MEGAN RILEY

MLIS PORTFOLIO

UCLA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES

SPRING 2020

Table of Contents

Professional Development Statement

My undergraduate degree was a BA in Comparative Literature with a focus on Latin and French. As a result of my work with classical texts, including an undergraduate research position where I assisted in transcribing a 16th century Latin edition of Euripides' plays, my initial academic interests when entering the MLIS program at UCLA in 2011 were mostly focused on special collections, rare books and preservation. After completing the Fall 2011 quarter, I found myself in need of both a break from academia - having come directly from undergraduate - and more experience outside of academia to better shape my professional interests.

I took time off from UCLA with the intention of returning within a few years, but when I returned to the Bay Area, I eventually found a position at bepress, a company which hosts and supports Digital Commons repositories and other forms of open access academic publishing. During my time there, I learned the ins and outs of institutional repositories, the structure and dynamics of academic library administration, graphic design and some coding, and open access scholarship. My work at bepress is what finally spurred me to re-apply to UCLA's MLIS program in 2017, and I re-entered the program in Fall 2018.

When I returned to UCLA, I was still interested primarily in special collections and rare book preservation. As I started classes with more non-academic experience under my belt, though, I found my interests shifting towards structural issues in LIS, the experiences of LIS workers, and critical theory in LIS. Although I still find special collections and preservation rewarding and worthwhile, my main research interest has coalesced into a focus on labor issues in libraries, archives, and museums (LAM). The labor issue I have found most pressing and most fruitful for further research and advocacy is the proliferation of contingent, grant-funded and precarious labor in LAM institutions. My deepening interest in this trend and its effects on the LIS field led me to apply for and be accepted to the PhD program in Information Studies at

UCLA, where I will be continuing to research labor issues in LAM and working with my advisor Dr. Sarah Roberts on commercial content moderator labor.

Special Collections

I was hired on in Technical Services at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in November 2018 and have continued to work there throughout my time at UCLA. As a result both of my position at the Clark as well as coursework in the MLIS program, I've become familiar with many aspects of special collections libraries and their collections, workflows, practices and management. My work at the Clark has encompassed activities and tasks such as creating finding aids, processing new archival acquisitions, building a relational database in Microsoft Access, reflagging books in the fine press collection, shelf reads, setting up and breaking down displays of rare books and other materials for public events, and more. It has also taught me valuable "soft skills" for working in teams to complete both short- and long-term projects.

Preservation and Conservation

During my time in the MLIS program I took two classes with Dr. Ellen Pearlstein on preservation and conservation issues - Issues and Problems in the Preservation of Heritage Materials in Fall 2018, and Environmental Protections of Collections for Museums, Libraries, and Archives in Winter 2020. These courses taught me skills for assessment of collections, disaster preparedness for LAM institutions, restoration of water-damaged materials, environmental monitoring practices and more. This knowledge is useful not only in a practical way for library employment, but also to better understand the labor practices and expectations of LAM workers.

Labor Issues in LIS

Working on my MLIS has, by virtue of it being a professional degree, exposed me firsthand to job precarity in LAM - not only in the classroom in a theoretical setting, but through discussions with friends and classmates whose only job opportunities are grant-funded or temporary contracts, and whose situations are even more precarious now because of COVID-19 and the lack of benefits such as health insurance frequently associated with temporary positions.

My PhD research will give me the opportunity to address this topic in a new way and to contribute meaningfully both to the scholarly discourse surrounding LAM labor and to the professional community affected by these issues itself. One method of research I am particularly interested in is analyzing job listings and descriptions for LAM workers with the intention of identifying any trends as well as collecting concrete data on things like the percentage of listed positions that are temporary versus permanent. I foresee my research also involving interviews with LAM workers who currently or formerly have held contingent positions.

Some research questions I hope to address include: how has precarious labor undermined and devalued LAM professions and workforces? How has the "reification" of information, per Christine Pawley, affected and been affected by contingent labor, neoliberalism, capitalism, etc.? The gig economy is widespread and neoliberalism is present in one way or another in all professions, so why is it important to study the effects of neoliberalism on precarious labor on LAM *in particular* - that is, what analysis might we miss or misunderstand if we were only to study job precarity today in general?

In the short term, my goals include addressing these research questions thoroughly in my time at UCLA and, as a part of that, contributing to the scholarly discourse by collecting up-to-date and useful data on precarious and temporary labor in LAM. I also intend to continue my

activity with organized labor, particularly in LAM; agitating for change and empowering unions is essential to reversing the exploitative hiring practices of the gig economy and contract labor. Long-term professional goals include continuing research and publishing relevant scholarship on labor issues in LAM, as well as teaching. I believe that MLIS programs would benefit from formal instruction about these types of labor issues - library management classes often cover labor practices, but not all MLIS programs offer these classes on a regular basis. Labor studies departments and institutes at universities would also benefit from instruction on LAM-specific labor issues; even cross-listed courses between information studies and labor studies departments could be valuable.

Issue Paper

Precarious Labor and Its Impact on LIS Workers and Institutions

Contingent, temporary, or contract labor, also sometimes referred to as precarious labor, has quickly become the norm for positions in libraries, archives, and other information and memory institutions over recent years. This shift from stable, full-time positions to positions that are short-term contract-based and often without benefits has drastically altered and undermined the professional library and information science (LIS) workforce. Using both critical theory and the grievance filed by UC-AFT on behalf of six temporary archivists at UCLA and its context as a case study, I examine how the mis- and overuse of contingent labor and its precarity negatively impact workers, institutions, and the libraries and archives fields as a whole.

The materiality of information work

The crisis of precarious labor in LIS is ongoing and fundamentally damaging to both workers and the LIS professions as a whole. Karl Marx's writings on communication, particularly in the *Grundrisse*, lay out how he considered it a form of work[1]; this analysis is often overlooked by other theorists and critics of Marx, but it is crucial for how we approach a discussion of information work. Marx's analysis of communication of work, as well as Maurizio Lazzarato's work on immaterial labor (and his theory's shortcomings), are both valuable for assessing, theorizing, and developing solutions to precarious labor and its negative impacts in LIS both past and present.

Although Lazzarato's concept of immaterial labor is useful for discussing information work as it relates to cultural content creation and influence - Lazzarato defines the concept as 'labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity'[2] - it can also serve to obscure the material basis of information work. The physical infrastructures and manufacturers that support information systems are very much material and inextricable from

1 Fuchs, Christian. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014.
2 Ibid.

information work, even work that is many steps removed from the mining, shipping, and manufacturing processes that build the tools and networks for communication and information work.[3]

Even within LIS, using unpaid or temporary labor to do basic maintenance tasks can obscure the materiality of information work. As Karly Wildenhaus notes, "On this tendency for maintenance work to be jettisoned onto unpaid interns in archives, archivist Hillel Arnold refers to the 'complicity [of archivists] in erasing others' by 'filling ongoing operational maintenance work with unpaid internships, or part-time and temporary labor.'"[4] Higher-level information work is then left to the professionals in the field, and it not only gives the impression that their work has little materiality but also implies that the physical labor in LIS is of little to no value. There is also an important discussion to be had about how and to whom the term "professional" is applied in LIS, and how that impacts the discourse around both precarious and stable labor; I intend to address this as part of my PhD research and scholarly output.

Part of what allows for this obfuscation of labor through unpaid or precarious workers is the constant drive to innovate within capitalist society in general and LIS in particular. Marx and Engels write that "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society."[5] "Innovation" and "flexibility" become the watchwords in late capitalism that signal shifting labor and social relations. Workers are expected not only to themselves be innovative, but to accept "innovation" within the workplace without complaint. "Flexibility" in

3 Fuchs, 2014.
4 Wildenhaus, Karly. "Wages for Intern Work: Denormalizing Unpaid Positions in Archives and Libraries." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 2, no. 1 (November 25, 2018). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v2i1.88.
5 Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

jobs is sold to workers as a positive feature, but far more frequently leads to the proliferation of temporary, part-time, and under-compensated labor.

The research currently happening on precarious labor, particularly by people like Wildenhaus and the *Collective Responsibility* project team, is invaluable at making clear the connections between changing production relations, "innovation," "flexibility," and neoliberal capitalism. Wildenhaus' research illuminates the fact that although unpaid internships have generally been believed to be a necessary step to reaching secure employment in LIS, they in fact have the opposite effect of driving down wages and undermining full-time labor.[6] The *Collective Responsibility* project's survey results back up this assertion with hard data; from their survey of 100 current and former grant-funded digital LIS workers, 66% who were rehired at an institution after the completion of their initial temporary contract were simply rehired into another temporary position.[7] Discussing the nature of temporary labor in LIS brings us back to the idea of immaterial labor and how, despite its drawbacks as a concept, it can still be useful for analyzing the current precarity situation.

Tiziana Terranova, in a discussion of technocapitalism, hits on a fundamental issue in a constantly-revolutionized sphere of production - the potentiality of immaterial labor within workers. "However, in the young worker, the 'precarious worker,' and the unemployed youth, these capacities [for immaterial labor activities regarding cultural content] are 'virtual,' that is they are there but are still undetermined. ...postmodern governments do not like the completely unemployable. The potentialities of work must be kept alive, the unemployed must undergo continuous training in order both to be monitored and kept alive as some kind of postindustrial

6 Wildenhaus, 2018.

7 Rodriguez, Sandy, Ruth Tillman, Amy Wickner, Stacie Williams, and Emily Drabinski. "Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums." Working Paper. University of Missouri -- Kansas City, 2019. https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/69708.

reserve force."[8] The key here is the emphasis on a "postindustrial reserve force" and the "potentialities of work." Owners and managers are finding it more beneficial to themselves and their profit margin to not only subdivide labor processes, but to subdivide labor power as much as possible. Separating labor in both space and time in "pyramid subcontracting structures" allows for production and labor extraction mobility at the institutional level and at the worker level can present a management-friendly barrier to unionization and other labor collectivism.[9]

Structures and business models like the gig economy and Amazon's Mechanical Turk - a website that allows businesses to essentially crowdsource minor computing or data work by paying freelancers to perform simple tasks like identifying image content that AI is unable to do - are a perfect example of the amount of profit that can be generated by the precariously- or semi-employed. This atomized work structure is prevalent in the modern university as well, instigated and supported by the rise of neoliberalism - as Kezar, DePaola and Scott note in their analysis of the "Gig Academy," "work responsibilities are measured in tasks completed rather than time dedicated. This mode of accountability benefits the employer far more than the worker."[10] This unstable but highly profitable model has been infiltrating LIS for decades, helped along under the guise of innovation and flexibility.

Temporary labor and the "UCLA Six"

In June of 2018, six archivists with temporary appointments in UCLA Library Special Collections (LSC) - Courtney Dean (Processing Archivist), Lori Dedeyan (Processing Archivist), M. Angel Diaz (Project Processing Archivist), Melissa Haley (Processing Archivist), Margaret

8 Terranova, Tiziana. "Free Labor." *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-18-2_63-33.

9 Rodriguez et al., 2019.

10 Kezar, Adrianna J., Thomas DePaola, and Daniel T. Scott. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Hughes (Collections Data Archivist) and Lauren McDaniel (Visual Materials Processing Archivist) - presented, along with the support of the librarians bargaining unit of UC-AFT, an open letter to the University Librarian and Associate University Librarian regarding the university's misuse of temporary positions for ongoing - that is, non-project - work.[11] The letter lays out how the alleged misuse has taken place over the past decade, including past labor negotiations that were meant to mitigate it, and how that misuse negatively affects workers, collections, the library as a whole, and the university's mission.

The main points against the mis- and overuse of contract archivist and librarian positions laid out in the letter are that "it wastes UCLA Library's time and resources...it wastes Library Special Collections' time and resources...it disrespects [LSC's] donors, users, and collections, and subverts the mission of UCLA Library...it diminishes institutional knowledge...it inhibits long-term decision making...it hinders professional development...it is financially harmful...it damages archivists' personal lives…[and] it undermines the professionalism, expertise, and worth of archivists."[12] These assertions are important, and it behooves us and the LIS field as a whole to take them seriously. Some of these points are expanded upon below:

Wasting time and resources: Temporary positions, whether grant-funded or short-term contract-based, necessitate frequent hiring cycles, which require staff time and other resources (including financial) to recruit, interview, and onboard new hires. If a position is grant-funded, the "timeline between when a grant is awarded and when it begins can be brief. As a result,

11 Dean, Courtney, Lori Dedeyan, M. Angel Diaz, Melissa Haley, Margaret Hughes, and Lauren McDaniel. "UCLA Temporary Librarians," June 11, 2018. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1h-P7mWiUn27b2nrkk-1eMbDkqSZtk4Moxis07KcMwhI/edit.
12 Ibid.

hiring timelines may seem rushed or follow different processes than full-time, permanent positions doing similar work."[13]

Disrespectful of donors, users, and collections; subverts institutional mission: When temporary employees are doing non-project work, the likelihood of that work continuing uninterrupted once their contract is up is very slim. This lack of continuity is damaging to the cataloging and maintenance of collections and thus damaging to donor relations and user needs. If donors, users, and collections themselves are not being properly served, maintained, utilized, and made accessible through the use of contract labor, then using contract labor is not a sufficient or acceptable use of university resources.

Diminishment of institutional knowledge: As mentioned above, disruptions in long-term work due to contingent workers' contracts expiring is a major cause of institutional knowledge being lost. Temporary workers doing non-project work may not have the time or resources to fully document their work, and so when their grant or contract term is up, their acquired knowledge of the collections, donors, and users leave the institution with them.[14]

Inhibits long-term decision-making: This applies not only to institutions but also temporary workers' personal lives. For institutions, relying on contract and other forms of temporary labor may seem financially preferable, but in the long term can in fact be more costly in terms of projects not fully realized ("When grants end, the accomplished work can lie dormant without anyone to promote it," as Rodriguez et al. note[15]), gaps in valuable institutional knowledge, and reinforcing institutional reliance on grant-funded or temporary work as budgets get slashed even further without those in positions of power advocating for full-time worker

13 Rodriguez et al., 2019.
14 Ibid.
15 Rodriguez et al., 2019.

funding. Many contingent workers, despite the reassurances of not just employers but even other LIS workers that temporary labor is not the norm and is in fact merely a stepping stone to permanent work[16], find themselves forced into a cycle of short-term employment. This dependence on contract after contract impedes a worker's ability to plan for long-term life goals or changes such as professional development, moving, health concerns, savings, family, and more. Being stripped of the ability to plan long term can feel dehumanizing and can negatively impact workers' financial situations, health, and personal lives.

Undermines the professionalism, expertise, and worth of LIS workers: This is perhaps one of the most wide-reaching and long-term negative impacts of precarious labor in LIS. The discourse around "paying one's dues" through undercompensated and/or temporary entry-level positions, or just simply the reluctance among later-career LIS workers or those with hiring power to push back against a widespread practice, has led to a severe devaluation in the labor of LIS workers. This devaluation can cause graduate students entering the workforce, early-career LIS workers, and even experienced LIS workers to question their worth as employees, and may pressure them into accepting positions that are under-compensated, without benefits, or lacking stability. The *Collective Responsibility* project's survey results, as mentioned above, have shown in hard numbers that taking temporary positions more often than not simply leads to another temporary position, rather than a permanent job.[17] LIS workers possess many specialized skills, and treating them as expendable not only dehumanizes and devalues them as individuals but lends further justification to the slashing of library budgets, mistreatment and undercompensation of employees, and the idea of professional LIS work as "unskilled" or disposable.

16 Ibid.
17 Rodriguez et al., 2019.

UC-AFT and UCLA are still going through the grievance process at this time; meanwhile, the livelihood of temporary archivists and librarians is more precarious than ever during the COVID-19 crisis. It is dangerous and unconscionable for LIS institutions to hire contract employees without healthcare benefits during a global pandemic, and this situation is an even more forceful example of how damaging precarious positions can be, not just for workers but for institutions and for patrons. A quarantine puts temporary workers in an even more precarious position than usual - many have simply had their contracts cancelled, and others get paid hourly and thus lose crucial income. No matter how many "be safe out there!" emails are sent and hand sanitizer bottles are available in the office, having even a portion of your workforce unable to see a doctor is unsafe and unsustainable. With healthcare both tied to one's job and increasingly unaffordable even for those with insurance, LIS institutions in the United States are putting their workers and their users at great risk during an epidemic.

Future research

Moving forward, it is essential to examine this precarity crisis in LIS in much greater depth. Further exploration of subjects like the contested uses of "professional," what is meant by "continuous training" (as referenced by Terranova above[18]) and how that both applies to LIS workers and is upheld through practices like work skills-related public library programming, and other similar topics can provide more useful scholarship and discourse around the relationship between LIS and labor. Though beyond the scope of this piece, it would also be valuable to examine some important relationships: the invisibility of archival labor and that labor being undervalued; neoliberalism and its connection to the concepts of "flexibility" and "innovation,"

[18] Terranova, 2000.

particularly in LIS; and the question of immaterial labor and social reproduction in libraries and other public-facing LIS spaces.

There's already excellent work being done within MLIS programs and professional organizations to conduct research, and continuing this work both at the theoretical level and as praxis is sorely needed. Professional organizations should be conducting regular censuses of their members and their employment situations. MLIS programs can encourage their students as well as their faculty to engage with this type of research. Although project and grant-funded work has its place in LIS, the overdependence upon and misuse of this type of labor is a professional crisis in the field. Advocating and agitating for fair labor practices in LIS requires research, assessment, and education, and the discourse around precarious labor is finally becoming more fruitful and widespread.

Major Paper

Neoliberalism, Individualism, and the Perceived Value of Labor in Academic Librarianship

Many of the issues surrounding GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) labor problems trace directly back to the neoliberalization project begun in the 1970s, and indeed are still exacerbated by its results today. For LIS (library and information science or studies) in particular, neoliberal policies and frameworks have had an impact on almost every aspect of the field. In recent years scholarship in the field has seen more of critiques of the role of neoliberalism in LIS, but we must continue this analysis if we hope to properly understand these issues and affect change. A number of scholarly works discuss overarching impacts of neoliberalism in LIS, but this paper will focus specifically on neoliberal attitudes and policies towards labor, especially in higher education and academic libraries.

Neoliberalization has its roots in the economic upheaval of the 1970s, when the economic elite - particularly in the US and UK - were concerned by a rising middle class whose economic and political power had only grown in the post-WWII years: "a progressive majority that had been getting expensive and demanding as it lay ever greater claim to the country's future."[19] The solution arrived upon by the nervous economic elite and politicians was to wage a subtle but devastating class war under the guise of a culture war.

As has been the case throughout most of modern history, those in power found the easiest way to break down a multiracial progressive middle-class coalition was to use racism and exploit cultural fears. Per Newfield, although the tactics were of a sociocultural nature, "winning the battle over ideology was not the ultimate prize. The ultimate prize was the reduced cost and status of the middle class that the public university created. ...A roundabout way was found to downsize the new middle class, and that was to discredit its cultural foundations."[20] The most

19 Newfield, Christopher. *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*. Harvard University Press, 2008.
20 Newfield, Christopher. 2008.

effective method to discredit these cultural foundations was to attack the public good responsible for elevating the middle class in many ways - the public university. By framing public goods and infrastructure like public universities as "entitlements" (in the pejorative sense) rather than rights, politicians and business owners could manipulate many in the middle class to decimate the institutions that helped the middle class to even exist.

The framework of universities as a means to an end - that is, preparing people to be better and *more valuable* employees - draws directly from neoliberalism's view of everything as a market and humans as "market actors and nothing but...who must constantly tend to their own present and future value."[21] This reduces a student to consumer and producer "who doesn't have rights but does have choices."[22] and faculty, or more likely, adjuncts and short-term contract employees, must be oriented toward those choices and how best to maximize profit - that is, crafting students into better workers, sometimes even in the sense of actually generating revenue for the university through intellectual property rights or similar means.

Part of the way that the state and institutions like public universities implement neoliberal policies and practices is through a policy of governance. Wendy Brown describes how "governance forthrightly aims to substitute consensus-oriented policy formation and implementation for the overt exercise of authority and power through law and policing"[23]. By this she means that governance masks its authority, obscuring itself "through isolating and entrepreneurializing responsible units and individuals, through devolving authority and decision-making, and through locally implementing norms of conduct"[24]. One of the ways in which the

21 Shenk, T. 2015, quoted in Beilin, Ian. "Student Success and the Neoliberal Academic Library." *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship*, vol. 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 10–23.
22 Beilin, Ian. 2016.
23 Brown, Wendy. "Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics: Wendy Brown." *Constellations*, vol. 23, no. 1, Mar. 2016, pp. 3–14.
24 Ibid.

state asserts and maintains its authority with governance is by managing "debt crises" that the state itself has orchestrated in order to "rationalize the system and to redistribute assets."[25] These manufactured crises create a justification for slashing budgets and eliminating jobs; citizens, as market actors, are called upon to sacrifice - whether it be their jobs, or their pensions, etc. - in order to ensure the health of the economy.

This idea of "sacrifice" by citizens is essential to understanding not just neoliberalism writ large in the US, but also the current labor practices in the LIS field. Wendy Brown's exploration of "sacrificial citizenship" and a "national-theological discourse of moralized sacrifice...required for the health and survival of the whole"[26] gives us an excellent framework to discuss the concept of "vocational awe" particularly as it applies to the LIS field. Fobazi Ettarh describes vocational awe as "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."[27] The traditional religious idea of a vocation as a calling, one that may require its practitioners to live in poverty, is enmeshed in vocational awe in such a way that demanding adequate compensation for one's labor as a librarian or archivist can almost seem gauche.

Much in the way that teaching is thought of as a self-sacrificing career to better the lives of others with little compensation, so too is the field not just of librarians or archivists but anyone who works in those institutions. If one has found one's "calling" to serve others, how could one possibly concern themselves with such earthly or even greedy things as adequate pay? This moralizing framework is "easily weaponized against the worker, allowing anyone to deploy a

25 Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2005.
26 Brown, Wendy. 2016.
27 Ettarh, Fobazi. *Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves – In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/. Posted 10 January 2018.

vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint."[28] This application of vocational awe functions as an individualizing and rights-denying practice. Along with the idea of "citizen virtue" in regards to sacrifice - virtue that, above all else, is "uncomplaining accommodation to the economic life of the nation"[29] - vocational awe leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation by capital. Rather than sacrifice to ensure economic health through union tactics like strikes, that sacrifice is now borne on an individual level through things like slashing of benefits and salaries, short-term contract work, or layoffs.[30]

That individual sacrifice is ensured through the manner in which the state guarantees rights. Harvey writes, "If political power is not willing, then notions of rights remain empty. Rights are, therefore, derivative of and conditional upon citizenship."[31] Under neoliberalism, only those who are willing to be sacrificed for the good of the free market are fully recognized as citizens. Thus their rights do not include to be protected by the state, despite their enmeshment with the economic health of the whole, but rather to freedom, in a seemingly broad but actually very particular sense of the word. Freedom, in the neoliberal framework, is not "freedom from want,"[32] but rather freedom from regulation - that is, the unrestricted ability to engage with a free market as an individual market actor - and freedom of choice.

This "freedom of choice" guaranteed under neoliberalism is one of the strongest and most persistent quasi-myths in the US, as well as one of the most indirectly damaging to democracy and collective action. Maura Seale notes that "dominant discourse within librarianship, as well as

28 Ettarh, Fobazi. 2018.
29 Brown, Wendy. 2016.
30 Ibid.
31 Harvey, David. 2005.
32 Harvey, David. 2005.

in broader society, tends to elide distinctions between different varieties of freedom and so consumer choice becomes synonymous with democratic choice, and freedom in the market becomes democracy."[33] This elision provides cover for neoliberalism's weakening and dismantling of unions under the guise of individual choice, as well as the explosion of short-term contracts and low-wage jobs based on the "flexibility" of workers. The neoliberal insistence on freedom of choice assists in deepening the pre-existing American tendency towards individualism and weakening collective action, as well as helping to mask negative outcomes from neoliberal policies.

Through practices like governance, externalizing costs, and cultural attacks, the neoliberal state undermines public goods and infrastructures at the same time as using them to deflect criticism and obscure the source of unpopular outcomes like rampant inequality or debt. "To ensure that these outcomes of neoliberal policies and institutions are removed from the dominant discourse, the media, schools, and other ideological institutions are utilized to hide and distort the true impact of neoliberalism," Daniel Saunders writes.[34] Politicians and the economic elite can point fingers at institutions like public universities when forced austerity measures (implemented due to debt crises manufactured by neoliberal policies) result in negative outcomes like student debt, reduced services, or job loss - the responsibility for these outcomes is shunted as low down the ladder as possible in order to protect capital and the upper classes; Brown refers to this technique of holding the individual accountable for both their own failure and the failure of the whole as a "bundling of agency and blame"[35]. With public institutions underperforming as

[33] Seale, Maura. "The Neoliberal Library." *Information Literacy and Social Justice: Radical Professional Praxis.* Library Juice Press, 2013, pp. 39-61

[34] Saunders, Daniel B. "Neoliberal Ideology and Public Higher Education in the United States." *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, Aug. 2010, pp. 42-77.

[35] Brown, Wendy. 2016.

a result of these austerity measures imposed upon them, the neoliberal state can enact further cuts by referring back to this underperformance as justification for defunding or privatization. Thus, a cycle of defunding and underperformance is set into motion and one of the major tools to break this cycle - organized labor - has been weakened or destroyed.

Neoliberalism plays off of this tension between strong individualism and responsibility for the whole as a means of undermining any sort of collective power that may attempt to form:

> A contradiction arises between a seductive but alienating possessive individualism on the one hand and the desire for a meaningful collective life on the other. While individuals are supposedly free to choose, they are not supposed to choose to construct strong collective institutions (such as trade unions) as opposed to weak voluntary associations (like charitable organizations). They most certainly should not choose to associate to create political parties with the aim of forcing the state to intervene in or eliminate the market.[36]

Again, we see this very specific definition of freedom that neoliberalism prescribes that focuses on the rights of the individual at the expense of the whole. American culture has always been enamored of the strong, individualistic, "boot-strapping" identity and has infused that identity into its particular brand of capitalism; neoliberalism has only exacerbated it in order to restore and maintain class power for the elite.

Neoliberal ideas and practices manifest in the LIS field and discourse in ways that are both mirrored in wider society and in ways that are particular to LIS. Within LIS literature and scholarship, there is often the risk (and some would argue habit) of "the uncritical adoption of ideas that seem authoritative and obvious."[37] Neoliberalism's appeal to expertise and hierarchy can often too easily find a home in LIS language and structures. Seale notes, "These [neoliberal] ideas of better service, increased access, more choices, and greater freedom are powerful, and

[36] Harvey, David. 2005
[37] Seale, Maura. 2013.

strongly resonate with the core values of librarianship (ALA, 2004)," thus their easy integration into the LIS field. From the public library as site of Americanization and cultural inculcation to the role of librarians as educators and custodians of information, librarianship - like other social and governmental institutions - "plays a role in creating and sustaining hegemonic values."[38] The hegemonic values in most cases today are those of neoliberalism; we see this in the valorization of LIS labor-as-vocation and, as will be discussed in short order, in the idea of "professionalism," the reactionary nature of universities to budget cuts and the LIS field to library-as-business, and the commodification of information.

Professionalism, in the context of LIS, has many connotations and histories. Viewed within the framework of neoliberalism, can be used as "a powerful form of social control," notes Howard Zinn. Zinn continues on to describe professionalism as an "*almost-total* immersion [in one's job], because if it were total, we would be suspicious of it. Being not quite total, we are tolerant of it, or at least sufficiently confused by the mixture to do nothing."[39] This mirrors the difficulty of naming and describing neoliberalism - and thus imagining life otherwise - because of its diffuse and changeable nature and practices. Invoking a nebulous ideal of professionalism can also be used to stifle any swing towards "politics" within one's work; numerous debates have taken place (particularly over the past few years) in the LIS field about this supposed ability to separate one's job from one's politics. This ability, of course, is predicated on the assumption that one's work is inherently apolitical or, as many LIS practitioners would like to or do believe, "neutral." The corollary assumption is that "part-time commitment to political involvement...assumes a basically just society," as articulated by Zinn.[40] The championing of

[38] Ettarh, Fobazi. 2018.
[39] Zinn, Howard. "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest." *The Midwestern Archivist*, vol. II, no. 2, 1977, pp. 14-26.
[40] Ibid.

professionalism in LIS can be seen both as a means of ensuring job security (ideally, although this doesn't always work) as well as an embrace of neoliberal economic structures and practices.

The development of professional organizations and standards within LIS has been an effort to not only elevate the field status-wise - once a job largely entrusted to women, more and more men have entered LIS, especially at the management level, and have sought to raise the occupation's perceived integrity and standards - but also to assure job security through specialization. This tension between professionalism as a safeguard against neoliberal employment practices and as a tool of neoliberalism itself is particularly apparent in university libraries. On the one hand, there has been a massive increase both in short-term contract labor in university libraries and archives as well as non-faculty support staff throughout academic institutions, due to universities either embracing the model of or being forced to operate as businesses. The increase in support staff leads logically to "increased managerial control of faculty,"[41] thus further solidifying the university-as-corporation model. On the other, professionalism can be used to bolster some worker rights, such as intellectual freedom, which will be discussed later.

Running universities as profit-making enterprises is the epitome of a neoliberal vision of higher education. Within a capitalist framework - in other words, the overwhelming economic and political discourse throughout US history - higher education has "always served the interests of capital and the ruling class" through "the vocalization of the curriculum, corporatization of governing boards, and the focus on marketable technologies"[42]; neoliberalism's rise has simply strengthened and emphasized these capitalist practices. As Nicholson notes, "under the new

41 Slaughter, Shelia and Gary Rhoades. "The Neo-Liberal University." *New Labor Forum*, no. 6, Spring-Summer 2000, pp. 73-79.
42 Saunders, Daniel. 2010.

capitalism, worker empowerment, participation in corporate culture, and the inculcation of corporate values have become a *business strategy*, a new soft-touch hegemony."[43] This strategy also exists in the world of higher education within the neoliberal university paradigm.

This "soft-touch hegemony" manifests itself a variety of ways. One of these ways is through "transformational discourse in academic libraries," which Nicholson asserts "is based on the flawed and reductive binary model - 'innovate or die'..."[44] This type of misleading transformational discourse is a common feature in neoliberalism, particularly in the technology and labor sectors (and most often where those two sectors meet). Universities "innovate" labor practices such as eliminating full-time positions and replacing them with short-term contracts in the name of "flexibility." "Flexible specialization," with its "asymmetries of information and power," per Harvey, "can be seized on by capital as a handy way to procure more flexible means of accumulation."[45] That is to say, flexible in the sense of job precarity - if the health of the market demands the outsourcing of labor or cutting jobs entirely, it's much easier for universities to accomplish this with short-term contractors rather than full-time, unionized, and/or tenured workers.

This hegemonic soft-touch business strategy is also embodied in the management of universities. It's become more and more frequent over the decades, particularly as public universities have been forced to turn to private funding due to federal- or state-level budget cuts, that trustees and board members at the highest levels of university administration are pulled directly from the business world. Many of these selections have little to no experience in higher education but are deemed valuable or appropriate choices because of their business expertise

43 Nicholson, Karen P. "The McDonaldization of Academic Libraries and the Values of Transformational Change." *College & Research Libraries*, vol. 76, no. 3, Mar. 2015, pp. 328–38.
44 Ibid.
45 Harvey, David. 2005.

and/or ability to procure funding.[46] This inexperience or unfamiliarity with university functions and purposes has created an ever-widening "gap between what high-level management (especially at [the University of California Office of the President]) thinks and what front line people actually do,"[47] as is evident in the ongoing union negotiations between the University of California and its librarians, as represented by the UC-AFT union.

UC librarians have requested that the University of California recognize their right to academic freedom[48], which UC affirms for faculty, lecturers, and students, but has decided is "not a good fit" for library units.[49] Michael Meranze wonders whether this is a result of the administration not knowing "what librarians actually do at the university"[50] - perhaps an overly charitable interpretation, considering UC's support for academic freedom among other units in the university system, and the fact that the existing MOU (memorandum of understanding) refers to librarians as academics - or if the UC's refusal to guarantee the protection of academic freedom is an attempt "to restrict the professional claims and status of librarians in order to gain greater control over their activities."[51] This possible - perhaps even likely - attempt to "deprofessionalize" librarian positions within the university is in fact not an uncommon tactic within neoliberal institutions. Tami Oliphant and Michael B. McNally document a similar situation within the Library and Archives of Canada, wherein a neoliberal restructuring and

46 Saunders, Daniel. 2010.
47 Meranze, Michael. "UC, Librarians, and Academic Freedom ~ Remaking the University." *UC, Librarians, and Academic Freedom ~ Remaking the University*, 28 Aug. 2018, http://utotherescue.blogspot.com/2018/08/uc-librarians-and-academic-freedom.html.
48 Brennan, Martin. "Academic Freedom and Copyright Ownership Bargaining Proposal." *UC-AFT Librarians Blog*, 24 Apr. 2018, http://ucaftlibrarians.org/2018/04/24/academic-freedom-and-copyright-ownership-bargaining-proposal/.
49 Meranze, Michael. 2018.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.

implementation of a "draconian employee *Code of Conduct*"[52] has restricted librarians' and archives workers' freedom of expression: "It deprofessionalizes them in two ways: they are unable to fulfill their obligation to guarantee access to information; and they are unable to express unpopular or unconventional ideas and opinions in their own practice and workplace."[53] This move to strip workers of their professional rights can be seen being played out again and again under neoliberalism as a way to induce labor precarity and reduce labor bargaining power. Whether it's simply out of misunderstanding of the actual work being done or as an attempt to destabilize collective worker power, tactics like these are part of the university's arsenal of reactionary measures to budget cuts and neoliberal policies.

Higher education has been put on its heels in terms of obtaining adequate funding for decades now; neoliberalism, "debt crises" and forced austerity have put universities always on the defensive. Christopher Newfield, in his analysis of the "unmaking" of public higher education in the neoliberal era, notes, "With the partial but continuing privatization of public universities, the market [has] become the medium and the message. Administrators [look] to private funding to solve the problems that the ascent of private over public funding helped create."[54] This cycle keeps universities always on the hunt for more outside funding and for new ways to slim down their expenses, which almost always means finding ways to obtain cheaper labor. Positions are cut, full-time becomes part-time, part-time becomes short-term contract without benefits. Newfield urges universities and states to operate from a position of offense, rather than operating reactively, and to "fund public higher education at the levels required by their full educational missions - missions that must again come from concrete educational aims

52Oliphant, Tami, and Michael B. McNally. "Professional Decline and Resistance: The Case of Library and Archives Canada." *Radical Teacher*, vol. 99, May 2014, pp. 54–61.
53 Ibid.
54 Newfield, Christopher. 2008.

rather than from reactions to permanent austerity."[55] Newfield also emphasizes that this budgetary-seeking strategy must "be tied to reversing the growth...of academic permatemps [positions]," and that instead of "trimming their labor standards to fit their budgets, public universities need to seek the budgets that will uphold their labor standards."[56]

Now, of course, this is easier said than done. Public universities have become large generators of profit for the upper classes even as traditional public funding has been cut or redirected, and it is not easy to reroute that flow of capital from the owners and administrators to the workers. Part of this difficulty is due to the fact that the majority of the capital generated by universities is by way of commodifying and commercializing information. Christine Pawley's work on the "reification" of information, which allows it to operate as a product, is essential for understanding the landscape of information technology and markets today.[57] In its transformation of all interactions and relationships into markets, neoliberalism requires the valuation - ultimately, monetary valuation - of every product, whether that product is a human being or something as ostensibly ephemeral as information. Pawley notes that "for consistent and fair valuation, the products must be susceptible to measurement, standardization, and aggregation"[58]; thus, neoliberalism is highly concerned with these activities as both a means and an end.

Pawley also emphasizes that this reification of information as a quantifiable thing - particularly as a supposedly *neutral* thing - helped libraries and their activities to become institutionalized (in the sense of standardization and legitimation), but that it has also led to the "decontextualization of information, obscuring the specific conditions of its production."[59] This

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Pawley, Christine. "Information Literacy: A Contradictory Coupling." *The Library Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 4, Oct. 2003, pp. 422–52.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.

decontextualization not only ultimately devalues the work of trained LIS practitioners but has serious ramifications for the field of information technology as a whole. As Harvey explains, information technology "is far more useful for speculative activity and for maximizing the number of short-term market contracts than for improving production."[60] Obscuring the production of information devalues the labor producing and working with it; we can see this vividly in the struggles of technology laborers and LIS workers to secure adequate compensation and even a minimum of job security.

The neoliberal imperative to behave as individual market actors has thus far, both in American society in general and in the LIS field in particular, dominated the discourse and political imagination. There have been attempts to counteract this but, as Zinn reminds us, "let's resist the characteristically American trick of passing off fundamental criticism by pointing to a few reforms."[61] Continuing to critically investigate and analyze the LIS field's role in and embrace of neoliberalism is essential to imaging a political, economic, and social reality outside of the neoliberal hegemony. Beyond just scholarly discourse, however, we also need to focus on actual labor organizing. Rebuilding and strengthening unions after decades of attempts to destroy or hobble them is not and will not be easy, but it's necessary to do so to protect and uplift workers both in and outside of the LIS field. John Budd, as quoted in Nicholson, emphasizes "that the language of consumerism and commodification dominates beyond the sphere of libraries is not sufficient reason to accept it uncritically."[62] Neoliberalism has had many years to enmesh itself both globally and in the US as "common sense," but that doesn't mean that it can't be shifted. A critical scholarly discourse as well as on-the-ground organizing can work to open

60 Harvey, David. 2005.
61 Zinn, Howard. 1977.
62 Nicholson, Karen. 2015.

the possibilities for a life outside of the neoliberal framework, and part of that task is to speak openly and frankly about our worth as humans and as workers. Harvey prompts us thusly: “The first lesson we must learn, therefore, is that if it looks like class struggle and acts like class war then we have to name it unashamedly for what it is.”[63]

[63] Harvey, David. 2005.

Elective Work

Oakland Museum of California Exhibition Proposal: *The Oakland Black Cowboy Association Parade at 45 Years: Celebrating the History and Communities of the Black American West*

PROPOSAL BY MEGAN RILEY, MLIS '20

WORKING TITLE

The Oakland Black Cowboy Association Parade at 45 Years: Celebrating the History and Communities of the Black American West

BACKGROUND

Black people have been cowboys and cowhands for essentially as long as the profession has existed. Before the abolition of slavery in the United States, having a job as a cowboy offered relative freedom - solo work on horseback, a gun, and more. After the Civil War, thousands of Black Americans migrated westward, and many found work in the cattle industry. Despite the prevalence of Black cowboys - it's been estimated that in Texas alone between 1866 and 1895, thousands in the cowboy workforce were Black (Pate 2001) - their history has largely been ignored or forgotten in the general history and mythos of the American West. Sporting events like rodeos solidified its imagery, and "the mythology that has been perpetuated about the American West, cowboy culture, and rodeo privileges whiteness and the contributions of Anglo-Americans" (Patton and Schedlock 2011). Despite the relative lack of attention paid to and scholarship on Black cowboys, there is a wealth of stories to be told and many institutions and organizations dedicated to sharing them and rewriting the assumptions inherent in a whiteness-centered Western mythology.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

One of the organizations dedicated to recentering the Black experience in the history of the western United States, particularly California and what is now the Bay Area, is the Oakland Black Cowboy Association. OBCA has held an annual parade in Oakland since 1974, when the organization was known just as the Black Cowboy Association. 2019 will be the 45th anniversary of the parade and thus an excellent time to celebrate its history, the broader history of Black cowboys and ranchers in California and the West, and today's generation of Black cowboys and cowgirls.

The exhibit will include items from OMCA's own holdings, including old posters for OBCA's parade in past years, Juneteenth celebration fliers featuring images of Black cowboys, and other ephemera. Additional objects and materials, such as personal photographs, home movies and sound recordings, should be acquired through consultation and partnership with the community, institutions with related archival materials, and organizations including OBCA and others, such as the Compton Cowboys and Horses in the Hood.

Particular attention will be paid to the history and current community of Black cowboys and cowgirls in the Bay Area; although the focus of many Western exhibits are on the men in the cattle and ranching professions, there were also plenty of women cowhands, ropers, and rodeo riders, and that should be acknowledged and reflected in the exhibition content.

EXHIBITION THEMES

- The history of the Oakland Black Cowboy Association and its annual parade
- The role the city of Oakland and its community has played in preserving Black cowboy and cowgirl heritage and history
- The history of Black cowboys and cowgirls, ranchers, and rodeo riders in California
- How the enduring myth of a white-centered American West was created through marginalization, discrimination, and erasure of Black communities
- How institutions and communities can work together to preserve and promote the non-whiteness-centered history of the West and its Black pioneers

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This exhibit is intended for visitors ages 8+; visitors with an interest in Western history; visitors with an interest in cowboys and/or rodeo performers; visitors with an interest in Oakland history; visitors who are members of these communities; visitors with an interest in famous Black cowboys such as Nat Love; visitors with an interest in Black Western movies

ASSOCIATED PROGRAMMING

Ideally this exhibition should overlap in some way with OBCA's 75th annual parade in 2019, which is held the first Saturday of October at DeFremery Park in West Oakland. Cross-promotional material can be created to encourage visitors to attend both the parade and the museum exhibit. Potential additional programming could include live demonstrations of riding from OBCA members at special museum events, movie screenings of old Western films featuring Black stars, and more.

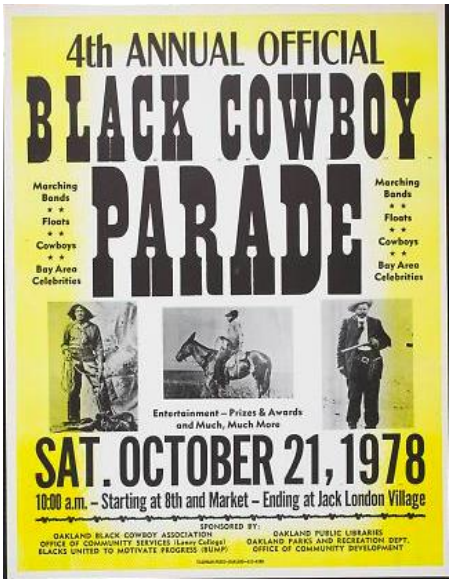
Oakland Museum of California had a past exhibition about the OBCA and its parade, but there's little information or documentation available about that exhibit; in fact, one of the only indications on the internet of its existence is a 1990s recording by local TV station KTOP that covered the exhibit by photographer Beverly Woodin, "The Black Cowboy, Then and Now." It could be interesting to include any available information about this old exhibit either in the new exhibition or as part of associated programming to relate back to the history of OMCA itself.

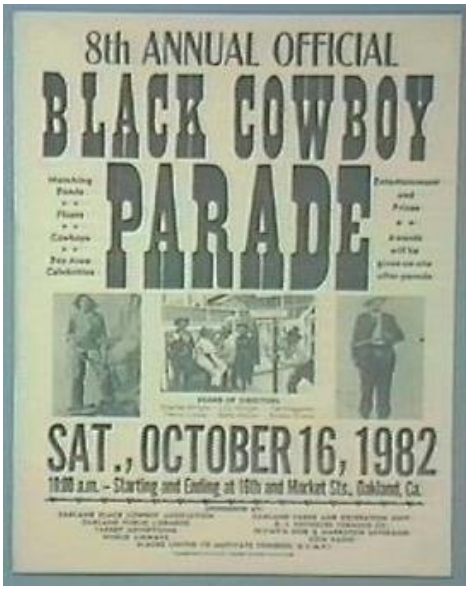
KEY OBJECTS

- *"Don't leave out the cowboys." KTOP-TV, 1990s:* this 23-minute VHS recording of a local news broadcast highlights OMCA's exhibit "The Black Cowboy, Then and Now" by photographer Beverly Woodin (coordinated by Beatrice Cox), which was on view sometime in the 1990s.
- *"California's Gold: Singing cowboys." Huell Howser, 1992:* VHS recording of an episode of Huell Howser's *California's Gold* TV program on KCET that features Howser traveling to Oakland to see OBCA's annual parade.
- *Poster for the 3rd Annual Official Black Cowboy Parade, October 22 1977:* This poster was acquired by OMCA originally for the Folk Roots exhibit.

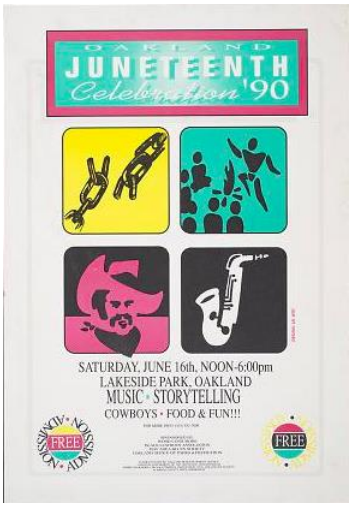
- *"Black Cowboy Parade." Tilghman Press, printer:* This is a poster for the 4th annual parade on October 21, 1978, and is part of OMCA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *Poster for the 8th Annual Official Black Cowboy Parade, October 16 1982:* This poster is another OMCA acquisition for the Folk Roots exhibit.
- *"Juneteenth 82 [1982] Emancipation Celebration." ISA Graphics, artist and printer:* Poster advertising a Juneteenth celebration at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco; image featured on the poster is famous Black cowboy Nat Love, aka Deadwood Dick. Part of OMCA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *"Juneteenth 84." ISA Graphics:* Poster advertising a Juneteenth celebration with a parade and rodeo; features an image of a Black cowboy. Part of OCMA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *Poster for Oakland Juneteenth Celebration '90:* Poster advertising a Juneteenth celebration at Oakland's Lakeside Park that features an image of a cowboy and indicates that there will be cowboys at the event. Part of OCMA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *"A Separate Cinema." Poster work on paper:* Features movie poster of famous Black rodeo man Bill Pickett in "The Bull-Dogger" film. Part of OCMA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *"A salute to black pioneers." Empak Enterprises Inc., publisher:* Lithographed poster with portraits of 18 Black pioneers; one of the illustrations is of Black rodeo man Bill Pickett. Part of OCMA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.
- *"Blacks in the Westward Movement: Oakland Museum, Oct. 18 - Nov. 9":* Poster advertising an exhibit at the Oakland Museum (the former name of OMCA); image on poster seems to be of Nat Love. Part of OCMA's All Of Us Or None Of Us Archive.

IMAGES OF SOME KEY OBJECTS

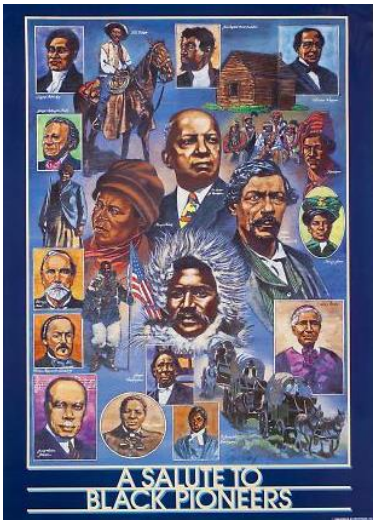


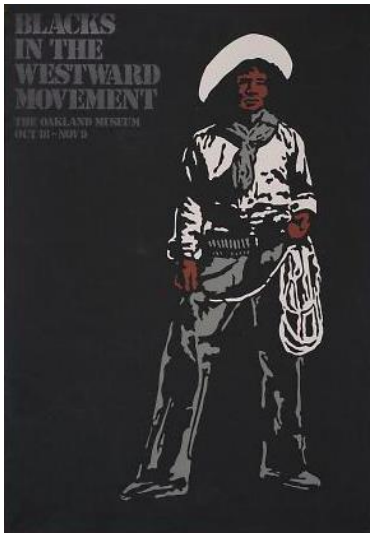



Juneteenth 84
EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION
June 16 and 17 —Saturday/Sunday
10 AM N' DA MO / San Francisco
PARADE 922-4028 RODEO


OAKLAND
JUNETEENTH
Celebration '90
SATURDAY, JUNE 16th, NOON-6:00pm
LAKESIDE PARK, OAKLAND
MUSIC • STORYTELLING
COWBOYS • FOOD & FUN!!!
FREE
FREE


BILL PICKETT
WORLD'S COLORED CHAMPION
'THE BULL-DOGGER'
THRILLS! LAUGHS TOO!
A SEPARATE CINEMA
FIFTY YEARS OF BLACK-CAST POSTERS
JOHN KISCH AND EDWARD MAPP
PREFACE BY SPIKE LEE • INTRODUCTION BY DONALD BOGLE


A SALUTE TO
BLACK PIONEERS


BLACKS
IN THE
WESTWARD
MOVEMENT

REFERENCES

California's Gold. Singing Cowboys No. 304. Huell Howser Productions ; [California State Library Foundation, distributor], 1992.

Don't Leave out the Cowboys. [AM Videos], 1990.

"OBCA Oakland Black Cowboy Association." *Oakland Black Cowboy Association*, http://www.blackcowboyassociation.org/. Accessed 12 Mar. 2019.

OMCA COLLECTIONS. http://collections.museumca.org/. Accessed 14 Mar. 2019.

Pate, J'Nell L. "Review of Black Cowboys of Texas." *The Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2001, pp. 87–87. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/3650843.

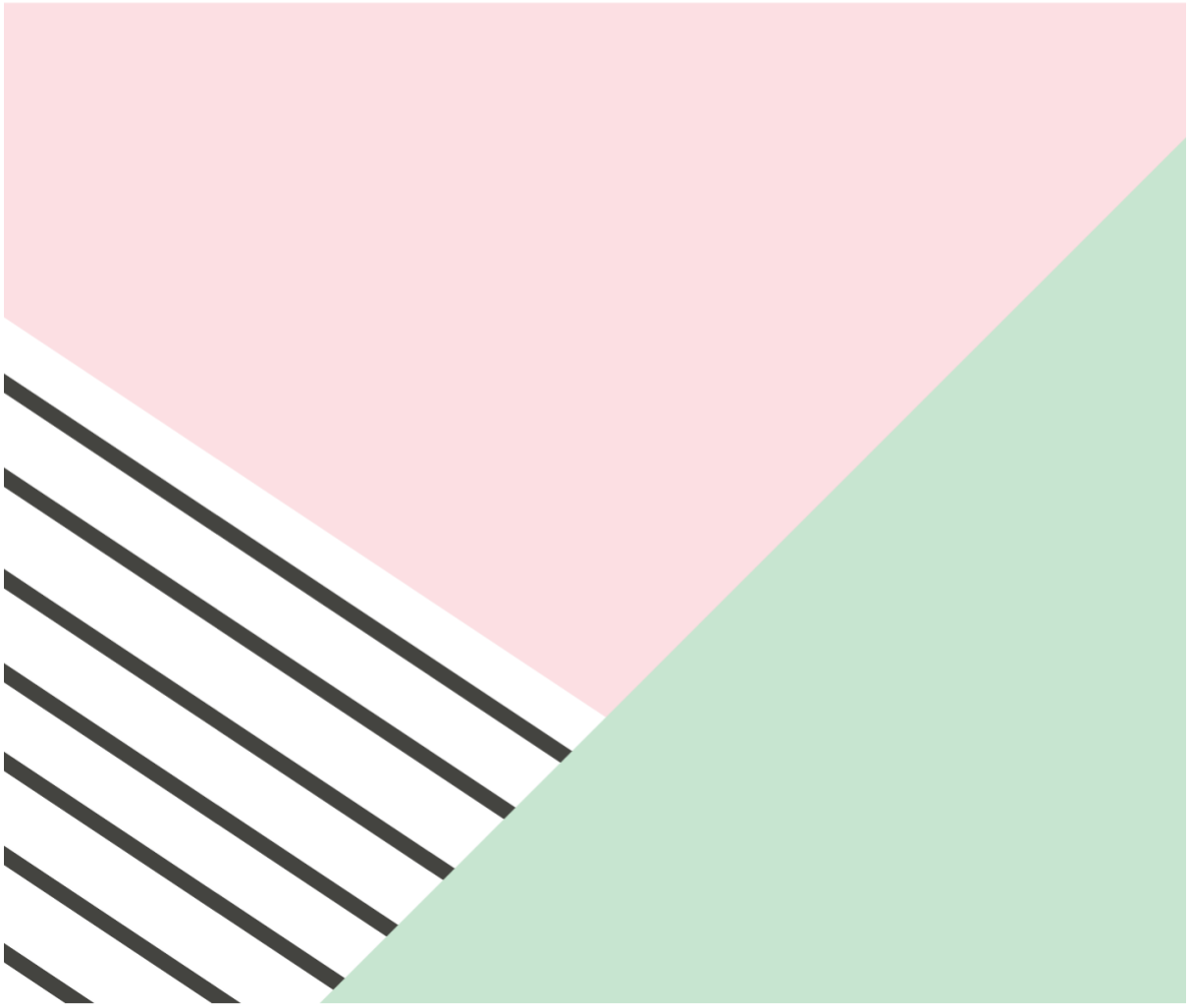
Patton, Tracy Owens, and Sally M. Schedlock. "LET'S GO, LET'S SHOW, LET'S RODEO: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE HISTORY OF RODEO." *The Journal of African American History*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2011, pp. 503–21. *JSTOR*, doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.96.4.0503.

Elective Work

Labor and Workforce Sustainability in Libraries, Archives, and Museums

LABOR AND WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY IN LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS

MEGAN RILEY
12 DECEMBER 2019



INTRODUCTION

Precarious labor - also often referred to as contingent, temporary, grant-funded, or contract labor - in libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) has been an ongoing issue over the past several decades and has only grown in scope and severity. As full-time jobs are eliminated or made out of reach for all but the most highly qualified and experienced (and often privileged), memory and knowledge institutions like libraries (both public and academic), archives, and museums have filled the void with contract positions. These temporary positions vary in length, but many are grant-funded and thus subject to a finite budget source. Contingent positions such as these also frequently do not provide benefits like healthcare or pension plans or allow for workers in those positions to be represented by the union to which their full-time colleagues may belong. Contingent labor issues are by no means limited to the LAM fields - the rise of the gig economy is proof of that - but precarious labor in LAM has some unique contributing factors and effects.

THE PROBLEM

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Wendy Brown's work examining the rise of "governance" under neoliberalism and how it has undermined and replaced collective action and explicit power structures by using things like "best practices" and "streamlining" to obscure and devolve authority and responsibility is essential for understanding how and why LAM has become rife with temporary workers. She ties together neoliberalism's use of governance to transform all aspects of life into economic frameworks with the "depoliticizing" and weakening of worker power and solidarity. This

hyperfocus on individualizing and isolating responsibility has played a large role in encouraging and sustaining contingent and precarious labor practices. Of particular relevance is Brown's analysis of "shared sacrifice" under neoliberalism, where citizen-workers are not only encouraged but expected to shoulder the burden of economic difficulties - be it through unemployment, precarious labor, lower wages, etc. - that are actually occurring at the institutional or societal level.[64]

Closely tied to Brown's scholarship is that of Karen Nicholson. Nicholson's analysis takes Brian Quinn's concept of the "McDonaldization" of academic libraries and dives deeper into how trends towards privatization, customization, and "flexible" workforces have transformed management of libraries and library workers. Nicholson ties this "shift from a 'bureaucratic-professional' model of accountability toward a 'consumer-managerial' model" to the commodification of information and library practices and the suffusion of neoliberal values and frameworks in the library and information professions and institutions. For example, the "core values" promoted by professional organizational programs and initiatives like the ALA's *Emerging Leaders* program and ACRL's *Value of Academic Libraries* initiative both buy into and promote business strategies and innovation that neither suit LAM institutions nor effectively address the troubles (e.g. budgets, an underpaid and overworked workforce, etc.) that plague them.[65]

The supposed panacea of "innovation" has made its way from the corporate world to the LAM world with little to no pushback at the institutional level. LAM institutions' adoption of

64 Brown, Wendy. "Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics." *Constellations* 23, no. 1 (2016): 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12166.

65 Nicholson, Karen P. "The McDonaldization of Academic Libraries and the Values of Transformational Change." *College & Research Libraries* 73, no. 3 (2015). https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.3.328.

a false “innovate or die” binary in response to budgetary crises and other external pressures has resulted in an undermining of their professional workforces. The fetishization of innovation and new technologies has led to problems such as so-called “entry level” positions involving technology that are in fact highly skilled labor; an assumption that new professionals will somehow already have these skills by virtue of their youth excludes those seeking entry into the field who don’t yet have those skills - but who could learn easily on the job - or under-compensates those who do have the skills already.[66] Another persistent and long-standing erroneous assumption undermining information professionals as a sustainable labor force is that unpaid internships and other un- or under-compensated positions are a necessary step to entering the LAM workforce.

Pushback against unpaid internships has gained strength in recent years, and scholarship on the exploitative practice is emerging. Karly Wildenhaus’s analysis of the issue and recommendations for addressing it are a much-needed contribution to the field. It connects unpaid internships and other un- or undercompensated positions to lack of diversity in libraries and archives and the growing trend in precarious labor; it also situates these positions “within larger questions of economic access, labor laws, indebtedness, and neoliberalization.” Although the piece does not explicitly name the sustainability of a professional workforce as something at stake, Wildenhaus makes very clear the negative impacts that unpaid labor has across the LAM fields. Wildenhaus examines how unpaid internships are far from guaranteed to lead to paying work - contrary to the common

66 Rodriguez, Sandy, Ruth Tillman, Amy Wickner, Stacie Williams, and Emily Drabinski. “Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums.” White Paper. University of Missouri -- Kansas City, 2019. https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/69708.

assumption of many people working in LAM - and also provides a number of concrete actions that workers, employers, and MLIS programs can take to combat unpaid internships and their wide-reaching negative impacts.[67]

THE STATE OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE TODAY

Recent research by the Collective Responsibility project - a grant-funded undertaking that aims to "address the specific problems of precarity" created and reproduced by contingent positions in LAM and "how those positions impact the lives and career of workers, particularly workers from marginalized and underrepresented populations" - has shown that while many institutions promote temporary positions as an entry to full-time work, these contingent jobs in fact simply lead to more contract work; in a survey of 100 current and former grant-funded digital LAM workers, 66% who were rehired to the same institution were rehired into temporary or contingent positions.[68] The attitude often found in LAM institutions, particularly among workers who have been employed longer and in less precarious roles, is that taking temporary and/or underpaying positions is an effective way to "get a foot in the door" in the field and that better and more stable positions will follow as a result. Ongoing analysis and research has indicated that this is far from true.

Results from the Collective Responsibility project's survey indicate several major themes among contingent workers in LAM, including a lack of professional and personal support and advancement in the field and the precarity of contingent labor forcing workers to be highly and often problematically dependent on their direct supervisors for support at work. As the project

67 Wildenhaus, Karly. "Wages for Intern Work: Denormalizing Unpaid Positions in Archives and Libraries." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 2, no. 1 (November 25, 2018). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v2i1.88.

68 Rodriguez, Tillman, Wickner, Williams, and Drabinski, 2019.

continues, it aims to articulate and evaluate these issues in order to allow for collective leverage and bargaining among contingent workers.[69]

An increasing problem related to precarious labor is burnout as a result of mental and emotional distress. Burnout among LAM workers - particularly workers from marginalized and minoritized communities and identities, and especially those in contingent positions - is becoming increasingly common. There isn't much comprehensive research on this subject yet, but it's become a growing point of discussion in LAM scholarship. Fobazi Ettarh's writing critically engages with the longstanding idea of "vocational awe" in librarianship - a conviction that one's work saves, educates and ennobles not only the saved or educated but also the worker. Treating LAM work as a vocation requiring sacrifice is common in those fields (as it often is with teaching as well), and Ettarh's analysis provides another dimension to the "sacrificial citizenship" that Wendy Brown examines. Ettarh delves into the mythos surrounding much of librarian work, how that mythos is in dialogue with and supported by institutional and structural oppression in LAM, and how the interaction between them leads to so much burnout among non-White and other minoritized LAM workers. Her discussion of under-compensation and job creep is particularly pertinent to short-term and precarious positions.[70]

Precarious labor has become a self-perpetuating cycle in many institutions, and solutions must be found to disrupt, break, and even reverse this trend. We must interrogate why this mistaken belief that temporary work will logically and eventually lead to a full-time,

69 Ibid.

70 Ettarh, Fobazi. "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2018). http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe.

stable position still persists and what an alternate vision for more equitable, stable and just "early career" and other full-time positions would be.[71]

RECOMMENDATIONS

FURTHER RESEARCH

So much of the scholarship in LAM regarding precarious labor is from the past few decades, and is either lacking concrete data or relies upon outdated data. More research with solid and robust data on the professional LAM workforce is needed - research and data about the number of workers in temporary positions, about the availability of and compensation for these positions as well as "entry-level" positions, about the rates of burnout amongst LAM workers (particularly among marginalized or minoritized community members), about unpaid internships, and more.

Some attempts are already being made to collect and analyze this data; the Collective Responsibility project is one, and an impromptu salary survey conducted via a Google spreadsheet distributed among Society of American Archivists members is another example. SAA and other professional organizations can perform more regularly censuses of their members - SAA's census is 15 years old at this point - to assist in collecting data for research and analysis.[72] MLIS programs are also in a position to aid in this task; documenting the numbers of students working unpaid (as well as paid) internships, and potentially even job placement post-graduation, can provide a useful data pool for researchers.

71 Berry, Dorothy. "Developing Imagination." Collective Responsibility, June 24, 2019. https://laborforum.diglib.org/2019/06/24/developing-imagination/.

72 ArchivesAware. "Responses & Retrospectives: Rachael Woody's Annual Conference Coverage on the Value of Archival Labor Sessions," September 6, 2019. https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2019/09/06/responses-retrospectives-rachael-woodys-annual-conference-coverage-on-the-value-of-archival-labor-sessions/.

CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS

One of the most positive and effective trends in the LAM workforce at the moment is the strengthening of and push for organized labor. At UCLA, the local UC-AFT librarian bargaining unit has field a grievance on behalf of six temporary archivists - known as the UCLA Six - in an attempt to curtail the misuse of contract positions within the library. At MOCA in Los Angeles, over 100 workers recently voted to unionize with AFSCME and have successfully had their union recognized by management.[73] The MOCA union drive is occurring at the same time as many other LAM institutions (especially art museums, which frequently lack the preexisting unions of many libraries) are forming or revitalizing their unions and labor activism. Building solidarity among workers not just institutionally but across the LAM fields - as well as related fields such as teaching - can only serve to improve conditions for the workforce; temporary labor not only negatively impacts the workers in those positions as discussed above, but undermines the bargaining power and professionalism of the full-time workers.

At the institutional level, employers need to look seriously at their labor practices. Using temporary labor to perform permanent work - as is the case with the UCLA archivists - is unsustainable for both workers and their employers and, in the long term, will lead to things like loss of institutional memory, workers unable to advance their careers, and higher costs in recruitment and hiring processes as a result of high turnover rates. If the only jobs available to new LAM professionals are temporary and/or under-compensated, institutions will slowly but

73 Miranda, Carolina A. "MOCA Will Voluntarily Recognize New Employee Union; Marciano Closure Is Permanent." Los Angeles Times, December 7, 2019. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2019-12-06/moca-recognizes-employee-union-afscme-marciano-closure-permanent.

surely find themselves struggling to fill later-career positions as older professionals retire and take their experience and institutional knowledge with them.

LAM institutions, professional organization, and MLIS programs should also actively push back against unpaid labor, most often in the form of internships. MLIS students and other new LAM workers can fight against this trend as well by refusing to take on unpaid work, but rapid change will only occur if institutions discontinue the exploitative practice. Devaluing the work that LAM professionals do undermines the workforce as a whole as well as institutions themselves. Fairly compensated and permanently employed workers are valuable assets to LAM institutions economically as well as for their knowledge and soft skills. Professional organizations and MLIS programs also have a vested interest in promoting and upholding the value of LAM labor; as such, they should be fierce advocates and allies for workers in the quest for ethical and sustainable labor practices.

CONCLUSION

Scholarship and research have a ways to go to fully capture the scope and ramifications of the explosion of precarious labor in LAM institutions. The impacts of neoliberalism at the institutional level, particularly in academia, has been devastating for LAM workers, especially those just entering the field. “Innovation” will not solve the problem of precarity or under-compensation; instead, LAM workers must organize, build solidarity, and advocate for themselves from a place of strength. Institutions must rethink not only their reactionary tendencies towards austerity and budget issues, but also how their hiring practices and treatment of their workforce can undermine their missions, values, and reputations. The

systematic devaluation of LAM labor is not new, but a critical dialogue surrounding it is gaining strength.

REFERENCES

Alaniz, Des. "Reflections on Temporary Appointments and Innovation/Diversity Culture in Libraries and Archives." Collective Responsibility, August 14, 2019. https://laborforum.diglib.org/2019/08/14/reflections-on-temporary-appointments-and-innovation-diversity-culture-in-libraries-and-archives/.

ArchivesAware. "Responses & Retrospectives: Rachael Woody's Annual Conference Coverage on the Value of Archival Labor Sessions," September 6, 2019. https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2019/09/06/responses-retrospectives-rachael-woodys-annual-conference-coverage-on-the-value-of-archival-labor-sessions/.

Berry, Dorothy. "Developing Imagination." Collective Responsibility, June 24, 2019. https://laborforum.diglib.org/2019/06/24/developing-imagination/.

Brown, Wendy. "Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics." *Constellations* 23, no. 1 (2016): 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12166.

Brunvand, Amy. "Re-Localizing the Library: Considerations for the Anthropocene." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 2, no. 3 (2019).

Christensen, Kirsten M. "Shaping the Humanities through Sustainable Service." *Academe* 98, no. 6 (2012): 8–13.

Ettarh, Fobazi. "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2018). http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe.

Google Docs. "SalariesImpromptuSurvey_SAA19." Accessed October 31, 2019. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1JVDjwC6JOkQpQFEnZ8pogGqoRzyvrQdNm5T3qyd4_u0/edit?usp=embed_facebook.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Reprinted. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011.

Lemenager, Stephanie, and Stephanie Foote. "The Sustainable Humanities." *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (2012): 572–78.

Matienzo, Mark A. "Evidence of Them: Digitization, Preservation, and Labor." Mark A. Matienzo, September 14, 2018. https://matienzo.org/2018/evidence-of-them-digitization-preservation-and-labor/.

Miranda, Carolina A. “MOCA Will Voluntarily Recognize New Employee Union; Marciano Closure Is Permanent.” Los Angeles Times, December 7, 2019. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2019-12-06/moca-recognizes-employee-union-afscme-marciano-closure-permanent.

Nicholson, Karen P. “The McDonaldization of Academic Libraries and the Values of Transformational Change.” *College & Research Libraries* 73, no. 3 (2015). https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.3.328.

Rodriguez, Sandy, Ruth Tillman, Amy Wickner, Stacie Williams, and Emily Drabinski. “Collective Responsibility: Seeking Equity for Contingent Labor in Libraries, Archives, and Museums.” White Paper. University of Missouri -- Kansas City, 2019. https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/69708.

Sloan, Katie, Jennifer Vanderfluit, and Jennifer Douglas. “Not ‘Just My Problem to Handle’: Emerging Themes on Secondary Trauma and Archivists.” *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 6, no. 1 (July 16, 2019). https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol6/iss1/20.

UC-AFT Librarians Blog. “UC-AFT Librarians Blog.” Accessed October 31, 2019. https://ucaftlibrarians.org/.

Wildenhaus, Karly. “Wages for Intern Work: Denormalizing Unpaid Positions in Archives and Libraries.” *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 2, no. 1 (November 25, 2018). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v2i1.88.

Core Work

Neoliberalism, Race, and Social Justice in LIS

The library and information science field has long struggled with its overwhelming homogeneity, but it's only within the last few decades that its deficiencies at the structural level - not just a superficial "diversity" issue - have come under scrutiny. Much of the critical scholarship within and about LIS in this time has approached these fundamental flaws and biases from an anti-racist standpoint; there have also, in more recent years, been more critical pieces regarding the role of capitalism and neoliberalism in the structuring of libraries and archives in the US. Transformational change in LIS, including commitments to anti-racist work and epistemic justice, will require critical analysis of the interwoven nature of racism and neoliberalism in America and its effect on the LIS field. This paper seeks to answer - or at least to begin to unpack - the question of how a critique of neoliberalism can help the LIS field more effectively commit to social justice and anti-racist action.

We begin first by evaluating the role neoliberalism has played in shaping LIS and the institutions of archives and libraries. Neoliberalism in practice can be very difficult to define; it is by nature flexible and amorphous enough to exist in many different forms. While the ideology remains essentially the same - the "economization" of all spheres of life (Brown 2016) - the material ways in which this ideology is expressed can vary widely. Cifor and Lee (2017) explain that

> neoliberalism has profoundly restructured areas of economic, political, and social life in ways that focus on individual responsibilities, reduce state interventions and funding for them, draw attention away from systemic oppressions, use 'chronic underfunding, disaster, and state failure' as excuses for privatization, and 'obfuscates or renders invisible forms of labor that are deemed undesirable.' ...Under neoliberalism, people no longer exist; only markets exist. (p. 3-4)

The United States, already primed for individualistic tendencies and Protestant work ethic, has become a neoliberal state *par excellence*.

The rise of a multiracial progressive middle class post-WWII threatened the economic and political elite in the US, and neoliberalism became the weapon with which to dismantle this coalition. By seemingly unconnected, but in reality interdependent, strategies of the "culture wars" in the 1980s and the systematic deregulation and privatization of public goods and infrastructure, the elite worked to resolidify their position at the top of the class hierarchy. Positioning the free market as the ultimate good and citizens as market actors allowed the government to become primarily an enforcer of "freedom" in the sense of market competition. This definition of "freedom" let the state abdicate any responsibility to its citizens, instead shifting the burden to them as "personal responsibility." This hard shift from a multiracial coalition to fragmented and segregated middle and working classes was made possible by the state's framing of "personal responsibility" as an individual moral issue and, very importantly, tying that moralization to race. As neoliberalism expanded and strengthened, the conception of race as a tool for social division became more embedded in the public discourse, and the primacy of the individual and its freedoms grew.

The LIS field being built on liberal and positivist ideals has made it perhaps all that much more vulnerable to neoliberalism. As Cifor and Lee (2017) explain, "Neoliberalism has infused LIS discourse with rhetoric of 'transformational change,' grounded in the unquestioning adoption of both neoliberal theory and practices. ...Neoliberal processes have come to seem natural and inevitable parts of information, government, and academic systems" (p. 8-9). As a field, LIS benefited immensely from the development of the "information age" beginning in the 1970s, an age inextricable from the rise of neoliberalism. Commodification of information

helped to professionalize the field and to created a demand for a new type of librarian, one who could help citizens adapt to this changing economy. Libraries, archives, and other institutions embraced their new roles with little hesitation, and soon the neoliberal qualities and values beginning to suffuse both the public and private sectors became just plain "common sense."

The LIS field is suffused with neoliberal assumptions - not just in the structure of public library services, or of university instruction, but even within its scholarship. Pawley's examination of "information literacy" is a good starting point for teasing out some of the field's foundational assumptions: the combination of the "'information' and 'literacy' sets up a tension between conflicting ideals of, on the one hand, a promethean vision of citizen empowerment and democracy, and, on the other, a desire to control 'quality' of information" (2003, p. 425) The professionalization of LIS as a field relied upon the existence of educated experts and a codification of standards and practices. This structure of rule-by-elites is fundamental to the neoliberal project - "governance by majority rule is seen as a potential threat to individual rights" (Harvey, 2005, p. 66) and thus to individuals as free market actors - and often that structure is not even recognized for what it is. Howard Zinn, in remarks to the Society of American Archivists and a subsequent article in 1977, notes,

> Professionalism is a powerful form of social control. By professionalism I mean the almost total immersion in one's craft, being so absorbed in the day-to-day exercise of those skills, as to have little time, energy, or will to consider what part those skills play in the total social scheme. I say *almost-total* immersion, because if it were total, we would be suspicious of it. Being not quite total, we are tolerant of it, or at least sufficiently confused by the mixture to do nothing. (p. 15-16)

Neoliberalism can also be thought of in this way; it is an ideology almost impossible to define because of its embeddedness, and the few counterexamples serve as plausible deniability for neoliberal proponents.

So we can see that on a fundamental level there is an implicit acceptance of neoliberal ideology within LIS. But how does that manifest itself in material ways? One of the most inescapable is the necessity of concrete valuation. “In a neoliberal framework the language of social justice can be easily co-opted to serve neoliberal aims where everything must lead to a demonstrable outcome,” Cifor and Lee write (2017, p. 12). This co-opting leads to practices like cultural competency trainings, diversity hires, and the conflation of having information needs met with the achievement of social justice. As has been noted in almost all social justice discussions, social justice is a process, one that is always ongoing and never fully achieved. But under neoliberalism, everything and everyone must have economic value, and so institutions (particularly those in the public sphere) and humans must constantly be concerned with demonstrating their value in an economically legible manner.

This fundamental neoliberal need to evaluate everything in market terms means that practices, communities, or knowledge that do not have concrete value on the free market will be neglected or even attacked. This indifference or animosity to things that don’t “make sense” economically or aren’t profit-generating exists throughout the LIS field, from the slashing of library budgets to the lack of attention paid to minoritized communities to the marginalization of non-Western ways of knowing to the racial homogeneity of LIS practitioners themselves. Neoliberalism also requires a similar aversion to naming structures or practices outside of a prescribed political arena as being inherently political; this fits almost seamlessly with the long-time LIS ideal of “neutrality” within the profession.

From the beginnings of LIS as a field with Paul Otlet’s vision of an objective, classifiable truth to even today, many librarians and archivists have viewed themselves as neutral practitioners, outside the messy world of politics and sociocultural biases. In the 20th century,

particularly coinciding with the civil rights and feminist movements, the idea of a "neutral" LIS professional came into question. Zinn, saying that "the archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business. His supposed neutrality is, in other words, a fake," forcefully confronted the false belief so many archivists and librarians had in their objectivity and neutrality. "Scholarship in society is inescapably political. Our choice is not between being political or not. Our choice is to follow the politics of the going order...or else to promote those human values of peace, equality, and justice, which our present society denies" (1977, p. 20). Since then, many other theorists and practitioners in LIS have generated insightful critical scholarship about the existential embeddedness of all humans within societal power relations.

Recognizing our position - both as individuals and as memory institutions - within these power relations is essential to working in a concrete way towards social and epistemic justice for marginalized and minoritized communities. And we cannot effectively or thoroughly evaluate our role in society's power structures without critical analysis of race and neoliberalism within the LIS field and its practices. As librarians and archivists, we are "are active participants in the dynamics of power relations" and although we may work to hold power to account through our roles as professionals and to acknowledge our own power, "the boundary between constructive and oppressive power is always shifting and porous" (Duff and Harris, 2002, p. 277). A critical piece of social justice work in LIS is constantly questioning what seems unquestionable - our assumptions, our privilege, what we can or are not allowed to ignore by virtue of our race or gender, the way things are done just because they've always been done that way.

Questioning the seemingly unquestionable is difficult for many reasons, one of which is a near taboo on discussing some fundamental ideologies - for instance, the constructed nature of

race, particularly of Whiteness. In the US, particularly since the ascendance of neoliberalism, discussing race - even acknowledging its existence, sometimes - and racial power dynamics is seen as divisive. However, to truly pursue social justice we need talk frankly about race and anti-racist work. “A recognition of race’s social constructedness...is not an assertion of its immateriality, then, but an opportunity to examine the very workings of its materiality as a site for the exercise of power within regimes of racial subordination,” David Hudson writes (2017, p. 20). The LIS field is especially uncomfortable with discussions of race almost certainly due to its largely White makeup; despite this discomfort, a number of LIS practitioners, particularly those of color, have begun and sustained a critical dialogue on anti-racism within the field.

LIS institutional attempts at combatting racism have often been ineffective at best, sometimes even harmful. As is the case with many “diversity” or “multiculturalism” initiatives within a neoliberal society or institution, an unjust and racist social order is implicitly validated by superficial attempts to replicate said social order within the organization. Part of this failure is a flawed or inadequate understanding of race, and in particular Whiteness, as social construct: “liberal anti-racism locates the problem of race squarely within the realm of the (ir)rational individual. With race understood as a morally irrelevant category whose invocation presents a barrier to social harmony, racism is cast as ignorance and irrationality - as, indeed, a social sickness, an aberration from a broader social order itself thus tacitly valorized” (Hudson, 2017, p. 14). The emphasis on the individual in liberalism and its supremacy in neoliberalism allows for the burden of anti-racist work to be placed on the individual, and more often than not the onus is upon Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) to do the heavy lifting while White people absolve themselves through things like diversity hiring - things that ultimately do nothing to

change fundamental racial power imbalances and thus lead to dissatisfaction and burnout among BIPOC practitioners in LIS.

A seemingly contradictory tendency within neoliberalism is to valorize the individual above all else but to universalize experience so as to minimize power imbalance. “Neoliberal concern for the individual trumps any social democratic concern for equality, democracy, and social solidarities,” writes Harvey (2005, p. 176). At the same time, by forcing responsibility on the individual to “solve” racism, neoliberalism enables a universalization of “difference in ways that uphold damaging power dynamics and hierarchies” (Cifor and Lee, 2017, p. 4); thus, we end up with possibly well-intentioned but ultimately damaging things like “All Lives Matter” as a response to “Black Lives Matter.” Caswell and Cifor note this tendency, saying, “This replacing of bodies, of black with white, naturalizes suffering and pain as the condition of black bodies, threatens to obliterate the suffering of the black body, erases meaningful differences between bodies, and always returns the focus to the white body and its affective experiences” (2016, p. 32). We see this play out time and time again, not just within LIS but in society at large - Black pain only becomes legible to Whiteness when refocused to center Whiteness. Individual empathy, radical or otherwise, is not a bad practice, but is also not inherently anti-racist.

To commit to anti-racist action in LIS is to commit to breaking from the neoliberal framework imposed upon us and our profession, and to interrogate even the structures that seem “natural” or unmarked. The unmarkedness of Whiteness in the US is reflected in the unmarkedness of neoliberal ideology. The neoliberal project has been so successful at hiding itself in plain sight, at seeming to be not just the default but the only option, that we can see strong parallels between it and the constructedness of Whiteness as default, as “raceless.” And indeed, these parallels help maintain and expand both neoliberalism and white supremacy:

> As a state-sanctioned account of difference, multiculturalism has served as a vehicle for incorporating institutionally validated nonwhite populations within the structural bounds of the nation, as well as a framework for reproducing such populations' differentiation and subordination in ostensibly deracialized terms like culture, nation, and religion. (Hudson, 2017, p. 24)

By continuing practices that inscribe and reinscribe these structural bounds, LIS does ultimately very little to challenge status quo power dynamics.

Judith Butler's conception of gender as performance is useful in analyzing how certain practices or biases can become standardized. Cifor and Wood note that Butler's work can "demonstrate that archiving is constructed through the repetition of a particular set of sanctioned acts that become naturalized into 'codes of behavior and belief.' Such scripts are thereby performed without even acknowledging that such a performance is being undertaken…" (2017, p. 9). This unconscious repetitive construction builds structures and practices that seem entirely natural or non-ideological. Neoliberalism relies upon a similar inscription and outcome to expand and maintain dominance; Gramsci's idea of "common sense" as constructed by a hegemony to manufacture a society's consent to be ruled through its conformance to said common sense (Omi and Winant, 1994, p. 67) works both to empower neoliberal projects and to enforce power dynamics along racial and class lines.

When we undertake critical analyses of race and of neoliberalism's effects in LIS, we must be conscious of of the framework in which we are situated. In a neoliberal framework, information has become a commodity, and our library patrons or archival researchers are now consumers. Within this framework, "information literacy is a matter of making enlightened and informed consumer 'choice'" (Pawley, 2003, p. 435). The neoliberal library, university, or other institution would have us constrain our work merely to assisting users in making the informed

decision, or to performing other actions - such as providing computer literacy classes - that serve the purpose of producing more valuable workers and increasing human capital. If we are to fundamentally transform LIS institutions, however, we need to interrogate these prescribed goals with questions such as, "How does the institutionalization of information literacy, and the development of information literacy as a 'natural' category reproduce, mediate or transform power relationships?" (Pawley, 2003, p. 445)

The information age and its technological advancement has altered the LIS field in meaningful ways, but to examine those changes without also understanding the neoliberal framework behind them is to only get a partial picture. While the internet and other technologies have allowed for a broader distribution of information, the LIS field "must investigate how cultural heritage institutions can create avenues of meaningful access without further promoting the uneven power dynamic that inspired the creation or collection of records of certain communities or groups" (Punzalan and Caswell, 2016, p. 34). Diversity initiatives and other attempts at social justice transformation that still operate within a neoliberal and hierarchical framework cannot fundamentally transform or rebuild the foundations of the LIS field. To undertake this radical transformation, we must rethink assumptions and ideas of freedom, individualism, and neutrality.

To paraphrase a line from Zinn's address to SAA, anything but a full-time commitment to political activity - that is, social justice - assumes that we are operating in a basically just society. This is a critical reminder that to do nothing is to enforce the status quo; to take it even further, to do anything but critical anti-racist and collective work is to support the status quo. "What is required then is to wrench ourselves out of our passivity, to try to integrate our professional lives with our humanity," Zinn exhorts (1977, p. 25). Part of shaking ourselves free

from passivity and the illusion of neutrality is to expose and question the power dynamics in our society falling not just along class lines but along racial lines as well. We can integrate this critical inquiry into our work by conceiving of alternate ways of working, existing, relating, and thriving. For example, Duff and Harris (2002) describe the idea of a "liberatory descriptive standard" that exposes, rather than obscuring, its construction and creators. This transparency "would not obscure the dimensions of power which it reflects and expresses" (p. 284).

This work is not easy, and requires not just an ongoing commitment to social justice but also imagination. Harvey (2005) reminds us that "To propose different rights to those held sacrosanct by neoliberalism carries with it, however, the obligation to specify an alternative social process within which such alternative rights can inhere" (p. 204). The unmarkedness of neoliberalism and of race in the United States can often make it difficult to conceive of a different way of being in the world and relating to those around us, but difficulty is not the same as impossibility. Continuing to investigate and interrogate LIS with critical understanding of race, gender, economics, and neoliberalism can help us build an ethic not based on individualism inscribed by the free market but based on mutual support and anti-racist action.

Works Cited

Caswell, M. & Cifor, M. (2016) From human rights to feminist ethics: Radical empathy in the archives. *Archivaria, 81*(Spring), 23-43.

Cifor, M., & Lee, J. A. (2017). Towards an archival critique: Opening possibilities for addressing neoliberalism in the archival field. *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i1.10

Cifor, M., & Wood, S. (2017). Critical feminism in the archives. *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, *1*(2). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.27

Duff, W. M., & Harris, V. (2002). Stories and names: Archival description as narrating records and constructing meanings. *Archival Science*, *2*(3–4), 263–285. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435625

Hudson, D. J. (2017). On "diversity" as anti-racism in library and information studies: A critique. *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i1.6

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.

Pawley, C. (2003). Information literacy: a contradictory coupling. *The Library Quarterly*, *73*(4), 422–452. https://doi.org/10.1086/603440

Punzalan, R. L., & Caswell, M. (2016). Critical directions for archival approaches to social justice. *The Library Quarterly*, *86*(1), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.1086/684145

Zinn, H. (1977). Secrecy, archives, and the public interest. *The Midwestern Archivist, 2*(2), 14–26.

Course List and Advising History

Course List

Fall 2011

IS 289 History of Books and Literacy Technologies - *Prof. Johanna Drucker*

Fall 2018

IS 211 Artifacts and Cultures - *Prof. Johanna Drucker*
IS 239 Letterpress Lab - *Prof. Johanna Drucker*
IS 260 Description and Access - *Prof. Gregory Leazer*
IS 432 Issues and Problems in Preservation of Heritage Materials - *Prof. Ellen Pearlstein*

Winter 2019

IS 270 Systems and Infrastructures - *Prof. Jean-François Blanchette*
IS 281-2 Research Methods: Graphics and Historical Illustrations - *Rose Roberto, visiting scholar*
IS 439 Special Collections Seminar - *Anna Chen, director of the Clark Library*

Spring 2019

IS 212 Values and Communities in Information Professions - *Prof. Sarah Roberts*
IS 213 Current Issues in Librarianship - *Prof. Gregory Leazer*
IS 464 Metadata - *Prof. Jonathan Furner*

Fall 2019

IS 289-1 Sustainability and Information Professions - Prof. Johanna Drucker
IS 423 Public Libraries - Robert Karatsu, former director of the Rancho Cucamonga Public Library
IS 434 Archival Use and Users - Prof. Michelle Caswell

Winter 2020

GEOG 248 Geographical Political Economy - *Prof. Eric Sheppard*
IS M238 Environmental Protection of Collections for Museums, Libraries, and Archives - *Prof. Ellen Pearlstein*
IS 298B PhD Seminar: Methodology of Information Studies, Critical LIS - *Prof. Michelle Caswell*

Spring 2020

IS 139 Letterpress Lab (modified to Book Arts) - *Prof. Johanna Drucker*
IS 289-1 Theory and Politics of Collecting - *Prof. Shawn VanCour*
IS 410 Management Theory and Practice for Information Professionals - *Prof. Sarah Roberts*
IS 433 Community Based Archives - *Prof. Michelle Caswell*

Advising History

Faculty Mentorship

The following is a timeline of advising sessions and check-ins, both in-person and via email, with Professor Johanna Drucker, as well as one meeting with Professor Sarah Roberts regarding the UCLA IS PhD program.

2 October 2018: Initial advising check-in and meeting
13 December 2018: Email check-in regarding winter and spring remote advising
19 February 2019: Discussion of spring schedule via email
24 July 2019: Discussion of fall schedule
8 and 22 October 2019: Discussion and revision of issue paper statement via email
15 November 2019: Discussion of applying to UCLA IS PhD program
12 December 2019: Advice on PhD statement of purpose via email
23 January 2020: Chat regarding Clark Library sustainability conference
25 March 2020: Check-in via email
Throughout program: various informal check-ins either in class or in passing
18 November 2019: Chat with Dr. Sarah Roberts regarding applying for UCLA IS PhD program

Outside of formal advising, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Drucker's encouragement of my academic interests and her advocacy allowing me the opportunity to present at the *Sustaining Visions* conference at the Clark Library in March 2020. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Roberts, Dr. Michelle Caswell, Dr. Gregory Leazer, and Dr. Ellen Pearlstein for their encouragement, advice, constructive criticism, and support throughout my time in the MLIS program.

Peer Mentorship and Collaboration

I would like to acknowledge my 2020 cohort as a source of mentorship, advice, collaboration, friendship, and support (both academic and emotional), as well as a number of the IS PhD students, who were wonderful resources during my PhD application process. I have been inspired by my classmates and look forward to seeing their successes. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Courtney Dean, Lori Dedeyan, and Maggie Hughes for their advice, inspiration, and assistance as I became interested in precarious labor in LIS. I was especially honored to be a part of the Spotlight on Labor session along with them at the *Sustaining Visions* conference at the Clark Library in March 2020.

Curriculum Vitae


The linked image cannot be displayed. The file may have been moved, renamed, or deleted. Verify that the link points to the correct file and location.


The linked image cannot be displayed. The file may have been moved, renamed, or deleted. Verify that the link points to the correct file and location.