

INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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ALTERNATIVE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES: 10 YEARS ON

Contents

Editorial – Ruth Rikowski and John Pateman

Background and overview to the book ‘Globalisation, Information and Libraries: The Implications of the World Trade Organisation’s GATS and TRIPS Agreements – Ruth Rikowski

Reference librarian/user relationship at Obafemi Awolowo University Library – J.O. Ajile Laogun

Terminator of educational dreams and aspirations – Glenn Rikowski

Where education is a luxury option - Htun Lin

Perfect Sound – Victor Rikowski

Librarians and the World Social Forum Unite – Mikael Böök

On the Impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour – Ruth Rikowski

Career development in a non traditional library role: some personal reflections – Paul Catherall

Influences in e-learning: forces for change or confusion? – Paul Catherall

Tackling Social Exclusion: the hardest to reach - John Pateman

Book Review by Jeremy Hunsinger of 'Digital play: the interaction of technology, culture and marketing' by Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter

Editorial –

Alternative library and information views and perspectives: 10 years on, ISC Issue No. 19

Ruth Rikowski and John Pateman (ISC Chief Editors)

Welcome to ISC, issue No. 19. This year is the 10th Anniversary of ISC, and there have been many developments during this 10-year period. ISC has covered a wide range of different topics, and has raised awareness on a variety of issues. Many things have changed since our first issue in 1994. We now have a New Labour rather than a Tory Government, for example – but can you really spot the differences much these days? Some things have not changed. In our very first edition of ISC John wrote a piece about “Emerging Democracies and Freedom of Information”. In this John explored the changing political situation in Eastern Europe and its effect on libraries. John also examined the IFLA position on Cuba, which was not supportive.

As we write this joint editorial in 2004 (on Friday 13 August, unlucky for some but lucky for the Cuban people because Fidel Castro was born 78 years ago today) the same issues are being discussed at the IFLA conference in Buenos Aires. Robert Kent and his CIA funded so-called “Friends of Cuban Libraries” are trying to turn the IFLA conference into a circus of anti-Cuba activity. He is allegedly being assisted in this task by Vaclav Havel, Elena Bonner and the former Prime Ministers of Estonia and Bulgaria. These East European has-beens are venting their bitterness and hatred of communism by assisting the US in its relentless attack on Cuba.

Before the organised removal of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, these countries had very well developed library and education systems and high levels of literacy. Today much of that legacy has been wiped out by market forces, consumerism and capitalism. Cuba, on the other hand, has a comprehensive library system that is well stocked, well staffed, and fully socially inclusive. There are more teachers per head of population in Cuba than in any other country in the world. And the literacy rate of nearly 100% puts the UK and US to shame.

And that is why Cuba is constantly attacked; this island of socialism in a sea of capitalism has shown that there is another way for us to live our lives. That “from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs” can become a living reality rather than a utopian aspiration.

To achieve this in any circumstances is not easy; to achieve this despite a 40-year US blockade and the loss of 85% of the islands trade in 1990 is nothing short of a miracle. We would like to dedicate this 10th year anniversary edition of ISC to Comrade Fidel Castro and the Cuban People. Hands off Cuba! Socialism or Death! Venceremos!

John would also like to dedicate this issue to his co-editor, Ruth Rikowski, and her forthcoming book *Globalisation, Information and Libraries*.

Contents in this issue

This issue covers a number of different themes, including globalisation, the reference librarian and the library user relationship, the increase in higher education fees and student debt in California and school and library closures in Contra Costa County in California. Also, librarians and the World Social Forum, a Marxist analysis of the length of the working-day for intellectual labour in the knowledge revolution and the development of, and influences on, e-learning.

The issue begins with a piece by Ruth, providing some background to, and an overview of her forthcoming book *Globalisation, Information and Libraries: The WTO's GATS and TRIPS Agreements*, which will be published at the end of the year (2004) through, Chandos publishing. Her book builds on the work that she undertook in ISC issue No. 14, on *Globalisation and Information* and, in particular, one of the chapters in the book builds on her article in ISC - *The corporate takeover of libraries*.

Secondly, there is an article by J. O. Ajileye-Laogun, a librarian at the Obafemi Awolomo University in Nigeria. The article considers the link between the attitude of librarians and library usage and focuses on some research that was undertaken in 2003/04 at the Obafemi Awolomo University. A questionnaire was compiled, which was entitled 'Questionnaire on reference librarian/user relationship'. The research found that both the personality of the librarian and library buildings affect library usage. If librarians are unfriendly, antagonistic or unhelpful, users are likely to be reluctant to ask them questions. Furthermore,

Large buildings, deteriorating buildings, rules perceived as being difficult and bureaucracy also contribute to users abandoning libraries...

The importance of this article can be linked to John Pateman's article on social exclusion - the final article in this issue. One of the ways to tackle social exclusion and to encourage minority groups to use our libraries more is surely to ensure that librarians and information professionals adopt an inviting, friendly and open approach.

Glenn Rikowski and Htun Lin indicate some of the consequences of Arnold Schwarzenegger's budget cuts in higher education in California (Rikowski) and in schools and libraries in Contra Costa County California (Lin). Not so long ago we were reading about the ransacking of

museums, archives and libraries in Iraq. But Htun Lin's article shows that libraries are not necessarily safe within the imperialist heartlands. Glenn Rikowski demonstrates how Arnold Schwarzenegger's squeeze on higher education funding in California has led to the state universities attempting to compensate by raising student fees. This is a process that has lessons for higher education in England when variable fees are introduced in 2006, and when the lid is taken off higher education fees altogether in 2010.

This is followed by a poem written by Victor Rikowski, which is entitled *Perfect Sound*, with an alternative look at the world! Victor is now 17 years old.

From here, we move on to Mikael Bööck's article on Librarians and the World Social Forum (WSF). Mikael Bööck organised a very successful library workshop at the fourth World Social Forum that was held in Mumbai, India, 2004, which was entitled *Democratisation of information: focus on libraries*. At this workshop Kay Raseroka, the current President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) said that librarians should participate in and document the WSF. In his article, Mikael Bööck gives some consideration to the meaning of documentation itself and also the difficulties involved in finding out more about the WSF, particularly from conventional library catalogues. Bööck then considers the WSF itself, why people go to it and why it is important. He emphasises the exchanging of information that takes place, saying that:

The WSF is a gigantic information market for the exchange of news, thoughts and knowledge. But it is not a mass market, nor an instance of mass communication. The information is not commodified and reified. The communication is between individuals and groups of individuals in kind of global public sphere beyond the distorted information landscape offered by today's mass media.

Bööck argues that librarians should go to future WSF's, participate in them and organise the documentation and says:

The documentation of the World Social Forum: a necessary step towards the global public library.

Furthermore, he also points out that both libraries and the WSF are often seen to be a meeting place. The World Social Forum, The European Social Forum and the London Social Forum all provide vehicles for those of us that seek to articulate and promote anti-global capitalist and alternative views. Thus, it is most encouraging that librarians are participating in the WSF and hopefully, this can be built on in the future.

There then follows another article by Ruth, which is entitled *On the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual paper*. Ruth gave this paper at a one-day seminar that was held at the Institute of Education, University of London, in May 2004, entitled *Marxism and Education: Renewing Dialogues IV – Education and the Labour Process*. This article builds on the writing and research that she has been undertaking on the knowledge revolution and knowledge management, from a Marxist perspective. She argues that in the knowledge revolution that we find ourselves in today, this being the latest phase of capitalism, there is a greater exertion

of intellectual labour and less exertion of manual labour. Hence, we have ‘flexible knowledge workers’. Marx formulated his concept of the ‘length of the working-day’ when the greatest expenditure of labour was undertaken by manual labour. Capitalism is sustained by value, but this value can only ever be created by labour, both from manual labour and from intellectual labour. The capitalist wants to extract as much value from labour as possible, but the labourer cannot work for 24 hours a day – she/he needs rest and nourishment. So, a compromise has to be established between the capitalist and the labourer and as Marx says:

The creation of a normal working-day is...the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class. (Marx, 1887, p.283)

Thus, the length of the working-day is established – such as the 8-10 hour day. However, Ruth argues that whilst the length of the working-day can be established for manual labour relatively easily, it cannot be so easily established for intellectual labour. This is because value is being extracted more from the knowledge and ideas that people have (their intellectual labour), yet, knowledge and ideas can be formulated in minutes, or they can take weeks, months or even years. They cannot be formulated within a neat 8-10 hour run. Thus, we need an appreciation of Marx’s concepts, but we also need to build on them, and make them applicable for the global capitalist world that we find ourselves in today. Therefore, Ruth argues that it becomes impossible to determine the length of the working-day for intellectual labour in the knowledge revolution, and that, indeed:

All that is solid melts into air. (Marx and Engels, 1888, p.83)

The importance, indeed necessity, of exploring this topic further cannot be over-emphasised.

Following on from this we have two articles by Paul Catherall. The first encapsulates some personal reflections on Paul Catherall’s career development in a non-traditional library environment. He is a qualified, chartered librarian/information professional but working in a non-traditional library setting. He is a ‘Web developer’ at the North East Wales Institute under the ‘Academic Services’ department of the library and is also a writer and a part-time lecturer. He considers the roles he plays and the ways in which these roles fit in (or not) with the traditional library environment, and concludes by emphasising the need for:

...innovation and adaptability in achieving personal development, and in particular not to rely on traditional sources of career development in a sector increasingly characterised by changing values and priorities.

The changing nature of library and information work clearly needs to be appreciated today, as does the need to try to ensure that it works for the good of humanity.

Paul Catherall’s second article examines e-learning and is entitled *Influences in E-Learning: forces for change or confusion?* He considers web-based e-learning and the use of the Blackboard e-learning system, in particular. Furthermore, he argues that the Virtual Learning Environments

(VLE) which includes Blackboard have become the dominant form of e-learning within academic institutions today, in both Further and Higher Education. He concludes by arguing that e-learning is not so much driven by pedagogical research and planning but more by technological innovation and political impetus. Paul Catherall points out that e-learning systems are largely being developed by e-learning companies, rather than by suggestions from the education community itself. This, once again, demonstrates the power that large corporations have in capitalism, and that the needs of capital largely takes precedence over other needs – in this case, over wider educational and pedagogical considerations. When developing and using e-learning systems we surely need to try to ensure that such systems are not just being driven forward by the profit motive. Paul has written a book through Chandos publishing, entitled *Delivering e-learning for information services in higher education*, which is due to be published in November 2004.

The final article in this issue is an article on Social Exclusion by John Pateman, who is now Head of Libraries, Sport and Support Services, Lincolnshire County Council. He begins by highlighting the fact that the latter part of the 20th century saw an increase in social exclusion and inequality in the UK. However, in 1997 the UK New Labour Government put in place an agenda to tackle both the causes and consequences of social exclusion and that this led to some improvements. The long-term increase in the numbers of children in relative poverty began to reverse, for example, and there was a decrease in unemployment. John points out that libraries, information and advice services can play a significant role in tackling social exclusion and that they have and continue to contribute to Inclusion, Learning and Regeneration Programmes. This includes programmes such as the UK Sure Start Programme, which offers services to over 400,000 children under four years of age, including a third of all children living in poverty. John concludes by considering what else libraries can do in the future to try to tackle social exclusion. This includes the provision of more outreach library workers, multi-agency working, addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged and ‘hardest to reach’ groups of people in the community and making library services more accessible. Libraries can also provide reliable information about vulnerable groups, such as refugees, homeless people and mobile or transient populations such as Gypsies and Travellers.

Finally, Jeremy Hunsinger reviews a very interesting book entitled *Digital play: the interaction of technology, culture and marketing* by Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig De Peuter. He describes the book as being “...both a fun read and a serious critical study of the social, economic, political and cultural systems surrounding the computer game industry.” The authors provide a critical history of the computer game industry as well as critical perspectives on the industry. In particular, they highlight how brand names commodify play and consider the gender stereotyping and capitalist structuring that is provided in many computer games. In essence, the book considers the effect of computer games on society as a whole and as such is surely a worthwhile read for ISC readers.

We hope that you enjoy reading ISC 19 and that you will continue to enjoy reading ISC in the future. The need to ‘challenge the dominant paradigms of library and information work’ remains as powerful as ever.

If you have any comments and/or would like to contribute to future issues of ISC, please contact us at:

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John Pateman and Ruth Rikowski, 13th August 2004

Background and overview to the book -

‘Globalisation, information and libraries: The Implications of the World Trade Organisation’s GATS and TRIPS Agreements’, Chandos Publishing, Oxford, 2005

Ruth Rikowski

1. Background

I have recently completed writing a book, which is entitled ‘Globalisation, Information and Libraries: The Implications of the World Trade Organisation’s GATS and TRIPS Agreements’, and is due to be published in November 2004. This builds on the many published articles that I now have on this topic. I originally became interested in the subject of globalisation when I read Glenn Rikowski’s book *The Battle in Seattle: Its Significance for Education* (G.Rikowski, 2001). I told John Pateman, one of the founding members of Information for Social Change (ISC) about

it, and after he read the book he suggested that I edit a special issue of ISC on the theme of *Globalisation and Information*. I had not been a member of ISC for very long, but I thought it sounded like a good idea, and so I agreed. That was now over 3 years ago, and an incredible amount has happened to me since then!

I started to gather information and make contacts with various people for the special issue, focusing in particular on the GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services) and its implications for libraries. During this process I made contact with Clare Joy, the Campaigns Officer for the World Development Movement, and this resulted in me participating in a BBC Radio 4 programme, *You and Yours*, on the GATS in 2001. Leading on from this, Graham Coult, the editor of *Managing Information* (MI), the Aslib (The Association for Information Management) magazine invited me to write an article about the programme. This article was published in the December 2001 issue (R.Rikowski, 2001). The editor then asked me if I would like to be the 'Book Reviews Editor' for MI, which I accepted. My first published article was published in *Managing Information*, in 2000 and I have had the 'writing bug' ever since then!

The special issue went on the web in January 2002. Then, during 2002 I gave various GATS and libraries talks and wrote several articles on the subject as well. Firstly, I gave a talk at the informal group of the International Group of the Library Association at the Library Association's (as it was then called) Headquarters in London. Following on from this, I gave a talk at Sussex University, as part of an evening session that considered the implications of GATS across a variety of different public service sectors and there were a number of different speakers. I was also involved in organising two very successful events. The first of these was a fringe meeting at the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) conference in Glasgow. I obtained funding to attend the conference, and my application was based on my wish to raise awareness about the GATS. I then found that I could not speak on the main programme, as that had been established well in advance, so I organised my own fringe meeting. I also helped to organise a successful event at the London School of Economics through ATTAC (the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions), which again, focused on the implications of the GATS across a wide variety of different public service sectors and there were a variety of speakers. Information for both of these events is available in previous issues of ISC, on the web.

I also became an observer on the EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library Information and Documentation Association) WTO Working Group in 2002, at the invitation of Frode Bakken, the then co-ordinator of the group and the President of the Norwegian Library Association.

Meanwhile, two journalists contacted me in regard to my work. One of these was Jane MacKenzie, the then News Editor of the Big Issue. A piece about libraries and the GATS, including information about my own work was published in the August 2002 edition of the *Big Issue* – and again, this has also been reproduced in ISC. Anders Ericson, a freelance journalist and librarian from Norway then contacted me, and said that he would like to come to England and interview me about my work on the GATS and libraries. He subsequently did that, and he interviewed John Pateman as well, and wrote two articles that were published in *BOB* (*Bok Og*

Bibliotek), a Norwegian library journal – one based on John’s work on social exclusion in the London Borough of Merton, and one based on my work (Ericson, 2002)

In 2002, different articles of mine were published in a wide variety of journals on the GATS and libraries. I thought the issue was just so politically significant that I wanted to get the message out to as many different people as possible – the privatisation of our libraries is no laughing matter. This included getting articles published in the *Public Library Journal*, the *Commoner*, *Focus*, *Link-up*, *Relay*, *BIS (Bibliotek i Samhaelle)* – a Swedish library journal, the *IFLA Journal* and the UK House of Lords report on *Globalisation*.

The following year (2003) I decided to move on and examine TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) – the other agreement that is being developed at the WTO that is likely to have significant implications for libraries and information. This proved to be very challenging! Three articles of mine were then published on the topic, in *Managing Information*, the *IFLA Journal* and *Business Information Review*. I also gave talks on TRIPS at the Library and Information Show, Excel, Docklands and at Kingston University to a group of MSc students there. I also gave another talk on the GATS at the UK Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Umbrella Conference in Manchester, in summer 2003.

At the end of 2002, representatives from EBLIDA and IFLA met with representatives from the WTO and the EC and asked them a number of poignant questions in regard to the GATS and libraries, and they asked them some questions on TRIPS as well. The report of this, by Kjell Nilsson, who is now the co-ordinator of the EBLIDA WTO Working Group, is also on the ISC website. In January 2003 CILIP issued a powerful statement about the GATS, raising its concerns, which I was obviously delighted about. This followed on from all the work that I had undertaken in this area, and a short piece that I wrote for the January/February 2003 issue of *Managing Information* (R.Rikowski, 2003). I concluded this short piece by saying that it would be helpful if CILIP were to issue a statement on the GATS as various other library associations had done. However, there was no reference to either myself or to ISC in the statement. This statement is also now on the ISC website. EBLIDA will be running a 2-day conference on the GATS and TRIPS in the UK, probably in spring 2005, which it is likely that I will be helping to organise through the EBLIDA WTO Working Group, and I have also been invited to speak on TRIPS. Finally, Barbara Schleihagen, from the German Library Association made contact with me in June 2004, wanting to know more about my work on the GATS and libraries, as the German Library Association are also planning to issue a statement about it shortly. She was very appreciative of the information that I gave her.

Having written so many articles, I then decided that I really wanted to write that book! Dr Glyn Jones from Chandos publishers asked me if I would be interested in writing a book for the Chandos Series for Information Professionals, and that was it. I obtained a book agreement and I was away. Dr Jones then offered me a position as a Series Editor for Chandos, which is essentially the role of a Commissioning Editor, and I accepted this. Hence, if anyone is interested in writing a book for the Chandos Series for Information Professionals, do get in contact with me. For the last

few months, I have been very busy writing my book. The second half of this article will provide a brief overview about what the book contains.

2. Overview

2a. Critiquing capitalism and analysing the WTO

So, what is in my book? The main drive behind my thinking and my main motivation for writing, is to understand, explain and critique capitalism and expose its intrinsic workings, and to demonstrate that the world will always be an unfair and an unjust place whilst we live in capitalism. Instead, we need to terminate capitalism, and replace it with socialism and eventually with communism, as far as I am concerned. So, one of the really important questions that one needs to ask is – what are the main motivating factors driving global capitalism forward at the current time? It seems to me that one of the main factors is the World Trade Organisation and the agreements that were and are being developed there. The WTO is basically endeavouring to create a world order for trade. Many people argue that communism has all but died, with the collapse of the Soviet block, the continued watering down of Chinese communism and the collapse of the Berlin wall etc. The argument is then often put forward that we are now one big happy ‘global family’ all living together in this wonderful global capitalist world, which is based on the market, free trade, commodification and competition. Obviously there still are some communist countries, such as Cuba, which John Pateman has written about extensively as we know, and he is continually informing people about the wonderful libraries in Cuba. But many argue, or endeavour to argue, that communism is all but dead. This is tied up with the notion of ‘TINA’ – There Is No Alternative. This philosophy preaches that capitalism might have its faults, but it is the best possible social system that we can possibly have, so we just need to find ways to get it to work more effectively. The WTO is seen to provide one such mechanism. Clare Short, who at the time was the International Development Secretary in the UK, articulates this view, saying that:

Globalisation is here to stay; the political challenge is to manage it well. (Short, 2001, p.17)

I find it a very bizarre way of thinking. We can use our intellect to travel in space, and to create complicated computer systems etc, but we cannot use our intellect to conceive of and work towards a better social, political and economic system. That instead, we have to live in a system that causes so much death, misery and injustice, it seems. This does not make any sense to me.

So, we all live in global capitalism now. We are all one big happy, global family apparently. The question then becomes, how can we work more effectively together? The argument is that global capitalist institutions, such as the WTO, prevents anarchy from surfacing, as it establishes a global framework for trade between its members. And obviously, ideally the WTO would like all countries throughout the world to be members of it – so then, we would have a supposed world order. There are currently some 150 WTO members, and the number of members is continually increasing. China joined quite recently. Some people might think this all sounds quite appealing, until one starts to uncover the fact that the WTO is very much weighted towards the benefit of

rich countries and large corporations, and the developing world suffers, in particular. All this is considered in detail in my book.

The important point to note, then, is that the WTO represents the sharp edge of global capitalism – it is driving global capitalism forward at a rapid pace. So, if we want to effectively see where some of the most important decisions are being made in global capitalism today, we need to look at the WTO. Within this context I decided to focus on the two agreements that are being developed at the WTO that are likely to have significant implications for libraries and information – namely, the GATS and TRIPS. Given that I come from a library/information background, this was obviously the sensible thing for me to do. Furthermore, I am convinced that although libraries are often perceived as being something of a backwater, they are in essence very important institutions. Many acknowledge the fact that we are now moving into the knowledge revolution. I have argued in a number of my articles that the knowledge revolution is the latest phase of capitalism and so it is knowledge that is driving global capitalism forward in many ways. As such libraries can play a big part in shaping the future – hopefully for good rather than for ill.

This, then, provides the background to my book and why I decided to examine the WTO's GATS and TRIPS agreements. My aim was to analyse one of the main areas that was driving global capitalism forward but then to place all this within a theoretical perspective, so that we can understand, explain and critique global capitalism, thereby bringing theory and practice together. For me this means adopting a Marxist theoretical analysis, and the last part of my book focuses on an Open Marxist theoretical analysis of value and the commodity, which I begin to relate to the GATS and TRIPS. However, it is a complex subject, so I only introduce it in this first book of mine. This will all be explored in more depth in my future works.

2b. Contents of the book

What, then, is contained in my book? Firstly, I consider the meaning of globalisation itself, and this is followed by an overview of the World Trade Organisation. I then provide an overview of the GATS itself, and consider the GATS, libraries, information and cultural services within an international perspective. I consider which countries have committed their library services to the GATS, under Sector 10C: Recreational, Cultural and Sporting Services, and examine a number of different countries. This includes: Canada, the USA, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the developing world in general, India, South Africa, Europe, UK, Chile and Singapore. I then examine real-life examples of how the GATS is impacting on libraries in the UK, focusing in particular on public libraries, which is based very much on my article in the ISC special issue, which is entitled The corporate takeover of libraries, with some amendments and revisions. This also includes the development of a framework for analysing the GATS and public services. I then outline some of the statements, positions and activities undertaken by various library associations and library, information and cultural bodies internationally in regard to the GATS. From here, I move on and consider TRIPS. Firstly, I provide an outline of the TRIPS agreement. Then, there is a chapter on TRIPS, copyright, libraries and information, followed by a chapter on TRIPS, patents, traditional knowledge, information and libraries in the developing world. The following

chapter considers the implications of TRIPS for the library and information profession, and also examines this within an international perspective. This includes looking at copyright, particularly the balance in copyright, patents and the WTO in general. The specific countries that are examined include India, Canada, USA, Africa, Europe and the UK.

The final chapters start to posit all this within an Open Marxist theoretical framework, focusing on value theory. Value theory is one of the most important parts of Marx's theoretical analysis of capitalism, as far as I am concerned, because it is value that sustains capitalism. This is why I have chosen to focus on value theory in particular. I emphasize that capitalism is sustained by value, and not by any set of moral principles. Value is created by labour and can only ever be created by labour. As Marx says "...human labour creates value..." (Marx, 1887, p.57). Furthermore, that labour is the 'substance of value', and as Postone says:

We have seen that labour, in its historically determinate function as a socially mediating activity, is the 'substance of value'; the determining essence of the social formation. (Postone, 1996, p.166)

This value then becomes embedded in the commodity. And this is where the GATS and TRIPS fit in. I am arguing that public services (through the GATS) and intellectual property rights (through TRIPS) are being transformed into international tradable commodities, and that these commodities are then traded in the market-place. In such a scenario, concepts such as the public service ethos become a nonsense. Once these areas have been commodified (and the logic of capitalism is the commodification and marketisation of all that surrounds us, and this even extends to our bodies – let us be clear about this), then the value that is created and extracted from labour becomes embedded in these commodities. This value seems to be a 'gift from nature' as far as the capitalist is concerned. The capitalist then sells these commodities, and from this process profits are derived, but this profit is ultimately derived from value itself. Thus, in essence, capitalism is sustained by value. This value is created by labour, and through this process labour is exploited, alienated and objectified. Furthermore, value in the knowledge revolution, through mechanisms such as the GATS and TRIPS, is extracted more from intellectual labour than from manual labour. The concepts of manual labour and intellectual labour are considered further in the other article that I have in this ISC issue – *On the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour*. Thus, the GATS and TRIPS will enable more and more areas of social life to be commodified and the value that is derived from exploited labour is then embedded in these commodities. I conclude my book by saying that:

There is only one real solution – to terminate capitalism, and to replace it with a better, kinder, fairer social system – to replace it with socialism, and eventually with communism... Let humans rejoice, then, in the world that they have developed with their labour – do not let them be dominated by it. Let us look towards a better future and a brighter world.

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N.B. This list of references does not include references to all the articles of mine that are referred to in the text in this article, or to the material that is on the ISC website. The latter can be found by going on the ISC website at – <http://libr.org/ISC>. Also, much of my material, and other readings on GATS and libraries on the web can be found on the GATS and public libraries website at – <http://libr.org/GATS/>.

If you would like any of my other material, please contact me at – rikowski@tiscali.co.uk or rikowski.uk@tinyworld.co.uk

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Reference librarian/user relationship at the Obafemi Awolowo University Library

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Abstract

This study was conducted to research into the link between students perception of the librarian and the rate at which they approach them for services at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. A questionnaire survey was used for data collection from the students in nine out of the eleven faculties of the university. The survey shows that there is a strong link between the librarians' attitudes, students' perceptions and assumptions of them and the rate at which they consult them for services and information.

Introduction

The Librarians' attitudes to a very great extent, determines the patronage of users to the library. When librarians are friendly and welcoming including being helpful, users are encouraged into the library, while in a library where the librarians are unfriendly and lazy, users are driven away. The personality of the librarian determines the rate of utilization of the library by its users. She/he should be friendly, humorous, intelligent and professionally good. Then, the user will be convinced that there is an approachable and reliable information expert in that library. If they are so drawn to the library by the mien of the librarian, they will then be able to browse through the books and thus become aware of the availability of materials relevant to their studies and research. Thus, the use of the collections increases.

Concept of librarians

At all levels of education, there is a general lack of awareness about the roles and duties of librarians and libraries and their potentials to education. This poses a formidable barrier to equitable access to information and the promotion of knowledge in our society. People are aware of the need for information acquisition but are ignorant of the roles of the library and librarians. This explains why the increased recognition of the value of information has not brought with it

increased recognition of the librarian as an information professional. One obvious reason for this is the thwarted image of the librarian. The librarians' image over time has been that of a negative one. Librarians are regarded as rigid personalities who cannot be approached, either an authoritarian or a weakling, incompetent hideaways, doing no more than shelving or stamping of books. This image hinders and forms a barrier to using librarians to ask initial or follow-up queries for help or information. People think of librarians as "trained" or "skilled" but not necessarily as "professionals" and have no idea of qualifications or training requirements (Heron P., 1977; Rothwell A., 1990).

This low professional image of librarians led to their lower status and this hinders the use and importance of librarians in the community. School librarians are not given heads of departments appointment. More so, librarians in academic institutions are not recognized as being equal to their counterparts in the faculty, even librarians in the commercial sector have lower rankings than other colleagues. Librarians being placed at this lower level cannot contribute to the overall organization as effectively, neither are they being involved in policy setting or important committees. Librarians remain "gatekeepers" to information at best rather than "gateways" or "information intermediaries" (Schumann P., 1990). In all types of libraries, the role and skills of librarians are not fully exploited, reinforcing low image, status, value and usage.

Reference theory

This study is hinged upon Vavrek's notion that the central focus for reference theory is in studying the quality of the relationship which develops between the librarian and the users of libraries. He maintains that emphasis on the librarian's internal housekeeping routine and the importance of a knowledge of sources is a wrong approach to the provision of a reference service. A close study of the nature of interpersonal communication is more important to Vavrek (1974).

The reference theory states that it is the librarians' task to ensure that users and potential users of libraries have untrammelled access to resources. The librarian needs to be an active promoter of the use of information and libraries rather than the somewhat passive keeper responding to stimulation but not reacting without such stimuli being provided by others.

Reference librarianship

The reference service is a complex, multi-faceted and ultimately, personal service and must be examined judiciously from various positions to be able to determine the degree of its success. According to Low (1990), provision of reference services is an important component of the information product. Reference librarians can be referred to as the public relations officer of any library. She/he is the image booster to the library she/he is working for because of his/her duties, which deal directly with the users.

Library users use the library to read and borrow books. However, many users in the University library who consult staff only have contact with non-professional staff.

A clerical image of book-stamping/shelving is fostered rather than an organizing or disseminating one.
(NCC 1986)

It would enhance the image of any reference librarian if users consult them for information. But the majority of users who patronize the reference rooms only use books and not staff and most who consult staff only ask them for information such as “where is reading room B?”, “how can I get to the toilet?” etc. and are not aware of their roles as information providers.

There is also little realization of the work of librarians behind the scenes. University students, for example, saw librarians in a service role, to help locate information needs and could not differentiate between professional and support staff (apart from by age) (Heron P., 1977). In the University Libraries, the Librarians’ role in maximizing learning resources are not realized due to poor communication and relationships between the librarians and their faculty counterparts and so their services remain unused and underutilized.

The Reference Librarian

Lawal (2001) highlights the functions of Nigerian reference librarians among which are assistance and instruction in library use, location of materials, use of the catalogue, and use of basic reference tools and sources. They also provide brief, factual information of the ready reference type, conducting literature searches, interlibrary loans for users, selective dissemination of information to clients and public relations.

Objectives of the study

This study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To find out if users are aware of the services at the reference desk.
2. To find out if users approach, or are willing to approach, the reference librarians at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library, Obafemi Awolowo University, with queries.
3. To find out the attitude of users to reference librarians and how this has hindered or aided them in their relationship.
4. To determine users’ perceptions of reference librarians and their duties.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study was that: Users are not aware of the services being rendered at the reference desk and some do not even know of the duties of the reference librarian and that some view the reference librarian as unapproachable and do not, consequently, explore the services of the reference librarian.

Methodology

This study was designed to cover a representative sample of students from the Faculties of Administration, Agriculture, Education, Environmental Design and Management, Law, Technology, Pharmacy/Medical Sciences, and Sciences, Social Sciences/Arts at the Obafemi Awolomo University. The study was carried out in 2003/2004 academic year. There were eleven faculties in the university out of which nine were selected for the study. A random sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sampling of the students in each faculty.

A set of questionnaires was administered to the students of these faculties. A student list was stratified into sub-parts of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th year of study. Out of 250 questionnaires 169 (67.6%) were completed and returned. The questionnaires were distributed through individual lecturers to their various students at different levels.

The questionnaire is tagged “Questionnaire on Reference Librarian/User Relationship”. A careful study of the records and available collections in each of the sections named in the questionnaire was undertaken.

Results and discussion of the study

Both male and female respondents from the nine faculties and at different levels, and completed parts one to five of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by some selected socio-demographic characteristics

SEX	Frequency	Percent
Male	106	62.7
Female	63	37.3
Total	169	100.0
AGE (Mean age = 24.0 years)		
15-19 years	12	8.4
20-24 years	78	54.5
25-29 years	44	30.8
30-34 years	3	2.1
35-39 years	1	0.7
40-44 years	5	3.5
Total	143	100.0
FACULTY		
Administration	31	18.3
Agriculture	6	3.6
Education	16	9.5
EDM	8	4.7
Law	12	7.1

Pharm/Medical Sciences	29	17.2
Sciences	19	11.2
Social Sciences/Arts	32	18.9
Technology	16	9.5
Total	169	100.0
LEVEL		
Part one	19	11.2
Part two	55	32.5
Part three	38	22.5
Part four	51	30.2
Part five	6	3.6
Total	169	100.0

(NB: the table for AGE excludes non-response)

Visitations and consultation

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by how frequently they visit the library and their purpose for visiting the library, controlling for their Level in School

How frequently user visits the Library	Level in School					Total
	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	
Everyday	5.3	9.1	10.5	10.0	16.7	9.5
Often	42.1	41.8	31.6	32.0	16.7	35.7
Sometimes	36.8	20.0	34.2	24.0	16.7	26.2
Seldomly	15.8	20.0	5.3	16.0	16.7	14.9
Hardly	0.0	9.1	13.2	12.0	16.7	10.1
Never	0.0	0.0	5.3	6.0	16.7	3.6
Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (55)	100.0 (38)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (168)
User's Purpose for Going to the Library						
To read	84.2	60.0	58.4	58.0	33.3	60.8
Search for materials	10.5	25.5	27.8	30.0	66.7	26.5
Read/search for materials	5.3	12.7	11.1	8.0	16.7	9.6
To chat/sleep	0.0	1.8	2.8	4.0	0.0	3.1
Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (55)	100.0 (36)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (166)

(NB: the table excludes non-response; number of cases for each total is in brackets)

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by how often they consult the Librarian/Library staffs

How frequently user consults Librarian/Library staff	
Every time user needs information/help	51.5
Hardly	28.5
Never	16.4
Don't know users can consult them	3.6
Total	100.0 (165)

(NB: the table excludes non-response; number of cases for each total is in brackets)

Tables 2 and 3 shows how frequently users visit and consult a reference librarian in the library, which level visits the library most and for which purpose. 9.5% visit the library everyday, 35.7% of the respondents visit the library often, 14.9% seldomly visit and 10.1% of the respondents hardly visit, while 3.6% never visit the library. This shows that the percentage of the students who visit the library is minimal compared to the number of students on the campus even though the ones who visit the library do so for different purposes. 51.5% of those who visit the library consulted the librarian for information and help while 3.6% were not aware they could consult a member of library staff.

Awareness of roles

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by whether they know the reference librarians, their rating of reference librarians and their knowledge of the qualification of reference librarians, controlling for their level in school (part I, II etc.)

User knows the reference librarians	Level in School					Total
	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	
Yes	57.9	36.4	55.3	54.9	33.3	48.5
No	42.1	63.6	44.7	45.1	66.7	51.5
Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (55)	100.0 (38)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (168)
User's rating of reference librarians						
Well educated	21.1	9.1	5.6	8.0	0.0	9.0
Experienced	36.8	27.3	33.3	36.0	33.3	32.5
Not too intelligent	5.3	18.2	11.1	8.0	50.0	13.2
Don't know/no opinion	36.8	45.5	50.0	48.0	16.7	45.2

Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (55)	100.0 (36)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (166)
User's knowledge of reference librarians' qualification						
School certificate	5.3	16.7	21.6	19.6	33.3	18.0
Diploma	15.8	5.6	13.5	15.7	0.0	11.4
First degree	21.1	22.2	13.5	13.7	33.3	18.0
Higher degree	5.3	7.5	0.0	7.8	0.0	5.4
Don't know at all	52.6	48.1	51.4	43.1	33.3	47.3
Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (55)	100.0 (36)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (166)

(NB: the table excludes non-response; number of cases for each total is in brackets)

Table 4 shows the level of awareness of the students to the presence and roles of reference librarians. However, 9.0% know they are educated, 32.0% feel they are experienced while 13.2% regard them as not too intelligent. It is interesting to know that 45.2% of the respondents have no opinion of the reference librarians, they are indifferent.

Out of the total number of respondents only 5.4% are aware of their real qualification, 47.3% do not know their qualifications and so as indicated by Table 6; 84.6% of those who know they are well educated consult them every time they need information while those who are unaware of their qualification; 29.7% only consult them when they need information.

User satisfaction

Table 5: Percentage distribution of respondents by whether they were satisfied during last consultation with reference librarian and attitude of reference librarian to them.

User satisfied during last consultation with librarian	Reference librarian's attitude to user during last consultation					Total
	Welcoming	Officious	Indifferent	Antagonistic	Don't know	
Yes	80.8	30.0	21.4	0.0	2.8	38.2
No	1.9	20.0	21.4	33.3	5.6	10.3
Partially	15.4	40.0	42.8	33.3	2.8	21.3
Don't know	1.9	20.0	14.4	33.3	88.9	30.1
Total	100.0 (52)	100.0 (10)	100.0 (32)	100.0 (6)	100.0 (36)	100.0 (136)

(NB: the table excludes non-response; number of cases for each total is in brackets)

In Table 5 above, 80.8% of respondents who feel reference librarians attitudes were welcoming were satisfied with the consultation. None of those who feel they were antagonistic in their attitudes were satisfied. This is an indication that the perceived attitudes of the librarians contribute to the feelings of being welcomed or users being put off.

Recommendations and conclusions

Lack of awareness, poor expectations and negative assumptions of services are major barriers to use of libraries. Images and perceptions of libraries full range of service and level of expectations can be altered and controlled to increase the use of libraries and librarians. Marketing and promotional activities applied effectively will increase value status and awareness. This method was employed by the American Library Association in their outreach, liaison and education schemes and campaigns such as “Ask a Professional, ask a Librarian!” (Smith, G., 1992). In addition to this, symposiums can be organized to enlighten users on the roles and services of libraries and librarians.

The personality of the librarian and the institutions they represent are barriers to its usage. This is because, if librarians are unfriendly, antagonistic or rather unhelpful, users will be reluctant to consult them. According to the research report put forward by Armour J. (1975) where “cold and clinical” were adopted, this accounted for users not approaching librarians for information.

The perceived value of libraries to individuals or organizations can also form a barrier similar to that of the perceived status of librarians. Lange (1987/88) found lower personal values attached to libraries among “typical non-users” and “marginal users” and higher values among “typical users” and “potential users”.

Large buildings, deteriorating buildings, rules perceived as being difficult and bureaucracy also contribute to users abandoning libraries and staff. Part of the reasoning of outreach services was to place books and services in more friendly, familiar places.

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Terminator of Educational Dreams and Aspirations?

Glenn Rikowski

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's approach to funding the state of California's public universities shows all the hallmark of Terminator. (Margaret Kubicek, I'll be broke, 2004)

When Arnold Schwarzenegger took over as Governor of California last year he was faced with a state budget deficit of £7.8billion (\$14billion) (see Kubicek, 2004, p.18). As part of his budget reduction strategy, Schwarzenegger moved quickly to slash higher education funding. This paved the way for university administrators to impose fees hikes, increases in student accommodation charges and other 'campus-based miscellaneous fees' which the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) felt compelled to bring in (Silicon Valley & San Jose Business Journal, 2003). Administrators at CSU put up their student fees by 30 per cent last academic year, and the UC by 25 per cent 'because of cuts in state funding' (Ibid.).

However, although Arnie might appear to be at the forefront as Terminator of educational dreams and aspirations, he is not alone and is merely following the herd. As a number of commentators on the higher education scene in the US have noted, many other states have pursued similar strategies

for higher education to California's (see Marcus, 2003a and 2003b). As Jon Marcus notes, 'more than 1,300 of the 1,800 US universities and colleges have raised their prices by at least twice the rate of inflation in the past three years' (Marcus, 2003b). Furthermore, most US higher education institutions have been raising their fees above the inflation rate for many years.

The outcomes of this fees trend are no surprise: increased student indebtedness, the creation of a vicious market in higher education based on ability to pay, and the hardening of social class and ethnic divides. As Jamie Merisotis (2003) has pointed out, where US student fees vary from \$1,000 to \$30,000 a year student 'choice' of course and institution is significantly determined by ability to pay and ability to finance debt. Merisotis notes that 'US students are indebted at levels unthinkable on an international scale: they borrow more than \$50 billion a year' (Ibid.). The UK government's introduction of top-up or variable fees for 2006 is but a stepping stone towards the full development of a higher education fees free-for-all. The US higher education fees experience is therefore most instructive in relation to what is happening in England in particular, and increasingly for other European Union countries that are starting up a higher education fees regime.

Jon Marcus (2003b) notes that the US Congress is seriously concerned about the consequences of states attempting to shift ever-higher burdens of higher education financing onto students and their families. Republicans in the House of Representatives started working on a Bill that would limit the powers of universities to draw on Federal higher education aid funds if they increased their fees more than twice the level of inflation (Marcus, 2003b). The Senate is also working on legislation to curb higher education fees increases over double the inflation rate (Ibid.). What this shows is that when the law of money is let loose into a public service, as with US higher education, it becomes increasingly marketised, commodified and capitalised, and then crises of various kinds develop. Higher education in the US, and increasingly England, is faced by a crisis of student debt and increasing resistance to pay the cost of higher education amongst students and their families. One student response is to work ever longer hours during term time to minimise loans and debt and to finance everyday life and study needs (see G. Rikowski, 2000). Some UK higher education students resort to drug dealing, stripping and prostitution to stave off debt and complete their studies, whilst others move onto depression and Prozac (see examples from G. Rikowski, 2000).

The UK Conservative Party's policy is to limit higher education provision in absolute terms with fewer places available for entrants, which is another way of limiting educational dreams and aspirations.

The higher education fees and student debt situation in the Land of the Terminator is therefore part of a much wider, and global picture of students drawing on their own labour-power to finance their courses, both while on course and post-course when paying back loans. They are subordinated to, yet struggle against, capital in its money form for many, many years.

The dramatic student fees increase in 2003/04 in Californian public universities has been widely reported in the pages of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (USA), the *Guardian Higher Education* and the *Financial Times*. However, what has received much less reporting in the educational press in the UK is what effects the Terminator's budget cuts are having on high schools and libraries. Thus, Htun Lin's (2004) article (the next article in this issue) on what is happening in these public services is instructive and disturbing. It is also heartening, as Lin points towards resistance to high school and library closures in Contra Costa County in California that heralds a future where information and education exist within a realm of freedom outside the orbit of capital.

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Where education is a luxury option

Htun Lin

Contra Costa County in California is multi-ethnic and culturally diverse overall, yet separated into communities stretching from predominantly white conservative Concord to white affluent Walnut Creek to poor working-class ethnic minority Richmond. But the one thing all these disparate communities share is the loss of health care and schools from disappearing city budgets due to our nationwide epidemic of state fiscal crises.

Hospital and school closures follow plant closures. In Richmond, the city's budget office announced that all school libraries and sports and music programs would be eliminated because of the city's mounting debt. The Bush gang's American dream of a booming economy is turning out to be our nightmare of a jobless recovery. Productivity increases while health care and other social resources workers need such as schools, libraries, and day care, decrease or disappear. Economists express consternation at this seemingly contradictory and "disturbing" trend. But we workers are not surprised. Why should anyone be surprised that the capitalists' gain is workers' pain?

Workers produce everything that is created under capitalism. Not just all the contents in the house, the goods and furnishings that are stolen from us, but the house itself, the governmental institutions we use like schools, hospitals and public utilities and infrastructure. Neither government nor private companies "provide" workers with these public goods. It's the other way around. Workers provide all these goods, public or private, by producing them with the sweat of our labor. When they tax our income, they are taxing us for something we produce. We have already been "taxed" before the government steps in. The first real tax is when the capitalist extracts our surplus labor each work day, with each and every product we make.

Felix Martin, *News & Letters* Labor Editor for many years, once wrote that it takes less than the first hour of his work day to produce all the value needed to pay for the worker's livelihood – to pay for his food, shelter and other expenses – to keep the worker sustained, as Marx wrote, "so that he can return to work another day." After the first hour, after producing enough to pay for the worker's sustenance, what the capitalist likes to call "variable cost" of labor, the rest is surplus labor.

Part of this surplus goes to the state coffers as income tax to pay for public institutions. The rest goes into the capitalist's pocket as profit, what Marx called surplus value.

LEAVING WORKERS WITH ZERO

It has turned out not so strange after all that they choose to use the strange term "variable cost" to describe our living expenses. The more they "vary" that cost of labor down, as close as possible to zero – either, for example, by speeding us up, laying us off, or taking away our health care – the higher are their profits. There is an inversely proportional relationship between our poverty and their wealth. All surplus value comes from living labor – living and breathing human workers. Machines don't create capitalist value. People do.

In an attempt to stop the hemorrhaging of school budgets and programs, many parents who can afford to, like parents in affluent Walnut Creek, have reached into their own pockets to pay for what has already been paid for, but will otherwise disappear if we don't pay again. It's quickly becoming education's version of "co-pay" burdens put on workers' backs for health care. But poor minority working-class Richmond is in no position to use private funds to save their public schools.

SCHOOLS UP FOR BID

Some school officials have even resorted to allowing commercial advertisers on school property in order to pay for sports programs. It's a kind of hostile takeover of public sector assets by the private sector. One school principal said, "We have to think outside the box. The days of state-guaranteed educational resources are over."

The Contra Costa Times reported that high school students demonstrated "violently" following the devastating news of the disappearance of their libraries and school programs. Many of the students' signs read, "You cut our budget, we cut classes." It was reported that many students then took their anger out by stomping on parked cars and looted a nearby store.

The Richmond Police Chief stated that he sent his officers with video cameras to "identify the looters and to pursue criminal prosecution against those students who committed these crimes." He said, "We simply cannot permit this kind of behavior to continue."

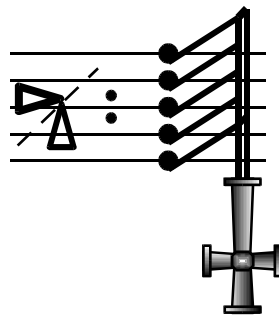
But who will investigate and identify the looters who took off with our public schools? Who will pursue the thieves who have stolen not only all the goods and furnishings in our house, but have destroyed our house by deliberately and methodically dismantling our public schools and hospitals and other publicly owned institutions and state resources? Who will look for the criminals who have stolen from our community's past and our future?

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The *News & Letters* web site can be found at <http://www.newsandletters.org>

Perfect Sound

Victor Verne Rikowski



Perfect Sound is my theory,
Of how to make a sound, sound perfect.
It is created with nothing but insanity,
And through it, musical revolution shall resurrect.
This theory, no one shall understand,
Until this sound is made.
But it shall be made and it shall be grand,
And by the masses I shall be paid.

I wonder what God is doing?

Use the water to bend your light,
Weave your colour through glass tubes.
Fill the air with this bright delight,
He can see around corners, curves and cubes.
All the pipes terminate at his eyes,
All the vision in the world is accessible.
And upon our every movement he squints and spies,
All those that are criminals are vulnerable.

He sits in his chair, with his long white blazer jacket,
Electronic goggles sitting on his nose.
And he'll switch the revolving pipes, watch and speculate,
He'll watch us dress, look at our parts and torso's.
The world is his bowl full of spaghetti,

With string ends of watching eyes.
He's is the only one to have seen a yeti,
In his black leather swivel chair, he'll grin and scream...
... and scrutinise...

Our lives are freedom, our lives are choice,
But where's the happiness, big house, Rolls Royce?
Don't ask, use a camping flask,
Keep the temperature of life continual.
Use green glass for blades of grass,
To stop the children playing football.

No one to blame so faith will be blamed,
'It was terrorists that bombed our Holy Grail.'
So go forth people and make the innocent enflamed
Survivors tossed aside or thrown in jail.

It was they whom broke the stone table,
Upon which the great lion Aslan lay.
It was they whom made Narnia a fairy tale,
So for all this blasphemy we will slay.

We spend our entire lives mowing the lawn.
We die, rot and turn into grass,
And laugh at how we become our own life burden.

We have a goal;
We just don't know where the posts are.
We supposedly have a soul,
But we only become a product consumer.

Drugs will make us insane,
We'll gain boredom and madness,
Play music and take morphine,
Drop bombs and be merciless.
We'll go hunting and use cannibalism,
We'll sit in corners of ragged tents.
We'll make pollution and believe in Satanism,
Burned out crops behind a broken fence.
Mental famine and insanity shall kill mankind,
Routine and rules shall trigger terror in our mind.
As Nietzsche was the first to welcome God's death,
I am the first to embrace mankind's last breath.

Like John Locke's 'Gap' theory,
There is something between our minds and our words,
Which restrains the image of our real feelings, our real story,
Which is why most poetry lives with herds.

And Lucifer said:

"Cook my kidney in a stew and eat it with bread, for bread is the body of Jesus, the son of your all mighty God.

And drink the stew with wine, drinks Jesus' blood.

Eat both Jehovah and Lucifer and aspire to become both good and evil,

Aspire to become human,

To have feelings, to be feeble.

Aspire to become who you are.

Aspire to be free from the control that the illusionary idea of human perfection has over you."

If truth is dark then virtue is a burden,

On us it needlessly feeds.

My mind is like my childhood garden,

Overgrown and covered in weeds.

Victor Rikowski is now 17 years old, and is studying A' levels in Philosophy, Music Technology and English Literature at Havering Sixth Form College.

Librarians and the World Social Forum, unite!

Mikael Böök

Introduction: Kay Raseroka's Proposal

At an international workshop of the fourth World Social Forum in Mumbai, January 2004, Ms Kay Raseroka, the present chairperson of IFLA, made an interesting proposal. Librarians should participate in the World Social Forum, she said. Librarians should document the World Social Forum and the information brought there by the thousands of organisations and social movements [1].

Kay Raseroka's proposal raises some important questions. Firstly, the question which the French librarian and documentalist Suzanne Briet asked some fifty years ago in the title of her pamphlet: *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* [2] Is the library documenting anything except its own collections? What is documentation today?

A second series of questions starts with this: Is the library independent enough? Can it decide to engage in documentation of the World Social Forum? Are we here speaking about a universal library policy or about a special project of some particular library? And why precisely the World Social Forum? Shouldn't the library then document the World Economic Forum (the

unofficial yearly gathering of the political and economic leaders of capitalism in the Swiss resort Davos) as well?

Kay Raseroka's proposal leads to discussion about the role of the library in the globalisation process of which the World Social Forum is such an important "document", i.e. example and proof, in itself. How is the library responding to globalisation?

It is also worthwhile to ask whether the World Social Forum is interested in cooperation and interlinking with the libraries. Is the International Council of the World Social Forum ready to accept IFLA among its eighty or so member organisations?

While trying to answer the above questions some comments must also be reserved for the "Mosaico de Livro", which is a library project in Porto Alegre, the capital of Brazil's southernmost state Rio Grande do Sul, where the first three WSFs (2001,2002 and 2003) were arranged and where the fifth WSF will again be held 24-31 January 2005.

Chapter One: How a reader searched for a book about the World Social Forum

1.

The Reader did not know very much about the World Social Forum. For some reason, he wanted to know more.

So he stood up, stepped out of his door and walked a kilometer. To the nearest library.

No, not yet.

The Reader, who was living in the southernmost part of Finland, just went to his writing-desk and accessed the new integrated online public library catalogue of the Helsinki Metropolitan area at www.helmet.fi

"There are over 60 branch libraries in the HelMet network and annually loans are approximately 16 millions. The library system is Millenium by Innovative Interfaces" [3], the Reader was reading from his screen. The webpages and search forms of the Helmet catalogue are unusually user-friendly, he noted, provided that the connection to them is smooth and fast. It was.

The Reader tried various search-phrases in Finnish, Swedish and English. He searched by title, by subject and by keywords, but he could not find one single book, nor any other document, about the World Social Forum.

No matter how hard he tried, the number of hits remained zero.

With 'social' AND 'forum' he actually got 4 hits, but those publications had nothing to do with the WSF.

Or perhaps one of them did, after all. That one was Bertrand Russell: Västerlandets visdom (Wisdom of the West).

Wisdom, always relevant. Also, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, which continues in the footsteps of the famous philosopher, participates actively in the World Social Forum. But that's another story.

That book had no doubt been included among the search results because of the name of its publisher, "Forum", and for the reason that one of the subjects that the catalogue had related it to was "Social History".

2.

“Hypocrite Reader, - my likeness, - my brother ... ” - Baudelaire

The Reader, my double, knew an alternative catalogue. So, on 7 June 2004, about half a year after the fourth WSF in Mumbai, he typed the search-phrase "World Social Forum" into Google.

Never mention Google without a warning about Big Brother. See <http://www.google-watch.org/bigbro.html> !!!

Google found approximately 134.000 web-addresses in 0.28 seconds.

Another search-engine, Alltheweb (www.alltheweb.com), captured 33,335 web-addresses in an equally short time. A third, AltaVista, offered 34,160 addresses.

A fourth, Yahoo, brought 145,000 addresses in 0.13 seconds as a result of a

search on the whole web. [4]

The Reader, who had heard in the mainstream media that ca 100,000 active citizens had attended the WSFs in Porto Alegre and Mumbai, was not much impressed by the quantities of hits from Yahoo and the rest. Nor did he pay too much attention to their differences. After all, which reader cares about another hundred thousand hits from a search engine?

All the search engines put the following links on top of their research results:

- www.forumsocialmundial.org.br = the homepage of the WSF
- www.wsfindia.org = the homepage of WSF IV in Mumbai
- www.fse-esf.org = the homepage of the European Social Forum

Clearly, these are relevant links. But the Reader wanted more than links...

3.

The Reader meditated on libraries, internet and wisdom.

Wisdom is God, he thought, remembering the words of Goethe:

Gottes ist der Orient!
Gottes ist der Occident!
Nord- und südliches Gelände
Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände!

The Reader wanted to read a book. About the World Social Forum.

Would he go to the Academic bookshop of Helsinki, one of the biggest general bookstores of Northern Europe? Or would he try to open up a chat-connection to a human being, a professional librarian?

What would Goethe have done in his situation?

Goethe would certainly have given Yahoo a second try, the Reader decided. So that was his next step. The Reader combined the search-phrase "World Social Forum" with "new book". Among the top 20 of 1900 hits, he sorted out the following titles:

- "The World Social Forum: challenging empires". Editors: Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Peter Waterman. The Viveka Foundation 2004. This was found at: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html together with details on how to order the printed matter from its Indian publishers. The full contents of this book were also there to be read instantly as webpages, and as a readable/printable pdf-file.

- Another World is Possible. Zed Books. Edited by William F. Fisher and Thomas Ponniah (ISBN 1 84277 328 3 Hb, ISBN 1 84277 329 1 Pb). This one was mentioned at <http://www.tni.org/news/060303.htm>

- War Talk, by Arundhati Roy. Forthcoming in September 2004 from the South End Press. Will include the author's "Address to the World Social Forum, Porto Allegre, Brazil, January 27, 2003". Mentioned at <http://lists.iww.org/mailman/public/iww-news/2003-May/002314.html>

Three books, all very fresh and interesting-looking, but in English! It would be nice to get familiar with this new phenomenon in my language, in Finnish, the Reader thought.

'Kirja' is Finnish for book , 'maailman sosiaalifoorum' equals 'world social forum' . Yahoo came up with a book-review (<http://www.kepa.fi/uutiset/demokratia/3013>).

Embedded in the book-review was a link pointing to the book itself:

- Maailman sosiaalifoorum - toisenlaisen maailman puolesta, by Laura Nisula and Katarina Sehm-Patomäki. NIGD 2002. This book is available both in print and online at <http://www.nigd.org/Maailman%20sosiaalifoorum.html>

That was that. We shall now leave my brother, the Reader, in peace. May he finally read the book he was looking for.

4.

I, for one, went to the library to take a closer look at things.

By car. I also used Helsinki City Library's "personal information services" via the web-service [5]. I contacted information professionals in the national library of Finland (Helsinki University library) by email as well.

The library can certainly do a lot to help you find what you are looking for, if you know how to make the librarians work for you. Well, that's what I did.

Using databases to which the libraries buy access, a member of the staff of the Library in Malmi (one of the 35 branches of Helsinki City Library) looked up references to 6 articles in journals, and to 9 articles in Finnish newspapers. For some of the articles, she could offer print-outs of the full texts.

She also retrieved 67 references to journal articles on WSF from the "MasterFILE Premier" database hosted by EBSCO [6].

I asked the librarian to send the EBSCO listing into my email box, which she did. This series of references with abstracts, most recent on top, proved well worth reading as such. I have to admit that this list is informative stuff, an excellent selection from social science journals, news magazines and newspapers (a film about the WSF is also mentioned). Moreover, full-text versions of many of the listed articles turned out to be available for free on the net. [7]

The personal online service of the library was also able to find four books relating to the World Social Forum in The Finnish National Bibliography. Here, "World Social Forum" (and the Finnish translation "maailman sosiaalifoorumi") turned up in the database field "subject, corporate name".

One of these four books was found in nine libraries of the Helsinki Metropolitan region, namely, *Globaali demokratia* (2003) by Heikki Patomäki and Teivo Teivainen. (8) Right now (13 June 2004) six of the altogether ten copies of this book are lent by the library's customers, one is in transit and three are on shelf.

Long live the library!

5.

On Thursday, the Reader searched furiously in the library for a book about the World Social Forum.

No book was found. On Sunday, the Reader searched the catalogue again. Now a book was found. Q: What had happened in the meantime? A: Impressed by the Reader's activism, the librarians had updated the cataloguing data.

Isn't this a good example of how an observer may sometimes influence the object of his research? In this case, the researcher influenced the subject, too. Now "World Social Forum" figures among the subjects of the library catalogue.

Chapter 2: Where is documentation now?

1.

"...blithe as a milkmaid, or sumptuously dressed according to the wishes of its masters"-- Suzanne Briet

Documentation, as a concept, seems to have become superseded by information and metadata. What was documentation?

"The active history of European documentation spans the years from the founding of the International Institute of Bibliography by Henri Otlet and Henri Lafontaine in 1905 in Brussels to its eclipse by information science after World War II", writes Ronald E. Day in *The Modern Invention of Information*.^[9]

Suzanne Briet, writing in the nineteen-forties and fifties, believed that documentation had a great future. She looked upon documentation as an offspring of the evolution of intellectual work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Briet, documentation was a necessary "cultural technique" in modern society.

Briet's "cultural technique" is complex. To explain it, she uses a rather vague notion of "documentary unity":

"Documentary unity tends toward the elementary idea, toward the unity of

thought, simultaneously and proportionally to the multiplication of documentary forms, to the increase of documentary mass, and to the improvement of the documentalist's technical skills." [10]

To the reader of Briet's pamphlet *What is Documentation?* (1951) it may be easier to understand documentation as the sum of the multiple skills and techniques which need to be mastered by a new category of professionals, the documentalists, rather than as just a single "cultural technique" [11].

Briet on the role of documentation and the documentalist:

"The evolution of human knowledge is a permanent compromise between two mental attitudes. Invention and explication, reflection and hypothesis divide the field of thought. Documentation is their servant: blithe as a milkmaid, or sumptuously dressed according to the wishes of its masters, the scholars."

To Briet, however, the documentalist is not only a servant, he is a creator, too. Consider the following characteristic passage:

"Documentation, while it is intimately tied to the life of a team of workers or scientists or scholars--or while it participates in an industrial, commercial, administrative, teaching activity, etc...., can in certain cases end in a genuine creation, via the juxtaposition, selection, and the comparison of documents, and the production of auxiliary documents. The contents of documentation are, thus, interdocumentary."

A reader today is struck by Briet's over-optimistic belief in progress through scientific research and industrial development. In this regard, Ronald Day's chapter on European Documentation brings a penetrating critique of her concepts and of the concepts of her predecessor, Paul Otlet.

Yet Briet stood for a principle which deserves to be remembered and revived. It is the principle that the documentalist and librarian (Briet herself worked at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris) should be an active intellectual producer and team-worker. And a networker, we would like to add today.

Another good principle of Briet is the openness and publicness of the documentation, which, nowadays, is called the freedom of information. Briet writes:

"Is the scholar confident of having the power to locate the entirety of that

documentation which interests him? The centers and offices of documentation read it for him. Documentary work is organized collectively. The location, however, of an important part of scientific documentation remains secret, in certain areas at least. Jean THIBAUD has recently translated the anxiety of scholars before the fact that "science" now appears "as the most essential of warlike activities in a time of peace." The great EINSTEIN has given a cry of alarm: "the field of information shrinks without end under the pressure of military necessity. Secret documentation is an insult inflicted upon documentation."

Back in the days of the Cold War, when Briet wrote these words, "secret documentation" did not mean exactly the same as it means in the present age of the GATS and the TRIPS. Not only the militarisation of research, still a very real threat today, but also the ever more exclusive tradable intellectual property rights of business corporations and media conglomerates are piling obstacles up against the "collectively organized documentary work" (Briet) which remains to be done. In our days, secret has come to equal patented, or copyrighted.

2.

Finnish library professionals maintain a thesaurus of library terms in Finnish (VESA) and Swedish (ALLÄRS). From these thesaurii the term 'documentation' has almost disappeared.

In the Finnish thesaurus, the word 'dokumentaatiokeskus' (documentation centre) is only mentioned as an outdated alternative to 'tietopalvelu' (information service), which is the preferred term.

Finnish language and culture is purist in the sense that Greek or Latin-based words are only rarely imported; instead, new words with Finnish roots are constructed like, for instance 'puhelin' (from the verb 'puhua', to speak) for telephone, or 'tietokone' (based on 'tieto', i.e. knowledge; information; and 'kone', i.e. machine) for computer. For a while I thought that 'documentation' (from the Latin verb 'docere', which means 'to show, teach') had perhaps been replaced because of linguistic purism.

That was vain speculation. The Swedish language takes in lots of Latin, Greek and English words, yet in the Swedish thesaurus, too, 'dokumentationscentraler' (documentation centres) is out; henceforward, the recommended term is 'informationstjänster' (information service). [12]

I provoked an angry comment from one of the maintainers of the thesaurus

when I reported my observation to her and described it as an example of ideological cleansing. I had to explain that I did not mean that there has been a conspiracy or that somebody was reaching his strategic goal, the liquidation of all 'documentation centres', and their replacement by 'information service units'.

Still I think that the eradication of documentation at the level of terminology has run parallel with a universal decline of the ideal of the librarian as an intellectual, in the sense of Suzanne Briet.

3.

I asked an information specialist, who has been working in the Helsinki City Library for decades, if they are doing any documentation in her library. Would they compile a bibliography on a particular subject, if needed? I was thinking of subjects relating to the World Social Forum.

The information specialist confirmed that, in the past, librarians often prepared special book-lists and bibliographies on demand (it would have been interesting to discuss the origins and nature of those demands). With the advent of electronic databases, however, that kind of documentation came to be considered as superfluous. People got used to printing out bibliographic data on screen or paper instantly from computerised catalogues, she said.

Fortunately, many librarians continue to document a little bit more than the collections of their libraries. I shall conclude this chapter with some examples of documentary work still being done:

- libraries have been (are?) engaged in local history projects in cooperation with study circles, historians and educational associations;
- the libraries arrange exhibitions, presentations, readings and many other events. These activities may involve documentation work;
- the head librarian of the Malmi Library (were they helped me find materials on the WSF in the EBSCO database), maintains a collection of links to facilities and services in the suburb of Malmi;
- in general, the libraries are making efforts to document the new contexts of the World Wide Web. Finnish public libraries have, for instance, produced web-directories of living novelists and poets. For several years now, the public library of Hämeenlinna, a city of ca 50.000 inhabitants, has maintained an excellent general collection of weblinks, "The Goodies" (ca

35.000 links), which is being visited each week by ca 100.000 visitors, predominantly women aged 15 to 29 and men over 45 [13];

Some years ago Finnish public libraries also begun to classify webpages according to the universal decimal system (or a specially developed variant of it). But that project, which was supposed to draw on assistance from the users, has never really "taken off". The "Link Library" continues as an experimental rather than a functioning and vital service.

Chapter 3: Global democratization

1.

From one year to another, the organisers of the WSF are doing a heroic job. The programme of the WSF in Mumbai, for instance, is indeed "a document". On each of its 120 pages in tabloid format are printed the dates, venues, hours, titles (in four languages), organisers and additional facts about ca 12 separate events. Thus the programme lists some 1250 events: panels, roundtables, testimonies, seminars and workshops. (The last fifteen pages is a catalogue of the cultural part, ca 150 presentations, concerts, film screenings and exhibitions.)

The WSF in Mumbai 2004 must have been one of the biggest international meetings in the history of humankind. Of course, even greater numbers of people from different countries and cultures have confronted each others in times of war, and some religious mass gatherings may also have attracted more participants from different countries. The WSF is unique, however, in its mundane, multicultural yet peaceful character, and because the participants are not sent there by a dictators, or even by more or less democratically nominated governments. One should like to call it a civilized meeting of civil societies.

Why do people go to the WSF? Here, I should like to use that word, information. The WSF is a gigantic information market for the exchange of news, thoughts and knowledge. But it is not a mass market, nor an instance of mass communication. The information is not commodified and reified. The communication is between individuals and groups of individuals in kind of global public sphere beyond the distorted information landscape offered by today's mass media.

The papers, the leaflets, the books and booklets, the CDs and videos brought to the WSF by people from all corners of the world need to be collected, scanned, preserved and presented as widely as possible through the public libraries of the whole world, because the WSF does not intend to be just one among several recurring world conferences. It is also meant to be a global sociopolitical process at the local level of social life. I want my local library to become involved. I would expect to find catalogues, digital copies of WSF-materials, and hard copies of important WSF-books in, say, the Helsinki City Library and in other libraries close to where I live.

Brazilian business-man and WSF-activist Oded Grajew has proposed [14] that social fora be arranged in all cities of the world in order "to accelerate the process of globalization". Actually, the diffusion of the social forum to the local level is already well under way. Continental and regional social forums are being organised in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. National social fora have been arranged in many countries, including my own, Finland.

Oded Grajew evidently understands globalisation as signifying, first and foremostly, global democratisation. Other participants in the WSF disagree and say that globalisation is something that has to be stopped. But even the most 'anti-globalisation' activists would not demand a halt to global democratization, I believe.

The participants in the WSF are an almost unbelievable multitude of people with so many beliefs, convictions and opinions. However, so are the users and patrons of the library.

2.

IFLA chairperson Kay Raseroka writes: "As a facilitator of communication, the library has to establish contextual operations that are determined by the needs of the community they serve." [15]

At the workshop in Mumbai, Raseroka expressly illustrated her statement with the example of the World Social Forum. [16] In the present global context, one of the necessary public library operations consists in documenting the WSF. The WSF badly needs a documentation service.

WSF activist Gustavo Marin writes: "The means for obtaining a global vision, to facilitate legibility sufficient to highlight the wealth of the debates and proposals, also remains a task on standby. Efforts have been made in the

sectors of documentation and systematising the ideas formulated at the Forums since the first forum at Porto Alegre in January 2001. There is no nostalgia in this quest to keep archives on the forums. An amnesic movement is liable to become diluted, or else others will write its history. The work of archiving, documentation and systematisation is essential for emphasising the intercultural, social and political wealth contributed by the participants themselves." [17]

It should become clear from this article that, although I warmly agree with the view that the WSF should "keep archives", I also think that, hitherto, the efforts at documentation of the WSF have been far too timid.

The WSF does not need to reinvent the wheel. The solution to this problem is very old. It can be found running smoothly somewhere in between the state and the civil society. It is universally known as the library.

The documentation of the WSF, that is, the job of collecting, preserving and disseminating of the proceedings from all the meetings and conferences of the World Social Forum, is a job for the library. Or, to be more precise: it is a task to be filled by the information professionals, the staff of the world's libraries.

The documentation of a world meeting like the WSF in Mumbai is an operation which cannot be carried out from afar. This means that librarians should go to the next WSFs, participate in them, and organise the documentary work. Because of the scale of these world events, the team should have as many members as possible.

3.

I can hear objections: Why, aren't the journalists already doing this? Is the WSF not being covered by press, radio and television teams? Why bother the libraries with extra work?

But journalism, I answer, is like the wife in the film called *Belle de jour*, while documentation resembles her husband, the neutral, stable and incorruptible doctor. Besides, the coverage given by a newspaper or TV-team may extend to five or ten events per day. Five hundred or a thousand events per day is a different story.

I also expect to be told that the solution is already up and running and it is called the internet. Just type "World Social Forum" into Yahoo, and

you'll get 148.00 hits. Do you need more?

The answer is yes, because 148.000 hits is a gross underestimation. Much more can be retrieved from the deep web [18].

Much more of what? I am not going to write that word, information, but I can draw a parallell.

La documentation Française has been, since 1947, the documentation center and publishing house of the French state government. Originally, however, the documentation Française was the London and Algiers based information agency of the French Resistance Movement during World War II. [19]

Resistance and Liberation are badly needed in our days, too. The World Social Forums in Porto Alegre and Mumbai have become the new London and Algiers, the new symbols of resistance and liberation. The WSF needs a new documentation centre, but one which is independent from the nation-state and which surpasses the documentation Française both quantitatively and qualitatively. The world's public librarians can create it, if they want to.

After the dissolution of the USSR, and with the spread of the internet, the process of globalisation has passed the point of no return. In this new situation, the librarians and documentalists must find new ways to serve the entire humanity.

The documentation of the World Social Forum: a necessary step towards the global public library.

4.

Is the documentation of the WSF a political project? In a sense, yes, because the World Social Forum is not politically indifferent. In April 2001 the Brazilian organizing committee drew up a charter of principles of the WSF. The first principle defines the purpose of the WSF in the following way:

"The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society centred on the human person." [20]

As long as it remains an open meeting place, however, the World Social Forum is no more political than the library. It is striking that one of the most often heard self-definitions of the library is precisely the same as the self-definition of the WSF - 'a meeting place'. Thus the library, and the ethos of the librarian, are also needed to save the democratic and open character of the WSF. Democracy is not only a question of the formal structures of decision-making, nor even of participation and majority power, it is also an issue of openness and tolerance. The principles of intellectual freedom and freedom of information of IFLA and its FAIFE-committee [21] should be fully compatible with those of the WSF. Democracy rests upon this spirit of the libraries.

The WSF does not release final statements nor have the participating organisations and movements agreed on a political programme. True, you will not find many supporters of the occupation of Iraq among the participants of the WSF. But that, too, may be an expression of their intellectual freedom. Because intellectual freedom does not mean indifference, either.

A secretariat and permanent office in Sao Paulo care for the organizational continuity of the WSF. The important planning decisions are taken by the International Council of the WSF which, after its most recent meeting (in Passignano, Italy), where 19 new members were admitted, is composed of delegates from 83 organisations. Among these are Attac, IBASE, World Council of Churches, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Via Campesina, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Ubuntu, Inter Press Service and Network Institute for Global Democratization.[22]

The possibility that the IFLA would join the International Council of the WSF must have crossed Kay Raseroka's mind in Mumbai last January. It is to be hoped that such a step forward will be taken. Both institutions have aspirations beyond the national borders and political divisions of mankind. They both need to share each others visions and to strive to realise them together.

Chapter 4: Instead of conclusions

Intead of ending this article with conclusions of a general kind, I shall briefly discuss how to translate the idea which I have tried to set out above into practice.

- 1.

It is not one huge project. The documentation of the WSF is a truly multifaceted task which can only proceed in a molecular manner. Some molecules are already forming the first cells of the new organism, but I am not sure that they will survive.

The Mosaico del livros is a collection of books which have been brought to Porto Alegre by participants in the WSF. This project tries to make "a Knowledge Mosaic around a fundamental opus: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" of the educator Paulo Freire". [23]

Another initiative is The Tree of Books, which describes itself as an artistic project: "It is the central bookstore that shall receive, in its roots, the authors, speakers and NGOs publications from all organisations and people attracted by the Forum". [24]

Stouthearted and nice as these initiatives are, they are in reality only pathetic reminders of the need to shape a true library policy and documentation strategy for the WSF.

2.

At one of the evaluation meetings in Mumbai on the day after the official ending of the WSF, an adivasi from Orissa complained about the difficulty he had to find what he had been looking for. In fact, most of the participants in the WSF experience the same problem. The stories about the consequences of the informational chaos at the WSF are legio. There are both negative and positive experiences.

However, this man had a special complaint. In Orissa, a social movement is developing against the bauxite mining, which is being undertaken there, as usual, by big corporations. At the WSF in Mumbai, this movement had arranged a workshop on the social and environmental impact of bauxite mining.

The problem, according to our witness, was that they felt isolated. They lacked contacts to similar movements in other places and other countries. In order to 'globalize the resistance' (as one of the often heard slogans go), one of course needs global links and contacts.

After the man from Orissa the present writer was given the floor. I explained that this is precisely the kind of problem which could be solved if there was a serious documentation of the WSF. I also pointed out that there exists one institution which is, or which is at least supposed to be, capable of providing valuable information on the most varied range of

subjects, namely, the library. In short, I asked the man from Orissa and the others to imagine that the library would be able to help them to find the information they need. - then I informed them about the library-related workshop we had at the Tata Institute for Social Sciences and at the Nesco Grounds (the are of the WSF-events in Mumbai). Finally, I stressed the importance of creating links between the WSF and the ordinary public libraries.

I am not sure what the man from Orissa thought about my speech because, unfortunately, I failed to look him up after the meeting and to get his contact details. However, I got positive response from an anthropologist who was also attending the evaluation event. His name is Felix Padel and he is working with a book on bauxite mining.

Bauxite, which is known as the third most abundant element (after oxygen and silicon) and as the raw material of the transnational aluminium industry, is a big topic in itself. I hope that a public library, somewhere, might want to initiate documentary work on bauxite-related activities at the WSF.

3.

When and for what purpose does a library initiate a "contextual operation"? Is there room for projects relating to the documentation of the WSF in the back-offices of the public libraries? Does the library staff have any time to work on such projects at hours when they are not serving their customers at the loan desks and reference desks? These are the kind of questions to which one would hope to get some positive answers.

Ten years ago Helsinki City Library launched the Cable Book, one of the first libraries with an own web-server and internet-connected workstations for the public. The beginnings of this operation of the city library - which, by the way, turned out to correspond very well to the needs of the surrounding community - coincided in time with the coming of Linux. Linus Torvalds was indeed present in person at the opening of the Cable Book branch of Helsinki City Library 28 February 1994, because the first webserver of the library was a linux-server.

In 1993-1995 Jyrki Kuoppala, the linux-guru, and myself, worked in the back-office of the Cable Book Library. [25] From these years, and from my subsequent experience I know that the librarians are sometimes capable of social innovations.

Footnotes:

* The author wishes to thank the Kordelin Foundation in Helsinki, which has provided financial support for my research work on the subject matter of this article. The homepage of Mikael Bök is at <http://www.kaapeli.fi/book> He can be contacted by email at the address book@kaapeli.fi.

[1] Besides presiding over IFLA in the period 2003-2005 Kay Raseroka is working as university librarian in Gaborone, Botswana. Raseroka gave the keynote speech to the WSF-workshop "Democratisation of Information with a Focus on Libraries" (Mumbai 18-19 January 2004). She also led a panel discussion during the first session of the workshop and was chair of the second session. As far as I know this was the first WSF-event which focussed on libraries and on connecting library professionals to the WSF-process. The majority of the participants were Indian LIS, including the leaders of the Indian Library Association, the director of the Library of the Parliament and other central figures of the Indian library community. Reports and proceedings from this workshop are available from the website of the Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD), which organised the workshop jointly with the Sir Dorabij Tata Memorial Library at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).
See <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai>

[2] See Briet, Suzanne(2001): What is Documentation? Selections from Qu'est-ce que la documentation? (Paris 1951), translated and commented by Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet.
<http://www.lisp.wayne.edu/~ai2398/briet.htm>

[3] Launched 2003, the Helmet system provides public online access to bibliographic information and availability data about the books in the public libraries of the Helsinki Metropolitan area (the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Kauniainen, and Vantaa). The database also comprises periodicals, videos, dvds and musical scores. Here are some statistical figures from the Ministry of Education about the books in the Helmet libraries: in 2003 the Helsinki City Library kept 1,815,313 books (3,31 books per inhabitant; new acquisitions 2003: 101,536 books), Espoo 869,660 books (4,54 books/inh.; acq. 2003: 57,273 books), Kauniainen 77,744 books (9,63 books/inh.; acq. 2003: 2,513 books) and Vantaa 524,346 books (3,44; acq. 2003: 36,595 books). More Finnish public library statistics are found at <http://tilastot.kirjastot.fi/>

[4] Yahoo also provides a catalogue of annotated links by subject. The homepage of the World Social Forum was found in the following directories:

- Society and Culture > Environment and Nature > Sustainable Development
- Global Economy > Conferences

[5] Helsinki City Library offers personal information services via the Internet:

"- Ask a Librarian - reference service: questions sent to this service may be answered by any Public Library in Finland. Users from abroad are welcome to send in questions concerning Finland.

- iGS - the information Gas Station: ask anything about anything. You can send in your question by e-mail, text message, fax, postcard or phone. iGS is on the move. You will find the schedule on the iGS homepage.

- iGS online: discuss online with the information service staff"

(source: http://www.lib.hel.fi/?lang_id=EN)

[6] EBSCO stands for Elton B. Stephens Company. Founded in 1944, the company is a subscription provider for more than 250,000 journals, serving more than 50,000 libraries worldwide, and a publisher of journal article databases.

EBSCO is also the world's largest manufacturer of fishing lures and a manufacturer of steel joist and metal roof deck. Furthermore, EBSCO is in the real estate business. Annual sales surpassed \$1 billion in 1997.

(Source: <http://www.ebsco.com/>)

[7] A copy of this particular listing can be seen at

http://www.kaapeli.fi/book/varia/ebsco_listing.txt

[8] The English version of Heikki Patomäki's and Teivo Teivainen's book is forthcoming from Zed books in August 2004 under the title A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions.

[9] Day, Ronald E.(2001): The Modern Invention of Information. Discourse, History and Power. Southern Illinois University Press, p. 7.

[10] Briet, op.cit. (<http://www.lisp.wayne.edu/~ai2398/briet.htm>). I am grateful to Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet for their web-translation. The "translation will be posted as it progresses", they write. So my quotations from Briet's text should be checked against the version in the web. I have not been able to find the French original. It would be nice to have that, too, on the web.

[11] "The documentalist is that person who performs the trade of documentation. He must possess the techniques, methods, and tools of documentation. It is now possible for this person to become a licensed technician: a state diploma exists in France since the founding of the

National Institute of Documentary Techniques [l'Institut National des Techniques de la Documentation (INTD)] (Decree of December the first, 1950)", quoted from Briet, op.cit.

[12] In the Swedish part of the thesaurus, it is also suggested that 'dokument' (document) be replaced by 'handlingar', a generic term signifying 'actions' or 'acts'. The VESA-thesaurus (<http://vesa.lib.helsinki.fi/>) is maintained at the Helsinki University Library (the Finnish National Library). It functions as a basic tool for documentation (!) work throughout the Finnish library system.

[13] Source: <http://www.makupalat.fi/>, homepage of "The Goodies".

[14] Oded Grajew's proposal, see <http://www.nigd.org/wsf/1080932645#grajew>.

[15] Kay Raseroka: "Keynote Address", "Democratisation of Information with a Focus on Libraries", Mumbai 18 January 2004 (<http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai/reports/keynote.pdf>)

[16] One of the particular contexts which Raseroka has been thinking of is that of the oral cultures: how can the library serve people who speak languages which are not written? See Kay Raseroka: "The Right to Memory" (<http://composite.uqam.ca/vidaez/docs/karaen.html>)

[17] See Gustavo Marin: "Advances and tensions of the alternative world movement" <http://www.wsfindia.org/eval2004d.php?myvar=14>

[18] 'The deep web' is a common denomination for internet content which is not reached by web-crawlers like Google and AltaVista. The International Internet Preservation Consortium was formed by a number of national libraries in 2003. Led by the National Library of France, the Consortium also comprises National libraries of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, The British Library (UK), The Library of Congress (USA) and the Internet Archive (USA). This consortium has a special working group on the deep web. See the press-release 5 May 2004 at

<http://netpreserve.org/press/pr20040505.php> Information about the deep web working group is found at <http://netpreserve.org/about/deepweb.php>

[19] La documentation Française is present on the web at <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/>

[20] World Social Forum Charter of Principles, quoted from http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu=4&cd_language=2

[21] Documents and news from the FAIFE are at <http://www.ifla.org/faife/>

[22] The list of members of the International Council, as well as documents on its rules and procedures, are found at <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>

[23] Mosaico de Livro, Biblioteca social mundial. <http://www.mosaicodelivrosfm.org/>

[24] The Tree of Books, an artistic initiative. <http://www.booktree.org/>

[25] See my article "The Cable Book and its Knot . An Internet Public Library" (Mikael Bööök) <http://www.kaapeli.fi/book/vineart.html>
(published in VINE No 98, March 1995)

On the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour

Ruth Rikowski

Introduction

In order to effectively understand, explain and critique capitalism we need to develop Marxist theory, as far as I am concerned, and apply it to the global capitalist world that we find ourselves in today. In particular, I am arguing in my various published works (Rikowski, 2000a, 2000b,

2003a, 2003b), that capitalism goes through various phases. Previously, there was the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution, and now we are moving into the knowledge revolution. This means that more value is being created from intellectual labour and that this value is then embedded in intangible goods/commodities. This is in contrast to value being created from manual labour and becoming embedded in tangible goods/commodities. This clearly has repercussions for labour itself. Labour is the core of capitalism, but today, in the developed world as we move into the knowledge revolution, there is a greater expenditure of intellectual labour and less expenditure of manual labour.

This paper will explore, specifically, the length of the working day for the labourer, and will demonstrate the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour. This means, ultimately, that the concept of the working-day becomes meaningless in the knowledge revolution, I suggest. Thus, whilst we need an appreciation and an understanding of Marx's concept of the working-day, having arrived at this understanding, we then need to appreciate the fact that the concept actually starts to lose its meaning and significance in the advanced stage of capitalism that we are now in. Indeed,

All that is solid melts into air. (Marx and Engels, 1888, p.83).

We come full circle, and prove the power of Marx's theoretical analysis.

Length of the working-day

As Marx emphasises over and over again, the capitalist wants to get as much work out of the labourer and to create as much value as possible. Value (and from this, profits) can only be created and extracted from labour, but there are limits to this, if the labourer is to survive, and if labour-power, the capacity to labour is to be replenished. The labourer needs to rest, sleep and have nourishment, so this basic fact alone means that the labourer cannot labour for 24 hours a day. But obviously, the labourer wants to engage in other activities as well. So, a settlement is found in regard to the length of the working-day, but this is still the 'product of a protracted civil war'. As Marx says:

The creation of a normal working-day is.... the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class. (Marx, 1887, p.283)

So, how does the length of the working-day differ for the intellectual labourer, in the knowledge revolution, as opposed to the manual labourer in the period of the industrial revolution? Obviously, both forms of labour are needed, but in the knowledge revolution there is a greater expenditure of intellectual labour and less expenditure of manual labour. First of all, there is a need for workers to be far more flexible in the knowledge revolution. In the industrial revolution, the emphasis was on 'graft' and physically hard work. The more physical expenditure that the labourer could exert

the better - more products could be produced, such as cars and washing machines. This manual labourer created value and some of this value would then be turned into profit, which meant that companies could succeed and capitalism could thrive. In this way it appeared to be a system that 'worked'. The differences between value and profit will not be explored - that is a very complex area. However, it is important to appreciate the fact that value and profit are different. Increasing the amount of manual labour is quite straightforward (in comparison with intellectual labour). If the manual labour is fit and nourished then he/she can work very hard for a certain period, which means that new value can easily be created. Only labour can create value - "...human labour creates value..." (Marx, 1887, p. 57). Furthermore, labour is the 'substance of value', and as Postone says:

We have seen that labour, in its historically determinate function as a socially mediating activity, is the 'substance of value'; the determining essence of the social formation. (Postone, 1996, p.166)

So, in regard to manual labour, it is just a matter of making a decision in regard to an appropriate length of the working-day - say, 10 hours, then the manual labourer works for this period, and creates value. There are also different forms and aspects of value, but there is not the space to explore this further here, but this will be considered further in my forthcoming book *Globalisation, Information and Libraries: the implications of the World Trade Organisation's GATS and TRIPS agreements*.

The intellectual labourer in the knowledge revolution, flexible ways of working and the concept of the length of the working-day for intellectual labour

However, with the intellectual labourer the picture is not so straightforward. Ideas can materialise at any time of the day or night. The intellectual labourer might have a vested interest in not divulging some of his/her knowledge and ideas within the company, preferring to take them home, and utilise them for another purpose. If a manual labourer is not labouring, the manager can see this very easily, and insist that they work harder. But the knowledge worker? Are they sitting there thinking up something wonderful to benefit the company, or are they just dreaming about their forthcoming night out, or a football match? Many workers surf the net. It is difficult for a company to keep track of whether this is being done for the benefit of the company or for the labourers' individual benefit. Companies do have the facility to track this - but how time-consuming that could be and might not be productive at all. Also, in order to create new ideas and to be forward thinking, labourers must be given a certain amount of freedom, including intellectual freedom, but on the other hand, the company does not want to give them too much freedom, as this could be detrimental to their profit margins. It all starts to become complex. A big problem, though, as far as many companies are concerned, is that many labourers take their knowledge and ideas home with them at the end of the day and/or when they leave the company. This means that the company does not benefit from this knowledge and ideas (even though they have been paying the labourer). As Leadbeater says:

Knowledge assets often reside in, or stem from, people. People cannot be owned, unless we return to a form of slavery. Companies cannot own the source of one of their most important assets: human capital. (Leadbeater, 1999, p.178)

How can companies overcome this problem? Many companies are now devising mechanisms for transforming what is often referred to as human capital into structural capital. This involves capturing the labourers' knowledge so that he/she does not take it away with him/her when they leave the company. Various schemes have been introduced, and in many ways, this seems to be working quite effectively. But obviously, it is impossible to capture everything - there is always that next idea and that next thought, on the horizon. Also, once such knowledge is put into a database it is not necessarily quite the same piece of knowledge as the one that was in the labourers' head. Furthermore, some argue that knowledge is subjective, as each person's perception of knowledge is different. There is not the space to explore this further but the complexities of the issue in regard to the length of the working-day for the intellectual labourer should be fairly self-apparent by now.

The majority of labourers that work in the service industry and with knowledge and intangible assets probably still work a 'traditional' 9-5 working day. The negotiations over the length of the working-day over many years having resulted in a shortening of the length of the working-day in comparison with the period of the industrial revolution - which we are all very aware of. However, there is a trend moving away from this, and towards the 'flexible' worker. Such labourers work unconventional hours and not always in the same place. Sometimes, they will work from home and sometimes they will carry a laptop around with them and go to different place in order to be inspired, to consider how other organisations are operating etc. Leadbeater refers to 'knowledge workers' and the need for them to be mobile in the following way, saying:

One of the most powerful social groups created by the knowledge economy are so-called 'knowledge workers': mobile, skilled, affluent, independent, hard-working, ambitious, environmentally conscious, people who can trade on their skill, expertise and intellectual capital. These knowledge workers will be highly mobile. (Leadbeater, 1999, p. 229)

In the knowledge management empirical research that I undertook, where I interviewed a number of different knowledge management 'experts' in a variety of organisations (Rikowski, 2003b), the topic of the flexible worker was raised by some of the participants. One of the participants (P5) said:

...we're not in an organisation where people physically sit at a desk everyday...I've just arrived at my office this morning. I was in my office one day last week and I'll probably only be in the office one or two days this week...I might be travelling. Or I work at home... we can actually take our libraries with us...We have technology that allows us to support...our people wherever they go...we use a groupware package called LotusNotes which allows you to replicate our databases...whatever databases you want. You can effectively take your library with you. You can search over those libraries in a disconnected way.

This participant also talked about synchronous collaborative work tools and online collaborative working. This is where workers can share a whiteboard, draft documents together, formulate ideas collaboratively, have real-time chat sessions and more formal online meetings and conferences etc. The technology has opened up a whole new range of options, which is enabling the worker to be more 'flexible'.

As well as, or as an alternative, there is also a move towards more flexible ways of working within an organisation itself, particularly within what are often known as 'knowledge-creating companies'. Leadbeater refers to such companies, saying that:

A knowledge-based firm differs markedly, in theory and in practice, from that traditional model of the company. The core of a knowledge-based company is the know-how of the people who work there. A know-how company is created by an agreement between people to forgo their claim upon their work for the sake of a joint enterprise. (Leadbeater, 1999, p.177)

There will tend to be less formal networks in such organisations, and more opportunity for knowledge and information to flow freely. There may will be more open forms of communication, with employees being encouraged to challenge the status quo. In such an environment, there is also likely to be more flexibility in regard to the standard length of the working-day. And so we have 'flexi-time', where labourers work a pattern that is outside the 9-5 run.

Are knowledge workers empowered?

To return to Marx and his analysis in regard to the working-day, and where he says that the working-day is:

...the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class. (Marx, 1887, p.283)

Where does this quote and a Marxist analysis fit in with this new, flexible knowledge worker? Some say that it does not, and that therefore a Marxist theory including a Marxist theory of value is wrong or redundant or irrelevant today. Many feel very passionate about this, and argue that the new knowledge worker rather than being exploited and alienated is actually empowered. So, this knowledge revolution is seen to be wonderful, and as liberating workers. Knowledge workers hold the knowledge so they can 'call the shots'. They can ask for a pay rise but if they do not get it they can leave the company and take their knowledge with them. They can bargain. I very much challenge this notion, but even if we were to accept it, the argument is still seriously flawed, if we are concerned with any form of just society. Supposing highly skilled knowledge workers are liberated in this way - well, what about the rest of the labourers in the developed world? A new divide would be established between those that have these knowledge skills and those that do not. And those in the developing world - well, they will be even further impoverished. So, to argue that we live in a wonderful society because knowledge workers are empowered must be seriously

flawed.

However, to return to the more fundamental point. Are knowledge workers empowered? A deeper analysis of this, and a return to Marx, clearly shows that they are not liberated in this way. The knowledge worker still has to sell his/her labour-power as a commodity in the market-place, the same as any other labourer does. He/she then has to work for a certain period, for which he/she is paid a wage, but during this period he/she creates value over and above the value that already exists. He/she creates 'added value'. As Marx says:

*...the labourer, by virtue of his labour being of a specialised kind...by the mere act of working, creates each instant an **additional or new value**.* (Marx, 1887, p.201 - my emphases)

There is much in the business literature that emphasises the need to create this additional value. As Welch says, for example:

The organisation has to recognise that its prime objective (perhaps its only objective) is to add value (Welch, 2000, p.10 - original emphasis)

So, the creation of this added value by the labourer (no matter whether this be a manual labourer or an intellectual labourer) is very beneficial for the capitalist. As Marx says, this is:

...very advantageous to the capitalist inasmuch as it preserves the existing value of his capital. So long as trade is good, the capitalist is too much absorbed in money-grabbing to take notice of this gratuitous gift of labour. (Marx, 1887, p.200)

Furthermore, this notion of the 'empowered knowledge worker' assumes that the knowledge worker is in total control of his/her own knowledge, and can choose whether or not to impart the knowledge, and if it is to be imparted, then the way in which it is to be imparted. However, this is often far from the case in reality. Companies sometimes take the ideas from the knowledge workers and encapsulate them into intellectual property rights that then belong to the company, without giving the knowledge workers sufficient recompense. Or joint intellectual property rights might be formulated, but perhaps the input of the individual knowledge worker within this is not given sufficient recompense. Also, there are now moves afoot to extract knowledge and ideas from workers by other means - ideas that they might or might not want to share. This includes tapping into peoples' unconscious knowledge and various brain mining techniques. Milton (2000) describes

various ways in which organisations try to tap into people' unconscious knowledge. He says that two types of tacit knowledge can be distinguished - conscious (what you know that you know) and unconscious (what you do not know you know). He suggests undertaking brain mining to extract the unconscious tacit knowledge from people's minds. As a Knowledge Manager for BP Amoco, Milton describes the brain mining techniques he has used for the extraction of this unconscious knowledge, including After Action Reviews where small teams undertake a brief action and are then questioned to extract their knowledge. It was found that superficial questions produced shallow answers but harder questions extracted the deeper knowledge. Thus, by such

measures unconscious knowledge can be extracted from workers, knowledge that they are not imparting freely and willingly, so clearly these knowledge workers are not empowered in any way.

Tapping into peoples' unconscious knowledge would disturb many peoples' sense of morality, but a detailed investigation would demonstrate, I suggest, that the capitalist system has no such moral concerns, and that, indeed, it cannot have such concerns. Instead its concern is with the need to be forever creating value from labour and for this value to then become embedded in the commodity - this drive is infinite, and there are no moral barriers to the realisation of this. Capitalism is sustained by value, and not by morals (this is also examined in my forthcoming book). This relates back again, to the joint desire to limit the length of the working-day. This is not because of any sense of morality on the part of the capitalist, but because ultimately, it is in the capitalist interest. The labourer must have a rest from work and have sleep and nourishment. Furthermore, as Marx said:

...in its blind unrestrainable passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus-labour, capital, oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working-day. (Marx, 1887, p.253)

In the knowledge revolution this is likely to include tapping into peoples' unconscious knowledge, as well as tapping into peoples' emotions and friendships etc., I would suggest. Boyett and Boyett say that we might even be moving into a new 'post-knowledge economy' and that:

A new post-knowledge economy may be emerging that is based not on the exploitation of information, but on stories. This market for feelings may gradually eclipse the market for tangible products. Six such emotional markets can be discerned now: adventures for sale, the market for togetherness, friendship, and love, the market for care, the who-am-I market, the market for peace of mind, and the market for convictions. (Boyett and Boyett, 2001, p.47)

They go on to say that:

Ultimately, we may see the development of an even newer post-knowledge economy in which the chief value that companies deliver won't be food, material things, information, connectivity, emotional satisfaction, or experiences but individual or personal transformations (Boyett and Boyett, 2001, p.47).

Thus, ultimately, knowledge workers are far from empowered.

Conclusion

A consideration of the length of the working-day for intellectual labour is very much a new, unexplored area. To summarise - establishing the length of the working-day is still formulated on a 'battleground' between the capitalist and the labourer. When the labourer labours he/she creates value which is beneficial to the capitalist, indeed, it seems to be rather like a gift from God, or a 'gift of Nature', as Marx says. So, obviously, the more free gifts that the capitalist can get, the better, as far as he/she is concerned. But the labourer cannot labour for 24 hours, so a settlement

needs to be arrived at, in regard to an average length of the working-day. For the manual labourer this was relatively easy to establish. In the period of the industrial revolution it was at least 10 hours, but today, it is about 8 hours. But in order to maximise the value that can be extracted from intellectual labour, this rigid 8-10 hour approach is not really beneficial. People cannot think creatively in a constrained environment. So, flexible ways of working are now being developed. This has led some to say that the knowledge worker is empowered and not exploited. But the intellectual labourer still has to sell his/her labour-power as a commodity, and so, he/she is still exploited. Furthermore, in some circumstances, the intellectual labourer might well work for longer than the length of the average working-day that has been established for the manual labourer. So, it is possible for the knowledge worker to be more exploited, rather than less exploited. On the other hand, an incredible new idea could be formulated in minutes. In regard to the concept of the 'working-day' specifically, this concept becomes a nonsense when applied to intellectual labour. This is because, with the need to engender an environment that encourages intellectual thinking and with the need for more flexible ways of working etc, it becomes impossible to determine the length of the working-day for intellectual labour. So, indeed,

All that is solid melts into air... (Marx and Engels, 1888, p.83)

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Career Development in a Non-traditional Library Role: Some Personal Reflections

Paul Catherall

Asked recently to write a short article on my own career experiences, I was a little perplexed, what interest could my career history be to the aspiring ranks of library and information professionals? Therein lies the answer, because whilst I possess a library and information

qualification, and am chartered with CILIP, I am at times uncertain how far my 'library and information' credentials apply to my present role.

I first started working in a library context when I was around 16, undertaking trainee work with a local library. I renewed this interest when I entered Higher Education at NEWI (the North East Wales Institute), Wrexham in 1997, working as an assistant in the academic library, whilst obtaining a bachelors degree in English literature with media studies.

In 1999 I undertook a Masters degree in library and information management (from John Moores University, Liverpool), followed in 2000 by my appointment as a 'Web developer' at NEWI under the 'Academic Services' department of the library. This role involved a broad mixture of e-learning, content management, user training and conventional Web development.

My senior line manager, a LIS professional, encouraged my Continuing Professional Development, including CILIP Chartership (called the Library Association back then) in 2001-2, and later Associateship of the Institute of Learning and Teaching in 2002-3.

With the merger of the Library Association with the Institute of Information Scientists in 2002, I felt that I should continue to remain a member of CILIP, since this body clearly represented my role.

Now, in 2004, I find myself performing largely the same role but under a 'Technical Services' department with a different outlook on the role of Information Services and staffing policies. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the changes, which has impacted on some personal development opportunities, has been the shift away from CILIP.

I have no qualms about this, in fact, my determination to continue my own CPD programme has spurred me on to new activities, including some part-time lecturing, a publication with the LIS publisher, Chandos, several articles and (hopefully!) the commencement of a PhD in Information Science this September.

I have also recently become involved externally with CILIP for the first time since chartering, providing advice and practical help developing the CDG Web pages for accessibility.

The CILIP Web site, Update journal and group publications also provide useful resources for maintaining current awareness of the information sector.

Additionally, I have found that voicing the need for CPD at every opportunity, e.g. internal conferences, staff meetings, eventually produce results if the message is consistent and reasonable.

I feel the role of CILIP in the workplace, for regulating status, pay and CPD is becoming more tentative as new management models replace traditional library managers, reducing the affinity of senior staff with the information profession.

Managers in modern information services are increasingly likely to have an MBA or other specialist expertise such as IT, rather than a library qualification.

Despite the obvious diffusion of the information sector, following the advent of digital resources, I am still convinced library and information management expertise is essential for the organisation and delivery of modern information services. Just look at the disorganisation of the World Wide Web for proof that digital content is useless without information structures.

Diversification and maintenance of essential skills is the key to proving the relevance of information management in this changing climate, including developments in government legislation, standards organisations, technology and sector developments; there is a constant demand to provide modern information services in the context of issues such as accessibility, copyright, freedom of information and data protection to name a few.

So my experience, briefly summarised has been that of a LIS graduate meeting the IT-focused demands of the modern academic library.

My own experience has informed me of the need for innovation and adaptability in achieving personal development, and in particular not to rely on traditional sources of career development in a sector increasingly characterised by changing values and priorities.

Paul Catherall is the author of 'Delivering E-Learning for Information Services in Higher Education', Chandos Publishing, 2004. ISBN 1 84334 088 7 (pbk), 1 84334 095 X
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Influences in E-Learning: Forces for Change or Confusion?

Paul Catherall

Overview

Recent years have seen a new impetus amongst academic institutions to embrace VLEs (Virtual Learning Environments) within existing academic structures and modes of course delivery. The JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and other leading regulatory bodies in Further and Higher Education are encouraging the development of e-learning as an adjunct to conventional teaching.

E-learning systems do indeed represent a sophisticated technology for education, characterised by an integrated, web-based communications interface allowing for document publishing, file sharing, email and shared calendaring.

The use of Web-based e-learning allows educational tutors or workplace trainers to interact with students in an ubiquitous context, either at the place of study, from the home or other remote location; additionally, e-learning does not simply allow for advanced email and file-transmission, but also provides synchronous tools such as real-time chat for 'Web conferencing'.

The pedagogical advantages of e-learning, from a practical perspective may seem obvious and appealing; however, it should be noted that e-learning is also characterised by a number of wider environmental influences.

Market Forces

The e-learning market is currently led (or dominated, depending on your perspective) by the Blackboard corporation, based in the USA and currently holding around 40% of the e-learning market in the UK.

Perhaps it is inevitable that the development of e-learning has emerged from a US corporation, possessing the required financial backing for research and development.

The Blackboard e-learning system is at first glance the archetypal VLE, incorporating all of the aforementioned e-learning features, its success is due to the simplicity of the Blackboard interface

and content structure (not resembling, but imitating Windows file manager), thus accommodating many teaching styles.

However, one could argue that like Microsoft, the Blackboard product has dominated the e-learning market in a snow-ball like effect, leading to widespread dependence amongst FE and HE providers on a commercial system based around an annual license fee with additional costs for consultancy and support.

The Blackboard system is certainly excellent in terms of usability, however with mass uptake of course programmes and subsequent dependence on e-learning amongst academic departments, many organisations are finding they have become increasingly locked into this and similar commercial e-learning systems.

There are alternative e-learning platforms to the commercial market leaders, the not-for-profit COSE and Moodle systems are both popular systems, with rising levels of user support to match the larger companies; however, the advantages of an off-the-shelf system with a formal support provider are obviously more appealing to smaller organisations without programming expertise for maintaining systems internally.

Political Influences

Political influences on e-learning are certainly less direct, but equally present; the UK government has invested considerable money in developing e-learning across a range of institutions, most notably the UK E-University (UKEU), intended to offer e-learning based courses for UK and overseas students from UK universities, but dismantled in June this year due to poor uptake and software problems.

There has also been a significant impetus from central government to encourage the use of e-learning to develop its lifelong learning agenda, most recently, the white paper *The Future of Higher Education* (famously proposing a £3000 'contribution' or top-up-fee.) The vision, seen consistently across government policies, suggests the use of learning technology to support innovative models of learning and teaching for non-traditional students, across FE, HE and workplace training.

These proposals have filtered down to professional bodies and other sources of advocacy, most notably in the JISC vision for electronic libraries, encouraging the development of MLEs (Managed Learning Environments).

Whilst the advantages of e-learning are being realised for supporting part-time, low contact and other non-traditional forms of teaching, some educationalists have begun to question the blanket solution or application of e-learning across academic institutions and the pedagogic viability of e-learning following the collapse of UKEU.

Pedagogy

Perhaps the most interesting and least mentioned influence is pedagogical development, i.e. the way in which e-learning systems are informed by educational theory and research.

The current model for e-learning system development has largely been characterised by E-learning companies reacting to suggestions from the educational community, with system features conceived by developers, rather than educationalists. For me, this indicates an obvious gap between pedagogical research and the finished e-learning product.

Whilst some academics have urged colleagues to embrace e-learning, adopting an innovate and tutor-led approach, there must be some uncertainty on the appropriateness or application of proprietary systems as a supplement or even replacement for conventional teaching. One of the most heated debates currently concerns the use of 'learning objects', reusable 'packages' which could resemble a PowerPoint presentation, but which allow greater interaction and could be downloaded and imported into a compatible e-learning system. Consider this comment from a recent article by Norm Frieson (2003):

To the knowledge of this author... there have been no in-depth studies of the pedagogical consequences of these systems and ways of thinking, and no examinations of their epistemological and ideological implications. On a more practical level, others have noted a general lack of adoption of these techniques by both practitioners and vendors...

Web Standards

Another aspect of e-learning, which perhaps should have been listed earlier as an influence, but which sadly does not feature prominently enough in this field is the issue of Web standards, i.e. standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium or W3C (the official standards making body for the World Wide Web.)

Web standards include the mark-up script used to display the Web page or front-end of the e-learning system. Currently, the latest mark-up standard is XHTML 1.1., although the more familiar HTML 4.01 is still valid.

It is important for software developers to adhere to mark-up standards to allow Web browsers, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator to display Web resources correctly; these standards are also important for users with disabilities or access problems, where incorrect mark-up may impair the browsing experience of the user (e.g. using a Braille Web display.)

Another important Web standard is the WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), a W3C standard to ensure users with access problems are able to interact with Web resources; there are three ratings for WCAG compliance, A, AA, and AAA (the highest level of compliance). Practical

examples of these standards include alternative text for images (to describe the image) and similar text to describe the purpose of tables.

Unfortunately, many e-learning systems depend on non-accessible features such as frames, javascript, image-based text and other features that could cause access problems.

The issue of accessibility and standards compliance is becoming more prolific amongst e-learning systems, with limited support for the WCAG in systems such as Blackboard, WebCT and other market leaders, although much research and development is still needed.

It should be noted that Web accessibility is not limited to physical, cognitive or other disabilities, but should be considered in terms of issues such as availability, ownership and the IT expertise of users - consider this excerpt from my own recent publication:

48% of UK households have Internet access, with approximately 25% using fast broadband access and the remaining 75% using a slower modem connection...

Some Final Thoughts

We have considered how a range of influences have brought an impetus for the uptake of e-learning systems, and how the VLE model has become the dominant form of e-learning, however, it is clearly apparent that e-learning is driven less by pedagogical research and planning than by technological innovation and political impetus.

There is certainly a requirement for further research both on the impact of e-learning in class-based, low contact and other forms of teaching, and for research into the advantages and practical application of e-learning to inform future system development.

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The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C): <http://www.w3c.org>

W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG):
<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/>

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Tackling Social Exclusion: The Hardest to Reach

John Pateman

Social exclusion has complex and multi-dimensional causes and consequences, creating deep and long lasting problems for individual families, for the economy, and for society as a whole. It can pass from generation to generation: children's life chances are strongly affected by their parents' circumstances, such as their income and the place they live. (Tackling Social Exclusion: Taking Stock and looking to the future, Social Exclusion Unit, March 2004)

The story so far

The latter part of the twentieth century saw worsening trends in social exclusion and inequality. Some of the main causes of social exclusion got significantly worse, such as unemployment (particularly long-term unemployment), and the proportion of children growing up in workless and low-income households. This was reflected in growing numbers of people suffering extreme disadvantage, such as rough sleepers.

In 1997 the Government put in place a new agenda to tackle both the causes and consequences of social exclusion, aimed at improving social justice, strengthening communities and supporting long-term economic growth.

The Government put considerable investment in place across a wide range of areas targeted at the disadvantaged. It placed particular emphasis on tackling the economic causes of social exclusion (especially worklessness and low income) and addressing social exclusion from early childhood with ambitious targets for tackling child poverty alongside investment in early years development

and education. It also promoted investment in educational attainment and skills, to boost the life chances of those from a wide range of backgrounds and promote equality of opportunity.

The Government coupled this extra investment with a completely new approach, emphasising prevention and joined-up working, and partnerships with a wide range of organisations, including a much stronger voice for local communities. It focussed particularly on supporting disadvantaged areas where social problems are concentrated, and it put particular effort into tackling some of the most severe and intractable causes and symptoms of social exclusion, such as teenage pregnancy and rough sleeping.

The new approach and investment are already yielding results – breaking the trend of the longer-term increase in social exclusion and its causes. For example, despite strong average income growth, the long-term increase in numbers of children in relative poverty has begun to reverse. There have been substantial drops in unemployment, including long-term unemployment especially for 18-24 year olds, and rising employment for vulnerable groups such as lone parents, the over 50s, ethnic minority groups, and disabled people. The number of workless households is falling, and the extra investment in education is yielding results. Even the intractable problems of rough sleeping and youth offending have been reduced.

However, significant problems remain, and a series of lessons can be learnt. For example, measures to tackle the economic causes of social exclusion have delivered significant results in terms of employment rates, but persistent levels of worklessness and concentrations of high unemployment in particular areas suggest the need for greater emphasis on employment in regeneration programmes for deprived neighbourhoods.

The library contribution

Library, information and advice services play a significant role in tackling social exclusion. For example, libraries provide information and advice about income and benefits, such as the National Minimum Wage, Working Tax Credits and Educational Maintenance Allowance. Libraries also work in partnership with organisations like the Connexions Service which offers a personalised advice service for 13-19 year olds. Libraries also work with the new Community Legal Service which aims to make sure that people can get information and advice about their legal rights, and help with enforcing them.

Libraries are contributing to key strategic agendas such as Inclusion, Learning and Regeneration, through their involvement in a wide range of initiatives and programmes:

Inclusion: National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Local Strategic Partnerships, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders, Sustainable Communities Plan

Learning: Sure Start Programmes offer services to over 400,000 children under the age of four, including around a third of all children living in poverty. Evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres (now Children’s Centres) pilot programme indicates that these centres can help reduce social exclusion through enhanced social, emotional and cognitive development, early remediation in rates of child protection orders and “looked after” children, and improved physical well being.

Regeneration: Welfare to Work, New Deal, Pathways to Work, New Deal for Disabled People, JobCentre Plus, National Skills Strategy, Regional Development Agencies

The emphasis on tackling child poverty and investing in high quality early years services, such as Sure Start and Children’s Centres, was the right one and the best way to improve the life chances of the next generation. This is important not just for the most disadvantaged groups but for a wider range of families where significant inequalities in life chances remain; inequalities in employment rates, health, low income and educational attainment persist between different social classes, different ethnic groups, and different areas of the country. People’s life chances are still strongly determined by their parents’ background. For example:

a baby born into the professional classes can expect to live over seven years longer than one born into the bottom social class
the likelihood of becoming a teenage mother was almost ten times higher for a girl whose family was in the lowest social class in 1999 compared to the highest social class
only 15 per cent of young people from unskilled social backgrounds begin higher education by the age of 21, compared with 79 per cent of young people from a professional background

Increasing numbers of children enjoyed upward social mobility and greater life chances compared to their parents throughout much of the twentieth century. However, the latest data suggests this expansion appears to have slowed or even halted in recent decades, thereby reducing mobility. There has also been a fall in intergenerational income mobility. This means poverty in childhood was more likely to lead to poverty in adulthood for those born in 1970 compared to those born in 1958.

There have been some major gains in tackling social exclusion but there is a long way to go. The scale of the problem remains large: for example, there are only 53 per cent of lone parents in work, and 17 per cent of pensioners and 16 per cent of children live in persistent low income.

Looking to the future

Looking forward, policy and delivery mechanisms will need to respond to changing economic, demographic, social and technological trends in the external environment. These will include the

increasing premium on skills, the ageing population with associated care needs, greater ethnic diversity, and a growing proportion of single person households.

We will also need to renew our efforts to achieve equality of opportunity, recognising that some groups are harder to reach and last to benefit from policies to tackle social exclusion. As policies help people back into work, training or other opportunities, the pool of people who remain will inevitably be those who are harder to help. Already some groups are not being reached as easily by existing programmes. Policy and delivery changes may be needed to reach all those in need.

We also need to build on current successes by making more use of delivery mechanisms which are working well for vulnerable groups, as well as considering radical new approaches:

individually tailored approaches – the use of personal advisers appear more effective than blanket approaches. Libraries need more outreach workers who can also be advocates for the communities they work with.

Multi-agency working – to allow multiple needs to be picked up by single agencies.

Libraries need to work in partnership with all the usual – and some of the not so usual – organisations and agencies.

Joining up and customising services – to address the needs of some of the most disadvantaged groups who are likely to live in some of the most deprived areas, for example through Neighbourhood Renewal. Libraries should focus on the “hardest to reach”, including people with personal problems such as alcohol or drug dependency, homelessness or a criminal record.

Making services more accessible – one-stop-shops, outreach, delivery via local intermediaries such as voluntary and community groups. Libraries should also employ more staff and volunteers from excluded communities.

Common objectives for all targets – operating across agencies which will prevent services and targets pulling in different directions. Libraries should develop integrated service planning, delivery and monitoring with a wide range of organisations and agencies.

Providing alternative environments – to deliver services in which excluded people feel comfortable, for example alternative learning environments, home visiting. Libraries must take services to where the people with needs are – including pubs, clubs and estates.

Flexible timescales – available for clients to receive help on programmes. Libraries must be open at times when people need to use them, including evenings and weekends.

Stable provision - also appears important to allow providers to carry out longer-term planning for clients and continuity in personnel to allow relationships to form between clients and providers. Libraries should avoid short term externally funded projects and develop long term mainstream funded services.

Floor targets – we should learn to build on the success of some of the floor targets where we have seen significant improvements in narrowing the gap, for example education.

Libraries also need to set challenging floor targets.

Libraries can play a key role – with regard to awareness and access - in improving the take up of services and opportunities by vulnerable groups. Lack of awareness of the existence of services and knowledge of own eligibility plays a key role in take up of services amongst those who are socially excluded. In terms of access, libraries are making a significant contribution to reducing the digital divide via the People's Network. Just 12 per cent of those in the lowest income decile have home internet use, compared with 85 per cent of those in the highest income decile.

Libraries can also capture reliable information about vulnerable groups. Some highly vulnerable groups are not picked up reliably in any social surveys or by administrative systems. These include, for example, dual heritage groups, refugees/asylum seekers, homeless people, disengaged young people, mobile or transient populations such as Gypsies and Travellers, and those in the bottom 10 per cent of the income distribution. More information on these groups is required to understand their needs and the risks they face. Award winning Libraries Change Lives! services to Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Merton, 2001) and Gypsies and Travellers (Essex, 2004) are capturing reliable information about these vulnerable groups.

Sustained effort will be needed to continue to reduce the scale of the problem, rolling out approaches which have been shown to be effective, and finding ways to measure and target success to give more priority to those who need most help. If we are to break the link between children's background and their life chances, it will be particularly important to continue supporting the early years to improve the life chances of the next generation, and sustaining that progress throughout the life course.

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27th April 2004

BOOK REVIEW

Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing
by Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig De Peuter
McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2003 ISBN 0-77-35-2591-2

Reviewed by: Jeremy Hunsinger, Center for Digital Discourse and Culture

Digital Play sounds fun and in the end it is. The book is both a fun read and a serious critical study of the social, economy, political, and cultural systems surrounding the computer game industry. Computer games are a significant part of many young people's lives, they form a

significant part of their informational environment, and over time have transformed from being simple graphic abstractions like space invaders to approximating real life through simulations such as The Sims(tm), Rainbow Six(tm), VirtualU(tm), and others. The variety and substance of these games provide experiences for their users, and as such, we need to understand them, but like the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and books we read, we have to be concerned about how games are produced and are producing cultures, markets, and social change.

The authors of Digital Play are beginning to provide an account of computer games for people interested in the larger social issues. However, that is not all they do in the book. Using a critical perspective derived from the plural sources of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Raymond Williams and the regulation school of political economy, the authors provide an extended theoretical presentation of the issues surrounding computer games. They develop a theory of media analysis based on "three circuits of interactivity", which they illustrate with successive diagrams showing the development of their theory (p. 51). By adding theoretical complexity and flux to their model, they develop an analytical, through which they can then examine the computer game industry as it develops through time, and attempt to match the evidence to the theory.

The evidence in the book is extensive. The authors provide us with a critical history of the computer game industry that covers over one hundred pages, going into some detail examining the changes surrounding the technical infrastructure, the economic implications and the games themselves. They use this history and open up some of the central questions of the computer games industry, such as who produces the games, for what reasons, and what kind of labor do the players perform in the games? By introducing these questions through the historical analysis, the authors can later seek some answers by analyzing how their theory fits the reality when providing the answers.

By asking these questions, the authors also open up the third section of their book which centers on critical perspectives. They analyze how certain brands are formed and how those brands commodify play, not just for adult games, but more seriously for children's games. Children's games are much more brand oriented than the games like Oregon Trail(tm) that I played when I was in school. However, I should note that the authors are primarily focusing on commercial games and not necessarily taking into account the wide spectrum of educational games, serious games, and critical games that are beginning to make their presence known to gamers online and off. Also in this section, the authors deal with the question of gender stereotyping and capitalist structuring provided in many computer games. They provide an insightful chapter on "Designing Militarized Masculinity" which delves into some serious questions about the media ecology that certain games produce.

Overall, if you are seeking to familiarize yourself with the computer game industry from the perspective of critical cultural theory, then "Digital Play" is a must read. While other books are more narrowly focused on gender construction in computer games, or developing a computer game, this one is focused more on the system, the governance, and the effect of

computer games on society as a whole. It however is not an indictment that some might be looking for in a critical analysis, instead following the tradition of Innis and McLuhan, it is a probing, historically based, theoretical analysis that brings to light questions and provides some interesting answers and explanations.