a deeper problem of how little space is left for enacting such a concept” (p. 141). Combining those two, “it follows that the most effective way to engage consumerism is through critically investigating the language of consumerism” (p. 157).
My quibble is that Baudrillard could have been more selectively read: the result of wending through the more extreme ends of his analyses tends to reinforce the hegemony of consumerism. In the end though, Norris makes a fine contribution to the work of extracting the political and democratic meaning of our ideology of consumerism.
Lite Ethnography: An Essay Review
by John Buschman

The University of Rochester has been a veritable cottage industry of studies on student and faculty behaviors and research practices. It is perhaps time that these be reviewed together, since they form such a juggernaut in the profession. Why are they here characterized as a juggernaut? The first thing one might notice when casting one’s eyes upon the citations provided below is that all – yes, all – of them are published by ALA. In other words, these studies literally have the imprimatur of our largest professional association, not to mention their investments in editing, producing, and promoting these publications. Second, these publications have gotten pretty respectful reviews in the field. Third, the cottage industry is not limited to books—there is a plethora of associated journal articles out there putting forward the Rochester story and methodology and perspective. Fourth, this approach has generated publicity — lots of it. For instance, the librarian leading the studies has been called the “Michael Jordan of librarians” (http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/mar/22/new-university-librarian-headed-to-yale/). The Chronicle of Higher Education has featured the Rochester projects – most notably in a splashy, color-photo-on-the-front-page-of-the-Information-technology-section article called “An Anthropologist in the Library” – and mentioned or profiled the studies and/or the lead librarian with frequency. Finally, there is a claim that Rochester is approaching this from a unique and intelligent research perspective heretofore not utilized, underutilized, or not utilized intelligently. The royal road to learning about inquirers and researchers and library users is paved with ethnography:

• “All of the librarians who volunteered to conduct faculty interviews attended a short training session in ethnographic interview techniques with the libraries’ lead anthropologist. An interview protocol provided us with the main points” (2007b, 2);
• “The undergraduate research project … focused on how [they] did their academic work. To address this topic, the project … used a mixture of methodologies” adapted from the in-house ethnographer/anthropologist characteristic of contemporary ethnography in modern settings “to develop a holistic picture of the lives of our students” (2007a, viii);
• “What we lacked was information about … the way in which people conduct [research] on their own, ‘in the wild’” (2011, 13).

I want to say here and now that designing library spaces, services, and tools without regard to the skills, habits, and desires of those who use libraries has always been nuts. This is not a call for a return to the good old days when “they” had to come to “us” and learn “our” tools and methods. But the Rochester publications represent far less than the hype around
them. They are shot through with and based on the shibboleths of what I called “generationalism” where products and their associated marketing categories are lazily and conveniently reified into discreet and “unique” demographics with World Historic Importance: “Academic librarians cannot rest on the knowledge that Net Generation students do things differently. To continue to support the teaching, learning, and research needs of students through active participation in the creation, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge, we need to know both how they are different and why” (2007a, 96). This tiresomely goes on throughout the three volumes (2007a passim; 2007b, 63-71, 79-83; 2011, 10-12), and it represents the kind of fake “insight” that the Beloit Mindset lists tout every year. Imagine, if you will, an equivalent list when someone over 40 or 50 went to school: “The people starting college this fall were born in 1960. They have no meaningful recollection of the Kennedy era. They were not conceived when the Korean War was waged, but were alive throughout all of the Vietnam War. The Pope was a liberal when they were born. They can’t remember a time before instant coffee or color television or cheap portable transistor radios. They never knew a time when cars didn’t have vinyl seats.” See how stupid that sounds? Is that really an accurate way to describe you or your entire generation – and then design a library system and facility around what that description says about your research and “learning styles”?

However, it is the claim to intellectual legitimacy through the sophisticated use of ethnography that gives the Rochester studies their street cred. Ethnography generally has two broad meanings: first, it is a method that generally involves fieldwork over time through the method of “living with and living like” those who are studied; second, it involves representing the results in writing and analysis, laying bare the empirical bases and reasoning process for the conclusions drawn about the culture and its practices. The Rochester projects tend notably toward the use of “lite ethnography” as it is called in the unembarrassed parlance of the business people who want to get at marketing information as quickly and efficiently as possible. Even that marketing literature notes that ethnography generally means “participant observation over an extended period in the ‘field,’ [and] entails more than simple description,” but the point of the lite version is to mine information produced by consumers “to focus on what they feel is important about their brand experience,” and so shortcuts are justified. Basically, lite ethnography boils down to “watching customers as they select or use a product or service” and glean marketing and consumer-behavior insights from observation:

Now think about a Hummer, or a bottle of $300-per-ounce perfume. Do we really need these items in order to continue thriving, even surviving, in our daily lives? They play more into our sense of self-worth from an outwardly-referenced point of view. And tapping into this sense of self-worth, or the more fundamental, unarticulated needs that we’re not even aware of, is where ethnography works very well.
The Rochester approach is basically characterized by the combination of lite ethnography and the generationalism previously noted. There are brave words written about how library spaces and services are intelligently shaped and for what ends:

When students draw an ideal library space and the drawing includes a massage room, our response is not to run out and buy almond oil. We understand the massage room to represent the student’s need to feel comfortable or to feel that s/he belongs in the space….Our aim is to understand how students work and how they might work better so that they can reach the standards set by the faculty and so that the university can work toward its mission….This, for us, is user-centered design (2007b, 82).

But the write-ups and interviews around the studies (particularly in “An Anthropologist in the Library”) are quite open and frank about their methods and the desire to capture a fair share of the student market:

The driving force behind the study isn’t simply curiosity about undergraduates….This is a type of consumer research, borrowed from the corporate world. Several years ago, Rochester was contemplating hiring a designer to rework some of its Web sites when [a new hire] offered a suggestion: Why not hire someone to study customers and their work environments, as Xerox had when he worked there…[basically to do] applied anthropology, the process of taking the methods of anthropology and using them in consumer studies and product design….? The study changed the way the library markets itself to students. The library was once merely a stop on the freshman-orientation tour. Now, after seeing how involved moms and dads are in homework, the library holds a breakfast for parents during orientation. “We can see from the drawings that they are so influential in the students’ lives, and the students aren’t ready to hear from us,” Ms. Gibbons says. Parents should leave with the message that experts in the library can help students with research (Carlson 2007).

Those brave words above seem to ring a little hollow, so better order up that massage oil!

In sum, when you contrast the Rochester “intellectual approach” with that of Scott Bennett for example and his way of designing space around educational missions and outcomes,7 Rochester’s approach is decidedly thin, anti-intellectual even. It looks more like the current “don’t let expertise or even what you know get in the way” management faddishness than a serious stab at research to shape an educative institution for a long-range good.8 Truth be told, the Rochester approach isn’t a new or unique: a thorough form of anthropological study and analysis of libraries has been done, and done well recently several times.9 The Rochester publications
represent a lot of publicity for the librarians doing the studies and for Rochester and I tend to think of them as a series properly titled “Studying the Studies of Students (Studying), Studying Faculty, All Their Combined Research, and Designing Library Spaces and Tools and Other Cool Stuff.” There are nuggets to glean from them, but use with caution – and a fully-charged b.s. detector.

Notes
This Book is Overdue: how librarians and cybrarians can save us all,
by Marilyn Johnson (HarperCollins 2010)
and Library: an unquiet history, by Matthew Battles (Norton 2003)
reviewed by David Lesniaski

found it interesting that Sanford Berman was one point of contact between these two seemingly very different books. Johnson’s book, on one level, is a thematically arranged set of anecdotes about librarians—primarily public librarians—in the US today, while Battles takes us on an epic tour of libraries from his own Widener Library at Harvard to the Alexandrian libraries, backtracking to Mesopotamia, then passing through China, various times and places in Europe and the Americas, only to end up back at Widener, musing over the LC classification number for his book. Not to be outdone by Battles’ musings on Panizzi (the systematizer), Dewey (the person) or LC (the system), Johnson devotes a chapter to a trying implementation of a new online system in her own public library consortium, and the earliest citation in her bibliography is Lubetzky’s 1953 Cataloging Rules and Their Principles.

Neither book, of course, is about cataloging or catalogers, who here happen to be common actors on two very different stages. Yet, in the end, neither book is really about what their titles or tables of contents might suggest.

Both books have in common their inception through other works. Battles’ Unquiet began with a 2000 Harper’s article (“Lost in the Stacks: the Decline and Fall of the Universal Library”) while Overdue was inspired, according to Johnson, by her prior work on obituaries (“the most engaging obit subjects were librarians” (p. 5) which inspired in her the idea that “libraries were where it was happening—wide open territory for innovators, activists and pioneers.” (p. 7)).

Johnson begins in the very real frontier town of Deadwood, South Dakota, with a description of the town’s librarian and archivist, then moves to the Second Life version of Deadwood, complete with its library, librarian and community. For the remainder of the book Johnson moves between the world of physical libraries with their buildings, books, users, boards of directors, librarians and technologists, and the virtual worlds many of these librarians inhabit (or in some cases, populate). From the two Deadwoods Johnson brings us back to her own public library, over to Rome, to New York Public Library, and twice up the road to Connecticut, with intermediary stops in descriptions of information and technology overload, Second Life, librarians’ blogs, the PATRIOT Act, archiving, and radical reference, among others. In each of her vignettes her focus is on the librarians she encountered in these journeys, and her pages give life to their stories. Yet these are not randomly selected tales: she tells us (p. 10) that her book “can be read as a journey into increasingly activist and visionary forms of library work” with her focus on, in her view, a chaotic world of information
that demands increasingly creative efforts to capture it, organize it, and navigate it. And librarians are the ones to trust these endeavors to: after all, “Civil servants and servants of civility, they had my back. They would be whatever they needed to be...information professionals, teachers, police, community organizers, computer technicians...or...guardians of my peace” (p. 252). So, in the end, and presaged from the beginning, her work is about ethos and ethics of librarianship as expressed through the librarians she highlights in her narratives of libraries and technology.

Along with the heroes, there are villains, but in many cases Johnson hedges on her initial judgments. For example, the librarians (and others) primarily responsible for the “democratization” of the research branch of the New York Public Library are lauded for their foresight and technological savvy, yet much of that chapter is devoted to describing the downsizing of the research function of the library, its special collection, and the host of special relationships created by that unique mixture of collections, librarians and users. Her conclusion? “I was an old-fashioned writer who loved the ancient books summoned via pneumatic tubes, the archives, the quiet. I had found something rare there: an inexhaustible wonder” (p. 211). Yet on the next page she continues: “But I couldn’t deny that there was something happening in the room...that thrilled me...A fresh crowd for the old library, new, alive, and up-to-date...” This is as close as Johnson comes to expressing what it is both about the traditional library she sees being displaced (sometimes) and the technology that replaces it (sometimes). It’s not merely that the old is comfortable; it provided a certain experience that she does not see replicated in any other setting. Yet she also posits that there really is no choice: if libraries, and librarians, are to flourish, the “new” has to find its place even if that qualitatively changes or removes the experiences she so dearly valued. Or...does it? The penultimate chapter posits the accidental nature of archives and archiving (real papers! letters! poetry!) before moving on to...wait for it...digital archives and the democratic functions they serve.

The only villain Johnson does not give second thoughts to is the U.S. Government. She tells in detail the experiences of the “Connecticut Four” and their principled defense of patron privacy in the face of an FBI request for patron records under the guise of the PATRIOT Act. As she notes (p. 70): “Few principles rouse librarians more than the right of free access to information and the right to privacy in our choices” and concludes, quoting a member of the librarians’ ACLU defense team, that “Congress won’t follow laws, the president won’t follow laws, the FBI won’t follow laws but we still have our librarians.”

So even though this book is story after story of librarians and technology, Johnson’s real message is that libraries are a public good and librarians are defenders of that public good. The colorful stories make great reading, but as she notes at the beginning of her tale (p. 12), “So where does one go in such a wobbly, elusive, dynamic, confusing age? Wherever the librarians and archivists are. They’re sorting it out for us.” And her
unstated conclusion is that we can trust them to do so because they are smart, creative, and adhere to a professional ethic that puts the public good out front.

Johnson’s conclusions, though, are contingent rather than absolute, and it takes grappling with Battles’ arguments to put Johnson’s remarks into perspective.

“And what the Word means to society...this is what the library enshrines” posits Battles (p. 9) in his *Library: an Unquiet History*. For Battles, the Word is encased in books (or their predecessors), and which books the library contains is, in the end, a measure of its creators, which, for Battles, ultimately is a measure of the culture and society of its creation (and, for most libraries in *Unquiet*, its destruction). The two characters on this vast cultural stage are the “Parnassan” library, the library of canonical works, the library of essential truths, and its counterpart, the accumulative, expansive “universal” library. Though these two different perspectives on the library are ever-present in this narrative, and though Battles favors one over the other, they, much like Johnson’s librarians, are stand-ins for other ideas Battles wishes to explore. Along the way Battles treats us to a selective look at notable libraries and collections within the context of the cultures that produced them, as well as the development of various “storage technologies,” from clay tablets to scrolls to inscriptions in caves to the codex, ending with a few wistful notes on the digital library along with final musings on the creation and destruction of libraries.

Destruction of libraries, for Battles, usually is not accidental but purposeful: it serves to mark the end of a culture’s reign. While some of the libraries of Alexandria certainly succumbed to fire, that fire wouldn’t have happened without the threat of invasion; in the end, the great universal libraries of Alexandria and elsewhere in the Roman empire...just disappeared, along with its civilization, to be replaced by the far more constrained (Parnassan) libraries of medieval Europe. The great (universal) libraries of the Islamic world, too, rose along with the flourishing culture in the Middle East, and, along with that culture, succumbed to a wave of invasions. Battles documents the rich Arabic heritage of Spain, nearly completely removed by the end of the fifteenth century with the expulsion of the Moors, in parallel with the Spanish destruction of the heritage of the Aztecs (who previously had destroyed the works of their predecessors). In each of these cases, and in several others Battles documents, the destruction of the universal libraries of these cultures coincided with the decline (or overthrow) of the culture itself.

As the early universal libraries disappeared, the various Parnassan collections that replaced them do not fare well in Battles’ narrative. Access both to books and to literacy itself in the European middle ages were, in his terms, “parceled out on a ‘need to know’ basis.” Those libraries were as focused and purposeful as the access to them, and each contained only “a few venerated texts.” Battles contrasts the poverty of these libraries
(as well as the attitude toward literacy and books they embodied) with the flourishing culture and book culture of the neighboring Islamic world. It took the rise of the university and of humanism in Europe to (re-)embrace the notion that the book did not exist in isolation but was meant to be read reflectively in the presence of others. “Big libraries didn’t spring up because of the economy and efficiency of the printing press, as others would later fear; they were bound up in the appetites of dukes, and merchants, and popes for the new learning aborning in the Renaissance” (p. 72).

The central chapter of *Unquiet*, “The Battle of the Books,” is devoted to the clash between the proponents of the Parnassan and the universal libraries through Battles’ recounting of Jonathan Swift’s story (now known by the same title). In this story, it is the books themselves that quarrel; in Battle’s words (p. 104) “conflict among books is what the universal library is about. The choices are not made for the reader; the reader must do the choosing, and the books must compete for his attention.” Despite Swift’s misgivings, the universal library won out over time; indeed, the next chapter is “Books for All.” Battles goes on to document the growth of the British Library (through its role as copyright registrar) and, for the first time in his narrative, dwells on the work of a librarian: Antonio Panizzi, and, from Panizzi and the British Library, moves to the rise of the public library in England and the United States, and to the obsessive Melvil Dewey.

“Books for all” does not mean all books for all: the creators of the earliest public libraries had an agenda; in Battles’ words (p. 137) “supporters of public libraries...hoped that libraries would channel the subversive urges of a lower class traditionally denied access to cultural means” and (p. 136) “through assimilation of the powers of reason [aided by greater access to information, and] fostered by education, the masses would come to accept capitalist principles as truth.” Battles documents the significant growth of libraries in the nineteenth century along with the standardization of tools for their organization and standardization of models of service, focusing on the mixed legacy this era left us: the notion that libraries, through the work of librarians, are to “improve” the reader; systems of organization that reflect a late nineteenth-century “gentleman’s” understanding of knowledge; the professionalization of librarianship along with the subservient role of women in that profession.

“If the nineteenth century was about the building of libraries, the twentieth was about their destruction” Battles continues in his next chapter, “Knowledge on fire.” He focuses especially on the destruction of European libraries (though he chronicles many others), and, through detailed examination of selected instances, links the destruction of libraries with the attempted (and in some cases, successful) destruction of the cultures that created them. Destruction, as I noted earlier, is a recurring theme throughout this work, and in this chapter especially but presaged in others, Battles gives a forensic analysis of just what happens when a library is destroyed. He notes that, on the one hand, gathering together a multitude
of books in one place assures their collective destruction; on the other hand, he notes books don’t burn all that well by themselves, and many conflagrations leave something behind—not whole books, but burned and scarred fragments. Discarding library materials accomplishes much the same (without the burned edges), and he relates a tale of a geniza, literally, a “book tomb” in Cairo, where worn-out materials were placed—buried—out of respect for the written tradition they embodied. It is worth quoting Battles at some length here (p. 195):

So is the geniza a library? In the strict sense of the term, of course, it is not...the geniza is the library’s opposite: its contents were the things thrown out, discarded specifically for their uselessness. In a more fundamental sense, however, the geniza is a library—for libraries collect and store books for future use, and this the geniza certainly has done...it could be said that the geniza preserved its materials better than a library would have done. ...More interestingly, the fact that they were deemed valueless is precisely what makes them invaluable to us today. They convey a far more comprehensive message from their times than any vetted and authorized library collection ever could...The geniza has no ax to grind...This above all makes it the library’s opposite, [for the library] contains the buried and often contradictory impulses of the princes, philanthropists, and academicians who are its authors.

That is the heart of Battles’ discourse: by tracing the idea of the library through different cultures and centuries he shows that any library has an agenda (or, perhaps, several contradictory ones); even the universal library is, well, not as universal as its advocates might assert. Indeed, over time, the items that have the most value might be the most accidental items, the ones left rather than the ones selected (and then removed, intentionally, or through damage or decay). For this to be the case, though, Battles notes that, unlike the Parnassan collection (if it’s canonical once, it’s always canonical), in the universal collection the value and meaning of a work changes over time and in relation to the other works that surround it. He doesn’t assert that any work is meaningless or contains any meaning the reader wishes to impart; rather, each is like a diamond, casting different colors when illuminated different ways. So as much as librarians attempt to create coherent and meaningful collections, there always will be connections (in the universal library) that transcend the particulars of their time, their place, their acquisition, and even (knowledge of) their destruction.

By conflating accidental with purposeful destruction, though, Battles obscures one critical point. While it is true, perhaps trivially so, that every physical book in every library today sooner or later will be gone, whether in years, centuries or millennia, that does not necessarily imply that its contents will not be preserved in some other form (in replicas, or, more abstractly, in works inspired by the originals). Systematic destruction attempts precisely to destroy the ideas contained in those works (for me,
the most touching instances Battles describes are the libraries of the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, and the destruction of the Sarajevo library: both of these were attempts to destroy not only a culture but, especially in the case of Sarajevo, an idea, that of a functioning multi-ethnic society). There is little comfort in Battles’ observation that even the most vicious attempts at destruction leave something behind; for, after all, following his argument, if the meaning of a work is at least in part contingent on its dialog with the works that surround it, removing the context inevitably distorts the intended meaning of the work.

Battles ends his book back in the stacks at Harvard, musing briefly about digitization (as well as the precise classification number for his book). He ends with this contradictory set of observations (p. 213): “What we face is not a loss of books but the loss of a world...the Word shifts again in its modes, tending more and more to dwell in pixels and bits instead of paper and ink.” Yet a few sentences later: “...the very fact that the library has endured these cycles [of manifestations of the Word] seems to offer hope. In its custody of books and the words they contain, the library has confronted and tamed technology, the forces of change, and the power of princes time and again.” Well, maybe. Although his book suggests an endless cycle of death and reincarnation, note that he has spoken only of physical books (and their physical antecedents). Maybe this (cycle), too, is one of many. Battles appeals to Borges, but rather than Borges the librarian, in the context of Battles’ final remarks I would reflect on his story “The Circular Ruins.”

So which masters do librarians serve? As we substitute electronic rentals for physical, owned collections, to what extent are we complicit in a collection’s destruction? And what will remain as the bytes decay (including the operating system code, transmission protocols, software code, the code the actual work is expressed in...oh, and the equipment, too)? Johnson trusts us to be advocates for the public good; through her narrative, librarians are of the public as well as advocates for the public and servants of the public. In Unquiet History, librarians, when they finally do show up in the narrative, often are portrayed as oppressors rather than servants or liberators. We may believe our universal libraries are indeed more inclusive and less utilitarian than the nineteenth-century libraries Battles describes (critiques of Berman and others about what is missing from our collections notwithstanding). Battles, however, notes that the fate of libraries (as well as the idea of the library itself) is intertwined with both the Word and its manifestation. Neither the choice of medium nor choice of message is value-independent: what are our choices, and which values do they reflect? The ALA Code of Ethics tells us that our collections should represent “all points of view,” but what good does this do as their manifestations vanish? Perhaps we also should think in terms of “all manners of expression.” This might be hedging our bets: according to Battle, it’s all dust, sooner or later, but at least we would have a little more success in passing along our desire for the universal library that is created and preserved with more intention than accident.
In 1996 I gave a presentation to my paraprofessional library tech classmates about the inclusion of gay and lesbian communities in addressing multicultural groups in library settings. I spoke about the then newly opened James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center collection in the San Francisco Public Library and the need for all people to see themselves reflected in our diverse culture. At the end of my presentation, I was met with blank stares and silence followed by perfunctory clapping. Coming from a town that has an agriculturally-based economy and is fairly conservative in its political leanings, I didn’t think my speech was an act of bravery or even particularly controversial, simply a necessary assertion for those who might not have even considered the gay community as belonging in the context of multiculturalism. I have since acquired a BA and MLIS and while the LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning) community has made sizeable strides towards acceptance, our culture and our library profession have much further to go to realize full embracement. 

Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users: Essays on Outreach, Service, Collections and Access, edited by Ellen Greenblatt, points to both of these opposing facts. It reports that LGBTIQ related collections and archives are rapidly increasing and yet in a 2008 survey of school librarians, 47% admit they may abstain from purchasing a book because it has a homosexual theme. (p. 249) While a number of states have passed non-discrimination workplace laws which include sexual minorities, many “public, school, and academic libraries may or may not provide domestic partner benefits” (p. 290) as is unquestionably afforded to heterosexual spouses.

Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users updates a 1990 publication co-edited by Cal Gough and Ellen Greenblatt entitled Gay and Lesbian Library Service. Greenblatt, the associate director for Scholarly Communication and Digital Initiatives at Auraria Library at the University of Denver, explains that reflecting the period in which it was produced, the earlier book concentrated solely on library service for the gay and lesbian communities. Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users encompasses a wider-reaching community. The book begins with a glossary of LGBTIQ related terms. While the fluidity of language and recognition of varying use (and users) are noted, these terms allow readers a basis for understanding some common vocabulary. Pertinent concepts such as gender, gender expression, and gender identity are explained.

The amount of material and the range of vision concerning libraries and LGBTIQ issues are impressive. From the more technical aspects of classification systems to poignant personal accounts, the references for each
essay attests to the diligent research performed by the authors. Greenblatt has adeptly arranged the assortment of essays into seven appropriately grouped sections. “Collection Development”, “Bibliographic Access” and “Professional Concerns” are some of the sections. Categorizing the wide scope of library related essays allows the reader to easily choose sections of highest interest. While there was understandably some overlap in subject matter and suggested resources, most were fresh. Those that were mentioned more than once only served to intensify their importance.

The first section “New Communities and Connections” informs readers about additional groups added under the umbrella term of LGBTIQ. Bisexual, transgender, and intersex communities are all addressed with specific chapters on each. We are reminded that while these newly associated communities share certain commonalities with the lesbian and gay communities, each group has its own unique preferences and needs. Collaboration between libraries and local organizations can help address each community’s specific needs in such areas as collection development, programming, and suggested resources. New, also, since the 1990 title, is the ubiquity of the Internet and its significant effect on the LGBTIQ community. Through computer usage, sexual minority and gender variant people have gained access to much needed information. Through shared experiences, the isolation often felt by those in earlier years has diminished. This connectivity also permits anonymity. Access to online materials may remain private. Subsequently, there are darker aspects to internet usage; listed in particular are the cruelty of cyberbullying and the short-sightedness of draconian Internet filtering.

Access to information is vital in any library venue and LGBTIQ interests in public, academic, and special libraries are well covered. Noted issues run the gamut of library fundamentals. Collection development, staff training, collection integration, displays and programming are all examined from an LGBTIQ-sensitive perspective. The school environment can present a harrowing experience for sexual minority and gender variant students. In her essay, “School Libraries Make a Difference,” Arla Jones provides a large number of practical ways for librarians to increase support and reduce feelings of isolation for LGBTIQ students. Her suggestions range from simply placing a rainbow sticker on the library door to welcome students to a safe place, to making a commitment to order LGBTIQ themed books, to starting a Gay-Straight Alliance. Jones includes selection tools such as the Rainbow List published yearly by the Rainbow Project, a joint committee supported by the GLBTRT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual Round Table) and SRRT (Social Responsibility Round Table) and the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) Printz award list to help make inclusive choices.

In speaking about homophobia and school bullying, Jones astutely points to a GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) publication which states that students of color experience even higher levels of harassment than their white peers. While she does not elaborate further,
hers is one of the small numbers of essays to bring up LGBTIQ people of color. While LGBTIQ people of color may be included as authors and discussed in some sections, such as specific archives, workplace concerns, and Native peoples’ terminology, a more lengthy discussion of their needs and how to facilitate them would be highly valuable. Knowledge of issues pertinent to and available resources for those experiencing a double blow of marginalization would provide librarians with a better understanding of how best to serve their needs. As with the larger LGBTIQ community, it is noted that each specific group differs in its background and culture and we must be careful to recognize those separate needs.

Needs of marginalized groups can also be expressed in terms of controlled vocabularies and bibliographic access as witnessed in Greenblatt’s essay, “The Treatment of LGBTIQ Concepts in the Library of Congress Subject Headings.” She discusses the concepts of universalization and minoritization explaining their opposing positions and their connection in regards to creating controlled vocabulary. The idea of a universal language necessarily supports the majority or dominant culture whereas a minoritizing language plays up variance and diversity. In an effort to be seen, or in this case retrieved by catalog subject searching, marginalized cultures such as the LGBTIQ community need controlled language that will aggregate and support such search results. After providing an etymology and historical look at terms often used in connection with LGBTIQ subjects, Greenblatt explores the problems inherent for LGBTIQ users in the Library of Congress Subject Headings. She notes the difficulty in making changes to an established universal language, where terms such as sex and gender remain undifferentiated, and the Library of Congress’ reluctance to make changes in a timely manner. Greenblatt concludes the essay on a positive note, suggesting ways to remedy outdated and misunderstood language. Also explored in the book are both community-based and mainstream archives. Aimee Brown’s fascinating history of LGBTIQ archives explains the shocking lack of archival materials preserved before the Stonewall riots and the gay and feminist liberation movements in the late sixties. Countless items were destroyed by family members and others in misguided efforts to protect their names or the names of the deceased. Unfortunately, the tragedy of the AIDS/HIV epidemic served as the impetus for many people to begin collecting and preserving historical materials. While mainstream archives now find LGBTIQ collections desirable, it was the work of individual visionary collectors fighting to safeguard an all but obliterated history who have enabled us to see into the past.

Despite the fact that LGBTIQ archives may be receiving more exposure, censorship remains a concern, particularly for school and public libraries. Anyone who has read the “Top Ten Challenged Books” on ALA’s Banned Book site knows, And Tango Makes Three has landed on the list every year since 2006. Based on a true account, this seemingly innocuous picture book tells the story of two male penguins in the New York City Central Park Zoo who, enamored with each other, become a couple. With the help of a sympathetic zookeeper they eventually hatch an egg and become parents
to a baby penguin named Tango. Reasons for the challenges include, anti-family, homosexuality, and unsuited to age group. In a similar challenge, James LaRue, Director of the Douglas County Libraries in Colorado, shares a memorable letter he wrote to a patron who objected to another picture book entitled, *Uncle Bobbie’s Wedding*. Using the patron’s own words, LaRue deftly responds the patron’s concerns. He employs sound logic in a non-confrontational and even caring tone, explaining why this book is a necessary inclusion in the library’s collection. Although, one will never know if the patron was swayed from his or her original viewpoint, LaRue should be applauded for his rational and measured response demonstrating the amount of consideration that was taken in reviewing the patron’s complaint.

One of the most gratifying aspects of *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users* is the way Greenblatt ties the highly informative essays with engaging personal narratives from librarians and archivists. The stories of individual striving exemplify the prescriptive put into practice. Stories of perseverance, strength, and accomplishment are many and include Tami Albin’s creation of an LGBTIQ oral history archive, James Carmichael’s enchanting musings through time and literature, and Bleue Benton and Sharon Grimm’s establishment of a transgender resource collection. Perhaps the most powerful of these stories is Tatiana de la Tierra’s passionate account of her life as contained within her archival files. The files hold the archives of her two published magazines for Latina lesbians along with palpable memories of her love affair with magazine cofounder Margarita Castilla. de la tierra takes us back through time to the creation of the first publication, esto no tiene nombre (this has no name) to its subsequent death and the beginning of the second magazine, comotión (commotion and “with motion”). We come to know and understand something about Margarita in a few short paragraphs and to mourn her death from colon cancer in the next few sentences. It was shocking to learn that her life history, saved in memorabilia, photographs, and love letters, was chucked in the garbage by her uncaring brother. de la tierra, however, ultimately shows us why *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users* was written. This is why we must follow its examples. To serve the LGBTIQ community is to serve ourselves. Diversity enriches our lives and empowers our humanity. Lest there be any doubt, *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archive Users* makes it clear, the question is not whether we are serving the LGBTIQ community but how well we are doing it.

reviewed by Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Gordon McShean has been characterized as “A spokesman for radical librarianship in the 1960s.”¹ He was coordinator of the Illinois Library Association Social Responsibilities Round Table, director of the National Freedom Fund for Librarians, president of the Society for Creative Political Literature, and an activist in the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table. McShean has chronicled his bouts with censors at the Roswell, New Mexico library in his 1977 book, *Running a message parlor: a librarian’s medium-rare memoir about censorship*.² His papers from 1968-1978 are deposited at the American Library Association Archives.³

McShean’s latest book, *Retired Terrorist*, is his memoir of his early years in Scotland including his involvement with the Scottish National Party, his time in the U.S., and his eventual move to New Zealand where he now resides. Of most interest to PLG readers are McShean’s recollections of his battles with censorship in Roswell in the 1960s. He was part of the group of progressive librarians affiliated with Eric Moon.⁴ An interesting, highly personal, story of one man’s confrontation with censorship including electronic discussions. Recommended for collections on intellectual freedom.

EDITORIAL NOTE: Transitions

With this issue of Progressive Librarian, PLG marks several important transitions.

Progressive Librarian editors John Buschman (with PL since issue #9), and Peter McDonald (since issue #23) are leaving the editorial board. We will miss them both. On behalf of membership of the Progressive Librarians Guild, readers, and subscribers, thank you for your remarkable work and dedication to the cause of progressive librarianship. Buschman and McDonald have been key to the development of Progressive Librarian, making incalculable contributions to the journal as both editors and contributors. Even as they move off the editorial board we look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

Marianne Lenihan of Rider University Library is also ending her years of working with Progressive Librarian which began with issue #27 of the journal in the summer of 2006. She has been steadfast in keeping memberships, subscriptions, and journals flowing smoothly. We owe her our deepest gratitude. We shifted PLG’s home from New York City to Rider where editor John Buschman was then based. Lenihan, who worked with John Buschman, continued her help with PL long after John moved on to Georgetown University.

A welcome and thanks goes to PLG-CC’s newest member, Braden Cannon, Special Projects Archivist at Provincial Archives of Alberta. This winter, Braden took over the PLG-sponsored Union Librarian, a blog initiated and maintained by Kathleen de la Peña McCook. Braden also initiated a new e-bulletin for PLG members.

Moving our operation from its base at Rider University, PLG has a new business address:

Progressive Librarians Guild
C/O MLIS Program, St. Catherine University
2004 Randolph Avenue, #4125
St. Paul MN 55105

We extend our thanks to PLG Coordinating Committee member David Lesniaski, faculty member at St. Kate’s, and to the current student leaders of St. Kate’s PLG Chapter – Trenton Brager, Emilie Hanson, Amy Mars, and Linda Nguyen – for taking on the responsibility of hosting PLG’s and PL’s new mailing address.

The address represents the organization’s and journal’s financial headquarters. Membership and subscription payments all go through the
address and volunteers pick-up the mail, sort it out, enter names and other data into the database, deposit checks and money orders into PLG’s non-interest bearing savings account, and mail out the journals. Money from memberships and subscriptions is used to pay for the printing and mailing of *Progressive Librarian*, the Braverman essay contest award, and on occasion for speaker honoraria, donations, and special projects.

The PL editors
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Lynn Andersen is transitioning from Durland Alternatives Library to Senegal.

John Buschman becomes Dean of University Libraries at Seton Hall University on July 1st after earning his Doctor of Liberal Studies degree from Georgetown University. He is author, editor, and co-editor of several books, and his forthcoming book is entitled *Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy: Marking the Limits of Neoliberalism*, to be published by Scarecrow Press/Rowman & Littlefield this year.

Jennifer Crow is the librarian in the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children’s Literature in the Madden Library at California State University, Fresno, where she has worked for the last ten years. With nearly 500 titles, the Arne Nixon Center boasts one of the largest collections of LGBTQ literature for young people in the United States. Crow is currently working on a project to share LGBTQ literature with Fresno metropolitan area high schools.

Betsy Fagin is an activist and librarian with the People’s Library at Occupy Wall Street. She received degrees in literature and creative writing from Vassar College and Brooklyn College and completed her MLS degree in Information Studies at the University of Maryland where she was an ALA Spectrum Scholar.

Shane Hand, a PhD student at the University of Southern Mississippi, studies early twentieth century cultural history with a focus on race. Current research interests include the collection of oral histories for insight into how black and white communities viewed common experiences, such as participating in south Mississippi’s moonshine tradition, through asymmetrical interpretive lenses.

Mandy Henk is the Access Services Librarian at DePauw University and an Occupy Wall Street activist working with the People’s Library working group. She is writing a book titled *Sustainable Librarianship* to be published by ALA Editions. Her MLS is from Simmons College and her BA was awarded by Clark University.

David Lesniaski is an associate professor in St. Catherine University’s graduate program in Library/Information Science, a composer and musician, and is currently Secretary/Treasurer of the Minnesota chapter of AAUP.

Zachary Loeb earned his MSIS from the University of Texas at Austin and a certificate in guerrilla librarianship (written in crayon on the back of
a flyer) from the Occupy Wall Street People’s Library. When he is not at work at a library, he is (most likely) working in a different library.

Jeremy Mauger received his Master’s degree in library and information science in 2010 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Information Studies (SOIS). Currently, Jeremy is a doctoral student at SOIS focusing on information law, policy and ethics and is a research assistant at the Center for Information Policy Research.

Kathleen de la Peña McCook is distinguished university professor, University of South Florida, School of Information in Tampa where she teaches the “History of Libraries,” “Public Librarianship” and “Human Rights and Librarians.” She is a member of the Progressive Librarians Guild Coordinating Committee.

Daniel Norton is a social activist, advocate for student development through experience, and pre-professional librarian currently obtaining a B.S. in Information and Library Services from the University of Maine at Augusta. He views his engagement with the People’s Library of Occupy Wall Street to be an integral piece of his future professionalism.

Jaime Taylor is an art librarian at Poster Auctions International in New York City, and one of the librarians for the People’s Library at Occupy Wall Street. She received her MLS from Simmons College and her BA from Smith College.