

February 1, 2000

TO: Local/library Press

FROM: Sanford Berman, Former Head Cataloger, Hennepin County Library

SUBJECT: WHERE HAVE ALL THE "BERMAN BOOKS" GONE?

The HCL Catalog currently shows 9 entries under the author, "Berman, Sanford, 1933- ." In each case, I am listed because of being associated with the individual title as a contributor, coeditor, or interviewer. The following five works, either written or compiled solely by me, have been in the HCL collection, but no longer appear in the catalog:

+Joy of cataloging (Oryx Press, 1981).

+Cataloging special materials: critiques and innovations (Oryx Press, 1986).

+Subject cataloging: critiques and innovations (Haworth Press, 1984)

+Worth noting: editorials, letters, essays, an interview and bibliography (McFarland, 1988)

+Prejudices and antipathies: a tract on the LC subject heads concerning people (McFarland, 1993).

Further, Everything you always wanted to know about Sandy Berman but were afraid to ask, edited by Chris Dodge and Jan DeSirey (McFarland, 1995), has similarly vanished, although initially there were at least three copies in the system.

A December 6, 1999 Library Journal Digital news report ("Hennepin County Drops Cataloging Bulletin") speculated that termination of the 26-year-old HCL Cataloging Bulletin, which once garnered the prestigious H. W. Wilson Library Periodical Award, "may...be an attempt by HCL to purge itself completely of former Head Cataloger Sandy Berman, founder of the Bulletin, who resigned earlier this year after a clash with the library's director." Is that also why the books have disappeared? Am I being morphed into a non-person, flushed down an Orwellian "memory hole"? For answers to these tantalizing questions, contact HCL's Collection Management Service (CMS) at 612-847-8588. Ask for the Lead Senior Librarian.

4400 Morningside Road
Edina, MN 55416

612-925-5738

Your Search: Berman, Sanford, 1933-

	AUTHOR/TITLE	CALL NUMBER/DATE	
1.	Rosalie Maggio	Video 428 R	1991
2.	Sources: a guide to print and nonprint materials available from	Reference 015.73 S	
3.	H C L cataloging bulletin.	Reference Periodical	
4.	Wachsberger, Ken, 1949- Voices from the underground: volume 2: a directory of sources a	Reference 070.4509 W	1993
5.	Kester, Norman G., 1962-, editor. Liberating minds: the stories and professional lives of gay, le	027.61 K	1997
6.	Counterpoise.	Reference Periodical	
7.	Berman, Sanford, 1933- editor. Alternative library literature, 1996/1997: a biennial anthology	020.5 B	1998
8.	Venturella, Karen M. 1962- Poor people and library services.	027.6 V	1998
9.	Danky, James P., 1947- editor. Alternative materials in libraries.	Reference 025.175 D	1982

** 9 Items UNSORTED - Page 2 of 2 - End of List **

DATE:: February 23, 2000

TO: Local/library press, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners,
Hennepin County Library Board, Hennepin County Administrator

FROM:: Sanford Berman, Former Head Cataloger, Hennepin County Library

SUBJECT:: WHERE HAVE ALL THE "BERMAN BOOKS" GONE:: UPDATE

In late January, I inadvertently discovered that six books either by or about me, all of which had been in the Hennepin County Library (HCL) collection, no longer appeared in the HCL online catalog. They had totally vanished, the records almost certainly having been deleted deliberately and systematically.

On February 1st, I issued a one-page statement detailing what had apparently happened, citing the six missing books and speculating that the catalog-record obliteration may have been an attempt by HCL management to further--in Library Journal Digital's words--"purge itself completely of former Head Cataloger Sandy Berman...who resigned in Spring 1999 after a clash with the library's director."

Seven days later, I submitted formal Requests for Reconsideration for each of the disappeared volumes.

To date, there has been no official communication from HCL management to me regarding this matter, although the Community Relations Manager has been quoted in the press as saying that anyone at any HCL branch could have deleted the records, that the materials do not seem to have been formally recalled or weeded, and that "some of the titles were still physically on the library shelves" (American Libraries Online, 2-14-00).

My understanding is that copies of at least one title (Prejudices and Antipathies) have been located and a catalog record recreated for that work. Additionally, I'm told that all the wayward books have been reordered, although several are now out-of-print and thus unlikely to be replaced.

What more do I want? These things:

1. An accounting of exactly which books have been found in the system and which remain physically missing.
2. An unequivocal **declaration** by the HCL management that this calculated removal of books and catalog records constitutes a despicable act of censorship and clearly violates the Library Bill of Rights. (Even more serious than the physical withdrawal of some works is the indisputable destruction of the catalog records for all six titles, which in effect rendered them inaccessible and unavailable. This is flagrant bibliocide.)

3. An explicit and sincere commitment by HCL management to identify and discipline the perpetrators. (To simply claim that "anyone could have done it" is not enough. To be blunt, anyone could have done it, but I personally know of no one at HCL--outside of several members of top management--who had a possible or plausible motive for doing it. It seems like a logical next step for the very persons who had last year expelled me from the system to now expel my words and ideas from the shelves and catalog, especially since I have been unremitting in the many months since my forced retirement in attempting to secure personal justice: the cancellation of an unjust reprimand and an apology for the mistreatment and abuse inflicted upon me. I have also sought redress for the outright censorship of corrections and additions I submitted--at their request--to the OCLC Newsletter. And I have repeatedly asked HCL management to explain how their ostensible guarantee to preserve high cataloging standards and quality squares with the demonstrable deterioration of cataloging at Hennepin County. Finally, I have inquired about the apparently lessened "urgency" to fashion a Cataloging Practices Manual, which had been the stated reason for my sudden and involuntary reassignment last Spring. There has been no response to any of these requests and queries.)
4. Institution of measures at HCL to prevent the recurrence of such an intellectual freedom travesty.

4400 Morningside Road
Edina, MN 55416

612-925-5738

DATE: April 27, 2000

TO: Local/library press, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners,
Hennepin County Library Board, Hennepin County Attorney,
Hennepin County Administrator, MLA Intellectual Freedom Chair

FROM: Sanford Berman, Author/Editor/Former HCL Head Cataloger

SUBJECT: WHERE HAVE ALL THE "BERMAN BOOKS" GONE: UPDATE

Yesterday I attended a Hennepin County Library Board meeting. Under "New business," Director Charles Brown was slated to present a five-minute "information-only" item: "Missing Bibliographic Records/Books."

He noted that several works by "Sanford Bierman" (that's how he managed to mispronounce my surname) did seem to be physically missing from the HCL collection and their bibliographic records purged from the online catalog. A Board Member asked how many titles. He thought perhaps 7 or 8. Elizabeth Feinberg suggested 10 to 15. No one seemed sure. He said an "investigation" had been conducted, involving "consultation" with the County Attorney's Office. "Did we also consult with the Sheriff?" he asked aloud. No one knew, although all of HCL's top management was present. What was the nature of the consultation with the County Attorney? He divulged no details. Nor was any other evidence offered to suggest that any genuinely substantial "investigation" had been undertaken.

It was claimed that such an event might be prevented in future by introducing more stringent "protocols" and reducing the number of staff able to perform catalog deletions. Without amplification, these did not appear to be truly tangible, convincing means to offset later intellectual freedom travesties.

I requested permission to address the Board, then posing these questions:

+Does the Administration intend to reply to inquiries made by the Minnesota Library Association and Minnesota Coalition Against Censorship in mid-March?

No answer. Stony silence.

+Does the Administration intend to inform HCL staff about what happened? (To date there has been no mention of the incident either in the Staff Newsletter or by e-memo, with the result that the matter is effectively unknown and invisible for the majority of HCL employees.)

No answer. Deathly silence.

*Is there any intention to pursue the four, eminently reasonable recommendations I made to Charles Brown and Community Relations Manager (Spin Doctor) Nancy Perron in letters dated March 4th and March 1st, respectively? (The suggestions: 1) a public accounting of exactly which and how many books have been found in the system (and where) and which remain physically missing; 2) an unequivocal, public condemnation of this act of censorship, making it unmistakably clear that such behavior is unacceptable; 3) an explicit and sincere effort to identify and discipline the perpetrators; and 4) institution of measures to

make such bibliocide less likely to recur.)

No answers from HCL management. One (relatively new) Board member, after I had formally requested the Board to direct the HCL Administration to address the four recommendations, assured me that it would be considered. But not at that meeting.

Following adjournment, one Division Manager--incidentally, one of the three or more who successfully conspired to force my retirement last year--approached me with two of her own questions:

How could I possibly think that anyone in the Administration was involved in the book-and-record purge?

Why did I insist on calling the act "censorship"?

Unnecessary (yet inescapable) conclusion: HCL management does not regard the elimination of my words and ideas from the shelves and catalog as a particularly grave matter. (Indeed, it appears to win their reluctant attention only because of potentially damaging press coverage. Otherwise, they manifestly find the event no more than a trivial annoyance. None of them even knew how many titles had been expunged. Six. And no one could say for sure that HCL had contacted the County Sheriff regarding these palpably criminal acts of database tampering and book theft.)

Not that it matters any longer, but I remain deeply disappointed. And thoroughly disgusted. Hennepin deserves better leadership than this. And the library profession deserves that its basic canons regarding free speech and intellectual freedom be respected in practice.

DATE: May 23, 2000

TO: Local/library press, Hennepin Board of Commissioners,
Hennepin County Library Board, Hennepin County Attorney,
Hennepin County Administrator, MIA Intellectual Freedom Chair

FROM: Sanford Berman, Author/Editor/Former HCL Head Cataloger

SUBJECT: WHERE HAVE ALL THE "BERMAN BOOKS" GONE?: UPDATE 3

My last "Update," following a Hennepin County Library Board meeting on April 26th, glumly concluded that "HCL management does not regard the elimination of my words and ideas from the shelves and catalog as a grave matter." After this morning's Board meeting, I sadly conclude that--with one honorable exception--the HCL Board doesn't much care, either.

Although I had asked the Board in April to direct the Administration to answer questions I posed relating to MIA and MCAC inquiries, as well as their failure to inform staff of the book/record wipeout, and to pursue four specific recommendations, the subject did NOT EVEN APPEAR ON THE MEETING AGENDA. One Board member asked why there was no slotted opportunity for discussing the matter, but got no comprehensible explanation. During "public comment," I echoed that concern, stating that I was disturbed and disappointed that the episode was being treated so casually, perhaps being dragged out, ignored, and postponed in the hope that eventually everyone would forget about it.

It is now four months since the bibliocidal scandal erupted, and in that time I've detected absolutely no sense of outrage or urgency on the part of HCL management or board, only a vaguely-expressed worry about the "corruption and integrity" of online resources like the catalog. NO ONE SEEMS MORALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY ABLE TO SAY THAT THE RECORD-DELETION AND BOOK REMOVAL WAS A DELIBERATE, DAMNABLE ACT OF CENSORSHIP. NOR DOES ANYONE INSIST THAT THE LIBRARY BE ACCOUNTABLE: PROVIDING DETAILS ON MISSING AND FOUND VOLUMES AND SERIOUSLY INVESTIGATING WHO DID IT (IDEALLY, THROUGH THE AUSPICES OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY OR SHERIFF).

The Board, at least, is supposed to represent the public. Well, as a member of that public, I don't feel at all well represented.

HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, May 24, 2000 - 8:00 a.m.

Ridgedale Area Library - Robert H. Rohlf Room

A G E N D A

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME GUESTS	Information	5 min.
MINUTES OF APRIL 26, 2000 BOARD MEETING	Action	5 min.
PROGRAM: MELSA and Metronet Reports James Wroblewski, Executive Director, MELSA Janet Fabio, Interim Director, Metronet	Information	20 min.
COMMITTEE REPORTS		
• Ways & Means Committee - B. Zaragoza	Information	10 min.
• Policy Committee - C. Walsh	Information	5 min.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS		
• Library Foundation/Library Board Priorities - C. DeGraff & C. Brink	Discussion	20 min.
NEW BUSINESS		
• Internet Update - M. Bell/ N. Perron	Information	15 min.
• Speakers Bureau - N. Perron	Discussion	15 min.
DIRECTOR'S REPORT UPDATE – C. Brown	Information	5 min.
LIBRARY BOARD MEMBER REPORTS		
• President [including Foundation]	Information	5 min.
• Member Reports	Information	10 min.
OTHER		
• Grants - C. Brown	Information	2 min.
• Gifts	Action	2 min.
• Adjournment		

NEXT BOARD MONTHLY MEETING – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 4:30 p.m.
MAPLE PLAIN COMMUNITY LIBRARY

NEXT LIBRARY BOARD WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2000, 4:30 P.M.
LIBRARY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES AT RIDGEDALE

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO ALL LIBRARY BOARD MEETINGS

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Cindy Ahrens at 952/847-8581 (Text Telephone at Ridgedale 952/847-8880) three work days before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.