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Democratic Communication and The Library as Workplace

Abstract

The protection of intellectual freedom is considered by many to be a core value of the library profession. Little is written, however, on the library employees right to intellectual freedom and freedom of speech in the library workplace. The very organizational structure of the library as workplace, when it is based upon hierarchical relationships, tends to inhibit the protection of intellectual freedom for library employees. Many cases that involve library employees being denied the right to free speech in the workplace are based upon challenges by workers to management and by workers to the established order or status quo. In considering this issue, which amounts to a facet of the neutrality over social responsibility debate, the argument is presented that intellectual freedom and other 'civil rights' of citizenship must co-exist alongside the social rights of citizenship, such as a guarantee to real social and economic equality. Non-hierarchical or more participative management strategies should and must be considered as one way of achieving intellectual freedom for library employees, so that they may actively participate as advocates in the development of an egalitarian communications order, where all people may exercise their right to intellectual freedom.

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When social rights are added to civil and political rights we start to move from treating human beings as ‘things’ to be bought and sold, to a consideration of their essential humanity and its sustenance and development. The individual’s isolation in the market is replaced by a concern to maintain the means for the development of his or her individuality as a human being. Thus, social rights of citizenship when added to civil liberties and political democracy may present a major challenge to free market capitalism. (Twine 103)

I. Introduction

A guarantee that the individual and the public as a whole have access to as wide and as diverse a selection of knowledge as that which exists, free of charge and ideally without restriction, represents for many the greatest and most essential rights of citizenship in western liberal society. For this reason, a dedicated commitment to the principles of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression, alongside a resistance to censorship in any form, are often recognized as amongst the major driving forces behind the modern library discourse. One needs simply to turn to the professional statements of various North American library associations to see how the library and the librarian are conceptualized as the guarantor’s of intellectual freedom or a “...state of affairs in which each human being has the freedom to think, say, write, and promulgate any idea or belief “(Gorman 88). For instance, the Canadian Library Association’s Statement on Intellectual Freedom reads in part

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom. It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

Despite the importance and significance of the principles represented in this statement, the scholarly and professional library literatures offer no or very few indications of the library employee’s right to freely express her or his opinion in the library workplace. The public library as a place of work, as most other workplaces in a liberal market economy, is typically based

upon a hierarchical organizational structure (Buschman and Rosenzweig 37). Such organizational structures are inherently adverse to the protection of intellectual freedom, as they are based upon the authority and visibility of certain voices over others in the communicative process. Allowing certain voices a privileged position or dominant role in the communication of knowledge represents a crisis of legitimacy for intellectual freedom and for democracy in general. The North American library community is a particularly relevant profession to consider when studying the question of intellectual freedom within the workplace, since it is a profession that regards the defence of intellectual freedom as amongst its core values.

It is important to recognize that the debate surrounding intellectual freedom and freedom of expression in western liberal society is generally framed from within a liberal democratic rights based perspective. In this context, freedom of expression represents a legally and constitutionally protected right for the individual to express an opinion. While it is not within the scope of this paper to provide an overall critique of the liberal democratic perspective, it can be demonstrated that the protection of intellectual freedom as a 'civil liberty' will benefit when it exists alongside a dedication to the 'social rights of citizenship' (i.e. a guaranteed and reasonable minimum wage, guaranteed housing, and so on). Conceptualizing intellectual freedom in this way should help the discussion in two ways. First of all, it will help in developing an understanding of why it is important for library employees, who in many ways must act as advocates for intellectual freedom, to have a guaranteed protection to their own freedom of expression in the workplace. Secondly. It will help to demonstrate how hierarchically organized social relationships are inimical to the provision of true intellectual freedom for library employees and for society in general. It will thus be argued that it is completely within reason to suggest that the free speech situation of library workers, and all workers for that matter, will

benefit from non-hierarchical social arrangements in the workplace. Before dealing with the issue of intellectual freedom within the library workplace this discussion will benefit from a consideration of the importance of intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of communication in a truly democratic society, and the role of the library therein.

II. The Public Sphere and Deliberative Democracy

With his theory of the public sphere modern German philosopher Jurgen Habermas attempts to situate the birth and ultimate degeneration of public opinion as a political force within a particular historical time frame that parallels the emergence and development of the liberal market economy. Habermas argues that a collection of societal institutions (newspapers, coffee houses, universities, libraries, and so on) arose in the 17th and 18th centuries that provided the new bourgeois class with an arena, the public sphere, in which reasoned, consensual, non-hierarchical, and ultimately democratic communication could take place. Habermas does not perceive the public sphere as a physical space but rather something that occurs any time two or more people come together to discuss and deliberate on matters of public concern. He argues that the development of public opinion as a political force in turn created the necessary conditions for the development of western liberal democracy (Habermas 231). The special role that Habermas gives to deliberation indicates that his conception of democracy is one in which the public plays a participatory role. Noelle McAfee describes 'deliberative democracy' as an "...alternative to both the empty proceduralism of liberalism and the weighty and questionable substance of civic republicanism. Deliberative democracy gives the public sphere a central role in the political process, namely that of forming public opinion and will on matters of common concern" (McAfee 96). On the importance of deliberation to the democratic

process, Will Kymlicka suggests that Habermas believes that free, consensual, and non-hierarchical communication is essential because without it people will come to accept established practices as givens “...and thereby perpetuate the false needs and false consciousness which accompany those historical practices” (222). Essentially, democracy cannot be legitimized unless the public is afforded a venue in which the current or established order may be openly and publicly questioned and criticized.

In his article “The Idea of Civil Society: A Path to Social Reconstruction” Michael Walzer presents an argument which describes the concept of civil society in similar terms as Habermas’ public sphere: “The words ‘civil society’ name the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks -- formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology -- that fill this space” (Walzer 293). In considering Walzer’s comparison, McAfee identifies civil society as the “space between the private sphere of individuals and the governmental sphere of the state; it is the space of public associations in which people enter into common life by joining with others” (83). Both of these conceptions of civil society and the public sphere exist within discourses where political or public affairs are separate from the private lives of citizens. As the purpose of this paper is to deal with the issue of democratic communication in the library as workplace, it should then be noted that these conceptions exclude the workplace as an area in which the public sphere can occur. Further along in her discussion McAfee states “Civil society is the network of all those nongovernmental associations, both formal and informal, that bring people together...What they share is a way of bringing people out of their homes and workplaces and into a network of other associations” (83). The recognition that the workplace in capitalist society does not allow for the occurrence of the public sphere is an important step towards developing an understanding of how liberal

capitalism, and the inherent social inequalities that come as a result of capitalism, actually serve to undermine democratic communication in society in general and in the workplace in particular.

In dealing with the democratic deficiencies of capitalism, Habermas argues that over the last century public opinion as a political force became corrupted when powerful private actors were allowed entrance into the public sphere. This allowed these more powerful voices to dominate dialogue and ultimately threatened the role of consensual and unrestricted communication in the democratic process. Sue Curry Jansen argues that in the context of society at large, once these actors are allowed to dominate the public sphere, they obtain the power to control knowledge and to present to the public an official version of the social reality (6-7). In this sense, Habermas' theory of the public sphere demands for there to be equality amongst all people who are participating in the communicative process. In discussing this requirement McAfee cites Seyla Benhabib:

Only those norms...can be said to be valid...if such agreement were reached as a consequence of a process of deliberation that had the following features: 1) participation in such deliberation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry; all have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate; 2) all have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and 3) all have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are supplied or carried out (Benhabib 70 in McAfee 97)

As was mentioned earlier, the workplace in liberal society is not traditionally conceived of as a space in which the public sphere, or deliberative democracy, can occur. This is because the traditional workplace in capitalist society is based upon a hierarchical organizational structure where the voices that wield the most power tend to dominate the dialogue or the communication of knowledge. The purpose of discussing theoretical perspectives which present the workplace as a site of undemocratic communication is to provide a defense for the argument that the workplace should be a site where a public sphere of sorts can be achieved. This is particularly so

when that workplace is considered in other contexts to be an arena in which democratic communication is commonly achieved, as is the case with the public library.

For instance, Patricia Glass Schuman argues that the major role of the public library in a democratic society is to help that society in the development of public communication and understanding (86). Likewise, Bob Usherwood claims that the public librarian “has an obligation to society to facilitate the flow of information and ideas and to protect the right of every individual to have free and equal access to sources of information without discrimination ” (121). Liz Greenhalgh elaborates on this argument where she states “public libraries have been part of what was defined...[as]...the public sphere. Public libraries reflect some of [the] ideals of the civil society and the need to make sure that citizens have access to the basic resources that allow them to enter a public sphere and literally belong to society” (90). Evidently these writers share a commitment to the idea that the public library in modern society should serve as an arena in which democratic deliberation can occur. It is a space where, within certain legal limits, all people can gain access to information and participate in the communication of knowledge. Ideally, then, the library is an exceptionally democratic institution. However, the library’s role as a site of the public sphere has been challenged since wealthy and powerful actors in society have been allowed to dominate dialogue. Not only this, but the very institutional structure of the public library is such that it inhibits free, consensual, and democratic communication.

A great deal of literature has appeared in the last 30 years that indicates that the library has in many ways failed to equitably serve all people in society. In the introduction to the anthology Social Responsibility in Librarianship: Essays on Equality Donnarae MacCann states “...the record of service to American ‘minority’ groups, [is] a record of negligence at best, and extreme cultural arrogance at worst. The history of library service to the most oppressed cultural

and racial groups points up the illusory nature of the claim that libraries have functioned as a collective social memory” (1). If MaCann’s statement is correct, how then can supporters of the public library claim it to be a site of intellectual freedom, and themselves defenders of free expression, without recognizing that whole groups in society have been and continue to be excluded from the communication of information. With this in mind, one should also consider that the public library as workplace is an institution where hierarchical and unequal relations amongst workers commonly do exist. To say then that the public library is a democratic institution without taking these factors into consideration demonstrates a naive and limited understanding of the concept of ‘democracy’.

III. Intellectual Freedom and the Social Rights of Citizenship

In her book Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism, Ellen Meiksins Wood recognizes the conflict that exists between capitalism and democracy when she states “Capitalism...made it possible to conceive of ‘formal democracy’, a form of civic equality which could co-exist with social inequality and leave economic relations between ‘elite’ and ‘labouring multitude’ in place” (213). Others echo Wood’s sentiment and argue that true democracy and equality cannot be realized in unregulated market economies. In his book Citizenship and Social Rights: The Interdependence of Self and Society, Fred Twine states that civil liberties such as the right to free expression and the protection of intellectual freedom can only be legitimized when they co-exist with a collection of social rights, such as guarantees to housing, food, and a just minimum wage (102 - 103). He states that the “...emergence of civil rights of citizenship provided opportunity for members of society to give ‘voice’ to their concerns, but depended upon a small propertied elite to respond to those claims...so long as this

small elite were the rule-makers, the mass of society were severely constrained in their ability to change the structure of opportunity and constraint under which they lived” (Twine 174). The right to speak and be heard is contingent upon ones status in society. Martha Jackman and Bruce Porter consider the issue of social rights in the Canadian context in their report “Women’s Substantive Equality and the Protection of Social and Economic Rights under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*”. They argue that the recognition of social and economic rights in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* is an essential factor in creating a Canadian human rights regime that validates the demands of social and economic equality advanced by the most disadvantaged women in Canadian society. They conclude their report by stating that such recognition will serve to aid in the development of an understanding of the interdependence of social and economic rights with civil and political rights (Jackman and Porter 88-89).

The debate over the recognition of social rights is itself not alien to the sphere of library and information studies and the library community in general, although it is not typically discussed in these same terms. In her article “Librarianship and Resistance” Sandy Iverson criticizes what she describes as apolitical tendencies amongst librarians. Her concern is for librarians to make an effort to consider themselves as actors or activists who work against the forces that would essentially serve to exclude individuals or groups from the sources of information in modern society. She argues that the “...underlying concepts that govern the everyday work of librarianship continues to perpetuate systems of domination in our society” and that “if we accept that information is connected to knowledge and knowledge to power, we must examine the connections between knowledge and power in our postmodern society” (Iverson). She recognizes the library as an arena in which the civil rights of citizenship are protected but the social rights of equality are ignored. MacCann raises similar concerns where

she discusses the role of libraries in providing access to information for all people rather than for those who historically held and currently maintain a substantial base of power in society (5). Along these same lines, Dougherty argues “We must become fighters in the defense of what we hold most dear-access to all the world’s intelligence...and the ability to use that information once found (Dougherty qtd in Camarigg and Hafner 299). Finally, Roma M. Harris summarizes the activist position in a section of her book Librarianship: The Erosion of a Women’s Profession. She argues, as does Iverson, that equality of access to information is a growing concern in modern society, as information itself has shifted from being treated as a public good to an exploitable economic commodity. With this, libraries have felt increasing pressure from the private sector to act as competitors in the information marketplace. She cites Henry T. Blanke who claims that if librarians refuse “...to define their values in political terms and actively defend those values against the interests of wealth and power, such fundamental library ideals as free and equal access to information are in jeopardy” (Harris 160 and Blanke 40)

The perception of the librarian as activist in defense of social rights and democracy can be traced back to the social responsibilities movement that emerged in the North American library community in the 1960’s. This movement was based in part upon the recognition by librarians and library workers that not all members of North American society were in fact equal, and that a dedication to intellectual freedom could and most certainly should exist alongside an equal dedication to social rights or substantive equalities (MacCann 1-9). However, the argument that librarians should be encouraged to take a specific stance on social and political issues is viewed by many within the library profession to be contrary to the long held tradition and practice of providing neutral and unbiased service and information. This point of view is based upon the assumption that a commitment to providing the public with unrestricted access to

information requires an equal dedication to sustaining an unbiased and neutral or value-free atmosphere in which this information can be accessed and provided. In fact, two sections of the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association endorse the position that librarians should adopt a professional mandate of objectivity and neutrality:

Section 1: Librarians must provide the highest level of service through appropriate and usefully organized collections, fair and equitable circulation and service policies, and skillful, accurate, unbiased and courteous responses to all requests of information.

Section 7: We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representations of the aims of our institutions is the provision of access to their information resources.

The role of professional neutrality in serving the public is an important aspect of librarianship and should not be disregarded outright. However, an adherence to absolute neutrality ignores the differences that actually exist in society, and essentially allows for an unquestioning acceptance of things as they are (Camarigg and Hafner 285). As Gorman recognizes, the supporters of absolute neutrality often see themselves to be in direct competition with those who believe that the defense of intellectual freedom and the provision of information requires active participation on the part of the provider (89-90).

American library scholar David Berninghausen is amongst those who argue that the provision of neutral information requires that library employees devoid themselves of all personal opinions in the course of their work. He takes specific aim at librarians who believe that intellectual freedom cannot be truly achieved without an equal dedication to issues of social justice when he states

Under a concept of libraries called 'Social Responsibility', topics concerning librarianship were replaced in ALA conferences by a variety of social and political issues...Vital though they are, it is essential that librarians in their professional activities, shall view such issues as subordinate to the principle of intellectual freedom. For, unless men (sic) have access to all varieties of expression as to the facts, theories, and the alternative solutions to these problems, they will be unable to apply their powers of reason toward their resolution (3675).

When Berninghausen argues in this passage that a librarian's 'social responsibility' is subordinate to the principle of intellectual freedom, he is ignoring the potential for inequalities that exist within society, and therefore amongst the library's user population, to subvert and negate the principles of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression. Berninghausen's conceptualization of librarian neutrality regards neutrality as a professional ethic that demands of the librarian to take an altogether passive role in the provision of information. Comparatively, he fears that those who demonstrate a concern for social issues in the process of their work will demonstrate bias in the provision of information and services, or that they will exercise editorial control over the information that they provide for patrons (Berninghausen 3675). While neutrality in these aspects of library work is of importance to the provision of information it cannot be effectively exercised without taking into consideration the cultural, economic, and political context of modern capitalist society. As Sanford Berman states "...neutrality, as an ideal is [not] necessarily a Bad Thing -- provided it's undertaken within a context of real social and economic justice, of actual equality and empowerment" (Berman xi). As will be discussed later on, there are many examples of library workers who, upon voicing their discontent with the established order, are criticized and reprimanded for undermining the ethic of professional neutrality and for presenting a challenge to the hierarchical organizational structure of the workplace. In this sense, professional neutrality represents bias in favour of the established order. If the library worker is not allowed to recognize the social and economic barriers to freedom of expression and intellectual freedom, his or her own right to freedom of speech is undermined and intellectual freedom in general is undermined, as it becomes a freedom that is afforded to some and not to others.

As was mentioned earlier, a strict adherence to neutrality implies an unquestioning acceptance of ‘things as they are’, including the state of affairs within the library workplace. Just like all other traditional workplaces in western liberal society, the library as workplace does not allow for the occurrence of true intellectual freedom when it is founded upon hierarchical social relationships. These relationships effectively allow for the existence of an in-egalitarian communications situation. In a sense, an attempt by a library worker to recognize the social and economic inequalities that would inhibit a citizen’s right to intellectual freedom could be silenced. In order to challenge this situation and to allow the library worker to recognize the deficiencies of the current socio-economic order, a context of actual equality and empowerment must therefore exist within the library workplace itself. In the following section it will be demonstrated that an undemocratic organizational structure in the library workplace undermines the library worker’s freedom of expression, which ultimately undermines the principles of intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of communication for all library users.

IV. Intellectual Freedom within the Library Workplace Undermined

In his book Our Enduring Values: Librarianship in the 21st Century Michael Gorman argues that alongside their duty to provide the public with access to all available materials, librarians are also privileged to a set of rights of their own. He includes amongst these rights the guarantee of intellectual freedom, “...the democratic process in the workplace, and the right to pursue any chosen lifestyle”(Gorman 89). In attempting to raise awareness amongst librarians on the issue of the library workers right to free speech John Buschmann and Mark Rosenzweig initiated a short study which surveyed academic library employees on their perceptions regarding

intellectual freedom and freedom of expression in the workplace. They grounded their study on the argument that while the library the profession presents itself as a defender of intellectual freedom there are certain institutionalized types of censorship that ultimately affect the ability for the library and the librarian to effectively defend intellectual freedom. They state:

Censorship is predominantly considered in a very limited sense: strictly in terms of conscious decisions about selection and reference or research assistance. There is, however, a demonstrated internal dimension to this process: institutional practices and cultures that inhibit the exercise - and defense - of full intellectual freedom. These are norms, expectations, and behaviours that have become integrated into libraries, but remain largely invisible...Essentially, such self-censorship in library professional work would tend to critically undermine the profession's ability to safeguard these freedoms for others, and would do so in ways that are not always obvious (Buschman and Rosenzweig 37).

Buschmann and Rosenzweig begin their study by examining a number of American Library Association positions on the intellectual freedom rights of academic library employees, including the following statements. The first, entitled "Security of Employment for Library Employees" states that "Security of employment, as an elementary right, guarantees specifically: ...Intellectual freedom[,] Appointments and promotions based solely on merit [and] the opportunity for the library employee to work without fear of interference or dismissal...for unjust reasons" ("ALA Handbook"). They also consider the 1972 Academic College and Research Library statement on academic freedom for library employees which reads "Academic freedom...is indispensable to librarians, because they are trustees of knowledge with the responsibility of ensuring the availability of information and ideas, no matter how controversial, so that teachers may freely teach and students may freely learn" (Joint Statement in Buschman and Rosenzweig 38).

Together, they argue that these statement essentially indicate that

American librarians...should be protected by intellectual freedom guarantees in the workplace in their intramural speech (i.e. arguments for or against policies or

commentary about the institution) with both colleagues and supervisors. Further, as a result of this intellectual freedom right in the workplace, librarians should be judged specifically on performance of responsibilities, not vague criteria which mask differing opinions on policy or personal matters (39)

The results of their study found that 72 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that librarians at their respective institutions enjoyed the freedom to express opinions contrary to those of supervisors, and that 81 percent of respondents felt free to express dissenting opinions to more senior colleagues. On the other hand, the findings also indicated that 56 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that self-censorship amongst librarians was common; and that 46 percent of respondents felt that the institutional framework of the library necessitated this self-censorship. When the authors looked more closely at the results they found a significant difference between the responses of library administrators and non-administrators. For instance, they found that two thirds of the administrators strongly disagreed or disagreed that they felt the need to engage in self-censorship while half of the non-administrators felt the opposite. However, most alarming to the authors is the fact that nearly one fourth of all respondents failed to recognize intellectual freedom in the library workplace as an issue involving the employee's right to participate in the decision making process. Rather, these respondents tended to focus upon the issue of collection development and reference work, and the need to retain professional objectivity and neutrality in the exercise of these duties (Buschman and Rosenzweig 41-42). The fact that such a large percentage of the workers failed to recognize the issue of worker free speech as a question of workers having a greater participatory role in the functioning of the workplace and in the challenging of dominant workplace and societal norms may indeed suggest that there is a long way to go before these dominant practices can be effectively challenged.

When library workers are denied the right to free expression in the workplace, this denial is often directly related to the institutional practices, values, and rules of conduct that are created

and guarded by the dominant or more powerful voices in the organizational ‘chain of command’. Rosenzweig himself was involved in a dispute with an employer regarding his free speech rights in the library workplace. In July of 1991 he was dismissed from his job as a reference librarian at the Mid-Manhattan branch of the New York Public Library over a program he developed and lead on Israeli censorship. In an October 1991 *American Libraries* article, Rosenzweig claimed that the dismissal was politically motivated, and that his case was not afforded a fair evaluation procedure. He further related how senior librarians at the New York Public Library warned him that it was dangerous for provisional employees to be involved in political activity (“News Fronts: NYPL”) Similar to Rosenzweig’s case is the situation of Wendy McPherson, a Seattle (Wash.) Public Library library assistant who was ordered by her employers to stop wearing a political button that supported Yolanda Alaniz, a Freedom Socialist Party candidate for Seattle city council. McPherson refused to remove the button and challenged the library’s policy forbidding employees from wearing political buttons while working at public service desks. A spokesperson for the library claimed that McPherson was ordered to remove the button because a statewide policy prohibits public employees from using a public facility to advocate a particular point of view. The spokesperson went on to say that an employees “freedom of expression on politics is not infringed on in the workplace. The only issue is when dealing with the public”(“News Fronts: Staffer’s”). While the statewide policy mentioned above is entirely valid and necessary, McPherson counters the library official’s statement by pointing out that in the past many other library employees have worn clothing or buttons that advocated established or status quo points of view, and that she was singled out because her button supported a socialist candidate (“News Fronts: Staffer’s”).

Other examples can be pointed to which demonstrate that public library employees do work within corporately structured organizations, and that their rights to free speech are generally limited to the speech that administrators and managers consider to be acceptable. For instance, on October 15, 1990, Santa Ana (Calif.) Public Library worker Barbara Lambert criticized library director Robert Richard's managerial abilities at a televised city council meeting. Richard subsequently noted in her personnel file her displeasure with him, charging her with insubordinate behaviour. Lambert later took municipal officials to court after they refused to remove Richard's memo from her file. In a 1995 ruling and subsequent high court appeal, the courts upheld Lambert's First Amendment rights ("News Fronts:Former Library" and "Updates:Library Loses"). A similar case involved Lexington (Kentucky) Public Library employee Evelyn McGill, who claimed that the library discriminated against her after she voiced her support for an African-American co-worker who had consulted with the Human Rights Commission about discrimination in the workplace. McGill took the library to court and in 1995 she was paid \$25 000 to settle the lawsuit ("Ex-Librarian").

A more recent case involved American library activist, and former head of cataloguing at Hennepin County Library, Sanford Berman. On January 18, 1999, Sanford Berman sent three of his superiors a memo expressing his opinion on proposed changes regarding the cataloguing of library materials. Berman's superiors responded to his seemingly harmless memo with a written reprimand, accusing him of unprofessional behavior, stating "You have the right as a citizen to express your opinion. You may not initiate discussion of that opinion on work time nor route that opinion to staff at work" and that "...further counterproductive behavior" would result in "...further discipline" (Gilyard 13). Berman, after unsuccessfully demanding that the reprimand be removed, was eventually demoted to a position that required a less active involvement in the

functioning of the cataloguing department and the library in general. Instead of accepting the position he resigned, ending a 26-year career with the Hennepin County Public Library (Gilyard 21). A final and appalling example of freedom of expression in the library workplace being undermined raises not only questions of intellectual freedom, but also of concerns for the physical safety of library employees in the workplace. On November 10, 1997, Donna Kennedy, an Amhite, Louisiana library worker was fired from her job after asking her employers for improved security conditions in city libraries. Her request was submitted following a violent sexual assault committed against one of her co-workers. The library officials later acknowledged that the employee's dismissal was indeed in response to her letter ("Court").

V. The Library and Workplace Democracy

In all of the examples that were examined in the previous section, library workers who attempted to exercise their right to freely express themselves in the workplace were reprimanded in some way because of their explicit or implicit criticism of established practices, values, and ideologies of power. Quite simply, to deny these individuals the right to criticize the established order, whether these criticisms are directed at an alleged incompetent employer or at an alleged corrupt system of government, is a direct threat to the principles and tenets that the public library and librarians claim to hold dear. In order to ensure that library employee intellectual freedom is protected and to foster a 'free speech situation', libraries and librarians should consider adopting organizational structures or practices that allow the worker to take an active, participatory, responsible, and equal role in the operation of the library workplace. Through examining the concept of 'empowerment' as a managerial practice, Gisela Von Dran briefly considers a theoretical perspective which views 'organizations' as social constructs that are in need of a

fundamental transformation. These theories conceptualize individual and organizational interests as being in fundamental competition with each other and that hierarchical organizational structures and bureaucratic forms of governance are ultimately adverse to human existence. Her contention is that these theories exist in order to help those in power to see organizations as a means of increasing "...human self-understanding and responsible autonomous action. Interpretive and critical theorists differ from mainstream organization theorists because their major goal is to assist individuals in their struggle for freedom and meaning rather than in primarily organizational goals". The supporters of these theories demand that managers and employers reconceptualize their views of employees so that they include a moral perspective "...because human struggle towards freedom is only partially conscious and current bureaucratic organizations defend themselves against any expansion of consciousness" (Von Dran 9).

Empowerment attempts to situate the worker into an organizational structure that will foster his or her full potential as a human being. In this sense, as it is an organizational practice or style of management that recognizes the value of the worker as a human being, 'empowerment' can be considered to be an example of workplace democracy. By supporting democratic practices in the workplace, by providing workers with the will and the 'power' to make decisions that will ultimately affect their own jobs and the jobs of their co-workers, you are attempting to develop a conception of the worker as an active and responsible participant in the labour process. In order for there to be a shift in North American political culture from an acceptance of formal democracy and the inherent inequalities that are embedded in such a political economy to a social and political organization that guarantees not only civic rights and equalities but also social rights and equalities, people must embrace the tenets of political and workplace

democracy. Former library activist Celeste West positions the radical democratic perspective within the library workplace where she states

Libraries belong to the community and to the people who labor in them...So why are workers in these supposedly humanistic places so alienated from their jobs? Because we don't control what services we produce, or for whom. "The administration", an out of touch minority, with no distinctive skills or education, (in San Francisco no experience is even required), makes the ultimate decision...Why indeed are librarians "administered" to? We are a skilled profession, not lacking standards, self discipline, or judgment. We profess the ethics of access founded on the spirit of democracy, freedom of expression, and self-determination. None of us are inert objects to be bound in bureaucracies or humiliated by hierarchies. Why do we put up with this paraphernalia of domination, this chain of command?" (West 3-4)

The ideas and opinions expressed in West's quote are evidently founded upon a dedicated commitment to the abilities of librarians and library workers to have control over their productive labour and their right to free expression.

In his article "Twenty-Five Years of Collegial Management: The Dickinson College Model of Revolving Leadership and Holistic Librarianship", Steve McKinzie discusses the democratic management style of Dickinson College Library, in Carlisle, PA. He recognizes that college and university libraries tend to be unreservedly hierarchical, and are generally based upon managerial styles that are reflective of the business community rather than those one would expect to find an institution of higher learning (McKinzie). In 1975, Dickinson Library underwent an organizational restructuring which remains to this day. The librarians at Dickinson chose to do away with all of the hierarchical underpinnings of traditional management practices and introduced a "...collegial pattern of management with a rotating chair, and implemented a holistic vision of librarianship" (McKinzie). McKinzie claims that the experience of employing a democratic organizational structure has led to a number of benefits for the library staff and for the library as a whole. Firstly, the collegiality of a system where management is shared and where the chair is rotated allows the library to limit and diversify leadership and management. If

a director does not receive the full support or confidence of the department, he or she can be removed of his or her post much more easily than in a non-collegial system. Secondly, the librarians at Dickinson, according to McKinzie, genuinely like the system: “They find our collegial approach to management attractive and the kind of opportunities that the system offers enticing. Those with an interest in management realize that they will have an opportunity to rotate in to the chair at some point. Those who welcome a free-flowing collegial process sense that their *voices will be heard and their perspectives given equal weight*, and those who value professional development sense that the system will give them plenty of challenge” (italics added, McKinzie).

The organizational structure of Dickinson college library appears to have qualities that would allow for the realization of democratic communication, or the achievement of a situation in which the public sphere in a workplace context, could be realized. Conceivably, as all voices in the workplace are given an equal weight, worker challenges to an established order or set of practices would then have to be recognized. The first step towards creating a library environment where all people are provided with an equitable guarantee to freedom of speech is a library where the employees are afforded and guaranteed the right freedom of expression and intellectual freedom. This will in turn allow these employees to recognize and challenge the implicit social and economic barriers that inhibit the universal protection of freedom of expression and intellectual freedom.

VI. Conclusion

The protection of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression for all people is essential to the proper functioning of modern liberal democracy. It must be recognized, however, that the tenets of democracy cannot be fully exercised or protected unless they exist alongside a commitment to the substantive social and economic equality of all citizens. In other words, the civil right to freedom of expression requires a recognition that not all citizens in western society are equal, and that social and economic status may have a direct impact upon a persons ability to exercise his or her own right to freedom of expression. It was demonstrated throughout this paper that the public library is often conceptualized as an arena in which freedom of expression and intellectual freedom can be achieved and thoroughly defended. The library, as a site in which the public sphere can be realized, is in this context thoroughly democratic. Often, the defense of intellectual freedom requires the library employee to recognize that not all citizens are automatically afforded the same civil rights. Just as certain societal factors inhibit the protection and defense of these principles, certain institutional practices and structures that are common to the library as a place of work inhibit the library worker from openly recognizing that these societal factors and limitations do actually exist. When the library worker is unable to challenge these practices, factors, and limitations the defense of universal intellectual freedom and freedom of expression is inhibited as the voices that wield more power are allowed to dominate the dialogue of human communication. Challenging the hierarchical organizational structure that is common to the library as a place of work may then be looked upon as a first step towards the development of an egalitarian free speech situation, where intellectual freedom actually exists alongside real social and economic equality.

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