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**Library Documentaries, Libraries and the Working Class,
Anti-Semitism, Knowledge and Social Change**

CONTENTS

Editorial by Ruth Rikowski and John Pateman

**The Library in Crisis, 2002 – Introduction to Julian Samuel’s Documentary on
Libraries by Vinita Ramani**

Vinita Ramani interviews Julian Samuel, a Montreal film-maker and writer

Public Libraries and the Working Classes by John Pateman

Israelis and Indians by Michael Neumann

What is Anti-Semitism? by Michael Neumann

Can Library Work be a Recipe for Ill Health? by Martyn Lowe

**Knowledge Organisation: Information, Systems and Social Change by John
Lindsay**

Creating Value from Knowledge in the Knowledge Revolution by Ruth Rikowski

Book Review – ‘The Truth’ by Mike Palecek, Reviewed by Sheila Conroy

Editorial by Ruth Rikowski and John Pateman (Co-Editors of ISC)

Welcome to ISC Issue No. 20. Having passed the 10-year mark, we are now looking ahead, with hope and enthusiasm towards the next 10 years! As ISC members we will continue to seek out positive social trends during this period – i.e. for signs that offer some hope towards the possibility of creating a fairer and more equal world, where the needs of people are put before profit!

Once again, this issue covers a wide variety of topics, including information about a documentary film entitled *The Library in Crisis*, which was made in 2002, and an interview with Julian Samuel, the maker of the film. We also have articles on Public Libraries and the Working Classes; the meaning of Anti-Semitism, Library Work and Ill Health; Knowledge Organisation and Creating Value from Knowledge.

The first piece is about a documentary film entitled *The Library in Crisis*, which was made by Julian Samuel, a Montreal film-maker and writer in 2002. *The Library in Crisis* covers a wide variety of topics, including libraries; literacy and the French Revolution; libraries morphing into centres of E-commerce; the impact of copyright and the digitization of text and the World Trade Organisation and democracy. Julian Samuel interviews a number of people in the film, including Brian Campbell, Past-Chair, Canadian Library Association; Martin Dowding, Assistant Professor, School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia and Fred Lerner, author of *The Story of Libraries, from the Invention to the Writing of the Computer Age*. Vinita Ramani provides an introduction to the film, and in referring to the documentary says that:

Its considerations of how writing and ideas have developed through time make it a relevant tool in fields such as history, cultural theory and media studies, especially if one considers the library as a core institution within the academy...[Furthermore]...it draws attention to how globalization concretely threatens intellectual freedom as well as political and economic liberties. By raising the idea of a library as a community whose reading rooms provide presence, distance and a space to engage in debates, it implicitly compels us to question how we understand the growing presence of web-based communities and what limits will be imposed upon this method of social activism.

Following on from this, Vinita Ramani interviews Julian Samuel. He asks Julian Samuel questions on a variety of topics, including, the possible casting aside of history; the threat of privatisation and its impact on libraries and information; digitization; bibliocide - the de-accessioning of books; globalization and charging for library cards. Julian Samuel is very concerned, for example, about the threat of privatisation of libraries and information, which is an area that Ruth Rikowski has written about extensively and passionately in ISC and elsewhere. Julian Samuel says that:

Privatizing information means that it becomes easier for the elites to control who gets to see information (and documents).

He then considers this within the context of globalisation, emphasising that:

The term “globalization” means privatizing everything from libraries to health care... and even privatizing the process of privatizing itself – this process has produced a litigious culture the likes of which we have never seen.

He also points out that there is “an ugly trend afloat” – namely, charging for library cards, which is another issue that Ruth Rikowski has addressed, particularly in relation to micropayments and Smart cards. Furthermore, Julian Samuel refers to Nicholson Baker’s work *Double Fold, Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (2001), which highlights how microfilming and digitisation often replace books. Baker concludes by saying that many books have been destroyed during this process, that this has been quite unnecessary, but that it has resulted in a casting aside of history in various ways, particularly given the fact that microfilms often have missing text. This is referred to as ‘biliocide’ or the de-accessioning of books. Julian Samuel concludes by saying that:

Without the public library we are dead and finished as a civilization.

Leading on from this, as Ruth Rikowski has emphasised time and time again, we surely need to become more aware of what is/could happen to libraries on a global base, and from this, then seek to change the tide.

Then, we have an article by John Pateman on *Public Libraries and the Working Classes*. He considers the fact that there is a dearth of research into the use and non-use of public libraries by the working class. Also, the fact that there is a general trend today to regard class as being an irrelevant concept. John’s article provides an historical analysis of public library use by the working class in Britain from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War. Jonathan Rose, in his book *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (2002), highlights the fact that historically public libraries only played a very minor part in the intellectual life of the British working class. Instead, as John Pateman emphasises the working class set-up their own libraries and reading rooms, through organisations such as the Working Men’s Clubs and various Co-operative Societies. People also read aloud in pubs and on street corners. As John Pateman says:

When public libraries were established, they were used by some working class people. But this was never a mass activity. Working class people who used libraries were the exception rather than the rule.

Furthermore, that state-funded public libraries were largely set up by the Victorian establishment, in order to control the reading habits of the working class. All those involved with public libraries would benefit from some knowledge and understanding on the historical background within which UK public libraries developed, we would suggest.

There then follows two articles by Michael Neumann, the first of which is entitled *Israelis and Indians* and the second is entitled *What is Anti-Semitism?* These articles move us out of what can sometimes be a rather confined library and information world,

to consider information within a broader context. Both articles demand that we look at moral issues in a different light. The first article, *Israelis and Indians* considers if and when it is acceptable to kill others. As Neumann says:

Sometimes...we treat the deliberate killing of civilians with reverence, or at least feel a special moral pride in our refusal to condemn it.

Here, Neumann gives the example of American Indians. American Indians sometimes deliberately killed civilians, including children, but we do not, in general, condemn these acts. This is because, as Neumann says, the Indian people were threatened. In fact:

More than threatened; their society doomed without resistance. They had no alternative. Moreover, every single white person, down to the children, was an enemy, a being which, allowed to live, would contribute to the destruction of the Indians' collective existence.

He then draws comparisons between the Palestinians and the Indians, saying that:

Like the Indians, the Palestinians have nowhere to go. All the Arab states either hate them, or hate having them there...Like the Indians, the Palestinians have not the slightest chance of injuring, let alone defeating Israel through conventional military tactics. Like the whites, every single Israeli Jew, down to and including the children, are instruments wielded against the Palestinian people.

Neumann says that the Palestinians, like anyone else, will kill if it helps to prevent the destruction of their society and that:

No people would do anything less to see they did not vanish from the face of the earth.

This gives us 'food-for-thought'. Furthermore, this piece can also be related to the Open Marxist theoretical analysis on globalisation that Ruth Rikowski is developing. In her forthcoming book, *Globalisation, Information and Libraries* (2005), she emphasises how capitalism is not sustained by morals or any set of moral principles at all. Instead, it is sustained by value, and this value can only ever ultimately be created and derived from labour. When it is convenient for capitalism, then moral issues will be raised. In the case of the Palestinian situation, it is in America's interest to try to ensure that Israel is the dominant force in the Middle East. So, from this position, it becomes convenient to undergo moral indignation against Palestinians. However, such moral indignation is surely essentially shallow, one-sided and groundless.

The second article by Michael Neumann is about the meaning of anti-Semitism. Neumann thinks that too much credibility is given to anti-Semitism but instead that:

...we should almost never take anti-Semitism seriously, and maybe we should have some fun with it.

He considers the situation of the Jews and the Palestinians, saying that:

Today, when Israel could have peace for the taking, it conducts another round of dispossession, slowly, deliberately making Palestine unlivable for Palestinians, and livable for Jews. Its purpose is not defense or public order, but the extinction of a people.

Neumann argues that “Israel is building a racial state, not a religious one.” As a German Jew, he says that “Palestinians are being squeezed and killed for me, not for you.” Furthermore, that Palestinians are

...being shot because Israel thinks all Palestinians should vanish or die, so people with one Jewish grandparent can build subdivisions on the rubble of their homes. This is...an emerging evil, the deliberate strategy of a state conceived in and dedicated to an increasingly vicious ethnic nationalism.

Neumann then raises the question as to whether it is anti-Semitic to accuse Jews of complicity in these crimes. Clearly, this cannot be anti-Semitic. So, the task then becomes one of defining just what we mean by ‘anti-Semitic’, but this is not an easy task. As Neumann says, it can include racially based acts and hatreds, for example, but these might not be simply anti-Semitic acts. He concludes by saying that:

In short, the real scandal is not anti-Semitism but the importance it is given.

Then, there is a short piece by Marytn Lowe, a library and information worker in a public library in a London borough, asking whether library work can be a recipe for ill health. He considers the fact that library assistants work long hours with low pay, and that the work can also be quite stressful, especially when the library assistant is the first port of call. He would be interested to hear the views of other library workers on this topic.

Meanwhile, John Lindsay considers knowledge organisation. He emphasises the fact that although librarians have no control over what is published they do:

...exercise control over the terms that are allocated in controlled vocabularies, and the associations that are established in classification schemes as well as the terms. Control is also exerted over the shelf mark.

He then focuses on the term ‘gay’, and its associated terms ‘homosexuals’, ‘homosexuality’ and ‘queer’, within the context of controlled vocabularies and classification schemes in libraries and other sources of information. With this in mind he undertakes some searches on these terms – namely, in university libraries, public libraries, bookshops, electronic resources and the Internet. When searching on the terms ‘gay’, ‘homosexuality’, ‘homosexual’ and ‘queer’ in the library catalogue at Kingston University (where he lectures), for example, he found that the records that were retrieved from these searches all had “widely differing classification numbers”. He concludes by emphasising that this whole topic is important because:

...to know about ourselves is partly the consequence of knowing what exists, what may exist, and what does not exist. This is the heart of knowledge organisation.

The final article in this issue is by Ruth Rikowski, and is entitled *Creating Value from Knowledge in the Knowledge Revolution*. This builds on her article in ISC No. 19 - *On the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour*. In this article, Ruth demonstrates how business people today largely recognise both the

importance of creating value, in general, and of the importance of creating value from knowledge, in particular, in the knowledge revolution that we find ourselves in today (this being the latest phase of capitalism). In arriving at these conclusions, Ruth draws on contemporary business and information literature, as well as her own empirical research that she undertook on knowledge management (KM), between 2001-2003. Meyer says, for example, that:

Value is in the intangibles like knowledge, information, services, software and entertainment. (Meyer, 2000, p.193)

Furthermore, effective KM practices assist with the process of extracting this value.

However, the meaning of value itself is not, on the whole, considered in the business and information literature, and it is this point, in particular, that Ruth wishes to draw the readers' attention to. Ruth argues that in order to understand the meaning of value, we need to return to a Marxist analysis of value. Furthermore, that as Marx said, only labour can create value. However, in the knowledge revolution, this value is created more from intellectual labour than from manual labour. Ruth concludes by emphasising that the process of extracting value from labour:

...means that labour becomes exploited, alienated and objectified. In order to break free from this we need to break from capitalism itself and look towards an alternative social system – i.e. move towards socialism and ultimately to communism. In this way, humans can enjoy and rejoice in the world that they have created with their own labour, rather than being dominated by it. Let us shape the future together; let us look towards a better world.

The issue concludes with a book review by Sheila Conroy on the book *The Truth* by Mike Palecek. Palecek considers how democracy is threatened in the United States. There is an emphasis on how this democracy is threatened not only by the Bush administration, but also by the inertia of the American public themselves. Sheila Conroy concludes by saying that:

It is without hesitation that I urge everyone to read this book. For those who are lost in the chaotic events of our times, it is illuminating and for those who are familiar with the aspects that Mike describes, his lucidity and fine perceptions further organize our thinking.

We hope you enjoy reading ISC 20.

If you would like to comment on any of the articles in this issue and/or would like to write an article for ISC, then do contact us at:

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Ruth Rikowski and John Pateman, December 2004

The Library in Crisis, 2002: Introduction to Julian Samuel's documentary film

Press Release

The Library in Crisis (46 minutes, 2002) is a documentary on libraries; historic and contemporary bibliocides; literacy and the French Revolution; libraries morphing into centers of E-commerce; the impact of copyright and the digitization of texts; the Khmer Rouge's catalogues of people killed; and the World Trade Organization's concern for democracy.

The film includes **interviews** with:

Brian Campbell, Past-chair, Canadian Library Association, Information Policy Committee and Founding President, Vancouver Community Network

Donald Gutstein, Senior Lecturer, Communication, Simon Fraser University and Author of *E.Con: How the Internet Undermines Democracy*

Fred Lerner, Author of *The Story of Libraries, From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age*

Ian McLachlan, Chair of Cultural Studies, Trent University

Manal Stamboulie, Head Librarian, Lakefield College School

Martin Dowding, Assistant Professor, School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, University of British Columbia

Peter F. McNally, Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, McGill University

Sumaiya Hamdani, Islamic Historian, George Mason University

Film-maker and writer Julian Samuel has made a four-hour documentary on Orientalism and has published a novel, *Passage to Lahore*, [De Lahore à Montréal].

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Websites

http://www.cca.ca/artists/artist_info.html?languagePref=en&link_id=1813&artist=Julian+Samuel

<http://www.colorado.edu/journals/standards/V7N2/ARTS/samuel.html>

<http://www.colorado.edu/journals/standards/V7N1/ARTS/arts.html>

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<http://www.web.net/blackrosebooks/iem.htm>

The Library in Crisis: Introduction by Vinita Ramani

In the recent past there has been much furor surrounding the meetings of institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The corresponding clout of protestors has been aided by the ubiquitous presence of the Internet, which has acted as a useful tool in decentralized cooperative organization. So much attention has fallen upon this medium of communication and information acquisition, that little has been said about how its predecessor and still existing sibling – the library - figures into the larger equation. Filmmaker, writer and visual artist Julian Samuel has undertaken the project of tracing the birth and current trajectory of this public service institution par excellence. **'The Library in Crisis'** follows *The Raft of the Medusa*; *Into the European Mirror*; and *City of the Dead and World Exhibitions* (1993 -1995). The trilogy largely concerned itself with the nuances of colonialism and imperialism, bringing the articulations of history into the realm of documentary filmmaking. Since the library is the institution in question here, the concern with history has not been abandoned. In a recent interview, noted writer and filmmaker Tariq Ali observed that it is as if history has increasingly become too subversive because the past has too much knowledge embedded in it. How historiography has shifted over time can be aptly charted by following the progress and function of writing and libraries. This is the core articulation of the documentary.

The video consists of interviews with eight academics, historians, and librarians, who offer a kind of collective genealogy of the library, from the advent of writing and universities to its use as a tool for disseminating information by the state. This is connected to present concerns regarding the digitization of texts, copyright laws and how the privatization of a public domain amounts to an infringement on civil liberties. As Donald Gutstein aptly notes in the film, the library is in many ways the foundation of a democratic society. The full gravity of this statement is articulated as the documentary moves towards considering bibliocide - euphemistically described as "de-accessioning" books.

Tracing the beginnings of writing, Fred Lerner and Ian McLachlan note how it oscillated between several roles, with the information function and wisdom

embodiment function of writing often caught in a proverbial tussle. This tension between contradictory forces manifests most pointedly in the shape of the library as an institution that served both purposes.

Depending on the nature of the historical context, the roles played by libraries varied considerably. Samuel uses understated juxtapositions to convey this tension through the documentary. The images are not always inter-cut with each other, thereby occupying full screen presence. Instead, he repeats his preference for split screens, previously utilized in his trilogy. The camera roves across the spines of aged books on the shelves, while one of the interviewees speaks in a smaller frame – a screen within a screen. Similarly, pages awash in sepia-toned light share space with flashes of computer screens, where a search for Nalanda University yields a digital image of the building. Thus, attention is constantly drawn to the contrast between fragments of digitized information with their immediacy, and the organization of texts, which necessarily require more time and patience.

Islamic historian Sumaiya Hamdani offers an important critical perspective on libraries as purveyors of information dissemination. There is particular relevance to her observation that the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the nation state required and invented homogeneity. This was embodied in education, libraries and state propaganda. The alignment of education and libraries with state propaganda is one shift in the interpretation of libraries that is astutely explored. No surprise then, that Peter McNally refers to the underground network of publications written during the French Revolution. Rather than censorship, a more effective means of suppressing dissent was provided by creating middle-class values of morality through mass literacy. This point is visually complemented by website images of Khmer Rouge victims, perhaps hinting at the point that creating a mass culture also allowed for the elimination of a nameless mass. Libraries therefore, were increasingly used as repositories of detailed information on genocide, and the propagation of state ideology.

Manal Stamboulie, Donald Gutstein and Brian Campbell further the multiple interpretations of libraries presented in the documentary by highlighting how they have now become centers of E-commerce. The inclusion of software into the copyright act in 1976 has raised crucial questions about corporate take-over of information. While efforts are being made to copyright and commodify information, libraries increasingly become the carriers of electronic information - in itself incomplete and frequently less widely accessible than one presumes. Much of the fuss around information technology has revolved around issues of availability and the curtailment of file sharing and free access. However, Gutstein's point that institutions in the information technology field are more concerned with how to charge for information rather than how to increase access acts as an important connective to previous definitions of libraries. What was previously a public service now faces infringements from the private sector and institutions such as the World Trade Organization play a role as participants in support of this corporate orientation. Thankfully, Samuel avoids any conclusive remarks about these dramatic shifts. The threat to free access and the marginalisation of a library's role in questioning and creating ideas are assertively put forward. But the various perspectives avoid being prescriptive, therefore allowing room for debate.

Overall, the questions considered in this documentary have wide applicability inside and outside classrooms. Its considerations of how writing and ideas have developed through time make it a relevant tool in fields such as history, cultural theory and media studies, especially if one considers the library as a core institution within the academy. Perhaps more significantly, it handles the phenomena of globalization without stating the obvious or re-playing the now-popular trope of protestors who constitute the "anti-globalization" movement - itself an inaccurate summing up of a diverse movement. Rather, by delving into the historically shifting function of libraries and current developments involving corporate presence, it draws attention to how globalization concretely threatens intellectual freedom as well as political and economic liberties. By raising the idea of a library as a community whose reading rooms provide presence, distance and a space to engage in debates, it implicitly compels us to question how we understand the growing presence of web-based communities and what limits will be imposed upon this method of social activism.

Vinita Ramani interviews Julian Samuel, a Montreal film-maker and writer

Julian Samuel made a documentary film in 2002, entitled '**The Library in Crisis**'. Vinita Ramani interviews him about the film and about some of Julian Samuel's views about life in general.

For more information about the film, see – <http://www.filmfest.org.sg/pr.htm>

VR = Vinita Ramani (Interviewer)

JS = Julian Samuel (Interviewee)

VR: The first thing that comes to mind watching '**The Library in Crisis**' is a quote by Tariq Ali in an interview he did soon after September 11th. He said "... the one discipline both the official and unofficial cultures have united in casting aside has been history. It's somehow as if history has become too subversive. The past has too much knowledge embedded in it, and therefore it's best to forget it and start anew." Has history always been of topical concern to you in your work and how does that relate to what is happening with libraries?

JS: I am not a historian nor am I an analyst of contemporary world affairs. I am, however, a documentary film-maker who has a fundamental grasp on what it means to expose audiences to extensive discussions of a historical nature. Will my works bring about a skepticism that will empower us to make for a better world? What a dreamer some of your readers might say. I believe that it is only via a discussion of historical issues that we will be able to understand and act in the contemporary world. For example, Noam Chomsky has consistently referred to recent Middle-East history in order to expose the current-day slaughter of Palestinians. By the way, the Israelis are directly responsible for the poor condition of libraries in Palestine (see 66th IFLA Council and General Conference Jerusalem, Israel, 13-18 August. Paper by Erling

Bergan, Bibliotekarforbundet, Oslo, Norway. Web site for Bergan's essay:
<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/170-172e.htm>).

And on the subject of history - well let's see what kind of future this area of study has. For years now, schools in France have not given the failed Paris Commune of 1871 the attention it deserves. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and the consequent siege of Paris lead to one of the first experiments in social democracy. It must be difficult to study history in societies that specialize in communal violence such as India, Pakistan and Canada - a country that has a history of violence against First Nations, et al., ad nauseam. Depending on the country, the repercussions from the history classroom to the street are immediate, and the elites will try to exert - as they have always done - limiting parameters on the teaching of this subject as well as others. Absurdly, there are news reports that tell of a move toward controlling actually who studies biology. Will students with "Middle-Eastern" features be observed, controlled and discouraged from advancing in this field? One wonders.

VR: You do not merely address the issue of the threat of privatization of what is essentially a public service in your documentary. You specifically use the word "bibliocide" to describe the phenomena. What was the intention behind that usage and how widespread a phenomenon is it?

JS: Ian McLachlan, one of the main interviewees in 'The Library in Crisis', uses this word. Bibliocide is happening as we speak. The forthcoming part of this documentary on libraries and information in society, entitled, "From Alexandria to Cyberspace: The Library in Crisis" will address the following themes: permanent book burning - the enlightened destruction of primary documents in the libraries of western democracy; the future of the study of history based on primary sources and commentaries and images from the developing world. What am I basing my suspicions on? Nicholson Baker has written a brilliant work of humanist scholarship, "Double Fold, Libraries and the Assault on Paper" (2001). He makes the following claims:

- That major librarians at Library of Congress, Yale, Harvard, et al., have since the last 40 or so years, microfilmed newspapers and books, subsequently discarding, selling or destroying the originals. The process of microfilming requires that books have to be disbound (the binding slashed open with a knife) because the pages have to be put perfectly flat on a table in preparation for photography.
- That there is an attempt on the part of major libraries to transfer books to the digital world. Once the books have been filmed or scanned, they are not re-shelved, but sold or "pulped".
- Librarians need more and more bookshelf space; space means the expenditure of money which is not easily available. Yet, year after year more and more books and newspapers are published. Librarians of major collections say the only way they can make more space is to microfilm the old documents, throwing them away afterwards. The Library of Congress leads the way in this

book and newspaper massacre.

- Microfilming indirectly results in the destruction of books and newspapers. Microfilm cannot work as a substitute for paper; many microfilms of newspaper are incomplete, issues and pages missing, badly cropped pages, missing texts. Nicholson Baker estimates, conservatively, that one million books and tons of newspapers have been intentionally destroyed. Furthermore, microfilm is not as stable as paper.
- Various conservation processes, including the use of diethyl zinc (an explosive element found in fuel-air bombs), have not saved books from acidity, but rather have ruined and in some cases destroyed them. Preservation is destruction: "Just leave the books alone."
- Filming and scanning of old books and papers is much more expensive than simply building a large off-site warehouse. It is exponentially more expensive to store complete books on hard disks than to build warehouses.

Baker objectively concludes that the destruction of books has been utterly unnecessary: American libraries have tossed out 975, 000 books worth \$39 millions dollars, and have no intention of stopping.

VR: Part of the process of privatizing public services reveals a tussle between what may be termed "knowledge" as opposed to "information". A recent article points out the emergence of companies launching "information markets", which would provide reference services for paying customers and would call themselves "library-like services" in order to claim government funding. In light of this, what are your thoughts on the digitization of texts and the prevalence of the Internet as a resource? What impact is digitization having on libraries?

JS: I haven't the expertise to respond to these questions. However, let me offer the following:

Are you suggesting that "digitization" may become "privatization"? Perhaps, privatization will mean that libraries may charge for knowledge. If we as a public don't resist the primrose path towards privatization of knowledge, the full-steam ahead of the privatization of education (what Tony Blair is trying to do in the UK), and the privatization of health care, then we are doomed. People should make their will known to the politicians who claim to represent us in Parliament and City Councils. Their feet must be held close to the fire, otherwise their natural proclivity to falsely represent our interests will prevail. These thinkers and plotters are committed to making more money, not extending democracy. They want to project their ugly policies from above without listening to anyone. Rancid cliché - hello: the rich are not interested in solving the problems that follow from globalization.

VR: The threat posed to libraries, and the de-accessioning of texts (a term Ian MacLachlan cites in the film to point out how books are "cancelled", or taken off the

shelves) extends to universities as well. In a sense, the definition of a university as a place for intellectual debate and exchange itself is being de-accessioned. Is there a broader agenda motivating this other than the workings of privatization?

JS: Books need not be "deaccessioned." It is cheaper to build large warehouses with roofs that do not leak rather than rip apart books for filming - film lasts for only a few decades. Books last for ages - longer than computers stay at the cutting edge.

Privatizing information means that it becomes easier for the elites to control who gets to see information (and documents). At the moment, it is getting harder and harder to look at archival government documents in the USA - rumour has it that the US government may even put a back curtain around the beautiful Statue of Liberty. The post 11 September Bush administration is particularly worrying. Julian Borger, a journalist for the Guardian Weekly, explicitly addresses the issue of the 1966 Freedom of Information Act and the current access to government documents (Thursday March 7, 2002).

VL: The term "globalization" is tossed around liberally and inversely, the term "anti-globalization" is used to dismiss any serious (and not always supportive) concern for the policies that fall under this ambiguous term. In a sense, it even feels like a ruse designed to detract attention from the various issues that fall within its realm. How does your film grapple with this term?

JS: The term "globalization" means privatizing everything from libraries to health care (I realize that not all countries have public healthcare) and even privatizing the process of privatizing itself - this process has produced a litigious culture the likes of which we have never seen.

'The Library in Crisis' tries to put historical events such as the fall of the library at Nilanda and the contemporary digitization of texts in a framework, which allows us to make comparisons and to act in an informed way. Without some knowledge of the past we can't act.

VL: Your previous work on Orientalism, (*The Raft of the Medusa*; *Into the European Mirror*; *City of the Dead* and *The World Exhibitions*) consisted of three documentaries that examined colonialism, imperialism and how historiography operates, amongst other issues. Is there a similar series in the works built around the thematic concerns raised in **'The Library in Crisis'**?

JS: In a very general sense, **'The Library in Crisis'** is similar to my work on how the Middle East and parts of Asia are configured within the workings of western imagination. **'The Library in Crisis'** focuses all interviews onto one single site: the library. This public institution is one source for the preservation and further development of democracy.

However, there is an ugly trend afloat: charging for library cards. This trend has not yet hit Montreal, but the province of Alberta is now charging for library cards, and

Montreal area libraries are charging for borrowing best sellers - about five bucks a shot - total fraud this is. We have *already paid* for the library and *all* its contents - the shelves, the books, the networks, the data bases, the journals, the newspapers, the tables, the CDs, the old LPs, the 45s, the chairs, the air-conditioning and the heating *through our tax* contributions. Why are some odious and conformist library administrators starting to *double charge* us? A simple petition by library users could stop this hideous trend towards barring those who may not be able to afford to use the library. Without the public library we are dead and finished as a civilization. Protest and survive is that the answer? I am not sure.

Julian Samuel can be contacted at: jjsamuel@vif.com

Public Libraries and the Working Classes by John Pateman

“However often today’s literary scholars repeat the mantra of race, class, and gender, they clearly have a problem with class. A search by subject of the on-line *MLA International Bibliography* for 1991-2000 produces 13,820 hits for “women”, 4,539 for “gender”, 1,826 for “race”, “710” for post-colonial, and only 136 for “working class”. The *MLA Directory of Periodicals* lists no academic or critical journals anywhere in the world devoted to proletarian literature, and the subject is very rarely taught in universities” (Rose, 2002)

There is also a dearth of research into the use – and non-use - of public libraries by working class people. This is part of a general trend to dismiss class as not being relevant. In social history, for example, class was a dominant issue between 1963 (when EP Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* was published) and 1983 (when *Languages of Class* by Steadman Jackson was published). But today it is no longer considered an important issue, despite recent research which suggests that social class is still the key determinant of life chances, from as young as 22 months.

In this article I will examine the evidence regarding the use of public libraries by the working class from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War. I will suggest that public libraries were used extensively by some sections of the working class (autodidacts) but that public library use by working class people was never a mass activity. In my next article I will consider the evidence regarding the use of public libraries by working class people today, and what can be done to increase that use.

In his landmark book, *The Intellectual life of the British Working Classes*, Jonathan Rose traces the rise and decline of the British autodidact from the pre-industrial era to the twentieth century. Using innovative research techniques and a vast range of unexpected sources such as worker’s memoirs, social surveys and library registers, Rose shows which books people read, how and why they educated themselves, and what they knew. In the process he shines a bold new light on working class politics, ideology, popular culture and the life of the mind.

Rose also reveals that public libraries played a very minor role in the intellectual life of the British working class. In 464 pages of well-researched text, public libraries are only referred to on 48 occasions. Libraries are not central to Rose’s arguments – they are used mostly to illustrate case studies of autodidacts who used public libraries for self improvement. Unlike the miners’ libraries and the Workers Education Association, public libraries do not merit their own chapter.

Public libraries were marginal, peripheral or irrelevant to the needs of working class people. They do not deserve their reputation as “street corner universities”. The common assumption – which has become an enduring myth – is that public libraries were established to provide informal education for working people. The reality is that they were set up and run by the Victorian establishment to control the reading habits and idle time of the “deserving poor”.

Well before Lord Brougham and George Birkbeck established the “first” Mechanic’s Institute in 1824, the working classes were organising their own. They also organised reading rooms and adult schools, largely as an alternative to the Mechanic’s Institutes, founded and governed by paternalistic middle class reformers, where religious and political controversy was usually barred and the premises could be uncomfortably genteel: “Working men do not like to be treated like children, to have the books they shall read chosen for them”.

An example of this was the Lord Street Working Men’s Reading Room in Carlisle. At first Lord Street attracted crowds to its library and classes, but as it assumed the trappings of a conventional Mechanic’s Institute, it was deserted by the working classes.

Albert Mansbride (founder of the Workers Education Association) realised that the Mechanics Institutes had failed because they “were largely the result of philanthropic effort, set on foot by some local magnate...rather than upon the initiative of the mechanics themselves”.

Working class libraries – owned and controlled by working class people – existed long before the advent of public libraries in the mid nineteenth century. The Leadhills Reading Society (founded 1741 and in use until about 1940), the Wanlockhead Miners’ Library (founded 1756), and the Westerkirk Library (founded 1792) were the first working class libraries in Britain.

Craftsmen in Lowlands Scotland enjoyed particularly high literacy rates between 1640 and 1770. These groups patronised one of the first true public libraries in the world, the Innerpeffray Library in Perthshire near Crieff. There was also a large measure of working class participation in the East Lothian Itinerating Libraries, founded in 1817.

Working class libraries were also organised in working men’s clubs and co-operative societies. Although the Working Men’s Club and Institute Union was primarily a social organisation, it also made a contribution to mutual education. Nearly all working men’s clubs had lending libraries. By 1903 there were about 900 clubs with 321,000 members. Five hundred of those clubs had libraries with a total of 187,000 volumes

Co-operative Societies also had libraries. In the 1870s and 1880s there were actually more Co-operative libraries than public libraries nationwide. The Royal Arsenal Co-operative society in Woolwich opened a library in 1879, twenty-two years before any municipal library service began.

Reading aloud in pubs and on street corners was also very popular. All these influences combined to produce a shared literary culture in which books were practically treated as public property, before public libraries reached most of the country. Knowledge Chartists such as William Lovell made intellectual freedom their first political priority, calling for adult education programs and public libraries governed by the workers themselves.

Working people developed their own libraries until the late nineteenth century expansion of public libraries. According to a 1918 parliamentary enquiry “not a single municipally maintained public library is to be found in the central Glamorgan block of the coalfield”. Miner’s libraries filled that vacuum. In areas where public library services were slow to penetrate, notably the coal valleys of South Wales, miners made exceptional efforts to support their own libraries up to the mid-twentieth century. One Yorkshire coal town had no public library until 1925, and no full time librarian until 1942.

When public libraries were established, they were used by some working class people. But this was never a mass activity. Working class people who used libraries were the exception rather than the rule. Public libraries appealed, in particular, to working class autodidacts, whose mission statement was to be more than passive consumers of literature, to be active thinkers and writers.

Autodidacts used public libraries extensively in the years leading up to the Great War, for a number of reasons: the proliferation of public libraries, the high tide of the Victorian ethic of mutual improvement, and the lack of other distractions (cinema, radio, television) were all contributing factors.

Frank Argent (b.1899), son of a Camberwell labourer, took advantage of the public library and early Penguins. Harry Blacker (b.1910), the son of a Russian immigrant cabinet maker, had access to a good local reference library and “a wonderful selection of books and magazines”. Ronald Goldman (b.1922), the son of a Manchester hat maker, acquired an insatiable appetite for reading from his senior school, the public library, evening classes and WEA courses.

Jack Jones (b. 1884) was book buyer for the Blaengarw Miners’ Institute Library in 1923 when he discovered the great peace of the Cardiff Central Library: “I’d like to do a year’s reading in the quiet of this room”, he told a librarian, who guided his reading, and the library became “my university”.

But not all working class public library users had such positive experiences. Joseph Stamper (b.1886), an ironmoulder’s son, was the author of two books. Later, while working at a steel foundry, he went to the public library to ask permission to borrow, for study purposes, three non-fiction books at a time (the usual limit was one). The Chief librarian was sceptical “Where is the need for study...in a steel foundry? Thinking to sway him to granting the privilege, Stamper told the librarian that he’d had two books published. Stamper recalled “It was a false step, I saw his manner harden, accusation swam into his severe eyes. I was an offender against the unwritten law, I had no right to have books published, I was not a member of the book writing class. He closed the interview.”

In turn of the century Bolton, Alice Foley (b. 1891) was delegated to borrow books from the public library for her entire family. After a long trek in clattering clogs, she had to confront enormous catalogues and equally intimidating librarians. At Whitechapel public library there was much conversation and some rowdiness, in spite

of a stern librarian. As late as 1937 a Workers Education Association adult student had to tackle the town Library Committee for banning Shaw's *Black Girl*.

The attitude of librarians and library committees was not the only barrier to working class use of public libraries. The stock did not always meet their needs either. Closed stack public libraries had been a serious barrier to adventurous reading. Even where librarians encouraged broader reading, they often met resistance. Manny Shinwell (b 1884) doggedly tackled volumes in the public library "whose contents I usually failed to understand". Allen Clarke (b.1863) the son of Bolton textile workers, found physiology books in the public library incomprehensible.

Even among autodidacts, only a minority used public libraries, as evidenced by a 1918 study of 816 adult manual workers in Sheffield, which found that 20-26% were "intellectually well equipped", 67-73% were "inadequately equipped" and 5-8% were "mal equipped". Of eight men from the intellectual group, one "patronises the free library", one "borrows light literature from library" and one "occasionally borrows from the public library". Of five women from the intellectual group, one "never uses the public library" and another "occasionally visits an art gallery or the public library"

In a 1937 survey of 484 unemployed men aged 18 to 25 in south Wales, 57% identified reading as a major leisure activity, but only 20% ever visited public libraries, and just 6% were regular borrowers. As late as 1940, Mass Observation found that while 55% of working class adults read books, 66% never bought books. 68% never patronised any kind of library and only 16% used the public library.

By the Second World War the phenomenon of the working class autodidact was at its peak: "The roots of that autodidactic culture go back as far as the late middle ages. It surged in the nineteenth century, particularly in Joseph Ashby's late Victorian generation, and crested with the Labour Party landslide of 1945, the climax of this history. Thereafter, the working class movement for self education swiftly declined, for a number of converging reasons. This is, then, a success story with a downbeat ending."

It is a similar story for working class use of public libraries, which also peaked just after the Second World War, and has never fully recovered. But, as Rose suggests, this should not make us despondent:

"In current debates over cultural literacy, it would be a serious error to look for any golden age in the past. The WEA and Everyman's Library did noble work, but only for a motivated minority: Britain really is better off with the Open University and Penguins in every airport bookstall. The question that still confronts us is whether this vast cultural wealth is fairly shared among all, in inner city schools as well as those that serve the affluent. In that sense E.D.Hirsch is entirely right to criticise the mal-distribution of knowledge in contemporary America. When he argues that democracy and equality are impossible without mass cultural literacy, he is only saying what generations of British working people know in their bones."

In my next article I shall be considering present day use of public libraries by the working class, the distribution of knowledge in contemporary Britain, and how to improve it.

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Israelis and Indians by Michael Neumann

Palestinian tactics are often attacked or defended on dubious grounds. Whether these tactics are terrorist is irrelevant; some terrorism is defensible, some not. The same applies to whether the acts are murders. Whether others are bigger terrorists or murderers is also irrelevant; two wrongs do not make a right. Whether Israelis have committed crimes is not directly relevant either; that they have committed crimes is not sufficient to justify killing people, civilians, who have not committed them.

The problem, as anyone will tell you, is that Palestinians deliberately kill civilians. You would think, then, that we would never do such a thing. Maybe not. Those who conducted strategic bombing raids against Nazi Germany, or for that matter those who set speed limits on our highways, did not. These actions, it seems, were fine. Bombs would definitely stray into civilian areas; lower speed limits would definitely mean fewer children killed and maimed in accidents. We knew this with certainty, but we didn't *intend* these consequences. Apparently, this makes us far better than the Palestinians. The scholastically fine distinction between deliberately killing civilians and knowingly killing civilians has become, it seems, a moral chasm.

Sometimes, though, we treat the deliberate killing of civilians with reverence, or at least feel a special moral pride in our refusal to condemn it. The best examples can be taken from American history. We have not forgotten that American Indians deliberately killed civilians, including children, and sometimes as a policy. But no one demands an apology from contemporary American Indian leaders - quite the reverse. Nor is this simply a matter of the silly business of apologies or other manifestations of political correctness. (If political correctness is involved, it comes from focusing on the warfare of 1850-1890, when the whites were the worst killers, not on the earlier periods when things were more even.) Why then, do we keep silent about these presumably awful crimes? Why do we not rub them in the faces of our children, so that they will never forget that such presumed evils presumably tainted our land?

It is necessary to put the question more sharply to exclude feeble answers. The Indians sometimes murdered innocent civilians, including children. These acts were right, wrong, or morally indifferent. Which were they?

I cannot see that they were morally indifferent, can you? Were they wrong? If so, they must have been awfully wrong, because they involved murdering children. Is that what we want to say?

I suggest not. I suggest the acts were terrible, cruel, and ultimately justified. My reasons are familiar to everyone. The Indians' very existence as a people was threatened. More than threatened; their society was doomed without resistance. They had no alternative. Moreover, every single white person, down to the children, was an enemy, a being which, allowed to live, would contribute to the destruction of the Indians' collective existence.

The Indians had no chance of defeating the whites by conventional military means. So their only resort was to hit soft targets and do the maximum damage. That was not just the right thing to do from their point of view. It was the right thing to do, period, because the whites had no business whatever coming thousands of miles to destroy the Indian people.

The comparisons with the situation of the Palestinians are beyond obvious. To start, what I have written sneaks in some misconceptions. There were no people called "the Indians". They were diverse, as cultures and as individuals, some peaceful, some warlike, some responsible for the massacres, some not. It was, of course, the whites who lumped them together and demonized them (just as this sentence does to the whites). The Israelis kind of do that when they destroy the houses of old women and blockade cities to the point of starvation and medical catastrophe. And when anyone supports the Israelis, they are responsible for this sort of collective 'punishment', even if they do not - as they often do - indulge in the same coarse generalizations.

As for the other points of resemblance, not only Israeli, but much non-Israeli Jewish propaganda does its best to conceal them. But concealment is impossible. Guess what? The Palestinians did not travel thousands of miles to dispossess the Jews. It was the other way around. Often the Jews had very pressing reasons to leave Europe. So did the whites who settled in North America. And both groups of settlers could not quite take in what they saw: that gee, there were other people already there, and the land was theirs. When possible, both engaged in sleazy land deals to get their foothold - when not, force was used. But always there was no question: the whole land would be theirs, and the state to be constructed would be their state.

Both groups of settlers somehow contrived, despite these goals, to believe that they wanted nothing but to live in peace with their 'neighbours' - neighbours, of course, because they had already taken some of their land. And sure, they did want peace, just as Hitler wanted peace: on his terms. The most casual survey of Israeli politics indicates that mainstream, official, respectable Jewish opinion asserts an absolute right to Israel's present boundaries, and at the very least would never abandon the continually expanding settlements. What is considered extreme Jewish opinion, which asserts rights over the entire area occupied by Palestine, is not the Israeli extreme. The far right in Israel claims a territory that stretches as far as Kuwait and southern Turkey. This matters, because, given Israel's fragmented politics, the extreme right wields a power out of proportion to its numbers. The conclusion must be that Israel, as a collective entity, wants peace with all the sincerity of, say, General Custer.

Like the Indians, the Palestinians have nowhere to go. All the Arab states either hate them, or hate having them there. And, like Indians, Arabs and Palestinians are not all alike: do we scratch our heads and wonder why, when the Cherokee were kicked off their land, they did not just join the Apache or Navaho? Like the Indians, the Palestinians have not the slightest chance of injuring, let alone defeating Israel through conventional military tactics. Like the whites, every single Israeli Jew, down to and including the children, are instruments wielded against the Palestinian people.

Of course the two situations are not quite analogous. Things are clearer in the case of Israel, where virtually every able-bodied adult civilian is at least an army reservist, and every Jewish child will grow up to be one. And the American settlers never spent years proclaiming how happy they would be with the land they had before embarking on a campaign to take the rest of it. One might add that the current situation of the Palestinians is more like that of the Indians in 1880-1890 than earlier, because the Palestinians have lost much more than half of their original land.

The Palestinians do not set out to massacre children, that is, they do not target daycare centers. (Nor do they scalp children, but according to the BBC, that is what Israel's clients did in Sabra and Shatila.) They merely hit soft targets, and this sometimes involves the death of children. But, like anyone, they will kill children to prevent the destruction of their society. If people have any right of self-preservation, this is justified. Just as Americans love to do, the Palestinians are "sending a message": you really do not want to keep screwing with us. We will do anything to stop you. And if the only effective way of stopping their mortal enemies involved targeting daycare centers, that would be justified too. No people would do anything less to see they did not vanish from the face of the earth.

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What is Anti-Semitism? by Michael Neumann

Every once in a while, some left-wing Jewish writer will take a deep breath, open up his (or her) great big heart, and tell us that criticism of Israel or Zionism is not anti-Semitism. Silently they congratulate themselves on their courage. With a little sigh, they suppress any twinge of concern that maybe the Goyim - let alone the Arabs - cannot be trusted with this dangerous knowledge.

Sometimes it is gentile hangers-on, whose ethos if not their identity aspires to Jewishness, who take on this task. Not to be utterly risqué, they then hasten to remind us that anti-Semitism is nevertheless to be taken very seriously. That Israel, backed by a pronounced majority of Jews, happens to be waging a race war against the Palestinians is all the more reason we should be on our guard. Who knows? It might possibly stir up some resentment!

I take a different view. I think we should almost never take anti-Semitism seriously, and maybe we should have some fun with it. I think it is particularly unimportant to the Israel-Palestine conflict, except perhaps as a diversion from the real issues. I will argue for the truth of these claims; I also defend their propriety. I do not think making them is on a par with pulling the wings off flies.

"Anti-Semitism", properly and narrowly speaking, does not mean hatred of Semites; that is to confuse etymology with definition. It means hatred of Jews. But here, immediately, we come up against the venerable shell-game of Jewish identity: "Look! We're a religion! No! A race! No! A cultural entity! Sorry - a religion!" When we tire of this game, we get suckered into another: "anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism!" quickly alternates with: "Don't confuse Zionism with Judaism! How dare you, you anti-Semite!"

Well, let us be good sports. Let's try defining anti-Semitism as broadly as any supporter of Israel would ever want: anti-Semitism can be hatred of the Jewish race, or culture, or religion, or hatred of Zionism. Hatred, or dislike, or opposition, or slight unfriendliness.

But supporters of Israel will not find this game as much fun as they expect. Inflating the meaning of 'anti-Semitism' to include anything politically damaging to Israel is a double-edged sword. It may be handy for smiting your enemies, but the problem is that definitional inflation, like any inflation, cheapens the currency. The more things get to count as anti-Semitic, the less awful anti-Semitism is going to sound. This happens because, while no one can stop you from inflating definitions, you still do not control the facts. In particular, no definition of 'anti-Semitism' is going to eradicate the substantially pro-Palestinian version of the facts that I espouse, as do most people in Europe, a great many Israelis, and a growing number of North Americans.

What difference does that make? Suppose, for example, an Israeli rightist says that the settlements represent the pursuit of aspirations fundamental to the Jewish people, and to oppose the settlements is anti-Semitism. We might have to accept this claim -

certainly it is difficult to refute. But we also cannot abandon the well-founded belief that the settlements strangle the Palestinian people and extinguish any hope of peace. So definitional acrobatics are all for nothing: we can only say, screw the fundamental aspirations of the Jewish people; the settlements are wrong. We must add that, since we are obliged to oppose the settlements, we are obliged to be anti-Semitic. Through definitional inflation, some form of 'anti-Semitism' has become morally obligatory.

It gets worse if anti-Zionism is labeled anti-Semitic, because the settlements, even if they do not represent fundamental aspirations of the Jewish people, are an entirely plausible extension of Zionism. To oppose them is indeed to be anti-Zionist, and therefore, by the stretched definition, anti-Semitic. The more anti-Semitism expands to include opposition to Israeli policies, the better it looks. Given the crimes to be laid at the feet of Zionism, there is another simple syllogism: anti-Zionism is a moral obligation, so, if anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism is a moral obligation.

What crimes? Even most apologists for Israel have given up denying them, and merely hint that noticing them is a bit anti-Semitic. After all, Israel 'is no worse than anyone else'. First, so what? At age six we knew that "everyone's doing it" is no excuse; have we forgotten?

Second, the crimes are no worse only when divorced from their purpose. Yes, other people have killed civilians, watched them die for want of medical care, destroyed their homes, ruined their crops, and used them as human shields. But Israel does these things to correct the inaccuracy of Israel Zangwill's 1901 assertion that "Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country". It hopes to create a land entirely empty of gentiles, an Arabia deserta in which Jewish children can laugh and play throughout a wasteland called peace.

Well before the Hitler era, Zionists came thousands of miles to dispossess people who had never done them the slightest harm, and whose very existence they contrived to ignore. Zionist atrocities were not part of the initial plan. They emerged as the racist obliviousness of a persecuted people blossomed into the racial supremacist ideology of a persecuting one. That is why the commanders who directed the rapes, mutilations and child-killings of Deir Yassin went on to become Prime Ministers of Israel. (*) But these murders were not enough. Today, when Israel could have peace for the taking, it conducts another round of dispossession, slowly, deliberately making Palestine unlivable for Palestinians, and livable for Jews. Its purpose is not defense or public order, but the extinction of a people. True, Israel has enough PR-savvy to eliminate them with an American rather than a Hitlerian level of violence. This is a kinder, gentler genocide that portrays its perpetrators as victims.

Israel is building a racial state, not a religious one. Like my parents, I have always been an atheist. I am entitled by the biology of my birth to Israeli citizenship; you, perhaps, are the most fervent believer in Judaism, but are not. Palestinians are being squeezed and killed for me, not for you. They are to be forced into Jordan, to perish in a civil war. So no, shooting Palestinian civilians is not like shooting Vietnamese or Chechen civilians. The Palestinians are not 'collateral damage' in a war against well-armed communist or separatist forces. They are being shot because Israel thinks all

Palestinians should vanish or die, so people with one Jewish grandparent can build subdivisions on the rubble of their homes. This is not the bloody mistake of a blundering superpower but an emerging evil, the deliberate strategy of a state conceived in and dedicated to an increasingly vicious ethnic nationalism. It has relatively few corpses to its credit so far, but its nuclear weapons can kill perhaps 25 million people in a few hours.

Do we want to say it is anti-Semitic to accuse, not just the Israelis, but Jews generally of complicity in these crimes against humanity? Again, maybe not, because there is quite a reasonable case for such assertions. Compare them, for example, to the claim that Germans generally were complicit in such crimes. This never meant that every last German, man, woman, idiot and child was guilty. It meant that most Germans were. Their guilt, of course, did not consist in shoving naked prisoners into gas chambers. It consisted in support for the people who planned such acts, or - as many overwrought, moralistic Jewish texts will tell you - for denying the horror unfolding around them, for failing to speak out and resist, for passive consent. Note that the extreme danger of any kind of active resistance is not supposed to be an excuse here.

Well, virtually no Jew is in any kind of danger from speaking out. And speaking out is the only sort of resistance required. If many Jews spoke out, it would have an enormous effect. But the overwhelming majority of Jews do not, and in the vast majority of cases, this is because they support Israel. Now perhaps the whole notion of collective responsibility should be discarded; perhaps some clever person will convince us that we have to do this. But at present, the case for Jewish complicity seems much stronger than the case for German complicity. So if it is not racist, and reasonable, to say that the Germans were complicit in crimes against humanity, then it is not racist, and reasonable, to say the same of the Jews. And should the notion of collective responsibility be discarded, it would still be reasonable to say that many, perhaps most adult Jewish individuals support a state that commits war crimes, because that is just true. So if saying these things is anti-Semitic, than it can be reasonable to be anti-Semitic.

In other words there is a choice to be made. You can use 'anti-Semitism' to fit your political agenda, or you can use it as a term of condemnation, but you cannot do both. If anti-Semitism is to stop coming out reasonable or moral, it has to be narrowly and unpolemically defined. It would be safe to confine anti-Semitism to explicitly racial hatred of Jews, to attacking people simply because they had been born Jewish. But it would be uselessly safe: even the Nazis did not claim to hate people simply because they had been born Jewish. They claimed to hate the Jews because they were out to dominate the Aryans. Clearly such a view should count as anti-Semitic, whether it belongs to the cynical racists who concocted it or to the fools who swallowed it.

There is only one way to guarantee that the term "anti-Semitism" captures all and only bad acts or attitudes towards Jews. We have to start with what we can all agree are of that sort, and see that the term names all and only them. We probably share enough morality to do this.

For instance, we share enough morality to say that all racially based acts and hatreds are bad, so we can safely count them as anti-Semitic. But not all 'hostility towards Jews', even if that means hostility towards the overwhelming majority of Jews, should count as anti-Semitic. Nor should all hostility towards Judaism, or Jewish culture.

I, for example, grew up in a Jewish culture and, like many people growing up in a culture, I have come to dislike it. But it is unwise to count my dislike as anti-Semitic, not because I am Jewish, but because it is harmless. Perhaps, not utterly harmless: maybe, to some tiny extent, it will somehow encourage some of the harmful acts or attitudes we would want to call anti-Semitic. But so what? Exaggerated philo-Semitism, which regards all Jews as brilliant warm and witty saints, might have the same effect. The dangers posed by my dislike are much too small to matter. Even widespread, collective loathing for a culture is normally harmless. French culture, for instance, seems to be widely disliked in North America, and no one, including the French, consider this some sort of racial crime.

Not even all acts and attitudes harmful to Jews generally should be considered anti-Semitic. Many people dislike American culture; some boycott American goods. Both the attitude and the acts may harm Americans generally, but there is nothing morally objectionable about either. Defining these acts as anti-Americanism will only mean that some anti-Americanism is perfectly acceptable. If you call opposition to Israeli policies anti-Semitic on the grounds that this opposition harms Jews generally, it will only mean that some anti-Semitism is equally acceptable.

If anti-Semitism is going to be a term of condemnation, then, it must apply beyond explicitly racist acts or thoughts or feelings. But it cannot apply beyond clearly unjustified and serious hostility to Jews. The Nazis made up historical fantasies to justify their attacks; so do modern anti-Semites who trust in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. So do the closet racists who complain about Jewish dominance of the economy. This is anti-Semitism in a narrow, negative sense of the word. It is action or propaganda designed to hurt Jews, not because of anything they could avoid doing, but because they are what they are. It also applies to the attitudes that propaganda tries to instill. Though not always explicitly racist, it involves racist motives and the intention to do real damage. Reasonably well-founded opposition to Israeli policies, even if that opposition hurts all Jews, does not fit this description. Neither does simple, harmless dislike of things Jewish.

So far, I have suggested that it is best to narrow the definition of Anti-Semitism so that no act can be both anti-Semitic and unobjectionable. But we can go further. Now that we are through playing games, let us ask about the role of *genuine*, bad anti-Semitism in the Israel-Palestine conflict, and in the world at large.

Undoubtedly there is genuine anti-Semitism in the Arab world: the distribution of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the myths about stealing the blood of gentile babies. This is utterly inexcusable. So was your failure to answer Aunt Bee's last letter. In other words, it is one thing to be told you must simply accept that anti-Semitism is evil - to do otherwise is to put yourself outside our moral world. But it is quite something else to have someone try to bully you into proclaiming that anti-Semitism is

the Evil of Evils. We are not children learning morality; it is our responsibility to set our own moral priorities. We cannot do this by looking at horrible images from 1945, or listening to the anguished cries of suffering columnists. We have to ask how - much harm anti-Semitism is doing, or is likely to do, not in the past, but today? And we must ask where such harm might occur, and why.

Supposedly there is great danger in the anti-Semitism of the Arab world. But Arab anti-Semitism is not the cause of Arab hostility towards Israel or even towards Jews. It is an effect. The progress of Arab anti-Semitism fits nicely with the progress of Jewish encroachment and Jewish atrocities. This is not to excuse genuine anti-Semitism; it is to trivialize it. It came to the Middle East with Zionism and it will abate when Zionism ceases to be an expansionist threat. Indeed, its chief cause is not anti-Semitic propaganda but the decades-old, systematic and unrelenting efforts of Israel to implicate all Jews in its crimes. If Arab anti-Semitism persists after a peace agreement, we can all get together and cluck about it. But it still will not do Jews much actual harm. Arab governments could only lose by permitting attacks on their Jewish citizens; to do so would invite Israeli intervention. And there is little reason to expect such attacks to materialize: if all the horrors of Israel's recent campaigns did not provoke them, it is hard to imagine what would. It would probably take some Israeli act so awful and so criminal as to overshadow the attacks themselves.

If anti-Semitism is likely to have terrible effects, it is far more likely to have them in Western Europe. The neo-fascist resurgence there is all too real. But is it a danger to Jews? There is no doubt that LePen, for instance, is anti-Semitic. There is also no evidence whatever that he intends to do anything about it. On the contrary, he makes every effort to pacify the Jews, and perhaps even enlist their help against his real targets, the 'Arabs'. He would hardly be the first political figure to ally himself with people he disliked. But if he had some deeply hidden plan against the Jews, that *would* be unusual. Hitler and the Russian anti-Semitic rioters were wonderfully open about their intentions, and they did not court Jewish support. And it is a fact that some French Jews see LePen as a positive development or even an ally. (see, for instance, "'LePen is good for us,' Jewish supporter says", Ha'aretz May 04, 2002, and Mr. Goldenburg's April 23rd comments on France TV.)

Of course there are historical reasons for fearing a horrendous attack on Jews. And anything is possible - there could be a massacre of Jews in Paris tomorrow, or of Algerians. Which is more likely? If there are any lessons of history, they must apply in roughly similar circumstances. Europe today bears very little resemblance to Europe in 1933. And there are positive possibilities as well: why is the likelihood of a pogrom greater than the likelihood that anti-Semitism will fade into ineffectual nastiness? Any legitimate worries must rest on some evidence that there really is a threat.

The incidence of anti-Semitic attacks might provide such evidence. But this evidence is consistently fudged: no distinction is made between attacks against Jewish monuments and symbols as opposed to actual attacks against Jews. In addition, so much is made of an increase in the frequency of attacks that the very low absolute level of attacks escapes attention. The symbolic attacks have indeed increased to

significant absolute numbers. The physical attacks have not. (*) More important, most of these attacks are by Muslim residents: in other words, they come from a widely hated, vigorously policed and persecuted minority who do not stand the slightest chance of undertaking a serious campaign of violence against Jews.

It is very unpleasant that roughly half a dozen Jews have been hospitalized - none killed - due to recent attacks across Europe. But anyone who makes this into one of the world's important problems simply has not looked at the world. These attacks are a matter for the police, not a reason why we should police ourselves and others, to counter some deadly spiritual disease. That sort of reaction is appropriate only when racist attacks occur in societies indifferent or hostile to the minority attacked. Those who really care about recurrent Nazism, for instance, should save their anguished concern for the far bloodier, far more widely condoned attacks on gypsies, whose history of persecution is fully comparable to the Jewish past. The position of Jews is much closer to the position of whites, who are also, of course, the victims of racist attacks.

No doubt many people reject this sort of cold-blooded calculation. They will say that, with the past looming over us, even one anti-Semitic slur is a terrible thing, and its ugliness is not to be measured by a body count. But if we take a broader view of the matter, anti-Semitism becomes less, not more important. To regard any shedding of Jewish blood as a world-shattering calamity, one which defies all measurement and comparison, is racism, pure and simple; the valuing of one race's blood over all others. The fact that Jews have been persecuted for centuries and suffered terribly half a century ago does not wipe out the fact that in Europe today, Jews are insiders with far less to suffer and fear than many other ethnic groups. Certainly racist attacks against a well-off minority are just as evil as racist attacks against a poor and powerless minority. But equally evil attackers do not make for equally worrisome attacks.

It is not Jews who live most in the shadow of the concentration camp. LePen's 'transit camps' are for 'Arabs', not Jews. And though there are politically significant parties containing many anti-Semites, not one of these parties shows any sign of articulating, much less implementing, an anti-Semitic agenda. Nor is there any particular reason to suppose that, once in power, they will change their tune. Haider's Austria is not considered dangerous for Jews; neither was Tudjman's Croatia. And were there to be such danger, well, a nuclear-armed Jewish state stands ready to welcome any refugees, as do the US and Canada. And to say there are no real dangers now is not to say that we should ignore any dangers that may arise. If in France, for instance, the Front National starts advocating transit camps for Jews, or institutes anti-Jewish immigration policies, then we should be alarmed. But we should not be alarmed that something alarming might just conceivably happen: there are far more alarming things going on than that!

One might reply that, if things are not more alarming, it is only because the Jews and others have been so vigilant in combating anti-Semitism. But this is not plausible. For one thing, vigilance about anti-Semitism is a kind of tunnel vision: as neofascists are learning, they can escape notice by keeping quiet about Jews. For another, there

has been no great danger to Jews even in traditionally anti-Semitic countries where the world is *not* vigilant, like Croatia or the Ukraine. Countries that get very little attention seem no more dangerous than countries that get a lot. As for the vigorous reaction to LePen in France, that seems to have a lot more to do with French revulsion at neofascism than with the scoldings of the Anti-Defamation League. To suppose that the Jewish organizations and earnest columnists who pounce on anti-Semitism are saving the world from disaster is like claiming that Bertrand Russell and the Quakers were all that saved us from nuclear war.

Now one might say: whatever the real dangers, these events are truly agonizing for Jews, and bring back unbearably painful memories. That may be true for the very few who still have those memories; it is not true for Jews in general. I am a German Jew, and have a good claim to second-generation, third-hand victimhood. Anti-Semitic incidents and a climate of rising anti-Semitism do not really bother me a hell of a lot. I am much more scared of really dangerous situations, like driving. Besides, even painful memories and anxieties do not carry much weight against the actual physical suffering inflicted by discrimination against many non-Jews.

This is not to belittle all anti-Semitism, everywhere. One often hears of vicious anti-Semites in Poland and Russia, both on the streets and in government. But alarming as this may be, it is also immune to the influence of Israel-Palestine conflicts, and those conflicts are wildly unlikely to affect it one way or another. Moreover, so far as I know, nowhere is there as much violence against Jews as there is against 'Arabs'. So even if anti-Semitism is, somewhere, a catastrophically serious matter, we can only conclude that anti-Arab sentiment is far more serious still. And since every anti-Semitic group is to a far greater extent anti-immigrant and anti-Arab, these groups can be fought, not in the name of anti-Semitism, but in the defense of Arabs and immigrants. So the anti-Semitic threat posed by these groups should not even make us want to focus on anti-Semitism: they are just as well fought in the name of justice for Arabs and immigrants.

In short, the real scandal today is not anti-Semitism but the importance it is given. Israel has committed war crimes. It has implicated Jews generally in these crimes, and Jews generally have hastened to implicate themselves. This has provoked hatred against Jews. Why not? Some of this hatred is racist, some is not, but who cares? Why should we pay any attention to this issue at all? Is the fact that Israel's race war has provoked bitter anger of any importance besides the war itself? Is the remote possibility that somewhere, sometime, somehow, this hatred may in theory, possibly kill some Jews of any importance besides the brutal, actual, physical persecution of Palestinians, and the hundreds of thousands of votes for Arabs to be herded into transit camps? Oh, but I forgot. Drop everything. Someone spray-painted anti-Semitic slogans on a synagogue.

* Not even the ADL and B'nai B'rith include attacks on Israel in the tally; they speak of "The insidious way we have seen the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians used by anti-Semites". And like many other people, I do not count terrorist attacks by such as Al Qaeda as instances of anti-Semitism, but rather of some misdirected quasi-military campaign against the US and Israel. Even if you count them in, it does not seem very dangerous to be a Jew outside Israel.

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Can library work be a recipe for ill health? by Martyn Lowe

Now consider this: -

Long working hours, multi-tasking, & with a high stress level.

Low pay, which is well below average salaries, & which in turn means that many library workers have to live in cheap or far from ideal housing conditions.

An occupation health hazard - bad backs & muscle strains.

A job in which one has to constantly stoop, while one also carries a lot of heavy weights - i.e. heavy books.

An inclination towards developing RSI & eye strain problems, for which I can give a lot of good examples.

The chances of heavy weights falling on ones head, shelves falling down in front of one, & book trolleys doing the same upon one.

All of which have happened to me - though the real, highly skilled library worker does develop instinctive skills in order to both avoid such problems & roll out of the way at the right moment.

Plus a skill in breaking up fights which sometimes break out in public libraries, plus dealing with drunks & very stoned people too.

Both of which I have had to deal with in my library work over the years.

There is also another set of more emotional stresses, which also come into play as a result of library work too.

The stress which comes from the 1st port of call for many people, who have legal, health, housing, & social problems - for which we are not specialists, & for which we are by our professional standards excluded from becoming involved within.

Here it should be noted that if you know your library users well, then you will really get to know their information needs very well, & so over the long term you can take a very detached view about their individual problems.

From which a question.

Just how many librarians & library workers have ever gone though any kinda course on just how to deal with people who have legal, health, housing, & social problems?

The kinda course which means that one can both deal with the worries &

emotional stress of those people who ask for our help, make an analysis of what their immediate information needs are, know just which specialist bodies to pass them on to, & be able to take them through the processes which they might need to follow on from.

This might all make for good information working, but it can have a high emotional cost to one too.

All of which makes for a lot of high stress on the job.

As to low pay - this equates to a feeling of being very undervalued within society - the equation between a feeling of having a low social value & ill health is also very well understood by psychiatrists too.

I give the above as ideas.

What I have in mind is a special issue of ISC on Health & library work.

The above are pointers to what I would like to include within it.

So - dear readers - would any of you like to make a contribution to such a special issue of ISC?

If you are a radical library or information worker who shares our ideas, & would like to join us in our work, then we would like to hear from you.

We would also welcome people who would like to consider becoming a part of our editorial board/editorial working group.

ISC has a very global perspective, & this should always be kept in mind.

If you are interested in joining in with the work of ISC - then please let us know.

Martyn Lowe is a Library and Information worker, who works in a public library in a London borough

Knowledge Organisation: Information, Systems and Social Change

by John Lindsay

Dedication

This essay is dedicated to the memory of John McKay, Librarian of Ravensbourne College of Art and then of the Glasgow School of Art. He was also co-founder of Librarians for Social Change, the Gay Librarians Group and Gay Rights at Work, a life long trades unionist, and was active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. While I was writing it, he was ill, but I did not know he would die before I would finish it. There will be a more substantial publication during Gay History Month, to commemorate his work.

Introduction

Actually it is not Gay History Month, it is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) History Month, but I think I will prove the gay bit is hard enough and leave the others to someone else.

The approach taken in this essay follows that in Librarians for Social Change and in particular in Radical Librarianship twenty five years ago. What was argued then was that while librarians have no control over what is published, control is exerted over the stock (in terms of books, journals etc.), which is selected. Furthermore, librarians exercise control over the terms that are allocated in controlled vocabularies, and the associations that are established in classification schemes as well as the terms. Control is also exerted over the shelf mark.

What was argued in those articles was that staff in libraries have an obligation to give a positive and discriminatory approach, such that the identities of LGBT people (but I am going to stick to gay) should be supported.

Concepts in libraries

This was, and probably still is, contentious. I have a recent example. The enquiry desk of my university library, (Kingston University), was staffed by a science subject specialist. I asked her to describe how the key words were allocated in our catalogue. While describing the approach, she 'outed' herself and a science specialist and therefore not the best person for my query. She also explained that the organisational form of faculty and school shaped the selection policy. I remarked that the literature on the attitude to 'homosexuality' within scientific method was such that a systematic distortion of the scientific record has probably been constructed. Furthermore, that librarians have an obligation under the charter to and the UN declaration of human rights on freedom expression and access to information to ensure that selection policy should be much wider. Within a very short while, for writing this has taken longer than the conversation, we were in very deep water indeed and agreed not to follow further.

That the matters of this material have moved so little seems to me to need further exploration. However, before engaging on that project I wish to clear the undergrowth,

as Locke might have said, on human understanding, by establishing what we currently know of the organisation of documents on the concept of 'gay'.

The concept, needless to say, is contentious, for we have to decide whether when we first put on our 'Glad to be Gay' badges we were creating the concept. Did it exist before the badge?

We will have to limit ourselves to the word in English, though we will not have to limit ourselves in regard to the material. In fact it appears very frequently in the past, but it is not at all clear what the word means. For more than one hundred years there has also been another word, 'homosexual' and a concept 'homosexuality'. These raise a similar issue: what was the activity or the practice, or the practitioner with which this term was associated? Presumably the practice existed before the term, but did the term create a new association?

This paragraph is simply yet another restating of a debate that has enthused practitioners, summarised as a constructionist, essentialist debate. Has the phenomenon always existed, or at least within history, or is it an invention after the word?

We must jump to a third string, 'queer' for there is now an established literature on what is called queer studies and queer theory. The origin of this term is in turning the words of the oppressors and this is often cited within a domain called popular culture. I am afraid though that in proper popular culture it still carries its earlier pejorative. There are lots of other terms too but I think we can leave them out. We will have enough trouble with these three.

Since those articles we have seen the development of the Internet. It is more than likely that someone approaching the topic will search on Google before going to a library. But this is, in turn, part of what I want to explore. How does the Internet and Google stand up against a library, and the social forms that have been inserted and constructed to map the information landscape?

University libraries

My starting point was InfoM25lib.ac.uk which clumps the library catalogues of the university libraries roughly, within the M25 - a motorway which surrounds and encircles with motorism - London, England. In another search though I found that the retrieval of the clump is unreliable.

So, I will start instead with my university library catalogue. There is a keyword search function and an author search function. On keyword it gives 89 records for gay, 91 for homosexuality, 9 for homosexual and 23 for queer. These records have widely differing classification numbers attributed. 06776 is sometimes used as an extension to a root, but it is clear that a number of decisions have been made about what a book is about. We need to bear in mind that gay will include John Gay.

My query produced the understanding that the record is part of the purchase of the book. Dawson's are our predominant supplier. We do not know at this stage who allocates the keyword apart from the occurrence of a string within the title. There might

then be some intervention by a subject librarian - that would depend on which faculty. So we have class number and keyword as contested categories of human intervention.

It is also interesting to note that, looking up 'Wilde' records in my university library catalogue hides any reference to the significance of his sexual orientation.

The university management refuses to provide access to the subject heading, or use that as a hypertext term, to which I will return.

Public libraries

Hallelujah, Hallelujah! In Westminster Public Library, searching on gay, with 187 results, I found in one the use of a subject heading as a hypertext pointer, 'homosexuality and music', and when I clicked on that it brought me to Harris, E. Handel as Orpheus. This is radical. I had the idea a while ago that Handel should be in my stack, and began to look at gender in his operas. I want to make quite clear how this moves us forward. There are hundreds if not thousands of books on Handel. In a lifetime I could not read them all, and it would be a complete accident were I to stumble on this one, which provides significant evidence. When I tracked the book down, I found the subject heading included in the Library of Congress CIP data as a LC subject heading. So what has happened is that LC has constructed the category, someone has decided to allocate the category (though it is not clear without examining the book what the thrust is, and someone else might not agree that this is the main thrust). Westminster has either willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, taken the category, included it, and made it available. This is the sort of issue that we were arguing about thirty years ago. At last a library has made some of this information available.

After that it is rather down hill. I looked on 'What's in London Libraries', <http://www.londonlibraries.org.uk/will/> and found a rather depressing story. For brevity we could point to the use of the search terms I used above, try it, and see what sort of results one can get. I went to Tower Hamlets to try it out in practice and found six copies of a Muslim publication on homosexuality and Internet pornography, which I have not yet tracked down. But that was the only title to have more than two copies. I have not yet looked at Brent, Newham and Croydon. However, attending a meeting on libraries at the Royal Society of Arts I heard a librarian from Newham, and another from ReSource make remarks about the role of classification and cataloguing that I regard as so heretical that I would call it unprofessional, but to that we will return.

I am not going to look further at libraries because we have established enough.

Bookshops

I next visited a couple of bookshops to see how they were organised. Borders and Waterstones seem accidentally to locate material in a gay and lesbian section. McKenna on Wilde, which was celebrated while I was writing this, appears in different places in different bookshops.

Electronic resources

The next category is the retrieval instruments to which Kingston University subscribes. These appear accessible to anyone within the local area network, or who has logged on to the campus wide Intranet. They will be accessible with an Athens password. (which is in itself a nightmare for my faculty technical staff who require me to change my password frequently, and will not allow me to reuse previously used ones. Then Athens will not recognise me, but I exist already.) Sigh. Who said any of this was going to be easy?

The resources to which the university subscribes is organised by faculty and school and this follows the funding regime in which subject specialists are the fund managers. So we will leave this till we have dealt with a more general resource and then return.

The Joint Information Systems Council (JISC) funds a thing called the Resource Discovery Network. This has been a long time in the making and needs a much more considerable history than I am going to allocate here. You will probably want to read this in parallel with logging on to the site. There are eight gaytes. Go to each of them and type in the three search strings we have identified, gay, homosexuality and queer. Write your own evaluation. Is this knowledge organisation?

The Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG) gave me more than one hundred, whereas the others at most around ten. The problem with SOSIG is that the list is in alphabetical order without any further segmentation. The site says there is a subject map, but all I could find were a short list of topics.

I have for a long time argued that the Electronic Development Information Service (ELDIS) ought to be included but without success. I might do a circular argument and search on these and see which find ELDIS. But given the contest in developing countries about gay liberation, we will have to give ELDIS a try too. Were there other resources I would presume we would have retrieved them.

Genuinely useful, I would also include Rictor Norton's two sites, the bibliography and the literature. Searching on Google I failed, for I had not remembered how correctly to spell his name.

The queer theory site I did not know about, nor the gay history one. Both of these have developed their own taxonomies and methods for organisation, which we might call information, which needs navigation and within which we cannot be confident we know whether something is there or not without surveying the whole. I also did not know about the gender studies journal, which in turn has its own list of resources.

Comparing the cost of producing this, with the JISC sites, I wonder where we might allocate bang for buck and buck for bang? With the electronic journals however we have no alternative to reading through the contents lists, for there do not appear to be thematic cataloguing resources.

Possibly the gem which should inspire us all is the New York Public Library. I had no

idea this resource existed. Read the introduction. Does any institution in Britain promote itself like this? I am not sure their claims are supportable. It would certainly be interesting to read a history of how they got here. What would Sanford Berman say?

InforM25 I have mentioned, now more on clumps, zetoc and copac. Should these have come before the gates, for they refer to books? We are being driven to put form over content. There is a process at play. Books in my immediate library, electronic resources, journal articles, books in other libraries, journal articles in other libraries - is that the order?

Internet

Google I may dispose of in a moment for I do not think we can consider this knowledge organisation. Were we able however to establish more precise search terms, then we might move forward. I have argued this in some detail in the case of Bacon, Francis, with Meautys and Gorhambury and will use that case somewhere appropriate. It is available from me in the meantime. I have done another on the case of Antonio Perez, then to my joy and delight, discovered from Maranon that I could join them, for Perez and Bacon had met.

Retrieval tools

Should we now investigate our tools?

Dewey 21

UDC

Bliss

Library of Congress

Library of Congress Subject Headings

UN and UNESCO macrothesaurus

UK archive thesaurus

Central and local government category lists

Point to Currier perhaps

I am not sure that simply listing these will help. Perhaps we need a study of how people have been taught to use them.

This section has been episodic as I want to point to what needs to be done, rather than do it all myself, though I will undoubtedly return to all this.

Conclusion

Perhaps, to end we should return to the beginning. Why do we need any of this? There

are two answers. The first is fairly obvious, that to know about ourselves is partly the consequence of knowing what exists, what may exist, and what does not exist. This is the heart of knowledge organisation. The second is more problematic: is the experience of 'gayness' simply an issue of taxonomy, or classification? I have to take words that I did not create and apply them to my experience as a sense of making activity, whether the words are appropriate or not. By making a badge which said 'Glad to be Gay' or by forming an organisation called the 'Gay Liberation Front', or by writing a pamphlet called 'The Gay Liberation Manifesto' a category was brought into being with which I had to associate. This was the case even if much of it did not make much sense to my experience. Then, participating in a group called 'Gay Rights at Work', being involved in producing a pamphlet, 'The Word is Gay', going to a bookshop, 'Gay's the Word', being involved in setting up 'Gay Switchboard' and the 'Gay Librarians' Group', I make a category with which I am associated - even if its meanings are without my manipulation.

To all this we will return, but if you, gentle reader, want to undertake some field work, as it was called in anthropology, or even make a contribution during Gay History Month, you might consider the following:

Plato (an easy start but perhaps Phaedrus rather)

Theocritus

Virgil

Horace

Maecenas

Sidney

Spenser

Bacon

Pope

Kent

Burlington

Handel (given a lead already)

Gay (easy this one, Nokes)

Walpole (easy ditto, Mowl)

Gray (indeed, he of country churchyard)

Hervey (amphibious thing)

Burke

Hogarth

Bentham

John Lindsay

Reader in Information Systems Design,

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Creating Value from Knowledge in the Knowledge Revolution

by Ruth Rikowski

Today, we are moving into the knowledge revolution, which is the latest phase of capitalism. This knowledge revolution is dependent on knowledge, information, skills, human capital, intellectual capital, ideas, services, intangibles, brainpower, education and brand names. Stephen Byers, who at the time was the UK Trade and Industry Secretary described this revolution to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in 1999, saying:

The first industrial revolution was based on investment in capital and machinery. The revolution we are going through now requires investment in human capital – skills, learning and education. (Byers, 1999)

Meanwhile, Potter said:

*My thesis has been that we are in the relatively early phases of a major economic revolution. This revolution is based around the concept of a post industrial era where making things is increasingly automated and routine; creating things is difficult and **value** therefore derives from creation and from the intellectual capital or knowledge base of the firm or nation.* (Potter, 1999, p.7 – my emphasis)

Note here, in particular, Potter's reference to **value**. So, value today is being derived more from knowledge itself, rather than just from the production of manufacturing goods. Obviously, knowledge also plays some part in the production of manufacturing goods. However, today, knowledge and ideas are also being sold and marketed in their own right, such as through the selling of a patent or a brand name, and through this process value is being derived from knowledge. This is in contrast to the 'first industrial revolution' where value was largely extracted from tangible goods.

A consideration of value in the current business and information literature

The importance of creating **value** itself for the continued success of the economy has been recognised by many in the business and information world today. Tapscott, for example, says that:

*Innovation drives everything and competitive advantage is ephemeral. Firms must constantly seek new ways to **create value**.* (Tapscott, 2000, p.220 – my emphasis)

Meanwhile, David Green says:

*KM is different in that it focuses on future **value**, rather than short-term profit.* (Green, 2000, p. 31 – my emphasis).

So, Green emphasises how knowledge management (KM) can create value. Furthermore, that it is also increasingly being recognised that value must be clearly differentiated from profits. As Welch also says:

*The organisation has to recognise that its prime objective (perhaps its only objective) is to **add value**. NOT to cut costs. Making more profit, increasing the share price, increasing the **value** of intellectual assets (including brands) is what makes a company fit to survive. (Welch, 2000, p.10 – my emphases)*

The difference between value and profit was also considered in the knowledge management (KM) research that I undertook between 2001-03 (Rikowski, 2003). I conducted semi-structured interviews with KM experts from both the private and the public sector, across a range of organisations. This included both information professionals and non-LIS staff. I also undertook some research in a number of KM focus group sessions. In order to ensure anonymity throughout the research, a simple code was used; for example, P1 for participant one and P2 for participant two. When considering profit and value, one of the participants, P8, said:

*I think **value** must be measured on a number of different...fronts...we have the balance score card...made a start on trying to...re-balance the scales. **Profit** is one amongst a number of measures of **value**. (My emphases)*

Meanwhile, when I asked P11 about the difference between value and profits she said that value:

...is slightly more intangible. We can point to some, because we change peoples' roles and see them as being more efficient. But will it win us more projects? I dunno. That's a bit harder to say... Well, if I invest £2 million in knowledge management, will I get 5 million out. It's a bit hard to do that.

Upon asking P10 whether he thought that value was different from profit, he said:

...say we chose to work with...a particular customer...and I demonstrated that the profit was 20%. Then, we had another customer and the profit was 30%...That appears to be black and white...if you have limited resources you'd always work with the one that gives you 30%...But I could clearly make a case that by working with the customer that's only giving us 20% profit now, we might be...building our capability, that's say based on knowledge...Increasing our knowledge, that we might be building an organisational capability that would give us profits...extending into the future...That clearly creates value.

Thus, several of the participants clearly thought there was a definite difference between value and profit, and that value somehow encompasses more and can help to provide long-term sustainability for companies. However, although businesses largely recognise that there is a difference, much of the business and information literature does not really explore what this difference actually is.

Similarly, much of the literature has difficulty in defining value itself. Chris Meyer, writing in *Business 2.0* makes some interesting comments about value, saying:

*The New Economy's emphasis on the intangible forces us to think about **value** in a new way. The economies of the past – the Agrarian Age and the Industrial Age – were characterized by the mass of their outputs, be they crop or steel. We became accustomed to thinking about worth in terms of weight. But the intangible economy is harder to define because there's less stuff to look for an indicator of **value**... While we are all conditioned to think in terms of that which we can touch and feel, actual “matter” has significantly less relevance in the New Economy and **value** has become all about velocity. Matters matter less. (Meyer, 2000, p. 194 – my emphases)*

Furthermore, he notes that:

Value has shifted from the tangible to the intangible, from steel mill to know-how, from supply side to demand side, and from dealer network to customer loyalty. (Meyer, 2000, pp.194-196 – my emphasis)

Thus, Meyer emphasises just how important it is to create value for the continued success of the economy, and that the necessity to create value goes across different ages, or phases of capitalism. However, whereas in the Agrarian Age and the Industrial Age this value was created through tangible products, in the New Economy (or the Knowledge Age) this value is increasingly being extracted from intangible goods. The important point to note here is that the necessity of creating value cannot be over-emphasised.

However, Meyer misunderstands the concept of value itself. He says that value creation is moving from manufacturing (the production of goods and tangible commodities) to intangibles like knowledge, information and services. But when Meyer says that, “there’s less stuff to look to for an indicator of value”, this misrepresents and misunderstands the concept of ‘value’. Value itself is intangible – it is not the case that when value was created by the production of tangible goods, such as in the Agrarian and the Industrial Age, that value was tangible and could be weighed and measured. If this was true, then a bag of potatoes would be worth more than a diamond, for example. Instead, value is and can only ever be created by human labour – this can never be weighted. As Marx says:

...human labour creates value...(Marx, 1887, p.57)

Furthermore,

The value of a commodity...is determined by the quantity of labour contained in it... (Marx, 1887, p. 203)

Meyer’s quote does, though, at least help to illustrate the complexity of ‘value’ as a concept and the need to recognise that it needs to be considered at a deeper level.

Many business and information writers (as well as others) recognise the importance of value, but do not endeavour to actually define it. This is often seen to be largely a waste of time. When I asked one of the participants, (P6), in my research about his views on the importance of ‘value’ in regard to knowledge management, for example, he was somewhat sceptical and said:

...it is easy to talk about adding value because you can lump together a whole range of things that you are doing well.

Furthermore, he thought that, in some ways, value was almost being used as a ‘copout phase’. He said:

...all the time one is hopefully adding some value...One is creating something extra. And it's just ,it's almost a copout phrase. It's a...case of, well year, there's something there.

When I then proceeded to ask P6 whether he thought it was an easy way out, he replied:

Well...I mean I'm being cynical, I guess, but it is...a common phrase. You know...adding value.

Thus, there is recognition amongst many in the business and information world that value is something important, but there is somewhat of a reluctance to actually explore this further. Similarly, Seybold recognises the importance of value in today's economy, saying that creating value:

..is different. You have to move faster, build momentum quickly, and find ways to get customers to literally stick to you. (Seybold, 2000, p. 248)

However, the meaning of value itself needs to be explored at a deeper level. Various thinkers and writers have endeavoured to define and explain value. Adam Smith in 1776, referred to value in the following way, saying:

*The word **VALUE** it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys. The one may be called '**value in use**'; the other '**value in exchange**'. (Smith, 1776, p. 132 – my emphases)*

Value does indeed have a 'use value' as well as an 'exchange value'. P6 in my research referred to value, saying:

*...the value is defined...not by the person who is saying it is valuable, but by the **user**... People don't collect it because they have this desperate desire to collect data. They collect it because they think it's valuable. But eventually it's...the person that is **using** it that really makes the judgement... (My emphases)*

Also, one of the focus group sessions that I researched discussed the topic '**Does knowledge have a shelf-life or should we ever discard old knowledge?**', and at this session there was a discussion about whether only useful knowledge should be kept, and whether knowledge only has value at the point of use. The two main speakers emphasised the importance of useful knowledge, but another person in the group said that knowledge could be sold, even if it does not appear to be useful. He gave the example of patents that are sold for a price, but do not necessarily have to be useful. This person, then, was referring to 'exchange value'.

However, value also needs to be defined on its own, in abstract from both use and exchange, I would suggest. Michael Neary and Glenn Rikowski explore value at a deeper level and describe value as being '**social energy**'. They say that:

Value can be viewed as being social energy that undergoes transformations... Value is a multi-dimensional field of social energy – a social substance with a directional dynamic (expansion) but not social identity. (Neary and G. Rikowski, 2002, p.60)

Furthermore, Glenn Rikowski says that:

...value, within the social universe of capital, constitutes a social force field analogous to gravity as a force within the known physical universe...value is a social energy whose effects as a social force are mediated by the movements of capital (in its various forms) and the social relations between labour and capital. (G. Rikowski, 2002, p.183)

Thus, this is a complex topic, and energy and also time need to be considered and analysed further.

A consideration of value-creation through knowledge in the current business and information literature

Thus, many of those writing in the current business and information literature recognise that it is necessary to create value, but they also recognise that in the knowledge revolution today this value is increasingly being extracted from knowledge. A few quotes from the literature on this subject highlight this fact. Meyer says, for example:

Value is in the intangibles like knowledge, information, services, software, and entertainment. (Meyer, 2000, p.193 – my emphasis)

Furthermore, Potter notes that:

...Value and wealth derives from the process of creating, not making things. (Potter, 1999, p.2 - my emphasis)

Meanwhile, Byers speaking at the Mansion House in February 2000, said that:

The main source of value and competitive advantage in the modern economy is human and intellectual capital. (Byers, 2000, p.1 – my emphasis)

Broadbent also notes that:

Knowledge management is about enhancing the use of organizational knowledge through sound practices of information management and organizational learning. The purpose is to deliver value to the business. (Broadbent, 2000, p.24 – my emphasis)

Comments made by Mougayar are also interesting. Mougayar says:

Customer loyalties are shifting from companies that produce the best products to those sellers that make the best use of information about their customers. Companies therefore are pressed to develop infomediary-think and infomediary-flair within management ranks so that the right infomediary strategies are quickly developed. The goal: create a business that relentlessly manipulates information to extract higher value from it by reselling it, reusing it, repackaging it, or giving it away; either directly to end-users or indirectly via third parties. (Mougayar, 2000, p.253 – my emphasis)

In referring to the Internet Mougayar says:

Value is digital value Digital value is 100 percent information-based. It surrounds, envelopes, and sometimes makes obsolete current (or old) value....Just as a factory is in charge of production, the infomediary is in charge of creating digital value. (Mougayar, 2000, pp.253-254 – my emphases)

Meanwhile, in ‘Keystone for the information age: a national information policy for the UK’ the Library and Information Commission say that there is an urgent need for a UK National Information Policy that will add value to some of the initiatives that it is undertaking. It says:

*Britain is closer to becoming an information society but we still lack the overall policy and co-ordination that will add **value** to the various initiatives that are taking place. We have, therefore, taken the opportunity to re-state our view that a UK National Information Policy is urgently required if we are to remain competitive in the global information society. (Library and Information Commission, 2000, p.1 – my emphasis)*

Furthermore:

*The National Information Policy should establish a framework within which the public sector can evolve information strategies to manage and add **value** to their information resources. (Library and Information Commission, 2000, p.6 – my emphasis)*

Various models and concepts have also been developed in order to explore intellectual capital in more depth. This becomes necessary for businesses given that intellectual capital assists in the creation of value today. A model called the ‘**value** platform’, for example, has been developed between Skandia, CIBC and Dow Chem. The model puts intellectual capital in three main categories - human, organisational and customer capital. Dzinkowski says:

*These three components dynamically interrelate to form **value**. Human capital (HC) + organisational capital (OC) + customer capital (CC) = intellectual capital (IC). (Dzinkowski, 2000, p.42 – my emphasis)*

Human capital can be seen to be the knowledge that is in people’s heads. Furthermore,

*CIBC, one of Canada’s biggest chartered banks, recognised the importance of the hidden **value** of intellectual capital in Canadian history and in so doing, has become one of the first banks in the world to devote an entire lending division to businesses whose primary assets are knowledge and innovation. (Dzinkowski, 2000, p.44 – my emphasis)*

Much has been written about transferring human capital into structural capital. Through this process the knowledge and ideas that people have are transferred to the company and becomes part of the company’s ‘structural capital’. For companies, the issue becomes – how can they capture this as quickly and easily as possible?

Thus, various business and information people are now recognising that knowledge is the essential ingredient for creating value in the knowledge revolution, this being the latest phase of capitalism, that we find ourselves in today.

Empirical research on value, knowledge and KM

The empirical research that I have been undertaking on KM (Rikowski, 2003) also reinforces the importance of extracting value from knowledge today. Many of the participants interviewed thought that it was very important to create value from knowledge, and that this could be achieved through effective KM practices. One participant (P7) said, for example:

*...I believe that the **value** comes out of **managing knowledge**, whether people recognise it as that or not...In reality, you are always **managing knowledge** to create an application and create **value** out of...a situation...you might not actually recognise it as knowledge management but you're still doing it. (My emphases)*

Another participant (P11) said:

*I suppose people talk about that [value] because they feel that if they've got to implement any sort of knowledge strategy or programme in a company then you've got to see some benefits...so people talk about the **value** of it... (My emphasis)*

Meanwhile, P8 said:

*I think the whole point of...**managing knowledge**, information and people...is to produce **value** for the organisation and beyond the organisation for its customers... (My emphases)*

At another point P8 said:

*I think the whole point...of **managing knowledge**, information and people...is to produce **value** for the organisation and beyond the organisation...but that **value** isn't always produced in monetary terms, or measurable in monetary terms. (My emphases)*

P7 thought that the links between value and knowledge were not all that clear at the current time, but that would become increasingly so in the future. He said:

*Yes, that relationship...about **knowledge** and **value**, I think, is something where it will dawn on people a lot more. (My emphases)*

However, there was also a clear recognition that there is little point in storing and capturing knowledge just for its own sake. Instead, this needs to be related to how value can be extracted from the knowledge, so that the knowledge can be used effectively, particularly for business advantage. P9 said:

*So, knowledge is useless if it is indexed, stored, categorised. It is only of **value** when it is applied in a business context. And in our view too much knowledge management effort goes into...the indexing, capturing and storage of the content, even the retrieval of the content, not enough into working out how it can be applied to business advantage. (My emphasis)*

Furthermore, P6 also related the capturing of the data to use, saying that there is little to be gained from capturing the data, if that data is then not used. He said:

*...there is...this obsession...with capturing things and it is almost a disease...People...get this sort of thing, we must capture it, it's great...But...it...starts with **use**. You should really only capture the stuff that is useful...And it it's not gonna be **used** there's almost no point in actually capturing anything in the first place...And ...I think one of the failures has been that people have tried to capture endless streams of data...which then isn't **used**. You know, it's no use whatsoever. And there is also the access time. That sometimes it's...stashed away in the database that is almost...incomprehensible to the average user...So, they just don't **use** it. They can't use it because they don't understand how to get in. Yes, capture it, put it there and I'm sure we'll be able to access it...It's not as easy as that. (My emphases)*

Thus, this is clearly an area that information professionals need to give due consideration to.

Marx, Value and Intellectual Labour

In conclusion, the importance of creating value in general and of extracting value from knowledge, in particular, in the knowledge revolution that we find ourselves in today is now generally recognised. This article has considered some of the business and information literature, in this regard, and has also focused on the empirical research on KM that I undertook between 2001-2003. The empirical research included both interviews and focus groups.

However, what does *value* actually mean? Many in the business literature are loathe to explore this in any depth. However, in order to make meaningful progress we need to explore these deep philosophical questions, I would suggest, and as far as I am concerned, this means returning to a Marxist analysis of value. Marx emphasised how value can only ever be created from labour. A Marxist analysis considers various types of value, including use value, exchange value, surplus value and added value, which I refer to as the forms and aspects of value (Rikowski, 2003). This is considered in more depth in my book – *Globalisation, Information and Libraries* (Rikowski, 2005). Use value and exchange value are different forms of value, whilst surplus value and added value are different aspects of value. In order to ensure the continued success of capitalism, value must always be created, and this value can only ever be created by labour. This value then becomes embedded in the commodity, in various forms and aspects. When the labourer labours, he/she undertakes both manual and intellectual labour, but what is important to appreciate for this analysis of knowledge and value, is that in the knowledge revolution, there is a greater expenditure of intellectual labour and less expenditure of manual labour. Extracting value from knowledge can only be achieved by the exertion of intellectual labour. This is the key point. When business people refer to creating value from knowledge, they seldom refer to the labour process that is necessary in order for this to succeed, but the labour process is essential – value cannot be created from knowledge without the labourer undertaking some form of intellectual labour.

As I emphasise in my article *On the impossibility of determining the length of the working-day for intellectual labour* (Rikowski, 2004) although the labouring process involves both manual labour and intellectual labour, in the knowledge revolution there is a greater expenditure of intellectual labour, and less expenditure of manual labour. The value from this intellectual labour then becomes embedded in intangible goods/commodities. This is in contrast to the industrial revolution, when there was a greater expenditure of manual labour, and the value from this labour then became embedded in tangible goods/commodities. This then, is why there is such an emphasis in the world of business on the importance of creating value from knowledge, ideas, information, brand-names and brain-power etc. Furthermore, good and effective knowledge management (KM) processes assist with this process. This creation of value from intellectual labour, which is then embedded in the commodity becomes necessary, so that intangible commodities can be sold in the market-place and profits can be made (and ultimately profits can only ever be derived from value).

This process ensures the continued success of the knowledge revolution, and indeed of global capitalism itself. This process means that labour becomes exploited, alienated and objectified. In order to break free from this we need to break free from capitalism itself and look towards an alternative social system – i.e. move towards socialism and ultimately to communism. In this way, humans can enjoy and rejoice in the world that they have created with their own labour, rather than being dominated by it. Let us shape the future together; let us look towards a better world.

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Book Review

‘The Truth’ by Mike Palecek, Writers Publishing Cooperative, 2003, 223pp, ISBN 1930149263

Against the backdrop of history, we have the story of a small-town mailman whose son is one of the U.S. casualties during the Occupation of Iraq. We see his almost inevitable realization of the cruel, deceptive and cynical context within which many sons and daughters continue to sacrifice their lives.

Mike Palecek’s latest book *The Truth* is a vital book on a vital subject. Democracy (of any definition) is threatened in the United States more than any time in her history. It is threatened not only by the erosive events enacted by the Bush Administration (and the events are many, both in domestic and foreign affairs), but also by the inertia in response, or non-response, by a truly frightening number of the American public.

The book is organized with even-numbered pages carrying quotes of significance to the point of the lockdown of America (from Goebbels, from Goering, from Ari Fleischer - but also the wonderful and inspiring words of such human beings as St. Augustine, as Thomas Jefferson, as well as writers and thinkers and journalists ranging from Helen Thomas to William Shakespeare..) and the odd-numbered pages relate the story of Pete Penny. Either the quotes alone or the story would be fully satisfying, but together they serve in creating an acute tension of the individual life in historical context. This same tension is further played out in the very, very funny sections that run throughout an otherwise almost Kafkaesque unraveling of the life of one man. The extremely comic attend the tragic of both the story and history’s narrative, just as the ludicrousness of an absurd President underline the daily horror. The horror of the Administration’s avarice and lies in a bloodshed which shows no signs of abating; the mockery and indifference to much that the American people have valued; the ravaging of any American dream.

It is without hesitation that I urge everyone to read this book. For those who are lost in the chaotic events of our times, it is illuminating and for those who are familiar with the aspects that Mike describes, his lucidity and fine perceptions further organize our thinking.

(I found out the truth, man, but it’s better to stay stupid, go to ball games, smoke cigarettes and fish from the shore. Figuring it out is not the hard part. It’s what are you gonna do, now, man? That’s when it gets tough. What you gonna do now?)

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