

REVOLTING LIBRARIANS

by

CELESTE WEST

ELIZABETH KATZ

et al

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION by Celeste West 0

the image

| | |
|---|----|
| THE PASSING OF THE UNICORN, A FABLE by Marilyn Gell | 1 |
| "a library pome" by richard moses | 3 |
| THE LIBERATION OF SWEET LIBRARY LIPS by Art Plotnik | 5 |
| THE UNSINKABLE MISS PHILPOTT by Geoffrey Dunbar | 15 |
| "what is the afternoon for" by Tod Hawks | 18 |
| THE SENSUOUS LIBRARIAN by Kathleen Glab | 19 |

the officious orthodoxy

| | |
|--|----|
| THE RECRUITER SPEAKS by Shirley Olofson | 23 |
| LIBRARY SCHOOL LUNACY by Harleigh Kyson | 29 |
| PHDFFT! anonymous | 33 |
| HOMOPHOBIA IN LIBRARY SCHOOL by Bianca Gutttag | 37 |
| SEX AND THE SINGLE CATALOGER by Steve Wolf | 39 |
| LC LABELING: AN INDICTMENT by Joan Marshall | 45 |
| heads by Bill Hinchliff | 49 |

outreach?

| | |
|---|----|
| LIBRARIES TO THE PEOPLE! by Sanford Berman | 51 |
| HOW TO ANNIHILATE SERVICE TO TEENAGERS by Anne Osborn | 58 |
| DOING IT: MIGRANT WORKERS LIBRARY by Martha Williams | 63 |
| CONTINUING IT? by Jana Varlejs | 67 |
| THE TURKEY TROT IN DALLAS by Don Roberts | 69 |
| "a dewey decimal mind" by Tod Hawks | 71 |

restructuring

| | |
|--|----|
| DEAR SUPERVISORS by Shannon Patterson | 73 |
| TRIALS OF A PARAPROFESSIONAL by Judy Hadley | 77 |
| "sanfranciscopubliclibrarypoem #1" by Elinor Martin | 82 |
| UNITE! by Joan Dillon | 83 |
| "Tribal Letter ONE" by Tim Moffatt | 86 |
| TRIBAL PROCESSES by Jim Holly | 87 |
| "bibliotherapy" by Tod Hawks | 96 |
| WE LOST IT AT THE LIBRARY by Mary McKenney/Edith Ericson | 97 |

in transit

| | |
|---|-----|
| REFLECTIONS OF A 'HEAD' LIBRARIAN by Reva Landy | 109 |
| 3 poems by Elinor Martin | 114 |
| I NEVER WANTED TO BE A LIBRARIAN by Melinda Schroeder | 115 |
| ALTERNATIVE LIBRARIES FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS by Sonia XX | 125 |

lib lit

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE LIBERATED LIBRARIAN'S NEWSLETTER by Linda Katz & Julie Babcock | 131 |
| SIPAPU by Noel Peattie | 133 |
| "rights and permissions" by Elinor Martin | 137 |

onward

| | |
|--|-----|
| FREE LIBRARIES AND OTHER WAYS TO FLY by Elizabeth Katz | 139 |
| NOTES ON A UTOPIAN INFORMATION SYSTEM by Paul Axel | 145 |
| IDENTITY CRISIS by Karen Jemison | 149 |
| GOOD READS | 153 |
| COLLABORATEURS | 155 |



EACH HAS
A STORY
TO TELL...

INTRODUCTION IN WHICH *The* *Grand Design* IS CHECKED OUT AND RETURNED

It is a riproaring satisfaction to publish outright and upfront what some of us really feel about the library world: how it relates to our personal being - our hopes, conflicts, growth. Every profession is being radicalized [*L. radix=root: searching for the root of the matter*] as its practitioners refuse to draw any "conflict of interest" line between their lives and their work. Naturally, this displeases the hierarchs and sachems. Librarians with personal commitment, a "code," do not play follow the leader. They do not take orders as hacks, apologists, or nitpickers. Their responsibility is not to any power structure at all, but to the patron and to the profession. True professionalism implies evolution, if not revolution; those who "profess" a calling have certain goals and standards for improving existence, which necessarily means moving, shaking, transforming it.

Our specific skill is making information accessible to the commonwealth - of which we are members. Thus, objectivity is no more than a useful abstraction - like the line of the equator. Do "balance" your collection with pro-racist, sexist, violence material (on ultramicro-fiche?), but as the ombudsmen of the mediascape, push the other, the human-hearted. Do anti-war bibliographies, whole*earth how-to lists, community survival information, stoned soul programs. The Good News is Advocacy! Participation! Librarians can generate information. Why watch it congeal on a 3x5 world?

We did a book (and therefore planted a tree) because librarians into changing things need a forum: to talk about what should be totally trashed and what feels good; to wink at sacred old cows and explore our newer dogmas; to find each other. A lovely thing about freedom of expression is that it's contagious. More and more librarians realize they too can defy the *CREEPING MEATBALL*. (I think this is a Merry Prankster expression, akin to cartoonist Dan O'Neill's *POOPADOODLE*: a mocking refusal to dignify the big bumtripping

CELESTE WEST ↗

INTRODUCTION

forces of evil, which flourish on reespect.) You'll see the library world's *CREEPING MEATBALL* manifestations exposed throughout this book: sometimes compulsive about power and convention, sometimes passive with irresponsibility, fear, lack of commitment. §Flash! Giant Hamburger: status quo larded, hierarchically layered, creeping backwards in time, and at last happily from vision....



We didn't exorcise it, but maybe we alerted a library school student, or reinforced some lone librarian red taped by a superstructure insensitive to gathering, and making visible, needed information. A lot of us are tired of working in Book of the Month Club Libraries run for the leisure of Mr. and Mrs. Mid-Cult and the profit of the publishing plutocracy.

We didn't realize just how many of us there were until we put out the call in *Synergy* and the *SRRT Newsletter* for contributors to a book about "revolting" librarians. We were somewhat apprehensive about getting any takers, because activists aren't necessarily into writing. Personal solicitation proved that. But our circle was small; we contacted only people we knew about. It was the friends we didn't know we had who contributed most to make this book possible.

I happened to be reading *Cat's Cradle* when articles were coming in. In his novel, Vonnegut plays with a sort of Emersonian over-soul concept he calls a "karass," or mind pool of sympathetic energy which synergizes (2+2=5) when combined. Hearing from all these wild, far away librarians was like discovering members of a karass. The "design" of this book is based on the lovely coincidence some of us found out about each other. We regret not getting viewpoints from people on every different action front. Send us your trip for our "Fellow Traveler" sequel.



DAVE SHREIBER

INTRODUCTION

This book is brought to you by a grant from your friendly cottage-industry media activists. That is, we typed, designed, and illustrated one copy in my dining room, then paid a printer \$1650 earned as librarians keepers to make 4000 more. (This is a long run for "library literature," but we ultimately market researched by the *I Ching*, hexagram #43 - Resolution.) Perfect freedom of the press meant forgoing the services of an established publisher. So we simply transformed ourselves into BOOKLEGGERS PRESS, "*Raggedy Margins, Straight Shootin' Lines.*" Actually, to gamble with some publisher's money would be nice, but one does have to play by his rules and be satisfied with 10% of the take. We wanted to make our own "rules" (non-capitalist, total freedom of expression) and participate in the whole production.

Enter, wonder of modern technology! Photo-offset reproduction takes printing out of the expensive, elitist bracket. The underground press survives by this non-set "cool" type. It is simple to prepare copy yourself. You type/letter/illustrate a page exactly the way you want it to look. The page is photographed and its image burned into a plate from which copies are printed. It is a prole medium in the same way videotape is; individuals can get the communication access corporate interests usually monopolize. The real "information explosion" is going to happen when all media are more democratized this way. As Sadie says in the play *AC/DC*, "When my revolution comes, everybody's gonna be on television all the time....When my revolution comes, there's gonna be Total Access." What will library life be like then?



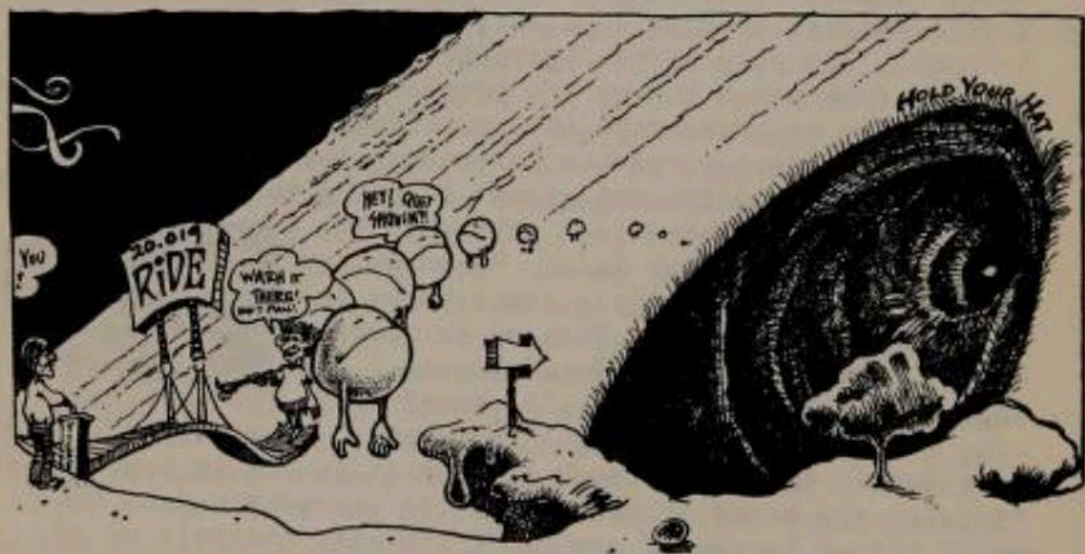
But back to today's adventure. The only mystique involved in doing this book is that it is now in your hands. "Seizing the means of production" is incredibly fun, but still rather barren if one can't liberate channels of publicity and distribution. These are still undisputed territory of the Media Baron. Book distributors, besides being choosy about what they move, take a 40-50% cut of the retail price. So we bought mailing supplies (10% of our retail) and eliminated another middle man. The advertisers were easiest of all to dismiss. It costs \$720/b-w page in *LJ*, \$500 in *Wilson* to create a demand. But the demand for a book about shaking the shackles of our profession is already there. "The establishment library media will announce the book as a news item in the freebee columns, and a little

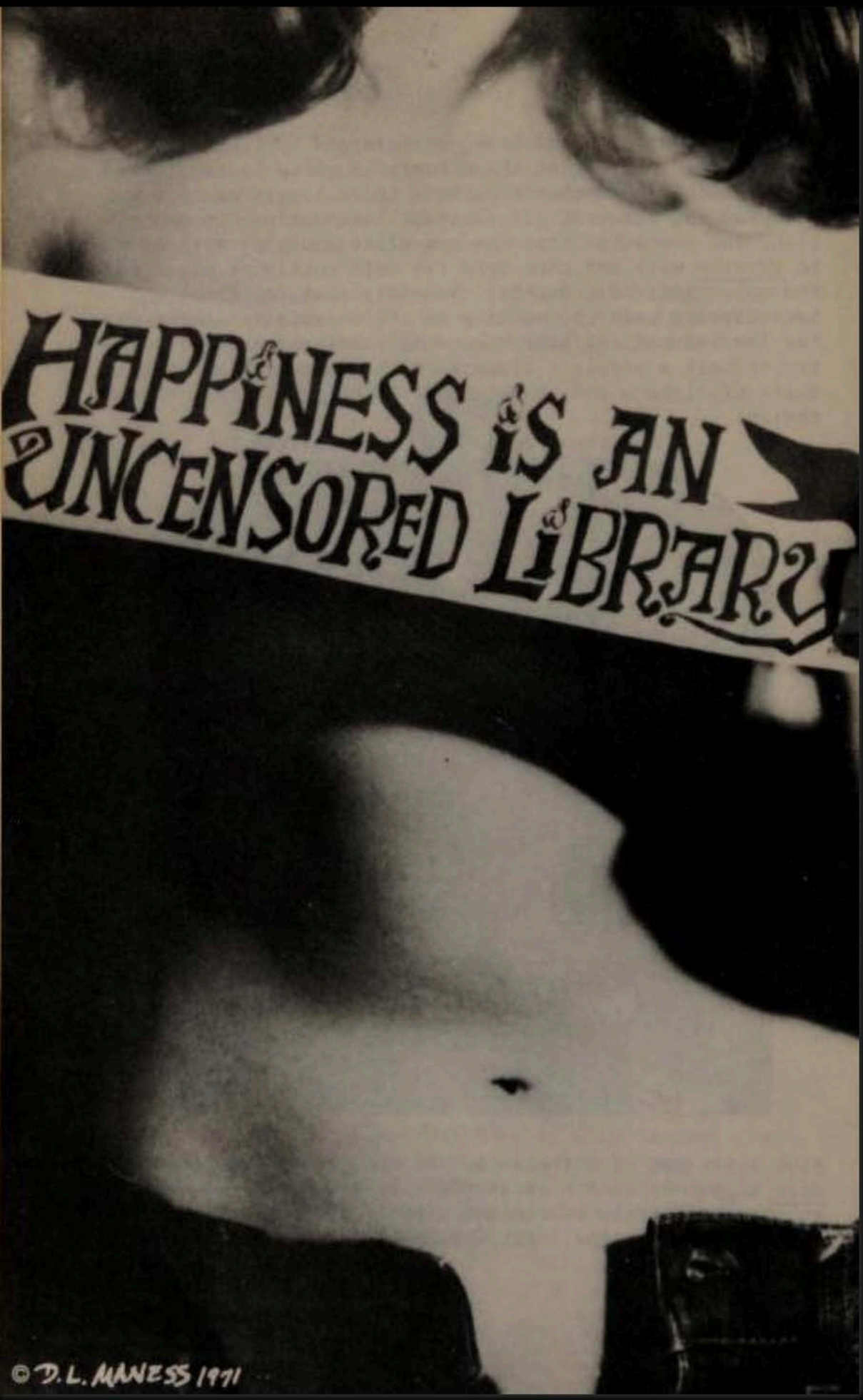
INTRODUCTION

grassroots promotion will do the rest," said the Old Book-legger....

We decided to hang copyright because many of our ideas came from other people who in turn had been sparked by folks who had ideas shared with them which...well, it all became a terrible First Cause problem. Besides, we believe no one has a monopoly on ideas or expression; that we are guests of existence, not proprietors. We're still ownership junkies in lots of ways, but since we're into this book mainly for message and not for food, wine, and shelter as well, © is an empty legal hang-up, like paying one's marijuana stamp tax. Six of our contributors have very good karmic reasons to ©. And we registered our press name to avoid identity crisis.

The audio portions, introducing some articles, were recorded live, around a jug of red mountain. The un-expurgated cassette will soon be available to serious students of bibliobacity. OM-MEDIA-SEE and bless you All....





HAPPINESS IS AN
UNCENSORED LIBRARY

LIBRARIES TO THE PEOPLE

If you're a bank manager, real estate broker, or stock market player, you'll emphatically dig at least one large, well-funded public library in the LA area. It's got everything to satisfy the financier and major-league rip-off artist: *California Business*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Transcript*, *Western Financial Journal*, *Barrons*, *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, *Advertising Age*, and a number of expensive investors' services like *Moody's* and *Standard & Poor*. But if you're young, hip, radical, impecunious, Black, Chicano, or into one of the many "liberation" scenes, you won't dig it so much. Yeah, it stocks *Ramparts* (probably because the mag is indexed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, which doubles as a kind of scriptural authority for serial-picking) and *Ebony* (hardly the voice of Black militancy,) but that's it. The closest it comes to any rag dealing with Third World revolutionary struggles is the *African Violet Review*.

The library profession long ago adopted a *Bill of Rights* that enjoins librarians to stock material covering all possible political and other viewpoints. Yet the library in question no doubt typifies *actual* practice - namely, to offer its readers only safe, orthodox, Establishment-type literature. For this reason, many counter-culturists have (justifiably) come to regard their local school, college, or public library as increasingly irrelevant to their lives. How in hell can the pothead groove on *Business Week* and Norman Vincent Peale? A feminist get excited over *Cosmopolitan* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*? Or an acid-rock fancier find any goodies in the *Reader's Digest*? It ain't easy. Still, longhaired freaks and madassed revolutionaries are as much members of the community as Big Money Makers and hard-hat "straights." Some even pay taxes or tuition to support the library operation. In short, they've got as much right as anyone to expect their libraries to offer them books, mags, and A/V items that *they* can relate to.

Nobody can afford to buy everything he wants to

SANFORD BERMAN

read, see, or hear; people in low income strata even less so than most. And not everybody can afford to browse at infinite leisure at a *Freep* Kazoo or Papa Bach's. The basic rationale for libraries is that they can furnish a broader, fuller range of material than ordinary folks could possibly purchase for themselves or discover in even the best and largest print-pic-phono emporia. Clearly, though, they're not all doing their job.

How, then, can school and public libraries be induced to get with it? Hundreds of activists within the profession are trying their damndest to shake the barnacles off. Among other things, they've demanded that the American Library Association re-affirm its dedication to Intellectual Freedom, particularly by supplying swift, tangible support - in cash and legal aid - to those librarians willing to stand up against troglodyte censors. Already a host of *engagé* colleagues, from Richmond, California, to Groton, Connecticut, have either been fired or heavily shit upon for daring to stock or defend such subversive, obscenity-laden offal as the *LA Free Press*, *Village Voice*, *New Left Notes*, *Evergreen Review*, *Do It!*, and *Soul on Ice*.



Another undertaking has been to publicize and sympathetically rap about the ever-growing output of offbeat and "underground" presses. A group called the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) has published *Alternatives in Print*, a counter-directory to the conventional, Bible-like *Books in Print*. The Bay Area Reference Center in San Francisco issues a dynamic, creative journal, *Synergy*, each number featuring articles, graphics, information sources, and bibliographies on topics like "The First Americans," impending ecological disaster, "Library Service to Prisons," "Greenfeel," and Gay Liberation. And an imaginative book-jockey at UC Davis began *Sipapu*, a homespun newsletter that could easily become a much-needed catalyst/clearinghouse for librarians, teachers, and scholars concerned with ethnic, radical, and UG publishing. Also, several librarians have collaborated with Toronto's Alternative Press Centre in producing and plugging the *Alternative Press Index*, a quarterly guide to the contents of some 125 Movement periodicals. Still others have tried to awaken foot-dragging brethren to their obligations toward non-silent, unshorn, pissed-off, hitherto-neglected readers through articles and letters in the principal library organs.

Nonetheless, the pressure for change - if it's to be effective - needs to come from *two* directions: not

only from inside the traditionally straight-laced, stuffed-shirted, status-quo-hugging profession, but also from outside, from the liberationists and undergrounders themselves, from angry feminists and alienated students, from warring Indians and unshackled Blacks, from proud Chicanos and no-longer-docile Asian-Americans, from boss-burdened workers and impatient peaceniks. It's not merely our right to enjoy easy access to the books, pamphlets, films, tapes, discs, and mags we want, but equally a necessity that the mass of uncommitted and largely uninformed citizens have access to sources that authentically explain what we're all about, that genuinely convey our vision of the "alternative society." If what Middle Amerika knows about the Black Panthers, as an example, derives solely from *Time* and tv, they'll never understand the BPs, nor all the fuss about "persecution" and "genocide." The Movement, in short, if it's ever to shuck its insularity and really get its message to the Amerikan public, must be made more accessible. Libraries are one route.

Blacks who find nothing live in their local library collections should insist on subs to soulful, uppity periodicals like the *Black Panther*, *Black World*, *Journal of Black Poetry*, *Black Rap*, *Nommo*, *Black Theatre*, *Sechaba*, *Black Scholar*, *Lotus Quarterly of Afro-Asian Writing*, *Mozambique Revolution*, *Zimbabwe Review*, *Uptown Beat*, *Liberator*, *Freedomways*, and Britain's *Black Voice*, and ensure that Malcolm X, Earl Ofari, DuBois, Lutuli, Fanon, Cleaver, Mandela, Mondlane, Angela Davis, Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Bobby Seale, George Jackson, and Nyerere, as well as the literary and other produce from Jihad Productions, Emerson Hall, Afro-Am and Black Star Publishers, Drum & Spear, Afram Associates, and the Broadside, Black Academy, and Third World presses get on the bookshelves.

The young, hip, and yip should make it goddamn clear that they want the *local* UG rags in their *local* library plus a generous selection of other "alternative" and rock-oriented publications (e.g., *Rolling Stone*, *Evo*, *Great Speckled Bird*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Other Scenes*, *Nola Express*), not to mention the loving, effervescent creations of irrepressible poet-guru-jesters like Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and Allen Ginsberg.

Bona fide "radicals" and everybody else uneasy with a System that systematically fucks over most of its own people and much of the world should express their reading



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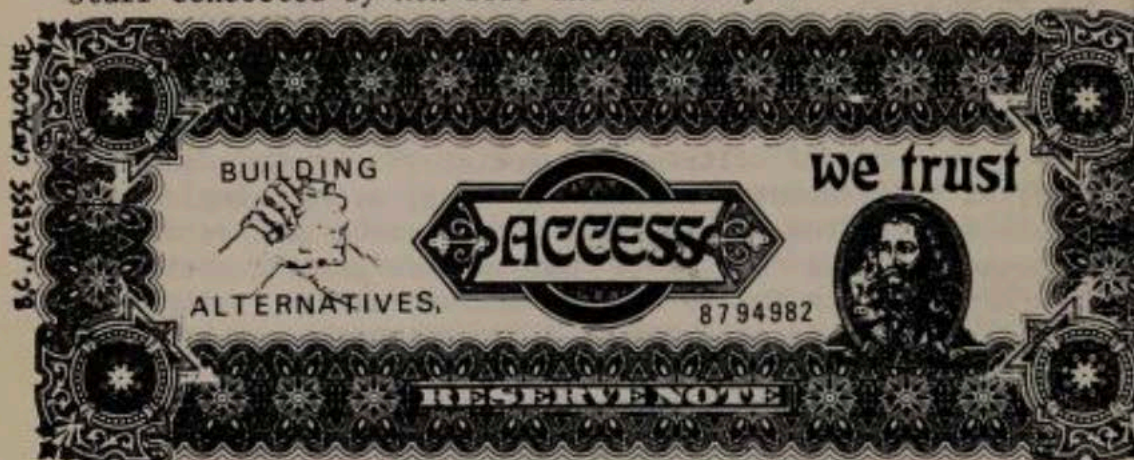
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Bona fide "radicals" and everybody else uneasy with a System that systematically fucks over most of its own people and much of the world should express their reading



tastes to the nearest "Reader's Advisor," emphasizing that the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Progressive* ain't exactly identical to *Liberation*, *Radical America*, and *Tricontinental*. And that Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Sen. McGovern, and Tom Wicker aren't quite the equivalents of Paul Buhle, Dave Dellinger, and Tom Hayden. Similarly, the library that so effortlessly stocks cartoon statements by Herblock and Mauldin needs a little prodding to get the more pungent right-on stuff concocted by Ron Cobb and Ed Badajos.



Chicanos and Puertorriquenos know what fine stuff like *Con Safos*, *Regeneración*, *El Malerriado*, *Grito del Norte*, *Palante*, and *La Raza* has been tumbling out of the barrios but not reaching the library racks. Likewise, the Asian-Americans' *Gidra*, *Getting Together*, and *Hawaiian Pono Journal* are wonderfully rare in most libraries. Ditto the wealth of Amerindian publications, from *Rainbowpeople* to the *Indian Historian*.

It would no less amaze gays to spot *Gay Sunshine* or *Come Out!* in a library mag collection than it would startle a feminist to sight *Everywoman*, *Aphra*, *Ladder*, or the excellent Baltimore quarterly, *Women*. Similarly, David's turned-on sons and daughters would surely prefer the *Jewish Liberation Journal* to *Commentary* or the *B'nai Brith Messenger*.

Teachers and parents anxious to rescue our kids from the spirit-stifling education rut, those dedicated to "free schools" and nonauthoritarian classrooms, can profitably invest a few minutes to clue in Marian on the plentiful books and mags that underlie and stimulate the ongoing breakthrough in pedagogy: *This Magazine is about Schools*, *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, *Teacher Paper*, *New Direc-*

tions in Teaching, England's *Rank and File*, Berkeley's *New School of Education Journal*, and the seminal works by Paul Goodman, Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, A.S. Neill, John Holt, and others.

Draft-age men, as a matter of sheer survival, ought to rock the library boat until it responds to their needs with some of the abundant material on how to thwart Selective Service, including the poop-sheets confected by our Canadian comrades for potential exiles. And maverick, Brass-bugged servicemen could well blow a little smoke to persuade libraries near their bases to provide a few of the nearly hundred GI anti-war rags like *Bond*, *Fatigue Press*, and *Dare to Struggle*, none of which they're likely to encounter in on-base facilities.

Not all workers fit the standard media-image of complacent, flag-waving hard hats. Some think, worry, and act about things like war - and automation-triggered unemployment, upside-down national priorities, sell-out "labor bureaucrats," sexist/racist hiring, training, promotion, and union-joining practices, dehumanizing shop conditions, and international working-class solidarity. They, too, should find on library shelves a little more nourishment than the party-line *American Federationist* or roseate *United Mine Workers Journal*. Why not *Workers' Power*; the grass-roots *Miner's Voice* (U.S.) and *Mineworker* (U.K.); Detroit's *Inner City Voice*, organ of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers; the Institute for Workers Control *Bulletin*; *Fifth Wheel*, a monthly tabloid produced by independent-minded teamsters in the San Francisco Bay Area; and the 35¢ per year (!) *Catholic Worker*?

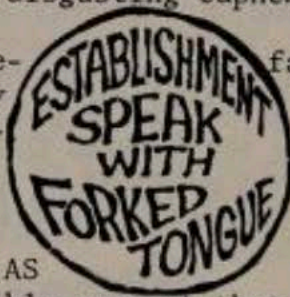


So if you think the professional "insiders" currently attempting to yank library collections into the nitty-gritty NOW are on the right track, help out the struggling brothers and sisters - and incidentally give a push to the whole provincialized Movement - by putting the pressure on those librarians who, while probably reluctant to "controversialize" their fiefs, may be even more reluctant to face a jumbo-sized hassle over preserving their sterile, stagnant, no-wave-making purity.

And on a related tangent: has anyone checked out a card catalogue lately? Well, it's the open-sesame key to

any library's collection, a vital finding-tool. And the chances are overwhelming that it contains an unbelievable pile of crap. Not necessarily the books represented by the 3x5's, but rather the antediluvian subject headings employed to describe *what* the books deal with. (Usually subject-cards are interfiled alphabetically with author and title entries, but they can easily be identified since the headings are either capitalized or printed in red.) Most fair-minded persons would raise a royal shitstorm if they discovered headings like NIGGERS, GOOKS, or KIKES, right? The reality, unfortunately, isn't much better than those hypothetical forms. In fact, *actual, active* headings like NEGROES, KAFIRS, YELLOW PERIL, and JEWISH QUESTION demean whole categories of mankind and subtly reinforce age-old, utterly pernicious stereotypes. NEGROES, for example, is a slaver-spawned term no longer dug by most Black people, who would readily opt for AFRO-AMERICANS, AFRO-BRAZILIANS, etc., as more accurate and acceptable forms. KAFIRS, ostensibly designating the Xhosa and certain other South African peoples, in *Herrenvolk* parlance means "Niggers," YELLOW PERIL freely translates into "Watch out for the greedy, multiplying, rat-juice-drinking, slant-eyed dinks." And JEWISH QUESTION is a disgusting euphemism for gas-chambers and carnal-ovens.

Gays are de-
 tion of Homosexuality
 Children, ac-
 tigious Library of
 scheme, are fit ob-
 gangs or factories -
 "Management." WOMEN AS
 IANS, etc., unmistakably suggest that the "fairer sex" be-
 belongs exclusively in the kitchen or maternity ward.



Africans, among others, are "Native races" or "Primitives," explicitly linked with cannibalism and savagery. And America, unlike Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, has never messed around nastily with "colonies," but only benevolently administered a few "Territories and possessions" (i.e., Puerto Rico, Micronesia, Hawaii, Samoa, the Philippines, Okinawa, the Virgin Islands, etc.).

A book on the shameful mass internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II ordinarily gets the doubly assinine rubric, JAPANESE IN THE U.S. No form acknowledges that Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, and Mexicans *in* the U.S. may also be *Americans*. Instead, they remain perpetual al-

iens, a fate seldom suffered by full-blooded WASPs.

In the religious sphere, the Mosaic God is denoted GOD (JUDAISM), the Muslims', GOD (ISLAM), etc. But the Christian deity is simply and exquisitely GOD. Period. And such examples of pro-Christian favoritism are legion.

Okay. If this sort of embedded racism, Western chauvinism, prudery, misogyny, and senility rubs anyone the wrong way, let librarians know about it. Urge them to humanize their own card catalogues and campaign for changes in the basic subject schema - LC and Sears - upon which most such cataloging is based. We're never going to straighten out the world unless we first straighten out our heads. And libraries can be an important factor in this.

Nice slogan, "LIBRARIES TO THE PEOPLE!" But it can only be realized when people make their libraries invigorating, just, and responsive.



For more information on the "social responsibility" movement among librarians and its multiple Task Forces, contact Tyron Emerick - SRRT Clearinghouse, The Library, Kansas City Community Junior College, 727 Minnesota Ave., 66101. Celeste West edits *Synergy* for BARC, c/o the San Francisco Public Library, Civic Center, S.F. 94102. (It's free to public libraries. Ask yours to get it.) A year's sub to *Sipapu* costs \$2 from Noel Peattie, Route 1, Box 216, Winters, Calif. 95694. Direct orders for *Alternatives in Print* to Ohio State University Libraries, PC, Room 322a, 1858 Neil Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210; \$4. The Alternative Press Centre (Bag Service 2500, Postal Station E, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) will gladly furnish data on the *API* and alternative press scene. *Prejudices and Antipathies*, a full-scale critique of Library of Congress subject heads "concerning people," is available for \$7.50 from Scarecrow Press (52 Liberty St., Box 656, Metuchen, N.J. 08840.) And for details on the fast-proliferating minority publishers, write the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 9 East 40th St., NYC 10016.

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