

The Counterhegemonic Academic Librarian: A Call to Action

1. Introduction

This essay argues that academic librarians should work consciously for the improvement of conditions for marginalized and underrepresented segments of the population, and do so in spite of the fact that the political terrain of the academic library typically reflects the ideologies of the dominant culture. Although long a subject of intense debate among library practitioners,¹ we hold firmly that the academic librarian may not maintain claims of neutrality; human reality would simply not exist without formative, and ultimately political, relationships. But, as Sandy Iverson noted, “all too often librarians have rejected the political nature of the work they do.”² The counterhegemonic academic librarian *qua* transformative intellectual both questions hegemonic realities and changes them.³

Although this essay uses the theoretical work of critical theorists in sociology, education, and library and information studies, its object is not theoretical, but practical and political. Philosophizing by itself, as influential Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser warned, runs the risk of becoming an empty discourse.⁴ The ultimate goal of this essay is to encourage informed practice among academic librarians through (1) critiquing existing ideological structures using extant theory and (2) offering theoretically conscious strategies

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for action based upon this critique. We would like to stress that the reader of this essay need not be a member of the left. She should, however, be willing to engage with the essay, comparing her own ideas critically with the arguments within. We hope she will emerge with a modified understanding of the academic librarian as a political being, and conclude that such an understanding necessitates political action.

Marginalized groups are those who have been categorically denied access to privilege including educational access, political office, high-paying jobs, and access to health care. While college enrollment reports show that women, an historically marginalized group, have outnumbered their male counterparts for over thirty years,⁵ it is not a time to consider our work done. These statistics are based on a binary understanding of sex and gender which excludes students with gender identities outside of these two categories. Additionally, students of color, low income students, students with disabilities, and first-generation college student enrollment is still lacking nationwide with Caucasian students comprising over 60% of the enrollment in degree-granting institutions,⁶ and retention rate for these students are significantly lower than students from dominant socioeconomic and ethnic groups. While Caucasian and Asian-American/Pacific Islander students have a graduation rate of 59% and 60% respectively, only 50% of Hispanic students and 39% of African-American students reach graduation.⁷ The ideologies driving the academy cannot change if underrepresented groups cannot make it past bachelor-level studies.

The stories of members of marginalized groups are chronically erased from accounts of history and when present are often told from the perspective of the dominant group. To work toward an understanding of a whole issue it is imperative to include multiple perspectives. Sandra Harding explained that, “in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such politics shaping the very structure of a society, the *activities* of those at the top both organize and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them.”⁸ Meaning that those ideas belonging to those people at the top of the hierarchy create a cultural and social context into which members of marginalized groups must situate themselves. Perspectives and social realities of members of marginalized groups are not considered when dominant groups form these limits. Harding continued, “ones’ social situation enables and sets limits on what one can know; some social situations – critically unexamined dominant ones – are more limiting than others in this respect, and what makes these situations more limiting is their inability to generate the most critical questions about received belief.”⁹ Although the world of academe seems the ideal location to “generate the most critical questions,”¹⁰ those in places of power within the academy may simply be aligning themselves with the dominant ideologies of the institution and not analyzing their behaviors and assumptions and how they reflect those of their

employer. Herein, we call librarians to participate in a critical examination of their institutions and their practice within them.

2. The Political Terrain of the Academic Library

Karl Marx acknowledged the pervasiveness of the notion that capitalism is the “natural” mode of production in western civilization, writing in the *German Ideology* that these “eternal laws” are, in fact, the “ideas of the ruling class,” which “increasingly take on the form of universality.”¹¹ These dominant ideas (i.e., the concepts that make up the dominant ideologies of a culture or society) tend to support the dominant culture and the society’s privileged groups.¹²

Althusser argued that dominant ideologies are implanted in individuals through the primarily non-violent operation of “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISAs) such as the church, trade unions, and, preeminently, education.¹³ He held that the educational apparatus was the dominant ISA under the capitalist mode of production wherein “the relations of exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited are largely reproduced. The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology...”¹⁴

The dominant western ideologies (e.g., the narratives of capitalism, liberal democracy, positivism, and “neutral education”) appear to members of society as natural because of the members’ submergence in the ideological work of the educational ISA; institutions of higher education are well-positioned to perform this indoctrination, especially considering their place of high authority in western society. Althusser held, however, that dominant narratives cloak the materially based realities of social life.¹⁵ These realities include the exploitation of marginalized groups by the dominant class.

Michael H. Harris argued in his seminal essay on the modern library and research perspectives that the library is an apparatus for cultural production, one that privileges high culture.¹⁶ Reflecting upon the work of Harris and Wayne Weigand,¹⁷ Douglas Raber concluded that the public library is an ISA, a “state-maintained, superstructural institution designed not to coerce but to persuade the public of the historical bloc’s [the prevailing social formation of the age] legitimacy by reinforcing the dominant culture.”¹⁸ The current historical bloc may be characterized as a late capitalist social construct that validates existing hegemonic structures. The public library, as an organ of this bloc, disseminates information that Wiegand described as being valued primarily by business and government.¹⁹ The academic library may also be regarded as an ISA in that it supports higher education, promoting the status quo through aiding in the

educational apparatuses' production of, according to Althusser, "small and middle technicians, white-collar workers, small and middle executives, petty bourgeois of all kinds."²⁰ In this capacity, the academic library is a necessary and inseparable component of the educational ISA, reproducing the political milieu through its collections and library staff or faculties. As a result, students in higher education are not only positioned to become functionaries of the prevailing mode of production, they are steeped in the norms of the dominant culture that ultimately controls the means of this production.

Academic librarians are in a problematic position. Even though academic libraries support freedom,²¹ they do so from hegemonic perspectives, from vantage points molded by curricula and cultural/literary canons that reproduce dominant structures and the workers necessary for these structures' maintenance.²² The American Library Association (ALA) "Code of Ethics" illustrates this contradiction. The Code describes intellectual freedom and objectivity as a core professional value; librarians, according to the Code, "distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources."²³ One interpretation of the Code mandates that librarians set aside their prejudices and collect and connect users with resources they may not personally find suitable or believable. Librarians should be able to treat materials on evolution, creationism, and intelligent design on the same level, not collecting materials in line with their personal beliefs disproportionately with those that contradict their own interpretations and understandings. However, a second interpretation of the Code is that it encourages librarians to maintain a neutral standpoint on social justice issues and give equal access to materials that promote the advancement of marginalized groups and those that encourage continuation of the status quo or opposition to equality.²⁴

Librarians with faculty status and in tenure-track environments, furthermore, face additional challenges and responsibilities that underscore the need for the immanent critique of dominant hegemonic concepts. Tenure-track librarians are uniquely placed as creators of knowledge, researchers, and part of the institutional body that curates and purchases the knowledge resources that support their constituencies. However, until conceptions of academic librarianship are reshaped from within to facilitate meaningful change, academic librarians are left in a position that does not offer them the ability to use their expertise to act transformatively. For example, although support for open-access materials is growing amongst librarians and across campuses, many promotion and tenure decisions are ultimately made by a university-wide committee that may not have specialized knowledge in the field. If librarians or other academics ethically choose to submit their work to open-access journals that are not on the list of the alleged top-three journals of the field, reviewers

may see that as a lack of the candidates' strength instead of an intentional and politically conscious move.²⁵ Additionally, new media, like blogs, are highly contested in discussions of promotion and tenure. In a 2009 survey, Arthur Hendricks found that most survey participants' institutions did not give blogs the same weight as a peer-reviewed article.²⁶ However, the conception that all written work should be evaluated by the same criteria misses the mark and suggests the capitalist quantification of the profession and the commodification of its intellectual products. While blogs may not go through the same rigorous review that traditionally-published articles do, they can make a meaningful contribution to the field of librarianship.²⁷ Librarians, as gatekeepers for a campus' information resources, need to raise questions of new media in their tenure and promotion discussions.

At what point should librarians act, taking it upon themselves to transform the library and their profession? When does a social justice issue become mainstream enough for the library to promote it? Librarians wield an incredible power. Through collection development, and, in their capacity as gatekeepers to those collections, they have a hand in guiding undergraduate, graduate, faculty, staff, and community research and education. As most undergraduates, and arguably most users of the academic library in general, use sources that are immediately available, the progressive, conscientious librarian should facilitate instant access to materials representing and supporting works by and about underrepresented and marginalized groups.

Ours is not a position of neutrality as imagined by the ALA "Code of Ethics," but one of social and moral responsibility to challenge the academic library as an ISA, to contribute to the creation of authentic knowledge and history, not simply the reiteration of canonical indoctrination.

3. The Politically Conscious Academic

Because of higher education's role in sociocultural and economic production, the idea that the legitimate academic, and therefore the legitimate academic librarian, must remain neutral – that is, that they should refrain from viewing scholarship and pedagogy through the lens of politics – keeps its grip on academic consciousness. Gary Radford argued that the neutral librarian is a result of an ingrained culture of positivism;²⁸ positivism being a major bulwark of capitalist ideology.²⁹ This positivism, (i.e., knowledge derived from experience and empiricism not theoretical inquiry³⁰) as well as middle-class hegemonic accounts, such as the need to maintain links with the corporate world and assert the scientific status of library and information studies, serves as a basis for LIS graduate school curricula.³¹ As a result, reproduction of the academic library as a hegemonic institution is essentially a circular process.

The neutral academic, and hence the neutral academic librarian, works passively in the service of the controlling interests of society; she acts politically.³² Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux termed such academics “accommodating intellectuals,” that is, intellectuals who stand

firm within an ideological posture and set of material practices that support the dominant society and its ruling groups. Such intellectuals are generally not aware of this process that they do not define themselves as self-conscious agents of the status quo, even though their politics further the interests of the dominant classes.³³

This accommodating but professedly neutral intellectual was first identified by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* as the “traditional intellectual,” that is, one who thinks herself as acting independently while in fact perpetuating dominant ideological norms.³⁴ The professional academic, in her capacity as an academic, accepts the hegemony of the privileged classes over groups typically defined as “subordinate” classes, races, genders, and sexualities.

Gramsci’s “organic intellectual,” in contrast to the traditional intellectual, is a politically conscious functionary of the prevalent material conditions of the age and aligns herself fundamentally with a social group:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new social system, etc.³⁵

Aronowitz and Giroux also described the “hegemonic intellectual,”³⁶ which conforms to Gramsci’s organic intellectual in the service of the bourgeoisie.

Aronowitz and Giroux warned, however, that such categories should not be held as rigidly separable.³⁷ Gramsci himself wrote in a later passage of his *Prison Notebooks* that the distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals is illusory, that, in fact, intellectuals are always bound organically to particular classes.³⁸ We suggest, therefore, that Gramsci’s traditional intellectual further decomposes into two groups: (1) a passive auxiliary of the body of organic intellectuals that aligns with the dominant class at varying levels of self-consciousness; and (2) a potentially mobile contingent of critical thinkers possessing developed political convictions but who have not yet made a political commitment in their capacity as public intellectuals. The first

type of traditional intellectual, while operating under the guise of neutrality, is complicit in what Gramsci called the bourgeois organic intellectual's "articulation of the relationship between the entrepreneur and the instrumental mass."³⁹ The passive professional academic, through their tacit or grudging support of dominant ideologies – e.g., modernism, positivism, a-politicization of academia – braces capitalism in their capacity as a researcher/educator. The second type of traditional intellectual listed above, the critical thinker as professional academic, while still complicit, has the most potential to become a "true," that is, markedly affiliated, organic intellectual.

4. The Academic Librarian as Counterhegemonic Intellectual

The American Library Association lists democracy among its "Core Values of Librarianship."⁴⁰ In neoliberal societies, however, the academic library arguably has become a tool of the democracy's ruling interests, and academic librarians have become these interests' subalterns. The academic librarian, in fact, is a rather obvious techno-bureaucratic, organic intellectual, a specialist academic who works for the academic library *qua* ISA, and, despite this function, one who often maintains pretensions of neutrality. Raber outlined this role of librarian as organic intellectual, arguing that Gramsci's work suggests that

librarians can be viewed as 'organic intellectuals' and that they play an ideological and organizational role in maintaining a historic bloc's hegemony over the relations of economic production and civil society. From this perspective, the apparently neutral discourse of LIS regarding access to information can be examined as a discourse that privileges particular rather than universal interests.⁴¹

Raber concluded that, because of the hegemony's grip on the academy, and its legitimization of the status quo, it is unlikely that librarians (i.e., traditional or hegemonic intellectuals) will question the relationships between information and power.⁴² Librarians, he concluded from Gramsci's theories, inhabit a "contradictory theoretical consciousness;" they have the potential to make progressive reforms to society but are held back from doing so because of hegemonic norms that suggest that they should take no action.⁴³

Considering the broad themes and values associated with librarianship (e.g., intellectual freedom, freedom of information, equity of access to information resources, and democracy) we hold that, upon accepting the concept of the neutral academic as fallacious, academic librarians should align themselves with other academic workers, the laboring classes, marginalized, and underserved

groups. Aronowitz and Giroux referred to this class of organic educator as “transformative intellectuals,” those who

earn a living within institutions that play a fundamental role in producing the dominant culture... [but] define their political terrain by offering to students forms of alternative discourse and critical social practices whose interests are often at odds with the overall hegemonic role of the school and the society it supports.⁴⁴

Raber argued that librarians maintain some level of autonomy and may choose to align themselves as organic intellectuals with counterhegemonic groups.⁴⁵ What is required for this to happen? There must be a shift in political perspective concerning the function of the academic library in its determination of power relationships and a commitment to political and economic equity. But until the change has been made, even the second type of neutral academic listed in the previous section of this essay, the potentially mobile contingent of critical thinkers, remains a cog in the academic library in its capacity as ISA.

5. Call to Action

Although the typical academic working in a college or university avoids political alignment in the performance of her job, she acts politically, either maintaining hegemonic structures or challenging them. As outlined above, professional practice always realizes ideology regardless of whether it consciously incorporates theory. John Doherty argued that, for the librarian to engage in effective praxis – the realization of theory as practice – she must actively pursue “reflection-in-action,” she must commit to a constant critique of actions.⁴⁶

Responsible academic librarians must be cognizant and critical of ideological influences, understand that they saturate thought and action, and, following necessarily upon this, own and/or disown specific ideological positions. Adopting Althusser’s language, the politically conscious academic librarian is at once able to be “in the truth” and to “speak the truth.”⁴⁷

Therefore, we call on academic librarians to act politically, but to do so in consciously transformative ways that address inequities in society and the institutions that reproduce society. They should become what Les Tickle described as organic intellectuals “constantly interacting with society, struggling to change minds, engaged in the evolution of knowledge, raising issues in the public domain and defending decent standards of social well-being, freedoms and justice.”⁴⁸ Academic librarians, as intellectual laborers and gatekeepers of knowledge resources, should advance the interests of marginalized and

disempowered groups. Doing this will make the library a more democratic institution: a position in line with the purpose of library work.

6. Strategies for Action

As professionals engaging in public service, librarians are well-positioned to engage in transformative praxis at the level of their library community. The counterhegemonic academic librarian is both an educator and a facilitator of the research process for her constituency, which includes students, staff, professional scholars, and community users. Raber suggested that means of resistance are open to librarians, including demands for intellectual freedom and resistance against censorship. He also asked for transformative strategies from librarians.⁴⁹ We offer the following strategies for action along with readings that support their informed application:⁵⁰

(1) Advocate the teaching of critical theory as part of library school education. Introduce library school students to critical theory during internships and practicums. Explore alternative educational opportunities with library school students, such as serving in informal mentoring capacities or inviting graduate students to functions relating to progressive librarianship.

Recommended Reading:

- Andersen, Jack. "Information Criticism: Where is It?" in *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian*, edited by Allison Lewis, 97-108. Duluth, MN: Library Juice, 2008.
Argues that librarians should be trained as "information critics" of systems of knowledge organization and concludes that library schools do not adequately prepare graduates for this role. Andersen advocates that library schools verse their graduates in the methods and theories of critical/cultural analysis.
- Aronowitz, Stanley, and Henry A. Giroux. *Education Still under Siege*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993.
The second edition of Aronowitz and Giroux's *Education under Siege*, the classic challenge to education that supports hegemonic social structures, acts as an antidote to the entrenched neo-liberal ideologies often found in LIS school curricula.
- Brookfield, Stephen D. *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
A detailed survey of critical theory that advocates theory's application to adult education. Many of the ideas (e.g., developing critical consciousness) are applicable to the education of LIS students.

(2) Fight to protect intellectual and academic freedom, and use developed, defensible theoretical positions to do this.

Recommended Reading:

- American Library Association. *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. 8th ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010.
Designed to “answer practical questions that confront librarians in applying the principles of intellectual freedom to library service,”⁵¹ this manual lays out the ALA’s position on intellectual freedom matters, gives advice to information professional dealing with intellectual freedom issues, and reproduces related documents.
- Arko-Cobbah, Albert. “Intellectual Freedom and Academic Freedom: Some Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Libraries in Africa.” *Mousaion* 28, no. 2 (2011): 76-95.
The author incorporates academic librarians into the debate over academic freedom, an arena in which they are absent due to their lack of faculty status. Arko-Cobbah stresses the importance of academic freedom not only to ensure research without potential job loss, but also to shape curriculum to pass values to the next generation.
- Buschman, John. “Who Defends Intellectual Freedom for Librarians?” *Academe* September-October (2009).
Discusses the American Library Association’s policies on ethics and intellectual freedom, but urges them to actively defend these freedoms. Buschman also discusses what individual librarians can do to help promote intellectual freedom.
- Larue, James, L. *New Inquisition: Understanding and Managing Intellectual Freedom Challenges*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007.
Although written for application to the public library, this book provides practical techniques and resources for responding to intellectual freedom challenges that are also of value to academic librarians.

(3) Fight for equal status and job security for academic librarians, Support initiatives that maximize librarian autonomy and self-governance within the academic library,⁵² while opposing measures that reduce academic librarians to being bureaucratic functionaries.

Recommended Reading:

- Coker, Catherine, Wyoma vanDuinkerken, and Stephen Bales. “Seeking Full Citizenship: A Defense of Tenure Faculty Status for Librarians.” *College & Research Libraries* 71, no. 5 (2010): 406-420.
Analyzes the history and development of tenure status in academic libraries,

provides arguments both for and against tenure, and offers strategies to librarians seeking to attain or protect tenure status in their institutions.

- Fanton, Jonathan. "The Academy and the Future: Constancy within Change." *College and Research Libraries News* 50, no. 7 (1989): 564-566.

From a paper presented by the then president of the New School for Social Research at a 1988 meeting of the ACRL Greater New York Metropolitan Area Chapter. This article reasserts traditional concepts of the academic library as a neutral forum, while calling for a vigilant defense against the increasing corporatization and bureaucratization of the institution.

- Hill, Janet Swan. "Wearing Our Own Clothes: Librarians as Faculty." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 20, no. 2 (1994): 71-76.
Defines the characteristics of the academic librarian as faculty members while contrasting them with those of traditional teaching faculty.

(4) Engage in and support library practitioner research that challenges positivist and scientific assumptions. The academic library is an excellent working laboratory,⁵³ providing a vantage point from which the scholar librarian may observe and critique power structures active in society and determine how these ideological constructs manifest themselves in the library as an institution. Practice informs sound theory. The counterhegemonic academic librarian as researcher occupies a vanguard position; she both generates new professional knowledge and dialectically tests and refines existing theory through her work.

Recommended Reading:

- Budd, John. "An Epistemological Foundation for Library and Information Science." *Library Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1995): 295-318.
This well-researched, theoretical article argues against a solely positivist approach to libraries and library science, shifting the focus from the library as thing or place to the library as the site of human actors. For a rebuttal to Budd, see, Zwadlo, Jim. "We Don't Need a Philosophy of Library and Information Science—We're Confused Enough Already." *Library Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (1997): 103-121.
- Dick, Archie L. "Epistemological Positions and Library and Information Science." *Library Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1999): 305-323.
Argues that epistemological research and discussions are lacking in LIS programs. The author researched definitions of epistemology and discusses methods for incorporating epistemological research into librarianship and LIS programs as a way to distinguish the presuppositions and theories from the practice and policies.
- Leckie, Gloria J., Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman. *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the*

Disciplines. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2003.

A collection of the latest critical theory research in library and information studies. Essays are written from multiple critical perspectives and apply the thinking of major theorists to LIS.

(5) Analyze academic library constituencies as political beings or interests. Develop academic libraries in light of these entities and their relationships.

a. Include library users in the process of defining the library.

Recommended Reading:

- Edwards, Julie Biando. "Neutrality in Context: Principles and Rights." *Information for Social Change* 31 (2011): 17-27.
Considers library neutrality from both the perspective of individual rights and group rights, advocating a middle course of action. Edwards affirms the consideration of context when making decisions that might curtail the rights of individuals or groups.
- Maret, Susan. "True Community: Connecting the Millennium Development Goals to Public Library Services in the United States." *Information, Society and Justice* 4, no. 2 (2011): 29-35.
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a United Nations initiative that aims at effecting positive societal change internationally through eight goals by 2015.⁵⁴ Maret advocates applying the MDGs to benefit users and potential users of public library services in the United States. She offers two valuable models for implementing the goals, particularly the second of the eight, which aspires to "Achieve universal primary education."⁵⁵
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. *A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2000.
Provides strategies for libraries engaging in community building, including both in the physical and virtual senses. This book emphasizes the importance of building diverse communities and discusses how librarians fit into the effort. Narrative accounts of library community building efforts effectively illustrate the discussion.
- Mehra, Bharat, Ann Peterson Bishop, Imani Bazzell, and Cynthia Smith. "Scenarios in the Afya Project as a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Tool for Studying Information Seeking and Use Across the 'Digital Divide'." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 53, no. 14 (2002): 1259-1266.
The Afya Project aims to increase health information access to Black women. The authors employed scenarios to determine social contexts and involved their intended users in all stages of the research process

giving them a voice that is missing in the research methods often employed by library and information studies researchers.

b. Provide appropriate information tools for all user groups. Critique existing tools to determine whether they reflect a diversity of viewpoints.

Recommended Reading:

- Cyzyk, Mark. "Canon Formation, Library Collections, and the Dilemma of Collection Development." *College & Research Libraries* 54, no. 1 (1993): 58-65.
Examines the concept of canon development in collection development. Cyzyk calls for the careful analysis of how library collections form, how they tend to center around "protean entities," and what duties collection officers have towards their audience.
- Dilevko, Juris, and Lisa Gottlieb. "The Politics of Standard Selection guides: The Case of the *Public Library Catalog*." *Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2003): 289-337.
Dilevko and Gottlieb analyzes the *Public Library Catalog (PLC)*, a bibliography of recommended books for public library collections, in terms of the ideological frames that it represents. The study determines that certain necessary perspectives are excluded. Similar studies may be performed on academic collections and collection development tools to determine where they are insufficient.

c. Make connections with underrepresented and marginalized campus groups – offer to lead a library tour and make targeted library handouts for the GLBT or women's center, multicultural centers, and Black student association. Encourage librarians to participate in professional organizations like the women's faculty group.

d. Actively address hegemonic canons of knowledge. Identify the "non-dominant" and counterhegemonic resources in hegemonic collections and make them easily findable.

Recommended Reading:

- Adkins, Denice, and Lisa Hussey. "The Library in the Lives of Latino College Students." *Library Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2006): 456-480.
Discusses the historical context that led to librarians losing power over their collections through approval plans, patron-driven acquisitions, and other "advancements." Danky's work encourages librarians to seek out alternative presses to ensure substantive neutrality.
- Doherty, John J. "The Academic Librarian and the Hegemony of the

Canon.” *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 24, no. 5 (1998): 403-406.

A call for academic librarians to engage in “information dialectic between academic libraries and the faculty and departments that they serve.”⁵⁶ Contends that the reflective librarian can actively help canons evolve by considering the inclusion of non-canonical materials.

- Rothbauer, Paulette. “‘People Aren’t Afraid Anymore, But It’s Hard to Find Books’: Reading Practices That Inform The Personal and Social Identities of Self-Identified Lesbian and Queer Young Women”. *Canadian Journal of Information & Library Sciences* 28, no. 3 (September 2004): 53-74.

Discusses the power of reading, especially how it pertains to the GLBTQ community and brings to light challenges users seeking GLBTQ materials face while trying to access library materials.

- e. Consider counterhegemonic ideas in programming and offer alternatives.⁵⁷

Recommended Reading:

- Accardi, Maria T., Emily Drabinski, and Alana Kumbier, eds. *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods*. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2010.

A guide to incorporating critical pedagogy in library instruction. This resource is illustrated with stories of successful praxis.

- Baldwin, Michael. “Librarians as Knowledge Provocateurs.” *Public Libraries* 45, no. 2 (2006): 11-14.

Written from a public libraries perspective but with implications for libraries of all types, Baldwin encourages librarians to not just connect users with materials but promote information itself and the library as a center of democracy.

- f. Factor in ideology when considering adopting technologies for library constituencies; for example, select free/libre open-source access methods as opposed to “proprietary software that stands in the way of the need for autonomous solutions.”⁵⁸

Recommended Reading:

- Stevenson, Siobhan. “Digital Divide: A Discursive Move Away from the Real Inequities.” *Information Society* 25 (2009): 1-22.

Stevenson critiques the concept of digital divide as an invention of neoliberal ideology supporting existing class structures.

- Stienstra, Deborah. “The Critical Space Between: Access, Inclusion and

Standards in Information Technologies.” *Information, Communication & Society* 9, no. 3 (2006): 335-354.

Discusses the Canadian Standards Association and if this type of organization can ensure equal access to information technologies. However, the author argues that corporate interests have too loud of a voice in the issue, and she suggests ways to put the users back into the center of the debate.

(6) Develop a culture of critical social theory within the academic library.⁵⁹ Create progressive information worker working groups within libraries to bring together librarians, staff members, and student workers within academic libraries. These groups would engage in a communal research and publication program centering on the ongoing critique of LIS.

Recommended Reading:

- Eubanks, Virginia. *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*. London: MIT Press, 2011.

Critical analysis of the effects of information technology on society and how such technology leads to inequitable social structures and the exploitation of marginalized groups. Eubanks introduces the concept of technological citizenship as means of providing equity and increasing freedom among these groups.

- Graham-Gibson, J.K. “An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene.” *Antipode* 41, no. S1 (2009): 320-346.

In the human-centric world we are both transformers of and transformed by the world around us – understanding the consequences our actions have but not necessarily how to create positive change. The authors discuss the ethics, power, and abilities of so-called hybrid research collectives and challenge the reader to create change in their communities and encouraging academics to understand that research is activism.

- Roelvink, Gerda. “Collective Action and the Politics of Affect.” *Emotion, Space & Society* 3 (2010): 111-118.

The author uses the anti-globalization movement as a lens through which she studies possibilities for collective action. This moves away from a problem with a singular solution model to the power of an affected hybrid collective creating new previously unimagined possibilities.

(7) Collaborate with campus organizations outside the library. Create a system of mutual support wherein campus activists and counterhegemonic librarians can find strength in their shared mission and further progressive community reformation.

Recommended Reading:

- Fonseca, Anthony J., and Van P. Viator. "Escaping the Island of Lost Faculty: Collaboration as a Means of Visibility." *Collaborative Librarianship* 1, no. 3 (2009): 81-90.
The authors suggest librarians reinvent themselves and spend time promoting library services outside of the library to ensure equal standing with other faculty on campus.
- Morrone, Melissa, and Lisa Friedman. "Radical Reference: Socially Responsible Librarianship Collaborating with Community." *The Reference Librarian* 50, no. 4 (2009): 371-396.
Discusses a model of librarianship and reference work that challenges librarians to work with populations outside of the expected scope of academic libraries, providing professional-level reference assistance to activists and journalists not affiliated with colleges and universities, and therefore unable to access subscription information sources.
- Ritzo, Christopher, Chaebong Nam, and Bertram Bruce. "Building a Strong Web: Connecting Information Spaces in Schools and Communities." *Library Trends* 58, no. 1 (2009): 82-94.
Focuses on a youth-service program from the University of Illinois that focuses on integrated education and instruction through a collaborative effort amongst community organizations and libraries of different types (i.e., school, public, university).

(8) Promote small presses and databases. Often we focus on the most-used resources and classify these sources as niche materials. As long as budget decisions are based on usage statistics over content, the large databases will always win.

Recommended Reading:

- Atton, Chris. "Beyond the Mainstream: Examining Alternative Sources for Stock Selection." *Library Review* 43, no. 4 (1994): 57-64.
Although the article is a bit dated, Atton provides an excellent analysis of the value in collecting publications that fall outside of the dominant paradigm, as well as strategies for selection.
- Browning, M.K. "The Small Press and the Library. A View from Confluence." *Serials Librarian* 9, no. 1 (1984): 37-42.
Discusses the cultural function in society and their value to library collections using Confluence Press as a case study. Argues that small presses "set the parameters of genuine regional literature,"⁶⁰ and encourages academic librarians to explore them.

7. Conclusion

Alison Lewis wrote that “at the beginning of the twenty-first century, ‘neutrality’ no longer always means ‘impartiality’ or ‘objectivity,’ but too often is taken to mean ‘indifference.’”⁶¹

To turn a blind eye to political and economic forces and determinants – the market and groups that maintain an inordinate amount of control over this market – while working as a gatekeeper of information is not objective. It is, instead, an irresponsible form of “moral relativism,”⁶² but a moral relativism determined, in the last instance, by ruling ideologies. The counterhegemonic librarian advocates directly for those she serves, and she advocates directly for the integrity of librarianship as a politically conscious institution. If she does not have this power, she should fight for it.

Audre Lorde, a radical black lesbian feminist and practicing librarian, asserted that real change would never come by fighting the system using its own rules: “For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”⁶³ Similarly, librarians who work within dominant ideologies will never be able to reform the academy. Lorde and the authors of this essay challenge the reader to a call to action. While this initially may be daunting, requiring academic librarians to question existing narratives of power, it is “only threatening to those women [and indeed, any marginalized group] who still define the master’s house as their only source of support.”⁶⁴ Counterhegemonic academic librarians need not rely on the master’s house for support but need to make themselves visible through action and scholarship to create networks of best practices and support.

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25. For a discussion of the quantification of scholarship through ranking-lists, see Stephen Bales, Laura Sare, Catherine Coker, and Wyoma vanDuinkerken, "Journal-Ranking Lists and the Academic Librarian," *Library Review* 69, no. 2 (2011): 142-154.
26. Arthur Hendricks, "Bloggership, or is Publishing a Blog Scholarship? A Survey of Academic Librarians," *Library Hi Tech* 28, no. 3 (2010): 470-477.
27. Blogs can be used to create national conversations, encourage readers to locate the authors' traditionally-published materials, and can engender collaboration and presentation opportunities, it seems natural that professional blogs should be

- considered in a librarian's tenure package. Some blogs, as Hendricks, "Bloggership," 46-7, noted is the case with "In the Library With the Lead Pipe," are working to re-conceptualize the blog by crafting well-researched, article-length, double-reviewed pieces with full citations that are freely available on the internet.
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49. Raber, "Librarians as Organic Intellectuals": 51.
50. For an additional list of citations of interest to counterhegemonic librarians, please see the first section of Ann Sparanese's "Activist Librarianship: Heritage or Heresy? One Librarian's Two-Part List of Relevant and Thoughtful Reading for the Engaged Librarian and Involved Citizen," in *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian*, ed. by Allison Lewis (Duluth, MN: Library Juice, 2008): 83-85.
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54. These goals, developed by the United Nations Development Programme and stated at United Nations Development Programme, "The Millennium Development Goals: Eight Goals for 2015," <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html> (accessed October 18th, 2012), are to "(1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) Achieve universal primary education; (3) Promote gender equality and empower women; (4) Reduce child mortality; (5) Improve maternal health; (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) Ensure environmental sustainability; [and] (8) Develop a global partnership for development".
55. Ibid.
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57. Jensen, "The Myth of the Neutral Professional"; Michael Baldwin, "Librarians as Knowledge Provocateurs," *Public Libraries* 45, no. 2 (2006): 11-14; Julie Biando Edwards, "Neutrality in Context: Principles and Rights," *Information for Social Change* 31 (2011): 17-27.
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