
Every thing determines everything

Embracing the flux of academic librarianship to co-author meaningful change

By Stephen Bales

[Keynote address delivered at the 1st Annual Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians, Brock University, Saint Catharines, Ontario, May 26, 2014. The version herein has been modified from the original delivered at Brock University, and it also includes additional documentation and notes to further benefit the reader].

Introduction

I would like to thank the CAPAL Programme Committee for inviting me to speak today. I am honored to have this opportunity to share my ideas about academic librarianship with the members of the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians.

Today I want to discuss dialectical materialism as an alternative way of thinking about the academic library. It seems an appropriate topic for this conference, with its theme being the shifting landscapes of academic librarianship. Every one of us knows that the only true constant in the academic library is change. When I started library school in 2002, I think we were still at Web 1.0. Who knows what version we are on now? It's a different world than it was just moments ago. Dialectical materialism has been around for nearly two

■ Stephen Bales is Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian at Texas A&M University where he is subject librarian for communication & journalism, philosophy, religion, and anthropology. His research interests include the history and philosophy of libraries and librarianship and the professional identity of LIS workers.

■ KEYWORDS: Philosophy of Library and Information Science; Professional Identity; Librarianship and Critical and Cultural Studies; Academic libraries; Dialectical materialism.

centuries, but it is of great value today for analyzing social change in a world that often seems to ignore change until it's nearly too late.

Thinking dialectically about the library is not something that many of us are used to doing. We typically view life linearly in terms of cause and effect.¹ For example, library anxiety research has found that “barriers with staff” correlates with elevated levels of library anxiety.² This is a valuable observation but it does not go very deep. A dialectical approach, however, would study barriers and anxiety from a different perspective, one that considers relationships as well as the change, history, and codetermination that accompany these relationships. I believe that learning to think in this manner would be a valuable addition to the critical thinking toolkit of any practicing academic librarian. I also think that it will result in meaningful change to both academic libraries and the larger society.

The dialectical approach to analyzing the library, therefore, has political implications. Now, seven hundred years ago it was pretty easy to identify the social relationships operating in the society in which one lived. For example, when a serf worked the land for his landlord, he knew exactly who was receiving the value created by his labor: his feudal landlord.³ Modern capitalism, however, is very effective at obfuscating relationships of all sorts, be they economic, political, cultural, or combinations of these categories.⁴ As academic librarians, we are well-placed to work out the important, as well as the sometimes exploitative, relationships found within the academic library itself and between the academic library and the capitalist social totality.

Adopting a mode of thought that uncovers exploitative relationships has a price tag attached. I am a progressive librarian who works at Texas A&M University Libraries in College Station, Texas. Have you seen those tee shirts that say “Keep Austin Weird”? Well, in College Station they have tee shirts that say “Keep College Station Normal.” Of course, the definition of what counts as “normal” in central Texas can have pretty rigidly defined boundaries. Being any flavor of left-wing academic in any place in Texas outside of Austin can make for interesting experiences. Nonetheless, when you uncover something that is unjust, you should work towards changing the situation. If you don't, you are complicit in the injustice. I am convinced that if you are an academic librarian who adopts a dialectical approach that sensitizes you to the relationships and change within human society, you are left better able to critique and change the academic library as an organic institution within a historically situated and structured society.

The origin of the dialectical approach is often attributed to the writings of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (died ca. 475 BCE). Before we plunge into Heraclitus's river, in which the spot “where you set your foot just now is gone,”⁵ I will tell you the story of my own personal first encounter with dialectic.

Encountering the dialectic

I have always wanted to be a librarian but have not always known that what I wanted to be was called “librarian.” This may sound strange, but it illustrates how concepts like librarianship are, in fact, flexible phenomena made up of relationships. Academic libraries and librarianship incorporate many different ideas, physical objects, and their interrelationships. Libraries and librarianship are also in relationships that extend outside of the library itself and all the way up to the ultimate relationship, reality itself. When I was a kid in Augusta, Georgia, my first goal was to become a priest. I suppose that this plan was, to some extent, selfish. In hindsight, I think that it had something to do with the fact that priests are in close proximity to power and are mediators of this power. That career plan didn’t last long, but I did go on, with a certain amount of cynicism, to obtain a religious studies BA. When one comes to a realization about the inadequacy of an abstract idea—in my case this idea was the deity idea—the realization can place everything surrounding the compromised idea in doubt, resulting in a sort of gestalt shift. How does one account for the structure of organized religion in light of the perceived limitations of the deity idea? Such a realization can radically change one’s worldview. But, without the proper intellectual toolset, the shift may result in nothing but more cynicism.

Although I had been critical of my received reality for several years, I had not fully developed my critical thinking skills by the time I graduated with my MLS. Upon graduating with my MLS and getting a job, I didn’t realize that I had, in fact, accomplished my original objective of becoming a priest, albeit a secular priest, and a cynical one at that. I had entered a hierarchical and largely patriarchal ideological apparatus with definite traces of religion: higher education in a capitalist society.⁶ I was complicit, in spite of and because of my ignorance, in reproducing these ideologies and social formations, of supporting abstract ideas similar to the conception of deity that I had started to question. How did I pierce this professional veil and decide to be a transformative librarian instead of the techno-bureaucrat I was heading towards ending up as?

Now, I don’t know how true the adage is that higher education breeds skepticism, but I do believe that enough education in conjunction with material practice may eventually result in a qualitative change in one’s understanding of the reality transmitted to them by the dominant culture. My own qualitative shift happened when I started my Ph.D. dissertation work and started reading Aristotle (lived 384-322 BCE).⁷ This was my first real encounter with this kind of thinking. Aristotle saw that knowledge develops from process and that the academic library is a necessary part of this process. The academic library is about changing the world. Aristotle, you see, thought that to create new knowledge you have to make deductions from basic *a priori* principles, and that these axioms can only be discovered by *dialectically* synthesizing

the existing *endoxa*, the “expert opinions” of others.⁸ It is only after such a synthesis that a scientist devises logical syllogisms to organize reality. How did Aristotle himself engage in this dialectic? Well, for one thing he owned a print library of *endoxa*. Many of his treatises have extensive reviews of the work of previous philosophers, suggesting that Aristotle used this library for his research. Aristotle also wrote about his dialectical method, his manipulation of *endoxa*, in his book the *Topics*. He did this in a way that looks suspiciously like instructions for organizing a research library:

We should select also from written handbooks of arguments and should draw up sketch-lists of them upon each several kind of subject, putting them down under separate headings, e.g. ‘On Good’, or ‘On Life’—and that ‘On Good’ should deal with every form of good, beginning with the essence. In the margin, too, one should indicate also the opinions of individual thinkers, e.g. that Empedocles said that the elements of bodies were four; for any one might assent to the saying of some reputable authority.

Of propositions and problems there are—to comprehend the matter in outline—three divisions; for some are ethical propositions, some are on natural science, while some are logical [...]”.⁹

When I read this, I see instructions for a classified catalog. I see a printed library catalog with texts keyed to a subject classification. I believe that the ancient scientists and philosophers who came after Aristotle read the *Topics* and saw the same thing. Demetrius of Phalerum (lived ca. 350-280 BCE)—the man that set up the Great Library of Alexandria approximately 20 years after Aristotle’s death—was an Aristotelian philosopher that studied under Aristotle’s famous protégé Theophrastus.¹⁰ Some scholars think that Callimachus (flourished ca. 285-240 BCE), a librarian and scholar at Alexandria, created the *Pinakes*, the first true library catalog, by dividing reality first by subject, then organizing individual authors alphabetically under each major heading and providing short records of all of their individual works.¹¹ This is a very Aristotelian approach to dividing up knowledge, and I think Callimachus possibly followed Aristotle’s instructions for creating a catalog as put forth in the *Topics*.

When considering these things, I began to see dialectic, even if at the time it was just dialectic in its Aristotelian form, as a key to understanding what was happening with the development of ideas and knowledge creation at the academic library as a social institution. The academic library could be seen as a locus of scientific progress and societal progress where ideas met and transformed each other, and it accomplished these things through connecting physical objects (the library collection) and mental objects (the ideas in the books).

But researching the Great Library did more than just clue me in to the rich interaction and change that act as a foundation for what everyone sees as an obvious purpose of library use: knowledge creation. My research also revealed to me a major contradiction within the academic library as a social phenomenon, one that challenged my understanding of what the library does as an institution. Ptolemy the Great (lived 367/6-282 BCE), the man directly responsible for the Great Library, effectively took Aristotelian philosophy and materially realized it in terms of the political ideology of Ptolemy's own former boss (and Aristotle's most famous student) Alexander the Great (lived 356-323 BCE). Like Alexander, Ptolemy understood that one of the best ways to ensure Greco-Macedonian power over the Eastern conquests was to take Greek culture and make it BIG.¹² One result of this strategy was the Great Lighthouse of Pharos, a giant phallic symbol of Greek rule. The pharaoh also went BIG with the Great Library, another ode to Greek power as well as a symbol of that culture's monopoly of knowledge. One interesting manifestation of this conflation of power and knowledge is that when ships entered the Alexandrian harbor, they were searched by Alexandrian soldiers for books. If any books were discovered, they were confiscated and copied. The copies were returned to the ships and the Great Library kept the originals.¹³ The Great Library was also a testament to Greek spiritual authority. It was, being attached to the Temple of the Muses,¹⁴ a symbol of spiritual dominance and cultural hegemony. Aristotelian dialectic had been transformed through this relationship with power and religion. It had become integrated into a material realization of Greek authority. The acts of knowledge creation that occurred in the Great Library and the religio-political and cultural ideological structure enforced by the Great Library were both responsible for reproducing a status quo in which Greek culture and power was ascendant.¹⁵

This contradiction perplexed me, but it also made me want to learn more. The Great Library, arguably the archetype for all the academic libraries that came later, was at one and the same time a symbol for scientific progress and a political tool used to control a colonized people by enforcing the hegemony of the dominant elite. This realization started the restructuring of my idealistic conception of the academic library. Research that had its beginnings as an historical project with philosophical overtones became an historical project with political overtones. Because of this shift, I also began to question my received understanding of the modern academic library. I had started to move beyond just thinking about dialectic and the library. I had begun to think dialectically *about* the academic library, and this shift in consciousness required that I move beyond common sense understandings of the library.

To a degree, my library school experience served as a sort of a finishing school in the dominant ideology of the academic library. But, because of my research, I had this paradigm shift in my world view, and I started to think dialectically

as opposed to linearly, even if it took me a while to do so in any sophisticated way. As a result of this break, I also began to shift my research agenda towards trying to understand the not so apparent relationships comprising the modern library. After the Great Library burned, academic libraries could not have just stopped being hegemonic tools, could they? Dialectical materialism presented itself as a holistic approach for understanding relationships and change beyond the common sense surface appearances.

A relational approach to the academic library

Many people think and write about the academic library without considering it in terms of relationships and change, an approach that may have something to do with the LIS profession's general fixation on quantitative methods. When LIS professionals do consider things like relationships and change, it can lead to consternation. For every article that is optimistic about the future of libraries, there always seems to be one lamenting that the library is becoming something else, something that it is not, and this projected change is sometimes reduced to being the effect of some monolithic cause. For example, major changes in technology periodically lead writers to ring the death knell for libraries and librarianship. This is a simplification that helps us to avoid considering the multiple relations involved in any phenomenon.¹⁶ When such reductionist arguments are made without considering the simultaneous (as well as historical) movement of the other phenomena involved in the thing called the library, people can lose perspective and panic. We sometimes think of the academic library as an idea divorced from reality, as something eternal. In doing this, we lose sight of the relational nature of things and we lose perspective and context. I am pretty confident that the academic library will keep doing what it does, regardless of changes in things like information technology, so long as the basic relationships that comprise it remain unchallenged and thus not made amenable to radical change. The question becomes: do we want the library to keep doing *everything* it currently does? The great thing about the dialectical approach, identified by contemporary Marxist philosopher Bertell Ollman as the "philosophy of internal relations,"¹⁷ is that it helps us to identify those things that may not be readily apparent. It helps us to see the potential for positive change in even the most apparently sluggish social structures, and it works towards this change.

All of this talk about relationships may seem a bit blurry. To bring it into focus, I want to talk briefly about the philosophical work of two men, one a lens grinder and the other a tanner. I find their ideas particularly valuable for approaching the academic library as a social institution that is organic to society, as something that both determines the social totality and, in turn, as something that is determined by the social totality.

The lens grinder was Benedict Spinoza (lived 1632-1677 CE). Spinoza, in contrast to his near contemporary Rene Descartes (lived 1596-1650 CE), denied the existence of a mind-matter duality. Spinoza held instead that everything was of the same substance, which he labeled “God.”¹⁸ *Every thing*—mind, matter, ideology, etc.—is *equally real* according in this conception. Mind and matter are simply different modes of expression for the same cosmic substance.¹⁹ If we look at the academic library through the lens of Spinozism, we can then attach similar levels of material reality to things like the physical places involved, the ideas surrounding what we do and will do as librarians, and what other people, institutions, and ideologies do in relation to the library. If *every thing*, regardless of its tangibility, is material, the mental and the physical become intertwined in our definitions of what the academic library *is* and *does*, and we can begin to decipher how people materially relate to it and are affected by it. We can better understand how things like ideas have a material effect on people. We can also analyze how the physical and mental interact to form stable ideological structures that reproduce society. Adopting this standpoint makes the positivistic approaches traditionally used for understanding these things appear one-dimensional. For example, distributing surveys to a randomly selected sample rips out these relationships and obscures socio-historical context.

The tanner was the nineteenth century philosopher Joseph Dietzgen (lived 1828-1888 CE). Dietzgen was a Marxist and later an anarchist (he is buried beside the Haymarket martyrs in Chicago because of this latter association). Dietzgen coined the term dialectical materialism and developed the philosophy at the same time as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. But, while Marx did not say much about dialectical materialism in his writings, and Engels has been accused of being overly schematic in his development of the philosophy, which in turn may have aided in the rise of Soviet dogmatism, Dietzgen was a clear communicator and a flexible thinker. He took Spinoza’s ideas concerning the basic sameness of all things and illuminated their shifting connections by means of Hegelian thought. Dietzgen saw *every thing* that materially exists as part of everything else and therefore as co-determining everything else.²⁰ Dietzgen had a profound influence on later dialecticians, including the aforementioned Bertell Ollman.²¹

I would not exist without relationships. We would not be the people that we are right here and now without what is happening to and between us right here and now, as well as without everything that happened prior to our being here and now. Let me illustrate this point with an example. Let’s say that a baby named Jack has just been born in London. According to Dietzgen’s philosophy, Jack would not be who he is without my existence. To posit otherwise would mean drawing definite existential boundaries between Jack and me. Contriving such boundaries ignores the web of relationships between the physical objects and ideas (again, both equally material and equally real) that connect the person

Bales with the social totality within which Jack exists. We can look at a slice of reality as the phenomenon Bales qua Jack and vice versa. Doing this also lets us consider the individuals in relation to the whole because neither one can exist “as it is” without the other.²²

Now if I did not exist, there would probably be only a miniscule difference in whom Jack is or who he would likely become, but he would be a different Jack nonetheless. So who cares? The relationship is too obscure, too minute to be of much interest. Why should we even consider reality like this? However, if we understand Spinoza’s idea of what substance is and Dietzgen’s explanation of how *every thing* codetermines every other thing as well as the totality, we are not limited to studying just the relationship between two particular common sense “things” like Bales and Jack. There are, in fact, an infinite number of ways to divide up reality into meaningful congeries of relationships, each of which expresses something that is equally as materially real as every other division of reality. Reality, no matter how we decide to chop it up, has a material existence and effect. Upon adopting this view, the capitalist academic library becomes a set of relationships of people, ideas, and places that are as materially real as Bales the person or as real as everything else in this room. This is a profound realization because it means that everything that I do affects everything else, and vice versa.

As a result of this flexible way to examine existence, it becomes important how we decide to break up reality in order to study it. Analyzing the relationship between Bales and baby Jack probably won’t get us very far. But, unlike the miniscule and obscure relationship between two individuals that have never met and likely will never know one another, the academic library is a massive social institution with great material presence in everyone’s life whether or not they ever actually set foot in the place. Just looking at the 2011-2012 statistics for the 125 member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries provides staggering evidence of academic library’s influence:²³

TABLE Selected ARL Statistics, 2011-2012 Survey

Total Expenditures	4,500,000,000 USD
Total Professional Staff Employed	12,714
Total Support Staff Employed	15,452
Total Reference Transactions	8,452,307
Total Regular (Non-Federated) Searches	347,075,987

If we conceptualize the phenomena that we want to study as the confluence of relationships that make up the academic library,²⁴ both past and present and both internal to the institution itself and connected with the greater social totality, we

can start to put together how individual elements of these relationships interact with each other in the larger material context. We can also examine how they affect each other and the academic library as a totality, how they reveal unequal power relationships, and how these inequalities are structurally embedded in social phenomena and the social totality as ideology.

Here is one example situation in which a dialectical approach might be fruitful. Many of the major library subject classifications that we use to organize and retrieve from collections, e.g., the Library of Congress Classification System, are based on culturally biased approaches to knowledge.²⁵ How do such biased divisions of reality hide alternative and counter-hegemonic collections? How do these systems help to reproduce hegemonic power structures and ideologies through their relationships with the educational apparatus? Or do classificatory structures influence knowledge creation by constructing collections in the way that they do? What can be done? While attitudinal surveys tend to come up short regarding meaning and context, and qualitative approaches like grounded theory do not, in my opinion, adequately take into account either the historical development of a phenomenon or the connection between the whole and the part, a dialectical approach accomplishes all of these things.

This talk is not meant as a blanket condemnation of ideology. Everyone operates using some kind of ideology to structure their reality. It is important, nevertheless, to identify and combat those elements of ideology that result in human exploitation. Studying how relationships exist and change is an excellent way to accomplish this task because it challenges assumptions concerning ideas that we may no longer easily see as affected by relationships and change. You see, viewing the academic library as a system of real relationships that interact both simultaneously and over time allows librarians as critical analysts to identify and critique the simplistic ideas that can become cemented as reality and then help to perpetuate unfair power structures. Ollman wrote that such simplistic ideas about reality can get stuck as *ideological structures* that seem to be in some way real outside of time and space.²⁶ Capitalism is rife with simplistic ideas, some of which are reflected and reproduced by libraries. For example, positivist science becomes idealized as *the only* science and *the only* way to truth,²⁷ freedom becomes synonymous with social freedom while ignoring the limitations imposed by economic inequality,²⁸ and public education transforms the process of internalizing ideas like these into what it takes to be a productive and patriotic citizen in a society that's economic formation is also taken for granted as an eternal given.²⁹ I myself wrote a book chapter about the academic library as "sacred space," and how ideas of the library as a religious place have been historically transcribed in it, and that this sublimation continues to influence how we act in relationship to it.³⁰ The academic library as a crypto-church reinforces a set of deeply ingrained ideas about reality that are not often questioned.

By examining the academic library as the constant motion of physical things and ideas that both co-define and transform each other through these relationships, we are able to root out the simplistic ideas and understand them for what they are: ideological elements that have become fixed, obscured, and now go largely unquestioned.

For instance, let's consider a major element of our practice that has been reduced to a simplistic idea: library neutrality. How do academic librarians' adoption of a simplistic and idealistic idea of neutrality help to reproduce exploitation? How are we, as academic librarians, complicit in this explanation if we choose to ignore these things?

Transformative academic librarianship and utopian thinking

Library neutrality has become an idealized concept that is largely divorced from real life and real relationships. Academic librarians should not claim to be neutral because *they cannot be neutral*. If we accept that the academic library is composed of relationships that exists in time and space and that it both maintains and is at the same time buttressed by capitalist ideological structures, then "neutral" librarians are actually functionaries of the dominant culture, reproducing its ideology and hegemony through their supposed neutrality.³¹ The claim of neutrality is a façade that hides the real relationships involved, and neutral librarians support a political-economic social structure that reflects and reproduces exploitation. This argument about professional intellectuals is not new; it has been around at least since Antonio Gramsci thought it through while sitting in an Italian jail cell in the 1930s.³² The progressive library community, particularly through the work of theorists like Douglas Raber and activist collectives like Radical Reference,³³ has made and acted upon such arguments for years. If you haven't already, I recommend taking a look at the ongoing discussion being carried out in journals like *Progressive Librarian* and *Information for Social Change*.³⁴ And, even if you don't agree with left-wing sociopolitical positions, or if you disagree with the dialectical approach to reality, it is still a good thing to think about who butters your bread. It is more ethical to investigate and own where you stand in relation to the ideological state apparatus for which you work,³⁵ whether it's to the left, center, or right, than to maintain pretensions of neutrality.

As I said before, I am a progressive academic librarian. If you are as well, and you agree that academic librarians are always, whether implicitly or explicitly, serving some ideological interest, and if you have decided to align yourself with those groups that are exploited, that is, you operate as a counter-hegemonic intellectual, then a theoretically grounded dialectical approach towards academic librarianship will help you to make strategic, positive change.

The sociologist Karl Mannheim wrote that “the only form in which the future presents itself to us is that of possibility, while the imperative, the ‘should,’ tells us which of these possibilities we should choose.”³⁶ The imperative that Mannheim wrote about comes as the result of utopian thinking. Now the word utopia tends to have a negative connotation in modern society. Utopia is associated with pie-in-the-sky ideas approaches to the future that are not grounded in realistic thought. But, like the fact that everyone has an ideology of some sort, most everyone engages in utopian thinking. Unless you think that “this is it” and that the status quo is utopia (and some people do think this way, usually people with power and money), you should work for the best possible social future.

I believe that librarians are most always utopian thinkers. Now this utopian outlook may have something to do with the fact that librarians rarely have power or money, but I like to think that it’s because we see the potential future social totality as being a place which better realizes freedom, diversity, and creative power in terms of the resolution of societal contradictions as opposed to ideas that have been abstracted from their concrete relationships. I also think that librarians instinctually see the library as a cradle of constant becoming and progress, and we see the kernel of this possible future contained in an academic library that is currently constrained by elements of the capitalist ideological structure. I think that because of our close proximity to the library, we are also tuned into the contradictory elements found in the institution: the relationships that just don’t seem to make a lot of sense. This is why I feel that a dialectical approach to professional praxis provides a way to think about the future of the library that hangs on the reality of the academic library as a materially existing, historically situated, and profoundly interconnected social phenomenon.

In conclusion

This talk has been a birds-eye view of the primary ontological aspects related to a dialectical approach to the academic library. The dialectic, however, is a deep rabbit hole to go down, and this has been meant only as a brief taste. But, before ending, I would like to briefly address method and professional praxis. How can transformative academic librarians facilitate meaningful change by using a dialectical approach? Tons of books and articles have been written on the ways that things relate dialectically, and there are many different interpretations of how dialectical change happens. There are, however, a few basic dialectical “laws” that we can apply to understand how social relationships work, where they are headed, and how we might develop workable strategies for creating positive change.³⁷ These laws include esoteric sounding things like (1) the negation of the negation, (2) the unity and conflict of opposites, and (3) the transition from quantity to quality. I will briefly talk about the final one of

these, the transition from quantity to quality, to suggest how these laws are of value to understanding and making change. If you are interested in digging deeper into these dialectical laws, I suggest reading one of the ABC's published by Progress Publishers.³⁸

The dialectical tendency for things to transition from quantity to quality holds that once a quantitative threshold for something is reached, a qualitative change will rapidly occur. This tendency is derived from empirical observations of the natural world, the classic example being the fast transformation that happens to water when the quantitative threshold of 100 degrees Celsius is reached.³⁹ The same idea holds in Marxist social theory, in which crisis after crisis eventually results in the qualitative leap of revolution. It happens in personal intellectual development too, and I think that my own shift in perspective came as the result of transition from quantity to quality.

As academic librarians and critical analysts, we can approach the library through this dialectical law and attempt to understand what is going on where we work. In terms of practice, we can harness the transition from quantity to quality. How much or how little does it take to reach a qualitative tipping point? For example, how much exposure does an oppressed group need in order to create or at least influence a substantial qualitative cultural change within the communities we serve? I firmly believe that if the quantity of critical analyses published and presented at conferences like CAPAL continues to increase, that the basic relationships that we have with each other, library paraprofessional staff, library users, and outside groups and institutions will at some point radically change, and do so for the better. These are, of course, simple examples that require much additional research, and effective dialectical work must take into account many shifting relationships and circumstances.

You must, however, resign yourself to the fact that since change is a constant, such analysis never ends. But, despite the difficulty of the task at hand, this simple observation about quantity and quality should be a source of optimism for librarians. It suggests that the steps that we take to create a more equal society, no matter how small, count. We need to keep taking steps until transformation happens, both within the academic library and in the social totality.

Thank you for listening to me today. I hope that this process has been dialectical, and that both parties to the exchange, even if I have been doing most of the talking, come out as different people. That is my goal, both in terms of this talk and as an academic librarian. I want to confront academic libraries as flux, to try to make sense of this flux, and to make the understanding of flux into an important element of the ongoing professional conversation.

The author would like to thank the Programme Committee of the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians and particularly the efforts of Mary Kandiuk and Leona Jacobs. He would also like to thank Wanda

Rosinski of the University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville for her invaluable suggestions and advice.

REFERENCES

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, 85-126. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001.
- Aristotle. *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by J. Barnes. 2 vols. Bollingen Series. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Association of Research Libraries. *ARL Statistics, 2011-2012 Survey*. Edited by M Kyrillidou, S. Morris, and G. Roebuck. Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2013.
- Bales, Stephen. *Aristotle's Contribution to Scholarly Communication*. PhD. Dissertation, University of Tennessee, 2008.
- . "The Academic Library as a Crypto-Temple: A Marxian Analysis." In *Class and Librarianship: Essays at the Intersection of Information, Labor and Capital*. Edited by Erik Estep and Nathaniel Enright. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2014. [In press].
- Bostick, Sharon. "The Development and Validation of the Library Anxiety Scale." PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1992.
- Blum, Rudolf. *Kallimachos: The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*. Translated by H. Wellisch. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
- De Vleeschauwer, H.J. "Afterword: Origins of the Mouseion of Alexandria." In *The Oral Antecedents of Greek Librarianship*, by H. Curtis Wright, 175-201. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977.
- Dietzgen, Joseph. *The Nature of Human Brain Work*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010.
- Engels, Frederick. *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*. Edited by C.P. Dutt. Translated by Emile Burns. New York: International Publishers, 1939.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971).
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968.
- Harris, Michael H. *History of Libraries in the Western World*. 4th ed. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995.
- Heraclitus. *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*. Translated by Brooks Haxton. New York: Viking, 2001.
- Leckie, Gloria J., and John E. Buschman., eds. *Information Technology in Librarianship: New Critical Approaches*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2009.
- Leckie, Gloria J. Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman., eds. *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010.

- Lewis, Alison., ed. *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian*. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2008.
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. San Diego, CA: Harvest Books, 1936.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin, 1976.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998.
- Maxwell, Nancy Kalikow. *Sacred Stacks: The Higher Purpose of Libraries and Librarianship*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2006.
- Fritz. *Hanbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*. Vol. 3. Weisbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1952.
- Ollman, Bertell. *Alienation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- . *Dialectical Investigations*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Olson, Hope A., and Rose Schlegl. "Standardization, Objectivity, and User Focus: A Meta-Analysis of Subject Access Critiques." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2001): 61-80.
- Parsons, Edward Alexander. *The Alexandrian Library: Glory of the Hellenic World; Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Press, 1952.
- Raber, Douglas. "Librarians as Organic Intellectuals: A Gramscian Approach to Blind Spots and Tunnel Vision," *Library Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2003): 33-53.
- Radical Reference. "Radical Reference." <http://radicalreference.info/>.
- Spinoza, Benedict. *Ethics*. Translated by W.H. White. Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 2001.

NOTES

- 1 See Joseph Dietzgen, *The Nature of Human Brain Work* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010): 56-66, and Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 118-119.
- 2 Sharon Bostick, "The Development and Validation of the Library Anxiety Scale," (PhD dissertation, Wayne State University, 1992).
- 3 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976): 345-347.
- 4 Ibid.; cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 62-63.
- 5 Heraclitus. *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*, trans. Brooks Haxton (New York: Viking, 2001): 27.
- 6 For an excellent overview of the religious aspects of libraries, see Nancy Kalikow Maxwell, *Sacred Stacks: The Higher Purpose of Libraries and Librarianship* (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2006).

- 7 See Stephen Bales, *Aristotle's Contribution to Scholarly Communication* (PhD. Dissertation, University of Tennessee, 2008); corrected version available at <https://repository.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/151476>.
- 8 Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. J. Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984): 167-168.
- 9 *Ibid.*: 175-176.
- 10 Michael H. Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World*, 4th ed. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995): 42.
- 11 Rudolf Blum, *Kallimachos: The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*, trans. H. Wellisch (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 153.
- 12 See Fritz Milkau, *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, vol. 3 (Weisbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1952): 17; Edward Alexander Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library, Glory of the Hellenic World: Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Press, 1952): 104-105; and Herman Jan De Vleeschauer, "Afterword: Origins of the Mouseion of Alexandria," in *The Oral Antecedents of Greek Librarianship*, by H. Curtis Wright (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977): 177-181.
- 13 Harris, *History of Libraries*: 44.
- 14 *Ibid.*: 43.
- 15 De Vleeschauer, "Afterword": 177.
- 16 Evald Ilyenkov refers to simplistic ideas as "abstract thinking." What we should be aiming for, Ilyenkov wrote, are concrete concepts that offer a "unity of different and opposing definitions, as mental expression of the organic links, of syncretism of the separate abstract definiteness of an object within the given specific object; see *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2008): 25-26.
Bertell Ollman wrote that such abstractions can become "the basic units of ideology"; see *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003): 62.
- 17 Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*: 37.
- 18 Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. W.H. White (Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions): 14.
- 19 *Ibid.*: 27.
- 20 Dietzgen, *Nature of Human Brain Work*: 17-32.
- 21 Ollman has written many important works on Marx's ontology and method including *Dance of the Dialectic, Alienation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971), and *Dialectical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
- 22 In *Dance of the Dialectic*, Ollman describes Marx's ontology as a where the "relation is the irreducible minimum for all units [...]": 17.
- 23 Association of Research Libraries, *ARL Statistics, 2011-2012 Survey*, ed. M Kyrillidou, S. Morris, and G. Roebuck (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2013): 9-45.
- 24 Ollman refers to these units of analysis that are composed of multiple relationships as "Relations," in *Dance of the Dialectic*: 26.

- 25 Hope A. Olson and Rose Schlegl thoroughly analyze the literature concerning bias in both classification and subject access systems in “Standardization, Objectivity, and User Focus: A Meta-Analysis of Subject Access Critiques,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2001): 61-80.
- 26 Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*: 16; 66-67.
- 27 Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968): 67.
- 28 Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*: 62.
- 29 Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2001): 104-106.
- 30 Stephen Bales, “The Academic Library as a Crypto-Temple: A Marxian Analysis,” in *Class and Librarianship: Essays at the Intersection of Information, Labor and Capital*, eds. Erik Estep and Nathaniel Enright (Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2014) [In press].
- 31 Douglas Raber, “Librarians as Organic Intellectuals: A Gramscian Approach to Blind Spots and Tunnel Vision,” *Library Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2003): 45.
- 32 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971): 5-23.
- 33 For critical/cultural approaches to LIS, one should seek out Gloria J. Leckie and John E. Buschman (eds.) *Information Technology in Librarianship: New Critical Approaches* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2009) and Gloria J. Leckie, Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman (eds.), *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010). Radical Reference’s website is available at <http://radicalreference.info/> (accessed June 11, 2014).
- 34 For an excellent collection of essays concerning library neutrality, see Alison Lewis, ed., *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian* (Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2008).
- 35 “Ideological State Apparatus” was a term coined by Louis Althusser to describe the capitalist state’s programmatic role in reproducing ideology. See Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”: 85-126 for a detailed explanation of this function.
- 36 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (San Diego, CA: Harvest Books, 1936): 260.
- 37 For the classic presentation of dialectical tendencies, see Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science*, ed. C.P. Dutt, trans. Emile Burns (New York: International Publishers, 1939).
- 38 One particularly clear summary is *ABC of Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, trans. Lenina Illitskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978).
- 39 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*: 138.