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Table of Contents

Progressive Librarian #46                                     Winter 2017/18

EDITORIAL 3

ARTICLES

The Fight for Public Library Funding: Demonstrate Value or Demonstrate in the Streets?
by Stavroula Harissis 5

Degradation Professional Librarian Status at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 2007-2015 — a policy history
by Thomas H. Kreneck 12

Ideology and Rhetoric of Undergraduate Student Workers in Academic Libraries
by Elliott Kuecker 50

ALA, IFLA, and South Africa,
by Al Kagan 63

Information Preferences of Reddit Communities Surrounding the Brock Turner Case
by Kathryne Bratland 86

Invisible and Inaccessible: Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, Inc. – A Mixed Methods Inquiry
by Laura Patino & Joyce M. Latham 101

OERS and a Language of Urgency
by Jaci Wilkinson 114

Criminalizing Information Providers: Sharina, Gomez, Elbakyan and Schwartz
by David Ramirez-Ordoñez and Virginia Inés Simón 120
PLG PROGRAM PAPERS


Neoliberalism and the Academy
by Peter McDonald 128

November 8, 2016, the Public, and Libraries
by John Buschman 135

Efficiency or Jagged Edges: Resisting Neoliberal Logics of Assessment
by Maura Seale 140

Community-Building vs. Customer-Driven Librarianship:
Countering Neoliberal Ideology in Public Libraries
by Mark Hudson 145

BRAVERMAN ESSAY

Personal Health Data, Surveillance, & Biopolitics:
Toward a Personal Health Data Information Literacy
by Matthew Weirick Johnson 149

BOOK REVIEWS

Higher Learning and the American Academic Library in the Twilight Era of Neoliberalism
a review essay by John M. Budd & Bart M. Harloe 158

DOCUMENTS

ALA Resolution on Libraries as Responsible Spaces 178
ALA Resolution on Access to Accurate Information 179
ALA Statement on Global Climate Change 181
As this issue of *Progressive Librarian* heads to press, the outrages of the first year of the Trump administration are powerfully countered by an abundance of resistance. From women’s marches and airport shutdowns to the #MeToo and Break the Internet campaigns, heartening signs abound that social movements toward justice inside the United States are gaining momentum on many fronts. Unfortunately, successes over the past year at times seem overshadowed by the tremendous challenges facing us all. The pressure and enormity of the past year have not occurred in a vacuum. Within PLG we have struggled to find the energy to maintain consistent, solid communication and put new ideas into practice. Several of our stalwart editors and coordinating committee members have resigned, retired, gone on to other projects, or simply needed to put time and energy elsewhere. Their departures leave some voids that can never be filled, but also create openings for new people to make their place within PLG.

Our members have always been the driving force of this organization. If you are looking for ways you can make a difference in these troubling times, please consider joining the PLG’s Coordinating Committee and help us meet the challenge. Details on getting involved can be found on our website.

With that said, and in the midst of this churning political scene, you might ask: Where is PLG? What, as an organization, have we accomplished over the past year? What more can we do?

Much of our work this past year has been internally focused, but always with an eye to where we want the organization to stand in relation to the shifting landscape of librarianship in our society. Organizationally, PLG’s accomplishments for 2017 include a revised Statement of Purpose – with a survey of the membership to ascertain members’ thoughts and solicit feedback. We issued a statement in support of librarian Leslie Williams, the sole African-American librarian of the Evanston (IL) Public Library, who was targeted by library management for disciplinary measures in response to her advocacy on behalf of excluded and underserved library constituents. We also submitted for public comment and record our opposition to policy changes by the Department of Homeland Security that threatened privacy rights of immigrants and naturalized U.S. citizens. Additionally, we launched a beautiful new website and blog; increased our social media presence; we published issue #45 of *Progressive Librarian*, and sponsored a program on neoliberalism and librarianship at the annual conference of the American Library Association, the papers presented are in this issue of *PL*. 
The articles and documents contained in this issue stand as testament to the attention library and archive workers are giving to demands for social change. A major focus of this issue is neo-liberalism and the insidious spread of policies that continue to de-professionalize library workers, utilize business models to determine the value of resources (human and otherwise) and erode public space for political education, community building and dissent. Authors Harrissis, McDonald, Buschman, Seale, Hudson, Kreneck, Wilkinson, Budd and Harloe all write about neoliberalism’s nefarious impact throughout our profession and within our institutions, and Kuecker’s article reveals the manner in which neoliberal ideology has driven how LIS researchers approach practical issues such as the use of students as library workers.

There is also attention to other relevant topics within librarianship as Brattland analyzes the information source preferences in social media communities with focus on the Brock Turner rape case as an example; Patino and Latham describe a project designed to support the day-to-day information needs of a community group, in this case Planned Parenthood; and our Braverman essayist looks at personal health data tracking technologies. While Ramirez-Ordoñez and Simón paint a picture of the repression faced by the most visible faces in the struggles of the rights of access to information for all people in the world, lest we become discouraged, the articles by Kagan and ALA resolutions give ground for hope — the former an overview of how librarianship responded to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the later examples of progressives’ influence within mainstream librarianship. The task, as always, is to transform resolution into reality.

As 2018 dawns, we now find ourselves with the momentum of a newly revised statement of purpose, a newly redesigned website, a new blog, and a respected journal with a long history. But without filling our open leadership roles, we’ll fail to capitalize on our collective strength and risk the organization’s sustainability. As we continue to resist the forces that undermine our values and progressive librarianship, PLG remains committed to (re)conceptualizing our work, calling out inequality and injustice in librarianship and cultivating a robust organization capable of responding to an expansive set of social challenges.

Jennifer Williams, Nathaniel Moore, and Elaine Harger
The Fight for Public Library Funding
Demonstrate Value or Demonstrate in the Streets?

by Stavroula Harissis

It is an interesting time to be a MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) student. Though professors usually stop short of telling us that the public library is in its death throes, there is a palpable sense of crisis ranging from uncertainty to doom in the curriculum and conversation. Between technological advances that supposedly threaten to make the public library obsolete and the economic strangulation of austerity policies that have decimated public funding, the future of the public library does indeed seem to be at a crossroads. Libraries have generally responded well to the first obstacle, adapting to changing technology by upgrading their materials (more computers, digital content, etc.) and by shifting their mission from merely providing books and information to a renewed emphasis on community building and lifelong learning. But budget cuts and the general climate of austerity in the United States stymie these efforts to continue evolving the identity of the public library, and thus the question of funding takes center stage.

The most common response in the current LIS literature to the question of funding revolves around the idea of “demonstrating value.” We are told that librarians have failed to adequately advocate for themselves or prove the worth of their libraries, and this is why library funding has suffered. Therefore, the prescribed solution is to develop better advocacy strategies and outcome measures to convince politicians and the public that libraries deserve more funding. But this is an incorrect diagnosis and an inadequate strategy that fails to address the systemic issues driving the problem. In reality, the primary cause of our funding woes has little to do with the perceived or real value of libraries and everything to do with political and economic power. We must address these power structures if we hope to truly overcome persistent underfunding and give the public library the resources it needs to survive and flourish in the 21st century.

Stavroula Harissis completed her MLIS in August 2017. She currently works as Adult Services Program Coordinator at Indian Trails Public Library District in Wheeling, IL. She also serves as a volunteer Steering Committee member for Liberation Library, a Chicago-based organization that provides books for incarcerated youth.

Keywords: public libraries; demonstrating value; labor unions; neoliberalism; public good; social justice
Is the value of the library really in question?

Recent surveys have shown that a staggering 82% of people in the U.S. believe public libraries are important to their community (Zickuhr, Rainie, and Purcell 2013, 19), 83% have used the library in their lifetime (Horrigan 2015, 15), and 49% have visited the library or its website in the past year (Horrigan 2015, 15). The public also tends to vote overwhelmingly in favor of tax levies to fund libraries. In 2009, in the midst of the “Great Recession,” 84% of referenda to fund library operations and 54% of referenda to fund library construction in the U.S. passed (Dempsey 2010). Given this massive amount of public support, even from non-users and even in tough economic times, it seems ludicrous to assert that libraries have failed to demonstrate their value.

Is it the politicians we have failed to convince, then? Not exactly. While many politicians have certainly cut library budgets, you would be hard-pressed to find one who did so because they did not believe the library was valuable to the community. Instead, the message usually boils down to, “We’re sorry, we don’t have enough money.”

Chicago provides us with an excellent case in point. Current Mayor Rahm Emanuel has been described by Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Brian Bannon as being “a staunch supporter of libraries” (Schwartz 2013) and Emanuel himself has held many press conferences in support of various library initiatives. Yet, in his first year as mayor, Emanuel proposed cutting $10 million from the overall library budget, including over 300 layoffs and a reduction in branch hours to 40 per week by closing all branches on Mondays (Balde and Kaplan 2011). This amounted to 50% of the layoffs in his proposed city budget, despite the fact that CPL accounted for only 3% of the city’s overall spending (“Chicago Public Library Head Resigns...” 2012). If Mayor Emanuel was willing to decimate the CPL budget while simultaneously singing the library’s praises, it is clear that “demonstrating value” did not or would not have made an impact on his decision. What explains this disconnect?

Neoliberalism Wants Libraries to Fail

In order to understand the actions of politicians, we have to understand the political and economic contexts within which they operate. Currently, we are living in a historical period defined by neoliberalism, an ideology whose beginnings are most often attributed to the administrations of Ronald Reagan (U.S.) and Margaret Thatcher (U.K.) in the 1980’s. It is an ideology “mandating that decisions of government be based on what is best for markets” (Jaeger et al. 2014). This is accomplished by the government implementing policies which strengthen the private sector (e.g. deregulation and corporate tax breaks) while simultaneously weakening the public sector (e.g. austerity/budget cuts and privatization).
Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, and Sarin examined the intersection of neoliberalism and libraries in their 2014 book entitled, *Public Libraries, Public Policy, and Political Processes*. They discuss how neoliberalism destroys the idea of the public good by forcing all entities to demonstrate a direct benefit to the economy, which is at odds with the purpose of educational and cultural institutions like libraries. Moreover, they argue that professionals working in the public sector “threaten the assumption that markets know more than other social actors” (Jaeger et al. 2014, 68).

In other words, the deprofessionalization of librarianship, another facet of the current public library crisis, is an intentional product of neoliberalism. Others have written more extensively on the topic of deprofessionalization, such as Bill Crowley who noted that “the logic of the marketplace provides a very limited role for the professional librarian and, at times, even the public library itself” (Crowley 2006, 77), owing largely to the fact that “from a business perspective, information is less a profession and more a commodity” (Crowley 2006, 76).

It seems logical then that Jaeger and colleagues would come to the following conclusion: “Simply put, the neoliberal economic ideology wants libraries to fail” (Jaeger et al. 2014, 68). Yet, despite this systemic diagnosis, the authors fail to offer systemic solutions. Instead, they offer the same recommendations as those who ignore neoliberal ideology altogether: demonstrate value in economic terms if you want to survive. Specifically, they state that “demonstrating these types of numbers may enable libraries to speak in the language of policy makers, who currently exist in an environment that requires even traffic lights to have a demonstrable economic value” (Jaeger et al. 2014, 115). This statement encapsulates the absurdity of the argument for demonstrating value—it demands we speak the language of sociopaths who want even the most basic functions of public safety to demonstrate an economic value. That hardly seems like a winning strategy for defending libraries and the public good. And in fact the authors do not seem convinced of their own strategy, concluding: “Even if libraries cannot be kept out of harm’s swift way, politically engaged and data-driven advocacy will at least make it more difficult for politicians and policy makers to render with impunity decisions that are detrimental to libraries” (Jaeger et al. 2014, 116).

This is a remarkably defeated prognosis and a baffling conclusion to draw from an otherwise solid analysis of the political landscape that the public library finds itself in. If we are operating within a system that we know is setting us up to fail, as the authors concede, then the only logical response is to challenge that system and its underlying assumptions. Anything less than that is to accept a slow, tortured death masked by denial.

*Demonstrating in the Streets*

The antidote to this death by a thousand cuts can be found by returning to our Chicago example. After Mayor Emanuel announced his budget proposal in October 2011, there was a swift response from AFSCME Council 31,
the union representing CPL workers. They organized a “Story Time at City Hall” protest on Halloween where they read books to children dressed in costumes outside the Mayor’s office and delivered a petition with thousands of signatures opposing cuts to the library (Balde and Kaplan 2011, Moberg 2011). This mobilized community members and garnered media attention that then led city council members to put pressure on Emanuel to revise the budget, not only in favor of libraries but also demanding reduced cuts to other public services as well (Moberg 2011). When the budget finally passed city council in November 2011, $3.3 million in funding and over 100 staff positions were restored to CPL (Kelley 2012, Kaplan and Ahern 2012). AFSCME continued the fight into the new year, organizing letter writing campaigns and holding “People’s Library Hours” in protest of cuts in library hours, which eventually succeeded in fully restoring branches to 48 hours per week (Blake 2012, Brandel 2012).

This example shows how an organized labor force that mobilizes public support can put pressure on politicians to act in the interest of the public good. And although there were some elements of “demonstrating value” in the arguments from AFSCME, it is clear that what actually made the difference was the public pressure generated by organized protest. Mayor Emanuel did not restore funding because he was suddenly convinced that the library’s value warranted it. He restored funding because it became politically impossible not to. That should be the first goal of any library advocacy campaign: organize community support to put pressure on politicians to act in the interest of the public good.

Community support should of course focus on defending the library, but whenever possible we should also connect the fight for library funding to other community issues. This not only broadens the potential base of support but, more importantly, broadens the conversation to begin discussing the systemic causes of our shared financial woes. Another union in Chicago, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), has been leading the way on this front. Mayor Emanuel had barely been in office for a year when the CTU voted to authorize a strike in the summer of 2012. That fall, they went on strike for seven school days and held a massive rally that put thousands of teachers and supporters on the streets of downtown Chicago (Campbell 2012). The contract itself won some significant concessions from the city (Chicago Teachers Union 2012b, McCune 2012) but equally important was how they won. The CTU garnered massive public support and connected their contract fight to broader social and economic justice issues, centering their message around a report entitled “The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve” (Chicago Teachers Union 2012a). This report connects educational theory, workers’ rights, racial equality, and economic factors to produce a comprehensive, evidence-based plan for improving schools.

**Challenging Neoliberal Economics**

The economic issues touched on in “The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve” moved to the forefront of the CTU’s later contract negotiations.
In May 2015, the union issued a press release entitled, “Broke on purpose: Board of Ed continues to peddle budget myths to justify its starving of classrooms” (Chicago Teachers Union 2015). This statement debunks the myth that the city of Chicago is too broke to fund the kind of quality education that the CTU has been advocating for and shows how the city’s finances have been mismanaged—or rather, managed in favor of the private sector. From Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds used to subsidize multi-million dollar luxury developments to $1.2 billion in toxic swap liabilities (Chicago Teachers Union 2015), millions of Chicago’s public tax dollars have been funneled into the hands of private banks and corporations. Taken in combination with continuous corporate tax breaks, it is clear that Chicago’s bankruptcy is a manufactured crisis, a faithful execution of neoliberal doctrine.

Thus, one of the CTU’s main demands in the 2015 negotiations was for the city of Chicago to explore alternative revenue sources. They offered suggestions such as a progressive income tax, a financial transaction tax, and the return of TIF money to the public coffers (Chicago Teachers Union 2015). These are precisely the kinds of demands that libraries facing budget cuts should also be making. And they are not unreasonable demands to make of one the richest and most powerful governments in the world. We often hear about how the “Great Recession” of 2008 hurt “the economy,” but this narrative conveniently obscures the fact that some people have recovered quite nicely, while most others continue to suffer. “After adjusting for inflation, the average income for the richest 1 percent (excluding capital gains) has risen from $871,100 in 2009 to $968,000 over 2012 and 2013. By contrast, for the remaining 99 percent, average incomes fell by a few dollars from $44,000 to $43,900” (Wolfers 2015). Meanwhile, Wall Street and the stock market are also doing better than ever, as reported in a ThinkProgress article titled “The Wealth Gap Between Rich and Poor is the Widest Ever Recorded” (Salles 2014). So it seems that what is commonly referred to as an “economic crash” would better be described as a transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top of the economic food chain.

**No Such Thing as Neutral**

Unfortunately, discussions of politics and economics on this level are generally considered taboo in U.S. society. This is perhaps even more so true within the LIS field, which has been dominated by an ethos of “neutrality” in recent decades. However, some librarians have pushed back against this mentality. A collection of essays from *Progressive Librarian* questioning the argument for library neutrality was published in 2008 (Lewis 2008). The first essay in the collection, an article by Mark Rosenzweig originally published in 1991, reminds us that the public library was an ideological project from the outset, “primarily concerned with the regulation of literacy, the policing of literary taste, and the propagation of a particular class culture” (Lewis 2008, 6). He goes on to briefly trace the history of the intersections of the public library and politics, from
librarians supporting censorship during WWI to the shift toward defending intellectual freedom in the 1960s, demonstrating that “the question… is not whether politics enters into professional matters (it always has), but rather what politics, and to what effect” (Lewis 2008, 7). Therefore, librarians who claim to reject “politics” are in fact lending support to the politics of the status quo. As Steven Joyce put it: “‘neutral’ librarians are not, in fact, neutral. Rather, they help to maintain an inequitable status quo created by and in the interests of the dominant forces within society… those who sit on the fence ought to give some thought about who built that fence and why” (Lewis 2008, 54). We should heed this advice when thinking about advocacy, funding, and the overall future of public libraries. It is in our interest to get off the fence and take a side in the political and economic forces that shape our communities and our profession.

Conclusion

Public libraries are a venerated institution in the United States. The public intuitively supports them and the research continually confirms their positive impact. While measuring outcomes can certainly help libraries improve their programs and services, these measures should not be used to justify or deny the existence of the library itself. In fact, more and more, the prescribed outcome measures often have little to do with impact on the community, as neoliberalism demands public services demonstrate their value in economic, rather than human, terms. It is alarming to see the field of librarianship adopt these terms.

The inherent value of the public library is not in question. The current emphasis on “demonstrating value” as a way to secure funding is a distraction, a misuse of time that could and should be spent attacking the real causes of the public library’s existential crisis: a political and economic system that wants public libraries to fail. If we hope to truly to preserve libraries as a public institution, we need to break through the immobilizing appeal to “neutrality.” We need to organize ourselves and our communities into a consciously non-neutral, consciously political force that actively fights for the right and value of the public good. Our survival depends on it.

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Degrading Professional Librarian Status at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 2007-2015 — a policy history

by Thomas H. Kreneck

“When we remain silent, we participate in our own marginalization.”
Wendy Davis, Austin 1/21/2017

From December 1, 1990 through August 31, 2012, I served as head of Special Collections & Archives at the Mary and Jeff Bell Library of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. During my almost twenty-two-year tenure in that position and through the efforts of a diligent staff, the department made some stellar achievements for the benefit of the students of A&M-Corpus Christi and elsewhere, scholarship in general, and the larger community’s historical consciousness by documenting the development and culture of the region it served. Some of the more interesting of these contributions have been chronicled in the professional and popular literature.1

While these experiences were positive, during the final two years of my service in that position (2010-2012), I was a witness to, participant in, and (along with the rest of the library professionals) a victim of deliberate degrading of professional librarian employment status. Unfortunately, such degradation of librarian and other academic professional status has become a trend in academia. What we as a class of A&M-Corpus Christi employees experienced during those two years constituted a case study of the downgrading of professional librarians from “good cause” employees to “at will” employees by the Texas A&M University System and A&M-Corpus Christi. This process ran counter to progressive thought and activity, which has always focused on the condition of employees in general and librarians in particular.

A native of South Texas, Thomas H. Kreneck holds a Ph.D. in history from Bowling Green State University. He served as an archivist at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (1976-1990) and as head of Special Collections & Archives at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (1990-2012). Author of books and articles, Kreneck specialized in documenting the Mexican American experience.

Keywords: deprofessionalization, library management, neoliberalism
The present downgrading of librarian status academy-wide usually takes the form of losing faculty status and has caught the attention of those reporting on the condition of librarians. As a variation, the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians lost “academic status,” an alternate form of professional rank which allows for academic freedom and job security. Furthermore, A&M-Corpus Christi did not “grandfather” those of us who had achieved off-probationary status, a condition earned after serving a five-year probationary period which had conferred a vested right to our jobs and had allowed for continuing renewal of annual employment. Thus, this essay does not deal with the long-debated issues of faculty versus non-faculty status. It deals with basic rights granted to professionals who had earned rights through laboriously following the stated policy under which they were hired and then having those rights summarily and retroactively stripped from them, much as property is taken.2

Incredibly, too, although the librarians learned of their degraded employment status in 2010, the downgrading had actually taken place in 2007. The librarians had not been notified of their misfortune by the university administration for approximately three years. Lamentably, too, after the initial struggles of 2010-2012 which I observed firsthand before I left A&M-Corpus Christi, the librarians worked to formulate a new policy which was formally adopted in late 2015. While this new policy contained elements which were designed to make it palatable to some of the professional librarians, it provided them with terminal one-to-three-year contracts. Thus, this new policy in effect codified the downgrading of their employment status begun in 2007.

The purpose of this essay is to present a policy history which places into the professional literature this entire episode (2007-2015) and thus augments knowledge on the topic. By doing so, professionals can understand what happened to a specific group of librarians from the perspective of one who went through its most intense phase as well as sought to understand its details and implications through subsequent research. This essay might then be used as an example of what has transpired and is transpiring throughout the profession. Perhaps it can also help to serve as a practical roadmap for what professionals might look for and guard against. Hopefully, too, this essay will encourage professional librarians in other institutions to document similar experiences which they have undergone. In accomplishing the above purposes, what the library professionals at A&M-Corpus Christi endured as a class of academic employees will not have been entirely in vain.

Perhaps over-optimistically, I hope that the trend toward de-professionalism of librarians, as evidenced by the case at A&M-Corpus Christi, is but a phase, and that through concerted effort conditions might be righted for the betterment of the profession, education, and society in general. Thus, I place my faith in progressive values and the rectification of the negative atmosphere which prevails.
My methodology is that of the first-person participant observer who seeks to narrate the facts as I saw them to be. As such I interpret the particulars from the view of the insider. This perspective provides an intimacy with the situation that a third party can never possess. My training as a professional historian, an appropriate passage of time since the events occurred, as well as gathering further data through interviews and other documents and open records research furnish a heightened degree of balance, objectivity and information. Furthermore, I hold my judgments regarding how others felt and/or their motivations to a minimum and provide them only when totally convinced by documentary evidence, multiple observations and interviews, and/or interactions with those individuals firsthand. In this manner, what I present might allow readers, especially professional librarians, to draw their own conclusions.

My approach also includes providing anonymity to persons I interviewed, quoted, or cited for this essay. My research deals with sensitive matters for many involved, and as journalists often do, such efforts by necessity must shield some people’s identity. Although many individuals willingly divulged their insights and factual information, for a variety of understandable reasons, they asked that I withhold their names. These reasons ranged from mere personal privacy to the need to pursue the rest of their careers without fear of future unfair or retributive job references. Some simply wanted to put these unpleasant experiences behind them and could best do so by not revealing their identity in print.

Except for those persons who were involved in the development of librarian employment status at A&M-Corpus Christi before the degradation started, I do not identify by name those individuals who held positions and took certain actions in the 2007-2015 process. While personalities play roles, it is the actions of those involved which need to be scrutinized without revealing individual names. Often times, too, it is impossible to determine what specific person(s) within the system or university administrations made the decisions which impacted the events. In such cases, it is enough to identify the action as a system or university. It is the process itself of the degradation of professional librarian employment at A&M-Corpus Christi that is important to identify and explain. Naturally, I mean no ill will or bad intentions toward any individual.

The Events: Academic Status, 1990-2009

On March 29, 1990, A&M-Corpus Christi (then Corpus Christi State University) issued (i.e. formally adopted) its employment policy for professional librarians as university policy section 2.2.10 (later renumbered 2.3). Entitled “Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians,” this university policy identified professional librarians as a “distinct group of academic employees” with “special skills, knowledge and experience….”
Almost six pages in length, university policy 2.2.10 (2.3) constituted a form of what professional librarians commonly term “academic status” and it closely paralleled the terms of employment given to tenure track teaching faculty. Policy 2.2.10 (2.3) called for a period of probation “which shall not exceed seven years of full time service” at the institution. In each of the first four years the librarian was carefully evaluated on a lengthy list of criteria. “During the fifth complete year of employment…, a librarian comes under consideration for the formal closing of his or her probationary period.” Within that fifth year a librarian came under “a review of more than ordinary scope.” After this review period, the professional librarian was no longer on probation and could thereafter only be terminated “for good cause.” Important as well, the policy stated that “the burden of proof of good cause rest[ed] with the institution” for issuing “dismissals or terminal contracts.” This process paralleled that of faculty, as the policy called for the professional librarians’ membership in the faculty senate, service on university committees, attendance at graduation ceremony, and other faculty duties.4

Though university policy section 2.2.10 (2.3) had shortcomings (mainly, it lacked rankings and promotions), it provided a fair, professional employment framework. The policy listed seven (7) “good cause” motives for dismissal that included “professional incompetence,” “moral turpitude,” “bona fide financial exigency,” and other reasonable, commonly accepted reasons. Furthermore, the policy provided that in the “dismissal of a non-probationary librarian, a bona fide effort should be made to achieve a satisfactory resolution of difficulties....” Otherwise, in practice, after the end of the probationary period the annual appointment letter would be automatically issued (called “continuing appointment” and “continuing employment” by the Association of College & Research Libraries).5

From March 29, 1990 forward, the university hired professional librarians under the above-mentioned policy and abided by its recognized guidelines. Upon reaching their fifth year of employment, they each went through the process of going off probation which included preparing a lengthy packet for review by a committee and the library director; their formal recommendation for the closing of the probationary status to the provost/vice president for academic affairs (i.e. the chief academic officer in the university); and the formal closing of that status by the provost. At that point, the librarian had earned a vested right to his/her job.

After that onerous process, the librarian worked under continuing appointment, with his/her letters of appointment automatically issued on an annual basis. Using myself as an example of the process, I was hired under 2.2.10 (2.3). At the time of my hiring as head of Special Collections & Archives in late 1990, then library director Richard L. O’Keeffe explained this policy to me in great detail, as it had recently been adopted. O’Keeffe was justifiably proud of this policy because he had played an important part in its formulation. The policy played a major role in my accepting the position as it offered a level of academic freedom, job
security, and professional stature paralleling faculty. Having come from a professional position at the Houston Public Library which offered civil service protection, I would not have taken the job at A&M-Corpus Christi without policy 2.2.10 (2.3) in place. Even at that early date in my career I had no desire to be an employee that served by annual appointment which made one susceptible to the unbridled pleasure of an administrator.

In 1994-1995, I underwent this process of going off probation after having been on probation for four years, submitting my substantial packet of materials to then library director Benjamin Wakashige, and being intensely evaluated. Based on the library director’s recommendation, I was formally taken off probation by the signature of provost/vice president of academic affairs Tito Guerrero on December 7, 1995, thus earning a vested interest (aka vested right or property right) to my job in accordance with university policy. I felt justifiably proud of having gained this off-probation status and had no doubt that the university would henceforth recognize that achievement. From that time forward, I worked under continuing appointment, with my letter of appointment, signed by the library director, issued annually.7

The university further verified our status under continuing appointment to me when in January 2001, a subsequent A&M-Corpus Christi library director as well as a subsequent provost/vice president for academic affairs asked me to write a letter of recommendation to the latter granting “the status of continuing appointment” to the incumbent library director. Believing the incumbent should receive this status, I quickly complied.8

Thereafter, I continued to serve the university as the head of special collections and archives and in other ways and was designated associate (library) director of special collections and archives in 2001, one of three associate directors in the Bell Library. My credibility was perhaps best recognized in 2006-2007 by receiving the first Excellence in Librarianship Award bestowed by the A&M-Corpus Christi faculty senate. By 2010, I had become the senior professional librarian and senior associate director in terms of length of service.

Between 1995 and 2008, other professional librarians on staff went through the identical off-probationary process outlined in policy 2.2.10 (2.3). I was aware of approximately six others who followed me in attaining this status. Each put forward their packets, her/his work was intensively reviewed, and earned continuing appointment after five years of productive employment.

From 1990 to 2010, the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians took seriously their employment status. Often, they raised the issue of gaining faculty status and/or trying to codify a system of rankings and promotions within Policy 2.2.10 (2.3). This focus on vested rights resembled the concerns of professional librarians in many other places, just as teaching faculty felt about tenure.
The Events: August 23, 2010-Early 2011

However, in 2010 and along with the other approximately ten members of the professional library staff (including the five above-noted, off-probation individuals), I received an unpleasant, perplexing surprise. Signed as usual by the library director, my annual appointment letter dated August 23, 2010, varied from previous letters of appointment by adding two sentences which stated “This notice of appointment is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time. Per [Texas A&M University] System Policy 32.02, non-faculty appointments are ‘at will,’ which means that the University may terminate the non-faculty appointment, with or without cause.” Like the other Bell Library professionals, I had no warning or expectation that such was to happen and naturally was dismayed, especially by the harshness of the newly-added final two sentences.9

Under normal circumstances, as I approached my twentieth anniversary of service in the Bell Library, I would have felt a sense of satisfaction at having achieved such a milestone. Instead, my time at A&M-Corpus Christi would thenceforth be marked by feelings of confusion, frustration, betrayal, disrespect, and an acutely stressful work environment.

Several of the other librarians (with whom I immediately spoke directly about the situation) and I were also verbally, individually, and informally told that this system-wide policy superseded local university policy. However, we were never issued any written directive officially stating or explaining this situation. Previous to this 2010 appointment letter, to my knowledge the professional librarians had never been notified or apprised of System Policy 32.02 or any of its revisions, much less that this system policy conflicted with the employment status of professional librarians in any manner.

Upon receiving the August 23, 2010 “at will” letter, another senior member of the library professional staff and I immediately asked the library director for a group meeting and formal explanation of this situation, but we were not granted such a meeting. Instead, the library director told me that she would meet with professional librarians who had questions on an individual basis. Thus, I would only know what she told me and others who chose to confide in me.

Several of us also immediately checked the Faculty and Staff Handbook both in hardcopy and online and found that section 2.3 (formerly 2.2.10) “Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians” was present. We also checked system policy and found that 32.02 was likewise there. A sentence stating “The rule is being revised” had been added to policy 2.3.10 (Subsequent open records research revealed that this sentence first appeared in the 1994 Handbook.) I surmise that sentence had been added during the 1990s when the professional librarians had advocated for rankings and promotions be added to our policy.11
At first I thought the August 23, 2010 appointment letter had an easy remedy in favor of those who had been hired under university policy 2.3, or at least for those of us who had gone through the five-year review. Usually, even under the worst of situations regarding a change in professional status, such “grandfathering” was the norm. As events unfolded, my initial thoughts proved erroneous.

From the start, I felt puzzled by what seemed to me the incumbent library director’s non-engaged posture regarding the issue, especially since it involved her entire body of professional librarians (and herself) apparently having lost academic, “good cause” status. Having been summarily appointed to the position in 2003, she was the fourth library director under whom I had served since 1990, and she was a knowledgeable individual. Indeed, so capable in the eyes of the administration that we had learned at the August 17, 2010 library staff meeting that as of September 1, she would be elevated to assistant vice president – in addition to holding her title as library director. When I had received my appointment letter directly from her in her office in late August, 2010, she had not pointed out the addition of those two disconcerting sentences. I had even opened the letter in her presence and gave it a cursory reading (mainly to check for a salary increase), and thanked her for my annual appointment.

When I had returned to my office, a fellow senior librarian telephoned to urge me to read the letter carefully to note this “at will” statement at the bottom of the document. I immediately returned to the soon-to-be AVP/library director’s office to inquire about why these sentences had been added. The director told me that she had no knowledge of the situation other than what was stated in our 2010 appointment letter. The rank and file professional librarians quickly tried to organize a unified reaction to this situation, but we were unsuccessful in even constructing proper language for a statement to the administration that we could agree upon. We all expressed concern about this new language in our appointment letters. However, differing personalities, disagreements regarding the correct approach, fear for one’s job, intrinsic problems of unifying white-collar professionals, and doubtless other unspoken motives, prevented us from organizing a stiff resistance. This disunity from the start, in addition to what I soon began to see as a lack of support/leadership from the administration, played a fundamental role, I believe, in a doomed outcome.

My own position was firm and I expressed it numerous times. Reflecting on my notations of a September 30, 2010 meeting strictly among the professional librarians, I stressed to our two library representatives on the faculty senate that the administration should rectify the situation of the professional librarians’ status as “good cause” employees and support our longtime policy 2.3. This meant that the administration should at least try to have our policy re-validated by the A&M University System. I felt overwhelmed that my employment policy had somehow been abrogated.12
On October 7, 2010, six weeks after our appointment letters had been issued and much worry on our part, the library’s representatives to the faculty senate informed the professional librarians that the AVP/library director and the speaker of the faculty senate finally spoke to the then interim provost about our “at will” letters. Our senator directly handling this issue advocated for our position admirably, though she was still in her probationary period. She gave us an optimistic report that while the interim provost had not been aware of the language, he did not feel that the “at will” language should have been included. Our senator also noted that she felt “we’re on the right track.”

Through open records research I conducted much later for this essay, I learned that the harshness of the wording on the employment letter and the employment status of professional librarians finally became a topic for open discussion at the regular president’s cabinet (PC) meeting on October 11, 2010. The PC consisted of the university president, his four vice presidents, a couple of attachés, and usually some lower level administrators making reports. This particular PC meeting included ten people, meaning that the issue would be known more widely. While the PC seemed to lament the “aggressiveness of the language” in the letters, they “agreed that the status of non-faculty employees does need to be understood, but the language of the letter should be reviewed.” They noted among themselves that “Librarians go through a process, established in a 1990 rule and not reviewed since.” Furthermore, and unknown to the professional librarians, “[a] policy [was] under review that provide[d] for ranks for librarians.” They also noted that “[t]he 1990 rule and the one under development need to be reviewed together.” The interim provost was to “follow up” on this matter. “It was also agreed that the annual salary letters for librarians...should come from the Provost’s Office rather than Human Resources.”

The AVP/library director communicated to us on October 12, that “our appointment letters were discussed in President’s Cabinet yesterday and it was decided that henceforth our letters will be issued by the Provost’s office along with faculty letters, rather than by HR.” While her abbreviated reporting of the PC discussion could be read with some optimism, it was still unclear how this change addressed our concerns or altered our employment status.

We librarians tried to take a degree of encouragement from what had transpired, and I voiced as much positive support to the AVP/library director as I could. Our faculty senator handling this issue had said the interim provost was sympathetic to our cause. Also, in answer to my direct query of the AVP/library director if “a correction will be made in our current letters of appointment that have the ‘at will’ clause,” the AVP/library director informed me that it was “still unknown at this time whether they will correct our current letters” but noted that she was working with the university president and the interim provost “to more clearly define our status based on current system policy and to everyone’s satisfaction.”
also stated that she would “be calling a meeting of the librarians soon to go
over things” and that the interim provost was “definitely working toward a
resolution in our favor.”

Still, I (and others) were more than uneasy about this situation. Such “a
meeting of the librarians,” I felt, should have come at least a month before
with full disclosure. I again emailed the AVP/library director that “I feel as
if I am in a nightmare situation” and hoped that “no one is contemplating
trying to deny me the conditions under which I was hired and have been
employed these last twenty years.” I likewise stressed that being “at will”
would deny me the right to academic freedom.

Several days passed when we received what I saw as ambivalent news
from our lead faculty senator on the results of the October 15 meeting
of the faculty senate. On the one hand, she reported “palpable support
from senators,” lengthy discussion of our situation, that our letters of
appointment would be re-issued, and that the “at will” clause would be
removed. On the other hand, “there will be a statement indicating that
we are here at the discretion of the President, which caused some concern
among those present.” She also noted that the interim provost “mentioned
the need for an updated ‘definition’ of librarians in University Policy” with
our status being “decided with librarian input.”

In response, I emailed our faculty senator, and copied in all the professional
librarians including the AVP/library director, that “[h]aving not been part
of any process of discussion on our status other than with my fellow
professionals” to this point, “I was unclear about the part about us being
here ‘at the discretion of the president.’ That sounds as if it is an ‘at will’
phrase, just put another way.” I concluded that “it sounds to me as if my
‘just cause’ protection of the policy under which I have been working for
twenty years has been ignored.” I concluded by asking everyone: “Am I
incorrect in this? Would someone have the decency to tell me?” Surely,
almost two months of not being privy in a significant manner to my status
and future called for some understanding and sensitivity regarding the
issue at hand.

On October 21, the interim provost communicated to the professional
librarians via email (through the AVP/library director) about “what we are
doing to clarify the status of and career path for librarians at the university.”
He noted that librarians were “a special group of professionals who, while
not faculty, are central to the academic enterprise of the university.” The
library, he continued “ha[d] been directed to develop a new classification
and ranking system for librarians.” He repeated that our letters of
appointment would “originate from the office of the provost.” We would,
however, receive “continuance letters” from Human Resources. Of course,
he thanked us for our “valued” service.

While I tried to put the best face on this communication and thanked
the AVP/library director and (through her) the interim provost for their
efforts, I continued to express my serious concerns about the drift toward something that varied from our previous academic status and its possible negative repercussions on our employment.21

I soon had what I guess was supposed to be the administration’s answer to “my concerns” and oddly it did not come from the AVP/library director who was my direct supervisor. After all my expressions of concern as well as those from other professional librarians about this matter (mainly through emails with one another), I alone was summoned to the office of the interim provost for a meeting on October 22, 2010.

This summons surprised me because I had only seen the interim provost and did not know him. Indeed, it was difficult to develop any significant familiarity with the occupant of the Provost’s Office at any particular time at our university in those years because the position was commonly termed on A&M-Corpus Christi campus as a “revolving door,” much complicating the situation for the professional librarians and their status. By the time I was contacted by the interim provost in late October 2010, two previous permanent provosts had been hired and removed and replaced by interims between August 15, 2006 and April 20, 2010, making occupancy or continuity in this important office extremely unstable and, as shall be further noted, detrimental to the professional librarians and knowledge of their status.22

This meeting with the interim provost shook my momentary, tenuous optimism. Even the invitation to this October 22 meeting was confusing and disheartening. The interim provost’s administrative assistant had telephoned me for this meeting without telling me what it was about. After I asked her what the topic of the meeting was to be, she had to call the interim provost and then call me back to let me know it was about my “concerns.” At the time I could only assume my “concerns” had to do with the employment status of librarians. I had no idea who had told the interim provost I had “concerns” or who determined that he should call me to a private meeting.

The interim provost was an outwardly courteous, retired education dean from another university who the incumbent A&M-Corpus Christi president often called upon for interim duty. Thus, I could assume that he had the president’s trust, spoke for him, and could be relied on for understanding our current status.

When I met with the interim provost he began by saying that he had just come from the university president’s office where the president had told him that “he [the president] would not let me [the interim provost] fire you [Kreneck], even if I [the interim provost] wanted to.” I supposed that this was an “old boy” attempt to assuage “my concerns,” but it inwardly aggravated me. At age 62 and with my advanced credentials, I had come to this meeting to talk about professional librarian employment policy and the vested right we had earned in our positions, not to be the recipient of what I perceived as individualized paternalistic treatment.23
At the meeting, the interim provost indicated that the administration was aware of the contradiction in policies, and he dismissed my attempts to put forward my argument for my off-probationary vested status under 2.3. He made it clear to me that the university administration considered that our academic vested right was null and void.

On the other hand, when I expressed my concerns about having my academic freedom protected by formal policy, the interim provost assured me that we were still protected by the same guarantees as before. This statement, of course, made no sense to me. He heightened my frustrations when he noted that we would have no problems if we just kept doing our jobs. His demeanor was dismissive and his body language indicated to me that our library work to him was diminutive in nature and that he had little idea of what professional information managers actually did.

Nor did the interim provost indicate any firm understanding of the future status of professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi as I had been led to believe by previous communications. He tried in vain to explain a new contract type employment that, apparently, they envisioned for us, but floundered in reading an online version of the document. He noted, however, that the AVP/library director would produce a draft of the new policies and procedures for librarians within a couple of days.

At the time, we librarians had been told that an “amended” letter of appointment was to be issued to us. When I asked the interim provost if the language stating that we would “be employed at the discretion of the president” (i.e., “at will”) would be retained in that forthcoming letter, he opined that it “probably would be.” His last statement gave me much discomfort.

Knowing that this interim provost would soon be replaced by yet another permanent provost (a search was in process), I made no further remonstrance, hoping that a new provost would be more understanding of our situation as professionals. I left the interim provost’s office, however, baffled and frustrated, having at best received what I regarded as contradictory information, except that the administration considered that our status under policy 2.3 was null and void, and disheartening indications that the interim provost knew little to nothing about professional librarianship and its past and future status on campus.

Regardless of what the interim provost had told me, three days later (on October 25, 2010), the university issued to each of us an “AMENDED” letter of appointment which excluded the “at will” and “without cause” sentences. Nor did it contain the phrase “at the will of the president.”

Indeed confusing, our amended letter held the exact wording as those that predated the 2010 “at will” letter. As usual, my letter of appointment simply stated that our employment was “subject to the Regulations of the Texas A&M University system.” Since we had received no official explanation,
I had no idea whether this statement remained as a pro forma inclusion or whether it was an attempt by the university to shift any further onus on to the System without directly stating we were “at will.” (The only difference from the standard, previous letters was that the director now signed it as “Assistant Vice President and Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library,” the AVP title which had been bestowed as of September 1.)

Adding to the confusion, during the fall 2010 episode over the initial “at will” letter of appointment, two of our professional librarians actually underwent their intensive five-year review as per university policy 2.3. As a senior off-probation librarian, I served on the library committee to review their packets. We unanimously recommended that the two merited being taken off probation. One of these librarians later informed me that he was notified that he was declared off probation. This action led me to hope that our policy 2.3 was somehow in effect. Otherwise, it was inexplicable why the administration put these people through this process. The one off-probation letter I saw (much later in preparation for writing this essay) from the interim provost to the university president dated February 11, 2011, was entitled “Continuing Appointment of [the librarian in question].” It stated, however, that “in accordance with our current policy 2.3,” the librarian should be granted “Continued Appointment.” This letter was checked as “Approved” and initialed by the president himself. In the administration’s mind, did “continued” mean something different than “continuing?” Was it a clever obfuscation by use of a different word or simply clumsy prose? Regardless, still left without an explanation in late 2010 (and early 2011), this action regarding the two librarians increased the degree of uncertainty among the professionals.

Also, another professional librarian was hired in December 2010, with policy 2.3 posted (after the “at will” letter appeared), just as I had been hired under it twenty years before, absurdly in contrast to what we were being told was our true status. For me, this latter hire seemed to be done under false pretenses by the university, which I mentioned to the librarian in question. She told me a few days later that she and her spouse did not feel they could afford the costs of an attorney. Such a response underscored, in my opinion at that time, the vulnerability of the professional librarians.

Of greatest importance, policy 2.3 remained on the university’s online “Faculty Handbook” and in the print copy of the Faculty Handbook that was in the bookcase in the library staff lounge, which held other official library and university documents for staff reference. This Faculty Handbook was the document we had always been led to believe was in effect.

As one can imagine, by the end of 2010, I (and others within the rank and file professional staff) felt harassed and adrift in regard to our status and employment policy, and more confusion and harassment would follow.

Through our two faculty senators (both of whom were still within their five-year probationary period), we continued to press our case to the
faculty senate in a vain attempt for resolution. At first, as noted above,
many members of the faculty senate seemed concerned with our situation,
but I sensed a waning of that interest or urgency about the matter. As
time progressed, I observed that the teaching faculty, which made up the
majority of the senators, were more concerned about the issues pertaining
to their own material conditions rather than trying to understand, much
less appreciate, the academic status of professional librarians, a common
condition doubtless faced by many professional librarians. I even had to
correct the speaker of the faculty senate at one senate meeting that what
governed librarian employment was “policy” rather than “practice,” when
he tried to explain our status. In all candor, when I repeatedly engaged
the teaching faculty senators and the speaker, I began to feel as if they
distanced themselves from the issue and that my comments fell on deaf
ears. I remember remarking to one of the other affected librarians that if the
teaching faculty members’ vested status (i.e. tenure) had been summarily
stripped from them they would be in rebellion across campus. Teaching
faculty, even my closest associates, for whatever reason, simply would not
or did not put themselves in our shoes.

In late 2010, the AVP/library director presented us with the draft of a
new policy which seemed aimed to push professional librarians into a
“contract” status. While I read the document and had input into revising it,
the implications of being a “contract” employee were unclear, especially in
guard to system policy. It appeared to be a new and untried policy and we
were the guinea pigs in its implementation. Even though I was an associate
director, I never had a full and systematic explanation of the implications
of this “contract” status, as well as a full and systematic explanation – i.e.
by whom, how, and when – our current policy was supposedly abrogated.
I was told that this new contract policy had been adopted by another A&M
system campus. However, when I personally telephoned the director of
that library, he told me they had not done so and indeed quizzed me with
concerns he had about the policy.

The professional librarians and the AVP/library director had several
meetings dealing with this new proposed contract policy in late 2010-
early 2011, and seemed to be making progress (i.e. we were able to
include a form of continuing appointment into the draft). Those meetings
discontinued, however, before the proposed document was completed for
reasons unknown to me.27

It was, however, during one of these meetings on the new proposed contract
policy that the AVP/library director mentioned in my presence that our
status problems had been brought about by the incumbent A&M system
chancellor and his wishes regarding librarian status. Our AVP/library
director made reference to a problem with a librarian at another campus
receiving “undeserved” tenure. This comment made no sense to me and
I called it into question, but I (and the others present) received no further
explanation, except that it was the will of the chancellor. Nevertheless,
the AVP/library director’s comment piqued my curiosity that something
had transpired I did not know and would prompt me soon to explore this subject more fully.

Wondering about the fairness or desire to communicate openly with us on the part of the university administration, in early March, 2011, I personally contacted the head of A&M-Corpus Christi’s Human Resources (HR) and asked about the system policy on “contract” employees. The HR head emailed me on March 7, stating that she was “not aware of any system regulation or University rule about putting employees on ‘contract.’” She further noted that she believed “the issue is whether or not librarians serve ‘at will’ or … do they have a ‘property right’ to their job and thus can only be terminated for cause.”

While I firmly held that I had earned a property right to my job, I marveled that even the head of HR knew nothing about moving employees to “contract” status and that our vested status was still an open question, further creating a sense of uneasiness and confusion with conditions of my employment and the trustworthiness of the university.

When the new permanent provost arrived in early 2011, he demonstrated, at least to my disappointment, little concern about rectifying librarian status. He met with the professional librarians collectively regarding general matters in late March, 2011. Though he was pleasant in his demeanor, toward the end of this meeting I raised the issue of librarian status by stating forthrightly that people had gone back on their word to us. He responded that luckily he had not had to deal with such issues where he had worked previously since the librarians there had faculty status. My comments ended there from want of a follow-up by any of the other librarians present. I (and others) sensed that this new provost had no interest in exploring the issue of our vested status under policy 2.3.

The reticence of younger professionals to confront this issue was understandable. Some were still in their five-year probationary period, such as both of our faculty senators. Others, even those who had off-probation status were in stages of their career where they could ill afford to confront situations like this one and risk retaliation or mediocre references in the future. Less understandable, were those who simply “did not want to get involved” or identified with decisions of the administration for whatever reasons.

Being in my early sixties in 2010, I had more to lose than most of the others. While I shared many of the same fears and confusion as my colleagues, I had been vested longer than the others, prized my professional employment status greatly, and because of age discrimination had no place realistically to go if I wanted to pursue similar employment at this stage in my life. I tried to persevere and certainly wanted to work longer. However, I felt deeply aggrieved by the breach of faith, principle, and contract by the system and university as well as intense frustration by being kept in the dark and given contradictory messages. I felt a sense of disrespect and betrayal by an
institution whose principle purpose was to develop the life of the mind and search for truth. Being a young man during the 1960s-1970s civil rights movements, having taken an active role in the Central American Solidarity movement during the 1980s, and as a progressive I understood the general attack on workers' rights throughout Texas and nation transpiring during these events. Perhaps, too, I am more stalwart at speaking truth to power, while others remain silent in the face of authority.

The Events: Researching the Librarians' “at will” Status, 2011

As I had received no explanation about system policy 32.02, in early 2011, I personally researched that policy since it seemed to be at the root of our predicament. To my amazement, I discovered that this policy had been changed in 2007, abrogating the A&M-Corpus Christi university librarian status policy and that contrary to standard practice, the university administration had not notified the rank and file professional librarians of such an important change in our employment status for this extended period. Thus, the librarians had been “at will” for three years without their knowledge. This discovery gave rise to even further chagrin among some librarians and caused me to lose all faith in the university administration.

Through research of the policy’s revisions, I soon found that A&M University’s system policy 32.02 had two parts which had been initially approved in February 1995 and November 1997, respectively. Since then, the policy had been periodically revised. I also learned that it was only with the September 28, 2007 Revision that system policy 32.02/32.02.02 flatly declared all non-faculty employees “at will.” Prior to that, the Policy had spoken mainly of non-faculty employee probationary status, good cause dismissal, and progressive procedure dismissal, which were generally consistent with the librarian employment policy 2.3. The 2007 revision was recommended to the A&M Board of Regents by the chancellor on August 31, and was formally approved by a unanimous vote of the regents at their September 27-28 meeting. Mention of a probationary period was stricken in the revised policy. This revision clearly represented a watershed in employee status that no one in authority, especially longtime administrators who dealt with probationary periods, would likely miss.

My verbal telephone inquiries at the system level and with select campus administrators likewise revealed that the A&M System placed this revision in the system policy manual immediately upon approval, had communicated this September 28, 2007 revision to the university’s provost office and that this change would have been communicated to the major unit heads, i.e. the deans, project managers, library director, etc., especially if it impacted their units.

In addition, such revisions would have been quickly entered into the general print and online system policy manual for Texas A&M University campuses. Through my verbal investigation, I was told that even when
the A&M-Corpus Christi’s provost’s office was vacant, such duties as disseminating policy changes were divided among other provost office administrators so that the various unit heads received system policy changes.31

On October 1, 2007, a new provost (the second of the two aforementioned short term people to hold that position), assumed that office at A&M-Corpus Christi, just after the system made its crucial revision to policy 32.02/32.02.02. (and he would serve until April 20, 2010). Though I knew him to be an honorable, intelligent individual, this new provost who took office so soon after the policy change could hardly have been expected to be conversant on the nuanced employment policy of the professional librarians.

The other key university administrators who could have come into play on this issue, however, were long time employees and I believe could have been expected to know both the status of the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians and the important change in system policy 32.02. These officials included the head of the university Human Resources Office (HR), the head of the University Equal Opportunity/Employee Relations Office, the library director, the System Attorney assigned to A&M-Corpus Christi and perhaps others. Indeed, a case for going off-probation by another one of the professional librarians was initiated in December 2007, became rather contested, and had apparently made its way to the office of the System Attorney. (A person of merit, the librarian in question eventually achieved off-probationary status. I served on the committee to evaluate her credentials and followed her situation as closely as I could.) While the new provost could be given a pass on this issue, it seems difficult to believe that the other above-mentioned offices did not know of the September 28, 2007 revision and its inherent contradiction with university policy toward librarians or communicate with one another about this situation, since the reconciliation of system and university policies forms part of their activities, especially as events unfolded in the controversy surrounding the off-probationary status of this particular librarian in the post December 2007 period.32

Awareness of the problem among A&M-Corpus Christi administrators who dealt with library matters might have been heightened by the A&M System’s climate against professional librarian status impacting other A&M campuses by 2008. While a detailed recitation of the situation and its exact sequence of events at these other system libraries are not within the scope of this essay, according to my later interviews with numerous professional librarians, a pattern of questioning librarians’ vested status arose, which they felt emanated from the chancellor’s office.

The professional librarians at Texas A&M University-College Station (the flagship campus), Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMU-K) James J. Jernigan Library, and the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) had all long held faculty status.
According to my reliable sources at these schools during my preparing this essay, however, beginning no later than 2008, their faculty status all came under question, reportedly by the chancellor. Though a complex story, the College Station librarians successfully retained their faculty status model, but future faculty status for librarians at the latter campuses was abrogated or in practice suspended. But librarians with tenure at these two branch campuses were grandfathered. These latter two South Texas campuses are in close proximity to A&M-Corpus Christi, giving their situation particular salience to A&M-Corpus Christi.

The many past and present librarians at the three above-mentioned campuses with whom I spoke for this essay (several of them library directors) firmly believe that a system-wide “attack” took place on the vested status of professional librarians, and they were aware of it at the time through their library directors and other administrators. According to library directors in these system schools at the time with whom I conversed, alarm at this state of affairs was even expressed and intensely discussed at one of the regular meetings (ca. 2008-2009) among the A&M University library directors which took place at the bi-annual sessions of the Texas Library Association.

Although select campuses and the library directors were aware of the system’s questioning of librarian employment status, we professional librarians at the Bell Library (at least my closest colleagues and I) were not collectively cognizant of the issue. We remained isolated in more ways than one. Lamentably, the rank and file professionals in the various A&M campuses failed to share information adequately with other campuses about what was happening at their schools, which proved to be a weakness. Most of the librarians I contacted at these other campuses during the writing of this essay knew nothing of our later problems, though many were not surprised. Equally unfortunate, we librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi had no regular meetings of just the professionals so that such issues might be raised about what they had heard as individuals, and informal communication was not what it should have been. A&M-Corpus Christi library general staff meetings included professionals and paraprofessionals, were lightweight at best, and confined mainly to Bell Library issues. Each of us as professionals was mainly concerned with our own areas of departmental activity, as it proved, much to our peril. Besides, we did not have faculty status, but rather academic status, so in the absence of outside information there seemed no cause for alarm as we trusted our university and felt we were secure with our own policy. In hindsight, having such trust was our mistake, but we (at least my closest colleagues and I) were given no warning from the library or university administration prior to late August 2010, to suggest that our employment status was in danger.

Essentially in the dark for three years, the A&M-Corpus Christi professional librarians had little reason to question our long-established university policy 2.3 because it remained in the online and printed Faculty and Staff Handbook as official university policy, professionals continued
to be evaluated and go off probation under its terms, and new professionals were hired under it.

Indeed, while preparing this essay, in September 2015, I contacted the former A&M-Corpus Christi provost who had assumed office in October 2007, about his recollections of the employment condition of the professional librarians in the 2007-2010 period in which he served. He replied forthrightly that the librarian employment status issue was “not part of any discussion in the Provost’s office… to the best of my recollection. The then Director of the Library [who directly reported to the provost] … did not bring this matter into our regular one-on-one meetings or in the Provost Cabinet meetings.”

Thus, for three years this new provost did not have word of this discrepancy. The librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi were deprived of any hope for resolution by this new, sympathetic provost, nor were we afforded the extra incentive which such information would have given us to push for a resolution or at least to seek or take advantage of more secure long-term employment elsewhere.

In his 2015 reply to me, that former provost also noted that “we were in the middle of SACS accreditation preparation….” This comment lent support to the suspicions that some of us librarians held in 2011 that the SACS process had been instrumental in keeping us ignorant of the change in our status.

**Probable Role of the 2010 SACS/COC Petition Process, 2007-2010**

During 2007-2010, while the A&M-Corpus Christi rank and file professional librarians remained unaware of their employment peril, the university administration was busy with its 2010 accreditation petition to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC). This approximately three-year process apparently took on more importance than the contradictory status of its professional librarians.

The atmosphere that I sensed on campus and in the general faculty and staff meetings which I attended in those years indicated that the SACS petition process seemed to outrank all other university concerns from late 2007 (when initial discussions began) until its successful completion in 2010. It was clear to most of the staff and faculty that the SACS petition held great importance to the university president. Thus, the university seemed preoccupied with compiling the SACS petition during the time which paralleled the time when the librarians’ status was being ignored.

Furthermore, the library director played a leadership role in the university’s entire SACS/COC petition effort. According to her vitae, she served as Coordinator of the SACS Compliance Certification Report and Reaffirmation effort from 2007 forward, as well as Co-Chair of the SACS
Reaffirmation Steering Committee from 2008 forward. The president’s cabinet meeting minutes from those years indicate that the library director was deeply involved in aspects of the SACS petition effort including everything from the larger compliance matters to making “welcome baskets” for the members of the SACS visitation committee which came to A&M-Corpus Christi in March, 2010, amid much campus preparation.38

When the university submitted its final SACS: Self Study Report in September, 2009, its section on the library stated that professional librarians were recruited and hired by procedures “mandated by the Texas A&M University System and University policy.” This statement online linked to policy 2.3, though no system policy was directly included in this link. The library section further noted, following the requirements of 2.3, that “During the fifth complete year of employment …, professional librarians come under consideration for formal closing of his or her probationary period.” This section even included a “sample letter recommending the closure of this probationary period.....” The SACS report likewise contained the university’s Faculty and Staff Handbook dated August 2008 which listed policy 2.3 regarding professional librarians. In a separate section, however, the SACS report included the System Policies and Regulations which contained Policy 32.02 and other sub-policies stating that non-faculty employees were “at will.”39

But in my examination of this massive, ponderous SACS report I could not find mention by the university that a serious problem existed regarding the status of its professional librarians inherent in the system and university policies.

Once this contradiction became clear to the professional librarians after late August 2010, several of us professional librarians eventually questioned among ourselves whether the university ignored or obscured this contradiction or simply put off grappling with this issue. Several possible scenarios emerged in our thinking: Did the university simply not wish to deal with this issue which may have called for some sort of timely resolution that recognized the vested status of the professional librarians before moving forward with the administration’s SACS petition? Was the university administration concerned that revealing this contradiction would have created a snarl with the SACS accreditation report? Was the university concerned that revealing such a contradiction would provoke possible action by the librarians that would have embarrassed the university in the eyes of SACS? Or, more probably, did the university administration simply postpone its librarian issue while dealing with what it saw as the larger issue of producing the SACS petition? This final speculation, in my estimation, summarizes the small concern that university administrations normally give to library professionals.

Prompted by my later inquiry while researching this essay, SACS officials indicated to me that (incredibly in my opinion) such a policy contradiction would not have been an issue to them. But that does not preclude a
perceived concern about the matter on the part of those university officials dealing with the petition itself. People who have dealt with SACS petition efforts have informed me that inflated concerns often arise making supplicants over-react regarding what might be important in getting the petition accepted, regardless of what SACS personnel tell them during the process.40

Those of us negatively affected could readily conclude that any of the above scenarios were possible reasons for us not being made aware of our precarious situation. My assessment is, however, that the SACS petition process simply trumped dealing with the librarian employment status issue.

One thing seems certain: The preoccupation of the university administration with the 2010 SACS/COC petition most likely played a role in the failure even to notify us of our predicament, much less resolve it in our favor. Perhaps it would have been more beneficial if relevant administrators had paid attention to the employment plight of the professional librarians, rather than making “welcome baskets” for the SACS visitation team.

Thus, the A&M-Corpus Christi SACS accreditation process and the Texas A&M System’s downgrading of employees’ status had likely coincided to deprive us not only of our vested rights, but also an egregious lapse of time before we librarians learned of our employment condition.

The irony of this situation appears likewise obvious: The university’s preoccupation with the SACS/COC petition actually undercut the stated mission of SACS (that is, to improve the quality of education at a university), if one believes that professional librarians are important to the successful accomplishment of a university’s mission to educate.

The Looming Budget Crisis of 2010

Any explanation of why the professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi were finally notified of their “at will” status in 2010 also should include that the campus was responding to the Texas state budget crisis which was acute by late that year. Since hundreds of other non-faculty employees were included in this “at will” announcement in their employment letter for the first time, the A&M-Corpus Christi administration likely wanted or needed to make sure it was on sound legal footing in case layoffs occurred, or so former university officials later informed me. Indeed, in late September, 2010, and with justifiable concern in her voice, the AVP/library director’s administrative assistant pointed out to me wording in the minutes of the September 16, 2010 meeting of the A&M-Corpus Christi’s president’s cabinet that “Texas A&M University has announced that it will make [faculty and staff] cuts effective August 31, 2011.”41

The professional librarians’ academic status may have been so nuanced or counted for so little in the administrators’ minds that when the HR
department wrote the 2010 appointment letters we were included in the “at will” stack of letters for simplicity’s sake. One sympathetic administrator confided in me in 2010 that HR insisted on there being “two stacks” of letters: that is, faculty who were not at will and all other employees, so that it may never have occurred to HR to notice the implications of the librarians’ academic status. Thus, the university administration simply swept up the librarians in this draconian language, regardless of the nuances of university policy 2.3 and its over 20 years of history.

For sure, I tried mightily through public information requests and otherwise in preparing this essay, but I could never get a conclusive answer regarding the reasons why the university administration or Human Resources waited to include the “at will” language until the first appointment letter in the post SACS petition process, three years after the detrimental 2007 revision of 32.02 or until it did in 2010. Though the president’s cabinet was prompted by its admitted above-mentioned feelings that “the status of non-faculty employees does need to be understood…,” the university informed me through the Texas Attorney General’s Office, in response to my formal request for documentation on their motives, “that after a good faith search for information…, no such information was found.”

During the writing of this essay, my quest for the university’s side of the story about the origins and timing of these appointment letters included asking several of the key administrators directly involved in the process. The answers I received ranged from “I don’t recall” to “I do not remember!” to silence. The readers can draw their own conclusion regarding such responses.

Nor apparently did it seem that the A&M-Corpus Christi administration wished in 2010 to try to sort out the contradiction by trying to get its librarian policy 2.3 accepted by the A&M System. I was never aware of such an effort if it did take place or was even contemplated. The September 28, 2007 revision to policy 32.02 had been issued during the first year of the tenure of the same chancellor who questioned the librarian status at College Station, TAMU-K, and TAMU-I. Serving from 2006-2011, this chancellor’s term was described by the A&M student newspaper as a “turbulent run,” especially marked by the strife he had with the College Station president which led to the latter’s resignation in 2009. This chancellor was characterized by a speaker of the College Station faculty senate as “‘known for shooting from the hip.’” But he was also noted for helping the branch campuses in many ways. In short, he was someone who the A&M-Corpus Christi administration would likely have not wanted to question on librarian status. Besides, I think it was perfectly acceptable to the university administration if it now had a group of “at will” librarians rather than librarians protected under university policy 2.3. (The provost who took the position at A&M-Corpus Christi in 2011 and met with the librarians in late March, would tell the faculty senate in November 2011 that the university president said that professional librarians did not and would never have “tenure” at A&M-Corpus Christi, a statement consistent
It defies credulity that our university administration missed the contradiction between policies 2.3 and 32.02 from late 2007 forward regarding the employment status of its professional librarians when the heads of so many offices on campus (i.e. the head of HR, the library director, the director of EO, etc.) would also have situationally had access to this policy information for an extended period. The administration not recognizing the problem seems even more unlikely when one remembers that the library director (the unit head) was so capably involved with compiling the SACS report and its many aspects of policies and regulations. (It was on the heels of her commendable efforts with the SACS petition that on September 1, 2010, she received the additional title of assistant vice president and thus held that position as well as library director when the status issue became revealed.)

My Final Involvement for a New Policy

By the end of 2011, hopes for a resolution in our favor were all but extinguished. Among the most important factors for this, our lead faculty senator left the employment of the Bell Library in mid-August. With her, in my estimation, went the most effective negotiator and open communicator relative to our employment status.

In mid-November 2011, the professional librarians were presented with a second policy draft to work on, one which comprised a set of rankings that apparently had been excerpted from the above-mentioned first proposed new policy and amended by the new provost. According to my notations on these events, I received these proposed rankings via email on November 16, 2011 from the AVP/library director. This was the last “new” document with which I would deal before leaving. This document said nothing about “continuing appointment” or any such status.

Our new lead senator on the issue emailed me on November 22, 2011, informing, as noted above, that at the November 18 senate meeting the provost stated the librarians “do not and cannot have tenure at this university” and “that there is a move toward annual appointments with contract lengths.” Furthermore, our senator noted that the provost said nothing about “continuing appointment,” though the minutes from the meeting would reveal that the provost stated “that library staff was on an annual contract.” When it was pointed out to the provost that a contradiction existed between the system and university policies, the provost “indicated the need to remedy that.” For me, this inconsistency should have been answered correctly and compassionately in our favor by the administration four years previous.

After careful consideration of the November 2011 rankings document, the professional librarians had a productive meeting with the AVP/library
director in December to deal with it. This meeting proved to be the last one among the professional librarians relative to our employment status which I attended, and there was no follow-up from the administration before I left.49

By early May 2012, the frustration level and confusion continued to simmer among some of us professional librarians. Though exasperated, I had what seemed to me to be a cordial meeting with the AVP/library director to ask what exactly our employment condition was, to which she again answered that she did not know. She said, however, that the new provost would. I marveled that so far into this issue that the AVP/library director would not have understood the exact status of her professional staff - - which also included her own employment as a librarian.

I had my meeting with the new provost on May 11, 2012 which proved to be the first informative meeting I had on my current status. He told me that he thought the librarians were now contract employees, like “the rest of us.” While I acknowledged his candor, I also knew that if he meant himself by the term “rest of us,” such was not analogous since he also came with tenure in the College of Liberal Arts. Our continuing employment seemingly had been swept away and we had no tenured position elsewhere as he did. But I said nothing.

Thus, from the university administration, I had received misguided paternalism from an interim provost and the president, disingenuousness from the new provost, and an ongoing plea of ignorance from the AVP/library director. Altogether, I viewed these expressions as professionally and personally disrespectful to the entire body of librarians.

One might ask why we did not go as a group to the provost at that time. I believe, based on my ongoing observations, that the answer was complex. Some of the more stalwart among us had left for other library positions elsewhere and the remaining professionals lacked the unity of purpose that plagued us from the start. A couple of us, doubtless for their own reasons, seemingly capitulated to the reality of our lost vested status and now stood with the administration. Others who felt we still had a claim to vested status surmised that approaching the new provost would be futile since they believed he had no intention of supporting our vested rights, more beholden was he to the wishes of the university president and mindful of the fate of the two previous permanent provosts.

During my May 11 meeting with the new provost, I informed him that I had done extensive research on the librarian status situation and asked him if he would like a written explanation of what had transpired regarding our professional librarian status. He answered that he would. I delivered this document on May 22, which incorporated a full narrative of events, including that we had been uninformed for three years. I placed the memorandum in his hands as he walked to his office. Whether he ever read it I have no idea, but I never received any other communication from him
about the matter. His silence spoke loudly to me, however, and verified the reservations that other professionals held about his desire to support our vested status.50

The Outcomes

Following my visit with the provost, in July 2012, at age 64, I left the foul work environment of the Mary and Jeff Bell Library, thus terminating my almost twenty-two-year tenure.51 Not before, however, receiving unanticipated, written rebuke from the administration for my vocal opposition to the degrading of our status. This criticism served as one example of what this issue cost A&M-Corpus Christi’s library professionals. Such is the price one can expect to pay for speaking up in the struggle over employees’ rights. It also demonstrated that, contrary to the claims of that interim provost to whom I spoke, academic freedom (of which legitimate freedom of expression is a part) no longer had guarantees for librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi.

When I left, university policy 2.3., formally abrogated in September 2007, still remained in the online and printed university Faculty Handbook.

But in leaving I had ample company. Five other professionals moved on immediately before and after my departure, including our two senators during the 2010-2011 period of this controversy, representing a significant staff exodus. While each had “pulling” reasons, four of the more vibrant young professionals who departed felt the discomfort of events, or so they told me. (In 2016, one of these four publicly recalled this episode as an example of poor campus leadership.) This loss of talent that had been at the library in the post-2010 period represented a severe negative consequence of the issue. Such staff turnover is not beneficial to the educational mission of the university.52

Even the AVP/library director soon left the library, though she stayed at the university and continued her ascent in the administration ranks, being elevated by the provost in August 2012, to the title of associate vice president for academic affairs. The library director position would now report to her, a further downgrading of the library whose head had formerly answered to the provost and could directly advocate for resources to the chief academic officer of the university.53

In July-August, the administration also reorganized the library, eliminating at least one professional librarian position. This reorganization had secretly been planned since at least May, 2012. The library moved into what may well be described as a paraprofessional model.54

Replacing professional librarians became difficult, almost impossible, which comprised another lamentable outcome. The remaining professional librarians, trying to gain a new policy, stated in a compelling memo in

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November 2012 to the faculty senate that it was “becoming increasingly difficult to attract professional librarians that are willing to accept positions in this [current] environment” or “to retain librarians under these conditions.” They noted that many other libraries “offer more advancement and security in their…positions.” As evidence, they noted that since September, 2011, of the seven national searches conducted by the library, “[t]hree of these … failed when prospective candidates withdrew to accept positions at other institutions. Three of these positions remain vacant.” Due to these empty positions, they further stated, “the library lost 34 months of productivity.” In pursuing the futile searches, “the library … spent over $119,000.”

Little wonder they complained. Six rank-and-file professional librarians remained in the Bell Library to affix their names to their petition to the faculty senate. This number constituted fewer than when I began in 1990 for a student body that was more than two and one half times in size in 2012.

The university even delayed hiring my successor to care for the invaluable materials of Special Collections & Archives until it finally bowed to potent community pressure about this neglect and its potentially woeful consequences. This successful public struggle to hire my successor has now become part of archival history as an example of how concerned citizens can move an incalcitrant institution. Even then, the university downgraded that position from associate director, what it had been when I held it, to “librarian and university archivist.” Downgrading of professional librarians at the Mary and Jeff Bell Library seemed to have no end.

During the spring and summer of 2013, I sought answers as well as relief for my professional colleagues at A&M-Corpus Christi by formally contacting SACS/COC. I inquired and ultimately filed a complaint about how A&M-Corpus Christi had handled its professional librarian employment status during its 2010 petition process. Though, as already noted, SACS/COC determined that the school did not violate any SACS accreditation standards, the SACS president stated that some of the academic librarians on SACS staff had been involved in “similar situations” and that such was “disappointing and devastating to the librarians involved….” Thus, SACS had at least been made aware of the problem. Perhaps, I thought, SACS would more closely scrutinize future submissions from such a university.

I could take some satisfaction that my communications with SACS/COC also may have played a role in A&M-Corpus Christi formally clarifying what we already knew had transpired. On the heels of my initial inquiries, on August 1, 2013, policy 2.3 was finally stricken from the A&M-Corpus Christi policy handbook on the grounds that it was “obsolete.” Even when the policy was taken down (two months shy of six years after it had been abrogated in late September 2007 by the A&M System), the university administration apparently did not notify the remaining professional librarians of this action. It came down in silence, just as our loss of
academic status had not been communicated to us in a timely and decent fashion in 2007 or 2010.\

After policy 2.3 was expunged, even hiring a new director seemed jinxed in the wake of all the degrading. After an initial search for a new library head failed in 2013, the university administration felt it necessary to hire a search firm, which was unprecedented for the A&M-Corpus Christi library. (During my twenty-two years there, I had been involved in three library director searches, which always used internal search committees and consistently garnered ample qualified candidates.) Open records revealed that in 2013, however, the university committed $83,000 for the search conducted by an out of state firm. One can readily speculate on whether such extraordinary spending was a matter of the reputation which the Bell Library had garnered within the region because of the degrading of its professionals’ status and numbers, as well as its place on the university organizational chart. As one of the A&M-Corpus Christi professionals confided to me: “I think the word is out about us.”\

When the new library director came on board in 2014 through this costly search, the provost wrote in his letter of appointment that “While it is our hope that you will have a successful career with this university, non-faculty appointments are ‘at will,’ which means that either you or the university can terminate your employment at any time, with or without cause.” Though such language softened the “at will” conditions as they were communicated to us in August, 2010, the message remained the same. The provost who wrote this contract letter left for a new position out of state in early 2015, contributing to the “revolving door” provost situation. As such, he was no longer present to facilitate the new library director’s hoped for “successful career with this university…”\

My efforts on behalf of the librarians’ plight continued into 2015 with some solid outcomes, at least in terms of community awareness, public support and dissemination of information about the employment status of librarians. The city’s major newspaper, the Corpus Christi Caller-Times, published a guest editorial I wrote entitled “Librarians left in curious limbo” on March 22, thus carrying advocacy for the professional librarians onto the streets. This column contained a seven-hundred-word synopsis of A&M-Corpus Christi’s degrading of its professional librarians’ status, and I received some positive feedback from professionals and laypersons alike. Feeling that it was of consequence, I widely circulated the column through email.\

Perhaps most gratifying for our cause as a profession, at the time of this writing this column is posted on the wikispace entitled Academic-Librarian-Status, accessible through https://academic-librarian-status.wikispaces.com/. This excellent resource, compiled by Chris Lewis of The American University, contains a comprehensive bibliography of commentary and scholarship on librarian status.
After I left in 2012, the remaining professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi worked on a new policy for the next three years. They finally achieved it in late 2015. When it finally came, however, the new policy was essentially inferior in terms of job security to policy 2.3.

As traced through the minutes of the faculty senate, achieving this new policy came slowly. In August, 2012, librarian “at will” versus “continuing employment” status remained as an issue, though by November the librarians had apparently shed any quest for the latter and called for “fixed-term professional faculty status,” a model identical to a new form of non-tenure faculty employment recently formalized by A&M-Corpus Christi. For faculty, this form of employment was called the “Professional Assistant Professor,” which took on the ironically accurate acronym “PAP” on campus and represented a second-tier form of instructor status. In its initial draft submitted to the faculty senate in November, this PAP policy adapted for librarians called for a fixed term five-year contract with a system of promotions. As such, it called for all the responsibilities of being faculty but without tenure. Though the librarians could never earn a vested right to their jobs, the proposed policy referred to them as “faculty.”

In late January, 2013, this librarian PAP proposal was to be sent to the provost and was seemingly under consideration throughout the year. The faculty affairs committee met with the provost in October to discuss the librarians’ policy; in November, that committee had to revise the promotion part. Word reached me in mid-November that the university administration apparently objected to any mention of “faculty” in the new library policy document and insisted that the word be expunged, thus perhaps explaining the need to make the revisions.

Offering little encouragement to an expeditious resolution to the librarian employment matter, when the provost presented the faculty senate with twenty-four priorities for the new academic year in September, 2013, the list did not even include librarian status. It did, however, enumerate “Preparation of the SACS 5-year report” near the top.

The year 2014 came with the library’s lead senator assiduously working with the provost’s office to make the necessary changes to the document. By late February, the alterations had been accomplished and the librarians, it was reported, “were comfortable with the document . . . as it is now.” With a final touch added, the senate approved it in late March. Sometime thereafter, the policy draft went to be reviewed by the system’s Office of General Counsel (OGC). In late November, 2014, a faculty senator asked to see the document that had emerged from the system legal office. “The Provost will look into it,” the senate was told, “and report back.” From these slow proceedings, one gets a whiff of the ongoing down-prioritizing that surrounded the entire issue.

By late March, 2015, the document was either still at the system legal office or had gone back there because the faculty senate minutes state that the
OGC was “making revisions” so that the policy could become “official.” Those minutes also recorded that the provost, associate vice president, and the president would meet “in the near future” about the matter. (One might wonder why these same three people could not have come up with an equitable resolution back in 2011.) Whether these individuals met or not, the policy seemed to disappear from the faulty senate radar until mid-September when the faculty affairs committee had to request a copy of the document as it had returned from the OGC. But during the over three years since I had left, the librarians remained in the status occupied by all other non-faculty staff; that is, “at will” and in effect non-professional.68

Finally, on September 28, 2015, the university approved of its new policy 12.99.99.C0.03 for the “Appointment, Rank, and Promotion of Professional Librarians,” eight years to the day after the system had abrogated librarian policy 2.3. It proved to be a version of “PAP” adjusted for librarians. It stated that “[a]ll appointment letters will indicate that the position is a non-tenure accruing, term appointment….” Explaining at length a list of rankings which included assistant, associate, and senior librarians with contracts of one, two, and three years respectively, the policy called for the responsibilities of faculty but without the ability to gain a vested interest in the job.69

On the plus side, the employee did not remain instantaneously “at will” during her/his employment. Rather, the policy stated that the librarian could only be terminated for “good cause” within the term of her/his appointment. At the end of these one, two, or three-year contract cycle, however, the university had the right not to extend the contract. In such a case, the university was to provide the employee with written notice “normally not later than 90 days in advance of the appointment’s expiration date, of its intention not to extend the appointment.” In short, the librarian’s right to employment did not extend further than the one, two or three-year appointment cycle, thus making the employee’s status “at will” at the end of the appointment, cause or no cause. As such, the librarian was on a continual treadmill of being reappointed at the discretion of the university.70

The list of reasons in the new policy as cause for dismissal before the end of the appointment term included nine items, up from the previous seven of policy 2.3. One of these added reasons included item (b), a simple statement “insubordination,” an ill-defined term at best. Thus, the administration’s control over the employee and ability to “manage” the workforce was near complete.71

In sum, the new PAP policy for librarians constituted a notch above being totally at will which had effectively been the case for the years, 2007-2015, but below the security which the off-probation librarian had once held under policy 2.3. Regardless of the new policy’s elaborate language describing ranks and promotions, the loss of the A&M-Corpus Christi professional librarians’ most important right, that is vested status, had been codified
by the new policy that the librarians had apparently shaped and adopted for themselves. Their downgrading had now been set in university policy. One librarian lamented to me that “I guess it’s just going to be harder to keep these jobs.”

In communicating with the librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi during 2015, I had urged them not to embrace this PAP employment model. They obviously had not heeded my admonition. With policy 12.99.99. C0.03, they set their status as transitory employees, no matter how many faculty committees they served on, graduations they attended, or scholarly contributions they made in pursuit of achieving these promotions and holding their jobs.

This downgraded status begs a couple of important questions. First, even though the professional librarians had achieved a new policy, why would anyone trust an institution after it summarily abrogated a previous status which gave the employee a fundamental right, failed to tell them of it, and then did not, in my opinion, exhibit respectful behavior to the affected employees? Second, why would any mature professional take a position in such an untrustworthy climate? The answers to both are just as obvious: Such an entity cannot be trusted, but people need employment, especially professionals just entering the market, and they will take what is available, even after academic status had been cut out from under them. However, as they develop their skills the best of them likely will look for other, more secure and reliable places to work and the talent drain from such institutions as A&M-Corpus Christi will continue.

_Postscript:_

This example of degrading professional librarian status calls for a few additional observations. Beyond the lack of communication among the professionals from 2008 forward and the unity that the A&M-Corpus Christi professionals could not muster in 2010, some extra fault must lay at the feet of the librarians as well. To be considered a professional, one must conduct oneself as such. During my last years at A&M-Corpus Christi, I observed too much non-professional horseplay transpiring, such as cookie parties, pot luck lunches, birthday celebrations, and other such continual informal events which projected an immature ambient. Toward the end of my tenure, for example, a barbecue took place on campus at which the library professionals posed with the paraprofessionals (the latter clad in pseudo-cowboy attire) for an online photo declaring themselves the “Library Posse.” Broadcasting such an image, while doubtless done innocently, does not portray a professionalism that the administration, faculty or students would have respected.

On the other hand, I must assume some of the responsibility for the lame opposition to what happened to us. Once I had determined what was transpiring and once I understood the disunity among the entire group of professionals, I should have rallied a few of the more stalwart and suggested
a legal effort to gain our grandfathered status. For me, this should have
taken place by March, 2011. After all, university officials had placed their
signatures on our off-probationary status and policy 2.3 still remained, if
in shaky terms. Numerous obvious reasons precluded me from doing
this, and hindsight is 20/20, but I would suggest to anyone facing a similar
situation to determine as soon as possible if the administration is dealing in
bad faith and to seek legal advice and whatever action might bring redress
in the court system to keep what one has already earned.

In such situations, one should also follow a few guidelines. While
remaining civil, assume that you are in an adversarial situation with those
in the administration, unless they have a proven track record of support and
integrity. Second, trust few, if anyone, in positions of authority. Persons
such as the head of employee relations are admittedly there to protect the
institution, not the individual employee. Other administrators also owe
their first allegiance to keeping their jobs or advancing their own careers.
Third, gather as much information as possible as expeditiously as possible,
through online research as well as speaking with people. As information
managers, librarians know better than anyone else that knowledge is power.
In the case of the librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi, we generally failed to
follow those simple rules.

One must refrain, however, from blaming the victims for the transgression
against them. As the people at SACS noted, such situations were
"disappointing and devastating to the librarians involved...." We rank
and file librarians never received the explanation, much less the apology
that we deserved from whichever administrators had a hand in doing what
they did. The reader must judge for herself/himself whether this episode
was altogether a case of mismanagement, incompetence, subterfuge, or
some combination of the three. Would it have been impossible for the
administration to handle it differently in a manner which lessened the
negative impact on the professional librarians? Is it inevitable that the
individual employee cannot rely on the administration to watch after his/
her best interests, as one system HR person told me during my inquiries
into this episode? Has that fundamental relationship of trust between
administrators and employees, so vital to the successful operation of an
institution, been dissolved? Can employees, in this case professional
librarians, rely on administrators to treat them with the fundamental
respect they deserve? Can employees rely on the culture of assessment by
agencies like SACS, which are after all funded by the member institutions?
For me, when I reflect on the episode, the words "trust" and "good faith"
in the university administration and affiliated individuals and agencies that
I dealt with do not come to mind.

This affair forms a case study of downgrading professional librarian status,
with a full cast of characters. One can only hope that the message of this
policy history resonates in some positive manner, but that will be determined
by the actions of other institutions and individuals, including the university
systems, university administrators, library organizations, and the librarians
themselves. Of great importance, the actions of individual professional librarians play perhaps the most essential role in future outcomes. Does the individual professional librarian eschew the welfare of the group and become involved in marketing her/himself, bent on achieving her/his self-interested professional goals, even at the expense of fellow professionals, the library profession as a whole, and the constituents that libraries serve? Or do professional librarians see the benefit of vested rights to their employment, unify and work for the good of the many?

The example of the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians, 2007-2015, demonstrates that the library profession, indeed all of academia, finds itself in a struggle. A sampling of the many responses I received from individuals to whom I sent my column entitled “Librarians left in curious limbo” vividly demonstrates that tussle. On the one hand, a retired liberal arts dean and seasoned educator replied: “Can anybody really believe that if [institutions] can do this to librarians then they cannot do it to faculty? I found the job security of tenure [i.e. vested status] to be important in getting a good night’s sleep…. Oddly, folks mostly don’t seem to realize that meritorious performance is no guarantee of continued employment anywhere…. Maybe, especially in educational institutions.” On the other hand, a Texas library dean to whom I sent the newspaper column declined even to forward it to his professional staff, stating that “if I were to distribute these pieces as dean … [it] is a kind of endorsement of views. [T]he matters you identify are … the concerns of TAMU-CC with which I am uninvolved and know nothing about.” Such responses reflected a cold dichotomy revolving around such issues – engagement versus timidity, solidarity versus disunity.73

If engagement and solidarity are not followed, the fall will come. First for librarians, and then for regular teaching faculty who across Texas and the country are feeling the wave of contract employment being increasingly foisted upon them. As one of my library colleagues at A&M-College Station told me during my investigations in 2011: “Librarians are like the gazelles that were broken away from the herd and eaten.” Teaching faculty may well already be seeing the slow death of tenure in their ranks, echoing the opinion of my retired dean associate who warned that what is done to the librarians can also be done to faculty, if only incrementally.74

Struggle or not, I hope that librarians can strive for better than what happened at A&M-Corpus Christi. Most professional librarians I have known (though lamentably not all) have chosen their line of work for lofty reasons and will continue to strive for improvement of the employment status and security of professionals, just as those early librarians did when they founded their associations in the past. Professional librarians in the public sector of academia are currently in dark times. Given the present political climate the future may well become even darker. Though difficult, let us heed Wendy Davis’ words: “When we remain silent, we participate in our own marginalization.”75 Let us speak out, support those who also resist and strive to make this nighttime simply a prelude to a new dawn.
Endnotes


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

43

9 Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library to Thomas H. Kreneck, August 23, 2010, Document in author’s possession. As noted in the text of the article, I will refrain from mentioning specific names of persons involved in the downgrading episode. By the time the degrading episode began, library directors O’Keeffe, Wakashige, and Kratz had long since departed A&M-Corpus Christi and were thus unassociated with these events, 2007-2015. The library director who sent the 2010 “at will” letter had been appointed to the position in 2003.


12 Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting minutes, August 17, 2010, 1, Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 16, 2014, Open Records Request by Author, CC-14-035, Author’s notations of meeting among librarians, September 30, 2010, from author’s Day Minder 2010/2011 calendar, in author’s possession. Perhaps due to my profession as an archivist historian I perfunctorily maintained such notes. Although after September 1, 2010, the official title of the incumbent head of the Bell Library was Assistant Vice President and Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, for brevity and clarity, I will refer to her as A VP/library director.

13 Library faculty senators to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, emails, October 7, 2010, 3:39 p.m. and 4:03 p.m. Documents in author’s possession.

14 President’s Cabinet Minutes, October 11, 2010, Open Records Request by Author, Number CC-14-077. Documents in author’s possession.


16 Thomas H. Kreneck to A VP/library director and professional librarians, email, October 12, 2010, 11:22 a.m.; library director to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, October 13, 2010, 4:56 p.m.; Thomas H. Kreneck to library director, email, October 13, 2010, 5:35 p.m. Documents in author’s possession.

17 Thomas H. Kreneck to A VP/library director, emails, October 13, 2010, 5:13 p.m. and 5:35 p.m. Documents in author’s possession.

18 Library senator to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, email, October 18, 2010, 2:45 p.m. Document in author’s possession.

19 Thomas H. Kreneck to library senator and other professional librarians, email, October 18, 2010, 3:11 p.m., 3:34 p.m., 5:50 p.m. Documents in author’s possession.

20 A VP/library director to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, email, October 21, 2010, 9:36 a.m. Document in author’s possession.

21 Thomas H. Kreneck to A VP/library director, email, October 21, 2010, 4:36 p.m. Document in author’s possession.

22 Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, May 1, 2013, Open Records Request by Author, CC-13-035(2) stating provosts’ tenures. Document in author’s possession. This turnover, I had been told at the time, was mainly due to the president’s dissatisfaction with their work. See also Thomas H. Kreneck, “The door that should not revolve,” Corpus Christi Caller-Times, May 3, 2015, 21A.

23 My recollections of this meeting are also based on notes I took immediately afterwards labeled Memorandum of Record, October 22, 2010. Document in author’s possession.


25 On December 13, 2010, I reviewed the packets of these two librarians in the A VP/library director’s office, and then met with the other librarians on December 16, during which we voted to recommend them being taken off probation. From author’s Day Minder 2010/2011 calendar. Calendar in author’s possession. Special Collections & Archives Department Monthly Report, December, 2010, report in author’s possession and in A VP/library director’s files. Memorandum, Interim Provost/VPAA to President, Re. Continuing Appointment of librarian in question. Document in author’s possession.


Ibid.

Minutes of President’s Cabinet Meetings, A&M-Corpus Christi, 2007-2010, obtained through various requests. Documents in author’s possession. For example, as early as the January 2007 PC meeting, the sitting provost emphatically told the members that “we need to speed up the [SACS] planning process.”

Vitae for Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, 8, Cassandra Hinojosa, Public Affairs Specialist, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, June 4, 2013, Open Records Request, CC-14-037; Minutes of President’s Cabinet Meetings, 2007-2010. For an example of the library director’s intimate involvement in the SACS process see PC minutes, December 10, 2009, 2-3. For the notation regarding the “welcome baskets” see PC minutes, January 25, 2010, 1. Documents in author’s possession. These sources support author’s own observations of the library director’s focus on successfully leading the SACS petition team in those years.


See President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, to author, February 21, 2014, for statement regarding the SACS belief that “The change in status of an employment category is not an issue related to accreditation.” Document in author’s possession.

Anonymous conversations in 2015 by author with former A&M-Corpus Christi administrator who followed the issue of the “at will” statement in the 2010 appointment letters. President’s Cabinet Minutes, September 16, 2010, 2, for statement on “Faculty and Staff Cuts at TAMU.”

Anonymous conversation by author in 2010 with A&M-Corpus Christi administrator regarding the “two stacks” of letters. Regarding author’s attempts at securing answers and documents regarding the use of the “at will” wording by the A&M-Corpus Christi administration, see author’s email exchange with Director of Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, April 11, 2014 and May 12-14, 2014; Chaslie McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, July 28, 2014, Open Records Request by author, CC-14-093 stating “the information responsive to your request is not available.” Thomas H. Kreneck to Open Records Division, Texas Attorney General’s Office, Fax dated November 4, 2014, CC-14-093 stating “the information responsive to your request is not available.” Thomas H. Kreneck to Open Records Division, Texas Attorney General’s Office, Fax dated November 4, 2014, CC-14-093 stating “the information responsive to your request is not available.”


Author’s email exchange with Director of Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, April 11, 2014 and May 12-14, 2014; Thomas H. Kreneck to Interim Provost, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, March 6, 2017, and Interim Provost to Thomas H. Kreneck, email dated March 10, 2017; Thomas H. Kreneck to President, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, October 25, 2015. See also Thomas H. Kreneck to Chief of Staff to President, California State University, Sacramento, email, April 24, 2017 and Chief of Staff, California State University, Sacramento to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, April 25, 2017. Documents in author’s possession.

“Former A&M System chancellor…ends turbulent run,” The Eagle, March 12, 2012, online; Tribepedia entry on former A&M chancellor, n.d., The Texas Tribune, online site http://www.texastribune.org/tribepedia. Private conversation between library faculty senator and author noting that the message that librarians do not and cannot have tenure came from the president through the provost. Our conversation took place in late November, shortly after the November 18, 2011 Faculty Senate meeting. Faculty Senate Minutes, November 11,
47

Provo and Vice President for Academic Affairs to Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, August 31, 2009 and August 23, 2010 (letters of appointment Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi); Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting Minutes, August 17, 2010, 1, noting the director’s “new title, Assistant Vice President and Library Director effective September 1st.” Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 16, 2014, Open Records Request by author, CC-14-105. Documents in author’s possession.

46 Texas A&M University Public Records Support/Charli McCandless, administrative assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, February 17, 2016, Open Records Request by author. W000328-020416 stating the lead library faculty senator’s employment hire and separation dates with university. Documents in author’s possession.

45 Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, August 31, 2011, and Library Faculty Senator to author, email, November 22, 2011, quote the provost stating, respectively, “librarians do not and cannot have faculty status” and “‘Librarians do not and will not have tenure at this university.’” Documents in author’s possession.

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58 Thomas H. Kreneck to SACS, email, March 24, 2013 mark my first formal inquiry to SACS/COC relative to the librarian employment status matter. Also, SACS/COC on-site visit committee chair to author, emails. April 8 and April 26, 2013, represent some of my other earliest inquires with SACS/COC about the situation. SACS/COC president to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, April 21, 2014. Documents in author’s possession.


60 Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting (minutes), August 21, 2013, Charli McCandless to author, email, July 15, 2015; Public Information Request Number CC-15-062; Thomas H. Kreneck, “A&M-CC’s dollars too precious for this,” Corpus Christi Caller-Times, February 22, 2015, 21A; Texas A&M Univ-Corpus Christi Purchasing Document Report, Executive Search -Library Director, 10/30/2013; President’s Cabinet Minutes, October 18, 2013, 3, Dora Garza to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 4, 2013, Public Information Request Number CC-13-100. Documents in author’s possession.


64 Faculty Senate Retreat Minutes, August 15, 2012, 1, 4; Faculty Senate Minutes, November 16, 2012, 1; Memo from A&M-Corpus Christi Librarians to Speaker and Members of the Faculty Senate, November 14, 2012, with attachment Draft 11/16/12, 12.99.99.C2.03, Appointment, Rank, and Promotion of Fixed Term Professional Track Faculty Librarians. Documents in author’s possession. All faculty senate meeting minutes can be accessed online at http://faculty-senate.tamucc.edu/agenda_minutes_archived.html.

65 Faculty Senate Minutes, January 25, 2013, 1, April 26, 2013, 1, August 29, 2013, 6, October 18, 2013, 5, and November 15, 2013, 4; Anonymous telephone conversations with select campus personnel by author.

66 Faculty Senate Minutes, September 20, 2013, 4-5.


68 Faculty Senate Minutes, March 27, 2015, 3 and September 18, 2015, 3. In early 2015, after three years of monitoring these protracted dealings (November 2012-2015), I recalled humorously a statement from the administrative criticism leveled at me in May 2012, that “a process has been moving forward to address his [Kreneck’s] concerns” about “the status of librarians...”


70 Ibid., 2, 10.

71 Ibid., 10.

72 Photograph of the “Library Posse.” Image in author’s possession.
73 These emails to author, 2015, must remain anonymous. Documents in author’s possession.


75 Texas State Senator, Wendy Davis, staged a now famous filibuster in 2013 against more restrictive abortion legislation. A progressive, she ran as the Democratic Party candidate for governor in 2014. This quote is from her keynote address on the steps of the Texas capitol at the 2017 Women’s Rights march. Though this sentence dealt with the condition of women, I believe it has universal applicability.
Ideology and Rhetoric of Undergraduate Student Workers in Academic Libraries

by Elliott Kuecker

Many library and information science (LIS) scholars do the commendable and useful work of identifying practical problems, and describing solutions, to improve undergraduate labor in academic libraries, but rarely has the field looked at the ideological problems surrounding this type of labor. Scholarship on student workers in academic libraries reveals a concern for the wellbeing of the students, and a desire to create the best possible work environment for all staff, but these goals can be better met by focusing not only on practical matters and individual libraries as small workplaces, but on the broader ideology of work in academia in general, student labor in general, and academic libraries specifically. Labor studies has long been concerned with ideology because it is how hegemony functions in writing and reproducing the commonplace rhetoric that allows inequitable systems of power to stay in place. I argue that rather than looking at new ways to train students in hopes of resolving problems with student labor, we must understand the rhetoric in the LIS field surrounding student workers, and how this rhetoric aids the hegemony of the academic institution, the labor market that affects academic libraries. I do this by presenting the common traits of the dominant rhetoric on student labor in LIS literature, discussing what ideological problems we can learn from scholarship outside of the field (labor studies and critical university studies), discussing the student activist perspective on student labor, and finally introducing counter rhetorics from which we should learn and borrow.

The abstract concepts of rhetoric, ideology, and hegemony must be considered, as “The central goal of critical theory in organizational studies has been to create societies and work places which are free from domination, where all members have an equal opportunity to contribute to the production of systems that meet human needs and lead to the progressive development of all.” Understanding our own rhetoric will allow for us to make shifts

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in it, hopefully undermining the hegemonic system that “works through
pervading common sense and becoming part of the ordinary way of seeing
the world, understanding one’s self and experience needs.”

So much of what we do in libraries is for the service, education, and support
of all people we encounter, but sometimes we look outward at our patrons
and not inward at our staff. As Benjamin Johnson, Patrick Kavanagh, and
Kevin Mattson critiqued when they introduced their *Steal This University*,
a text covering labor issues in academia: “Worse yet, sometimes it leads
middle-class people to forget the injustices that exist right in front of their
noses. Confronting practices closer to home is often harder than protesting
across the globe.”

**Rhetoric of Student Workers in LIS Scholarship**

Library services and demand has not waned, and in some cases has
increased, but contingent labor – temporary workers who usually work
part-time, without benefits – performs too much of the work. Many LIS
articles on student labor in libraries published in the last 15 years begin
with acknowledgments of how important student labor is to keeping the
doors open, or how “changing roles of librarians” has led to a greater
need for student labor, showing that as a field we all understand our
great reliance on undergraduate labor. Scholars then seek to solve these
problems through innovative training techniques, ways to introduce new
responsibilities for student workers, and ways to expand the value of part-
time work in academic libraries for student workers.

The many examples of the common rhetoric in LIS management literature
about the essential nature of student workers in keeping libraries running
prove that this is a universal issue, and that we talk about this issue in a
specific way. Vera J. Lux and Linda Rich write,

> Talk abounds in the academic library realm about the shifting roles
> of librarians. While it was once an accepted norm that an academic
> library should have a professional librarian staffing a reference service
> point, reference librarians now often find themselves needing to justify
time spent at the reference desk.

Lux and Rich go on to explore the quality of reference transactions
students provide in their expanded duties as reference representative, a
task historically left to professional librarians. Jamie Seeholzer writes,
patrons come forth with requests for more services, but

> with tight budgets and limited staff, how can academic libraries
listen and respond to these concerns? By enlisting the help of reliable
students, academic libraries can not only determine the concerns and
wishes of library patrons…and do so with minimal investment of
librarian resources, time, or money.
Seeholzer increases the meaningfulness of work for undergraduates by giving them tutoring assignments during certain library hours. Pamela N. Martin and Britt Fagerheim write, “As libraries continue to rely heavily on student workforce, librarians needs to empower students to be successful employees in the library and assess both their knowledge and tools we provide them.”6 Their students take on IT responsibilities as a form of empowerment. In all of these cases, and the many others, well-intentioned library managers are trying to make the best of the labor situation in their libraries, but the acknowledgement of a reliance on student labor is met with an attempt to fix the problem by assigning more tasks or more complex tasks, rather than resist or rewrite the system.

The dominant rhetoric we work with as a field, then, suggests that librarians do not have the time to do all the work assigned to them because of new job duties, and that students actually get something out of these increased responsibilities in the form of intangible value. In Martin and Fagerheim’s example above, they feel that this empowers students. In other examples, students get something out of it because they are learning. Campbell-Meier and Hussey even suggest formalizing learning outcomes to student workers, both graduate and undergraduate.7 And Jamie P. Kohler, recognizing that “students are no longer simply fit for routine tasks and manual labor,” suggests that trainings be moved to a distance learning format,9 as does Laura Manley and Robert P. Holley, who suggest using Blackboard.10 Evanson promotes the idea of individual projects that come with a proposal, goals, and a timeline.11 She writes that the new training model “has sparked in our students the opportunities it has created for transferrable learning. The development of training activities designed around our learning outcomes has enabled us to focus on the ‘student’ as well as the ‘employee’ role.”12 These notions are more similar to classrooms and curriculum than they are to work, showing that the ideology of student labor justifies the extra work by positing that we are paying students fairly in intangible value (education), even though, and especially because, we are not paying them fairly in the form of wages.

The idea that payment for work can come in the form of education rather than a fair wage is common, and is integral to the justification for Federal Work Study (FWS), the route many students take to academic library student jobs. FWS is meant to pay students a small wage (often on par with minimum wage in a state), and the intangible value of career-related education. Adela Soliz and Bridget Terry Long write, “Unlike the Pell Grant, which is awarded directly to students, FWS funds are allocated as a lump sum to institutions, which then have some discretion as to how to distribute the funds to students.”13 The institution pays part of the wage and the government contributes 20% to 50% of the rest. The major problem with this, other than the fact that it is financial aid in the form of a low-paying job, is that it does not live up to its intentions. Formed in 1964 as part of the Economic Opportunity Act to aid low-income students, “the placements are supposed to be both career-focused and scheduled to not interfere with academics.”14 Elizabeth Kenefick writes that “less than
40 percent of recipients indicated having a placement that complemented his or her academic problem.\textsuperscript{15} Since institutions have to pay part of the wages, students must be placed where they are needed, and since it would be a difficult task to link every student to an appropriate match, either on or off campus, FWS becomes a broken promise for students who wanted to justify the low-wage with relevant experience. Many FWS do end up in our academic libraries, and while many strive to give students transferrable skills to legitimate the library job more, a double-edge sword is revealed when we ask for more responsibility from students who are not adequately compensated for such responsibility.

Making the experience for a student worker valuable with transferrable skills is a time-consuming task for full-time library managers, which serves as another piece of evidence toward the repercussions of hegemony within the institutional labor system, though it is all in an effort to transform the student workers experience into something that appears more fair. The result is simply that we all are working more for the same pay. Bella Karr Gerlich posits that the cost of student employees is not worth their contributions, or lack of contributions, as they typically have “poor attendance records and ambivalent attitudes toward their work.”\textsuperscript{16} She writes, “I realized that our efforts on behalf of student employees had far exceeded the results that student employees contributed to the organization”\textsuperscript{17} and pushes for core workers (full-time, invested staff) instead of contingent employees (students who do not return nor have reasons to invest).

Gerlich does not address the issues from a critique of hegemony and has different motivations in her writing, but she contributes to how we can see contingent labor as a systemic problem that effects libraries in big ways, and she seeks alternatives. She also addresses our expectations for students: “how can we as managers expect a working class that is so talented to choose to do such repetitive and mundane tasks as shelving, processing, or circulation books for so little a financial reward”\textsuperscript{18} and further, “Is it any surprise then that today’s student employee is quickly bored with the low-tech, linear-thinking, rule-bound, hierarchical library job?”\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Student Perspectives on their Work}

Not only are library professionals unsatisfied with the labor circumstances surrounding undergraduates, student employees are as well. In June 2017, University of Chicago student library employees voted to join Teamsters Local 743, an unusual event among library student employees and private university undergraduate student workers generally. Ally Marotti reports, “The Teamsters plan to negotiate with the university for a contract that deals with issues such as employee wages and stable hours.”\textsuperscript{20} One student worker explains,

Young people from my generation are demanding that our voices be heard, and unionization is an important part of our movement. Our election sets a precedent for student workers across the country; they
can demand a seat at the bargaining table and make their universities more equitable and accessible.\textsuperscript{21}

Though the Chicago union example is exceptional and rare, other students are likely to have bargained with the university in an abstract way: to accept low-pay, low-status work as a temporary condition in exchange for freedom in the future, and, possibly for some, undergraduate work is also a type of badge of honor one puts up with in their student years. Student employees may be unmotivated because of the lack of financial reward (as Gerlich wrote), but then why do we do not hear of many labor unions forming from undergraduate student workers? Marc Bousquet describes the way all student workers think of their work, saying, "They see manual work and service work through the lens of their own past, through their own sense of their past selves as students, likely comprising all of the feelings the non-adult, of the temporary, of the mobile, of the single person."\textsuperscript{22} In his view, student labor as a past experience is an affect the student worker employs during and after this period as a way to understand why they did low-paying, dull work for a few years. He writes, "The universities' role in this bargain is crucial: it provides the promise of escaping into the future... give us, our vendors, and our employing partners what we want (tuition, fees, and a fair chunk of labor time over several years), and you can escape the life you're living now."\textsuperscript{23}

Self-awareness on the part of student workers is further evidenced in studies done in libraries on undergraduate labor. A survey conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (2010) questioned "what behaviors, opportunities, and experiences encouraged"\textsuperscript{24} student workers to continue working in the library field. They write, "Other participants were challenged by tedious shelving and being treated like 'second class citizens'... Faculty library users sometimes treated the students 'like peons.'"\textsuperscript{25} These results are interesting because they describe how students perceive themselves in their roles, and they used the language that suggest someone with inferior rights (second class citizens) and someone who is a day laborer (a peon). Further, the authors write that they did not anticipate the following results:

none of the focus groups reported being mentored, and there was no significant in-house guidance about career options as student workers... some reported that they had been discouraged from library work due to a variety of reasons, low pay being a main problem. Poor salaries are an issue the profession continues to battle.\textsuperscript{26}

In this case the student employees uniformly report that they receive no guidance, and that in fact, while they are at work, full-time staff actively discourage further interest in the field because of the disproportionate labor-to-pay exchange that happens across the field. In this way, the library itself contributes to the hegemonic labor system, perhaps because even the full-time staff feel exploited themselves. So while the library may not be the origin of the problem, it is not countering it.
A study conducted at Rutgers University Libraries (2014) approaches the topic of student labor operating under the assumption that, of course, students feel unappreciated in this labor system, and seeks to understand how to improve this rather than even prove that it is happening, as this notion should be a commonplace by this point. The information gathered in this survey can be used to “further integrate the students into the library’s organizational identity” and generally acknowledge the importance of their place in the library. The authors write that RUL has relied on and mentored student workers for a long time, yet still the “core” of the library is thought to be the professional librarians and staff. They saw this in how services, resources, programs, and so forth, are developed. They write, “This perception can leave student employees disengaged or unwilling to commit to library work beyond the minimum requirements. Librarians and staff may also fail to recognize their skills and potential as library ambassadors.” The language the RUL authors use is appropriate to this discussion, as they address the institutional ideology about student workers and suggest that lack of credit and acknowledgement these workers receive obviously results in lower quality work, rather than blaming the students themselves for lack of motivation. This again shows how the library itself is not the origin of the problem, but contributes to the hegemonic labor system, rather than countering it. Further, the survey is testing for the rankings on meaningfulness of intangible values, as the authors already know that the workplace culture has disadvantages for students, and the wages are irrelevant to students who simply need any job at all. In fact, 76% listed that a paycheck is their reason for working at the library, followed by a long list of intangible values that might be earned while working in the library such as a good atmosphere, likeable coworkers, customer service skills, communication skills, and etc.

Counter Rhetorics to the Hegemony

The line of rhetoric we see dominating LIS literature on undergraduate labor has been problematic in student labor in general, especially graduate assistant labor, though these discussions have not been part of the LIS conversations about labor. Marc Bousquet writes about the “casualization of academic work,” saying, “In this frame, the designation ‘student,’ including undergraduate and even child labor, emerges as a bonanza in global capital’s voracious quest for low-cost, underregulated labor.” Gordon Lefer describes it saying, “Universities have organized production along lines that rely on a continuing supply of cheap, just-in-time labor, continually refreshed with new recruits.” One part of what many call the Academic Industrial Complex is imposing contingent labor on departments to replace what were once full-time-employee jobs. Like Gerlich argued, we know that contingent workers are less productive because the fast turnover requires frequent training and that they are less invested in something temporary, but the bigger picture is that productivity is really the least of our worries. Ethically we are dealing with a situation in which jobs originally afforded to full-time staff are being given to student workers because they can be abused: low wages and no benefits, few complaints.
because the situation is temporary, and a constantly maintained ideology that they are getting an education on the side.

The Chicago library student employee example may be surprising for us to read about in the library field, but graduate student workers have been forming unions for several decades to combat labor exploitation. Facing low wages, little or no benefits, and teaching multiple classes a semester, they form unions to negotiate percentage increases in stipends, childcare subsidies, health insurance, protections against sexual harassment, and etc. State university students are also more likely to unionize, with famously successful ones being University of Michigan, University of Florida, and University of California, among others. In 2001, NYU graduate students became the first collective of students to form a union, though many have followed. In the case of the student library workers in Chicago, this would be a victory for a private school, in addition to a victory for undergraduates. The labor circumstances that lead graduate students to forming unions are similar to the labor circumstances happening in libraries because the duties that once befell full-time staff are being moved to contingent employees (often because full-time staff are being asked to do something else instead), and there is more contingent labor available than full-time staff (often because of budget).

The justification for having graduate students work in the place of instructors is very similar to how the LIS field, and the Academic Industrial Complex, justifies undergraduate student labor, suggesting that they are learning something as an intangible value that can take the place of wages. Further, the LIS field contributes to this rhetoric by solving the problem with more work or more complex work, but importantly, scholars who address graduate student labor already see through this justification, as it simply doesn’t work. Problems with graduate student labor largely revolve around the fact that demand for instructors at universities has not waned, and in most cases has increased in recent years, and yet graduate students teach classes that full-time professors could be teaching because (1) “graduate teacher’s salaries are so meager,” and (2) “graduate students have a unique status as faculty-in-training, so all their teaching and research work is really part of their education, and therefore should not be considered ‘employment.’” But for all of this teaching and experience, the graduate students are paid in poverty-level stipends and graduate only to see that their experience has not always served them in earning a fulltime job, as Lafer and Bousquet both argue that a PhD is essentially the beginning of an end to an academic career. In other words, they often never achieve the career that all this intangible value was supposed to train them for, as the academic job market is oversaturated and exceptionally competitive. We might limit our justification of such labor in light of what we know about graduate students.

Though the dominant ideology currently dictates that working while in school is a normal, commendable activity, there are other ways to look at this circumstance and see it in the light of capitalism run amuck. Students,
when acting only as students, are already workers, and not only that, they are impoverished workers. Understanding this notion is an essential ideological shift we must make in combating hegemony. In 1975 a group of student activists associated with Zerowork put it well when they authored a pamphlet called “Wages for Students.” They write, “Going to school, being a student is work. This work is called schoolwork although it is not usually considered to really be work since we don’t receive any wages for doing it… they have taught us to believe that only if you are paid do you really work.” They go on to write, “We are forced to survive on what others wouldn’t tolerate. The housing we can afford to rent is substandard and overcrowded. The food we eat, must eat, is cheap institutional food of the cheapest brands… We are a clear case of poverty.” In a system in which we are trained to believe that education is a privilege and luxury, not a right, rarely do we hear students identifying themselves as impoverished or that they are living substandard lives, but their argument is semantically watertight: “work” is in the word “schoolwork” for a reason, but this work is unpaid and rarely critically assessed. Work is already being conducted, so a student with no job is a working student. A student with a job outside of schoolwork has an additional job. Gus Tyler writes, in discussing labor organization from a union approach, “Whatever the outcome, the basic philosophy of organized labor is that wages and salaries are in exchange for work done and that there ought to be some ‘fair’ relationship between input and income—however sloppily the system operates.” As laborers, the amount of effort put into a job should match the fruits reaped for the work. Similarly, Bousquet writes, “the transformative agency of the millions of student employees is evident in the anti-sweatshop movement and in graduate-employee union movements, which have allied themselves with other insecure workers and not with the tenured faculty.” Like the Chicago library student employee example who voted to join the Teamsters, student employees have more in common with who we commonly associate with institutionally uneducated, low-wage workers, than they do the faculty in their classrooms, or perhaps even the upper administration in the library.

In being mindful of the fact that students who work in our libraries already have the job of students, we must move away from the notion of “unmotivated” students as character judgment, as this notion of intrinsic work ethic is a capitalist construction. Most likely people think that students should want to do good work because it is the right behavior and attitude to have. This is not addressing the fact that while that may be the dominant ideology of industrial capitalism, it is not the only ideology. The concept of “work ethic,” for example, is problematic as it is not a core human trait, but rather a belief system promoted by Calvinism in the West and, as many Marxists and labor studies scholars would suggest, a construction made to aid discipline in factories. Edmund F. Byrne explains, “Marx himself rejected the duty-based work ethic as a device of capitalist exploitation of the working class.” A love of one’s work, or desire to do good work is not what is generally being admonished. In fact, many anarchists and Marxists strongly believe in craft pride. Instead, it is the constant and compulsory work, no matter the pay and treatment, that is identified as the
problem, and the way in which this permeates our lives so much that we don’t even know there might be other options. Bernard Marszalek writes, “The faint rumblings of discontent with the stresses of American life, in the most part due to the compulsive adherence to the work ethic, have still to cohere into a recognizable opposition.”42 Consider if student workers, earning poverty wages, should be expected to have conform to the tools of discipline of capitalism simply because we as librarians have also been given too much work.

Additionally, if we ask students to sit at the circulation desk and perform user service tasks, or if we ask them to conduct reference transactions, a task we deem as more complex, they are still going to be paid the same wage. We cannot replace wages earned with intangible value, such as education opportunities, and so forth, when students may have not understood that was part of the deal when they agreed to take the job, or when they applied to Federal Work Study. Erik Olin Wright, in *Alternatives to Capitalism*, describes one of his axioms of participatory economics, writing,

> The quality of work, not just the material rewards from the work, is an issue in justice... As an ideal, all jobs should be equally desirable from the point of view of whatever qualities people value within work.... People in jobs that, for pragmatic reasons, have more burdens in this sense (i.e. a less desirable balance of tasks) should thus be compensated with greater income or more leisure or in some other appropriate way.44

When paying students more money is not within our power at our library, giving more tasks and more complex tasks cannot be the go-to solution, conflating solving the problem of dull work for students – or too much work for librarians – by making up educational outcomes that provide intangible value, we may consider doing the opposite, which is to provide more leisure time or give students an option of what type of work they do.

Problems that exist as part of industrial capitalism and the Academic Industrial Complex are not easily solved through practical measures. It is disappointing to write more text about problems and less text about solutions, but I see the current problem to be addressed as an abstract one grounded in how we think about student workers, and in the rhetoric we produce in our scholarship and conversations about student workers. Shifting our understandings of the power dynamics at play, and becoming aware of what more equitable labor systems might look or sound like, we can begin to introduce counter rhetoric to the dominant rhetoric, and hopefully begin to shift the dominant ideology within undergraduate student labor in libraries toward radical values that privilege ethics over productivity.
Endnotes


9. The notion of using technology for training could also be explored on its own through Marxism, as a cornerstone of many Marxist labor frameworks is looking at how technology does not enhance civilization, but instead aids in disciplining workers through new means, but that discussion would be a rabbit hole in this article.


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ALAN, IFLA, and South Africa

by Al Kagan

This article presents a brief overview of modern South African history going back to the arrival of the Dutch in 1652, subsequent European colonialism, and the years of white minority rule under the policy of apartheid. It briefly explains one aspect of the most potent worldwide responses to apartheid, the cultural and academic boycott. The institutional development of South African librarianship is then contextualized with ALA and IFLA responses. It pays particular attention to the Association of American Publishers report (The Starvation of Young Black Minds), Guidelines for Librarians Interacting with South Africa, IFLA’s various activities and reports, and the role of South Africa’s new nonracial democratic organization, the Library and Information Workers Organization (LIWO). Finally it analyzes ALA and IFLA actions and interventions during the transition to majority rule, and concludes with an evaluation of ALA and IFLA’s strategic importance in the subsequent development of the South African library profession.

Colonialism and Apartheid

The modern history of South Africa is a product of European colonialism and the ideology of white supremacy. The Dutch first arrived at the Cape of Good Hope on the southern coast of Africa in 1652. They soon subjugated the indigenous peoples and established a colony. The British conquered the Dutch in 1795. The Dutch then trekked into the interior and fought against the indigenous peoples to create their own colonies. British colonists first arrived in 1806. The two European powers fought not only the indigenous peoples but also among themselves until the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1910, the British and Dutch colonies were unified under the British, and became the Union of South Africa. The descendants of the British colonists spoke English and the descendants of the Dutch colonists developed a hybrid language called Afrikaans. People of mixed race origin (called Coloured) and people of mainly South Asian descent (called Indian) generally had somewhat higher social and economic status and more rights than the indigenous African peoples from various ethnic groups. Race and

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63
social class segregated people, but not quite asstringently as after 1948. The white supremacist South African ideology of apartheid was applied to government policy after the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948. In the Afrikaans language, the word “apartheid” translates as “apartness,” but its real meaning is closer to the way it is correctly pronounced: apart hate. A more functional definition of the policy of apartheid would be based around the concept of institutionalized racism. It was a policy that prevented the majority from holding any citizenship rights. It relegated only 13% of the land to more than 80% of the people. It allocated 60% of national income to 14% of the people. The distribution of wealth was so lopsided that it resulted in an African infant mortality rate of 94–124 deaths per 1000 live births and an average African life expectancy of 41–47 years. In contrast, the white infant mortality rate was 12 per 1000 and the average white life expectancy was 61–71 years.1 Apartheid was a brutal system of white-minority rule and segregation, which controlled every aspect of the majority of the peoples’ lives, and was held in place by violence and political repression. It classified and separated people into four large “racial” groups: White, Coloured, Indian, and African, and even many subgroups.

Apartheid applied to librarians and libraries as with all other professions and institutions. Many readers will be aware of the peoples’ struggles and the incredible international campaign to overthrow apartheid. The opposition movement included organizations with various political philosophies, but the most successful was the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC). The Freedom Charter was proclaimed at the Congress of the People at Kilptown, Johannesburg, on June 26, 1955. Although the African National Congress came to life in 1912, the Freedom Charter became its most foundational document. It begins:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:
that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and
that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the
will of all the people…2

Apartheid policies created completely separate and unequal education, official censorship and banning of books and ideas, and the banning and banishment of political leaders. It was against the law to even quote a banned person. The Freedom Charter addressed these policies. It said that:

The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national
talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;
All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free
exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;
The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their
people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;
Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;
Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;
Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;
Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;
The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

The Sharpeville Massacre of March 21, 1960, and the Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976, were widely reported and met international reprobation. (March 21st is now celebrated as Human Rights Day and June 16th as Youth Day.) A society-wide and international struggle was necessary to defeat apartheid. It included the armed liberation struggle of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC). A massive non-violent movement included strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience organized by the ANC, PAC, Black Consciousness Movement, United Democratic Front (UDF), and Mass Democratic Movement. United Nations international economic, cultural, and sports sanctions were important in isolating the country, and finally causing the collapse of the banking system. Government policies only began to change with State President’s F. W. de Klerk’s speech of December 2, 1990, unbanning the ANC and other opposition organizations, and announcing the release of political prisoners including Nelson Mandela. Majority rule was finally achieved with the first inclusive elections in 1994.

The first ANC government along with its partners, the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), made an initial significant effort to try to transform social and economic conditions for the majority of the population through its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Although not as wide-ranging as some had hoped, many local initiatives were carried out under its auspices. Although some activists complained, by 1996 the government changed direction and implemented the neoliberal policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). Analysis of these policies is out of scope for this article, but note that many on the left criticized the government for much too readily giving up on its initial transformative agenda at a time when there was still much political space to forge on.

The Cultural and Academic Boycott

Although there were calls for a boycott of South Africa from as early as 1960 after the Sharpeville Massacre, a systematic international campaign that threatened white-minority rule did not materialize until 1987. Due to the burgeoning of a new popular liberation culture, South African
performers, those in exile and those still living inside the country, came together in Amsterdam in 1987. That major Conference on Alternative Culture endorsed the concept of a selective boycott determined through consultation of mass democratic organizations. Also in 1987, the United Democratic Front (UDF) proclaimed that, “One should seek to make the distinction between isolating the regime and isolating the people of South Africa.” At that time, the UDF was the largest legal coalition of anti-apartheid groups in South Africa. At its peak the UDF represented over 800 religious, labor, community, and political groups. In a 1988 interview from exile in Sweden, ANC President Oliver Tambo endorsed the call for a selective boycott, which meant boycotting apartheid institutions and supporting all struggling to overturn the system.

**IFLA and Librarianship Under Apartheid, 1930-1989**

The South African Library Association (SALA) was established in 1930, before the advent of institutionalized racism in 1948. Its initial membership was 89, but it grew to 1611 by 1977. SALA was initially open to all, but it was a mainly white organization. However, it did promote a little library work in African communities. There were only three “non-White” members in 1963, when it decided to limit its membership to whites, and set up separate library associations for “Coloureds,” “Indians,” and “Bantu” (a pejorative term meaning Africans). Of these separate organizations, only the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) survived until the 1990s.

SALA was a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the preeminent international organization for librarianship. However, IFLA received much financial support from Unesco, which was very active in the struggle against apartheid. IFLA had a problem after SALA officially became an apartheid association. Unesco suspended relations and significant grant funding to IFLA in 1971. This anti-apartheid pressure soon led to IFLA’s request that SALA withdraw from membership. SALA withdrew in 1972, and the Unesco Executive Board lifted its suspension of IFLA. However, there were still three South African libraries that remained institutional members of IFLA, and they lost their voting rights in 1974. Strangely, IFLA restored voting rights to the South African institutional members in 1977, stating, “Their formal position had changed considerably.” But remember that the Soweto Uprising took place in June 1976, and that the country was rocked by protests and demonstrations during these years. The apartheid repressive apparatus was in full swing. Restoration of voting rights was clearly unjustified, and showed the true political allegiance of IFLA’s leadership.

As a result of political pressure, SALA could not continue, and dissolved itself at the end of 1979. It was immediately reformed as the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS). The organization’s 1982 constitution opened membership to all, but excluded
most black librarians by insisting on proper librarianship qualifications. One might see this as a small step on the way to equality, but it was essentially a way for the white establishment to remain in control of the profession in the face of international pressure.

The IFLA Executive Board took up the matter again in 1983 and surveyed its fourteen South African institutional members. Twelve reported that they did not discriminate, and therefore the IFLA Executive Board took no action. By this time, the worldwide movement against apartheid had become very large and vocal. Librarians were no exception, and in 1985, the IFLA Council voted to exclude membership from all apartheid institutions at the Chicago conference.9

This author personally experienced the IFLA Executive Board’s willful misinterpretation and refusal to honor the 1985 resolution. Other organizations took note. For example, the Archives/Libraries Committee of the [US] African Studies Association sent a letter of protest concerning the lack of implementation.10 In 1987, the IFLA Executive Board allowed all South African university and independent libraries to remain as members. The Board requested all South African government libraries to withdraw, and two protested this request. But after more surveys in 1988, the IFLA Executive Board again refused to carry out the 1985 resolution.11 In 1989, the Board stated it would not comply because “…IFLA in the first instance is a professional, and not a political organization….“12 But the IFLA establishment had included white South Africans for a long time, and IFLA was still mainly run by an elite European and North American group. International delegations regularly addressed the IFLA Executive Board demanding implementation of the resolution, but all to no avail.13 One is reminded of Ronald Reagan’s bogus policy of “constructive engagement” towards South Africa.14 This brings the IFLA story up to State President de Klerk’s historic speech on February 2, 1990, announcing the beginning of the end of apartheid.

ALA and Librarianship Under Apartheid, 1972-1989

In 1972, the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) called on ALA to break ties with IFLA until it expelled the South African Library Association for its apartheid policies. The ALA Council then passed a resolution stating that ALA would have no formal relationships with organizations that violate the human rights and social justice provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. No specific organizations were mentioned.15 Although there were prolonged discussions with the International Federation for Documentation (FID) concerning their national South African member, no action was taken. And it appears that breaking with IFLA was never considered. Nothing happened until the ALA Midwinter 1978 meeting when the ALA Council passed a resolution condemning the abridgement of free expression in South Africa [over closing dissident newspapers], urging the US Congress to impose sanctions on the country, and asking the US delegation to IFLA to introduce a censure
resolution.16 However, there is no evidence that such a resolution was ever put forward.

An international movement against apartheid blossomed in the 1980s, and was reflected in ALA where relations with South Africa became a major issue. ALA Council voted in 1980 to suspend its affiliation with the International Federation for Documentation until its South African national member removed itself, or South Africa abolished apartheid, but no similar action was taken against IFLA.17 Many ALA members joined the ongoing demonstrations outside the South African Embassy in Washington, DC during the Midwinter 1985 meeting.18 The demonstrations took place at a time when the worldwide community was calling for divestment from corporations doing business in South Africa. Although the ALA Council did not act, the ALA Executive Board directed the ALA Endowment Trustees to develop plans for divestment of the ALA endowment at a “the most reasonable schedule appropriate.”19

The SRRT International Human Rights Task Force succeeded in passing a resolution on “Abridgement of Human Rights in South Africa” at the 1986 ALA Annual Conference’s Membership Meeting in New York City, which was affirmed by the ALA Council. It called for supporting the South African freedom struggle, opposing the reentry into IFLA of the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS) until it opened its membership to all, urging US bibliographic utilities against investing or expanding services in South Africa, revising the forthcoming 20th edition of the Dewey Decimal area tables prepared by SAILIS to reflect the history of all South Africans, urging libraries to collect alternative South African materials, and for inviting South African colleagues to advise ALA on how it might help promote the free flow of information, open library service, and a more just and humane society there.20

In response to the policy, the Houston Public Library tired to find vendors that did not do business in South Africa. But the library gave up after sending 3000 unsuccessful letters, and asked the Houston City Council for an exemption, which was granted in October 1987. The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom got an opinion from the ALA lawyer that local sanctions were unconstitutional, but no further ALA action was taken on the matter at that time.21

A turning point in the anti-apartheid movement came when the US Congress overrode President Reagan’s veto and imposed strict economic sanctions on South Africa in September and October 1986. But the Executive Board of the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) continued to be upset about sanctions, and tried unsuccessfully to get the 1987 ALA Membership to vote for a resolution opposing local government restrictions against dealing with South Africa.22 At the Annual Conference in 1988, the Council voted to support imprisoned librarian, Thiswilandi Rejoice (Joyce) Mabudafhasi. Council asked for her case to be brought to the UN Commission on Human Rights.23
In a recent personal conversation with this author, Herb Biblo, ALA Treasurer from 1980-1984, said that ALA Executive Director Robert Wedgeworth wanted to travel to South Africa in the 1980-1984 period, but the ALA Executive Board refused his request, presumably because it would have broken international sanctions. By 1989, Wedgeworth had left his ALA position and he arranged a trip with Elizabeth Drew who represented the Association of American Publishers (AAP). This May 1989 “fact-finding mission” to South Africa was sponsored by the AAP and the Fund for Free Expression. Before the trip, Mr. Wedgeworth visited the African National Congress Observer Mission to the United Nations. At that time, the ANC notified Mr. Wedgeworth that the project could only be endorsed after consultations with the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) and the ANC. But Mr. Wedgeworth did not follow-up. In a memo sent to E.J. Josey at the 1990 Midwinter ALA Meeting, Mr. Tebogo Mafole, the Chief Representative of the ANC United Nations Observer Mission, noted that the ANC did not endorse the project and “has not been apprised on the project itself.” In a letter on June 20, 1990 to the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG), the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) put forward a similar statement concerning the Wedgeworth/Drew trip.24

In their trip report, Wedgeworth and Drew concluded that the international boycott was having negative effects, that our professional organizations should take strong positions against the boycott, and that publishers should be allowed carte blanche to trade with South Africa. The conclusions were based on discussions in South Africa with “more than 75 representatives of various organizations and institutions.” However, only a partial list was provided. Some of the organizations had a clear interest in breaking the boycott (for example, the two Government libraries and the three commercial bookstores). We should also be skeptical of a trade organization report with proposed recommendations that would financially benefit its members. Furthermore, there was no indication that the authors communicated with the large umbrella organizations that constitute the progressive movement, such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), or its constituent bodies such as church organizations and community groups. (It is interesting that the AAP did not speak for all mainstream US publishers. Chadwyck-Healey specifically opposed the report.25)

The ALA Executive Board transmitted the report to the ALA International Relations Committee (IRC). The AAP report had specifically called for ALA and other organizations’ endorsement. However, the current chair of the IRC was one of the founders of the ALA Black Caucus (BCALA) and SRRT, E. J. Josey, and he was a strong proponent of sanctions. Josey called an open committee hearing to debate the report. Many BCALA and SRRT members testified, and all called for rejecting the report except for Mr. Wedgeworth, who spoke last and then walked off in a huff. As a result, ALA reaffirmed its policy by rejecting the AAP report.26
We should try to understand the political context to determine the significance of the AAP report. When South African President F. W. de Klerk unbanned the anti-apartheid organizations and released prominent political prisoners, he called for the end of international sanctions. At the same time, the newly released prisoners and the unbanned organizations called for increased sanctions to force the South African Government into serious negotiations to end apartheid. In this context, we see why the ANC rejected the report; it precisely followed de Klerk’s position and was in direct opposition to the freedom struggle.27

It is heartening that the hearings sponsored by the ALA International Relations Committee resulted in an ALA Council resolution reaffirming current ALA policy and not endorsing the AAP report (Revised CD #97). However, the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee did endorse the report at its June 1990 meeting.28

Guidelines for Librarians Interacting with South Africa

The need to produce “Guidelines for Librarians Interacting with South Africa” resulted from the explosion of mass alternative culture within South Africa, a reflection of the changing political climate. The rise of grassroots organizations and local labor unions led to the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The Archives/Libraries Committee (ALC) of the [US] African Studies Association (ASA) organized a panel discussion on “South Africa and the Free Flow of Information: Dilemmas Facing the Librarian and Scholar” at the ASA Annual Conference in Chicago in October 1988. This author chaired the program. Panelists were Corinne Nyquist (SUNY New Paltz) Thomas Nyquist (SUNY Central Administration, Albany), Ismail Abdullahi (University of Pittsburgh), and Lorraine Haricombe (University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign).29 The program was so successful and provoked so much discussion that the organizers followed up by drafting guidelines in accordance with the African National Congress’ call for cultural and economic sanctions for presentation at the ALC’s next meeting in Gainesville, Florida, in April 1989.30 After long hours of debate, the ALC approved a document for its own use and forwarded it to the Executive Committee of the African Studies Association. (See Guidelines text in the appendix to this article.)

The original drafters of the Guidelines, Al Kagan and Corinne Nyquist, were ALC members, and they brought the Guidelines to SRRT and many other ALA bodies at the Dallas Annual Conference in June 1989. And they presented the document at an ALA panel discussion sponsored by the SRRT International Human Rights Task Force.31 Very lively debate ensued and the ad hoc group voted to make several significant amendments to be presented for further discussion. On that same evening, SRRT met
and further amended the document. The newly formed Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) adopted the Guidelines at its December 1989 meeting in New York City.

SRRT members made numerous presentations at the 1990 ALA Midwinter meeting in Chicago advocating adoption of the guidelines. Supplementing the work of Nyquist and Kagan, the most important SRRT activists not on the ALA Council were Ismail Abdullahi, Sandy Berman, Elaine Harger, Zoia Horn, Peter McDonald, Joseph Reilly, and Mark Rosenzweig. Advocates on the ALA Council were Herb and Mary Biblo, Betty Blackman, Cesar Caballero, Marva DeLoach, Mitch Freedman, E. J. Josey, Michael Malinconico, Linda Pierce, and John Sheridan.

The Guidelines won endorsement (in various iterations) of the ALA Black Caucus, the International Relations Committee, the International Relations Round Table, the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), the Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL), the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT), Reference and Adult Services Division (RASD), and the Young Adult Services Division (YASD).

The Guidelines were adopted at the ALA Membership Meeting also in Chicago on June 26, 1990. However, by a vote of 62 to 76, the ALA Council voted against endorsement and sent the document back to three committees for further discussion, the International Relations Committee (IRC), the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), and the Committee on Professional Ethics. Surprisingly, these three committees did not meet with each other. After separate considerations, the committees issued a joint memo to the ALA Council declining to recommend any further action. The committees instead suggested that the Social Responsibilities Round Table might want to rewrite the document. But SRRT refused to rewrite, and the Council on January 16, 1991, referred the Guidelines back to the three committees for further consideration and possible action at the June 1991 Annual Conference. No further action was taken. The Committee on Professional Ethics particularly objected to putting ALA on record to serving any particular social cause, as in point 3.4:

Librarians are encouraged to be of service to the South African mass democratic movement in the context of their professional work.

The powerful IFC was strongly opposed based on an absolutist conception of the freedom of expression. Its key sticking point was the statement in point 2.6:

As professionals, we must strive to balance our methods to promote the free flow of information with work activities that are morally and politically responsible.
In a later high profile debate and later book, intellectual freedom advocate John Swan used the absolutist argument to oppose ALA’s full support of the international cultural boycott of apartheid South Africa. He noted that it would restrict the free flow of information by preventing US publishers from selling their books there. What he did not say is that the only people who could afford to purchase the books were the affluent white minority, and that there were few if any libraries open to the majority of the population.36 Noel Peattie considered the ALA South Africa debate one of his “three hard cases.”37

The Guidelines had six sections.

Section 1, “Guiding Principles,” explains that libraries do not exist in isolation from the world arena; that libraries must serve their communities; and that our commitment to social responsibility means that we must oppose apartheid in all its forms.

Section 2, “The Issue,” deals with the need to “balance our methods to promote the free flow of information with work activities that are morally and politically responsible.”

Section 3, “General Recommendations,” encourages librarians to get involved in the political process to isolate the apartheid regime and be of service to the South African mass democratic movement.

Section 4, “Recommendations for Collection Development, Reference Service and Outreach,” notes the large worldwide propaganda program that distributes pro-apartheid material, and encourages the aggressive collection and dissemination of counter materials, development of teaching aids, and the need to teach library users how to evaluate materials.

Section 5, “Recommendations Regarding Professional Travel to South Africa,” provides various criteria as to whether such trips would benefit or hinder scholarship and progressive developments. It especially addresses how professional travel might unknowingly further apartheid interests.

Section 6, “Recommendations for Action,” promotes assistance to South African library workers who suffer the consequences of their actions in opposing apartheid. It encourages assistance to South African library school students who wish to study in a non-racial environment. And it opposes all activities that promote South Africa as a regional center for library development.

IFLA Working Group on South Africa

The IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations submitted a motion at the 1989 Paris IFLA Conference to “reconsider
the propriety of continued membership” of South African individuals and institutions. However the Section was strong-armed by the IFLA Executive to withdraw the motion. The Section Chair, Michael Foster wrote that he was subjected to “extreme psychological pressure” by IFLA President Hans Peter Geh.38

In a compromise, a Working Group on South Africa was established. Patricia Berger, ALA’s 1989-1990 President, chaired the working group. Their report was sent to all IFLA institutional members in April 1990, and generally released in July 1990 with comments due back to the IFLA Executive Board by November 1, 1990, after the 1990 IFLA Conference, and for action at the 1991 IFLA Conference.39 The Working Group recommended seven IFLA actions: 1. a statement against apartheid laws and the continuing “State of Emergency,” 2. endorsement of a statement on human rights and the ethics of librarianship, 3. two policy statements supporting freedom of expression and the obligation of all IFLA members to provide equal services to all, 4. a new working group to develop and distribute the policy statements, 5. revocation of the membership of existing South African IFLA members, assuming adoption of the policy statements and lack of change in South Africa, 6. personal membership for South African librarians who have shown their commitment against apartheid, and 7. an IFLA scholarship program for South African black library school students. After reviewing responses including endorsement by the Archives-Libraries Committee of the African Studies Association, the IFLA Executive endorsed points 1-3 with qualifications, considered it unnecessary to form a new working group because the situation on the ground was changing, and therefore suspension of IFLA membership was “not warranted.” Instead the Executive Board recommended that South African institutional members initiate another study on access to library services, and urge their associations and universities to develop programs to “recruit, train, and employ qualified black librarians.”40

Two weeks after that report was issued, Patricia Berger wrote to the Working Group members noting her “disappointment,” and that “…they just do not want to take a stand on South Africa” (underlining in the original).41 Then Michael Foster, another member of the Working Group and editor of the journal of the IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations, editorialized his chagrin with the IFLA Executive Board’s response. This led to a heated exchange of letters between Foster and IFLA’s Coordinator of Professional Activities, Winston D. Roberts, who excoriated Foster for his editorial and warned that “The question of overall editorial policy of IFLA journals is likely to come up for consideration…” Foster made a detailed reply noting the “high degree of aggression” shown to him regarding withdrawal of the Paris resolution (noted above).42

Readers may marvel over this extraordinary denial of democratic practice and basic free expression rights by the leadership of an organization that is supposedly committed to upholding freedom of expression. However, it is not an isolated incident.43
Meanwhile, 1990 finally brought significant political changes to South Africa. Nelson Mandela was released in February, and in June the Parliament repealed the infamous Separate Amenities Act of 1953. The ANC renounced armed struggle in August. On December 2nd, State President F. W. de Klerk gave a speech announcing the unbanning of the ANC and other political organizations. After discussions in Durban and Pietermaritzburg in 1989, a new alternative South African library organization was launched in Durban on July 14, 1990, the Library and Information Workers Organization (LIWO). SRRT and PLG immediately sent congratulation messages. More branches then organized around the country.

SRRT members took part in a demonstration outside the convention center at the IFLA Stockholm Conference in August 1990. More than 800 leaflets were distributed calling for implementation of the Working Group Report. The demonstration was organized by the Swedish alternative library organization, Bibliotek i Samhälle (BiS, Libraries in Society), the Isolate South Africa Committee (ISAK) of Sweden, and LIWO. It was cosponsored by the ANC, the Resource Centre Forum (Durban), the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), SRRT, and PLG. The demonstration greatly disturbed the IFLA leadership.

Nothing much more happened at the 1991 IFLA Conference in Moscow due to the disruption caused by the attempted coup during the conference. However, LIWO did distribute a resolution and statement there asking for implementation of the Working Group Report, and it was published in the conference newsletter. The LIWO statement noted that apartheid was “far from dead,” cited the problems with opening up libraries to all, and noted that the few township libraries that did exist were in poor shape. The resolution asked for IFLA’s support for library transformation, for continued withholding of membership from libraries and institutions that continue to uphold white privilege through various tactics, and for postponing a decision on South African participation in IFLA for one year, along with consultation of progressive librarians and organizations.

If Council II had been held, it would have considered two opposing resolutions. The first submitted by the Library Association (UK) called for another survey of South African libraries and a moratorium on new South African institutional members. The second proposed by the IFLA Regional Section on Africa called for endorsing the Working Group report. These resolutions were read but not debated at an abridged closing session. Instead, the Executive Board requested comments on all four resolutions submitted (only two concerned South Africa), and noted that it would implement them if there was “consensus.”

74
before the Board met again in April 1992. Although there was a “mixed response,” the Board reneged on its promise by rejecting a moratorium on admitting new South African members and rejecting the actions advocated in the report of the Working Group on South Africa, which had been endorsed by the IFLA Regional Section on Africa. This was another example of lack of democracy and the authoritarian nature of the IFLA Executive Board. It would have been much better to put off any decisions until the next IFLA Conference where IFLA institutional members could vote in the normal way.

IFLA Fact-Finding Mission to South Africa

Although the IFLA Executive Board had used every stalling tactic and underhanded method it could devise, the issue of South Africa would not go away. Their next ploy was to establish a fact-finding mission. Since the goals and mission were unclear, the ALA Executive Board declined to appoint a representative to go on the mission. However, an IFLA group did visit the country in June 1993, with members from Botswana, Finland, Netherlands, Nigeria, and Northern Ireland. The report was presented orally at the IFLA Council Meeting on August 22, 1993 at the Barcelona IFLA Conference. One can only speculate why no print copies were available. The Council “accepted” the report and sent it out on September 10 to all IFLA members for further comments by November 15.

There were six recommendations: 1. IFLA should assist in promoting free access to information for all South African citizens, 2. IFLA should assist and cooperate with all the new South African library initiatives and organizations on the ground, 3. IFLA should recognize all the existing South African library organizations and encourage communication between them, with a view for smoothing South Africa’s reentry into international librarianship after years of isolation, 4. IFLA should assist in “manpower development” of neglected population groups, 5. IFLA should recommend: a strategic national plan for library and information service provision, a legal framework, recruitment from disadvantaged groups based on potential rather than formal qualifications with appropriate staff development programs, more continuing education programs, and restructuring of the South African Institute for Library and Information Science, SAILIS (the largest and mostly white library professional organization) with a view to forging unity among existing library organizations, and 6. In view of the major constitutional changes in progress, a comprehensive review of the situation by another fact-finding mission in three years’ time. It is unclear if any comments were received.

The End of Sanctions and ALA’s Adoption of an Investment Code

Beginning in 1990, there were serious negotiations between the government and ANC, and real change on the ground finally started to appear. In a speech to Parliament on January 29, 1993, President de Klerk renounced apartheid and said that the old order would be gone in a matter of months.
Mandela and de Klerk received the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize. And by
October 1993, the African National Congress called for ending sanctions.

In October 1993, at the request of the ALA International Relations
Committee, the ALA Endowment Trustees asked the ALA Executive
Board to rescind sanctions; and the Executive Board voted to seek Council
approval at the 1994 Midwinter Meeting. The ALA Council approved
SRRT’s June 1994 resolution. It resolved to lift sanctions immediately
after the results of the 1994 South African elections had been ratified, and
that ALA would abide by the South African Council of Churches’ Code of
Conduct for Businesses Operating in South Africa. The Code promoted
ten standards: equal opportunity, training and education, workers rights,
working and living conditions, job creation and security, community
relations, consumer protection, environmental protection, empowerment
of black businesses, and implementation.

The first majority rule elections were held April 27-28, 1994. The ANC
won the majority of votes, and Nelson Mandela became President. Very
little happened in ALA concerning South Africa after majority rule in
1994.

**IFLA and the “Unification” of the South African Library Profession**

The IFLA leadership continued to press for the “unification” of the
profession. But in practice this meant merging the three existing library
organizations: SAILIS, LIWO, and ALASA (African Library Association
of South Africa). Colin Darch (University of Cape Town) provided the
intellectual arguments against SAILIS, ALASA, and LIWO merging into
one organization. He said that he was not opposed to either unity or
unification, but that unity must come before unification. Darch defined
‘unity’ as “…. the holding of broadly similar or compatible social and
political viewpoints by most or all of a defined population (in this case,
the community of LIS practitioners).” He defined ‘unification’ as “…the
administrative union of two or more separate organizations…..” He noted
that “….SAILIS and LIWO are actually in fundamental disagreement
over what LIS practitioners really do, and especially how they do it; and
over what membership associations are supposed to be like. We do think
differently.” He asked, “Unity to what purpose?,” “Unification on what
conditions?,” and “Unification through what process?” He exploded the
myth that a single organization with a single voice was standard practice in
the rest of the world by explaining the LIS situations in several countries,
most especially the multiple organizations in the United States. He said
that the various organizations could perhaps speak with a single voice
around specific issues, and provided examples.

In 1994, IFLA President Bob Wedgeworth held discussions with the three
library associations and gave the keynote address at the SAILIS meeting.
In a confidential e-mail message of November 18, 1994 to this author, one
of the LIWO leaders wrote that he had written a letter to Leo Voogt, IFLA
Secretary General, informing him of LIWO’s non-involvement in the forthcoming LISDESA Conference, and warning IFLA that LIWO would oppose any neo-colonial library intervention. He stated that the coming conference is a thinly veiled attempt to force unity on the South African LIS associations. He also expressed his suspicion about the reasons behind IFLA President Robert Wedgeworth visiting South Africa just before the conference.

And there is another piece in this IFLA story. Jane Digby, Marketing Executive at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Durban sent letters to many of the LIS leaders in South Africa asking if they as individuals would like to bid on holding the 1999 IFLA Conference in Durban, South Africa. Several LIWO leaders were upset. They were concerned that such an undertaking could only come from the LIS associations. They were concerned that IFLA might be directly intervening again in the development of LIS in South Africa. On behalf of LIWO, Christopher Merrett wrote to Leo Voogt, IFLA Secretary General, asking if the three South African library associations had been consulted. Mr. Voogt did not reply directly but sent a letter to Ms. Digby saying that the venues for IFLA conferences had already been allocated up to the year 2003. One must wonder how Ms. Digby got a contact list of key LIS leaders, and whether IFLA officials were involved.

The first Unification of Library and Information Stakeholders (ULIS) Conference was held on July 8-10, 1996, in Johannesburg with more than 250 participants. Thabo Mbeki, South Africa’s Executive Deputy President, urged unification. Kay Raseroka, Chair of the IFLA Regional Section on Africa, and Christina Stenberg represented IFLA. LIWO did not officially participate. Although nothing concrete was decided at ULIS, SAILIS voted to dissolve within one year from the date of its September 1996 meeting. ALASA reluctantly went along with unification, but LIWO refused this initiative because it rightly thought it would be swallowed up and lose its unique voice.

The ULIS-2 Constituent Conference was held October 17, 1996, in Pretoria with 450 participants. Ross Shimmon, Chief Executive of the Library Association (UK), along with IFLA President Robert Wedgeworth and IFLA Secretary General Leo Voogt, attended. Brigitte Mabandla, South Africa’s Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology gave the opening address. Sibusiso Bengu, South African Minister of Education, gave a congratulatory message on behalf of President Nelson Mandela. IFLA President Christine Deschamps gave the keynote address. The conference chair was Kay Raseroka, Chair of the IFLA Regional Section on Africa. After much debate, the participants unanimously adopted a constitution for the new “unified” association, LIASA, the Library and Information Association of South Africa. LIASA had been admitted to IFLA membership in August 1997, and SAILIS and ALASA disbanded in April 1998. LIWO gradually faded away and formally disbanded in 2000.
LIASA has since hosted two IFLA Conferences: 2007 in Durban and 2015 in Cape Town.


**Conclusion**

ALA generally played an important solidarity role in the struggle against apartheid from the 1970s to the 1990s. The early efforts of É. J. Josey and the Black Caucus of ALA (BCALA) combined with the steadfast efforts of SRRT educated thousands of librarians about the only country upholding a system of legalized and institutionalized racism after World War Two. BCALA and SRRT worked in conjunction with the ANC to push the association to uphold international sanctions. And many ALA bodies adopted guidelines for interacting with South Africa. It was unfortunate that the absolutist orientation of the ALA intellectual freedom bodies prevented the ALA Council from also adopting the guidelines. Nevertheless, the African National Congress and the South African liberation movement in general gained support from ALA’s actions.

IFLA’s role can be analyzed by looking at two periods: before and after majority rule in 1994. IFLA’s role in the first period was mostly negative. Although the IFLA Council passed a clear resolution in 1985 to exclude apartheid institutions, the IFLA Executive found every possible way to delay action by commissioning surveys, reports, and a fact-finding mission. Although many IFLA activists from various countries continued to press for change with delegations to the IFLA Executive at every conference, the IFLA leadership succeeded in putting off action right up until majority rule in 1994.

Many argue that IFLA played a positive role in helping to normalize the South African library profession, particularly after majority rule. The IFLA Executive had strong influence on the so-called “unification” process and the establishment of LIASA. IFLA’s influence on the internal dynamics of the library situation on the ground favored the established library leaders in SAILIS who were willing to share power along with the young African librarians who were willing to work alongside their previous bosses. This coalition effectively marginalized the upstart progressives in LIWO. Those who see IFLA’s role during this period as positive use the most minimal criteria. These changes took place following majority rule during the years of Mandela’s presidency. There was great widespread hope at that time that
South Africa would seriously address the problems of social and economic inequality. Although progress ensued, this period soon faded, and the ANC government descended into neoliberalism. Seen from the perspective of the LIWO activists who were part of the Mass Democratic Movement, the normalization of the South African library profession under neoliberalism was a defeat. There is no caucus or other body within LIASA that represents the agenda of the LIWO activists. Although LIASA represents all population groups and has black leadership, the strong progressive agenda for structural change has largely fallen by the wayside in favor of a technocratic orientation.

Except in extraordinary situations, library and other professional associations follow and therefore represent current trends in society. In a normalized South Africa, LIASA plays the usual role. It will be interesting to see how LIASA reacts if and when South Africa’s growing social movements become more powerful and have a transformative national impact.

We should acknowledge what the activists were able to accomplish in ALA. And we should learn just how hard it is to change the bureaucratic and establishment oriented nature of IFLA.

APPENDIX

GUIDELINES FOR LIBRARIANS INTERACTING WITH SOUTH AFRICA

In light of the continuing crisis in South Africa, numerous organizations, both within that country and worldwide, have called for a total boycott to isolate the South African regime. However, with the enormous growth of the South African democratic movement and its alternative structures, the international boycott has been modified in order to support that movement while still isolating the apartheid regime. Because librarians have a special role in providing information, guidelines are especially necessary to define our role under current circumstances.

A version of these guidelines was first adopted by the Archives-Libraries Committee of the [U. S.] African Studies Association (ALA) in April 1989. That version was significantly amended and adopted by the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association in June 1989. The following other ALA bodies adopted these guidelines in January 1990: Association of College and Research Libraries, Black Caucus, International Relations Committee, International Relations Round Table.

1.0 Guiding Principles

1.1 We support and uphold the values of a free, democratic and non-racial society and therefore totally oppose the South African system of government based upon race known as apartheid.

1.2 We oppose all institutions which contribute to the continuation of apartheid.

1.3 We are committed to excellence in the performance of our professional
responsibilities.
1.4 We are committed to social responsibility as one of our highest priorities.
1.5 Libraries should provide and promote services that are appropriate to the needs of the communities that they serve.
1.6 Research is enriched in excellence and social value through an exchange of ideas that occurs locally and internationally.
1.7 Meaningful research is impossible without full and uncensored access to information.
1.8 Libraries do not exist in isolation from the dominant trends and conflicts in the world arena.

2.0 The Issue

2.1 We take serious note of the international campaign to isolate the South African Government and its apartheid structures.
2.2 We note that the international cultural boycott has recently been modified to exclude from the boycott people and organizations that are contributing to the struggle to abolish apartheid such as the African National Congress of South Africa, Congress of South African Trade Unions and the United Democratic Front.
2.3 We note that the lack of the free flow of information to and from the mass democratic organizations and anti-apartheid institutions in South Africa has inhibited the evolution of South African democracy.
2.4 We note that the Government of South Africa does everything in its power to deny the free flow of information deemed useful to the mass democratic movement, both domestically and in the international arena.
2.5 We note that the Government of South Africa engages in a substantial and sophisticated worldwide propaganda campaign to assert its legitimacy, using every conceivable medium including the free distribution of publications.
2.6 As professionals, we must strive to balance our methods to promote the free flow of information with work activities that are morally and politically responsible.

3.0 General Recommendations

3.1 Librarians should encourage discussion and debate on the South African situation.
3.2 Librarians are encouraged to express their outrage concerning the continued existence of the apartheid South African Government.
3.3 Librarians are encouraged to work within the political process to isolate the South African Government and all apartheid institutions.
3.4 Librarians are encouraged to be of service to the South African mass democratic movement in the context of their professional work.
3.5 Librarians should attempt to educate members of their institutions to be aware of the subtleties of the South African Government’s propaganda campaign.
3.6 Librarians should become aware of the democratic and support organizations concerned with South Africa operating in the United States and elsewhere.

4.0 Recommendations for Collection Development, Reference Service and Outreach

4.1 We recognize the need to build balanced collections relating to South Africa. Because the South African Government maintains a large worldwide
program to distribute free pro-apartheid materials to libraries and other institutions, librarians are especially encouraged to aggressively acquire and publicize counter materials, especially those published by the mass democratic and liberation movements.

4.2 In their reference interactions and teaching responsibilities, librarians should strive to encourage library users to develop the critical skills necessary to evaluate, interpret and understand the underlying intentions of various sources of information about South Africa.

4.3 Through direct contact, guides, and bibliographies, librarians should publicize and provide access to a variety of sources of information, including possibly conflicting presentations of statistics and other facts, as well as expressions of differing points of view, and assist in interpreting these presentations.

4.4 Librarians should take the opportunity whenever possible to provide bibliographies and reading lists to support school and community activities such as films, programs and other public events, as well as to supplement media coverage of South Africa.

5.0 Recommendations Regarding Professional Travel to South Africa

5.1 Librarians should only travel to South Africa at the invitation of anti-apartheid groups and institutions.

5.2 Talks and seminars at, or contractual relationships with apartheid institutions should not be undertaken.

6.0 Recommendations for Action

6.1 Librarians and library associations are encouraged to promote legal and other humanitarian assistance to South African librarians and library workers who suffer the consequences of their actions in opposing apartheid.

6.2 Librarians, library associations and library educational institutions are encouraged to provide all types of educational and financial assistance to black (African, Asian and "coloured") South African students who wish to study library and information science in a non-racial environment. Assistance should not be based on whether or not students have the possibility of working in their own country under current conditions. Such students should be recruited from or with the approval of non-racial mass democratic organizations.

6.3 All activities that promote South Africa as a regional center for library development should be opposed while apartheid continues. Examples of such activities are: special training programs or lecture series at apartheid institutions, and consultation of the South African Institute for Library and Information Science in matters that involve other African countries (such as the revision of the Dewey classification schedules).

Notes


10. Letter from Phyllis Bischof, Chair of ASA Archives/Libraries Committee to Paul Nauta [IFLA Secretary General], November 17, 1989.

11. The IFLA Executive Board sent the same survey it used in 1983 to poll its South African members. E.J. Josey told the Board that it was inadequate and submitted revisions. Letter from E.J. Josey to Paul Nauta with revised questionnaire attached, November 5, 1987. See also letter from Margreet Wijnstroom, Secretary General of IFLA to The South African Library in Cape Town, The South African Library of Parliament, The State Library in Pretoria, and The Library of the Department of National Education in Pretoria, August 28, 1987. E.J. Josey evaluated the survey responses in 1988 and again called for implementation of the 1985 resolution. The only result was another letter from the IFLA Executive Board asking for more information from 10 libraries.


13. This author was a member of several of these delegations.

14. “Constructive engagement” was official US policy under President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. It was an alternative to United Nations mandated economic sanctions and the strong corporate divestment campaigns in the United States and Western Europe.


20, and the memo from Tebogo Mafole to E.J. Josey (page 29-30). Other articles are: Mark Rosenzweig and Elaine Harger, “The South Africa ‘Book Boycott,’ Censorship or Solidarity?”; Joseph Reilly, “International Librarianship & the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa”; Joseph Reilly, “Interviews with South African Library Users”; Dennis Mumble, “The Times Misquotes the ANC.”; and Christopher Merrett, “Censorship on the Retreat.” There are also brief statements by the ANC, COSATU, and the UDF.


28. It is interesting that noted author and critic Nat Hentoff weighed in to support Judith Krug, director of the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom. In a newspaper article, he slammed ALA for “Banning Our Own Books,” Washington Post, December 5, 1989, A25. Hentoff also had an obsession in castigating ALA for its policy on Cuba. See this author’s article on “ALA, IFLA, and Cuba” in Progressive Librarian, no. #45.


31. The panel was titled, “The South Africa Boycott: Developing Guidelines.” Speakers were Al Kagan, Chair (University of Connecticut), David Easterbrook (University of Illinois at Chicago), Regina U. Minudri (Berkeley Public Library), and Lorraine Haricombe (Peninsula Technicon, South Africa).


33. Memo from Denise Botto, Chair of SRRT to Corinne Nyquist, Chair of SRRT International Human Rights Task Force, June 20, 1990, with notes by this author.


35. This statement is based on this author’s personal knowledge.


38. Letter from Michael Foster to Winston D. Roberts, IFLA Coordinator of Professional Activities, May 1, 1991. Foster was also the editor of the Section’s Journal of Multicultural Librarianship.

39. Memos from Paul Nauta, Secretary General of IFLA, April 24, 1990 (reprinted as ALA
document 1989-90 CD#64), and July 1990. The first memo and the report were included
in the revised Doyle, Fact Sheet: South Africa, 1994, Exhibit 15, 91-94. (Note that page
94 is missing in this author’s document.)
40. Report of the Executive Board on the Motion Concerning South African Membership in
IFLA, April 11, 1991.
41. Memo from Patricia W. Berger, Chair, to Members of the IFLA Working Group on
South Africa, April 25, 1991; Letter from Phyllis B. Bischof, Chair, Archives-Libraries
Committee to Paul Nauta, November 7, 1990.
42. Winston D. Roberts, Coordinator of Professional Activities to Michael Foster, April 23,
43. For more on the authoritarian nature of IFLA leadership, see Alfred Kagan, “An
Alternative View on IFLA, Human Rights, and the Social Responsibility of International
44. Letter from SRRT to Library and Information Workers Organization of South Africa, July
5, 1990. Minnesota Librarians for Peace and Justice also congratulated LIWO in a letter
of June 20, 1990.
45. See “Apartheid Out of IFLA” leaflet for the demonstration in the BiS chapter in Alfred
Kagan, Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History (Jefferson, NC:
McFarland, 2015), 73; Al Kagan, “Iffy IFLA Issues,” [letter to the editor], American
46. “Statement and Resolution to the IFLA Conference, Moscow, August 1991, Adopted
by the Library and Information Workers Organization (South Africa) at it First AGM,
47. Memo from Paul Nauta, Secretary General of IFLA to IFLA Delegates, January 15,
48. Memo from Paul Nauta, Secretary General of IFLA, June 2, 1992. Paul Nauta sent this
author a summary of the 40 responses from 18 countries, along with 15 of the letters
from 8 countries. Many of the letters failed to respond at all to the two South Africa
resolutions, and several seemed to endorse both positions.
50. Memo from Leo Voogt, Secretary General of IFLA, September 10, 1993. The memo and
report were reproduced in Doyle, Fact Sheet: South Africa, 1994, 95-123. The Code was
also published in Washington Notes on Africa (Fall 1993): 7.
1993, 1; “The End of Apartheid and the Birth of Democracy,” South Africa: Overcoming
Apartheid and Building Democracy (East Lansing: African Studies Digital Library,
Michigan State University), Unit 6, http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-
24E-6&page=2.
52. “Resolution on Code of Conduct for Businesses Operating in South Africa” (Council
Document #35 of 1994); Doyle, Fact Sheet: South Africa, 1994, 6-7, 85-87 (Exhibit 13);
SRRT Newsletter, no 111 (March 1994): 3. Al Kagan drafted the 1994 resolution that
lifted sanctions and endorsed the South African Council of Churches investment code.
(SRRT has tried to establish policy on socially responsible investment through the ALA
Council using the South Africa code as a model. Although the Council did not act, slow
progress has been made. A full discussion of that debate is out of scope for this article.)
53. Colin Darch, “Unity Before Unification?: South Africa’s LIS Organisations and the
Held in Pietermaritzburg 20-21 July 1995 (Pietermaritzburg: LIWO Pietermaritzburg,
1995), 4-10., http://www.colindarch.info/docs/19950700_LIS_organisations_in_SA.pdf
54. Ellen R. Tise, “Strategies by LIASA to Develop Library Services and the Profession in
South Africa,” (Paper Presented at the World Library and Information Congress: 69th
55. Letter from Jane Digby, Marketing Executive, ICC Durban to M. Moodley, January 11,
1996 (photocopy), and email messages between Colin Darch, Manikam Moodley, and
Christopher Merrett, February 21-26, 1996 (photocopies).
56. Letter from Christopher Merrett, [LIWO] Communications and Media to Leo Voogt,
IFLA Secretary General, February 28, 1996 (photocopy). Letter from Leo Voogt to Jane
Digby, March 13, 1996.
57. “Address Delivered by the Executive Deputy President, the Hon. Mr T. Mbeki, 8-10
July 1996, Linder Auditorium, Johannesburg College of Education” (photocopy). Maria
Farelo, LIWO National Coordinator had written to Mbeki on June 11, 1996, informing
him that LIWO would not attend the conference and attaching a copy of their position paper. An acknowledgement of receipt was received from Sophia Toona, Acting Administrative Secretary for Ms. B. Mabandla, Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

58. “Progress in Unifying South African Librarians and Information Workers” (photocopy). This appears to be a ULIS document.

59. Claire Walker, the last SAILIS President, wrote to Mary R. Somerville, the current ALA President on October 10, 1996. The letter informed ALA of the SAILIS decision to disband in favor of a unified library profession.

Information Preferences of Reddit Communities Surrounding the Brock Turner Case

by Kathryne Brattland

In the age of the internet, it is easier than ever for individuals to find like-minded groups and communities online for the purposes of discussing common interests, and sharing and receiving information. One of the most currently popular platforms for online communities is Reddit (www.reddit.com), which allows users to create and subscribe to communities, or subreddits, that cater to almost every interest imaginable. As a result, niche topics are certainly discussed at length by various subreddits, but more mainstream topics like current news events are still a main point of interest of many Reddit users. In 2016, one example of a news story that was heavily discussed on Reddit concerned the Brock Turner sexual assault case out of Stanford, which was highly controversial and heavily covered by the media. This study examines the information practices and preferences of three subreddits (r/News, r/Feminism, and r/MensRights) surrounding the Brock Turner case, in the context of theories of rape culture, information worlds, and communities of practice. After a review of these theories, it can be hypothesized that each subreddit’s information practices and preferences will be influenced not only by each of their unique social norms, worldviews, and established rules of participation, but also by the larger culture in which they are all collectively situated.

Background: Case of People v. Turner

The media representation of the People v. Turner case and the resulting Reddit conversations surrounding it cannot be properly discussed without first briefly reviewing the details and timeline of the case. In January of 2015, Brock Turner (at the time, a member of the Stanford University swimming

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team) was arrested after two Swedish graduate students witnessed Turner assaulting an unconscious woman (identified only as “Emily Doe”) beside a dumpster on the Stanford campus and intervened, detaining Turner until police arrived (Levin, 2016; Puckett, 2016). In June of 2016, Turner was found guilty of “assault with intent to rape and sexually penetrating an intoxicated and unconscious person” by a jury, which would normally carry a minimum two-year prison sentence in the state of California, and a maximum sentence of fourteen years (Levin, 2016, para. 7).

However, Judge Aaron Persky, who presided over the case (and was also a former Stanford athlete), determined that a much shorter sentence was appropriate for Turner (Mejia, 2016), since he was intoxicated when he committed the assault and therefore could not be held entirely responsible, and had already suffered as a result of the negative media attention he received during the trial (Levin, 2016). Judge Persky ultimately decided to hand down a six-month prison sentence to Turner, and in September of 2016, he was released for good behavior, after serving three months of his sentence (Levin, 2016; Mejia, 2016). Media representation of the case drew controversy due to many outlets consistently referring to Turner as a swimmer or ex-swimmer, instead of making his criminality the focus on their stories and headlines. The reason cited for this use of language is that under California law, Turner was not actually found guilty of rape, being convicted of the lesser charges of assault and penetration with an object (Gore, 2016). The widespread media coverage and subsequent controversy over this case made it an ideal focus for the study of information preferences and practices of three Reddit communities who were likely to be sharing and seeking information about Turner, his crime and his sentence.

Reddit

Reddit is a website that hosts a collection of smaller communities called subreddits, in which members post links and original content which are subsequently voted and commented upon by other members (Ovadia, 2015; Reddit, n.d.). Posts with higher votes are featured higher up on subreddit pages (and on Reddit’s home page), thereby making the “most interesting, funniest, impactful, or simply amazing stories” the most visible content on the website (Reddit, n.d., “Vote”). Ovadia (2015) notes that “higher-quality content” typically rises to the top, but such quality judgments are entirely subjective. Users can become members of subreddits by registering on the website, and then using Reddit’s search function to find subreddits pertinent to their interests (Ovadia, 2015). Ovadia (2015) remarks upon the ease and simplicity of the registration process, noting that the ability to quickly create disposable and anonymous accounts without an email address can lower the quality of discourse in some subreddits. There are two forms of post content on Reddit: links to other sites, or text, which can consist of original content like questions posed to members of the subreddit or statements related to the subreddit’s main interest; posts may also contain a combination of links and text (Ovadia, 2015). Posts are discussed by
members of the subreddit, who may be answering questions posed in the original post or offering their own opinion on the matter at hand (Ovadia, 2015).

The platform of Reddit is democratic in that the website’s users (or, more specifically, the moderators of various subreddits) are responsible for determining the presentation of the content and the order in which content is displayed (Ovadia, 2015). Subreddits vary by the quality of their content and the number of members or subscribers; a higher number of members may be indicative of greater quality and quantity of content, but this is not necessarily true for all subreddits (Ovadia, 2015). Since upvotes are based primarily on popularity, links containing objectively false information may rise to the top of subreddits, surpassing posts that are true but perhaps not as interesting to members (Ovadia, 2015). The members of subreddits form a sort of group identity, to the extent that they function as a unit in order to conform to the cultural norms that are developed over time (Ovadia, 2015). However, Reddit’s mission statement claims that their site is intended to “help people discover places where they can be their true selves” (n.d., para. 1). Ovadia (2015) acknowledges the pervasiveness of racism and sexism on Reddit, adding that there are both positive and negative consequences of the ability of any user to create a subreddit on the topic of their choice.

Community Information Practices

Although information behaviors and practices are often studied on an individual basis, focusing on how people seek and evaluate information for their own use, there are also key theories dealing with the information practices of collective groups of people, particularly when the purpose of the information is to contribute to the shared learning interests of the community. Two of these theories, Jaeger and Burnett’s information worlds and Wenger and Lave’s communities of practice, demonstrate how groups form and then exchange information that is pertinent to their needs and interests.

The theory of information worlds (drawing on concepts from Elfreda Chatman’s information theories with small, localized groups and Jurgen Habermas’ with society as a whole) states that individuals’ information behavior is influenced by people (such as friends, family, and coworkers) and other trusted sources in their immediate environment (or small world, a term borrowed from Chatman’s research), as well as features of their larger social context (or Habermas’ lifeworld), including public institutions, media, technology, and politics (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). Small worlds consist of social groups with their own norms, social types, accepted information behaviors, and understandings of information value (or, in other words, their worldview) (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). The value of information to any small world is determined by its content, user perceptions, the degree of control over the information, and its economic
(social or monetary) worth, and will differ from one small world to another (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). Members of worlds negotiate norms surrounding how information is accessed, understood, and exchanged, both within the world and with outsiders (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). People often belong to (and interact with) multiple small worlds, and will follow the norms of whichever world they are currently occupying (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). There are boundaries between worlds, but these do not so much close small worlds off from each other as they allow for opportunities of exchange between mutual members (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). These boundaries must be porous in order for individuals to access information from diverse sources, thus allowing democracy to flourish (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

When grouped together as a collective, the various small worlds comprise the larger lifeworld (a term first conceived by Habermas) of a society, which is influenced not only by its small worlds but also its media, economy and government. These latter three influences may promote or constrict the free movement of information between small worlds and dictate which information is socially acceptable (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). The larger, more powerful media institutions can intentionally shape discourse and perceptions of events in small worlds and in the broader lifeworld, and Jaeger and Burnett (2010) argue that it is not possible for commercial media to be entirely objective because of the larger political and commercial influences on it. Jaeger and Burnett note that the internet can allow “individuals and small worlds to take an active role in the production and distribution of their own information sources” (2010, p. 88), but it can also be used by more powerful institutions to limit the flow of information between worlds. As previously stated, it is easier than ever for people to form into groups based on their needs and interests to share information, but the internet does not decrease the influence of the larger societal context on these information practices.

Another central theory surrounding social knowledge and information behaviors (similar to the theory of information worlds), Wenger and Lave’s communities of practice, is defined as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 5). Although this concept is typically applied to organizational and educational communities, other groups (including people who gather more informally) can also be considered communities of practice. It is worth noting that the actual act of learning in communities of practice may or may not be intentional; groups can form for a variety of purposes, with learning as an “incidental outcome” of participation in the group (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 6). In order to truly be a community of practice, a group of people must possess the following three characteristics:

1. Joint enterprise: Identity defined by commitment and accountability to the shared interests and purpose of the group
2. Mutual engagement: Regular discussions, interactions, and sharing of information that contribute to the building of relationships
within the group
3. Shared repertoire: Knowledge, stories, language, resources, experiences, and tools with which the group negotiates meaning (Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

The negotiation of meaning involves the interplay of two processes: participation (taking part in an activity with others) and reification (giving form to abstract concepts or experiences) (Wenger, 1998).

Some of the activities that may be undertaken by a community of practice include problem solving, requesting information and personal experience, repurposing resources and skills, coordinating toward a shared goal, gathering information to build arguments, gaining confidence through reinforcement of ideas, discussing events pertinent to the community, documenting failures and successes of the group, and visiting other communities to learn and fill knowledge gaps (Harlan, Bruce, & Lupton, 2014; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). To this list, Harlan, Bruce, and Lupton (2014) would add the activity of initially learning the rules and norms, which must be achieved before successfully participating in any community of practice, along with acknowledging that many of the above practices and activities may build upon each other or occur simultaneously.

Lev-On (2015) found that in an organizational context, members of a community of practice reported that their membership and participation in the community mainly served a cognitive purpose, by having access to the knowledge of their fellow community members through information sharing. Communities of practice can also serve the purposes of combating feelings of isolation, providing emotional support, and stimulating creativity (Lev-On, 2015).

A community of practice can be located in a physical, face-to-face setting or entirely online, be organized formally or informally, and can be comprised of any number of members (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Murillo (2008) conducted an extensive study which likewise concluded that social groups which exist solely online can be classified as communities of practice, provided they meet the requirements of Wenger’s framework. Burnett, Besant, and Chatman (2001) conducted research on the application of Chatman’s small world theory to virtual communities, and also found that the main concepts of this theory were relevant to online groups, rather than just physical small worlds. Virtually everyone is a member of some form of community of practice, whether in the realm of school, work or leisure, and may be a core or peripheral member of these groups (Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Communities of practice are not self-contained, existing in a vacuum - they are situated within, and influenced by, broader historical, cultural, social, and institutional contexts (Wenger, 1998). Various communities of practice can also be part of the same “constellation”, if they are observed by members or outsiders to share historical backgrounds, enterprises, conditions, members, artifacts, styles of discourse, and resources (Wenger, 1998, p. 127). By the above definitions and terms of communities of practice and information worlds,
a Reddit community (or subreddit) could certainly be defined as either of these theoretical groups, being influenced both by its members and the larger cultural context in which it is situated.

Information and News Bubbles

As useful as information worlds and communities of practice can be for sharing and exchanging information with like-minded individuals, there is also a risk that members may unknowingly receive biased information if they limit their information sources too narrowly. Savolainen (2007) found that when searching for orienting information on an issue, members of an informal community (in this case, environmental activists) relied on sources that were like-minded and “thematically focused”, and those perceived to have a high degree of credibility and cognitive authority (“Discussion”, n.p.). An audience is more likely to view information as credible if the message of it agrees with their existing beliefs (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Savolainen (2007) also found that his respondents trusted first-hand knowledge that agreed with their preconceived notions more than the second-hand knowledge of outsiders to their group. Overall, Savolainen (2011b) determined that contributors to online communities spend little time and energy seeking information that differs from their own personal knowledge.

There are many characteristics that factor in to the perceived credibility of information, including the source, the receiver (or audience), the medium, and the actual message or content of the information (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). When specifically assessing the credibility of a source, information seekers may focus on its aesthetics, professionalism, knowledge, expertise, and trustworthiness, which they may judge using stereotypes, assumptions or labels (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Savolainen (2011a) found that in online discussion forums, relevance of information to the users depends upon their perceptions of its quality and credibility. The quality of information is judged by a number of factors, including perceptions of its usefulness, correctness, and specificity, while credibility is assessed based on the reputation and expertise of the author of the information (Savolainen, 2011a). Another study by Savolainen (2011b) found that when providing information to others in an online forum, users depend on personal knowledge, networked sources, and experts or expert organizations as information sources.

When it comes to sharing information that one has found, perceived credibility and authority are not the only factors that group members consider. Personal interest and curiosity are important, but sharers also consider how the information can help them to connect and interact with other people and present a good image of themselves to their group (O’Brien, Freund, & Westman, 2014). People are also likely to strongly consider the social context of a group before deciding to share a particular piece of information with them, assessing whether the information will
have wide appeal (O’Brien et al., 2014). Mikal, Rice, Kent, and Uchino (2014) found evidence in online communities of content convergence or repetition, where members typically post content similar to what has been well-received in the past in order to gain the favor of their fellow community members, with little dissent in terms of content preference by community members (Mikal et al., 2014).

All of these factors for assessing credibility and relevance play into the selection of information to be shared with one’s world or community, which may include news about current events. Jaeger (2005), as well as Jaeger and Burnett (2010), note that the internet enables the common issue of narrowly-focused information seeking, resulting in the phenomena of group polarization, which sees group members developing more isolated and extreme opinions. Koutra, Bennett, and Horvitz (2014) found that in the aftermath of a controversial or polarizing news event, people were more likely to access online information about the event that they predicted would be agreeable to their existing opinions on the matter. When someone is likely to be directly affected by an event, however, they will be more willing to seek out information outside of their “filter bubble”, or the small realm of information sources they most frequently use (Koutra, Bennett, & Horvitz, 2014, “Conclusions”). The internet and its networking and communication capabilities can actually make it easier to critically analyze and compare information sources, which was reported as a crucial step in judging the credibility and authority of information from both insiders and outsiders to a community (Savolainen, 2007). Unfortunately, the majority of people seem to not take advantage of the available tools and resources to critically analyze the news they read, as the Media Insight Project (2014) found that only 4 in 10 Americans read beyond the headlines of news articles when learning about a particular subject or current event. In communities such as subreddits, where the headline or title is the most prominent part of a post, it is likely that headlines are a major deciding factor in users’ decision to upvote or downvote.

Rape Culture

First coined in the 1970s, the term “rape culture” refers to a society in which the act of sexual assault is unfortunately a common occurrence, widely known to be illegal, and is overtly considered a heinous act, but at the same time hypocritically trivialized, normalized and accepted in a variety of ways (Harding, 2015; Marshall University, n.d.). Signs of a rape culture include acceptance of jokes about rape, lax sexual harassment laws, the widespread mentality that a woman’s worth is based on her virginity while a man’s is based on his virility, frequent disbelief and shaming of self-reported rape victims, and a legal system that tends not to harshly punish rapists out of fear of negatively impacting their lives, among other phenomena (Harding, 2015; Marshall University, n.d.). In a rape culture, the victims of sexual assault are scrutinized much more intensely for their actions and behavior than their accused assailants, placing the
responsibility for rape prevention on victims instead of those who actually commit these crimes (Harding, 2015; Marshall University, n.d.). Men and women alike are negatively affected by rape culture, as the misogynistic attitudes perpetuated by rape culture also place considerable pressure on men to conform to toxic standards of manhood, as well as perpetuating the myths that sexually aggressive men are strong and powerful, and that men who are raped are inherently weak (Marshall University, n.d.).

There is strong evidence that rape culture holds considerable influence over mass and social media. A study by Zaleski, Gundersen, Baes, Estupinian, and Vergara (2016) found prominent evidence of the influence of rape culture (specifically victim blaming) in online social media forums following the publication of news articles about rape and sexual assault. They argue that the pervasiveness of rape culture in social media and popular culture impedes one’s ability to see sexual assault as an epidemic rather than an individual issue that can be blamed on the victim (Zaleski et al., 2016). They also found that in the aftermath of these news stories, survivors create “a collective call to action” by sharing personal stories and attempting to change the way that rape is discussed in society (Zaleski et al., 2016, p. 926). Franiuk, Seefelt, and Vandello (2008) found that men who were exposed to news headlines containing rape myths, like those perpetuated in a rape culture, reported “attitudes more supportive of sexual assault” (p. 797), while women did not report that reading rape myths increased their tendency to believe them. They posit that media outlets are one of the main ways in which rape myths are taught or reinforced in people’s minds, since rape myths (as well as subtle language shifting blame towards victims) are found in many headlines for stories about sexual assault, and headlines are read more frequently than actual news stories (Franiuk et al., 2008), similar to the Media Insight Project’s 2014 findings. They lament the fact that the inclusion of rape myths and victim-blaming language in headlines is likely not even a conscious or deliberate choice on behalf of journalists, but rather just a product of living under the influence of rape culture (Franiuk et al., 2008).

**Methodology: Data Gathering**

Data on the information practices of subreddits surrounding the Brock Turner case were gathered from three subreddits: r/News (https://www.reddit.com/r/news/), r/Feminism (https://www.reddit.com/r/Feminism/), and r/MensRights (https://www.reddit.com/r/MensRights/). After searching for “Brock Turner” in the search bar of each of these subreddits, results were filtered by the number of upvotes (see Fig. A below). Results can also be sorted by the number of comments on each item, or the chronology of the posting. However, for the purpose of determining which items were most popular among the community members of each subreddit, sorting by the number of votes granted by the community produced the most relevant data. No time limit was applied for the recentness of the posts, as the longest time frame allowed for filtering posts by date is one year. The
sexual assault committed by Turner occurred in January 2015, almost two years before the completion of this article, so it was necessary to include all available results.

Data were gathered for the top ten upvoted posts about Brock Turner in each subreddit, including the title of each post, the title or headline of any external source linked in the post, the type of content in the post (link, plain text, or combination), the type of link (if applicable), and the source of the linked information (if applicable). In order for the sizes of the text corpuses for analysis to remain a relatively small size, and because studies have shown that the majority of people do not read past headlines when gathering news information (Franiuk et al., 2008; Media Insight Project, 2014), the actual text of the posts and linked articles or other information sources were not gathered for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from each subreddit were analyzed with Voyant (https://voyant-tools.org/), an online textual analysis and visualization tool. The titles of the top ten posts and the headlines of any linked articles or external web pages in the top ten posts were each entered as a corpus of text into Voyant, producing a list of the most frequently-used words in each corpus. In addition to Voyant’s standard list of stopwords, the words “Brock”, “Turner”, and “case” were excluded from the corpus in order to produce a more meaningful analysis of the most frequently-used words. Only words that occurred more than once in the corpus were included in the lists; as a result, not all of the lists contain the same number of words, as some of the corpuses were longer and more diverse than others. Two lists of frequently-used words were developed for the r/Feminism and r/MensRights subreddits, and one frequently-used word list was produced.
for r/News, since r/News requires the titles of posts to exactly match the headlines of the articles linked in the posts. Also, the type of each post was qualitatively classified into one of three categories: text (containing no links to external sites); links (containing no editorializing text), which were further subcategorized into news, video and other; and combination, in which posts contained both text and external links. Lastly, the sources of any outside links were listed and qualitatively compared against each other to determine any similarities or differences of the most trusted or preferred information sources of each subreddit when it comes to information about the Brock Turner case.

Results

*r/News:* The most frequently used words in post titles/headlines, along with the number of times they were used, are as follows: Stanford (7), assault (3), ex (3), judge (3), months (3), rape (3), sex (3), swimmer (3), swimming (3), USA (3), jail (2), and new (2). According to r/News subreddit rules, all posts must contain only news links and titles must match headlines exactly, so there is no available comparison to titles of posts. The news sources of this subreddit include Fox Sports, NBC, The Independent, Yahoo, Palo Alto Online, People, ABC, and the Associated Press. Both NBC and The Independent were linked twice in the top ten posts.

*r/Feminism:* The most frequently used words in the titles of posts, along with the number of times they were used, are as follows: rape (5), judge (2), months (2), offender (2), and sex (2). The most frequently used words in headlines or external post titles, along with the number of times they were used, are as follows: Stanford (3), assault (2), crime (2), judge (2), months (2), rape (2), and rapist (2). The types of posts include four news articles with no accompanying text, two posts with combination of text and links (one with a linked news article, another with YouTube videos), two links to social media posts, one link to a petition, and one link to an art piece. The external news outlets and other websites linked from r/Feminism include The Independent, YouTube, CNN, Mercury News, Current Solutions, Occupy Democrats, Facebook, Twitter, change.org, and The Influence, with no site being linked to more than once.

*r/MensRights:* The most frequently used words in the titles of posts, along with the number of times they were used, are as follows: rape (4), prison (3), false (2), people (2), and they’re (2). The most frequently used words in external article headlines or other external post titles, along with the number of times they were used, are as follows: rape (3), sexual (3), Stanford (3), assault (2), prison (2), and sentence (2). The types of posts include seven links to news articles with no accompanying text (with two different users posting the exact same link under the same title), two posts with just user-created text, and one embedded Youtube video accompanied by a YouTube link. The external news outlets and other websites linked from r/MensRights include The Los Angeles Times, Mercury News, YouTube, Attn.com, Reason.com, The New York Daily News, and the Australian

95
Broadcasting Corporation. Only Reason.com was linked to twice, in the previously mentioned instance of two users posting essentially the exact same post. Also, two posts in r/MensRights posted links to an archived version of a news story from www.archive.org instead of linking directly to the original website.

Discussion

A comparison of each subreddit’s data revealed enlightening (and sometimes alarming) trends in the conversations each community conducted about the Brock Turner case, in the context of their own small worlds or communities of practice as well as the larger context in which they all coexist. Overall, the most frequently used words in the titles of all thirty of the analyzed posts, along with the number of times they were used, included rape (12), Stanford (7), judge (5), sex (5), and months (5), indicating a focus on the crime itself, the location, the trial, and the sentence, which was not particularly surprising. It was also not surprising that r/Feminism and r/MensRights used the word “rape” more than r/News did, since the post titles of r/News are restricted by the language that is used in the actual headlines. r/Feminism and r/News were more similar to each other in terms of most frequently used words in post titles than either of them were to r/MensRights, which may indicate that as information worlds or communities of practice, they could share a similar set of norms, or share mutual users or subscribers (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010; Wenger, 1998). However, r/News and r/Feminism still displayed a considerable degree of difference in their norms, since r/News was the only subreddit that mentioned “swimming” or “swimmer” in the titles of posts, and r/Feminism was the only subreddit to call Turner an “offender.” r/News seemed to be more highly influenced by the context of rape culture than r/Feminism, focusing on Turner’s future instead of his crime. Only r/MensRights brought up the word “false” anywhere in the titles of their posts, more specifically in the context of discussing the issue of false rape accusations. This was a main focus of this subreddit, even though the subject of false rape allegations is objectively not related to the Brock Turner case, showing that r/MensRights allows for and even encourages the reframing of information to make it more relevant to their interests and beliefs. The most frequently used words in the post titles in r/MensRights also curiously included the words “they’re” and “people”, which indicates that they referred to outsiders to the community frequently in their discussions, and were aware that their opinions on the Brock Turner case were quite different from those of most other communities.

The overall most frequently used words in all linked headlines or titles of external links across the three subreddits proved to be very similar to the most frequently used words in the titles of posts, but the differences between post titles and external link titles in r/Feminism and r/MensRights revealed interesting insights into their information practices and norms. r/Feminism was the only subreddit to post an external link mentioning the words “crime” and “rapist” in any of their external links, showing that they were willing to take a much stronger stance against Turner than either of
the other two subreddits. r/News did not feature any discrepancies between titles of posts and titles of external sources, as this is not allowed according to their subreddit rules, but 30% of links in r/Feminism were reworded, and 62.5% in r/MensRights. This shows that r/MensRights is much more likely to reframe external information sources to fit their worldview than r/Feminism, although this community still practices this to a lesser degree. In this case, these communities do not necessarily need to find information that corresponds to their beliefs or worldview if they have the option of reframing it to serve this purpose (O’Brien et al., 2014).

An analysis of the types of most upvoted posts on the three subreddits indicated that twenty-six of the thirty analyzed posts were just links to external information sources with no accompanying text, which may mean that Reddit communities in general prefer this type of post over posts that include editorializing on the part of users. The only subreddit that did seem to upvote posts with pure text and no external information sources was r/MensRights, suggesting that this community values information based on the personal knowledge of its members (Savolainen, 2011b). This finding, in conjunction with the fact that r/MensRights heavily reframes information sources, also falls in line with the information worlds theory, which states that some small worlds may show a preference for “local or internal information”, believing that information originating from outside the community has less value than that originating from within (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010, p. 96). The external information sources linked in the three subreddits came from a total of twenty-two unique websites, with only three shared information sources between subreddits. The Independent was linked to in both r/News and r/Feminism, and Mercury News and YouTube were linked to in r/Feminism and r/MensRights. There was interestingly no overlap between r/MensRights and r/News in terms of information sources, which speaks to the information valued by each community and the credibility they assign to different information sources (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010; Savolainen, 2007). Both r/Feminism and r/MensRights included some links from overtly progressive or conservative websites (respectively), which also indicated that they preferred information from sources that agreed with their beliefs to a certain extent (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

Viewed together, the entire body of data suggests some overarching themes about the information practices and preferences of each subreddit. r/News seems to be heavily influenced by rape culture, favoring several articles with headlines portraying Brock Turner as a victim whose life has been ruined, instead of considering the fact that he is a criminal who has ruined the life of another person. To some extent, it stands to reason that a large and relatively mainstream subreddit like r/News would be steeped in rape culture, as some members of the community may be unaware of the existence and insidiousness of rape culture, having not had to confront this reality in the course of their lives. r/MensRights touts several rape myths as facts, especially overplaying the frequency of false rape allegations, but this is hardly surprising in the context of this specific community who
actively rails against the idea that rape culture is real. r/Feminism was the only subreddit that worked to actively overthrow rape culture, including links not just to news stories but also to activist efforts like petitions, art projects and widely-shared social media posts.

Conclusion

This study found that subreddits on Reddit, although all part of the same online platform, are unique communities with their own sets of information practices and social norms but are still heavily influenced by the larger contextual factors of culture and media. However, the extent to which these communities either embrace or reject the norms of their larger culture vary depending on the mandates and interests of each subreddit. Some communities may simply report what they see on the surface level of their society as represented in the media, while others may take on an activist role in order to disrupt what they see as a harmful status quo. The Brock Turner case was a controversial and polarizing news event, drawing strong reactions from those who either hated or unabashedly supported Turner throughout the timeline of the case. One of the major limitations or challenges of researching a topic as controversial as the Brock Turner case is that it is nearly impossible to analyze the data objectively and without bias, not to mention the difficulty of even wanting to view an individual like Turner in a neutral and objective way.

Another limitation of this study is that the data set, comprised of only thirty posts (ten from each subreddit), is a very small sample, and data gathering and analysis was limited to one specific topic. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be indicative of the information behavior practices of these communities when it comes to other subject matter. In the future, it would be beneficial to explore the information behavior of online communities (including, but not limited to, Reddit) concerning broader topics, and with larger sample sizes, using a similar methodology.

Lastly, one of the most important implications of this study (and one of the most pressing areas of future research) is that rape culture clearly has an influence over our society’s news media, which cannot be addressed until consumers of news are at least made aware of the existence of rape culture. This influence could be especially dangerous for those who consistently receive their information from biased and narrowly-focused information sources, as under-informed or misinformed people, acting collectively, can potentially do a great deal of damage to a democratic society, not to mention to their fellow citizens. It is the role of some public institutions, like schools and libraries, to ensure that members of small worlds are able to access a wide variety of perspectives through the free flow of information (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). Through education and awareness initiatives, better information practices can be encouraged in individuals and groups to ensure that information from all types of sources flows freely through society.
Addendum:

In the year since this article was completed, there seems to have been a sea change in the amount and nature of online and media discourse surrounding sexual assault cases. Between the #MeToo campaign’s sobering and inspiring shows of survivor solidarity and the downfall of powerful and privileged abusers like Harvey Weinstein, Louis CK and Kevin Spacey, it has been heartening to witness what may very well be an important step towards dismantling rape culture. However, it has recently been reported that Brock Turner is appealing his sexual assault conviction, since he and his legal team believe that he was not given a fair trial, and that Turner did not actually commit any crimes in January of 2015. The fact that Turner refuses to accept the consequences of his actions, as minimal as they already were (serving half of a six-month sentence and being required to register as a sex offender), it is disappointing to say the least. It remains to be seen what will come of this appeal (if anything), but if the recent online conversation and news cycle around sexual assault has demonstrated anything, it is this: Rape culture will not go away quietly, but neither will those dedicated to eradicating it.

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Invisible and Inaccessible
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A Mixed Methods Inquiry

by Laura Patino & Joyce M. Latham

Planned Parenthood is a not-for-profit organization that provides sexual and reproductive health care, education, and advocacy. Margaret Sanger, a nurse and birth control activist, opened the first Planned Parenthood clinic in Brooklyn, New York in 1916. In 1935 a group of volunteers opened the first Wisconsin clinic, though at the time the distribution of contraception and family planning information was still illegal in the United States (Gordon 2002, 226). In the 78 years since its first clinic opened, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI) has grown into Wisconsin’s largest reproductive health care provider (Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin 2013) and currently operates 23 health centers across the state of Wisconsin and employs approximately 220 staff.

The Maurice Ritz Resource Center, founded in 1972, is located at the agency’s administrative headquarters in Milwaukee. The library provides information and research support to all 27 health centers and is also open to the public by appointment. Due to the recent state of the economy, PPWI experienced reductions in funding. These budget cuts left the Resource Center functioning at minimum capacity for the two years prior to this study. As a result, resource and technology developments in the library have been negligible, and outdated materials and technology have proven to be one of the barriers to use by PPWI staff.

PPWI administration recognized there were challenges in connecting their medical staff to current health resources. In partnership with the School of Information Studies (SOIS) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), PPWI supported that a needs assessment be performed to

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advance the process of resituating the library as a true resource center for the state. SOIS provided funding to support an MLIS student intern in a pilot engagement project to advance “academic objectives … through the implementation of projects which serve the community” (Yontz and McCook, 2003, 62) and to heighten the visibility of the school within the community. PPWI assigned staff to manage the needs assessment to ensure an accurate and evidence-based response to staff’s information needs as well as ensure the most efficient use of funds. Evidence-based decision making involves using reliable research data to shape institutional decisions, in preference to anecdote, personal experience, or tradition. While professional opinion can be useful, evidenced-based initiatives are grounded in research (McKnight 2010, 154). The partnership between SOIS and PPWI modeled partnerships between researchers and practitioners wherein each contributed to “the development of research questions, methodological design, data collection and analysis, as well as dissemination of findings” (Dulmus and Cristalli, 2012, 199). This research contributes to the discussion of research-in-practice within the fields of library and information science. It demonstrates the “intersection between research and practice in libraries” as well as illuminating how “the practice of librarianship can identify and influence areas in which there is a need for scholarly research,” particularly the information needs of non-profit organizations (Bertot and Wiegand, 2006, p.1).

Implications of Study

PPWI fills a unique need within the local community and state. The agency provides free and scalable reproductive health care for men and women including annual wellness exams, contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and care, breast, cervical and testicular cancer screenings, colposcopy services and midlife services for menopausal women. Three of the 27 health centers provide abortion services. Without PPWI, reproductive health care would be inaccessible to many patients as more than 50% of PPWI patients live below the Federal poverty level (Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin 2009, 4) and, particularly during the time of this research, have limited resources and access to health insurance. PPWI also provides educational programming throughout the state on such topics as human growth and development, contraception, sexuality and relationships, sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention, breast and cervical cancer prevention, and adult-child communication. In addition, the community education department provides training and technical support to other professionals working with youth, such as educators and social workers. Because of their reach of service population, it is essential that PPWI staff have ready access to current information on best practices to provide equitable, high-quality care and education.

Aims

The goal of this needs assessment was to obtain data about current information seeking behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and
information needs of PPWI staff. Prior research has shown that when seeking information, individuals will seek a family member, peer or colleague as their first information source (Lester 2007, 46). In addition, research demonstrates that health professionals will only seek out information for non-routine decisions, that is, situations that arise that cannot be solved by the individual’s own knowledge and experiences (O’leary 2012, 388). Research has also determined that health professionals, both nurses and doctors, are not aware of the library as a source for information (Younger 2010, 2). However, earlier research has demonstrated the libraries can provide contribute positively to patient treatment (Marshall, 1992). There is a serious lack of research related to the information needs of non-profit organization staff. This needs assessment explored current awareness and use of the library, as well as the current level of technology use among staff of an community based service organization.

Methodology

Mixed methods, a combination of data collection strategies, (Interview, Observation, and Survey) was used to achieve triangulation to strengthen the validity of the data. Anonymity was maintained throughout the interview and survey portions of the needs assessment. During the interviews and survey, no identifying information was recorded. Only department information and health center was requested, as well as position title, so long as that title was not an identifying characteristic. In cases of unique position titles, this information was omitted from the final report.

Interview method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of problems and provide an opportunity to examine meaning. Seventeen PPWI participants from seven different health centers were asked a standard set of 11 questions. Interviewees (see figure 1) and health centers (1 rural, 3 suburban, and 3 urban) were purposively selected by PPWI staff member Anne Brosowsky-Roth to ensure data was gathered from centers of diverse size that service a variety of patient populations. Interview questions were crafted in order to elicit data regarding current information seeking behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and information needs of PPWI staff. The Research Team did not limit the length of each interview. Interview lengths ranged from six minutes to 41 minutes, based on the subjects’ inclination to provide more or less detailed responses. Interview data was collected using Audacity Sound-recording software. Transcription of interviews was performed by a certified transcriber. Codes were inductively generated after data collection was complete. Open coding of transcribed interviews was performed in Microsoft Word. Category and thematic coding, as well as theoretical concepts were developed using Microsoft Excel.

Observation was selected to gain an understanding of the physical environment in which participants work and the types of resources they have on hand in the center. At each interview site, the Research Team toured each center with a staff person and took field notes regarding
onsite resources, location of resources, and organization of resources. The Research Team recorded observations using handwritten notes that were later typed and coded in Microsoft Word and Excel.

Survey method was utilized to maximize data collection for a broad, generalizable understanding of the current behaviors and practices, knowledge and attitudes, and information needs of PPWI staff. After the majority of the interviews and observations were conducted, the Research Team modified several questions in the online survey. Then, the Research Team pilot-tested the survey with three staff members to obtain their feedback regarding survey questions, and questions were modified where indicated. Pilot-test results were not included in the final survey results. Survey data was collected using the Qualtrics Survey Instrument. Print surveys were made available at all sites to ensure no one was excluded due to Internet access issues. Participants had two weeks to complete the survey containing 32 questions. Given the relatively small staff population, the survey sample was non-exclusive. Of the 220 staff members, 125 completed the online survey resulting in a response rate of 57%. The University of Texas at Austin (2013) states that, for email surveys, a response rate of 40% is average, 50% is good and 60% is very good. Survey results were tabulated automatically within the Qualtrics Survey Instrument. For open-ended survey questions, codes were inductively generated after the survey closed. Open coding of open-ended responses was performed in Microsoft Word. Category and thematic coding, as well as theoretical concepts were developed using Microsoft Excel.

Project Design

The purpose and scope of the project was initially reviewed and approved by Senior Management Team of PPWI to ensure buy-in from senior level staff, who then helped communicate the importance of participation to the staff they supervised. The Research Team promoted the needs assessment to PPWI staff to inform them of the purpose of the research and increase awareness of the project.
Qualitative interviews and observations were conducted first in order to help inform the quantitative survey structure. Beverages and snacks were provided for participants during interviews. Emails and strategically placed flyers (i.e. break-areas, announcement boards, and staff restrooms) went out 2 weeks before the online survey was released. Survey respondents were entered into a drawing to win 1 of 10 Target Gift Cards each worth $15, which was designed to enhance the response rate. At the end of the survey period, participants were prompted to forward an email to the Research Team to verify participation and be included in the drawing. During an annual staff day, 10 names were drawn and prizes distributed in-person.

The Research Team conducted on-going data analysis during all previous phases, but it was completed at the end of the survey process. The Research Team then coded interviews and observations for analysis, analyzed the results from all data collection methods, and forwarded the final report to the Senior Management Team.

**Results: Observations**

At each interview site, the Research Team toured the facility with a staff person in order to view onsite resources for staff. These observations revealed that, aside from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) Medical and Operational Protocol Manuals, the only other standard resource was *Contraceptive Technology.* The aforementioned resources comprised the standard print collection available in the visited centers. The location of the resources and organization system used for the resources varied in each center, due to building layout and available shelving. Staff comments during the tours revealed that four of the seven locations desire a more comprehensive standard print collection, which would additionally include: Nurse Practitioners’ Prescribing Reference, Managing Contraceptive Pill Patients, a medical dictionary, and a dermatology book.

**Interviews**

Seventeen PPWI staff members were asked a standard set of eleven questions.

Interview participants were asked about their roles and responsibilities and asked them to describe a “typical” day. Because participants holding a variety of positions were interviewed (see figure 1), varied responses were given, though nearly all participants (88%) had some level of daily patient contact. Many (47%) also had administrative duties in addition to patient responsibilities.

All interview participants stated that the resources provided by PPWI are necessary to perform their duties. Nearly all participants (94%) reported each other as an information source, which supports previous research (Lester 2007, 46). Of the resources provided by PPWI, the *Protocol*
Manuals, both medical and operational, were mentioned most often (88%). These manuals are compiled by PPFA, and use of these Protocol Manuals is required to maintain accreditation by the Federation, so availability and accessibility of these manuals is required. Other resources were cited as well (see figure 2). Participants indicated a preference (47%) for online/digital resources although some (24%) favored print. Others could not choose, stating they preferred either online or print depending on the situation (24%).

Many interview participants (64%) described certain PPWI provided resources as easily accessible. However, many more described other resources not easily accessible (82%), and described both print (65%) and online (35%) resources as difficult to access, and once accessed, poorly organized (65%). Additionally, these participants described the limited availability of resources (53%) that address unique conditions, situations, medications, and patient questions.

The most frequently encountered problem during the information search occurs with the Protocol Manuals (65%), both in print and online formats. The print manuals were described as poorly organized and difficult to keep current, with multiple versions in circulation. Additionally, four participants reported contraindications in the print versions of the medical protocol manuals.

The online version of the Protocol Manual then available on the Intranet was described as not searchable, poorly organized, and infrequently
updated. In addition, participants sometimes experienced connectivity issues making it impossible to access online resources. Participants encountered other problems as well during the information search (see figure 3).

![Problems Encountered in Information Search](image)

Participant responses also revealed that information to address unique conditions, situations, medications and questions about anything outside of women’s health was the most difficult information to find (59%). Spanish education materials were also cited as difficult to locate (29%). Participants also had problems locating information about community resources outside of Milwaukee (24%) as there are no comprehensive lists of ready resources for this type of information. When staff are unable find the information that they need to serve a patient nearly all participants stated that they would ask a co-worker (88%).

Those participants (76%) who indicated satisfaction with resources available to them found them very good in the realm of reproductive health and the patient resources user-friendly. Participants who were unsatisfied (65%) stated that patient resources are not user-friendly, locating material took too long due to navigation issues, and resources available to them too limited. They specifically lacked resources on unique conditions, situations, medication and questions, Spanish-language resources, and resources for or about males. These respondents wanted more depth and coverage in the resources available to them, as staff believes it is important that patients do not leave the service facility without the information they require.

The Research Team also explored resource awareness among staff. Thirty-five percent (35%) stated they were aware of library resources and that they had referred patients, students, parents and external organizations to the library. However, most stated they were not aware (65%) of the library
resources as the facility is not staffed and not marketed. They also indicated a lack of time to look into the resources that are provided.

Still, many stated they had used the library (65%) for work-related, personal, or educational purposes. Some who had visited the library did so to attend a meeting or interview that was being conducted there, but were still unaware of the resources available there. Others had never used it (35%) in any capacity. Almost all interview participants indicated that they did use public and/or academic libraries (88%) such as Shawano City-County Library, UW-Green Bay, UW-Milwaukee, Sheboygan Public Library, Lakeshore Technical College, and Waukesha Public Library, among others. Public library visits were for personal use or to attend a meeting. Academic library visits were made to conduct research for school or work, or to access e-journals.

Participants reporting positive impressions of the library (35%) stated the collection has useful and unique resources, were impressed with the size and accessibility of the collection, found staff helpful and welcoming, and the space comfortable. They also believed the library is an important part of PPWI. Participants who had negative impressions (24%) described the library as outdated, small, and inaccessible (i.e. print only). They also indicated that they are not sure how to access materials. Forty-one percent of participants stated they were not able to speak to this as they had either not used or not visited the library.

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Participants did have recommendations for improvements. Overwhelmingly, 82% of staff felt that the library should improve its accessibility and visibility. Staff that did not work at the main Jackson St. Center, and even those at other Milwaukee-area health centers, had a difficult time connecting with the library.

Survey

Staff from the Jackson Street (Milwaukee) health center represented the largest respondent group at 25%. The Jackson Street location has the highest number of staff as it houses not only a clinic, but all other departments like Administration, Community Education and Public Affairs, Marketing, Information Technology, and Medical Billing Services. The majority of survey respondents, however, were from Patient Services (65%).
The survey results showed that 100% of respondents use a computer daily as part of their work and 96% reported convenient access to the Internet at work. Furthermore, 79% of respondents use a computer several times a day outside of work and 95% of respondents report they possess an average to high ability to learn new computers systems and procedures.

Most respondents (57%) reported that they experienced an information need in the past year that required resources outside their health center. To obtain answers, respondents were most likely to use an Internet search engine or co-worker. Less than half of respondents (43%) preferred to access resources only online or digitally; most preferred a combination of both print and digital resources.

Based on the qualitative portion of the study, several staff indicated that they used the PPWI Intranet to satisfy many of their information needs. With that in mind, a series of questions related to the Intranet were included. Sixty-two percent of staff reported that they use the PPWI Intranet several times a week, primarily for Human Resources materials (66%) and Patient Services materials (57%). Sixty-six participants responded to an open-ended question to ascertain what they believed should be on the PPWI Intranet that is not; 24% indicated that the information on the Intranet is not current, particularly staff manuals, forms, health center information and directories. Again, staff indicated that the information contained on the Intranet is not well organized (14%) and specifically noted that information is kept in more than one place (both the Intranet and Everyone Drive®), the organization system is complicated, and they would like better search tools.

Despite 93% of staff indicating awareness of the library, proximity is a major cause of lack of use. Of the 40% that do visit, the most common reason was to attend a meeting or event. Respondents were usually initially introduced to the library through New Employee Orientation (NEO). Push and pull – searching and dissemination – issues are well balanced, as 52% percent of respondents prefer to find library information on the Intranet, and 58% indicated that they would like to receive information from the library on a monthly basis.

Respondents were most interested in professional development resources, information about available resources, and patient/community resources. Other resources were suggested as well and staff also indicated which subjects they would like developed in the collection (see figures 4 and 5).

Asked how the library could better support the institutional mission, respondents suggested increasing access through virtual components and increasing visibility through marketing and communication. PPWI staffs’ final thoughts were positive, noting they were glad to have the library available to them and that the study was conducted to improve the Center (54%).
Discussion

Findings revealed that there are two major barriers to use. The library is both inaccessible and invisible to most staff. To correct inaccessibility, the library must have an online component. Both the interview and survey portions of the study support this conclusion. Given that staff indicated a high degree of comfort with computer-based access, providing online access to the library collection would be highly valued. However, many participants reiterated that “online” does not necessarily mean “more accessible.” Both the interviews and survey showed that good information organization is key to accessibility.

The survey also revealed that 7% of PPWI staff is not aware the library exists, and a majority have never used it. Of the staff that responded to our survey, only 50% learned about the library through New Employee Orientation (NEO). A representative of the library attends every NEO; however, results indicated that something must be done to ensure greater retention of information presented at NEO. Apart from NEO, staff indicated a preference for finding information about the library’s materials, services and how to access and use those materials and services through the Intranet (52%), as this is the most visible and most accessed forum for staff.

Results further exposed that staff wants and needs access to current medical resources, in the reproductive health area as well as resources to address
unique conditions, situations, medications, and questions. They also want access to professional development resources. Staff would like to be able to search for materials remotely (OPAC), as well as access databases and journal articles.

Despite a desire to have access to more information, another common theme was lack of time to search for information. The sustained presence of a Librarian is important as staff frequently does not have time to conduct their own research.

Some results were not anticipated. The findings of this study revealed startling dissatisfaction with the Intranet, Everyone Drive, and Protocol Manuals. Respondents in both the interview and survey portions of this needs assessment reiterated that the Intranet is not searchable. The Everyone Drive also poses problems. Unlike the Intranet, which can only be modified through an IT administrator, the Everyone Drive is accessible to all PPWI staff. No policies address the management of this tool. This sometimes means that files are moved and/or deleted without notice, making it very difficult to find things. Staff also reported dissatisfaction with the Protocol Manuals as they found them poorly organized, not current, with multiple versions in circulation simultaneously. Although these resources are outside the jurisdiction of the library, per se, they are significant information resources requiring information strategies for optimal management.

Limitations

The interpretations that can be drawn from this study have limitations. First, the interview participants and survey respondents for this needs assessment volunteered to participate and did not constitute a representative or random sample. However, it should be noted that 57% of the targeted...
population participated in the survey portion of the study and that interview participants were chosen from small and large health centers in the hopes of obtaining a wide range of perspectives.

Second, the act of publicizing and implementing the needs assessment affected participants’ knowledge about the library and the services offered. That is, interviewing and surveying staff about library services and materials heightened the profile of the library. As no control group was created, it was not possible to measure the extent of the shift in knowledge.

Finally, due to limitations on time and resources, the Research Team was only able to interview 17 staff members. Thus, data collected from the interviews cannot be considered to represent more than their individual responses. This limitation was mitigated in part by a 57% response rate to the survey, and the survey findings supported many of the interview participants’ responses.

Conclusions

This study revealed that staff very much supports the library, which is the first step in building a successful resource center. One survey respondent put this feeling of support in words when s/he stated, “[I] am excited to see the changes being made to the library and the resurgence of excitement for this valuable resource.” The study also revealed several key areas that should be addressed. Some can be addressed with little to no expense to PPWI, (e.g. pathfinders, resource lists, newsletter, etc.) but others would require some allotment of funds and the consistent presence of a librarian (e.g. database/journal subscriptions, ongoing marketing campaign, reference, etc.). Many of the recommendations could be accomplished by library and information studies interns, which would reduce the cost for PPWI and also provide valuable learning experiences for students. However, some commitment of resources must be made by PPWI if the library is to continue the rebuilding initiative.

This project highlights the importance of a robust information center for staff and client support in a health information field. Further, non-profit organizations need to address information needs of their service providers.

While the impact of the study has been delayed due to further budget cuts to Planned Parenthood in the state of Wisconsin, it still demonstrates how “the practice of librarianship can identify and influence areas in which there is need for research” as well as “[illustrate] how researchers and practitioners can collaborate” (Bertot, Wiegand, 2006). The project enabled one MLIS student to engage in community service learning, and identified expanded areas for service learning for subsequent students. It also engaged a public institution of higher learning in community outreach to enhance the public good. It demonstrates the value of partnerships between scholars and practitioners in framing information service delivery.
Endnotes

1. At the time of this study, PPWI operated 27 health centers. Four centers closed in 2013 due to cuts in state funding. The number of health centers will be referred to as “27” for the remainder of the article.
2. Print surveys collected and entered into online survey instrument by the Research Team.
4. Includes departmental resources for PPWI staff.
5. Some participants reported satisfaction with some resources but dissatisfaction with others.
6. A Network directory that can be accessed directly by all PPWI staff.

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OERS & a Language of Urgency

by Jaci Wilkinson

Critical pedagogy draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire and experience are produced under specific conditions of learning, and in doing so rejects the notion that teaching is just a method or is removed from matters of values, norms and power – or, for that matter, the struggle over agency itself and the future it suggests for young people. Rather than asserting its own influence in order to wield authority over passive subjects, critical pedagogy is situated within a project that views education as central to creating students who are socially responsible and civically engaged citizens. Giroux, 495

Last fall, I attended an introductory seminar for faculty on open educational resources (OER) in higher education. The seminar was facilitated by a librarian and an online instructional designer but unexpectedly included managers from the on-campus bookstore. What unfolded was not one presentation on OERs but two separate presentations: one an informational introduction to OERs and the other a promotional pitch on proprietary software the bookstore is investigating to aggregate textbooks, online resources, and OERs organized by subject and course topics. I hope to demonstrate what this seminar did not: the remarkable differences in priorities between library-created OERs and proprietary software. This seminar exemplified a disturbing trend in the conversations on course materials in higher education.

OERs, often supported by libraries and institutional repositories, demonetize course materials through empowering instructors to create and share materials freely. University bookstores claim similar priorities while in fact serving as a shopfront for the problem’s source. One system treats information as cultural heritage and the other as a consumer product. One system is rooted in libraries – institutions at least partially rooted in democratic efforts to eliminate barriers to information and secure its

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114
perpetual access. The other system is controlled by contracts and in service to bottom-lines. One system is devoted to creation, adaptability, and challenging notions of who can have a voice in the classroom, and the other is about consumption and reinforcing authority and hegemony. Henry Giroux asks in his article "When Schools Become Dead Zones of the Imagination: A Critical Pedagogy Manifesto":

...who has control over the conditions for producing knowledge, such as: Are the curricula being promoted by teachers, textbook companies, corporate interests or other forces? (495)

Add to this list proprietary software that advocates for new and “disruptive” methods (disruptive in an economic, not critical, sense) of course material distribution. In an environment rife with theoretical debates on knowledge and power in higher education, why hasn’t critical theory and engaged pedagogy been used to describe and promote OERs? This paper, using critical theory, will demonstrate the urgency of OERs potential to make higher education more democratic, and suggests the ways libraries can be crucial support systems in that endeavour.

bell hooks, in her seminal text Teaching to Transgress, describes the fundamentally racist, misogynist, and authoritarian structure of classrooms in higher education. We, as educators, too often allow unconscious bias and a deeply intrinsic, unspoken belief in education as a banking system to mould an educational experience that we cannot celebrate because it does not validate or celebrate us, or our students, as individuals; as whole beings seeking wellness and freedom of body and spirit. The texts we use echo this oppressive system. Instructors represent monolithic, unimpeachable sources of truth as do the textbooks they use. Textbook truth is compiled and edited by publishers using the words of a small group of mainly white, male, Ivy-League-pedigreed experts. And all the while the student is silent. The student has a voice only to regurgitate the memorized information they have collected from the professor and the textbook.

If we, as educators, ask our students to purchase a book, its content should be transformative. The information contained in a book should be so dangerous and so unsettling that students will want to keep that book forever. They will want to pick it up off a shelf in ten years, read it, and have it reawaken or challenge their life again, because the transformation of information into knowledge is an essential cornerstone of information literacy and meant to be a lifelong process (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2001). But this critical relationship to knowledge is often not supported by higher education, and is certainly of little concern to the university bookstores who influence policies and agendas of course material acquisition. The phenomenon of rental and used books perfectly demonstrates the university bookstore’s treatment of knowledge as capital. University bookstores are shop fronts to the Big Five textbook publishers (Dubay). Rental and used textbooks disenfranchise students of perpetual access to knowledge with financial incentives that tend to snatch texts
away at semester’s end. Critical pedagogy “rejects the notion of students as passive containers who simply imbibe dead knowledge. Instead, it embraces forms of teaching that offer students the challenge to transform knowledge, rather than simply ‘processing received knowledges’” (Mohanty, 192). But for bookstores, at the end of a semester a textbook, by their logic, ceases to have meaning for an individual student. This relationship of student with classroom knowledge is further troubling in its implications that the knowledge taught in a class ceases to have meaning or utility at the semester’s end.

Proprietary software is one innovation seeking to claim space in the future of higher education, specifically to help students save money and help institutions retain students. But this software allows university bookstores to work with publishers in a new, but no less predatory, way. If a faculty member chooses a text from this software, that fee can be assessed to enrolled students through the university’s financial services and the material is made available to students through a course management system for the length the class runs. The purpose of university bookstores as a physical space weakens. Yet software like Sidewalk uses “disruptive” self-important language like:

We believe content in higher ed needs to be democratized. And it inevitably will be. Faster with Sidewalk than without. And when that day arrives, content will cost less. When it costs less, more students will have access to it. When more students have access to it, their likelihood of success will increase, and the payoff to humanity will be huge. (“About Us”)

Sidewalk aggregates OERs, internet resources, and other non-traditional resources with traditional textbooks; it supposedly “disrupts” a model by offering all these materials side-by-side, in one place. Sidewalk’s “disruption” implies a new path that exposes and solves the inequities of traditional modes. But this is not disruption. Sidewalk creates false equality in its aggregation of all types of course materials. In the process nothing is created, everything is presented and consumed equally, and publishers still prey upon students. There is nothing democratic or disruptive. In fact, software that directly charges students through course enrollment instead of through the purchase of course material corners students who can only afford education through creative avoidance of fees; photocopying library books, borrowing friends’ copies, for example. Publisher profit has been maximized and access has been minimized.

The logical fallacy of Sidewalk’s “disruptive” nature is a frequently utilized conservative tool in politics and business: the primacy of personal success and responsibility. That it is the responsibility for individuals (including corporations; now considered “individuals”) to disrupt and fix problems created by social services because of an inherent inadequacy in systems which are not tasked with amassing capital. Liberal ideology, conversely believes that, “Empowerment starts with education and extends to
infrastructure, communications, scientific research, and so on. (This) is the basis of democracy: empathy, the caring about one’s fellow citizens that requires social as well as personal responsibility.” (Lakoff, 186). In recent years public institutions, including libraries and public universities, have been urged to think and act more like businesses. Unfortunately, there has been little recognition across various institutions and stakeholders of how harmful and counter-intuitive that rhetoric is. In the case of Sidewalk and other course material software, their most ironic secret is that innovation and growth depends on the creation of more OER. Because what would a business like Sidewalk do without non-commercial, open access-dependent OERs? Just like public infrastructure is taken for granted by the businesses that use them most heavily, Sidewalk exposes its unsustainable dependence on OERs; without them Sidewalk is just another textbook search engine and yet it does nothing to support institutional structures of OER creation. Such vendors fail to understand that instead of disrupting they depend on systems and services that are created for a public good without a profit.

The OER model of course materials has the potential to be a significant participant in emancipating higher education from burdensome, anti-democratic elements present in a majority of classrooms. OERs exchange silent students and expensive – and 65% of the time, absent (Grasgreen) – textbooks for dynamic, free, open access material. OERs have the potential to become collaborative projects between instructors and students. Not only can instructors free students from the predatory, anti-democratic practices of the textbook publishing industry; they can even collaborate with students to create the alternative. Because although OERs free students from the costs of traditional textbooks, their use alone does not lead to anyone’s educational empowerment. Student expression is the vehicle of this transformation. bell hooks explains “Engaged pedagogy necessarily values student expression”. But, it “does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered.” (hooks, 21) Instructors must seize the opportunity OERs present to use engaged pedagogy and involve students in the creation of course material; this is a way higher education can systematically create space where classrooms involve empowerment for instructor and student. “Such a pedagogy listens to students, gives them a voice and role in their own learning, and recognizes that teachers not only educate students, but also learn from them.” (Giroux, 496)

And in the middle, facilitating these important interactions, are libraries. Librarians and libraries have the skills and mission to fully realize the potential of student-faculty developed OERs. The skills that librarians already possess equip them to organize OERs, curate them, and consider the unique intellectual property issues that may arise. Besides the practical reasons to involve librarians in the development of OERs, the pedagogical foundation that library instruction provides prepares effective student involvement in the creation of OERs. When students can use a variety of information to synthesize and create new research, they are better equipped than peers to contribute to instructional material in their discipline. The
Information Literacy Framework, explicitly directs librarians to teach students how to consider authority as constructed and contextual. Student-instructor developed OERs are the ultimate way to demonstrate how authority can be a means to disseminate power, not withhold it.

Unfortunately, the equal partnership needed between librarians and teaching faculty is almost unheard of. Deprofessionalization in librarianship has meant that libraries, especially academic libraries, are chronically understaffed, and librarians are not extended the same privileges and status as other faculty. Rory Litwin writes in his article “The Library Paraprofessional Movement and the Deprofessionalization of Librarianship,”

The deprofessionalization of librarianship and the transfer of the job functions of librarians to paraprofessionals serve as an opportunity for library administrators to take a greater share of control over library practice and to advance a business framework of metrical efficiency to the fore, displacing the ethical framework that derives from the professional orientation of librarians. (44)

The pervasive commercialization of knowledge further contributes to librarian deprofessionalization:

If the semi-professions are in a weaker position in terms of maintaining their autonomy against forces of deprofessionalization, librarianship has a special problem owing to its ideological opposition to the very notion of a monopoly of knowledge. (54)

The ethical priorities represented by OERs could be directly tied to demonstrating the importance of librarianship as a profession. Notice, I say could, not are.

OERs offer assistance in higher education’s crucially important struggle, yet I see no excitement, no light, in the faces of faculty when my librarian colleagues spread this good news. The only solution I see to this seeming disinterest is this: academic librarians need to reframe the discussion of OERs using language of freedom, engaged pedagogy, and resistance towards the anti-democratic forces at work in higher education. Chandra Mohanty writes,

Resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces. Resistance that is random and isolated is clearly not as effective as that which is mobilized through systematic politicized practices of teaching and learning. Uncovering and reclaiming subjugated knowledges is one way to lay claim to alternative histories. But these knowledges need to be understood and defined pedagogically, as questions of strategy and practice as well as of scholarship, in order to transform educational
institutions radically. And this, in turn, requires taking the questions of experience seriously. (Mohanty, 185)

Actively promoting OERs is exactly the type of “politicized practices” of which Mohanty speaks that assist in our resistance of normative discourses and representations; that of a commodified higher education system. The knowledge and authority that OERs reclaim from textbook publishers could flow immediately into the hands of instructors and students. If higher education fails to rethink its concept of course materials, proprietary software companies will further cement the undemocratic future of higher education curriculum.

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Criminalizing Information Providers: the cases of Sharina, Gómez, Elbakyan and Swartz

by David Ramirez-Ordoñez & Virginia Inés Simón

Details of the most representative cases of the last five years, with respect to the right of access to information, are presented below. Each of the selected cases is of interest to professional librarians, researchers and students from different parts of the world, who have been affected by various factors, including political, socio-cultural and economic. Anyone could get caught up in situations like those leading up to each case (including those who are currently reading this article) just by sharing information governed by copyright laws.

The Librarian of forbidden books: Natalya Sharina

Natalya Sharina is a librarian with more than forty years of experience, who resides in Russia. Most sources agree that, since 2011 (Bonet, 2017), she was the director of the Ukrainian literature library in Moscow, a public library with more than 52,000 reference works.¹ On October 28, 2015, after the Russian police raided the library, finding literary works of Ukrainian nationalist authors, she was arrested. Interestingly, the books confiscated by the police were not cataloged in the library collection. The legal defense and Natalya have insisted on her innocence, stating that the books were “planted” at the time of the police raid, and that this is a strictly political case.

Recently, Natalya has been convicted with suspended sentence of four years in prison, for extremism, anti-Russian propaganda and embezzlement of public funds. This is a clear case of political tension, resulting from the conflictive relations between Russia and Ukraine, which has direct and

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Keywords: information access, human rights, intellectual property, activism, freedom of expression
consistent repercussions by illegitimately depriving access to information, which is internationally understood as a basic human right. This case is a clear example of biblioclascy: the library is closed and its holdings transferred to another institution that, paradoxically, does not have the physical space to shelter even a quarter of the collection (Losada, 2017). The case has been closely followed and Natalya defended by groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation of Library Associations and Libraries (IFLA).

The biologist who shared a thesis: Diego Gómez

Diego Gómez Hoyos is a young biologist and a Colombian researcher, alumni of the Biology Faculty of the Quindío University, who works as research coordinator in a natural reserve in Costa Rica. In 2011, Diego shared a master thesis on Scribd with colleagues because he thought it would be of interest to them and because it was not easily accessible. It appears that he was unaware of copyright law in Colombia, and didn’t know such sharing was prohibited by law. As a result, Diego faced a criminal complaint for copyright violation. That’s why, in addition to his study of conservation and wildlife, he unexpectedly ended up with an education in copyright law as well.

Just to be clear:

• The thesis was already available on the Internet via several portals when Diego uploaded it and shared with other Internet users.
• Diego always cited the original author. This is not a case of plagiarism, he simply shared the document in the belief that others might need it and find it as valuable as he did.
• At the time when Diego uploaded the document, the website Scribd didn’t benefit financially, but provided access free (gratis). Later, however, Scribd started to ask for a payment to download documents or required an exchange of uploading another document in compensation. Scribd’s policy change requiring payment had nothing to do with Diego, but was solely a website decision.

Diego was found innocent and acquitted of all charges. However, an appeal was filed by the prosecutor and the thesis author (Fundación Karisma, 2017). Finally, in December 2017 the Court of Bogotá confirmed that Diego Gómez is acquitted of all charges for copyright infringement.

SciHub and the Pirates of the 21st Century: Alexandra Elbakyan

Anyone would think Alexandra is a kind of Robin Hood of science, as some journalists have described her. She says no. Stealing is not the same as copying: the owner does not lose possession when something is copied. Alexandra is 28 years old, born in Kazakhstan. She does not reveal her current location in order to preserve her freedom. This young woman, who graduated in computer science and currently is working in neuroscience,
is now one of the most influential people in Open Access, transgressing publishing barriers to give free access to scientific content, via the platform SciHub (SciHub, sf). She, like so many researchers, has needed access to articles in her area of research and has encountered the barrier of cost for access. Her need became the germ of the SciHub revolution.

Alexandra has managed to release more than 62 million articles, making them freely available to the entire scientific community. Most of the time, access to the databases where the papers are located is provided anonymously by researchers, academics and database clients who collaborate with Alexandra’s project.

SciHub currently faces a fine of 15 million dollars after losing a lawsuit with Elsevier (Schiermeier, 2017). Alexandra is not likely to assume the costs, since she is outside the court’s jurisdiction.

As long as the publication system does not change in favor of the authors of scientific research, SciHub will remain firm, in a constant struggle that undoubtedly will present new chapters in this ongoing conflict. Alexandra is dedicated to her position on open access and access to scientific knowledge for all people.

*Open Access Guerrilla: The fight and tragic end – Aaron Swartz*

Aaron committed suicide. He was denounced, persecuted and harassed until ending his young life of only 26 years, on January 11, 2013 (Swartz, 2013). Aaron Swartz was, like so many other bright minds in computing, a child prodigy. From an early age, before he was 13-years-old, he had contributed to advances on the web that we take for granted today, such as the syndication of contents in the well-known RSS format. The field of librarianship owes great honors to the work and thought of this young innovator for developments like selective dissemination of information, open access, the Open Library project, Creative Commons licenses, and many other projects. Aaron’s struggles were individual and collective. Collectively, he understood perfectly that access to information was a human right. He understood that the problem of science is to freely access information and communicated his ideas in his “Open Access Guerrilla Manifesto” (Swartz, 2017) in which he describes notions of free access, information needs, culture and libraries for all. In addition, Aaron’s was a vital voice in stopping the advance of SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) in the United States.

But Aaron broke the rules by downloading nearly 5 million documents from J-STOR through an MIT network. You might consider his actions his own way of implementing the ideas contained in his manifesto. As a result, he was legally accused of theft and endured a period of sustained pursuit, with the possibility of facing more than 35 years in prison. He took his life, leaving a legacy of paradigm shift on the Internet, and emptiness and sadness in the digital community.
The librarian's role

Under various international instruments of law, access to information is ratified as a human right. Access to timely information is necessary for human development, education and culture. Timely and universal access can save lives. Information professionals and all librarians must maintain an ethical framework of service to others, in line with the imperative need to ensure the right of access to information, as reflected in the codes of ethics of information professionals in their country. However, there is also the tension of respecting the rights of owners and authors which leaves our profession in a complicated situation.

How engaged are professionals in information science in local, national and global debates on access to information and copyright or the right to copy? Is the academy training new professionals on these issues? In their daily work, librarians can infringe in many ways the copyright law, because the infrastructure, social practices and ethics are not in harmony with the laws. Are librarians aware of this issue in their libraries? Are library associations demanding and working for revisions in the national copyright laws to protect librarians from possible infringements? We the librarians can take a passive attitude, but the cases presented here should raise awareness within the library field and encourage involvement in this debate.

Perhaps, within the context of these laws, issues related to professional ethics, copyright and intellectual property should be subject to reasonable adjustments, which, far from harming the intervening parties, call for a positive resolution to support the ultimate goal: production of new knowledge and the full enjoyment of the rights of access to information and human development. Such a resolution would also support several aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as set out in Agenda 2030, which IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions IFLA, s.f.) has started to promote, and which we highlight as follows: end of poverty (objective 1), quality education (objective 4), decent work and economic growth (objective 8), industry, innovation and infrastructure (objective 9), reduction of inequalities (objective 10); and peace, justice and strong institutions (objective 16) as well as fair remuneration for creators and rights holders. Without doubt, librarianship must examine these goals in more detail.

Conclusion

In this article, four international cases have been presented regarding the consequences of defending the right of access to information, or making use of it. The prison sentences range from two years, to threats of disproportionately prolonged imprisonment. In the worst case, complaints, prosecution, criminal proceedings, harassment and persecution, led to a death by suicide. From Natalya Sharina to Aaron Swartz, it has been possible to imagine the risk faced not only by activists leading great struggles for
access to information, but also by common citizens who unsuspectingly end up involved. Some people are, in these examples, activists by will and conviction (Alexandra, Aaron). Others became activists because they had no choice. The system has, in the first instance, promulgated the need for access to documents protected by copyright, or prohibited as in the cases of Diego and Natalya as if they were living in the Middle Ages. In these last two cases, the people involved did not act with intent to break rules and to this day they maintain their innocence. These cases are proof that copyright is problematic: When potentially every single person can be a criminal, that is a sure sign that something needs to be fixed to avoid these kinds of problems so they don’t happen again.

Each case involves the breaking of standards and conventions that, for the 21st century and in digital environments, no longer have as a fair goal the learning, research, development and leisure needs of human beings today. Each case, by action or omission, reflects the needs of democratizing knowledge, generating fair and inclusive norms and rethinking the notions of users, readers, intermediaries, consumers, copyright holders and intellectual property owners. In turn, each case poses a challenge to those whose business model is based on the sale of copies of documents, when the cost of making a copy tends to zero.

Final reflections invite us to think about the predatory role of the great publishing systems, which in every situation defend industrial interests over the interests of authors as individuals, educational institutions and readers. On certain occasions, multiple payments must be made for access to scientific articles: the payment by an author to be published; the payment to download by the reader; and the payment for subscriptions by institutions. It is worth reviewing legislation intended to promote science and technology, in order to know whether or not legal requirements encourage publication in open access scientific journals, or if, on the contrary, national journals reward publication in journals with payment. On the other hand, one is invited to consider the role of small and medium publishers, who do not have the capacity of large publishing systems and their work can be affected and also worth rethinking, given the current circumstances.

Finally, advocates for information professionals must establish a political position in this global debate, in addition to supporting initiatives such as learning the rules of copyright and identifying needs for revisions to standards. Previous practices are inconsistent with current thinking and dynamics due to new technological tools we have, and it is vital to discuss the issue, not only with information science professionals, but with all people involved in complex, multifaceted scenarios like these. If professionals in information science are informed by critical thinking about the construction of citizenship, there is nothing better than teaching by example.
The opportunities

Here are some opportunities that can be taken by information science professionals and librarians to participate actively in the decision-making process about the future of libraries and society regarding access to information:

• Review national codes of ethics of librarians to guarantee a moral point of view in this tension.
• Advocate for changes to copyright law with a focus on access to information.
• Advocate for the ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty (an international protocol concerning publications for the blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled) in each country, in favor of people unable to access printed documents.
• Engage in advocacy efforts with the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) asking your country’s representatives to promote an exceptions and limitations treaty for libraries, archives and museums.
• Participate in the Internet Governance Forum in your country and in the global forum, to present the library field’s perspective to government, civil society and private sector.
• Debate topics like access to information, professional ethics, plagiarism, censorship and other related issues without being ashamed or framing it as a taboo, and without assuming that different points of view are personal attacks, because if we present here extreme cases, there are similar cases in other levels that should not go unnoticed, to make our profession mature.

Proposals such as IFLA president Gloria Perez-Salmeron’s “Gears in the Motors for Change” (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions IFLA, 2015) push the library field and associations to adopt a critical and political point of view supporting access to information. We invite all librarians to become familiar with and adopt the vision of “Motors for Change,” to become part of the change to create a positive environment from information science to the world and to inspire an open mind to learn and grow as society.

Endnotes

3. The definition of life sentence varies in different countries around the world, but agrees
with sentences ranging from 25 years. So we can speak of a life sentence or long sentences. More information can be found at: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadena_perpetua

References


126
Neoliberalism and the Academy

by Peter McDonald

A common theme you’ll hear stated through the four talks today will be the impact of neoliberal thinking in the affairs, not only of librarianship as a profession, but also in the administrative running of our libraries, and, more widely, within the commons of society as a whole, and finally, inside the academy where sadly it is now rife as well. On this latter point, which is the focus of my talk, forget a liberal education, whoever mentions the benefits of such an education today to create well rounded citizens, gone are those days. Instead, universities everywhere talk in the jargon of the marketplace, terms like leverage, disruptive innovation, the new normal, mind-share, win-win, spin-up are all bromides from the private sector now rife in academia! It is this latter arena which I will explore and discuss more fully today – in short, how neoliberalism pervades every aspect of higher education, and by extension academic libraries.

Full disclosure. For the past ten years I have served as a library dean at just such a university, California State University, Fresno, so my talk intends not to point fingers, but to open a space for dialog and exploration. One thing I won’t be doing is offering some smorgasbord of solutions. Rather, it’s important in itself to understand how pervasive neoliberal nostrums are, how they pervade our lives, our work environments, without any sort of critical analysis.

So what is neoliberalism? Well at heart it’s a fancy name for “neo laissez faire economics.” Jason Del Gandio describes it thus: “a form of global capitalism based on the deregulation of free markets and the privatization

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Keywords: neoliberalism, academic librarianship, library management, access to higher education, library funding
of wealth.” This near religious emphasis on the privatization of wealth rather than the enhancement of the public good or the civic sphere is central to neoliberal ideology. In short, neo-liberalism subordinates all control of our civic spaces, from local governments to universities, to the interests of market-driven models of efficiencies and profit-taking under the false nostrums of the markets’ inherent ability to sort through any problem no matter how thorny and thereby provide a privatized (e.g. profitable) way to a better world or outcome. We can see pretty much everywhere how that’s been working for the 99%.

Indeed, today, most of the world’s governments - rather than regulating capitalist markets to assure a level playing field – have, to a fault, become instead extensions of corporate boosterism and business-friendly talking points. Hence the language of governance has become indistinguishable from the pabulum of Wall Street. Like Freddy Kruger, this malignant cyst just doesn’t fade away under the absurdities of its own inconsistencies and unsustainable goals.

But at the end of the day, stripped to the bone, about all neoliberalism does is provide tax breaks for the rich, reduces spending on social programs and welfare, gives unfettered control to corporations in most every sphere of public life, dismantles environmental protections, loosens drug and food regulations, wars against labor rights, and even sidesteps international and national treaties and laws all under the flag of free markets. Sadly, as I shall discuss, this is the precise world-order that our university-industrial complex and our libraries, if even unconsciously, so happily embrace today.

But is this really new news? Surely since the Middle Ages, universities have always been the exclusive play-ground of powerful elites. These centers of learning (might we say centers of indoctrination?) and their forbidden books, and religious texts, e.g. early libraries, were forbidden to the masses lest these unwashed denizens rise up and say (in paraphrasis), what a sec, we have naught to lose but our chains! Education during the medieval and renaissance eras was first and foremost an instrument to solidify the power of the clergy and the nobility, an uneasy alliance, from about the 12th century through to about 1600. From this point on, with the Reformation in full swing, and with the precipitous rise of a ruthless European mercantile class, over time, these new lords of commerce, often self-righteous Protestants of a new sea-going world order, were allowed reluctantly into the hallowed halls of ivory, since they now held so many of the usurious purse strings that the nobility, perhaps less so the church, grudgingly relied on.

Yet even here, as I say, universities fiercely guarded their gates against further intrusions from the rest of the world’s riff-raff for another two and a half centuries. Within this whites-only, wealthy and entitled enclave, the key notion of Manifest Destiny, e.g. the god-given right for Anglo-Saxon (e.g. Western European) elites to lord it over anyone anywhere at any time
for personal, hereditary or corporate profit (think the East India Company and the slave-based sugar industries of the New World), these became the norm. Indeed, in the fledgling United States, at least up to post-bellum Reconstruction years, under this rigged system ruthlessly erected a wall (think Donald Trump) to ensure that women, the poor, Jews, immigrants, the teeming masses, and most definitely minorities (e.g., freed black slaves and so on), one and all, that these second class citizens were left largely to fend for themselves when it came to book larnin’ — in short, denied easy access ‘to promote the Progress of Science and the Useful Arts’ (despite these being enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, Section 8).

It really wasn’t until the Morrill Act of 1862, oddly passed by a divided Congress of warring legislators, North and South, that things began to change with regard to offering more than a rudimentary high school education to the working classes. The law stipulated that ceded lands in every state, bought by federal funds, were to be set aside to build agricultural colleges for folks of average means, that is to say, immigrant population flooding into America. Hence the land grant college system that still dominates higher education today in every state of the union.

This wasn’t altruism on the part of the conservative male legislators of the 19th century who enacted the Act. It was a conscious well-planned experiment to create a white and educated working force (albeit made up of a melting pot of Old World males) as a vanguard to bring Manifest Destiny to fruition, so that the westward lands stolen from the native tribes by the thousands of square miles, treaties be damned, would have enterprising immigrant lads, with some agricultural know-how, to make productive the wild, purportedly unpopulated, purportedly unproductive, lands that God ordained should be given to the white man. Convenient quotes from the Bible, suitably edited, were used to justify the land grab and slaughter.

Modestly progressive for its time, the Morrill Act, surprisingly, forbade racial discrimination in admissions policies for colleges receiving these federal funds. The “fairer sex” still was not particularly made welcome but at least a narrow path to higher education was cautiously beaten forward. Women, in fact, mostly had to wait until the rise of the Normal Schools of the early 1900s, which were set aside for them as places to educate school teachers, latterly nurses, and other female-dominant professions. And as for the then-called ‘emancipated Negro’, the Morrill Act of course provided a handy loophole for the feds, in concert with the states, to set aside a parallel system of higher education designed specifically for black folk, hence the under-funded, discretely separate but “equal” (where have we heard that before) historically black colleges and universities of 1890s to the present day.

Despite these obviously glaring discrepancies in educational access to the nation’s diverse immigrant and non-white populations, one might nevertheless argue that these were the halcyon years of higher education in America, roughly from the end of the Civil War through to the 1960s.
The effort got a big boost, of course, with the passage of the G.I. Bill in 1944 at the height of the Second World War, which opened a floodgate to all veterans to attain to a college degree on Uncle Sam’s dime. Here one can claim, perhaps, America reached the apotheosis of its education ideals with a promise of higher learning for all, aided at every turn by the federal government with open pockets.

But as with so much else, things soon fell apart with the poison pill of Vietnam. So wrenching were the upheavals of the late Sixties through to the mid-Seventies, what with the anti-war protests on every college campus, the college deferments for elites, coupled with the inexorable rise of a counter-culture implacably disinterested in the stale nostrums of American exceptionalism purveyed by a 1950s mind-set, that the guarantee of a college education soon came under fierce scrutiny by conservatives and middle-of-the-road liberals of every stripe. Why should tax dollars pay for ‘pinko flag defilers’ (Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense) to get a draft deferment at a college they were trashing?

Despite the crash and burn of Richard Nixon in August 1974, and the bland salve of the interregnum of Gerald Ford, so ineffective was the next President, well-meaning Jimmy Carter, in bringing the war-torn union together, that in 1980, we the citizens of this fine nation, eagerly elected to the highest office in the land, ideologue Ronald Wilson Reagan, a second rate actor, and clumsy governor, to be our 40th President. But what Reagan, and, later, the iron-haired Valkyrie Margaret Thatcher, P.M. of the U.K. zealously shared in common was a religious belief in the magic of neoliberal economics and the capitalist mystique (the new and improved Manifest Destiny of the late 20th century) which they peddled would solve all our problems with unregulated profit-seeking in the realm of cut-throat capitalism within the milieu of free and competitive markets. And so on, in short, that the invisible hand of the market would accomplish all this by sleight of hand. The mantra first annunciated reverberates to this day: Rip government meddling out of every sector of civic society and let unfettered competitive capitalism triumph in the marketplace. With collapse of communism, Neoliberalism has since ruled supreme.

In the Clinton years of the 1990s, this insidious ideology truly got its sea legs, and marched triumphant across the globe, capturing the minds of both liberal and conservative elites, university administrations, and think tanks, library administrators, hence to pervade library service corporations like Elsevier and ProQuest, to media talking heads on down, ad nauseam, to the point that neoliberalism soon became what it remains today – a worldwide gospel canon within which few of us can see out to an entirely other way forward through the caged bars of a failing doctrine.

This burnished narrative naturally produced, and then unquestioningly necessitated, the withdrawal of most all state funding from the so-called public sector, first among the deprived – the welfare state and state funded land-grant universities who passed on the cuts to their own libraries.
everywhere. And to their students as newly minted consumers they piled on debt burdens for the privilege of going to college. Gone were the days of the G.I. bill and a path to a degree. Up by your own bootstraps, sonny, became the prevailing mantra.

Consider this. Since the 1980s public (e.g. tax) funding of public universities has fallen a whopping 60%-70% across the spectrum (EDUCAUSE data 2009), higher still in some states. Libraries, too, have faced precipitous declines in their budgets in equal amounts. Faced with this bone-headed but neoliberally-justified ideology of public de-funding, universities, and by extension libraries, have felt obliged to respond by, and here I paraphrase legal scholar Stanley Fish: (1) raising tuition at the university level, in effect passing the burden of costs to the students who now become degree consumers and debt-holders rather than beneficiaries of an affordable education, and, in libraries, by slashing collections and librarian student services; (2) entering into research partnerships with industry in all the Science Technology Engineering and Math (e.g. computer) disciplines, thus courting corporate funds where the pursuit of truths for Truth’s sake devolve into the pursuit of graduating cookie cutter worker bees for the profit-seeking sector. This was mirrored in our libraries by outsourcing monograph collecting to corporate jobbers, licensing e-journal bundles instead of buying journals outright for the shelf, and by beefing up IT departments with techies escaping the dot-com bust of 1999, to finally (3) hiring a larger and larger number of expendable part-time adjuncts, part-time librarians, or non-union contractual workers, who as members of a transient and disposable workforce are in no position to challenge the university’s and by extension library management’s practices or agitate for an academy more committed to the realization of democratic ideals rather than the monetary targets of neoliberalism. In short, most American universities, with their libraries supposedly resigned to follow suit, have embraced the neo-credo like godparents of a long-lost child.

According to a 2008 survey by The Chronicle of Higher Education, presidents from 19 of the top 40 research universities with the largest operating budgets sat on at least one Fortune 100 company board. The trend is more widespread among public universities, but the private ones are hell-bent on catching up. Here neoliberalism seeps into academia from the top where the purported successes of the corporate sector provide cover to bring its management techniques into all aspects of management in higher education.

Anyway, it was in the 1990s, too, that university endowment offices, until the financial crash of 2008 kicked the wind out of them, went into overdrive becoming at a stroke hyper-corporate boosters, entering into high risk investment strategies to maximize profits and thereby, one can only suppose, raise the university’s endowment rankings in various national polls. Many universities, in fact, have outsourced the management of their endowment revenues to hedge fund shysters only too happy to play with the billions stashed in our ivory towers. Campus efforts by concerned students
and faculty to disinvest their endowments in armaments, big pharma, coal, tobacco, you name it, however noble, have largely been ineffective across the board. A few liberal colleges have, admittedly, seen the few successes.

In libraries, there was also a flourish of hiring development directors and part-time grant writers, all to seek donor, corporate and government granting agency dollars. None of these sorts of employees had an MLS, or necessarily understood the roles of libraries as centers of intellectual discovery and dissent, they were hired for their acumen in fund-raising, finance, and grants. To pay for these positions, the number of librarians hired has declined precipitously since 1990s across the board at most academic libraries.

In short, in this new neoliberal milieu, rather than providing space for intellectual thought and rich learning for young minds, the academy has too often become an adjunct to a ubiquitous corporate culture, an educational model that now has to ‘pay its own way’ often via the dicta of bean counters in state goverments. The average college campus and its library are now ground zero (again from Del Gandio) for endless licensing agreements; construction contracts to build multi-use libraries, e.g. cram other units into library spaces especially tech heavy ‘innovation sand boxes’; outsourcing of bookstores, venders, concessions and food services, or take the building of Starbucks and other coffee shops in our library foyers – all point to a new corporatized mentality. Not to mention the addictions we endure at the hands of unscrupulous content-licensing businesses such that we all need to hire licensing experts rather than public service librarians just to make sense of this thicket. These and other ‘expert’ hires are often at an AUL or administrative exempt level with a proliferation of management types supplanting frontline librarians.

Along with massive corporate sponsoring of building construction, especially sports arenas and innumerable corporate named centers, think tanks and institutes, one and all these underpin, and enhance, under the football-speak of neoliberalism, a sense that questioning the very foundations of corporate hegemony is futile. Libraries fall squarely into this milieu as CFOs squeeze ever more other units into our spaces, as corporations, in tandem, underwrite our events, speakers, exhibitions and campus/library programs. I’ve been guilty of that myself at Fresno State. Even well meaning alternatives to corporate product dissemination (e.g. publishing), for example, have turned oddly to models like open-source publishing platforms (listen to that jargon) where we now ask faculty to pay upwards of $2500 to get a peer reviewed article in print all to alleviate library budgets. And this is considered a step forward? We rail against the Elseviers of the world, but there is no sustained, collective, structural or intellectual reframing among academics to reimagine the academic enterprise stepping wholly outside the neoliberal paradigm. This, of course, would demand an entirely new approach to the Retention, Tenure and Promotion and that is not soon in the cards. The equation is always: Under neoliberalism someone has to get screwed, here the faculty, then the
debt-laden students, tomorrow who knows who. Faculty and staff unions, sadly, aren’t exempt. Often they fight separately for their share of this diminishing pie, pitting one union’s wages against another, but I am not aware of a single academic union putting forward a coherent manifesto or bargaining platform that questions the foundations of capitalism. They would be laughed from the bargaining table.

So we, as librarians, surely, fit into this sad nexus without much fuss. But it goes in concert with offsite storage of collections to make more room for business modeled or donor named uber-spaces, like the trendy Maker-Spaces popping up everywhere, and so on. But why are we surprised? Historically, just look at top ARL libraries and who they are named after: Carnegie, Firestone, Lilly, Marriott, Olin, through the rolodex of corporate titans and robber barons, doubtless expiating their sins through named philanthropy. Yes, we have met the enemy and he is us.

Such corporatization, of course, is inexorably transforming students into statistical target populations of financially beneficial demographic niches (e.g. foreign students who pay premium tuitions). Or take administrators, like myself. We get schooled to model business ideals in managing our libraries, as we fret over resource allocations, bottom lines, statistical impacts on targeted goal attainment and ever down-spiraling budgets, while business-savvy CFOs in university administration, and licensing agreements we are forced to sign, and endless state-funded cuts bleed us dry. In short, campuses, and most certainly library users, as a whole, have become mostly market populations with strategic and statistically derived goals cooked up periodically in PowerPoint presentations by high-priced private sector consultants. I’ve hired these mavens myself. Also note the corporate terms CFOs, CIOs, even CEOs now pervade higher ed, first at the for-profit Phoenix-like universities, but now ubiquitous in mimicry of the private sector. Above all, if a university receives public monies from state or federal sources, they must increase graduation rates at whatever the cost, a liberal education be damned. A corporate capitalist consumerist hegemony, after all, needs a never ending supply of degree-credentialed workers with a job and a shopping habit. Libraries in tandem must now prove their investment “value” since we are the largest money sink on any campus. Think about it, we do not bring in a dime of tuition or any other consistent revenue except perhaps among top ARLs this or that NEH/IMLS grant. So streamlining our operations, outsourcing technical services, beefing up IT departments, and using staff rather than librarians at our reference desks etc. become the budget-conscious norm.

In closing, let me just say that if you Google the vaunted Association of Research Libraries, fourth hit from the top, we find their Analytics@ARL, which leads directly to a link to the so-named “Library Investment Index” (sic.) a term we can only suppose ripped right out of a Goldman Sachs’ portfolio. No longer stodgy library stats that once spoke of a bygone era of how we actually touched the lives of each student on campus, but lo! a library investment index. And on that note, I cede the microphone to my colleagues.
November 8, 2016, the Public, and Libraries

by John Buschman

Our recent election provides ample reason to stop and analyze what is going on. The same political system that elected Abraham Lincoln with 39.8% of the vote produced majorities in enough states to ratify an onslaught of lies and bigotry. Economically, people voted against “expansion of health-insurance subsidies for low- and middle-income Americans; investments in education and retraining; middle-class tax cuts; and a higher minimum wage [which] would do far more to help the economically precarious … than … top-heavy tax cuts and trade wars.” This, I contend, is a problem. To pivot to libraries, Wayne Wiegand never tires of quoting a colleague that our scholarship usually focuses on “the user in the life of the library rather than the library in the life of the user,” and he asks instead what role do libraries play in the lives of people, if any? I reformulate his theme: what, if anything, has changed in the nature of the public in its expectations of and interactions with libraries? I look at users in a particular aggregate – as a public or as publics: what is the library in the life of its public now? And, what is the role of a library’s public now? Has it changed, and if so, how? I technically define what a public is, but skipping to the results: the practical definition of a public that encounters a library is a) paying attention to the institution; b) receiving communication from the library; c) communicating to it; d) communicating among themselves about it; e) communicating about present benefits and future consequences of library decisions; and f) communicating in the context of common support for shared resources and services over time. Any one of these may be lessened at a given time – for instance in the level of attention given to library communication – but it also describes how a library engages its publics. So the question is: is that how publics engage libraries now? What is the library in the life of its given public now, and has it changed?

I disavow a golden past, but there is considerable evidence that a broad and liberal (as in marked by generosity of experimentation) political public has

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existed: a political consensus formed to invest in educational institutions in the 19th century and it was, after all, African Americans’ exclusion from schools and libraries—and segregated, substandard resources—that brought protest. Democracy and citizenship were once prime library and educational concerns. There were undercurrents of racism, sexism, and a distasteful normalization in these developments—Americanizing immigrants and other forms of social control—but the role of the library in the life of the public then was one of support and expansion of possibilities, opportunities, education, or just plain inexpensive leisure. Put simply, publics chose to build classrooms and libraries instead of other things with taxes and philanthropy. This is too broad a statement, but it contains enough of the kind of a “rough pragmatic resemblance to [the] reality” of the publics that then existed and it was successfully translated in political terms. So how have libraries’ publics changed? There is a broad scholarly consensus that we have lived for some time in a neoliberal age. Accounts of neoliberalism are largely critical, but its arguments “to let people have what they want, or to respect their freedom to choose” and to remove the “power to coerce … by removing the organization of economic activity from the control of political authority” were addressed to publics receptive to them. This means that neoliberalism isn’t purely done to the public, and the resulting effect on libraries’ relationship to its public is our focus. Neoliberal ideas have been translated in political terms: declining budget support, privatized alternatives supported at the public expense (like charter schools and vouchers), and responsibilizing citizens to advocate for their interests when engaging public services.

Putnam has looked at thirty years of surveys and found a consistent pattern of declining membership and participation in groups and voluntary associations, a decline in time spent with friends and acquaintances, a decline in political participation and interest in politics and a corresponding decline in trust in political institutions, an increase in mobility—and therefore an increase in uprootedness, a declining parental presence in the home (more hours spent in paid work), and the ascendancy of technologized and private forms of leisure during the times when people are together. These broad social patterns have clear relevance to the constitution of publics in the form of how people relate to each other via “trust and reciprocity [which are] crucial for social and political stability and cooperation.”

These trends continue—especially in the fraying fabric of commonality and mutual respect and dependence that political problem-solving depends upon—as demonstrated by November 8 and more than two decades of political experience. Put simply, the long-term and persistent decline in social capital produces different publics—including those that interact with libraries. These two strands are connected: neoliberal practices, assumptions and policies erode the bases of social cohesion. Technology and neoliberal economic policies deeply affect the circumstances of and the constitution of publics: production efficiencies underwrite a highly unequal growth in wealth and consumerism, and a globalized neoliberal market culture uproots identities and communities producing polarized publics, making
democratic politics difficult. Stability of grouping and identity is assumed in a public that encounters a library, and right on cue, Inglehart has very recently plumbed his long-running data on postmaterialism and found that “increasingly, high-income societies have winner-takes-all economies that tend [to produce an] overwhelming majority [with] precarious jobs [and as a result] populist movements” on the left (fueled by inequality) and the right (fueled by “emotionally-charged cultural issues cutting across economic lines”), polarizing social and political environments.11

This is the broad sociology that characterizes the results of wide acceptance and ascendency of neoliberal economic, technological, social, and political policy arguments over a few decades. How then does this play out in a given public’s interactions with libraries? Some of the trends are well known. Funding – for materials and personnel – is, at best static, and at worst decreasing across all LIS sectors, with state-level public funds the most endangered. In a time of “constrained public dollars and political shifts … that call for smaller government,” libraries directly compete with other units for the same dollars – police, schools, and roads in municipalities, maintenance and teachers and public safety in educational settings. At the same time libraries are supposed to become “less about … checking out books and more about … engaging in the business of making … personal … identities. … Users may ‘customize’ the [library] platform … to their individual needs” and address trends such as the maker movement, the Internet of things, drones, fast casual and robots. If ”the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power,”12 neoliberalism defines as alternative the public: that which is artificially insulated from the choices of consumers and bureaucratically centralized. Thus a public resource is democratic if a library’s public thinks of consumer choice as the equivalent of democratic choice. Likewise equity and equality are simply defined by how resources are deployed so that the basis of choices freely made are putatively neutral, ignoring the deficits of poverty or multiple jobs or health burdens or lack of insurance. The result is a library in the life of its public that, the thinking goes, should be paid for collectively but organized around private benefit. This represents a privatization of purpose of the library. Think of the rhetoric of “customer” service, or the coffee shop model to lure “customers.” Collectively this produces a change not just in spaces, but the meaning of spaces: institutions like the library are there to meet individual preferences and accommodate individual choices in the life of its public – a shift away from establishing and running an institution for the common good. These trends privilege a right of choice, but a public demanding these approaches from a library is itself now a particular slice of private interests. Library inclusion is thus another alternative defined by a neoliberal public in the life of the library: those in need are not a public in the life of the library.

Returning to the practical definition of a library’s public as an analytical resource, we find some serious gaps. While present (individual) benefits are front and center, future consequences are sacrificed on the altar of the private, and common support for shared resources and services over time
are relegated to the status of alternative. The library is increasingly viewed as a private good in its publics’ lives: there is little evidence that they are communicating among themselves about the institution over future consequences or common support. It is worth pushing this logic a bit further. As a practical matter, a library is a large undertaking and fiscal support logically goes away when the private purpose is done with – and then returns with the need. How does the institution continue in those gaps? Libraries face, in short, a changed public whose support for institutions and public purposes – behind which lies an argument for a shared social good – has dwindled, and has accepted, at least to some degree and for the time being, the argument for individual choice over a collective set of goods – libraries among them.

In conclusion, this is not simply a matter of setting up a definition that provides intellectual comfort to the LIS field and then complaining that the public is coloring outside the lines. We must come to grips with the contemporary reality that there is a deep hostility to collectivities within neoliberalism, and that includes libraries. Libraries may be a part of the educational and discursive infrastructure of a functioning democracy, but democracy’s and the library’s publics have become somewhat unmoored from that fact. Democratic politics is not necessarily valued for its own sake since popular sovereignty has too often expanded the state and interfered with the market in the neoliberal view, the ascendency of which was not in fact a mere matter of successful argumentation accepted by the public. Its rise was very much also a matter of corporate power, political deal-making, marketing and branding an idea, dissembling about its implications, and positioning the change as an inevitable wave of the future demanded by technology and economics which must be accommodated. The global does affect the local and the social, and has affected the library in the life of its publics at all levels. In the end, the picture is mixed. We have on the one hand a neoliberal argument that has become to an extent ingrained in our public life and discourse, and on the other longstanding and widespread discontent with the results. That shows up not only in the data, but in the Occupy movements, Slow Food, and the significant resistance to invasions of privacy by corporations and the NSA. Libraries are still held in high regard, but data also show that people worry that their local library will be closed, lessening their quality of life. Libraries face a public that has not reckoned with the economic, social, technological and political forces that have been unleashed, but the arguments and rhetoric in support of which they putatively agree. That is a big part of what November 8th tells us in my view. It is unsettled and de-centered public in whose lives the library plays a role, and this is perhaps the single most valuable lesson to carry forward. We do not want to wake up one day mindlessly catering to neoliberal choice ideologies and find ourselves with a public that has moved to the logical conclusion of these ideas – that it no longer has a place for libraries or has rediscovered its collective identity and finds an institution that no longer serves it.
2. See the sources and the account in Buschman 2017b, p. 279-281.
5. See Buschman 2017a, p. 56-58.
6. Hofstadter in Buschman 2017a, p. 60.
7. Taylor and Friedman respectively in Buschman 2017a, p. 60; see also Buschman 2017b, p. 282-284.
8. One tally of neoliberalism’s deficits notes that “the market is insensitive to the distribution of income and wealth among … classes and geographical locations,” that “left to its own devices, the market does little to alleviate the burdens of the dislocations it induces [in the form of the] the struggles of communities and regions [and their] declining economic sectors,” that “the market does little to ameliorate the tensions that women experience between workplace and family or to reduce persistent inequalities [or] discrimination,” that “the market does not achieve a self-regulating balance between consumption and investment [and] imperfect information[distorts market choice], externalities [are] not factored into … prices, [and there is] inadequate provision of public goods that undergird sustainable economic growth,” that the market will exhaust “global ‘carrying capacity’ [in] a rapacious and exploitative attitude toward nature” leading to ecological disaster, and that the market is indifferent to “the quality of human relationships it entails” along with the substantive quality of individual lives and work it engenders. See p. 37 of Galston, William A. 1993. “Political Theory in the 1980s: Perplexity Amidst Diversity.” In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, edited by Ada W. Finifter, 27-53. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
Efficiency or Jagged Edges
Resisting Neoliberal Logics of Assessment

by Maura Seale

The main focus of my essay is what I refer to as the dominant logics of assessment. These are the assumptions that underlie most conversations around assessment, and even the word itself. We assess in order to understand how well we are doing the things we claim to be doing, ultimately with the goal of improving or doing better. “Improve” and “better” could really mean any number of things, but I would like to suggest that when we’re talking about assessment of libraries, those words almost exclusively refer to making libraries more efficient in various ways, including removing effort, saving time, and making things easier. I am not arguing that all assessment relies on these logics – assessment of space often brings in aesthetics, for example – but a lot of the discussion around and practice of assessment does, and moreover, is unaware that it employs these logics.

This isn’t to say that we should throw out ideas of efficiency, ease, and effortlessness. Some forms of assessment are strategically or politically useful in asking for additional funding or pushing back against budget cuts. I acknowledge that there are moments when we might want to suggest that there is a return on our investments in electronic resources, monographs, services, and staffing. What underlies my essay, however, is the idea that if we must approach assessment strategically, we must simultaneously approach it critically, and that critical and strategic approaches are complementary, not contradictory. Indeed, assessment must incorporate an awareness of the political work it is performing both explicitly and implicitly.

Thinking of librarianship as a political project is central to how I approach librarianship, and in many ways, assessment might be the most important thing to grapple with politically. Assessment often deals with quantitative data, even outcome/impact-focused assessment. ACRL’s Standards for Libraries in Higher Education (2011), for example, which explicitly moves

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away from inputs and outputs, nonetheless emphasizes that outcomes/impacts, even those assessed qualitatively, “should be measurable.” The unquestioned and uncritical use of the language of quantification and measurement does several things. First, data is an abstraction of the social world, and as such, is necessarily incomplete, but tends to appear as and be understood as truth. Data is shaped by the questions we ask – whether they are survey questions or open-ended interview questions – and being able to measure something requires that that thing is able to be measured in some way. These assumptions and limits are inherent to any sort of data, but are not always foregrounded in discussions of either data or the assessment of that data.

Jeff Lilburn’s (2017) article, “Ideology and Audit Culture: Standardized Service Quality Surveys in Academic Libraries,” very nicely unpacks the assumptions and limits embedded in the LibQUAL+ survey of academic libraries, a widely used assessment tool, as well as the political work performed by this specific instance of assessment. He argues that “LibQUAL+ views library assessment through the lens of customer service. It emphasizes efficiency and customer satisfaction and encourages libraries to compare and rank their scores in relation to those of other libraries” (p. 103). These are the assumptions made by the survey, and the limitations inherent to the data it collects. Lilburn (2017) goes on to argue:

More specifically, this article situates the growing popularity of the standardized service quality survey LibQUAL+ within the broader setting of the pressures universities face to accept neoliberal principles and to operate more like private-sector businesses. Neoliberal principles...include an emphasis on free-market competition and privatization of public services, and recast citizens as consumers. Recent scholarship examining systems of accountability and the ideological principles driving their implementation in higher education raises a number of questions about the impact of accountability systems on teaching, learning, research, faculty autonomy, and the meaning and value of university education. This article considers how these questions are relevant to library assessment practices and, in particular, to the use of one-size-fits-all assessment measures such as LibQUAL+ (p. 90-91).

Lilburn outlines the political work performed by LibQUAL+. It affirms neoliberal ideology (and this quote gives a nice rundown of what that entails) and rejects other ideologies, politics, and values. Because of its orientation towards market values, business, and consumption, neoliberal ideology is particularly invested in notions of quantification and measurement and disregards those things that cannot be quantified or measured. Because neoliberal ideology is pervasive in American discourse generally, it tends to not be questioned, which means quantitative data and measurements likewise tend not to be questioned. This is somewhat of an oversimplification – there are reams of things written about neoliberalism, quantification, market values, etc. – but Lilburn argues, and
I would agree, that neoliberal ideology is antithetical to the missions of both higher education and libraries generally. But in order to even have a discussion about this and in order to be strategic in and critical of our assessment practices, we need to develop an understanding of our work as fundamentally political. Specific politics are promoted, while other values, experiences, and practices are obscured.

I have had three recent experiences that have simultaneously articulated dominant logics of assessment and pointed to other ways to think about assessment. At the beginning of the last academic year, our assessment librarian told us that ACRL had changed its definition of research consultations so that what made an interaction a research consultation was the act of the student making an appointment. I do a disproportionate number of research consultations, and they are hugely popular with students. I had been recording long email conversations, that sometimes go across semesters or even academic years, as research consultations. All of this work is now just answering reference questions, which sometimes go across semesters or even academic years, as research consultations. All of this work is now just answering reference questions which tends not to be valued and which we don’t assess using surveys and interviews. By recording my email conversations, I was trying to capture the relationships I was building with students, because relationships are the basis of so much of what we do, particularly in regards to teaching and learning. But to ACRL, the act of the student making the appointment is the important aspect to capture. This might be about the effort that the student makes to set up the appointment, but it might also be an implicit devaluing of relationships and emotional labor. Frequent conversations via email - like informal chats in hallways, saying hello to faculty you run into on campus, students waving at you when you’re at the reference desk - can’t really be measured or counted. Moreover, building relationships takes time and is not usually efficient.

I have been working on assessing the usability of LibGuides, both within our own library with our assessment librarian, and across our consortium with a consortium-wide committee. For the consortial study, we’re going to take a two-pronged approach: usability tests and evaluation of individual guides using a rubric. All of the usability questions and all of the rubric elements basically look at how efficient the guides are in getting users to where they think they need to go. This tendency is undoubtedly tied to the borrowing of usability testing from the business world and mapping the goals of commercial websites on to educational websites. I’m not advocating for library websites or subject guides that set out to confuse the user, but what we do when we’re looking for something to buy on Amazon is not the same as what we do when we have to write a research paper. I don’t expect subject guides or really any library website to actually teach students how to research, since research is complicated, recursive, and can’t be reduced to a series of discrete steps, but nonetheless, the assumed goal of subject guides is to make conducting research more efficient.

One of my faculty members and I were recently chatting about website evaluation and fake news. I sent him Mike Caulfield’s blog post “Yes,
Digital Literacy. But Which One?” (2016). Caulfield emphasizes that “evaluation of information” isn’t some abstract thing. It has to happen within a context, since that context informs its use, but it’s also difficult to evaluate something when you have little to no domain knowledge. Evaluation rubrics like CRAAP and RADCAB are designed to make it easier and more efficient for students to decide whether something is good or not but evaluating information is not necessarily easy or efficient, nor can it be made that way via a rubric. Efficiency, ease, and effortlessness are embedded in so much of the language around libraries and librarianship, but what are the possibilities if we define or think about “improvement” and “better” in different ways?

What if we approached reference and research consultations through relationship-building or emotional/affective labor rather than as something to be counted? At many institutions, that is some of the most important work that those services perform. What would assessment in terms of relationship-building or affective work look like? Might that more accurately capture what we do as librarians and what students get out of meeting with or talking to librarians? Moreover, assessment that highlights relationships might show how and why they are important to the institutions and push back against notions that only things that can be measured, counted, and monetized are important.

What if we centered our subject guides not around efficiency, ease, and getting rid of effort, but around cultivating and fostering intellectual curiosity and openness? Subject guides cannot teach how to research or write a paper, but maybe they can do more to push students into what Alison Hicks (2015) in her critique of LibGuides calls the “twisting, infuriating and (occasionally) joyful process of research that is stifled by the way that most librarians structure and organize their LibGuides.” I’ve recently tried to incorporate this exploration in library instruction sessions. I coax students to try different resources, different words, different topics, give them time to do that, and emphasize that the stakes in this particular session are nonexistent. In “Being ‘lazy’ and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy,” Riyad Shajahan (2014) argues that “slowing down is about focusing on building relationships, not about being fixed on products, but accepting and allowing for uncertainty and being at peace without knowing outcomes” (p. 10). It is about resisting market values and calls for productivity and efficiency; it is also about anti-oppressive pedagogy and returning “creativity and spontaneity” to teaching and learning (2014, p. 11).

Finally, Caulfield’s post describes a study done by the Stanford History Education Group in which undergraduate students were shown a Tweet with an embedded link and more than half of them did not actually click the link in their evaluation of the Tweet. Sam Wineburg, who is a scholar of history pedagogy, is one of the authors of the study. In his work, he talks about how history education shouldn’t dull or gloss “history’s jagged edges” but instead suggests that historical thinking “requires us to reconcile
two contradictory positions: first, that our established modes of thinking are an inheritance that cannot be sloughed off; second, that if we make no attempt to slough them off, we are doomed to a mind-numbing presentism that reads the present onto the past” (1999, p. 493). Historical thinking requires negotiating between the familiar and the strange, and although they are not identical, information literacy and evaluation also occurs within a landscape of complexity and “jagged edges,” and is a matter of negotiating these sorts of tensions around knowing and not knowing, albeit within different spaces.

But in the interest of efficiency, effortlessness, and ease, the evaluation of information has been oversimplified and students have been told to trust an acronym rather than seek out information themselves. Rubrics, like subject guides, subvert the development of students’ ability to work through the jagged edges of internet searches and scholarly research on their own. What if we tried to assess whether library instruction contributed to students’ interest, intellectual curiosity, and exploration? How then might we talk about and teach website evaluation? How would we talk about fake news or Snopes or Twitter?

I want to suggest that we think about library services/resources in terms of exploration, complexity, jagged edges, curiosity, openness, and so on, and not be limited by the logics of efficiency, effortlessness, and ease that underlie dominant understandings of assessment. Again, I don’t know how we should assess for “jagged edges,” but unpacking the assumptions made in much of the discourse around assessment and then asking these questions are the first steps. These questions are closer to the heart of what we actually do and want to do as academic librarians. We want to have supportive and productive relationships with students. We want to teach them how to use the library and how to conduct research, but we want them to also discover it on their own, because that is a crucial element of learning and intellectual growth and moreover, it can be fun, frustrating, and empowering all at once. We want them to leave college as thoughtful, critical, and empathetic people. Academic libraries are sites of teaching, learning, and generating new knowledge. Although dominant neoliberal ideology insists that everything be efficient, easy, and monetizable, our assessment practices should not uncritically accept this framing but rather seek to identify the reasons why what we do is already important.
References


Community-Building vs. Customer-Driven Librarianship
Countering Neoliberal Ideology in Public Libraries

by Mark Hudson

I want to start by mentioning the early work of the critical education theorist Henry Giroux. I think one of Giroux's most important insights from his early work in the 1980s — he was writing about schools but the insight applies equally well to libraries — is that mainstream educational institutions do not merely reproduce existing social inequalities of class, race and gender. They are also places where this reproduction is contested and resisted by the people who work in them and the people who use them. In Giroux's reading, ideological and cultural hegemony as Gramsci understood it is not something that is simply imposed upon subordinate social groups; it is essentially a pedagogical relationship, a mode of control that the dominant class is constantly struggling to maintain. The first task of radical educators is to acquire a critical understanding of the cultures, experiences and historic struggles of the oppressed and socially marginalized people in our communities, so that we can begin to understand how the institutions we work in might be transformed to meet their need for knowledge and resources that facilitate self-emancipation instead of reinforcing passivity and powerlessness.

A related insight from Giroux's early work, based on his reading of the Frankfurt School theorists, is the way in which a pervasive “technocratic rationality” impedes the development of the critical consciousness needed to transform educational institutions into vehicles of emancipation. The logic of technocratic rationality reduces educational practice to a form of social engineering, based on empirical data and disassociated from concerns about ethical purposes and questions about class, culture, power and knowledge. In public libraries we see this logic in the increasingly exclusive emphasis on circulation statistics in collection development, in the rise of the “business model” of library administration, and in the gradual

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redefinition of librarians as technicians, as mere managers of information
technologies, away from our historic identities as educators and cultural
workers. Giroux’s work provides us with some of the intellectual tools
we need to resist these trends and to develop an understanding of our true
social responsibilities and purpose.

The work of Kathleen de la Peña McCook provides a concrete model of
activist librarianship for librarians committed to the goal of grassroots
community building. In her 2000 book *A Place at the Table: Participating
in Community Building*, McCook challenges librarians to get involved in
community-building efforts that recognize cultural diversity, economic
inequalities and the urgent need for social solidarity. She emphasizes the
importance of understanding the community’s culture, demographics,
social and political structures, and major issues of concern, and she
advocates new models of library work that will allow librarians the time
and resources they need to fully participate in community events, meetings
and organizations. Librarians can contribute to ongoing community-
building initiatives by providing resources, programs and services that
support community organizations and meet the needs of all the different
groups that make up the community — not just the affluent middle class
but also the immigrants, people of color and working-class people whose
needs are so often ignored by librarians and who therefore understandably
perceive us as irrelevant to their lives.

Another model is the community-led or needs-based libraries approach
developed in Canada by the Working Together Project and in the UK by
John Pateman and others associated with the Open to All? study, which was
an effort to understand how public libraries might more effectively address
the problem of social exclusion and contribute to the development of a
more inclusive society. Pateman and Ken Williment’s book *Developing
Community-Led Public Libraries: Evidence from the UK and Canada*
provides a comprehensive theoretical and practical overview of the
community-led model of library service. Social exclusion affects groups
of people who are poor, unemployed or underemployed, racial, ethnic and
cultural minorities, and those who are marginalized because of gender,
sexual orientation, age or disability. Pateman and Williment advocate
prioritizing the needs of these groups by actively engaging them in library
planning. This means going beyond the traditional outreach approach,
which takes already-designed services into the community, and instead
embracing a community development approach in which librarians build
meaningful long-term relationships with socially excluded groups and work
with them as equal partners to plan and produce services. The community-
led model doesn’t require us to abandon our current users, but it does mean
giving at least the same priority to the needs of socially excluded groups
that we’ve traditionally given to the needs of affluent middle-class people
in the communities we serve.

Of course, the management philosophies and practices of most libraries
make implementing these community-building models on more than
a limited scale very difficult. Public library boards tend to represent the 
most affluent and privileged sectors of their communities, so instead of 
community-building librarianship, we get customer-driven librarianship 
and the “business model.”

As my fellow panelist John Buschman argues in his 2003 book Dismantling 
the Public Sphere, customer-driven librarianship is undermining the 
public sphere role of libraries as institutions that organize and circulate 
intellectually diverse discourses, that provide resources for rational 
argumentation and truth verification, and that create spaces for alternative 
views of the world and society. The customer-driven model manifests 
itself in the demand for “accountability” and “quality measurement” to 
justify funding, which assumes that the social value of a library service is 
measurable and quantifiable (i.e., a commodity with an exchange value), 
and in the growing emphasis on marketing, public relations and “brand 
identity,” which assumes that emulating the ethos and practices of private 
enterprise is the best way to improve the library’s financial position (the 
reality being that libraries are struggling financially more than ever despite 
their efforts to imitate the private sector). It also appears in the “give ‘em 
what they want” philosophy of collection development, which abandons 
any notion of intrinsic merit and the library’s responsibility to provide 
the widest possible diversity of viewpoints and forms of expression, in 
favor of collecting and retaining only what is currently most “popular,” 
as defined by circulation statistics. This philosophy assimilates the library 
into a corporate-controlled media system that marginalizes unorthodox 
and oppositional viewpoints and non-commodified forms of knowledge 
and cultural expression, with the result that increasingly only the most 
profitable products of the biggest corporate media conglomerates are 
represented in library collections.

Customer-driven, “business model” librarianship reproduces existing 
social inequalities because it reduces library services and collections 
— public resources that belong to the entire community — to the status 
of commodities while suppressing questions about class, culture, power, 
knowledge and social responsibilities. The advocates of the customer-
driven model call this “neutrality,” because they subscribe to an ideology 
that sees the market as an impartial arbiter of the public good. In fact, 
they’re partisans of the status quo, because they’re ignoring the needs of 
socially excluded people and impeding the development of the community-
building librarianship needed to transform libraries into vehicles of social 
emancipation and the renewal of democratic culture.

Public libraries today are contested ideological terrain where frontline 
librarians struggle to implement community-building strategies in a 
professional environment increasingly permeated by the ideology of 
customer-driven “business model” librarianship. The customer-driven 
model treats library resources and services as products to be “marketed” 
and assimilates the library into a corporate-controlled media system 
that marginalizes unorthodox and oppositional viewpoints and non-
commodified forms of knowledge and cultural expression. It reduces the purpose of library programming to mere “infotainment” and “boosting the gate count,” instead of developing substantive educational and cultural content aimed at improving public participation, increasing understanding of critical issues we face as a society, and facilitating the self-emancipation of the oppressed and socially marginalized people in our communities.

Thus the customer-driven model deprofessionalizes librarians by rendering their professional knowledge, subject knowledge and critical understanding of their social responsibilities and purpose irrelevant. After all, it doesn’t require an MLIS-degreed librarian to provide tech support to computer users, plan entertaining programs devoid of substantive educational and cultural content, and manage collections based solely on circulation statistics.

Another name for the ideology of customer-driven librarianship is “neoliberalism.” Neoliberal doctrine maintains that market forces are the ultimate arbiter of the public good and that public sector institutions such as libraries need to justify their existence in purely economic terms. But the value of library resources and services is social, not economic. In the long run I believe that community building, not emulating the ethos and practices of the private sector, is the best way to guarantee the survival of the library as a public institution.
As consumer wearable health and mobile health technologies become embedded in everyday life, coalescing with the integration and use of personal health data and the personal health record in the sprawling domains of the medical-industrial complex (MIC), health/information literacy (H/IL) and data information literacy (DIL), become more important, both for users of these wearable devices and for undergraduate students who might be folded into the research process as participants or researchers. The present paper argues for the integration of information literacy skills and instruction with a critical understanding of personal health data to provide useful skills for managing the massive amounts of personal health data that users are generating. My goal is to argue for an expansion of data information literacy to provide the necessary skills for users and researchers to critically assess their relationship to personal health data, understanding the concurrent modes of doing and undergoing surveillance.

Personal Health Data, Surveillance & Biopolitical Possibilities

Personal health data allows for what the medical institution views as a positive surveillance that breaks down the false dichotomy of the public/private. Health data can constantly be collected, allowing for data to be collected outside of the space of the medical institution. The personal health record correlates with a move away from medical paternalism and provides patients with the opportunity to be more involved in their own health; however, this patient engagement functions within the neoliberal paradigm to shift the burden from the institution to the individual where individualism is conflated with freedom. Further, the personal health record functions within the neoliberal expectation of self-surveillance.

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where personal health data is continually provided to the record to assist patients and professionals.

Wearable health technology refers to a broad array of technologies worn by an individual to monitor various health or bodily processes to develop data and informatics. Recently, consumer health wearables have rapidly entered the market as options for self-surveillance, an important objective of the neoliberal subject, to improve health and develop new habits (French and Smith; Rich and Miah; Shilton). These technologies can vary significantly in size and design, including headbands, watches, wristbands, badges, camera clips, and sensor-embedded clothing (Piwek et al. 2). Functionality and data collected also varies significantly, including sleep tracking, pedometer, thermometer, accelerometer, heart rate monitor, altimeter, GPS, oximeter, etc. (Piwek et al. 2). These devices also produce massive amounts of data that can be integrated into the personal health record and made available to the medical institution. Nonetheless, research on these devices has shown that they’re unreliable and inconsistent and that they reinforce current habits rather than helping to develop new ones (Bassett, Rowlands and Trost; Evenson, Goto and Furberg; Lee, Kim and Welk; Wen et al.; Yingling et al.; Patel, Asch and Volpp). Further, for consumer devices, the company that produces the device owns the user’s health data, putting the user in a precarious position. (Kostkova et al.; Hall).

The quick expansion of these technologies is representative of the technological sublime, a general awe or amazement related to technology and explains the preoccupation with and desire for the newest technology. In relation to surveillance, “[t]he sublime response relies on and resides in the publicity of the technology’s grandeur [...] Once it becomes spectacle, surveillance technology can dazzle and intimidate” (Maxwell 9). The technological sublime encourages a fear and anxiety surrounding surveillance technologies; however, the reality of such technologies doesn’t always live up to the fear.

Even the systems that surveil us break, which is perhaps a reminder of Susan Leigh Star’s claim that infrastructure is invisible until it breaks down, especially for government surveillance and health infrastructure; though, in this case, the breakdown of government surveillance infrastructure is important to reveal these practices to individuals (Star 382). However, the technological sublime explains the desire to enact technological surveillance simply because it is possible, which validates a feeling of paranoia for users. We constantly balance feelings of fear about what technology can do that are exacerbated in the popular imaginary while also attempting to resist the very real possibilities of surveillance technologies. However, we must also be aware of perceptions often generated of limited available modes of life for anyone who chooses not to be technological.

Biopolitics, as popularized by Michel Foucault, refers to disciplinary practices or other mechanisms used by a state to control and manage the
possibilities and ways of living for its subjects. Susan Stryker expands on Foucauldian biopolitics as “the calculus of costs and benefits through which the biological capacities of a population are optimally managed for state or state-like ends” (Stryker 38). Put simply, biopolitics refers to state control over the way its subjects live and die.

Further, personal health data is situated within the commercialization and corporatization of health care inherent in the neoliberal paradigm and the medical-industrial complex, constituting an important facet of the neoliberal carceral archipelago. Stated differently, the medical-industrial complex is a state-like institution that continues to support the state’s ability to control its subject, and the self-surveillance and personal collection of health data provides an easier way for subjects to be controlled and monitored. This trend coincides with the previously mentioned dissolution of the false dichotomy of public and private, coinciding with the rise of social networking and data sharing—both in terms of personal data and research data. Many wearable health and mobile health technologies allow users to share personal health data publicly, supporting social activity and competition. These features are evidence of the learned expectation of control under neoliberalism that supports the functioning of the biopolitical control state. The burden of surveillance is taken from the state and placed on the neoliberal subject, positioning the individual to provide the state the data that allows it to control their biological capacities and ultimately damns them.

Further, privacy, or any separation between public and private, is not universally attainable but a privileged position. Maxwell points out that “workers, the under- and disemployed, the incarcerated, the homeless, and those dependent on welfare (most of whom are women) are the most exposed to surveillance and the least enfranchised of privacy rights” (13). He provides a further exploration of the balancing act between providing information (or allowing surveillance) and rewards, equally applicable to the realm of healthcare, where rewards might be literally life-altering: “And for those who can tap into the privilege of privacy rights, the right to be left alone is sometimes no match for powerful inducements to be watched” (Maxwell 14).

So, what possibilities exist for the biopolitical manipulation of this data both in terms of futuristic imaginaries and present realities? In 2014, Fitbit data was used in a personal injury lawsuit, and, though data in this case was provided willingly, this pushes the responsibility of surveillance from state-like corporations to individuals (Olson; Gibbs). In 2015, Fitbit data was used to delegitimize a women’s rape claim, using self-surveillance data against the owner and making personal data public (Hill; Moon). These two cases set a legal precedent for the admissibility of Fitbit and other consumer health wearable technology data, allowing for future possibilities for personal health data to be used against individuals to control their various ways of life or to deem certain lives less worth living because of conceptions of health (Alba; Hall).
Further, current public and global health interventions using consumer health wearables, mobile health applications, and personal health data have focused on people who have Type II diabetes or who are identified by medical metrics as obese (Gilmore; Heintzman; Klonoff; Rehman et al.). In both cases, these interventions focus on bodies that diverge from an institutionalized construction of health. As the practice continues to move into the workplace and health insurance protocols, additional controls will be placed on the neoliberal worker/workplace to produce more productive workers. Hence, the medical-industrial complex targets certain bodies that are deemed unhealthy, and thus lives “unlivable,” as neoliberal subjects for self-surveillance to achieve “health” (and livability) through public and global health interventions as well as product marketing, though consumer health wearable devices have been shown to be less effective in producing positive health behaviors (Omura et al.; Patel, Asch and Volpp; Yingling et al.). The focus is on positive behavioral changes for the purpose of achieving a health status that is beneficial to the state and hence makes a life livable. What other deviant modes of health and life will this technology target, such as queers or sex workers?

Modes of life and health that diverge from this state expectation are deemed unlivable, and hence, become targets for technologies of self-surveillance. Again, positioning the neoliberal subject to supply the data that the state can use to metricize (un)livability of (un)healthy bodies. Understanding the precarious landscape of personal health data generated from mobile health applications and consumer health wearables, libraries and librarians have a responsibility to prepare users and communities to protect themselves or at least be aware of the possibilities inherent in their self-surveillance.

**Personal Health Data & Information Literacies**

Much research has focused on developing data information literacy (DIL) skills for students or researchers to ethically maintain, use, and reuse data, but there has been less of a focus on developing data management skills for the protection of personal (health) data (Carlson et al.; Cleveland and Cleveland; Federer; Hoffman; Macy and Coates; Shorish). DIL has also focused on data management for researchers to keep, maintain, and share data, which is perhaps antithetical to the privacy of individual users. As these new modes of generating health data become more common, management of personal health records and personal health data through DIL skills is important. DIL skills can be used in instruction for both medical and health professionals as well as for users and patients to prepare individuals on both sides of the information system for knowledge management and personal protection.

Carlson et al. argue that it’s important to differentiate data information literacy from other literacies, such as information literacy or data literacy, both of which are also relevant here (633). They argue that “data literacy involves understanding what data mean, including how to read graphs and
charts appropriately, draw correct conclusions from data, and recognize when data are being used in misleading or inappropriate ways” (Carlson et al. 633). For Carlson et al. these literacies (data, information, and statistical) build on top of each other, becoming necessary building blocks for the creation of DIL. Carlson et al. define DIL as the merging of “the concepts of researcher-as-producer and researcher-as-consumer” (634). They argue that other literacies focus on the way that data, (health) information, or statistics (for example) are consumed, but DIL requires this dual focus. However, the focus here is still on the individual’s status as a researcher, missing the possibility for non-researchers to produce data through these surveillance mechanisms. Further, it focuses on an intentionality of data production and sharing that is not necessarily inherent and intentional in the individual generation of personal health data. It misses the important possibility of simply creating data in our daily lives, outside of the environment of “research.”

Information literacy refers to knowing when information is required and being able to find and access the necessary information. More importantly, Eamon Tewell describes critical information literacy as a process that “examines the social construction and political dimensions of information, and problematizes information’s development, use, and purposes with the intent of prompting students to think critically about such forces and act upon this knowledge” (Tewell 36).

Expanding this to personal health data, a critical literacy would require the understanding of previously mentioned biopolitical possibilities for data situated in the power relations of neoliberal subjects to state and state-like institutions such as the medical-industrial complex. Further, a focus on critical literacy frees us from the falsehood of library neutrality, allowing this deconstruction of power relations, which is essential for an understanding of how personal health data can impact our lives. Data is constructed in power relations and for non-neutral purposes.

Arguing about the ACRL Framework, “Joshua Beatty (2014) finds the Framework to be a significant improvement to the Standards, yet that the document is still articulated in the rhetoric of neoliberalism and reinforces the notion that the way information is produced and commodified is a natural condition that need not be challenged” (Ewell 36). While preparing users, students, and researchers to protect themselves and their personal health data is important, it’s also important to be aware of the authoritarian institutions that profit from surveillance capitalism and the surveillance of our personal health. The production and commodification of the data itself is the primary site of confrontation.

A Possibility for Personal Health Data Information Literacy

Data information literacy for personal health (DILPH) requires a focus on data and information ethics. It requires confronting surveillance capitalism and modes of authoritarian control that continue to seep into our information
systems. As previously discussed, personal health data has many biopolitical possibilities and is strongly connected to the power relations of the medical-industrial complex and surveillance capitalism. As public health and other medical/health professions continue to see surveillance as a positive component (a sort of surveillance-care), providing greater health benefits, it’s necessary to confront continued surveillance, data sharing and networking, and other practices that are imbricated in discussions of data management and DIL. Providing data to these institutions means allowing them to handle the protection of that data, and the existence of the data itself creates the issue. This data makes us vulnerable.

However, the goal of DILPH shouldn’t necessarily be to stop the use of devices that gather personal health data, especially since many smart phones include a health app that can’t be deleted. Rather, the focus should be on educating people about these possibilities, about how personal health data is being tracked and used, and about what people can do. We are constantly being surveilled, but DILPH should make individuals more aware of that surveillance while helping them define how they are known by the state: “The political (and epistemological) question is not whether individuals are known and typified. We always are. Rather, it is a question of how individuals are known and typified—by whom, to whom, as what, and toward what end we are made visible” (Phillips 95). How can librarians help individuals make informed decisions about when to “come out” (disclose) or “pass” (conceal) and when these are possible with regard to personal health information?

In this vein, for librarians to be involved in DILPH instruction, they must be able to support the activist initiatives of individuals. While people can limit surveillance and make decisions to limit self-surveillance, the root of the issue is the neoliberal production and commodification of personal health data that makes personal collection unsafe. This is the primary site of confrontation which requires activist initiatives to deconstruct corporate and government control. Maxwell argues that “the more that private corporate interests intercede in the business of surveillance in the name of national security, the more structurally disengaged the American people will become from the processes that determine how surveillance is developed and deployed” (16). Health surveillance, especially for public health, can often be operationalized for national security, but DILPH should provide individuals with the knowledge and ability to engage with how surveillance is developed and deployed. How can we confront the technological sublime without reinscribing/reenacting the fear and anxiety that sublimity creates?

While it seems like a modern fallacy to claim that more data always produces better results, the possibility still exists that providing additional data will allow for improved clinical research and individual outcomes; however, as long as the data exists in the unsafe and volatile domain of the medical-industrial complex and the neoliberal state, there are significant costs and benefits for individuals sharing personal data with institutions.
What changes in medical, data, and information ethics are necessary to achieve important protection for individuals and a separation between health or medicine and the state?

**Conclusion**

The existence of personal health data makes us vulnerable to a variety of negative possibilities. Data information literacy and critical information literacy skills can be used to provide individuals with the necessary tools to critically assess the collection and dissemination of this information. The library and librarians are uniquely situated to provide these services, to develop instruction related to data information literacy for personal health, and to provide necessary resources for potential social activism.

My goal here is not to move the onus of data protection from institutions, researchers, and technologies to patients and users, but rather, to realize that these things are not perfect and cannot be, to realize that people will act unethically, and to engage (data) information literacy skills to help patients and users protect or limit the creation of personal health data in light of the biopolitical and necropolitical possibilities of the proliferation and dissemination of personal health data, through social networking, consumer wearables, mobile health technologies, or other possibilities that are not yet.

**Endnotes**

1. See Ara Wilson’s “The Infrastructure of Intimacy” for a longer review of literature on the public/private.
2. As a very brief subjectivity statement, I own and wear a Fitbit.
3. It’s useful to keep in mind that “freedom” in the neoliberal context primarily refers to freedom of markets but not necessarily freedom for individuals to act, so choice is already an incredibly limited concept.
4. This isn’t even to mention the possibilities for algorithmic and mathematical violence, such as using personal health data for actuarial calculations or for algorithms that predict changes in health.
5. The ACRL Framework often reminds me of a quote from Eve Sedgwick about the necessity of a “hermeneutics of suspicion”: “It reminds me of the bumper stickers that instruct people in other cars to ‘Question Authority.’ Excellent advice, perhaps wasted on anyone who does whatever they’re ordered to do by a strip of paper glued to an automobile! The imperative framing will do funny things to a hermeneutics of suspicion” (Sedgwick 125).
6. DILPH should be pronounced as DILF, but not like Dad Is Looking Fine, DILF, but rather Dad Isn’t Using My Personal Health Data To Control The Modes of Life, DILPH.

**Works Cited**


Higher Learning and the American Academic Library in the Twilight Era of Neoliberalism

a review essay by John M. Budd and Bart M. Harloe

The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them by Christopher Newfield (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016)
Reimagining the Academic Library by David W. Lewis (Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016)

And the future does not look promising. The cost of a university education has risen since 1972 at more than triple the overall rate of inflation. Between 2001 and 2012, funding by states and localities for higher education declined by fully a third when adjusted for inflation. … Even when account is taken of the discounts from full tuition made possible by scholarships and fellowships, the current level of American college completion has been made possible only by a dramatic rise in student borrowing. Americans now owe $1.2 trillion in college debt. Robert J. Gordon (2016)

Introduction: What Was Neoliberalism?

The four books under review in this essay depict and analyze the current state of higher education in the United States from the perspective of faculty, administrators, and librarians. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008-09, we will argue that the privatized system of higher education

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built over the last 40 years has not only put at risk democratic access to education but also undermined the scholarly communication system that allows students and faculty to participate effectively in research, teaching and learning. In order to fully understand our predicament and to be able to offer constructive solutions requires that we understand the neoliberal regime that underlies not only the higher education sector but also frames our conception of what constitutes a just order in the 21st century. We will argue during the course of this review that rising inequality is not just a “bug” of the system, but rather it is a determining “feature” of a higher education sector that is used to justify ever more dysfunctional outcomes for middle and working class families especially.

Defining Neoliberalism

If we are to critique higher education and academic libraries in an environment of neoliberalism, it is incumbent upon us to define the term as we intend to employ it. David Harvey (2005) offers the beginning of a definition: “It holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transaction, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market” (p. 3). He (2005) expands to relate how neoliberalism can affect what he refers to as the dispossession of a substantial portion of the populace:

Accumulation by dispossession comprises four main features:

1. Privatization and commodification.
2. Financialization.
3. The management and manipulation of crises.
4. State redistributions (pp. 160-63; italics in original).

In addition to Harvey’s four main factors, we would add one more determining element (especially in the American context) and that is:

5. A sublime faith in the ability of technology to provide solutions to higher education problems in general and to stimulate economic productivity in the process.

More and more, campus leaders are being hired not from the faculty, but from the private sector. With these hires (as single- or multi-campus leaders) and with the proclivity of governing boards to seek out such individuals, the total environment of the institution is altered.

There are still others who have written critical observations about neoliberalism and its effects on higher education:

Neo-liberalism has spread its clutches globally in the sphere of higher education. Its powerful discourse can be witnessed in terms of change in public higher policy. The basis has shifted from a traditional welfare approach to a more privatized, market-oriented approach. The
self-interested individual, free market economics, a commitment to laissez-faireism and free trade are the defining characteristics of this “new brand of neo-liberalism” that has fundamentally brought changes in higher education policy (Gupta, 2015, p. 6).

Inclusion of the welfare approach is not common in critiques, but it does have application to discussion of the environment of colleges and universities. Tania Gupta (2015) goes on to say, “Marketing in education is right out front. The increased demand for higher education has led to changes in the supply. Higher education, initially a government-supported service has entered the marketplace. Governments are not thinking much about how the universities are managed” (p. 10).

We will further argue that higher education is at the center of the neoliberal system because it justifies a “meritocracy” and, at the same time, rationalizes the unequal distribution of resources by in effect hiding the wealth factor in plain sight. Indeed, as Walter Benn Michaels has argued, “Schools loom larger in the neoliberal imagination than they did in the liberal imagination because schools have become our primary mechanism for convincing ourselves that poor people deserve their poverty. Or, to put the point the other way around, schools have become our primary mechanism for convincing rich people that they deserve their wealth.” (Michaels, 2006, p.97).

Finally, while all of the foregoing observations have merit and should be heeded, the primary usage of the word (for the present purposes) is provided by Wendy Brown (2015). She readily admits to the economic and political impact of the neoliberal imperative, recognizing that the elements of the above definitions do obtain. However, among other things, Brown (2015) observes that “neoliberalism” can be termed an empty signifier, in the language of semiotics (p. 20). This means that a word or term may not have a stable referent, that it points to no universal and agreed upon meaning. Brown’s observation would appear to present a problem for the present examination, but she goes on to present a useful and cogent way of studying neoliberalism and the conditions it spawns. Quite succinctly, she (2015) says, “Neoliberalism is a distinctive mode of reason, of the production of subjects, a ‘conduct of conduct,’ and a scheme of valuation” (p. 21).

Brown’s usage of the word includes the awareness of the historical frame of the condition as it necessitates expanding the notion to a sphere of rationality. Because in many ways the management of academic libraries in the early part of the 21st century exemplifies this mode of reasoning, we will follow this logic deep into the technical and administrative systems that are evolving rapidly in the neoliberal twilight period of history, post-hoc the so-called “Great Recession.” We hope to demonstrate in the process that this kind of rationality can be seen as a pervasive mode of thinking, not merely about the operations of higher education and academic libraries, but the very idea of purpose as well.
The Two Faces of Neoliberalism:
Privatization of the Public and Commodification of the Private

Christopher Newfield, a professor of literature and American Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has witnessed the dire impact of neoliberalism firsthand. The author of two highly regarded books on public higher education, he has been able to marshal his experience in the UC system to develop a sophisticated and very critical account of the decline of the public university in America. In his latest book, The Great Mistake (2016), he posits his thesis early on in the book: Higher education “has been broken by too much private funding and service to private interests” (p. 4). It may be the latter in Newfield’s diagnosis that is most pertinent to the present discussion. He analyzes the state of affairs further and even offers some possible ways of resolving many of the problematic issues that plague higher education today. In furthering his diagnosis he (2016) says, “Turning universities into private businesses is not the cure for the college cost problem, but rather its cause” (p. 26). There are several ways the costs have increased—for everyone—and Newfield discusses some of the causes for the problems that students, faculty, and institutions face.

Consistent with a reaction to neoliberal forces is a workable idea of “public.” Higher education, according to Newfield and others, is supposed to be a public, rather than a private, good. A task that faces any analyst is defining that idea of public. Raymond Geuss (2001) tackles this task in the form of some essential questions:

(a) What kind of and how extensive a sphere is it advisable to have that is defended from encroachment by “the public”?
(b) What is meant by “the public” in (a): does it mean only the government, or does it include more general social institutions, practices, public opinions?
(c) For what reason is it advisable to defend the private sphere . . . from “the public” . . . ?
(d) How is the defense to be enforced (e.g., through legal means, economic means, etc.)? (p. 80)

Is higher education constituted by the public? Does it encroach upon the private? Newfield answers the first question in the affirmative and the second in the negative. In fact, he (2016) says that “a public good is a good whose benefit continues to increase as it approaches universal access” (p. 64). If all qualified individuals had access to public higher education, the growth of the benefits to society could possibly be geometric, rather than arithmetic. A mitigating factor to the growth of education as a public good, however, is the fact that higher education is a rivalrous good. That is, if individual 1 is admitted to institution A, it may be that individual 2 cannot be admitted to that institution; there are limits to effective enrollment (see Newfield, 2016, pp. 64-66 and Mettler, 2014, pp. 8-9). Related to higher education as a rivalrous good (which is an economic principle) is the reality that while potential students and their families may have a notion of
enrollment in a university as having private, market-based, benefits, those people have a poor understanding of the non-market private and social benefits (Newfield, 2016, p. 69).

It is the non-market benefits that are opposed to the neoliberal ideal of solely market-based private benefits. Also, the non-market benefits are in opposition to the “transaction” principle of neoliberalism. What this means is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to measure the two sides of a decision to attend a university in the terms of a transaction. If someone can afford—or can absorb sufficient debt—to attend a university, that person can trade the monetary or debt resources for a set of skills that will render the person employable in a particular field. There are multiple aspects to the transaction and its outcome. For one thing, the exchange actually results in the person acquiring skills; for another, the person may acquire a “simulacrum” of skills that still enables the person to become employed. The result is a transaction that is nominally favorable to the person who undertakes it. That, though, is only one result; another may be a state in which the graduate is not fully able to engage in the polity of a community (or state, or nation). As Mettler (2014) observes, “Because education powerfully affects who exercises a political voice, the quality of our democracy itself is at stake” (p. 39). In order to break with the transaction mentality, according to Newfield, emphasis must be placed on higher-order thinking. Vocational instruction has a place in education, but universities ought to offer intellectually demanding courses, have high expectations for students, and work to minimize work for pay by making the acquisition of a degree affordable, among other things (see Newfield, 2016, pp. 265-66). Emphasis is on the affordability element and the diminution of student debt. The high costs and the rising debt have been offshoots of the transaction character of public higher education. To quote James Kwak (2017), “Competitive markets can be a wonderful thing. The problem is that the popular case for free markets is too often applied unthinkingly to virtually the entire sphere of social interaction, with little or no regard for the complexity of the real world” (p. 15).

The competition that Kwak speaks of is addressed by Newfield. In particular, Newfield decries the quest for external funding for a few reasons. Among the most pertinent here are that the search for funding takes away time from teaching and actual inquiry, and that the attraction of external funding has costs associated with it. In fact, the costs tend to exceed the money that is brought in to the university. He (2016) writes, “universities have only half the market picture. They are good at seeking revenues and raising costs, but bad at controlling them. Market discipline is the missing piece of the puzzle here” (p. 147). He presents data that illustrate how the direct expenditures related to seeking funding lead to net losses when one considers the time taken to write proposals, manage the funds, siphon off funds to operate offices of research, and money taken from indirect costs. In public institutions the losses can only be covered by state appropriations and student tuition. As the former shrinks, either the latter must cover the losses or the deficit spending grows. He also points
out that the direct expenditures related to sponsored research is restricted; that is, money dedicated to, say, biomedical research cannot be used to fund graduate students in the English department (even if there is a need for money to be spent on the graduate students).

The foregoing challenges all have an impact on academic libraries. The sources of funding, the size of student debt, the management of research affect what libraries aim to accomplish and how they aim to meet the needs of the institution. One additional phenomenon can have an even more direct effect on academic libraries and the manner in which the libraries and librarians seek to foster academic goals. In recent years, massive open online courses (MOOCs) have been developed for many reasons—reaching more students efficiently, standardizing instruction at some levels of education, and fixing teaching costs. Little will be said about the structure of MOOCs here; for more on their means of operation, see, “The Pedagogical Foundations of MOOCs,” (2013). Newfield (2016) explains part of the attraction of MOOCs: “The revolution sprang from thinking of education as an information and telecommunications industry in which the main obstacle to learning was the lack of digital delivery. Traditional colleges had come to depend on an expensive physical plant, and that was a needless bottleneck” (p. 229). Also, MOOCs seemed to have the potential to tap into a global market for educational courses.

Newfield critiques the premises upon which MOOCs have been built, including the claims that quality of instruction is as high as traditional educational models and that costs would be uniformly lowered in ways that would render the technological solution a cost-effective one. Perhaps of primary importance is a meta-analysis he cites that shows placing existing courses online does not prove to be effective as a learning strategy, while traditional courses can benefit by incorporating online technologies into a thorough-going pedagogical effort (Means, et al., 2009). He further mentions that the pass rates in many MOOCs are disappointingly low, indicating that the mass-market approach does not work as an effective pedagogical tool. He (2016) concludes, “Concentration, focus, repetition, failure, self-correction, and practice—these are among the essential learning processes that good technology can assist but not replace” (p. 253). Further, social differences tend to be ignored in MOOCs, teacher contributions tend to be stereotyped, pedagogical research tends to be ignored, and results tend to be misstated (see Newfield, 2016, p. 255).

Newfield’s solutions include reforming funding for higher education, emphasizing in general that education is a genuine public good. He urges that tuition rates reverse their course, ultimately leading to no tuition charged to students. Ideally, student debt should be reduced to zero. The opportunities for higher learning must achieve equity with respect to race and class so that there is no more “elite” student body in terms of socio-economic demographics. Ultimately, if his reforms could be put into place, the goal would be that there are increased pressures for wages. Newfield is not a voice crying in the wilderness. Walter McMahon (2009) states
that “the non-market returns are separate and discrete from the market returns” (p. 6). McMahon maintains that the non-market returns are real and measurable. What Newfield (and others) are trying to convey is that, not only are there serious problems with higher education today and that those problems have neoliberal roots, but that there can be solutions to the problems if everyone realizes that higher education is not solely market-based or grounded in the mentality of transactions.

Moving from the world of public higher education so well described by Chris Newfield to the elite world of private higher education that William Bowen occupied for over 40 years is very much a journey from the privation of the public to the commodified world of privilege in the Ivy League. Bowen and co-author Michael McPherson set out in their last book what they consider to be a Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education (2016). In this book, the authors describe the many ways in which extreme income inequality undermine both access to (and the experience of) higher education by lower and middle-class families. They even provide well-constructed social science data analyses to show this impact at both the micro and macro levels of the systems of private and public education. But they insist nevertheless, that while “growing inequality is, in our view, a serious national problem,” it is also “one that is outside the purview of this study.” (Bowen and McPherson, 2016, p.51). Again and again they outline a critical problem and then step back from a serious approach to reform that might allow for real change. For example, they recognize that the financial aid system really is non-transparent in ways that does real harm to families for the lower and middle income sectors of American society. They might even agree with Sara Goldrick-Rab (2016, pp. 251-252) in her description of how the emphasis on so-called merit rather than need works to the detriment of a truly egalitarian approach to financial aid:

Spending on non-need based aid perpetuates inequality. Twenty eight percent of all state aid and 31 percent of all institutional aid distributed in this manner flows to students from families in the top 25 percent of income distribution. Students from well-off families not only have no unmet need but their needs are overmet – while those of middle and working-class families go wanting.

The idea that the tax structure might be altered in any way to try to overcome the escalating problem of inequality is beyond the pale. They conclude solemnly, “these considerations lead us to doubt the wisdom of stating that free tuition should be even an aspirational goal. It is important to keep ideology under control and to recognize that, as economists say, there is no free lunch.” (Bowen and McPherson, 2016, p. 90). Rather, the authors recommend that “we put aside all-or-nothing solutions to financing higher education and focus instead on the real questions of balance, trade-offs, and affordability.” (Bowen and McPherson, 2016, p. 76). Thus, while Newfield outlines a bold approach for change in his book, Bowen and McPherson’s “Agenda” focuses on a more conservative transactional approach.
latter might be appropriate for those working within the confines of the elite private higher education arena like Bowen and McPherson, but this more incremental strategy compounds the problem for those experiencing the ongoing crisis of public higher education in places like California’s UC system.

As Newfield indicates, at the center of the neoliberal approach to higher education is an economic model of pricing based upon the notion of what Bowen and his colleague William Baumol call the “cost disease.” (Bowen and Baumol, 1966). This model suggests that colleges have to increase the price of tuition because economic efficiencies are hard to come by. In brief, this is because teaching and learning turn out to be very labor intensive. This argument, first set out in an article that they published in 1966, compares teaching to the work of a Mozart string quartet – any performance would always require four players and it would last approximately the same amount of time. Labor saving in the form of staff reduction is not an option in this case. And the players would have to receive increased wages over a period of time merely to keep up with existing wage increases in other professions; but productivity would more or less remain the same. Higher education is thus very prone to the so-called “cost disease,” they conclude, which explains why there are increases in the price of college that seem somehow out of control.

However, built into the “cost disease” model are some neoliberal assumptions: (1) that higher ed. is essentially a business and that economic modes of analysis are central to understanding how it can be improved; (2) that private markets are “progressive” in nature and produce (almost automatically) increases in productivity and efficiency while sectors like education are part of the “stagnant” sector, where “productivity is constant or growing very slowly;” (Baumol, 2012, p. 25); (3) Consequently, “innovation” is very hard to come by in higher ed. as these basic economic constraints make real gains very difficult. (As Bowen frequently remarks, it is even difficult to decide what the measurable metrics might be in most cases); (4) Nevertheless, Bowen and McPherson confirm that it is important to keep on trying to find the kind of economic efficiencies that would make American higher education more competitive and more affordable, including especially new technologies that might save dollars and provide for more effective kinds of teaching, learning, and scholarship.

Now let’s take a deeper look at the so-called cost disease, especially in relation to the way academic libraries are funded. The first thing to say about it is that even on its own narrow economic frame of reference, the cost disease analogy is problematic. As the economist Robert Gordon has remarked, “Even though Baumol was writing in 1967, the constraints imposed by this disease were already loosened as long ago as July, 1877, when Thomas Edison invented the phonograph.” (Gordon, 2016, p. 186). The cost disease argument becomes even more problematic when it comes to organizations like academic libraries, whose overall purpose might said to be supporting teaching, learning and research by providing resources and
staff in support of those overriding missions. Libraries build collections and provide technology-based solutions that enable teaching and scholarship – the idea of focusing on the cost disease model as a way to think about these kinds of activities seems to be on its face a kind of category mistake. And while academic libraries usually deploy resources and staff with a very critical view of cost and the impact on local budgets, etc., that critical view does not ultimately determine final resource allocation decisions in most cases. We will return to this argument in a moment, but for now, suffice it to say that the narrow economistic argument detailed in the so-called “cost disease” analogy really does not fit the case of higher ed. in general or libraries in particular.

At this point, the neoliberal argument developed by Bowen (and other academic administrators) takes what we might call the “technology turn,” that is, we begin to see an increasing focus on how technology in the 21st century can provide ways and means for delivering education at both the classroom and network levels in an efficient and cost effective way. Or at least that is the mantra. Christopher Newfield is rightly suspicious of the role of MOOCs, especially for public higher education. The decline of quality of instruction for undergrads seems like a probable outcome and the assessments that have been done so far indicate that online learning in general has yet to find a model that can come even close to the kind of pedagogy regularly experienced by undergrads at Yale and Princeton. In Bowen’s other recent book entitled Higher Education in the Digital Age (2014), he admitted that “a big barrier to greater acceptance of online learning is the lack of evidence concerning both learning outcomes and cost savings.” (Bowen, 2014, p. 157). Despite this lack, the neoliberal infatuation with technological solutionism continues apace. What does this mean for the “post-modern” academic library? Chad Wellmon (2015) provides an excellent point of departure for a deeper exploration of the role of academic libraries in this new environment: “New information technologies have taken over some of the research university’s traditional functions. For well over a century, the research university organized bibliographic information, because the university research library was the primary repository of print-based knowledge. But now Google’s search engines and related online tools made possible the creation of bibliographies outside the university library; its book scanning project provides access to many of the world’s books without the mediation of a university library.” (2015, pp. 271-272).

Whither Academic Libraries?

What should be the role of the “unbundled” academic library in the new media ecosystem and how should libraries organize themselves in a world where print and digital intermingle and students and faculty seek to access information and build credible knowledge that can be both shared and communicated? In his new book entitled Reimagining the Academic Library (2016), David Lewis scouts out a new path for a profession interested in creating an effective organization able and willing to meet
the scholarly needs of the 21st century. We will first examine his idea of the innovative academic library and then provide an alternative model for those interested in moving beyond the neoliberal mode of analysis.

Lewis begins his book with the following statement: “Today academic libraries are in the midst of a transformation of the basic strategies they use to provide documents and the information they contain. In so doing, we are altering centuries-old practice.” (Lewis, 2016, p.xx). Lewis first outlines what he calls “The Forces We Face,” and then in the second part of the book, he articulates the steps libraries need to take to make the transition to the digital world. The “forces,” Lewis argues, define the parameters of what academic libraries will be able to do in the near term, thus setting the stage for a set of strategic considerations he calls “The Steps Down the Road.” Finally, he concludes his book with a very practical chapter entitled “Ten Things to do Now” (Lewis, 2016, p. 155-158):

1. Retire the legacy print collection.
2. Develop a space plan.
3. Have a materials budget Strategy to Manage the Transition from Traditional Publishing Models to Open Access.
4. Support the Creation of, Access to, and Preservation of the Scholarly Content Created on your own Campus.
5. Commit to the Special Collections Your Library Will Support and Make the Required Investments.
6. Infuse the Curriculum with the Skills Necessary to Create and Consume Information Productively.
7. Understand the Demographics of Your Organization and Have a Plan to Hire and Develop the Expertise that Your Library Will Need.
8. Get the Culture Right.
10. Sell the Change.

Lewis seems to assume that most academic libraries will be able to pursue these kinds of very practical recommendations. And for the most part, the book lays out a plan that is reasonable and rational, if the reader assumes that library leaders are in a position to pursue these goals. There is not space here to unpack all the good logic behind his approach. Rather, we would like to focus here on #10; that is, how do library leaders indeed “sell the change(s)” within the culture of the current neoliberal academy?

In other words, given the institutional setting described by Newfield and Bowen and the constraints that Lewis himself outlines, how can library leaders build a narrative for change that has the potential for positive impacts in academe? Here is where Lewis goes astray as he seeks to build his own arguments around the business theories of Clayton Christensen and the notion of “creative disruption.” It is hard to imagine a more inappropriate approach if one really wants to make the case for change in academe. Why embed your arguments about strategic change for an academic library in a
business theory that is in fact hostile to the ways and means of academic culture in general and libraries in particular? It is important to note that the so-called Innovative University (2011) imagined by Christensen and his colleague Henry Eyring is really just another privatized corporate space to be mined for its content and data and then marketed to those willing to be exploited by this system. In fact, there is a reason why the word library never appears in The Innovative University, published in 2011. In this world of unbundled entities formerly known as the American university, there really is no need for the kind of scholarly culture that is focused on building specialized knowledge or even an ecosystem intended to promote teaching, learning, and scholarly communication.

It is therefore disappointing to see Lewis try to make this intellectual move when he probably knows better – the outcome of the disrupted university will not be a set of library institutions designed to promote scholarship, but rather a privatized business entity designed to maximize profit. “Useless” specialized knowledge in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences simply will not be supported because it does not promote the bottom line. Whether the final entity be the University of Phoenix or the UC System, the intellectual life of the mind that libraries nurture and support will be beside the point in this new “disrupted” environment. Innovations that cannot extract value from the community will simply be ignored and remain undeveloped. As one critic of the fetish of technological innovation has put it, “The object of the game is not to create a successful business, but to exit through an IPO or acquisition before the business fails. In spite of their abuse of the environmentalist’s lexicon, they do not create sustainable ‘ecosystems’ at all, but rather scorched-earth monopolies…” (Douglas Rushkoff, 2016, p. 34).

There is, of course, another narrative that can be developed and Lewis describes it early on in his book when he quotes the work of Lavoie and Malpas on the need to move the management of the scholarly record from “local” to “network” scale. Stewardship of the evolving scholarly record, they argue, will be a function of “conscious coordination,” rather than the “invisible hand.” Local decisions will be taken “in the context of broader system-wide conditions; more explicit collecting and curating responsibilities within collaborative arrangements; a greater degree of specialization in collecting activities; and deeper, more robust resource sharing mechanisms.” (Lewis, p. 32). In this environment of mutual reliance and interdependence Lewis is right to note that “the politics of this situation will be exacerbated, as there will inevitably be free riders.” (Lewis, p.41).

A library cooperative strategy that is based upon the tradition of scholarly sharing in the disciplines would, we argue, have more of a chance of succeeding on a purely rhetorical level with faculty stakeholders and committed administrators at most colleges and universities. Of course, university boards, frequently populated with “thought leaders” from the world of finance and the tech sector, will always be open to the rhetoric
of “disruptive” innovation, but the history of colleges and universities in the United States is also replete with many more powerful examples of non-disruptive knowledge development that has had a positive impact on research and scholarship and not infrequently leads to new economic innovations and cultural discoveries.

In fact, on a more practical level, the library world has built up an entire sector composed of non-profit consortial cooperative “best practices” that have resulted in some very creative forms of knowledge sharing and content development. Rather than focus on the so-called disruptive models of the tech world, we will outline a different strategy for academic libraries interested in taking those “steps down the road” described by Lewis. A good place to begin is the newly emerging “shared print initiative” which has allowed academic libraries, large and small, to work together to identify materials that can be stored locally and shared globally. Regional consortia across the country are not only addressing the issue of journal back-runs, but also taking on the far more complex process of dealing with the scholarly monograph. The analytical tools that have been developed for the latter project have allowed libraries for the first time to really take advantage of the historic lack of overlap in monograph collections and build that feature into the resource sharing arrangements for books going forward. This, in turn, sets the stage for not only more robust systems for sharing books in printed format, but also allows academic consortia to begin to establish trusted relationships for the purpose of moving toward a shared ownership model for e-books. These two strategies can also set the stage for local academic libraries to provide more resources while also renovating and modernizing their collection storage technologies and the teaching and learning spaces in the library, as Lewis has rightly recommended. We shall return to this theme of collaboration and cooperation in our conclusion to this essay.

**Neoliberalism and the Modern Capitalist Academic Library (MCAL)**

In his 1979 book, *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard writes,

> The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation. It can fit into the new channels – and become operational, only if learning IS translated into quantities of information. We can predict that anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned and that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language (p. 4).

This quotation sets a tone for Stephen Bales’ work on the dialectic of academic librarianship (2015). Bales’ book is of a different type from those that have been examined thus far. This work presents a particular philosophical analysis of the academic library and librarianship as it exists today. It should be noted that, while the approach is primarily
philosophical, there is a definite practical bent to the book, and pragmatic recommendations that can inform academic librarianship at this stage in their development.

Bales (2015) says that the object of his analysis is the “modern capitalist academic library,” or MCAL. He clarifies what he means by MCAL: “Today’s academic libraries either live and work in a deeply ingrained social formation, neoliberal capitalism, or else they live and work in a social formation that is influenced by neoliberal capitalism” (p. 6). The introduction to this paper describes neoliberalism in its multiple forms and also depicts the results of neoliberal thinking and action within institutions. It has also been noted that neoliberalism, as a historic working ideology, can be pervasive; that is, its tenets can be encompassing of the ways people think and act as part of their lives in those institutions. Moreover, the pervasive mode of neoliberalism can be such that the individuals are not fully aware of the influence and the outcome. One of the results of pervasive neoliberalism is a structural fragmentation that can lead to inequalities which become entrenched in the social fabric. Bales argues, rightly in the minds of the authors, that neoliberal capital formation has a profoundly deleterious effect on public institutions (whose putative goals may include democracy, equality, and justice). Bales (2015) quotes Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), who offer the observation that the emerging system “values knowledge privatization and profit taking in which institutions, inventor faculty, and corporations have claims that come before those of the public” (p. 29).

Bales’ means of examining the MCAL is that of dialectical analysis. The first question that may occur to the reader regards the meaning of dialectics. Bertell Ollman (1993) offers a succinct definition: “dialectics is a way of thinking that brings into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world. As part of this, it includes how to organize a reality viewed in this manner for purposes of study and how to present the results of what one finds to others, most of whom do not think dialectically” (p. 10). Bales presents a definition that serves as a philosophy and as a method for his study:

The dialectic of academic librarianship is nothing more than the application of [the] reflective and active approach towards reality qua flux to the academic library as a social institution and academic librarianship as an aspect of this institution’s being and identity. It aims for the critical apperception of the academic library as an integral locus and expression of the constantly changing total reality (p. 51).

Bales elaborates on precisely what he means when he speaks of reality as an element of dialectics: “the dialectic of academic librarianship is an ontological, epistemological, and practical application of a mode of thought and understanding of reality to the historical and material reality of the MCAL” (p. 57). This is sweeping coverage—it encompasses what can be considered as real, as knowledge, and as a path to action. The material
reality may be the most straightforward component of his vision here, but historical reality is extremely important to dialectics. The material and the historical are related. The institution of librarianship exists in the actual world, and it exists in time. The latter observation requires some further explanation; librarianship exists both in and through time. It has a past that, itself, is material and has been influenced by internal and external forces, including the external forces of the neoliberal college or university. Its existence is, in some important ways, fraught because of the external forces that impose a particular mode of being. In the extreme, the existence of higher education described by Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011) obtains: “The stark reality is that what the few can achieve the majority cannot regardless of how educated they are. Wage inequalities cannot be narrowed through better education or increasing skill levels because the global labor market is congested with well-educated, low-cost workers” (p. 12). The contributions of libraries and librarianship are thus limited because of the conditions under which the majority works.

The foregoing limitation is addressed by Bales in the context of the dialectical method he employs. He (2015) writes, “The typical MCAL is a conservator of the sociocultural landscape in which it sits” (p. 80, emphasis added). As he says, the library does this in a variety of ways. One way is conscious and intentional in that the MCAL seeks materials and access to information that mirrors the material that is produced by the corporate sources. Another way is less deliberate in that the MCAL is not fully conscious of what society maintains and preserves in an effort to disseminate information that reflects, and even embodies, the dominant capitalist mode of production. Of course these are not the only kinds of materials that the MCAL collects and makes accessible. The multiplicity of informational objects creates a tension for the library and librarianship in that conflicting ideological bases exist simultaneously, and without any demarcation of the ideological distinctions. There is another component to Bales’ observation; librarianship, perhaps particularly in its mediation role, also does not always recognize the ideological tension. The current state of affairs embodies a history, through which the collections, access mechanisms, and consciousnesses of librarians have developed.

Ollman (1993) suggests a reason for the state of affairs (in general, but which is applicable to the MCAL). He says, drawing from Marx, that the world offers itself to us through means of “abstraction” by which the thoughts we have about the world can be broken down (p. 24). He (1993) goes on to say that “most people are lazy abstractors, simply and uncritically accepting the mental units with which they think as part of their cultural inheritance” (p. 26). Ollman is, once again, emphasizing the historical element of the dialectic—a feature that does not escape Bales. One might ask how people may become lazy abstractors. Bales (2015) offers a possible cause for the phenomenon: “Wittingly or not, those working at the MCALs help to fulfill this function on behalf of the dominant societal class’s interests, unless they achieve theoretical consciousness of the underlying circumstances that they are supporting” (p. 94). Bales touches
upon a specific aspect of ideology, although obliquely, that has pertinence to the above state of affairs. A persistent ideology that appears to permeate the MCAL is the act of providing informational resources and services that are based on “neutrality.” The intellectualizing of neutrality frequently takes the form of fairness, in that all points of view have some inherent value. The problematic is a complex view of reality; if one would study the impact of a neoliberal state, one requires the materials on that topic. The MCAL consciously adopts a neutral attitude towards the informational content, in an effort to present a non-ideological stance (Bales, 2015, p. 132). The irony that is lost is a part of the MCAL.

In his conclusion, Bales concentrates on the dynamism of the library; the MCAL did not arise full blown as an entity in service of neoliberal capitalism. The lack of stasis signals the possibility for change in the future, especially if librarians can become more fully aware of the historicity of librarianship. In summing up, Bales (2015) writes,

Dialectics accounts for the vigorous and perpetual change occurring in the real world. . . . Therefore, when approaching the MCAL dialectically, the institution becomes more than a fixed entity or idea. Instead, the MCAL is experienced as a phenomenon that is forever in process. More precisely, the library is experienced as a set of relations” (pp. 150, 151).

It is the acceptance of the dialectical nature of the library that holds the potential for transformation of the history that has typified the MCAL. The important message to take away is that consciousness must become deeper so that the dialectical processes can be fully understood and the ideological formation of society must be grasped so that it is not merely adopted as a necessary component of the library. If these transformations can be achieved, the MCAL may disappear and be replaced by a different kind of institution and a more critical form of librarianship.

In order for this kind of change to happen, however, we will need to pursue new, more creative forms of organizational changes at the societal level and also within the higher education sector. We will need a new political vision, one that goes way beyond the narrow and self-defeating limitations of the politics of the neoliberal academy. For as Christopher Lasch argued almost a quarter of a century ago,

the activities of ‘academic radicals’ do not seriously threaten corporate control of the universities, and it is corporate control, not academic radicalism, that has corrupted our higher education. It is corporate control that has diverted social resources from the humanities into military and technological research, fostered an obsession with quantification that has destroyed the social sciences, replaced English language with bureaucratic jargon, and created top-heavy administrative apparatus whose educational vision begins and ends with the bottom lines.” (Lasch, 1995, p. 193).
In other words, we will need a conception of cooperation and collaboration that is based on a moral imagination that encourages a critical approach to dealing with the “inequality disease” that afflicts both our polity and our public and private higher education sectors. In the concluding sections of this essay, we will sketch out a set of recommendations that seek to build on the insights offered by Newfield, Bowen, Bales and Lewis in order to suggest some concrete changes that might arrest the continuing devolution of the neoliberal regime in the early part of the 21st century.

**Conclusion(s) Investing in Creative Approaches to a Collective Future in the 21st Century**

*College has a price and it is not free today for a reason: because higher education today is broadly considered a privilege and not a right.*  Sarah Goldrick-Rab (2016)

The economist Robert Gordon (2016) concluded in his sweeping history of the American economy since the Civil War that it has become very clear now that the higher ed. sector of the American economic system is acting as an accelerator of inequality and a huge “headwind” inhibiting future economic growth. Argues Gordon,

> almost all high income families send their children to four-year college, whereas virtually none of the poorest Americans do so. College completion for households in the top quarter of the income distribution rose between 1970 and 2013 from 40 percent to 77 percent, whereas for those in the bottom quarter, it increased only from 6 percent to 9 percent.” (2016, p. 624).

Indeed, as we have seen, this is precisely how class gets produced and reproduced by the higher ed. sector: the more “selective” a college happens to be, the more likely it is to favor attendance by the top 1% and disfavor attendance by the bottom 60%. As reported recently by the *New York Times,* “At 38 colleges in America, including five in the Ivy League – Dartmouth, Princeton, Yale, Penn, and Brown – more students came from the top 1 percent of the income scale than from the entire bottom 60 percent.” (“The Upshot,” *New York Times*, January 18, 2017).

While we now know that the neoliberal elite model of meritocracy is not functioning well, how can we move toward a different more egalitarian approach to higher education, one that might have a more positive outcome for American democracy and also help us begin to overcome the dire effects of the *inequality disease*? Drawing from the ideas and examples elucidated in the books reviewed above, we will attempt to outline some strategies for thinking about the future of universities and academic libraries.

In terms of higher education, a good first step is the very simple idea proposed by Senator Sanders last year during his presidential campaign: **FREE EDUCATION FOR ALL!** His free public higher education tuition
proposal clearly resonated with a large part of the electorate. In fact, the idea that access to higher education might be considered a right, not a privilege is now being actively explored at the state level in both New York and Tennessee, where new statewide programs now provide significant tuition subsidies for middle-income families attending institutions of higher education.

While this strategy falls far short of the kind of approach needed to fund the full cost of higher education for working and middle-class families, it is clear that we will need more experiments like these if we are to learn how to move beyond the neoliberalism “meritocracy” that privileges family income as a predicate to access to higher education in the United States. If neoliberalism is characterized by the transaction, the majority of Americans are closed out of the transactions that enable attendance at postsecondary institutions. Consequently, the democratic debate on this set of issues has already begun and the aggressive pursuit of such goals can have an invigorating effect on democracy, as the education activist Tressie McMillan Cottam has indicated (2015, p.116-117):

I do not care if free college won’t solve inequality. As an isolated policy, I know that it won’t. I don’t care that it will likely only benefit the high achievers among the statistically unprivileged – those with above-average test scores, know-how, or financial means compared to their cohort. Despite these problems, today’s debate about free college tuition does something extremely valuable. It reintroduces the concept of public good to higher education discourse – a concept that fifty years of individualism, efficiency fetishes, and a rightward drift in politics have nearly pummeled out of higher education altogether...Those of us who believe in viable, affordable higher ed. need a different kind of language. You cannot organize around what you cannot name.

Neoliberalism, Open Access, and Scholarly Communication

Both David Lewis and Stephen Bales recognize that the neoliberal market simply cannot address the issue of providing effective ways to support scholarly work at both the article and the monograph level. In fact, the market left to itself in the age of journal conglomeration and publisher consolidation will only result in an unaffordable system that will undermine and defeat the need to advance both scientific research and traditional scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. As Peter Suber has argued, it is time to create a “public” market for scholarly communication: “The idea is to stop thinking of knowledge as a commodity to meter out to deserving customers, and to start thinking of it as a public good, especially when it is given away by its authors, funded with public money, or both.” (Suber, 2012, p. 116).

The “Open Access” (OA) movement for journal publications is now recognized as the way forward for much of the academic community. As a recent report argues: “Members of the academic community, either
at established not-for-profit organizations or through informal groups of editors and advocates, must break the corporate publisher conglomerate by taking control of journals and developing funding, access and distribution models that work for their disciplines." (Democratizing Academic Journals, 2017, p.3). The research library community, perhaps with funders like the Gates Foundation, can now creatively invest in a system that promotes the widespread use of publishing services that encourage local control by universities and scholarly societies – rather than continue the destructive outsourcing to corporate entities that will only accelerate the trend of monopolization that private corporations like Elsevier have used to corner the market for new research over the last three decades. It is time for higher education to fulfill the objective of "creation" of knowledge by completing the production cycle.

Similarly, the need for new form of hybrid publication of the scholarly monograph is necessary, but will not happen without sufficient financial support outside the neoliberal marketplace. Here we would like to follow the argument of Scott Sherman (2014), who correctly recommends that:

The AAUP (American Association of University Presses) should take the lead in calling for a national effort—involving interested foundations, university administrations, IP centers, libraries and many other kinds of campus-based digital venues—to develop a publishing process that coordinates university press resources with many new publishing channels. (2014, p.23).

Sherman further argues that this effort will require that leading funders and leading research universities with large endowments devote a significant amount of their financial resources toward the support of new initiatives in the genres of both journal and monographic (long form) scholarship. In any event, as Suber notes, OA books are now part of the scholarly landscape:

Today there are many more OA books online than print books in the average academic library, and we're steaming toward the next crossover point when there will be many more gratis books online than print books in the world's largest libraries, academic or not. (Suber, 2012, p. 111).

We Need to Work Together in the Aftermath of Neoliberalism

Finally, we believe that an initiative that focuses on a collaborative approach to creating a 21st century system of scholarly communication would also benefit from statewide and regional consortial cooperatives organized so that libraries can multiply their investments through a kind of network effect. This is a facet of librarianship that Lewis clearly knows about to the extent that he mentions it in passing, but it is not sufficiently addressed as a way to focus both mind and energy going into the post neoliberal world. To put it bluntly, academic libraries organized into effective consortia can complement the economic investment at the local level by also investing
in creative publishing projects organized and maintained by consortia throughout the country. This kind of cooperation can create in effect a “public” market for the products of the scholarly community as they are developed in different states and regions. We need diverse and sustainable non-profit platforms for publishing academic content and it is not going to happen without a serious long-term investment in the ongoing output of the scholarly community.

The good news is that the infrastructure for this kind of system already exists in the form of the many active consortia that currently live in the library ecosystem comprised of the institutions active in the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). Consortia with different governance, technical systems, and collaborative cultures all tend to focus on resource sharing as a primary mission and that by itself leads to a more equitable system for small, medium-sized, and large public and academic libraries. Since there is usually little overlap between various library collections, putting these collections into a resource sharing relationship means that all the partners gain from the systematic sharing of resources.

What is needed now in addition to progressive sharing of content is imaginative leadership at the local and global levels, able and willing to experiment with collaboration that can create technical platforms that allow for effective sharing of scholarly information in published forms. If we create the kind of sustainable projects described above, we will be able to gradually overcome the negative features of inequality that currently obstruct and inhibit the scholarly communication of ideas and information in the higher ed. system. And at the same time, this system will stimulate a more democratic culture for higher education by providing widespread and economical access to important ideas and evolving scholarship. We do not need to accept a world with the kind of radical inequality that has developed in the early 21st century. Indeed, libraries engaged in active collaboration can work to overcome it in practice, even as new ideas for educational advancement emerge at the state and national level. We cannot continue the problematic systems that neoliberalism has developed over the last 40 years and as the authors of these four books have noted, we now need to move toward a different more democratic approach to education.

Bibliography


Resolution on Libraries as Responsible Spaces

Whereas, libraries have been deemed safe spaces for all members of their communities, and

Whereas, a study from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism has documented a 20% increase in hate crimes in 2016, and

Whereas, the ALA Offices for Intellectual Freedom and Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services are now collecting statistics on hate crimes in libraries after a rise in the number of incidents in libraries, and

Whereas, Article V of the Library Bill of Rights states “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views, and

Therefore, let it be resolved that the American Library Association:

1. Urges libraries to embrace the mantle of “Responsible Spaces” by adopting and enforcing user behavior policies that protect patrons and staff from harassment while maintaining our historic support for the freedom of speech.

2. Encourages libraries to develop community partnership programs with and promote services to underrepresented and unacknowledged community members.

3. Encourages libraries to sponsor programs fostering meaningful and respectful dialogue in communities.

4. Encourages libraries to provide materials and programming that deter hate, foster community, and oppose bigotry toward or oppression against any group.

Adopted by the ALA Council, June 2017
Resolution on Access to Accurate Information

Whereas the American Library Association recognizes the contribution of librarianship in informing and educating the general public on critical problems facing society (Policy, A.1.1);

Whereas the mission of ALA is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all (Policy A.1.2);

Whereas ALA has as one of its officially stated goals that it is the leading advocate for the public’s right to a free and open information society (Policy A.1.3);

Whereas ALA opposes any use of governmental power to suppress the free and open exchange of knowledge and information (Policy B.8.5.1);

Whereas in 2005 ALA adopted a Resolution on Disinformation, Media Manipulation and the Destruction of Public Information (2004-2005 ALA CD #64);

Whereas inaccurate information, distortions of truth, deliberate deceptions, excessive limitations on access and the removal or destruction of information in the public domain are anathema to the ethics of librarianship and to the functioning of a healthy democracy;

Whereas some governments, organizations, and individuals use disinformation in pursuit of political or economic advantage to thwart the development of an informed citizenry;

Whereas the exponential growth in the use of disinformation and media manipulation constitutes a critical problem facing our society and includes:

- the distribution of fake news via websites, social media, and traditional media under the guise of independent journalism;
- the increased potency of disinformation due to the confirmation bias effect of personalized newsfeeds, social media sharing, and web search algorithms (i.e. the filter bubble);
- propaganda campaigns and cyberwarfare operations conducted by governments and non-state actors to influence or disrupt the domestic affairs of adversaries;
- the use of paid political partisans as commentators and analysts on news networks and publications; the rise of branded content that are advertisements masquerading under the guise of legitimate reporting in many publications;
• the suppression or removal of scientific studies and data that disagree with possible policy positions, for example, the human effects on climate change;
• the removal of public information from U.S. depository libraries and the libraries of government agencies;
• the unreasonable delay or denial of public records and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and heightened assaults on constitutional rights under the guise of national security;
• attacks on the reputation of news organizations and intimidation of journalists; and

Whereas freedom of the press and freedom of speech is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and affirmed by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Whereas access to accurate information, not censorship, is the best way to counter disinformation and media manipulation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, the American Library Association, on behalf of its members:

1 reaffirms the resolution on Disinformation, Media Manipulation and the Destruction of Public Information approved in 2005 (2005 ALA CD #64).
2 opposes the use of disinformation, media manipulation, and other tactics that undermine access to accurate information;
3 encourages its members to help raise public consciousness regarding the many ways in which disinformation and media manipulation are used to mislead the public;
4 urges librarians and library workers to actively seek and provide sources of accurate information that counter disinformation;
5 supports the critical role of librarians and library workers in all types of libraries in teaching information literacy skills that enable users to locate information and evaluate its accuracy;
6 will pursue partnerships with news organizations, journalism institutions, and other allies to promote access to accurate information and defend the role of journalists and the free press in American society.

Adopted January 24, 2017, by the ALA Council
ALAn Statement on
Global Climate Change and a Call
for Support for Libraries and Librarians

Whereas the current Administration has removed the data and
information files on global climate change from the Websites of
the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (http://www.epa.gov)
and the White House National Action Plan on Climate Change (https://
obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/image/president27scl
imateactionplan.pdf), and has proposed severe budgetary reductions for
decadal and ongoing research and monitoring programs supported by the
United States (specifically with the Environmental Protection Agency, the
National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of Energy), and
threatening to withdraw the United States from the 2015 Paris Agreement
negotiated within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate
Change (UNFCCC);

Whereas the causes, effects, and implications of global climate change
are robustly identified, assessed, discussed, and upon which international
and national policies and agreements have been made, including the
UNFCCC Twenty-first Conference of Parties held in Paris, France, and
adopted by consensus on 12 December 2015, the Intergovernmental Panel
on Climate Change Assessment of September 2013, and the United States
National Academy of Science, which is joined by dozens of other national
academies, and scores of professional associations and societies in their
belief that the world’s climate is changing with human actions serving as
the major contributing causes for these changes;1,2,3,4 and

Whereas the information base on global climate change is large and
growing, indicating a clear and present need for libraries and librarians
to adopt sustainable practices (integrating the scientific and technical,
social, policy, environmental, and economic approaches to ensuring
organizational stability and resiliency across disciplines and lines of
work), and for libraries and librarians to promote, support, and advocate
for the promotion and understanding of the cross-disciplinary exchange of
resources and ideas among stakeholders with the common thread of needs
related to global climate change; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its
members:

1. recognizes that human interactions and activities affect the
dynamics of Earth’s climate system, and that there is a large and
growing base of factual scientific data, information, and literature
providing robust and accurate STE3M3 (scientific, technical,
environmental/economic/ethical/medical/mathematical/management) evidence of global climate change;
2. affirms a commitment to the preservation and availability of this factual scientific data, information, and literature, both from government and citizen sources; and
3. supports librarians, library workers, and educators, as they are guided by the ALA Policy Manual, in their roles for providing rigorous, robust, and accurate reference and referral services; access to data (both historical and current) and information resources, literature, and collections; and instruction in their use in assisting climate stakeholders’ and library users’ greater understanding of global climate change.


Endnotes
4 A select and partial list of professional associations stating their belief in the realities of global climate change includes: American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Association of State Climatologists, American Chemical Society, American Geophysical Union, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Meteorological Society, American Public Health Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, Ecological Society of America, Geological Society of America, National Academy of Sciences (United States of America), National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Center for Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Research Council, National Science Foundation, Pew Center on Global Climate Change, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.