
Editorial

Why PLG? Why paper? Why bridge generations?

Each article in this issue of *Progressive Librarian* could have supplied a slogan for the January 21st Women's Marches (or as we called it in Seattle, the Womxn's March): Librarians Against Rape Culture (Cobb); Degrowth = the only hopeful sustainability under capitalism (Civallero & Plaza Moreno); What now with U.S.-Cuba relations? (Kagan); Stop Cultural Genocide Against Palestine (Mermelstein; Mattson & Twiss); Public librarians love PINK! (Edwards); Womxn Poets! (Kortemeier); Library Workers Unite (Barriage et al.); The 1% Class — Making America Miserable Again! (Pateman).

Every gathering, large and small, in the 676 locations reporting events in the U.S. could easily have included at least one library worker, whether in Washington DC, Nome (Alaska), or Ocala (Florida). That weekend the PLG banner made an appearance at the convention center in Atlanta (Georgia) as librarians attending the midwinter meeting of the American Library Association prepared to join with some 60,000 Atlantans and National Book Award winner and longtime civil rights activist Congressman John Lewis who addressed the pink pussy-hatted crowds. And there were marches in Mexico City, Oslo, Beirut, Accra, Tokyo...members of the 99% around the globe expressing opposition to the new president of the U.S. (Thanks to Wikipedia this data is so easily available, which I suppose makes this editor an ally of the devil's advocates, along with Scholz and Beman-Cavallaro who urge *PL* readers to become Wikipedians.¹)

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■ KEYWORDS: Progressive Librarians Guild; Library activism; American Library Association; Trump administration and censorship; Disinformation; Librarianship and social justice

Progressive Librarian was being prepared for the printer at the end of the first week of the new Trump administration — a wild week that witnessed tweets and press “conferences” via which the administration lied about easily verifiable information, insisted on the legitimacy of “alternative facts,” characterized the press as “the opposition party,” and demanded that it “keep its mouth shut.”² The week also featured a flurry of actions regarding information ranging from demands that the EPA expunge climate change data from its website³ to outright deletion of the Spanish language portion of the White House website⁴ and the disappearance of LGBTQ rights webpages from the Department of Labor.⁵ And, at week’s end, came the horror of Trump’s executive order regarding immigrants from seven Muslim countries — a ban met instantaneously with protests at airports across the country and in quick order was halted by a federal judge.

Such is the political climate and information environment in which the library profession finds itself today. Navigating this landscape demands a sort of collective action and engagement within community that the profession has long paid lip-service to all the while continuing to serve the interests of the power elite.

We saw this when the American Library Association, immediately after the November election, offered congratulations, cooperation and services to the new administration (Document 1, p. 128-129) — a message coming directly from the elite of the profession, which quickly learned how distant it was from the rank-and-file. An outpouring of opposition via email, Facebook, Twitter, phone calls, etc. to ALA’s post-election letter put the Association on notice that it must stand firm on the profession’s core values. In a flurry the letter was rescinded (Document 2, p. 130) and ALA President Julie B. Todaro issued a letter of apology to members (Document 3, p. 130-131).

On January 30, ALA issued a statement opposing Trump administration policies that contradict core values⁶ and at its midwinter meeting in January the ALA Council passed Resolution on Access to Accurate Information⁷, which was based in earlier policy-making done a decade ago by PLG and SRRT members who served on ALA’s governing Council. In 2005, these members persuaded Council to approve the following:

The ALA opposes the use by government of disinformation, media manipulation, the destruction and excision of public information, and other such tactics, and ALA encourages its members to help raise public consciousness regarding the many ways in which disinformation and media manipulation are being used to mislead public opinion in all spheres of life, and encourages librarians to facilitate this awareness with collection development, library programming and public outreach

that draws the public's attention to those alternative sources of information dedicated to countering and revealing the disinformation often purveyed by the mainstream media.⁸

The spirit of safeguarding public information from destruction prompted librarians and archivists to join scientists and hackers, in the days leading up to Inauguration Day, in a preservation marathon of climate data.⁹

Political agendas served by “alternative facts” and “fake news” are nothing new, although the characteristic historical amnesia induced by a culture of consumption and the educational system in the U.S. makes everything under the sun seem new (except, of course, those things that are truly ancient — Egyptian mummies, Aztec calendars, the Great Wall of China, etc.).

So, what does Progressive Librarians Guild offer the profession? Why do we insist on publishing a paper, advertisement-free journal? Is PLG, as some have claimed, so disconnected from the newest generation of library and archive professionals as to be irrelevant?

What PLG offers can be glimpsed via the pages of this issue — raising questions, offering analysis, describing experiences, and suggesting practices that push the envelope on issues the profession as a whole would rather ignore: a culture of consumption; library service to the interests of capitalism; climate change. PLG members offer experience as library activists willing to share insights, strategies, cautionary tales, and welcome the company of like-minded colleagues on the journey.

We insist on publishing *Progressive Librarian* on paper and online and advertisement-free because

- the physicality of print is still the best option in preserving the historic record, , and the history of librarianship matters to us;
- for many people, young and old, paper is a most congenial interface between text/image, eye, and mind;
- online access gives the journal the broadest possible reach; and
- a journal supported exclusively by subscribers serves the interests of readers, not corporations.

As for the generation gap, PLG bridges generations. Two authors of articles in this issue were LIS students when their work was accepted for publication, a couple are tail-end-Baby-Boomers, the others are Me Generation, Gen-X or Millennials.

In Trump's “America” and around the globe, building bridges between generations and genders and place-of-birth/ancestry and language and culture is essential if we want our communities to meet the challenges of dwindling resources and climate change in a spirit of love rather than xenophobic hatred,

cooperation rather than exploitation. The profession — indeed, the planet — cannot afford generation gaps. All ages, the entire spectrum of diversities, must join together in a spirit of common purpose, mutual respect, caring and can-do enthusiasm in order to counter a power structure bent on destroying everything that stands in the way of its privilege.

PLG's newly revised Statement of Purpose begins:

Libraries are an important intersection of the individual, communities and knowledge. We see librarianship as a profession and practice that serves to enable the creation of and access to a multitude of forms of human expression, experience and aspiration. We also recognize that libraries are sites where structures of injustice, exploitation, control, and oppression are nourished, normalized and perpetuated. The Progressive Librarians Guild exists to expose and call out librarianship's active and passive complicity and acceptance of those systems, to offer and practice alternatives to those systems, to empower the voices of those excluded from positions of power and/or the historical record and to develop a praxis that contributes to on-going pursuits of human rights and dignity.¹⁰

Readers are encouraged to support the work of PLG by becoming members and joining in the work of organizing for social change.

PLG needs your support, and the profession needs PLG.

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PLG banner carried by Mark Hudson, Katharine Phenix, Mike Marlin and Vivaldo at convention center during midwinter meeting of the American Library Association and prior to the Atlanta Women's March on 21 January 2017. Photo by Kathleen de la Peña McCook.