Silencing Scientists and Scholars in Other Fields: Power, Paradigm Controls, Peer Review, and Scholarly Communication

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Role and Responsibility of Academic Librarians

> If anyone had told me that the kind of censorship you expose occurs in the Western World to the extent that you are now documenting, I would not have believed it. I thought the libraries, at least, would be above reproach. (S. Lang, personal communication June 26, 1986)

One of the primary themes of this book is that many important ideas and many scholars have been silenced, in one form or another, and for one reason or another, for long periods of time. Lang's words about libraries being "above reproach" reflect a common opinion among many scholars that academic librarians should not be willing participants in this silencing process. If the theme of silencing ran throughout the previous chapters, one of the main themes of this chapter would be access that helps break through various silence barriers.

Lang's "above reproach" remark can serve as a reminder that scholars have to depend on libraries, usually to a very large degree. A case can be made that delayed recognition of important ideas might have been delayed for much longer periods of time had it not been for the work of librarians who provided access to material that facilitated further research and discussion and, eventually, recognition. However, a more proactive approach in many cases might have led to quicker recognition.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE

Another major theme of this book is that the truth is often silenced along with scholars and their ideas. Librarians are expected to be above reproach in helping scholars search for the truth, rather than leading them down false paths. In this respect, librarians are often dependent on specialist scholars. Or, a mutual dependence might exist between scholars and librarians, as Swan (1992) discussed in "Scientists and Librarians: An Ethical Bond Must Unite Them" (p. 11).

It is obvious that academic librarians are not expected to be able to distinguish between truths and falsehoods among all the contents of the scholarly literature in their library collections. The reality is that the literature is too extensive and often too specialized and technical to allow librarians to make such distinctions. However, should academic librarians care, and should they be concerned, if they discover that specific material that purports to be true and authoritative might be blatantly false?

An unusual example of untrustworthy material in academic libraries is found in the field of art history. As of December 1994, some of the leading art libraries and public libraries in the United States owned the book *Due Pietre Ritrovate di AMEDEO MODIGLIANI*, published a decade earlier (Durbè, 1984). Unless there is some explanatory material attached to the book (or next to the book on the shelves), or written on the catalog entry, students and scholars might not be aware that the book (a catalog for a Modigliani centennial exhibition) was sequestered soon after it was published. Television, magazine, and newspaper stories narrate that the two sculptures in question are not masterpieces by Modigliani, as the experts all claimed in the catalog. One sculpture was created, according to these stories and to testimony, in 1984 by five university students as a prank, and the other was made by a local painter as an artistic happening. What do the librarians say?

Another example involves art library slide collections. In 1980, a fresco of high quality was discovered under the plaster of a wall in the Siena Palazzo Publico, and the fresco was uncovered. Slides of the fresco were made in Italy by the specialist firm Scala, and are distributed in America and Canada through Sandak, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing. The fresco depicts a castle in the midst of some buildings, surrounded by a protective wooden fence, with two figures standing to the left of the castle and buildings.

The label on the Scala slide carries the attribution for this fresco painting to Duccio, the famous 14th-century painter who was a contemporary of Simone Martini, and the subject listed on the Scala slide is "Surrender of Giuncarico." Librarians, professors, and students who use this slide for study or for classroom presentations might not be aware that the Duccio attribution and the Giuncarico identification for the castle were made by scholars who first enthusiastically attributed this fresco to Simone Martini, with the specific identification of the castle as Arcidosso (rather than Giuncarico). Furthermore, other scholars have accepted and retained the Simone Martini and Arcidosso hypotheses for the painting, and still other scholars have published opinions on the painting with attributions to Pietro Lorenzetti, Ambrogio

Lorenzetti, and Memmo di Filippuccio. In terms of publications, the Duccio attribution is a minority view that has not been accepted and followed by other scholars, particularly the Duccio specialists who have rejected the attribution.

Jannella (1989) described the lack of agreement in this case as an "incredible difference of opinions" (p. 63) and added:

> The observer may be surprised by this variety of attributions, especially since the artists mentioned are all so different. But for the public in general ... and also for those who take a professional interest, the main problem was how to form one's own opinion. How disorienting ... when learned art historians contradict one another so drastically? It is difficult to find one's way through this maze. (p. 63)

How do art librarians and slide librarians react?

These two situations show how librarians can be confronted with difficulties in attempting to help scholars gain access to the truth. Who knows how many such problems relating to other disciplines have turned up, or still exist, in academic libraries?

INACCESSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN

During the Guido Riccio controversy, Martindale (1986) wrote that "the accumulated bibliography is enormous, much of it in inaccessible journals" (p. 260) About a decade later, Kupfer (1996) stated, "Hayden Maginnis generously furnished me with copies of articles pertaining to the *Guidoriccio* debate from the *Notizie d'Arte*, which proved otherwise impossible to obtain, at least from research libraries in this hemisphere" (p. 286). (It should be pointed out that copies of the allegedly "inaccessible" journals that Martindale referred to were actually placed into his own hands, or else were located at his fingertips in the library of the Archivio di Stato di Siena, where he was doing research. In addition to journal articles, that library also has a collection of newspaper articles on the subject, among which there is material that had previously faced peer-review rejection by journals.) Meanwhile, practically all of the scholarly literature that supports the establishment view is quite easily accessible in research libraries in more than just "this hemisphere" to which Kupfer referred.

This episode relating to accessibility leads to discussion of how academic librarians see their roles in scholarly communication, particularly during scholarly controversies that include dissenting views (sometimes published in so-called minor publications) that challenge establishment views (ones that are usually already found among the mainstream literature of the libraries' holdings). Some might feel that with the information explosion and rapidly changing technology it is enough of a job to try to keep up with the administrative chores of acquiring and processing material, without getting involved in questions of accessibility of pertinent, but minor, material, or getting involved in disputes over the reliability of material among the libraries' holdings.

In the case of the Modigliani centennial book (exhibition catalog), librarians might say that because the book and exhibition enjoyed the patronage of the president of Italy and were organized by leading government officials and reputable scholars, if there is anything wrong with the book, it is up to scholars to find out what it is. The same attitude might be held for "retractions" in the scientific literature. If works have been retracted, scholars should be able to find the retraction notices. The librarian's responsibility would end when the journal (or other material) with the retraction notice is processed. If that specific journal is not included among the library's holdings, scholars will have to find out about the retraction elsewhere.

INQUIRIES AND RESPONSES

Inquiries relating to scholarly communication that involve problems of access, the handling of gifts to libraries, or other questions are not necessarily welcome for one reason or another. Sometimes librarians might be unsure of how to answer, so they might become hesitant or evasive or remain silent. In the Guido Riccio controversy, some problems of these types have come up. An editorial by Pacey (1992) in *Art Libraries Journal* gives some idea of what took place: "Some years ago a number of prominent art librarians received long letters from an art historian. ... Some of us were perplexed as to how to respond" (p. 3). The editorial then revealed that Swan (1991) published an article in *Library Trends* relating to this case, and that his article "explores the ethical implications of this case, including the 'lack of response of librarians'" (Pacey, 1992, p. 3). In his article, Swan (1991) concluded that "the difficult truth is that librarians must be both neutral champions of access to all points of view *and* advocates for the important views that are suppressed or unrepresented" (p. 273).

This editorial and the conclusion by Swan (1991) bring to mind some ideas from *Writings on Scholarly Communication* (Morton et al., 1988). The introduction read, in part, "At many points the scholar's world and the librarian's concerns overlap" (p. 22) Morton et al. (1988) also observed that "librarians and scholars are not in the habit of spending much time together or looking at what the other is reading" (p. 22).

Swan's (1991) remark about "advocates for the important views that are suppressed or unrepresented," and Morton et al.'s (1988) references to librarians and scholars spending time together indicate that, at the least, academic librarians and scholars should engage in discussion and, at the most, librarians and scholars are, in a real sense, partners, colleagues, and fellow travelers in the scholarly pursuit of truth. Not all persons view the situation in this same light, however.

In terms of fellow travelers, perhaps a parallel can be drawn between scholars and librarians, on the one hand, and travelers in a Tuscan tale, on the other. The tale illustrates alleged differences and rivalry between Sienese and Florentines. In this tale, a person is wandering in the Chianti countryside between Florence and Siena, looking for the way to Paradise. The person becomes lost, and asks a passerby, who happens

to be Florentine, where the road to Paradise can be found. The Florentine replies, "You are egocentric to believe you deserve to get to Paradise. What makes you think I am obliged to tell you where that road is?"

After that insult, the person makes the same inquiry (about the road to Paradise) of the next person who is encountered, who turns out to be Sienese. The Sienese replies in the following manner: "What a delightful question! I am flattered that you think I might know the answer. In fact, I am searching for the same road myself, and would be pleased to have your company. If we search for it together, perhaps we will have a better chance of finding it." (It seems that this version of the tale was told by a Sienese. Florentines might relate the tale with a different slant.)

If the Florentine and the Sienese in the tale become academic librarians, and if the inquiry about the road becomes the inquiries in the "long letters" mentioned in the *Art Libraries Journal* editorial, and if Paradise is viewed in terms of access to scholarly information, then Swan's (1991) reference to advocates of suppressed views and Morton et al.'s (1988) remark about scholars and librarians spending time together can be seen as having the same purpose.

Librarians and scholars spend time together when librarians seek expert advice from peer-review authorities and specialists about which scholarly material their libraries should acquire. Such activity takes place within the concept of service. Librarianship is often viewed in terms of service. The concept of service might imply a sense of subordination, based on expertise, or lack of it, when academic librarians seek advice from peer-review authorities about which scholarly material to acquire. At the same time, any sense of subordination of this type should be nullified by the realization that scholars are dependent on librarians.

Certainly academic librarians can be more than efficient, valuable, and helpful providers of administrative service. As professionals, they can become, in effect, partners and colleagues of scholars, and, based on some recent library literature, there are some indications that this view is becoming recognized as a vital aspect of scholarly communication. On the other hand, as in any profession, hierarchies and bureaucracies are part of the library profession, with the result being that internal politics become involved. Politics of academic librarianship can intertwine with academic politics in a way that can tend to subordinate librarians to powerful academic leaders and peer-review authorities.

After one of the so-called "long letters" (mentioned in the editorial in *Art Libraries Journal*) was written to members of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the Secretary General of IFLA, Margreet Wijnstroom (personal communication, December 10, 1986) wrote, "I would suggest you let the matter rest, and in any case cease to bother the members of my Executive Board and my staff with matters beyond their control. ... You may regard this note as my final reaction to any further letters you may have in mind." (In this case, Wijnstroom's note was the first reaction, as well as her final written reaction to the inquiries in question.)

In reply to some inquiries, Beth Houghton, at the time Chair of Art Libraries

Society/ UK & Eire (ARLIS/UK & Eire), gave some helpful advice and comments. At the same time, however, she would not reveal the names of her fellow executive leaders at ARLIS/UK & Eire, stating that she spoke, in her role as Chair, for the organization. However, when the Guido Riccio controversy intensified (including discussion of art library practices), Houghton later said she did not want to be quoted, because she had been expressing her personal opinions on the subject. Among his responses to inquiries relating to the same subject matter, Anderson wrote:

> I cannot for the life of me understand ... how a library, which exists to give service to its users, could refuse to let those users know about the materials being catalogued and not being catalogued. I can think of no reason to justify this action, and I would state it to anyone anywhere at any time. I am completely dedicated to the concept of service and will go out of my way at any time for anyone to give superb service. My goal as a librarian is to make every effort to do whatever users would like, to try to react positively to their suggestions rather than negatively, to be on the alert at all times to find ways to improve service to them, to have them leave my presence better off than they were before we came into contact. ... That is how strongly I feel on the issues you raise. (Moran & Mallory, 1988, pp. 129–130)

Comparing reactions of librarians to the reactions of persons in the version of the Tuscan tale described earlier, it would seem that Wijnstroom's reply would resemble the reply of the Florentine passerby: It would appear that Houghton tried to be like the Sienese passerby, but pressures of one form or another (collegial, professional, or political) inhibited her from carrying through completely.

On the other hand, Anderson's remarks would epitomize the Sienese traveler's willingness to help. Furthermore, as he expressed it, Anderson's concept of library service is so expansive, encompassing, generous, and enthusiastic in nature that it would seem, in terms of academic librarianship, to go beyond the realm of subordinate service, to the extent of identifying, in a real sense, with the actual specific research goals of the scholar. On a practical level, Anderson may not have all the time available, or the necessary resources required, to actually carry out all the help he would like to give, but the level of volition to help scholars would tend to make him as much an intellectual colleague as a helpful librarian.

PEER-REVIEW APPROVAL AND LIBRARY ACQUISITION DECISIONS

In an article on scholarly communication, Osburn (1989) wrote to the effect that academic librarians should carry out the wishes of academic peer review authorities: "We have discovered our place in what is now called the scholarly communication system. ... The relative importance of a given output of scholarly communication is determined through its acceptance or rejection by the peer review authority in each field" (pp. 277, 281). He also observed that the system is

already overloaded as a result of the information explosion, and he implied that material that peer review authorities do not approve is "noise" (p. 285). (Such a reference to noise brings to mind the title of the song "The Sound of Silence," because, in effect, Osburn was suggesting that if peer-review authorities decide to silence scholars, academic librarians should also participate in the process of silencing them.)

Osburn's (1989) views have merit to the extent that scholars using academic libraries would have access to the latest material related to paradigms taught in the classroom, and access to research results that have been subsidized by the leading organizations that award research grants. However, to the extent that this material is marked by protection of false paradigms, double standards in peer review, secret peer review, toleration of falsification, and intimidation of various types that lead scholars to not say what they believe, there is the possibility that Osburn, and academic librarians who follow his advice, will become an integral factor in the silencing of scholars. In effect, academic librarians might get caught up in carrying out a phase of the suppression decided on by peer-review authorities.

By contrast, Berman proposed a proactive stance for librarians when academic controversies arise. At one point he wrote specifically about the Guido Riccio controversy, but the thrust of the message would also apply to controversies in any academic discipline:

> Good library procedure would dictate—with respect to a major intellectual and academic dispute like that surrounding Guido Riccio—that extra measures be taken to IDENTIFY AND MAKE AVAILABLE THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF VIEWPOINTS AND DOCUMENTATION. ... Beyond that, given the unquestionable interest in this particular matter, a proactive, truly helpful and alert librarian would also prepare—and possibly duplicate for broad distribution—a special bibliography on the case. Such a resource list should be posted prominently in the library and updated frequently. (Moran & Mallory, 1991b, p. 347)

It is interesting to place Berman's words "IDENTIFY AND MAKE AVAILABLE THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF VIEWPOINTS," written in 1986 and published in 1991, next to the words of Kupfer cited earlier, published in 1996, which reveal that some of the published Guido Riccio material remains "impossible to obtain, at least from research libraries in this hemisphere."

In *Memorandum,* a monthly publication of the ALA's OIF, Krug and Levinson (1991) seemed to give support for Berman's views: "It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority" (p. 3 of Attachment VII).

In effect, scholars are silenced to the extent that their published views are not made available. Therefore, the ideas of Berman and the policies of the ALA (as found in the item from *Memorandum),* if put into practice, would help prevent scholars from being silenced. A problem relating to rhetoric versus reality can remain, however. For exam-

ple, Kaplan (1986) wrote about problems of availability of viewpoints that she faced while doing research in various libraries:

> Intellectual suppression is an issue that concerns us especially. I was alerted again to this problem very forcefully when I visited Europe a few months ago in order to complete some research on the feminist debate. I visited many libraries—mainstream libraries in West Germany—and wherever I went, catalogues were silent on publications by feminists. ... Denial of access to a wide audience and reading public is a scandalous way of muting women. (p. 2)

Furthermore, Kaplan (1986) seemed to imply that librarians were active participants in a silencing of scholars process when she wrote that "it seems that every attempt is made to drown out as many ideas as possible as quickly as possible by isolating them in specialized bookshops and a few, not well known archives" (p. 2).

LOOKING "ELSEWHERE" FOR SCHOLARLY MATERIAL

The material that Kupfer (1996) was seeking, but proved "impossible to obtain," was not material approved by peer-review authorities of the art history establishment. Likewise, the publications "on the feminist debate" that Kaplan (1986) tried to find in libraries in West Germany were not in the mainstream of scholarly publications. These situations would indicate that, despite the views of Osburn (1989), peer-reviewed scholarly material is not necessarily sufficient as far as scholarly communication and scholarly debate are concerned. Instead, it would seem that in situations where publications relating to an academic debate or controversy remain "impossible to obtain, at least from research libraries in this hemisphere," or where "catalogues were silent on publications by feminists," or in other similar situations, academic librarians should heed Berman's suggestion to go beyond the peer-reviewed scholarly literature and look elsewhere in order to identify and make available all points of view.

During the *Cell*–Baltimore controversy, Lang (1993) came to similar conclusions about the need to look elsewhere: "One could not rely on the establishment press for systematic and correct information. One had to look elsewhere" (p. 34). He added, "full documentation must be publicly available to provide the possibility of independent judgment" (p. 37).

In one sense, by deferring to peer-review authorities, Osburn let (1989) himself, and other academic librarians, off the hook in terms of responsibility, whereas Berman's ideas strongly imply that academic librarians have a responsibility to look beyond peer-review decisions in the case of controversies. In Lang's reference to "One had to look elsewhere," the word *elsewhere* means other than, or beyond, the mainstream and peer-reviewed literature. However, elsewhere in this case does not necessarily mean that scholars have to look in places other than academic libraries. Lang himself has given unpublished documentation from some of his own "file" studies to libraries at Yale and Harvard (and perhaps other university and college libraries

as well). It would seem that the donation of such documentation to libraries is in line with Lang's belief that libraries are above reproach.

Lang's file studies consist of compilations of discussions during scholarly debate, including letters to the editor and short articles that have been rejected by peer review authorities. His book *The File* (1981) is an example of an extensive file study that has been published (and it seems that other file studies might also be published). These file studies might provide excellent source material for courses in librarianship and information science, as they would help academic librarians understand problems of scholarly communication that can arise during academic controversies. The precise and extensive documentation found in these studies illustrates some of the activity and tactics that result in the silencing of scholars and their ideas.

A pertinent case involving responsibility and "elsewhere" took place recently. The so-called Dead Sea Scrolls have been in the hands of a group of establishment scholars for a long time. Publication of the texts was piecemeal and scanty, and drawn out over a long period of time. Some scholars who were not part of the "in" group had difficulty getting access to the source material. It seemed like another variation of the game of peer-review control over publication was being played out.

But then, as Baigent and Leigh (1993) pointed out, "the Huntington Library in California disclosed that it possessed a complete set of photographs of all unpublished scroll material" (p. 325). What is more, despite demands to give the photographs to the academic authorities in charge of the scrolls, and seemingly also despite legal threats, the library "announced its intention of making them accessible to any scholar who wished to see them" (p. 326). In effect, the library identified and made available some crucial documentation, despite peer-review authority protest. Interested scholars could go directly to the library (which would provide microfilm copies at a low price). Scholars had to look "elsewhere" for the material as far as the peer-reviewed mainstream literature was concerned, but they did not have to look "elsewhere" as far as a library was concerned, in order to obtain the scholarly material they were seeking.

In this case, the library took the lead in scholarly communication, with an expansive and generous sense of service to scholars that seems to be an embodiment of Anderson's beliefs. In a sense, the library became a colleague of scholars of religious history (and other interested scholars) by providing access to otherwise secret material. This is different from the normal service activity of acquiring and processing published scholarly material. A large part of the scroll material had not been published, and had not passed peer review yet. (In Osburn's [1989] view, would this material be included among the noise that academic libraries should not be concerned with?)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELIABILITY AND FOR CORRECTION OF ERROR

The concept of scholars and academic librarians as colleagues and partners in the search for truth was hinted at by Altick (1974). In his role as a scholar addressing a

group of librarians, he said, "I as a pursuer of truth, you as the dedicated custodians of truth" (p. 4). One of Altick's main themes is that reference works are filled with error and should be corrected:

> The progress of knowledge consists in large part of proving received statements faulty, exploding myths, reordering the sequence of events, and thus giving the lie to reference books. ... Instances of the untrustworthiness of the books we rely upon every day of our professional lives could be cited almost without end. (pp. 15–16)

He then urged librarians and scholars to "maintain a spirit of permanent skepticism toward all the 'information' that is our common stock in trade" (p. 16).

The term "our common stock in trade" sounds much like a term colleagues would use in their conversation and professional dealings. (In this case, Altick, an English professor, was addressing a group of librarians.) At the same time, his reference to "untrustworthiness of the books we rely on" leads to the question of the role of librarians in the correction of error. The errors in question, for the most part, were not made by librarians but by scholars. It might be argued, in this case, that scholars, not librarians, have responsibility for the correction of all these errors that they (the scholars) themselves, along with their colleagues and academic predecessors, all made. Besides, librarians are already overloaded with their own work and beset with their own problems.

On the other hand, part of the librarians' work, especially reference work, is to give reliable and truthful information rather than false and misleading information. If reference librarians are informed of possible clamorous error published in a certain subject, what do these librarians do when users seek information on that subject.? Do they merely repeat the official published view, and wait for updated corrected versions of the mainstream peer-reviewed publications, or do they alert users to the possibility of clamorous error? How long might librarians have to wait to receive publications with the corrections? If there is "untrustworthiness" in relation to the contents of some works, is there necessarily trustworthiness in relation to the proclivity of authors, or their collegial colleagues, to publish admissions and corrections of their errors?

Regarding correction of error, Koshland (1988) once wrote in an editorial in *Science*:

> When mistakes do occur, whether by fraud, sloppiness, or honest error, it is essential that they be corrected as rapidly as possible, and retractions, however embarrassing, must be made. ... Today's scientists need to realize that errors must be handled more formally, and in full view of an anxious public. (p. 637)

Taking into consideration the coverage by *Science* of the *Cell*–Baltimore controversy, and also of the controversy relating to AIDS research, Koshland's words might be considered part of a classic rhetoric versus reality gap as discussed in chapter 3. Librarians might also point out that Koshland was speaking to scientists and editors, and perhaps also to investigative committees of institutions, but not necessarily to librarians.

There are indications, however, that librarians are becoming seriously involved in the process of correction of error, including the taking of a proactive stance in the dissemination of notices of correction of error. Duggar and a team of librarians from Louisiana State Medical Center (Duggar et el., 1995) wrote, "researchers who are simply unaware of retractions may be misled" (p. 18) and "medical librarians face a professional challenge to become involved in the scientific process by educating and informing the medical/scientific community about retractions" (p. 25). They described their library's methods of informing scholars of retractions: "Four departments cooperate to provide five access points to patrons" (p. 28). Moreover, an updated list is compiled of "all the retractions back to 1966. ... For ease of access, the list is kept at the circulation desk" (p. 30). In conclusion, the authors encouraged "other librarians to promote an awareness of retracted literature," and stated that "librarians have an important role in the removal of erroneous information from the medical literature" (p. 31).

The reference to "erroneous information" carries the problem beyond the scope of specific retractions. Some serious errors are not corrected by formal retractions. Many errors are so-called honest errors that elude detection for long periods of time. The same is true for errors caused by fraud or misconduct (however these terms are defined) in research. There is often strong resistance to allowing correction of error or to admitting that a prevailing paradigm in academia might be false. In the passage from the *Science* editorial cited earlier (Koshland, 1988) about mistakes "being corrected as soon as possible," it becomes obvious that retractions are only a part of the correction process in academia.

A recent article by Hernon and Altman (1995) addressed the problems of perpetuation of error in the scholarly literature in terms of "service quality" provided by academic librarians. They observed that "discredited works may remain within collections without any stigma attached to them" (p. 30) and they asked about the effect on service quality in such situations.

The study conducted by Hernon and Altman (1995) reveals that many librarians do not consider the correction of error their responsibility. Instead, the opinion is stated that scholars have the responsibility to decide among themselves what is accurate or inaccurate, and when their decisions are published, librarians will provide access to the publications containing these decisions. In this sense, service quality is technical and administrative, not expansive in the manner that Anderson described. Hernon and Altman affirmed that "service quality must consider, but not be confined to, the validity and reliability of information which a library provides" (p. 35).

If scholars were not silenced so often when they try to correct error, there would seem to be much merit in the view that librarians can let scholars take the responsibility for the correction of error. In any case, it would seem logical that original and primary responsibility for correction of error lies with the scholars who made the error, and then with the specialists in the field who detected the errors.

As can be seen from countless examples throughout history, there is strong resistance among academics to correction of error. Perhaps a case can be made that it is

this very resistance that transfers some of the responsibility for correction of error onto academic librarians. The ball is thrown into their laps, or hit onto their side of the court, so to speak, when they find themselves in charge of the erroneous material amidst, on the one hand, some scholars who do not want the errors to be corrected, and, on the other hand, scholars and students (who did not make the errors) who are counting on the librarians to give them accurate, truthful, and reliable information. Along this line, Hernon and Altman (1995) noted that "one of the basic aims of research is to uncover error" (p. 28).

Their view about one of the researcher's basic aims might be the starting point for a hypothetical case study of the question of responsibility for correction of error on the part of academic librarians. In this hypothetical case, scholars involved in a research project, while working in the library, detect what they feel is serious error. At a certain point, they discuss the situation with the reference librarian, who has some specialized knowledge in the field. They ask the reference librarian about the existence of other possible material that might help confirm the error or explain it. The scholars then write an article that documents their case and submit it to a journal, only to have it rejected. They submit it to another journal. All the time they are continuing their research, and they inform the reference librarian about the peer-review rejection and the new submission.

At this point, in this hypothetical situation, another scholar starts researching, independently, the same subject, and goes to the reference librarian for assistance. If the reference librarian believes that librarians have no responsibility for the correction of error, the assistance given in this case might consist of providing the bibliographical references pertinent to the subject. If the bibliography contains erroneous material, it is up to the scholar to detect it.

Now suppose that after this, the mutual interest in the subject matter causes the paths of this scholar to cross with that of the scholars who detected the errors. The scholars inform the other scholar about the alleged serious error that they had detected, and relate that they had discussed these errors at length with the reference librarian. At this point, what opinion might this scholar have of the reference librarian who kept such vital information hidden?

If, on the other hand, the reference librarian felt some responsibility for correction of error, the scenario in this hypothetical case might be different. At the very least, the librarian might ask the scholars if they would want other scholars who are interested in the subject to contact them. The librarian might also suggest the names of other scholars who might be keenly interested and who might be able to provide further leads. And, based on knowledge of publications in the field, the librarian might give some useful suggestions about which journals might be inclined to publish the new research. The librarian might also alert other reference librarians in other libraries about the developments.

If nothing else, activities of this sort would help bring discussion of the subject out into the open, which would facilitate a type of network of scholarly discussion that could help counter the tendency toward isolating and silencing scholars in such situ-

ations. If strong and persistent peer-review rejection prevails, the librarians can say they did their part in bringing the material to the attention of scholars for critical analysis and debate.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ACTIVITY

The academic librarian's role does not have to end as it does in that hypothetical case study, however. Just as other librarians are interested in combatting intellectual suppression by means of a variety of intellectual freedom activities, academic librarians might be interested in cases of peer-review suppression that are based on double standards, toleration for falsification, and the protection of false paradigms. If this type of intellectual suppression is detected, librarians can take some steps that will aid scholars in their struggles to avoid being silenced.

One obvious step would be to form intellectual freedom (IF) groups that would document and evaluate cases that are brought to their attention. These groups could exist at various levels, ranging from individual libraries to geographical areas to professional organizations. In his "Ethical Bond" article, Swan (1992) envisioned that librarians and scholars "might well discover a healthy symbiosis that would promote, in collegial, nonintrusive, and efficient ways, a free and ethical environment for both inquiry and communication" (p. 11). In fact, an ethical bond between librarians and scholars would be the basis for such IF activity. These IF groups could become effective settings for such symbiosis, and for forums for the inquiry and communication to which Swan alluded.

Organization and activity could follow that of other IF groups within ALA, with special emphasis on specific cases of academic and peer review suppression. J Campanario (1996b) Nissani (1995) and others have documented numerous cases, from past centuries to the present, of peer-review suppression that resulted in long-term delay of correction of error and long-term delay of recognition of important discoveries. IF activity might have shortened the time necessary for the correction of error and for recognition of these discoveries.

Even if such activity did not result in definite resolution of cases, one of the most important functions would be to get the facts and issues out into the open. Peer-review tactics of double standards, secrecy, personal attacks, or false charges and claims are more likely to be successful and unnoticed by the larger academic community if the scholar whose work is being suppressed is isolated. The more an issue is out in the open, the more opportunity there will be for an increasingly larger group of scholars to evaluate the documentation relating to the issue.

One possible positive result of such IF activity could be improvement in peer review in general as well as in specific cases. Quality control, a rather frequent term used to describe the purpose of peer review, might extend to peer review itself in cases where suppression is suspected and detected. A major positive potential result could

be that librarians, in a working out of an ethical bond that Swan (1992) envisioned, could have a role in helping to keep scientists and other scholars from being silenced.

Just so there is no misunderstanding about the scope of potential IF activity of this type by academic librarians, it should be pointed out that it would not necessarily involve second guessing of referees and editors on specific manuscripts they have rejected, or of erroneous manuscripts that they have accepted for publication. Multiple rejections do not mean by themselves that there is a case of intellectual suppression in the works. The manuscript might be of such poor quality, or so irrelevant and inappropriate for specific journals, that rejection decisions would be the most logical decisions.

On the other hand, academic librarians may be able to suspect, in a logical manner, a severe potential intellectual suppression case after only a single rejection, based on the subject matter, and based on the nature of the rejection. A challenge to a paradigm is obviously a likely candidate for suppression. So are manuscripts that purport to detect and correct serious errors in works in prestigious journals whose authors are famous and powerful persons in academia. The histories of science and other academic disciplines are filled with cases of suppression of challenges to paradigms that were believed to be true but turned out to be false. The *Cell*–Baltimore case illustrates how attempts to make corrections can be suppressed.

Another point that is important to keep in mind is that IF activity would not result in the suppression or censorship of the erroneous works that are being challenged. Instead, the main thrust of the activity would resemble that proposed by Berman, namely, to identify and make available the documentation in a manner as complete and accessible as possible. Such activity would not necessarily try to get editors to change their minds, nor would it try to bypass or substitute for peer review. Instead, it would supplement peer review.

If there is validity to a manuscript that peer-review authorities reject, the contents of the manuscript will most likely eventually appear somewhere in so-called minor publications or underground publications. (In some cases that Lang has become involved in, much pertinent documentation has been accumulated in the form of "file" studies.) If librarians place such material alongside the material that is being contested and challenged, scholars will be provided with a more complete documentation of the scholarly record. The truth will become easier to ascertain if as much documentation as possible is made available, instead of suppressing that which is believed to be false. By providing such access, academic librarians would not only be custodians of the truth, to repeat Altick's (1974) expression, but also illuminators of the truth as a result of IF activity. Without such additional material, it is possible, in some cases, that scholars will not even be aware that a challenge was made, in which case it would be virtually impossible to make a critical analysis of the evidence. Or, they may be aware that a challenge was made, but the material provided in the peer-reviewed literature may be so slanted that scholars do not get a clear idea of the real situation, as far as the scholarly record is concerned. In *Service Quality in Academic Libraries*, Hernon and Altman (1996) made some pertinent observations: "If the materials are

not available ... then no higher order outcomes (such as the enhancement of learning, the facilitation of research, or the impact on intellects) will occur" (p. 6).

A question might be raised about whether academic librarians themselves feel they have responsibility for such an IF role. Another question is how the so-called electronic publishing era and the Internet will affect such a potential role for librarians, and also how it will affect the peer-review process itself. As Hernon and Altman (1995) observed, "The proliferation of electronic journals and computer networks affords more opportunity for misconduct" (p. 29). In terms of correction of error, will librarians and scholars be able to keep up with it all?

14

Silencing Scholars in the Electronic Age

In recent times, the proliferation of new journals in many disciplines has given a large number of scholars the chance to find a place for publication after they have received peer-review rejections from the older, traditional, and more prestigious journals. The electronic age, with electronic publishing and networking, will provide, at least in theory, the opportunity for all scholars to have their say on all matters about which they want to communicate their opinions and findings. It would seem, on the surface, that silencing of scholars will soon be a thing of the past. Peer review, under these circumstances, can be bypassed. Along this line, a recent article discussing electronic publishing (Reier, 1997) stated that "the Internet democratizes information," and, "without elitist editors to exclude material ... people can search for anything they want" (p. 21a).

In fact, Judson (1994) already wrote about the alleged "End of Peer Review:" He claimed that "the transformation brought in by electronic publishing ... will open up the processes by which scientists judge each other's work, making them less anonymous, capricious, rigid, and subject to abuse, and more thorough, responsible, and accountable" (p. 94). In effect, Judson envisioned the current peer-reviewed scholarly publishing system evolving into a continuous "open dialogue and collaboration among contributing scientists, editors, expert commentators, and readers" (p. 94). It would seem that Judson envisioned the traditional

form of so-called invisible colleges being transformed into a system of electronic colleges.

POWER, AUTHORITY, AND ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

The phrase "open dialogue and collaboration" in Judson's (1994) analysis sounds very much like the current rhetoric of academia with the present peer-review system. At this point, how can anyone be sure that there will not be a rhetoric versus reality gap in the electronic age as well? As long as peer-review authorities continue to control the vast lucrative sums of money for research grants, and continue to control, to one degree or another, promotion and tenure and prize decisions, how is it possible to be sure that paradigm dependency, paradigm protection, double standards, toleration of falsification, intimidation, retaliation, and fear to say what you believe will not continue to be factors leading to silencing of scholars in the electronic age?

A key issue is whether peer-review authorities will give up control of what specific research gets funded and of what material is taught in the classrooms as paradigms in academia. A related issue is whether any electronic publishing system will have a mechanism that can force the peer-review authorities to lose such control.

If a dissenting scholar in the past was regarded as something of a voice in the wilderness in terms of a challenge to a well-entrenched paradigm, many dissident scholars forming part of a computer network might be regarded as a chorus of discordant voices in a much larger and overcrowded intellectual wilderness. There does not seem to be any assurance that the impact of dissenting voices will necessarily be much different in the future than in the past. Also, if scholars are afraid to say what they believe when writing in journals, books, or when speaking during scholarly conferences or doing interviews, might they not have similar fears about expressing their ideas in electronic publications?

PROBLEMS OF QUALITY CONTROL

There is no question that the amount of information and the number of opinions and theories on record will increase greatly. How will all this information be processed and absorbed, and how will the processing affect impact? At present, the HIV–AIDS hypothesis is the paradigm in AIDS studies and AIDS research. It is taught in medical schools, vast sums of money for research grants are based on it, and the mass media report extensively on it as if it were proven fact. Serious challenges have been made, as discussed earlier, in a variety of publications and discussions, but the impact has not been strong enough to change official policy. If these challenges had been carried out by means of an elaborate and extensive electronic network and electronic publishing campaign, it does not seem that much would have changed at this point. Scholarly challenges carried out on the Internet or other forms of electronic

communication might be regarded by peer-review authorities as the equivalent of ham radio operators trying to compete with major mass media networks for impact on public opinion.

In an open electronic publishing system that does not prohibit expression, there will be a huge swirling mass of information and ideas in many different fields. At a certain point, the sheer volume of material on a specific academic subject may make it a strenuous task to read and analyze all of the material on a topic in which a scholar is interested. In this case, questions of indexing and abstracting, bibliographical control, and quality control seem bound to remain, and also seem bound to increase in scope.

At present, there are notions of major (or mainstream, core, or primary) scholarly publications, as distinguished from so-called minor or fringe publications. As electronic publication advances, there might be attempts to set up two-tier or multiple-tier levels of scholarly information, with the academic professional societies and associations, comprised of leaders in their disciplines, giving the academic equivalent of a seal of approval for studies they like, and withholding approval from those they do not like. It seems that the NSF has already set up an electronic scholarly communication system with restrictions on the material that will be allowed to be discussed, and restrictions relating to which specific scholars will be allowed to have access to the material. Shapley (1997) reported that the Director of NSF "controls who uses" (p. 11) this system (which is called Very High Performance Backbone Network Service), and that the NSF has implemented an "'acceptable use' policy" that restricts "use to researchers whose projects have gone through a peer review" (p. 15).

CYBERSPACE CENSORS

In any case, for scholars conducting research amidst a rapidly swelling sea of information, it would seem that efficient indexing and abstracting would be of utmost importance. Rodney (1995) regarded the "lack of indexing" among the defects of electronic publishing. She also foresaw serious problems relating to intellectual freedom:

> If too many libraries embrace an electronic means of disseminating and preserving information, the average citizen's intellectual freedom and the right of access to information will be controlled because a small group of people will determine what is included on the internet. ... Those persons with the money will make the rules, and those who invest billions in the new digitized world will have control of access to knowledge and information, and limitation of intellectual freedom is boundless. (pp. 76–77)

It would seem logical and natural that the same types of material that were the targets for censorship and suppression during the preelectronic publishing age would remain targets for censorship and suppression during the electronic publishing age. In fact, there have already been some recent widely reported attempts at censorship of electronic publishing. Even before that, a warning about the potential for such cen-

sorship was made by a professor at California State University (in its Florence, Italy branch) several years ago (during a discussion of the Guido Riccio controversy). Electronic peer-review rejection might be called *peer blackout.*

A recent front page newspaper headline read "Germany Forces CompuServe to Censor Sex on the Internet." This article by Martin (1995) begins by stating "Germany has imposed strict censorship on the Internet ... to ban worldwide access to about 200 bulletin boards" (p. 1). In another instance, it appears that the German Communications Ministry is also intent on banning some material that authorities do not consider to be politically correct (James, 1996a). As might be expected, once a specific target for censorship is zeroed in on, calls for censorship of other subjects begin to be heard. Internet access providers have been asked to "refuse to carry messages that 'promote ... mayhem and violence,'" and it is reported that "efforts are growing to restrict certain types of information on computer networks" (Lewis, 1996, p. 2).

The "certain types of information" that are targets for censorship can include material that peer-review authorities do not like. According to a news item from Reuters (1996), Internet providers in Communist China have come under the control of some government organizations, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It would not seem unusual if academic learned societies and professional organizations in other countries were to seek to exert some form of peer-review influence over academic material transmitted via electronic publishing. (In addition to being blackballed and isolated, scholars might also become blackpaged.)

Some recent legal action has shown that censorship of electronic communication can be far reaching, even if the specific target of censorship is a limited one. Andrews (1997) reported that the German government "indicted the head of CompuServe Corp.'s on-line computer service," with the accusation of "trafficking in pornography" (p. 13). The same company was also charged with failing "to block access to Internet sites offering Nazi and neo-Nazi material" (p. 13). This case was described as "a turning point in the debate over controlling pornography on the Internet" (p. 13). Furthermore, according to Andrews, some of the sites that were prohibited as a result of the German government's attempt to crack down on pornography actually "dealt with issues such as breast cancer and acquired immune deficiency syndrome and had nothing to do with pornography" (p. 13).

Censorship of electronic communication is not imposed only by governments. The providers of Internet services themselves might feel inclined to impose censorship on their clients in order to avoid the type of legal problems that CompuServe has been facing. In fact, Johnston (1997) revealed that one such provider, AOL Ltd., has revised and updated its contracts with subscribers. He observed that these new contracts forbid subscribers from "posting or transmitting any content that is 'unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, seditious, blasphemous, hateful, racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable'" (p. 9). The vague nature of the wording in this case increases the possibility of a chilling factor that results in

silence in the form of self-censorship. For example, the executives of AOL Ltd., the leaders of powerful institutions, and the leaders of governments and governmental agencies may have different views from the subscribers about which material is abusive, vulgar, or objectionable. (As discussed in Chapter 11, a passage from the Talmud did not seem objectionable to a professor at Chicago Theological Seminary, but it was considered objectionable by powerful leaders of that institution, with the result that the professor was silenced and punished.)

In addition to governments and Internet service providers, librarians can also restrict access to material in the electronic publishing system that is considered objectionable. Cohen (1997) described a situation in "Florida's Orange County Public Library System" in which a "Web filtering service" was put in place "so that patrons cannot view computer pornography" (p. 9). If academic authorities on specific campuses deemed certain material to be objectionable because it is politically incorrect, might they not try to employ similar filtering services to prevent access to such material on campus?

Electronic publishing can also lead to silencing of scholars in a paradoxical manner. Golden (1997) stated that during a renovation of the Main Library of the San Francisco Public Library "book space" ended up being "sacrificed for computer terminals" (p. 20). He related that as a result of this renovation, "More than 200,000 books ended up in the dump" (p. 20), including many books that were out of print and not easily accessible.

Golden's (1997) account deals with a situation in which the electronic publishing phenomenon crowds out printed books. In this case, there is not room for everything, and some material must be sacrificed. According to Lipetz (1991), peer-reviewed material might get crowded out, in the sense of being difficult to locate, as a result of electronic publishing. He concluded that electronic publishing will not bypass peer review, but instead cause a greater need for it. In effect, Lipetz viewed the situation as one in which there will be a greater need for quality control amid an information overload that could get out of control: "I shudder to think what modern technology could accomplish for us today if everything written were similarly accepted for publication without review" (p. 131). The result would be, according to Lipetz, "a deluge of publishable garbage" that would "shift the reviewing process from before-publishing stage to the after-publication stage" (p. 131). Lipetz expressed the hope that technology will help make the peer reviewer's work more efficient. (p. 132). One obvious potential way in which modern technology can help the peer reviewer is through the use of filters that eliminate the "garbage," thus making the search for material accepted by peer-review authorities easier for scholars. As far as impact is concerned relating to what material is taught in classrooms, and to which scholarly research is funded, it does not seem to make much difference whether peer-review authorities filter out unwanted material before the printed publication stage or after the electronically published stage.

Although the alleged deluge of garbage may signal a greater need than ever for peer review, Dalton (1995) suggested that the sheer volume of new information pub-

lished electronically may be too great for peer review to keep up with. It would seem possible that at a certain point there will not be enough peer reviewers to go around to even read all of the works, much less make detailed analyses and recommendations for them. At the same time, electronic publishing will improve scholarly communication of the type known as invisible colleges. Scientists and other scholars, either on an individual basis or in groups, can discuss their findings with each other much more quickly, and in a much more efficient manner, before these ideas are formally presented to the larger academic or scientific communities.

Although much has been written about electronic publishing, it seems too early to state with any certainty how the electronic publishing phenomenon will bear on the silencing of scholars in the long run. Electronic systems have been described as "a crazy quilt of both utopian and Orwellian possibilities" (Corcoran, 1996, p. 10). The utopian aspect can apply to its expansive nature, and to its aid to scholarly communication of an invisible college nature, whereas filtering services are among the Orwellian possibilities. These apparent polar opposites of utopian efficiency and freedom of expression and Orwellian censorship can actually exist side by side in certain situations. For example, a scholar might publish, electronically, new findings and hypotheses that most likely would not have passed traditional peer review because they disagreed with a paradigm or part of a paradigm. Graduate students who are writing dissertations on the same subject might come across this new work and wish to include it as part of the dissertation. They discuss it with their professors and advisors, who advise against using the material, even hinting that inclusion of such material might result in failure. Wishing to get their degrees, the students omit the material.

Thus, in this hypothetical situation, scholars can bypass the peer-review system in an unbridled manner that prevents them from being silenced. At the same time, silence barriers can subsequently be created around the work that bypassed peer review, thus limiting its citation, diffusion, and impact in future publication and classroom discussion. It can be on (electronic) site, but still be kept out of mind.

It history and human nature are guides, it seems that the electronic publication revolution will develop and expand side by side with continuous attempts by authorities to silence unwanted ideas. These silencing attempts on the part of authorities will continue to face the "Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind," which will incessantly try to penetrate, and eventually break down, whatever barriers are erected to silence scholars. If the adage that truth will eventually prevail has validity, the expansive and creative aspects of the electronic publishing phenomenon should be key factors in helping scholars to overcome silence barriers, to distinguish between truth and falsehood in the scholarly literature, and to discover new truths in their academic disciplines.