



Charles Sturt  
University

# ***Engineers of conduct and technicians of behaviour:***

*A DIVERGENT LOOK AT CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS,  
INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS AND THE  
HISTORICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF NEUTRALITY.*

MARY CARROLL AND JESSIE LYMN

# “WHAT DID YOU TELL THE LIBRARIANS?”

“We got it off the Internet. Some librarian is spreading the whole story.  
AND NOW WE’RE GETTING HATE MAIL FROM LIBRARIANS!”

Hmm, I thought, librarians are certainly one terrorist group you don’t  
want to mess with.” Moore, M, 2001 *Stupid white men* pp xvi-xvii

“Most people think of them as all mousy and quiet and telling  
everyone SHHHHHH!” I am now convinced that “shush’ is just the  
sound of the steam coming out of their ears as they sit there plotting  
the revolution” Moore, M, 2001 *Stupid white men* p. xvi

# The proposition of neutrality

The state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc.; impartiality.

*‘during the war, Switzerland maintained its neutrality’*

Absence of decided views, expression, or strong feeling.

*‘the clinical neutrality of the description’*

The condition of being chemically or electrically neutral.

*‘the structure has overall electrical neutrality’*

Lexicon Oxford <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/neutrality>

To be a librarian is not to be neutral, or passive, or waiting for a question. It is to be a radical positive change agent within your community.  
R. David Lankes

QuoteMaster.org



“Keepers of books, keepers of print and paper on the shelves, librarians are also keepers of the records of the human spirit – the records of men’s watch upon the world and on themselves. In such a time as ours, when wars are made against the spirit and its works, the keeping of these records is itself a kind of warfare. The keepers, whether they so wish or not, cannot be neutral”

McLeish, A.



# Social Welfare Institutions or Political institutions?

The establishment of public libraries seems to be one example of a phenomenon fairly common in the 1930's, namely the imposition of an overseas-inspired cultural institution by reformist elite. Vincent, I. *Libraries in 1938* p.9

A means of elevating the lower classes through good reading and by providing sources of information that would help the working man with his trade, of keeping peace between the classes, of inculcating democratic values in immigrants, of promoting civic virtue

Carpenter, K. (1996) *A library historian looks at librarianship*

Books and libraries were said to be efficacious not only in soothing the savage breasts of labor's men of action, but also in controverting some of the troublesome social philosophies which were beginning to attract the American worker Ditzion, S. 1940

*Arsenal of a democratic culture: A social history of the American public library movement in New England and the middle states from 1850-1900*

Librarianship, like the criminal justice system and the government, is an institution. And like other institutions, librarianship plays a role in creating and sustaining hegemonic values, as well as contributing to white supremacy culture.

Ettarh, Fobazi (2018) *Vocational awe and librarianship: the lies we tell ourselves*

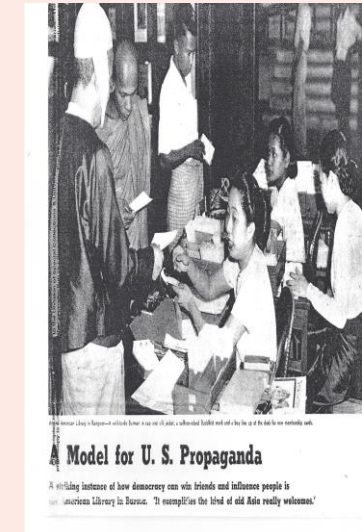
<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>



# 'Propaganda guns of truth' or 'Librarian warriors'



1946 Footscray Children's Library, Buckley Street, Footscray- Opening ceremony 23/06/1946 <http://www.picture.victoria.vic.gov.au/site/maribyrnong/miscellaneous/4979.html>



G. Broder, artist. Office of War Information poster, no. 7. 1942

The transfer of US library practice abroad not only spread American ideas, it also provided a working example of how a democratic society educates itself

Dizard Jr, W. (2004) *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The story of the U.S. Information Agency*

libraries were active weapons in the cultural side of the battle; they were propaganda guns of truth-- MacLeish saw librarians as the soldiers on the battlefield of ideology who must awaken to their historic tradition of defending mankind against the forces of ignorance

Steilow, F. *Librarian Warriors and Rapprochement: Carl Milan, Archibald Macleish, and World War II*

## Foundations of the professions

“Vocational awe” refers to the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique.

Ettarh, Fobazi (2018) Vocational awe and librarianship: the lies we tell ourselves <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>

# Foundations of the professions



Foundation support for educational institutions and the concomitant emphasis on the training of experts has given the foundations great leverage in the production and dissemination of knowledge. They are critically situated to play pivotal roles in determining what knowledge, what ideas, what views of the world receive support and become incorporated into the society's

**general discourse.** Berman E.H. *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence Of The Carnegie, Ford, And Rockefeller Foundations On American Foreign Policy* (Albany, SUNY Press 1983)

The time is ripe for closer contacts and the safest way is through educational agencies. From this time I am a missionary....The rest of the world may be worth cultivating but this part needs intensive tillage and irrigation.

*Russell to Keppel in White, M. Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia in the nineteen thirties-A reassessment p.5*

If the language around being a good librarian is directly tied to struggle, sacrifice, and obedience, then the more one struggles for their work, the “holier” that work (and institution) becomes.

Ettarh, Fobazi (2018) Vocational awe and librarianship: the lies we tell ourselves <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.Org/2018/vocational-awe/>



# Foundations of the professions: “not only suitable but specially attractive”

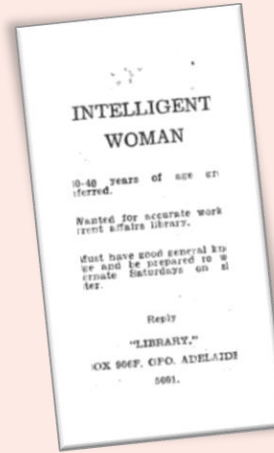
For various reasons the elderly fathers of the Melbourne Public Library do not employ women except to scrub floors. There are a good many jobs at the library. It is a nice, cool, quiet spot in the summer-time, and a sheltered and pleasant place without draughts in the winter. Much of the work consists in sitting down and waiting for somebody to turn up and ask for something; and a woman could almost do that. The time seems ripe to give her a chance. In neither war nor peace can we any longer afford to waste men in unproductive jobs. If the new arrivals at the library are nice things in clean pinnies and with a cheerful appearance, so much the better—always providing that the supply of disabled soldier has failed to satisfy the demand.

The workforce will, to some extent, consist of very able women who, having the good sense to realize that their working life is likely to be limited, wish to start working life after matriculation, not after spending four years in higher education. This I would argue, is for the common good. Their profitable working life is extended for 4 years (Flowers 1963, Objectives of training for library service, p.5).

Library collections, services and access were marked by gender as well as class, since they existed in a milieu of information creation, production and dissemination that was deliberately designed to bolster existing patriarchies.  
Wiegand W. 2009 Libraries and invention of information p. 534

“It is no accident that librarianship is dominated by white women”

Ettarh, Fobazi (2018) Vocational awe and librarianship: the lies we tell ourselves  
<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>



The News, Wednesday, March 4, 1970—51



SLSA: B69623/14 – Cleaning Week at the library 1922 Image Courtesy of the State Library of South Australia

A woman is instinctively quick, tactful and patient; the only drawbacks to her appointment, worth consideration, are those oft-hurled accusation as to want of health, lack of business training and executive ability, incapacity for rough work and want of originality, together with inability to manage library boards or committees whose members are largely composed of men only.” (James 1900, p.296)

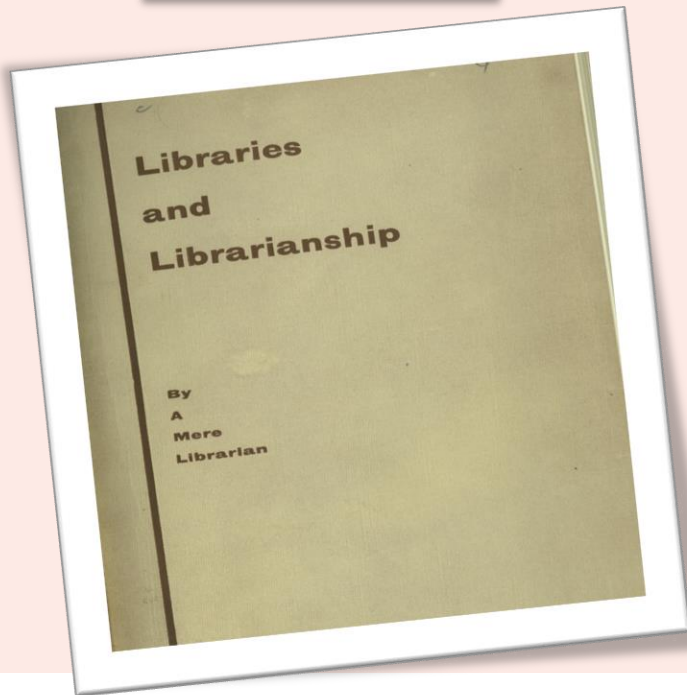
# Foundations of the professions: The construction of knowledge



Part of the challenge of understanding algorithmic oppression is to understand that mathematical formulations to drive automated decisions are made by human beings. While we often think of terms such as “big data” and “algorithms” as being benign, neutral, or objective, they are anything but. The people who make these decisions hold all types of values, many of which openly promote racism, sexism, and false notions of meritocracy, which is well documented in studies of Silicon Valley and other tech corridors.

Noble, S. (2018) *Algorithms of Oppression* pp 2-3

a library cannot emancipate itself from local influences ... and ... would be the first to suffer by the adoption of a universal classification; it would tend to destroy them.’ (Kaiser in Brazier 1912, p. 3)



the Dewey system of classification was full of ‘blunders and bizarreries’ ‘Australia ought to be able, by this time, to look after herself in library matters.’ (Brazier 1912, 13).

To document their heritage, these civilizations depended upon information contained in texts. Libraries have been responsible not only for preserving these texts, but also for making them accessible by superimposing upon them systems of organisation. But the texts libraries have chosen to preserve, and the methods of organization they have developed, also manifest culturally and chronologically distinctive patterns that reflect not only the role of power in the construction of heritage, but also the very definition of the word information. Wiegand, W. 2009 *Libraries and invention of information* p. 531

# Foundations of the professions: Archival presence

What role do archivists play in preserving histories of oppression and slavery (and enabling profit in contemporary times)?

Tamara Lanier says "Papa Renty" is the patriarch of her family. And in a lawsuit filed Wednesday, she says Harvard is using those photos without permission — and in so doing, profiting from photos taken by a racist professor determined to prove the inferiority of black people."

Schwartz (2019) <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/21/705382289/harvard-profits-from-photos-of-slaves-lawsuit-claims>

"First, the system of chattel slavery specifically sought to sever family ties and histories among the enslaved. Thus, to require black people produce a precise lineage reinforces the racist intent of the institution. Second, Harvard even refuses to acknowledge the documentary evidence the Lanier family was able to collect and complement through a rich tradition of oral history and an assortment of family artifacts."

Drake (2019) <https://medium.com/@jmddrake/a-vision-of-in-justice-harvard-archives-bear-a-strange-fruit-30e645643df6>

**Monday, June 25, 2018**

## **ALA Apologizes for Silence on Segregated Libraries Issue**

*ALA's board released a resolution apologizing for its failure to speak out against the racist Jim Crow laws that kept many public libraries segregated until the 1960s.*

On Sunday, June 24, 2018, renowned national library historian Wayne A. Wiegand and his wife, Shirley, appeared at the New Orleans Public Library's main branch to discuss their new book, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South: Civil Rights and Local Activism*



“Whereas, despite the work of African-American librarians . . . and the allies who stood with them to proactively fight segregation, a large majority of the nation’s library community failed to address the injustices of segregated library services until the 1960s.”

<https://bplolinenews.blogspot.com/2018/06/ala-apologizes-for-silence-on.html>





# From the ground up: A conflicting experience of compliance or resistance, and those who are caught in-between

MENU The Sydney Morning Herald SUBSCRIBE

POLITICS FEDERAL PARENTING

OPINION

**The government parenting program turning librarians into snitches**

March 3, 2019 – 12.00am

f t e | A A A



Jacqueline Maley

## Single parents forced to attend 'story time' or lose Centrelink payments

Parents on the scheme say they must attend children's activities or undertake self-funded study to qualify



Luke Henriques-Gomes

@lukehgomes

Tue 6 Nov 2018 04:00 AEDT



▲ Parents on the Centrelink program say they're forced to attend activities such as 'story time' or playgroup  
Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

2018/2019 'Parents Next' incident – reported in The Guardian in November 2018, in the Sydney Morning Herald March 3, 2019

ALIA responded 5 March and 1 April 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/06/single-parents-forced-to-attend-story-time-or-lose-centrelink-payments>

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/why-is-the-government-telling-parents-how-to-look-after-their-kids-20190301-p51116s.html>



SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 20 AND JULY 13, 1988

Serial No. 123



FBI COUNTERINTELLIGENCE VISITS TO  
LIBRARIES

MONDAY, JUNE 20, 1988

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS,  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:08 p.m., in room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Don Edwards (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Edwards, Kastenmeier, Conyers, and Schroeder.

Staff present: James X. Dempsey, assistant counsel; and Alan Slobodin, associate counsel.

Mr. EDWARDS. The subcommittee will come to order.

The gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Kastenmeier.

Mr. KASTENMEIER. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the subcommittee permit coverage of this hearing in whole or in part by television broadcast, radio broadcast or still photography in accordance with Committee Rule V.

Mr. EDWARDS. Without objection, it is so ordered.

This afternoon the subcommittee will examine efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to collect counterintelligence information from librarians regarding their library patrons.

The subcommittee is well aware that, in the foreign counterintelligence area, the FBI has awesome responsibilities. For that reason, the Congress has given the FBI awesome resources and authority. But we have not given them unlimited powers, and we certainly have not authorized them to gain access to information on library usage.

Libraries are unique institutions in our society. They are intended to be havens for scholarly work and quiet relaxation; they provide a place for study, reflection, solitude and intellectual exploration. We encourage our children to go to libraries and learn the value of reading.

Every year our Government grants visas to thousands of foreign students and scholars so they can come here to use our libraries.

Library circulation and usage records are not ordinary third-party records like telephone or bank records. They should not be available to intelligence agencies just for the asking.

When we learned about the program several months ago, we got in touch with the FBI and asked them for the reasons behind the Library Awareness Program and their justification and so forth.

# Librarians fall prey to FBI bungle

From CHARLES BREMNER in New York

FORGET the coffee houses of Vienna or the alleys of Berlin. With the Cold War fading in Europe, the real spy action can be found these days among the bookshelves and card files of New York libraries — or so the Federal Bureau of Investigation appears to believe.

For several months it was revealed on Thursday, agents of the FBI's counter-intelligence arm have tracked librarians around New York and other cities in the belief that they had fallen victim to a cunning KGB operation aimed at prising secrets from their shelves.

The latest in a string of embarrassments for the agency emerged after a civil liberties group used the Freedom of Information Act to oblige the FBI to divulge 1200 documents relating to its notorious Library Awareness Program, an operation that angered librarians when it became public in 1981.

Under that program, FBI agents visited at least 100 libraries around the New York area, told librarians the KGB was harvesting technical data from their shelves and asked them to report suspicious activity by readers with East European names, contacts or with links to Soviet bloc organisations.

When hundreds of librarians complained publicly, the FBI concluded



Mr Sessions... embarrassments

that these librarians may have come under the influence of KGB manipulation — and opened an investigation into 250 of them.

A memo from the New York bureau chief to the FBI director, Mr William Sessions, dated last February said the operation was necessary "to determine whether a Soviet active-measures campaign had been initiated to discredit the Library Awareness Program".

The agency turned up eight librarians among people whom its teams had found to be in contact with Soviet or Eastern bloc personnel or alleged front organisations.

The names were blacked out and there was no clue on the agency's follow-up. FBI spokesmen played down the significance of the operation, saying that the bureau had reviewed only those people who came in contact after the library program was disclosed in 1987.

A spokesman, Mr M. Ahlerich, resorted to "spy-speak" to explain that the library operation was "a threat-driven program targeted at the threat of hostile intelligence activities we believed were ongoing".

But the latest news from the library war triggered protests. Congressman Don Edwards, a civil rights advocate, said he was dismayed "The FBI never understood that the librarians and other Americans think that libraries are sacred," he said.

The National Security Archive, a private organisation which exposed the library affair, also won another victory against the FBI over its domestic spying.

Mr Sessions told Congress last weekend that it would purge its files of thousands of names collected during an investigation into people who protested against President Reagan's policy in Central America.

In contrast to its celebrated successes against the Mafia, the FBI has bungled a series of counter-intelligence operations in the past few years. It has failed to spot spying by several US citizens, including one of its own agents.

In the most public surveillance operation ever seen, teams of FBI agents can be found squirming under the glare of television cameras in Washington where they are shadowing Mr Felix Bloch, the suspected diplomat-spy.

The Times

# Thank You

Dr Mary Carroll Course Director and Senior Lecturer Faculty of Arts and Education  
Charles Strut University [macarroll@csu.edu.au](mailto:macarroll@csu.edu.au)

Dr Jessie Lymn Lecturer School of Information Studies Charles Strut University  
[jlymn@csu.edu.au](mailto:jlymn@csu.edu.au)