Görüşler / *Opinion Papers*

Finding Human Rights in Library and Information Work[*]
Kütüphane ve Bilgi Çalışmalarında İnsan Hakları Bulguları

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Öz

Bu görüş kütüphaneciliğin felsefî yönünü ele almakta, kütüphaneciliğin ahlâki unsurlarına değinmekte ve insan haklarını temel alarak aynı bağlamda sosyal hizmet faaliyetleri, sosyal değişime halk katılımı ve kütüphanecilik meslek etiği üzerinde durmaktadır.
Anahtar sözcükler: *Kütüphaneciler, Bilgi hizmetleri, İnsan hakları, Etik değerler, Sosyal adalet, Mesleki etik*

Abstract

This discussion paper touches on aspects of the philosophy of librarianship, moral and ethical aspects of librarianship, human rights, social action, social justice, citizen participation in social change, and professional ethics of librarianship.

Core library values, such as intellectual freedom, are determined by overlapping consensus. How individual library and information workers and groups worldwide actually handle these values proves to be diverse. This particular paper is inspired by the many courageous library and information workers throughout the world who take personal and professional risk to push for human rights. Their voices reflect contemporary local, national and transnational calls to action on conflicts generated by failures to acknowledge human rights, by struggles for recognition and representation, by social exclusion and by the library institution's role in these conflicts. These calls have integrated library and information work into existing social movements as well as the global discourse on human rights. They depict library and information workers as political actors that challenge existing networks of control by providing new possibilities for strategies of resistance.

Discussion

'There is more to life than increasing its speed.' Mohandas Gandhi

Several years ago I learned, through my own searching, that in 1983, at its 49th General Conference in Munich, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) adopted the Resolution on Behalf of Librarians Who Are Victims of Violation of Human Rights. The resolution recognises the risks that library workers take to uphold core library values such as intellectual freedom. It states: 'In the name of human rights, librarians must, as a profession, express their solidarity with those of their colleagues who are persecuted for their opinions, wherever they may be' (IFLA, 1983). In 1989, IFLA achieved global coverage when it expanded the text of the Munich Resolution and adopted its Resolution on Freedom of Expression, Censorship and Libraries. This resolution encourages librarians and their associations globally to support the enforcement of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to exchange information on the abuse of restrictions of freedom of expression which concern them and, when necessary, to refer the matter to the President of IFLA and if applicable to other competent international organizations, non-governmental or intergovernmental (IFLA, 1989). (Article 19 directs, 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom

to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'[*] The resolution also instructs the President of IFLA 'to intervene in the most appropriate way with relevant authorities about freedom of expression and to cooperate, if necessary and to this end, with other international organizations' (IFLA, 1989). I never knew that these international statements existed. I wondered how many other librarians worked in ignorance next to me. (Many I suspected.)

What I did know, from interactions with many library and information workers in numerous countries over the last 15 years, was that in spite of the good intentions of Article 19, existing social, economic, cultural, political and ideological pressures that affect library and information work have led to the not uncommon practice of internal or self-censorship by library and information workers. Few regions (e.g., Portugal, Sri Lanka, UK) have sanctions in place in the event that librarians violate their code of professional ethics, which in many instances worldwide instruct library and information workers to uphold intellectual freedom and to combat censorship (Shachaf, 2005). Although intellectual freedom is the first contemporary core value embraced by IFLA, the vast majority of library and information workers worldwide do not benefit from any protection afforded by freedom of workplace speech on 'non-confidential professional and policy matters about the operation of the library and matters of public concern within the framework of applicable laws' (American Library Association, 2005). A disturbing situation has evolved in which library and information workers advocate on behalf of their users for those very rights and freedoms they themselves have been denied. What a terrible irony! Despite this, and despite what I assume is a widespread lack of awareness of IFLA's 1983 and 1989 statements, I have found that many concrete social action strategies are used by library and information workers worldwide to negotiate this fundamental barrier in support of human rights in the face of adversity and risk. These strategies represent library and information workers' political and transformative acts of resistance to ideological domination in the

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[*] *Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Retrieved October 26, 2006, from http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.*

present reality of war, revolution, social change and global market fundamentalism. Some of the strategies involve varying degrees of personal and professional risk depending on the political, legal, economic, ideological, technological and cultural contexts of the countries and communities in which library and information workers live and labour, as well as more personal factors such as the gender, class, sexual orientation, citizenship, disability, ethnic origin, geographical location, language, political philosophy, race or religion of library and information workers themselves. And so I realized it was time that we - the global library and information global community - fully recognise the political context of library and information work.

As Kenyan librarian-in-exile Shiraz Durrani observes: 'manipulation of information, whether conscious or unconscious, is an important matter, not only in local life, but in international relations as well. Librarians can become tools in the hands of those seeking to manipulate whole populations to think along their lines – or stand firm to support the democratic rights of the people manipulated. There is no third way here' (Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2005). I believe strongly that to avoid becoming a tool in the hands of those who seek to manipulate others, and in order to support core library values, as well as giving due attention to global democratic and human rights, the priority for twenty-first century librarianship is to act on IFLA's 1983 and 1989 human rights resolutions. Failing to do so could result in Heinrich Heine's dire warning, that 'where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings', becoming more of a reality than it already is[*]. One critical condition for pursuing this priority is to work both for IFLA, as well as around IFLA.

IFLA identifies its professional priorities as supporting the role of libraries in society; defending the principle of freedom of information; promoting literacy, reading and lifelong learning; providing unrestricted access to information; balancing the intellectual property rights of authors with the needs of users; promoting resource sharing;

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[*] *"Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen". From Heinrich Heine's play Almansor (1821). See http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/ bookburning/bookburning.htm (Retrieved October,26, 2006).*

preserving our intellectual heritage; developing library professionals; promoting standards, guidelines and best practices; supporting the infrastructure of library associations; and representing libraries in the technological marketplace. IFLA's strategic planning focuses attention on the role that information and information services play in 'world problems such as sustainable development and HIV/AIDS', as well as issues of 'indigenous knowledge systems and oral cultures' and the problematic application of intellectual property rights in these contexts (Raseroka, 2005). In spite of the groundbreaking work done by IFLA, Durrani cautions that: 'while IFLA has done and can do a lot of good work, it remains a representative body of official Library Associations around the world, and most of them are conservative, establishment-oriented bodies. One cannot expect IFLA to be a radical organisation for change in the interest of working people around the world. But it is not necessary to have one or the other (IFLA or alternative, progressive organisations). There is room for both types of organisations. They may work together sometimes and have contradictions at other times; this is a healthy state of affairs'. At the same time, Durrani argues there is an urgent need for alternative progressive organisations if libraries are to become 'more relevant to the majority of people' (Durrani, 2004). Indeed, around the world, critical librarians engage in persuasion and consensus building through a diverse array of measures such as petitions, manifestos, resolutions, rallies, boycotts, alternative conference programmes, publishing, lobbying and daily information exchange to address historical inequities. Almost one hundred of the proven strategies are identified in the text box below:

1. Access to information
2. Law reform
3. Accessibility
4. Letters
5. Action research
6. Listservs
7. Activism, honouring of
8. Lobbying, government
9. AIDS information and awareness
10. Manifestos
11. Alternative action programmes
12. Media relations, management of
13. Apologies
14. Meeting room policies
15. Awards
16. Meetings with government
17. Bibliographies
18. Memory projects
19. Blogs and blogging
20. Merchandise
21. Book fairs
22. Mobile libraries
23. Books
24. Music
25. Borrowing
26. Naming, responsible
27. Boycotts
28. Outreach activities
29. Campaigns
30. Pandemics, response to
31. Classification schemes
32. Partnerships
33. Collection development and collection policies
34. Petitions
35. Platforms
36. Collections
37. Position statements
38. Community development
39. Posters
40. Community studies
41. Proclamations
42. Conference guides and sessions
43. Programmes
44. Cooperation, international
45. Programmes for children and youth
46. Cooperation, multidisciplinary
47. Projects
48. Court cases
49. Protests
50. Critical dialogue
51. Public forums
52. Cultural diversity training
53. Publications
54. Declarations
55. Rallies
56. Dedications
57. Reaffirmations
58. Disaster response
59. Representation
60. Dissent
61. Resolutions
62. Diversity action programmes
63. Resource sharing
64. Documentation
65. Round tables
66. Eco-friendliness
67. Scholarships
68. Education, LIS
69. School libraries, alternative
70. Election guides/kits
71. Security, humane
72. Ethics training
73. Seminars
74. Expositions
75. Space, autonomous
76. Film
77. Speeches
78. Forums

79. Storefronts
80. Fundraising
81. Student engagement
82. Historicism
83. Symposiums
84. Intellectual freedom
85. Teaching
86. Interest groups
87. Training, activist
88. International development
89. Translations

90. Interviews
91. Trustees, education of
92. Investing, socially responsible
93. Websites
94. Job postings
95. Wikis
96. Labelling
97. Women, status of

Modest Action Template For Finding Human Rights in Lis Work

'Action expresses priorities'. Mohandas Gandhi

It is my belief that library and information workers around the world need to have better access to, and awareness of, such proven strategies (as shown above) practised in the international *critical library community*, where considerations for the human condition and for human rights take precedence over other professional concerns. The critical library community, from which I have drawn upon many times over for its optimistic vision for the future, has built up its visibility and momentum over the course of many decades. And, at this point in time, it includes such contemporary groups as Bibliotek i Samhälle in Sweden, Arbeitskreis kritischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare in Austria, Arbeitskreis kritischer BibliothekarInnen in Germany, Progressive Librarians Guild in the USA, Information for Social Change - international, Círculode Estudios sobre Bibliotecología Política y Social in Mexico; Grupo de Estudios Sociales en Bibliotecología y Documentatcíon in Argentina, LibrarianActivist.org in Canada, and Progressive African Library & Information Activists' Group.

My motivation for promoting the *critical library community* is not superficial. I have three aims: (1) to encourage library and information workers to take a moral stand in the ongoing debate about what constitutes library work; (2) to encourage the conscious use of library and information rhetoric related to human rights (e.g. freedom of expression, freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry, privacy,

confidentiality) as a direct entrée to taking a professional interest in broad issues such as sustainable development, pandemics, poverty, war and peace, torture, destruction of cultural resources and government intimidation; (3) to encourage possibilities for seeing the library as a point of resistance[*]. How can I begin this process? Here below is a simple starting template that I am using with some success from my home in Canada. I think it can also be effective elsewhere in the world.

➤   Support the International Center for Information Ethics' (ICIE) open-ended stance that many of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are 'a basis for ethical thinking on the responsibility of information specialists' and that 'information specialists have a moral responsibility with regard to the users at a micro (individuals), meso (institutions) and macro (society) level'[**]. These elements include (but are not limited to):

Respect for the dignity of human beings (Art. 1)
Confidentiality (Art. 1, 2, 3, 6)
Equality of opportunity (Art. 2, 7)
Privacy (Art. 3, 12)
Right to be protected from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Art. 5)
Right to own property (Art. 17)
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 18)
Right to freedom of opinion and expression (Art. 19)
Right to peaceful assembly and association (Art. 20)
Right to economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for dignity and the free development of personality (Art. 22)
Right to education (Art. 26)
Right to participate in the cultural life of the community (Art. 27)
Right to the protection of the moral and material interests concerning any scientific, literary or artistic production (Art. 27)

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[*] *Thank you to Mark Rosenzweig for first introducing me to the concept of the library as a point of resistance.*
[**] *International Center for Information Ethics. Retrieved October 26, 2006, from http://icie.zkm.de/research.*

> ➢ Encourage library and information workers and other stakeholders in information and knowledge societies to participate locally, nationally and internationally in dialogue, collaboration, organisation, empathy, decision-making, practice, philosophy and policy development to promote the amelioration of social problems.

> ➢ Embrace diversity and contestation within library and information work, especially related to the subject of intellectual freedom.

> ➢ Expand the traditional library conception of intellectual freedom.

> ➢ Discover the range of critical library and information work worldwide.

> ➢ Disseminate broad aims of critical librarianship.

> ➢ Counter library neutrality with respect to cultural, political and economic matters.

> ➢ Contribute to the development of a full institutional memory of librarianship; one that provides identity to a diversity of vibrant library and information voices (official and unofficial) from all corners of the world.

> ➢ Place librarianship front and centre in knowledge societies.

> ➢ Thread library core values through information ethics and the global information justice movement.

> ➢ Envision library and information workers as participants and interventionists in social conflicts.

> ➢ Commit to an optimistic vision.

> ➢ Get in line with other early twenty-first century works and movements that explore civic engagement in cultural networks.

Closing Words – Lis Education As A Condition For Success

Library and information workers play an important role in preserving and supporting the ideals of tolerance, democracy, human rights and collective memory in many volatile parts of the world. As Argentine Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel observes: 'freedom of the press is being threatened, as is the heritage of the peoples and their cultures which are being subdued by the prevailing globalization. Social and cultural resistance is fundamental for the sake of freedom and the rights of individuals and peoples … you, who are the ones in charge of preserving memory … can contribute … [and resist] an 'only way of thinking' … that leads to the destruction of identity and culture' (Esquivel, 2004) Wayne Wiegand, however, warns that librarianship is 'a profession much more interested in process and structure than in people' (Wiegand, 1999, p.24). Jack Andersen, meanwhile, cautions that library and information studies 'have managed to create a metaphysical discourse that tends to favour technical and managerial language use. Such language does not invite critical consciousness and analysis as it is distanced from the objects it is talking about. Indeed, technical and managerial language often stands in opposition to basic human needs, and is more concerned with how to do things rather than describe and critically discuss how these things (i.e. knowledge organization systems) work or do not' (Andersen, 2005, p.7). Edgardo Civallero urges the field of library and information studies 'to give up its silence, its marble tower, its privileged positions in the new knowledge society, its apolitical attitudes and its objectivity. It must become more deeply involved in the problems, side with the helpless and struggle, shoulder to shoulder (maybe without tools, without technology, without money, just equipped with imagination, working wishes and service vocation) with other human beings, who were – and currently are – forgotten, just because they are faithful to themselves' (Civallero, 2004).

Wiegand's, Andersen's, and Civallero's warnings echo information ethicist Rafael Capurro's 1992 warning that: 'an information economy that seeks to reduce 'information' to an exchange value without taking into account the different 'forms of life' in which it is grounded is no less dangerous than a blind exploitation of nature. In

designing tools, we are designing … ways of being … Information science … must accomplish a self reflection in a formal-interpretive as well as in a cultural-historical way. It has to resist the temptation to become a purely technical heuristics or a meta-discipline embracing ethics and politics' (Capurro, 1992, pp.90-93). Indeed, as expressed by the fledgling Canadian Libraries in Communities interest group, there is an urgent need to 'challenge the broader library community to reflect on how our fundamental values of inclusiveness have drifted in the pursuit of efficiency and quantification … [and to recognise that] there is more to library engagement than checklists and programs' (Faveri, 2006).

In a similar vein, Herbert I. Schiller suggests that 'the focus on technology in the library and information curriculum serves to delude many, librarians included, that the new means to achieve status and respect is to concentrate on the *machinery* of information, production and transmission. When and if this focus turns rigidly exclusive, wittingly or not, the *social* basis of the profession and the needs of the majority of the people are left unattended' (Schiller, 1996, p.36). Schiller finds 'no inherent incompatibility in offering more technologically-oriented courses in a library school and maintaining, indeed, expanding the school's attention to social issues of the new instrumentation'. This, he argues, 'should be the aim of a new librarianship curriculum – how to guarantee social use and application of the new information technologies. But this is not what is happening. Instead, there are different vistas' (Schiller, 1996, p.37).

Christine Pawley concurs with these critical voices, and advocates that we carry our collective conscience into library and information studies education, because she finds that education 'perpetuates rather than transforms the status quo' (Pawley, 1998, p.137). In particular, Pawley observes 'four focal areas that relate to the theory and practice of cultural hegemony [that] have preoccupied the LIS curricular fields: links with corporate world, professionalization, aspiration to scientific status, and stratification of literacy and of institutions' (Pawley, 1998, p.123). 'From a class perspective', she asserts, the 'failure of LIS education to confront societal questions is itself a sign of the power of the dominant class to exercise hegemony'

(Pawley, 1998, p.132). Pawley indicates we would better serve students by preparing them to 'tackle broader political questions relating to control of the production, distribution, and indeed, definition of information' (Pawley, 1998, p.139). A key challenge then for twenty-first century library and information communities, starting with educators such as this author, is to foster language and a culture of critical librarianship which better support core library values and that encourage and promote active participation in the amelioration of social problems. This challenge is considerable, but we have begun the hard work.

*In the coming year*s*, it will be necessary to* monitor UNESCO, IFLA, national libraries, library associations (official and unofficial) and their relationship to the critical library movement in its push for the development of a more humanistic profession grounded in an unfettered cultural record, the ability to publicly finance library work, freedom of expression on professional and policy issues within library ranks, respect for cultural diversity, desire to redress concessions, omissions, absences and negations in collective memory and progress in opposing commodification of information, 'corporate globalization, privatization of social services, monopolization of information resources, profitdriven destruction (or private appropriation and control) of cultural artifacts and the human record' (Rosenzweig, 2001, pp.1-5). A fundamental condition for realising this vision is the advancement of library and information studies programmes worldwide that demonstrate a concern for people and the amelioration of social problems. Like this author, progressive library educator Pawley is hopeful on this count. She observes, hegemony 'is never complete and historically some librarians and library educators have resisted ideological domination' (Pawley, 1998).

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