

EMBRACING THE FEMINIZATION OF LIBRARIANSHIP

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The piece of writing that got me thinking more deeply about the feminization of librarianship appears to have little if anything to do with gender: it was an article in the *Library Journal* by Rick Anderson.¹ And yet, I think it is very much about gendered, as well as other *Othering* anxieties in librarianship. In the spring of 2015 I had the opportunity to join five faculty members at my university in a multi-disciplinary seminar focused on gender, creativity and change.² This seminar allowed me to put the Anderson article into conversation with several other texts, including Melodie Fox and Hope Olson's chapter, "Essentialism and Care in a Female-Intensive Profession."³ I presented provisional thoughts in relation to these analyses at the *Gender and Sexuality in Information Studies Colloquium* in Vancouver,

1 Rick Anderson, "Interrogating the American Library Association's 'Core Values' Statement," *Library Journal*, January 31, 2013, <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/01/opinion/peer-to-peer-review/interrogating-the-american-library-associations-core-values-statement-peer-to-peer-review/>.

2 I owe gratitude to my colleagues at University of Redlands for introducing ideas that helped to germinate this chapter: Kathleen Feeley, Dorene Isenberg, Victoria Lewis, Jennifer Nelson, and Pauline Reynolds. And, as always, my thanks to Lua Gregory.

3 Melodie Fox, and Hope Olson, "Essentialism and Care in a Female-Intensive Profession," in *Feminist and Queer Information Studies Reader*, eds. Patrick Keilty and Rebecca Dean (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2013), 48-61.

April 2016.⁴ The reading and writing that went into the following chapter provided an opportunity to continue to explore “embracing” our feminized labor as librarians.

TROUBLESOME “CORE VALUES”

In 2013 the *Library Journal* published Rick Anderson’s article titled, “Interrogating the American Library Association’s ‘Core Values’ Statement,” in which Anderson parses what he determines as “internal contradictions” generated from the inclusion of “questionable ‘core values’.”⁵ The “Core Values of Librarianship” statement summarizes the essential values of “modern librarianship” as expressed in a variety of key documents published by the American Library Association (ALA), including the *Library Bill of Rights*, the *Freedom to Read* statement, *Libraries: An American Value* statement, and are codified in the *ALA Policy Manual*.⁶ Distilling and articulating a set of values at the core of the professional identities of a broad and varied profession must have been an arduous task, taken on by consecutive Task Force on Core Values groups in 1999 and 2004. In their recent special issue of *Library Trends*, editors Selinda A. Berg and Heidi LM Jacobs wrote that despite the problematic nature of attempting to reflect “what values were at the core of an incredibly diverse profession made up of a wide array of types of professional librarians who serve even more diverse populations of users”⁷ the “Core Values” statement provides a touchstone for “[c]onversations about the values that provide the framework for librarian’s work as individuals, as institutions, and as a profession [that] are critical to highlight both our points of convergence and points of divergence.”⁸ Herein I highlight some points of divergence.

⁴ Many thanks to the organizers Emily Drabinski, Tara Robertson, and Baharak Yousefi and to sponsor Rory Litwin.

⁵ Anderson, “Interrogating.”

⁶ American Library Association, “Core Values of Librarianship,” June 29, 2004, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/corevalues>.

⁷ Selinda A. Berg and Heidi LM Jacobs, “Introduction: Valuing Librarianship: Core Values in Theory and Practice,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 3 (2016): 460. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>

⁸ *Ibid.*, 462.

In his *Library Journal* article, Anderson wrote that *Access*, *Intellectual Freedom*, and *Service* were the primary “Core Values” whereas *Democracy*, *Education and Lifelong Learning*, *Social Responsibility*, and *The Public Good* were amongst the troublesome, conflicting “Core Values.” In trying to process my indignation in relation to his claims I came to the conclusion that his argument reflected a particular dominant positionality that assumes a universal perspective and is situated in gendered discourses on library, information, and knowledge work. What if we examine the “Core Values” statement from the opposite perspective from which Anderson makes his claims? Those “Core Values” that Anderson considers inessential are, from an alternative perspective, that which drives librarianship, and to which all other “Core Values” are subordinate, or rather, from which they draw meaning? Would this reconceptualization orient our practices as library and information (LIS) professionals toward significantly reconsidered ethics of service and of access?⁹

Furthermore, the arguments that Anderson uses to discredit the “Core Values” of *Social Responsibility* and *The Public Good* might also be used to question *Access* and *Service* as possibly empty signifiers: Anderson suggests that the concepts of “‘social responsibility’ [and ‘the public good’] without an agenda [are] meaningless.”¹⁰ Perhaps true. But it is equally valid to suggest that the values of *Access* and *Service* are meaningless without an agenda. What drives us to provide access and services in libraries? Commercial, for-profit entities can and do provide the kinds of access and services that libraries do—for a fee, generally, or, a cost of some sort. Libraries provide access and services for fundamentally different purposes that are contingent on understanding library work as framed by commitments to social responsibility and that are situated in particular communities.

Anderson’s emphasis on access and service is common in librarianship. Whether explicitly, implicitly, primarily, or tangentially, a significant amount of literature in and about LIS focuses on issues of access and providing service(s), yet access and services are rarely challenged or examined as the central tenets of our profession. I

9 Gabrielle Dean, “The Shock of the Familiar: Three Timelines about Gender and Technology in the Library,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (2015). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/9/2/000201/000201.html>

10 Anderson, “Interrogating.”

will argue that this emphasis, to the exclusion of other professional values, is deeply wound in the gendered discourses of librarianship. As a response, I will explore the ways in which the feminine-coded qualities of librarianship and the “feminization” of library work may be aligned with (re)asserting an agenda for libraries that builds from a foundation of serving the public good and of social responsibility.

OUR FEMINIZED LABOR

Most readers of this chapter are likely aware that librarianship in North America has been a predominantly white, female workforce, at least since the late 19th Century.¹¹ In part we can thank Melvil Dewey for this. Dewey founded the School of Library Economy at Columbia College in 1887, admitting and actively recruiting women, and with a firm belief that women were well suited to library work: “The natural qualities most important in library work...are accuracy, order (or what we call the housekeeping instinct), executive ability, and above all earnestness and enthusiasm.”¹² Likewise John Cotton Dana, a Dewey contemporary and supporter, described women’s natural affinity for library work along the lines of “conventional stereotypes of the ideal woman as pleasant, malleable, helpful, accurate, detail-oriented, naturally intuitive, but not too smart.”¹³ Dewey, and others, also recognized women as more economical, requiring lower wages. Limited opportunities for educated women, coupled with a willingness to conform or concede to feminine stereotypes, led to the lower paid, lower status workforce and profession. Not only did librarianship become, and has remained, female intensive, but also library work became characterized as ‘feminine.’ Feminized professions—including nursing, social work, and paralegals—are predominantly service-, support- and care-oriented, and often require more intensive affective labor. As opposed to masculine-coded

11 Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: Macmillan Information, 1979); Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, “The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016). doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0015.

12 Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 163.

13 *Ibid.*, 165.

productive labor, whether that is making and building, requiring increased education and expertise, or simply defined as productive based on wage scales. Roxanne Shirazi has suggested that academic librarianship can be seen as the reproductive labor of the academy, supporting the productive labor of research and scholarship.¹⁴ It is also useful to recognize that women's work, or more broadly feminized labor, is often invisible. Care, maintenance, and service work done well are seamless in such a way as to be invisible, and often take place in private spaces. Here I highlight the correspondence between care work that takes place behind closed doors, whether in the home or institution, and maintenance work that may or may not take place behind closed doors, such as janitorial work, work visa processing, and copy cataloging.

This only scratches the surface of productive versus reproductive labor discourses, leaving out much, including intersectional experiences of feminized work. Feminized, reproductive and maintenance work are as much about class, ethnicity and race as they are about gender. Miere Laderman Ukeles' late 1960s and 1970s photographic and performance art work on "care" and "maintenance art" drew attention to the parallels between the nearly invisible work of care and maintenance.¹⁵ A 1974 photograph titled *Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object* is a portrait of the artist, a white woman, a museum conservator, a brown man, and a custodian, a white man.¹⁶ In the black and white photograph, both men wear uniforms, Ukeles does not and wears all white, thus calling attention to their difference and signifying a lower social status of the men in uniform. In the parallel performance piece Ukeles cleans the protective display case for a piece of art work, naming this work "dust painting." Once the work has been defined as "art" the responsibility for the cleaning be-

¹⁴ Shirazi makes this claim specifically in the context of digital humanities work.

Roxanne Shirazi, "Reproducing the Academy: Librarians and the Question of Service in the Digital Humanities," July 15, 2014, accessed February 2, 2016. <http://roxanneshirazi.com/2014/07/15/reproducing-the-academy-librarians-and-the-question-of-service-in-the-digital-humanities/>.

¹⁵ Miere Ukeles, "Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition 'Care.'" accessed February 10, 2016. http://www.feldmangallery.com/media/pdfs/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf.

¹⁶ Miere Ukeles, "Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object." http://www.learn.columbia.edu/courses/fa/images/large/kc_femart_ukeles_79.jpg

comes that of an art conservator. The same work—cleaning a display case—is transformed when performed by a custodian, an artist, or an art conservator. “Ukeles’s role as ‘artist’ allowed her to reconfigure the value bestowed upon these otherwise unobtrusive maintenance operations, and to explore the ramifications of making maintenance labor visible in public.”¹⁷ In the photograph, Ukeles makes visible the intersection of class, ethnicity and race, and gender. In her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969! Proposal for an exhibition “CARE,”* Ukeles divides work into the categories of development and maintenance, a parallel to productive and reproductive labor.

Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who’s going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

*Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight; show your work—show it again
keep the contemporaryartmuseum groovy keep the home fires burning*

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major room for change.

*Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little room for alteration.*¹⁸

Ukeles’ photographic and performance art limned cultural understandings of male-coded and female-coded work, as well as classed and racialized work. Likewise her work drew connections between the gendered, classed, and racialized labor of care, service, and support work. All of which linger today.

¹⁷ Helen Molesworth, “House Work and Art Work.” *October* 92 (2000): 71-97.

¹⁸ Ukeles, “Manifesto for Maintenance Art.”

FEMINIST CONCEPTIONS OF AN ETHICS OF CARE

In trying to think through my own and others' ideas in relation to gendered conceptions of our values in librarianship, as a female intensive-profession, I found myself back in the 1970s and 1980s. Both the multi-disciplinary seminar in which I participated and reading Victoria Hesford's *Feeling Women's Liberation* prompted me to reflect on what may have been lost in the break from second-wave feminism that could be useful in imagining more equitable futures in LIS.¹⁹ Care seems to hold possibilities as a means toward equitable, inclusive, anti-neoliberal futures. Second-wave feminist scholars have grappled with and advocated an ethics of care that is deeply connected to women's ways of being and knowing. Carol Gilligan "claimed that on the average, and for a variety of cultural reasons, women tend to espouse an ethics of care that stresses relationships and responsibilities, whereas men tend to espouse an ethics of justice that stresses rules and rights."²⁰ For some feminists, myself included, an ethics of care has felt too close to essentialist conceptions of our sexed and gendered selves. Writing in response to such critics, Gilligan made clear that she considers the "care perspective...neither biologically determined nor unique to women."²¹ Eva Kittay makes a similar fine distinction in her formulation of a "feminist public ethic of care."²² Care work, or what she calls "dependency work," has been predominantly women's work, and most especially poor women's work through its alignment with traditional patriarchal and hetero-normative notions of gendered labor within familial structures. Kittay argues that recognizing "dependency work" as legitimate and vital to the well-being of society may result in "possibilities for well-being of individuals and for justice within collectivities [to] proliferate in as yet unimagined ways."²³

19 Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

20 Rosemary Tong, "Carol Gilligan's Ethics of Care," in *Feminine and Feminist Ethics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 80.

21 Carol Gilligan, "Reply to Critics," in *An Ethic of Care*, ed. Mary J. Larrabee (New York: Routledge, 1993), 209.

22 Eva Feder Kittay, "A Feminist Public Ethic of Care Meets the New Communitarian Family Policy," *Ethics* 111, no. 3 (2001): 523-547.

23 *Ibid.*, 547.

The public aspect of Kittay's care ethic identifies care as not solely about intimate relations and private spaces, but rather challenges us to see the multiple "nested dependencies" in which we live, the public domain included.²⁴

Patricia Hill Collins recognized a connection between an ethic of care rooted in women's experience and "Afrocentric expressions of the ethic of caring."²⁵ For Collins there are three components to an ethic of caring within the African American community: "the value placed on individual expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions, and the capacity for empathy."²⁶ Furthermore, Collins suggests that the value placed by African American communities on "individual uniqueness, personal expressiveness, and empathy" is correlative to feminist emphasis on "women's 'inner voice'."²⁷ The "inner voice" refers to subjective knowledge, and a recognition of one's self as an authority. While Collins distinguished an Afrocentric feminist ethic of care from an "abstract, unemotional Western masculinity,"²⁸ Mary Belenky and colleagues theorized the concept of women's "inner voice," or subjective knowledge, as an alternative to a similar masculine ideal of disembodied, rights-based epistemology.²⁹ In other words, Gilligan, Kittay, Collins, Belenky, amongst others tried to theorize a capacity for care, an epistemology anchored by care and empathy, that may develop from lived and/or shared experiences of oppression and marginalization, and those tasked with responsibility for the well-being of others.

24 Eva Feder Kittay, "The Ethics of Care, Dependency, and Disability," *Ratio Juris* 24, no. 1 (2011): 49-58.

25 Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 4 (1989): 767.

26 *Ibid.*, 767.

27 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2009), 283.

28 Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," 767.

29 Mary Belenky, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

AN ETHIC OF CARE IN LIS

In the early 1990s Roma M. Harris, Jane A. Hannigan, and Hilary Crew published work that examined librarianship through a feminist lens. Harris's book, *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession*,³⁰ covered a range of issues including women's status in the profession, cultural representations of librarians, and the role of the American Library Association in librarianship. While Harris does not explicitly address a care ethic, she did argue "for preserving values of librarianship as a female-intensive profession by resisting the privatization of services and the drive toward professionalization," instead suggesting that we re-embrace "the old librarianship by restoring to it a brand of female professionalism."³¹ Hannigan and Crew proposed a new model of research and scholarship for LIS that draws on the female-intensive nature of librarianship, one that is "cooperative, participatory, interdisciplinary, and nonhierarchical... thereby becoming an exemplar of the very things it promotes."³² Hannigan and Crew argued that a feminist model of scholarship would be relational, or that which incorporates an ethic of care, and can be epistemologically categorized as *constructed knowledge*. Hannigan and Crew define *constructed knowledge* as emphasizing interdependence and contextuality.³³ These emphases on cooperativeness, interdependence, and contextuality as specific to a female-intensive profession, or space, are well aligned with feminist theories of care ethics of the same time period.

In the past few years the concept of care has re-emerged. It seems fitting that an ethic of care has also made a return in the female-intensive profession of librarianship. In *Feminist Pedagogy for Library Instruction*, Maria T. Accardi associates feminist teaching practice with caring about and caring for students. Through the work of Nel Noddings, Accardi connects a gendered ethical orientation toward caring with feminist practice, one that values personal and individual

30 Roma M. Harris, *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub., 1992).

31 *Ibid.*, 163.

32 Jane Hannigan and Hilary Crew, "A Feminist Paradigm for Library and Information Science," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, October, 1993: 28.

33 Hannigan and Crew, "A Feminist Paradigm for Library and Information Science," 30.

experiences, affirms and nurtures, and develops trust. While these values have historically been considered the domain of women's experience, Accardi notes that Noddings refers to "relational ethics" as a means to de-gender or de-essentialize an ethical orientation toward caring.³⁴ Relational theory suggests that the self is constituted through our relationships with others as opposed to the self being formed by a set of universal values. Relational ethics means that decisions and actions are made within the context of a relationship or set of relationships, are based on mutual respect and willingness to understand the unique situation of an individual or group, and make use of both our intellectual as well as emotional abilities. Beth Nowvieskie, writing on capacity and care in the digital humanities, draws on Noddings's conception of "engrossment." Engrossment is a "kind of close attention and focus on the other" that leads to empathy, or specifically a "productive appreciation of the standpoint or position of that person or group."³⁵ Accardi and Nowvieskie limn a similar aspect of Noddings's concept of care: that which is receptive and responsive to the cared-for.³⁶ Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, in relation to archival practices, suggest "radical empathy" as an approach that "assumes that subjects are embodied, that we are inextricably bound to each other through relationships, that we live in complex relations to each other infused with power differences and inequities, and that we care about each other's well-being."³⁷ A significant aspect of the radical empathy they posit is that it recognizes difference; it does not blur "the lines between self and other."³⁸

In their chapter, "Essentialism and Care in a Female-Intensive Profession," Fox and Olson trace some of the feminist debates in relation to an ethics of care rooted in women's experience, specifically in relation to the work of Carol Gilligan and Gayatri Spivak. In doing

34 Maria T. Accardi, *Feminist Pedagogy for Library Instruction* (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2013): 44-45.

35 Beth Nowvieskie, "On Capacity and Care," *Nowvieskie.org*, October 4, 2015, <http://nowvieskie.org/2015/on-capacity-and-care/>.

36 Nel Noddings, "Caring in Education," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, 2005, <http://infed.org/mobi/caring-in-education/>.

37 Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 81, (Spring 2016): 31.

38 *Ibid.*, 31.

so they illuminate the impetus for feminist developments of an ethic of care. Second-wave feminists were interested in conceptualizing a situated ethics, a contextualized sense of justice and responsibility in opposition, or perhaps complimentary, to a rigid set of rights and universal rules—a Rawlsian sense of justice characterized as masculine. A Rawlsian theory (John Rawls) of justice has been criticized by feminists for centering the individual—over the public good—and economic liberty over other forms of well-being. In relation to libraries, Fox and Olson write that “an ethic of care seems logical and right, given libraries’ social mission...An ethic of care includes willingness to hear another perspective, deeper delving to get at context, and bending of rules to endeavor to satisfy any user’s need.”³⁹ Their chapter culminates with the question, “Can librarianship take advantage of its female-intensiveness to assert an ethic of care in our practice?”⁴⁰

CARE ETHIC AND STANDPOINT THEORY

“Feminist thought is forced to ‘speak as’ and on behalf of the very notion it criticizes and tries to dismantle—women. In the contradictory nature of this project lies both its greatest challenge and a source of its great creativity.”⁴¹

There are affinities, and perhaps genealogical relations, between theorizations of an ethic of care and of standpoint theory. As with a care ethic, standpoint theory centers non-dominant and marginalized perspectives and lived experiences. Likewise, standpoint theory claims all knowledge and ways of knowing are socially situated. According to Sandra Harding, standpoint theory produces a new subject of knowledge, one differentiated from the subject of empiricist knowledge. This new subject is culturally and historically situated, as are the objects of knowledge, and that this knowledge is produced and legitimated by communities, rather than individuals. Finally, the subjects of knowledge from a feminist

39 Fox and Olson. “Essentialism and Care in a Female-Intensive Profession,” 58.

40 Ibid.

41 Sandra Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology,” in *Feminist Epistemologies*, eds. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, (New York: Routledge, 1993): 49-82.

standpoint theory are “multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory or incoherent, not unitary, homogeneous, and coherent as they are for empiricist epistemology.”⁴²

Sara Ahmed notes that a “central thesis of standpoint feminism [is] that the experience of oppression has epistemic significance.”⁴³ In other words, one’s lived experience of oppression and marginalization necessarily affects one’s world-making. Yet, the relationship between experience and knowledge is not so simple. Feminist standpoint theories are complex in related ways to feminist conceptions of an ethic of care. Harding argues that a standpoint is not merely a perspective; standpoints are socially, politically, scientifically mediated, whereas, according to Harding, perspectives are unmediated. Thus, “the logic of standpoint approaches contains within it both an essentializing tendency and also resources to combat such a tendency. Feminist standpoint theory is not in itself either essentialist or nonessentialist, racist or antiracist, ethnocentric or not. It contains tendencies in each direction, it contains contradictions.”⁴⁴ Furthermore in standpoint theories, our selves are contradictory insofar as we become “subjects and generators of thought, not just objects of others’ thoughts.”⁴⁵ Harding explains that to be a female scientist or an African American philosopher is to “think and act out of contradictory social locations,” both dominant and non-dominant.⁴⁶ Like feminist conceptions of an ethic of care, feminist standpoints inhabit potentially regressive essentializing as well as liberatory spaces. Feminist standpoint theory and feminist care ethics also share an imperative to start from the stance of the marginalized, the othered, as a means to bring those ways of being and knowing to the center.

42 Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology,” 65.

43 Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012): 217.

44 Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women’s Lives*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991): 180.

45 *Ibid.*, 275.

46 *Ibid.*, 275.

BACK TO LANGUAGE: GENDERING ACCESS AND SERVICES

In theorizing an alternative conception of justice via an ethic of care, feminists have defined a set of relational values that distinguish a care ethic from a Western, masculine sense of justice. They do so in purposefully feminine and masculine coded language. See the table below for an enumeration of some of these feminine- and masculine-coded values.

Feminine-Coded	Masculine-Coded
relationships	rules
responsibilities	rights
situational	abstract
empathy	unemotional
expressiveness	individual
community	economic liberty
subjective	objective
unique	universal
heterogeneous	homogeneous

Collins calls attention to the value placed on “individual uniqueness” and “personal expressiveness” in African American communities. How does this differ from a Eurocentric, masculinist emphasis on the individual? Claiming a unique perspective, developed through one’s lived experience is to also acknowledge that the self is always forged in relation to others. Our lived experiences are shaped via their connectedness to others’ experiences. In contrast, individuality is most often conceptualized as being separate and independent of others, as if born to the world fully formed without interference from others.

Reading Anderson’s article, “Interrogating the American Library Association’s ‘Core Values,’” again, it becomes clear to me that his understanding of the “Core Values” is gendered, reflecting a Western, masculinist, and seemingly universal perspective. Anderson asks, “What are the deepest and most basic purposes of the library?” For Anderson these are providing access with service, and supporting

intellectual freedom. According to Anderson, *Access* is the Library's primary function, and more important than collections, "because collections exist for the purpose of supporting access, not the other way around."⁴⁷ Certainly the ethos of libraries is to provide freely available access to information (collections). However, preservation of collections of materials may not always be in the immediate service of access. Preservation of artifacts from marginalized or precarious communities and organizations serving those communities may require limited access, at least in the short term. I am in agreement with Anderson in relation to the importance of service, without which a library would be "a collection of documents sitting in a building." Anderson's hyperbole risks regressively suggesting that libraries are simply warehouses of print materials. Nonetheless libraries are services—supplying a public need, a public good—and they provide services—maintaining systems of access, developing and maintaining systems of discovery—and library workers engage in service-oriented activities—providing aid, instruction, and in the best cases, being of use to their communities. Anderson's understanding of *Intellectual Freedom* as a "Core Value" is mechanistically oriented, with a focus on the structures that "enhance" and "restrict" access. As examples, Anderson highlights borrowing time limits as the structure that enhances access, the structure that enables the greatest number of people to have access to a resource, and vaguely alludes to restrictions on access for materials that some patrons might find offensive. Anderson further elaborates on intellectual freedom and access in a scenario in which "two core values come into conflict," the "subordinate" core value, privacy, and the "fundamental" core values, access and intellectual freedom.⁴⁸ In this scenario, a colleague questions offering access to a resource that requires the provision of personal information in order to use. For this colleague the requirement to provide personal information "constitute[s] a breach of the patron's privacy."⁴⁹ For Anderson, to withhold access to this resource would mean that the library/librarians were impinging on the intellectual freedom rights of patrons. Anderson's scenario is an either/or situation: "when two core values come into conflict, you

⁴⁷ Anderson, "Interrogating."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

need a way of deciding which one will win.”⁵⁰ Anderson chooses to ignore the ways in which a right to privacy and intellectual freedom are deeply embedded in the other. “When users recognize or fear that their privacy or confidentiality is compromised, true freedom of inquiry no longer exists.”⁵¹ By describing this situation as a conflict, as either/or, in which one core value trumps the other, Anderson appeals to masculine-coded concepts of rules and rights that must be universally applied. In contrast, the *Library Bill of Rights* describes the relationship between privacy/confidentiality and intellectual freedom in which patrons have the right to be informed in order to make choices. Thus, the *Library Bill of Rights* already leans toward an ethic of care, one more aligned with feminine-coded values, insofar as it emphasizes the heterogeneity of our patrons, their agency to make situational decisions, and the responsibilities of the library/librarians to contribute to informed decisions.

Anderson closes his article with the “questionable ‘Core Values,’” although he finds nothing “bad or wrong in and of themselves,”⁵² Anderson questions how we can simultaneously hold democracy, diversity, and intellectual freedom as core values of librarianship given that these concepts ostensibly contradict. If valuing diversity, he argues, means serving patrons with anti-democratic ideals, how can we claim democracy—defined as political philosophy—as a professional value? Anderson’s definition of democracy in this article differs from that in the ALA statement, in which the emphasis is on supporting an informed citizenry.⁵³ One can also choose to define democracy in relation to a belief in social equality. Each of these perspectives on the concept of democracy is political in nature, but Anderson adheres to a rules-based and singular notion of democracy. Likewise, the primary concern Anderson has with social responsibility and the concept of the public good is that we have no universal, homogeneous definition of what these mean or how to enact them. Finally, Anderson questions *Education and Lifelong Learning* as a “Core Value” by harkening

50 Ibid.

51 American Library Association, “Privacy,” July 1, 2004, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/privacy>

52 Ibid.

53 American Library Association, “Core Values of Librarianship,” June 29, 2004, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/corevalues>.

back to an elitist notion that “recreational resources” have little educational value.⁵⁴

Reading Anderson’s interrogation of the “Core Values” from a feminist standpoint, I see a Eurocentric, masculinist version of the values of librarianship emerge, one that seeks to define our values as universal, objective, and neutral rather than embracing the heterogeneity and context of the communities we serve, nor comfortable with defining our service according to our responsibilities to and relationships with our communities. A feminist standpoint toward the “Core Values” would center *Social Responsibility* and *The Public Good* as the values that drive and inform the ways in which access to collections, information, spaces, and services are provided.

THE FEMININE AS RESISTANCE

Rather than enforcing notions of women’s “natural” predisposition toward care and nurturing, many feminist scholars have negotiated the connections of an ethic of care with lived experience. All of them informed by their experiences as women: for Collins, the intersectional experience as a Black woman; for Kittay, the experience of a woman and mother of a child living with a disability; and for Fox and Olson, as women in a female-intensive profession. However, lived experience is merely a condition that *may* foster adopting an ethic of care. A feminist ethic of care is also a strategic choice. Reading Teresa de Lauretis’s “The Essence of the Triangle,” Victoria Hesford writes that for de Lauretis, taking the “risk of essentialism” is “less an assertion of some natural innate being-ness of women and more...a potentiality, a radical project of reimagining the social and cultural domains—a reimagining that is part of the process of constituting ‘new social spaces’ and ‘new forms of community’.”⁵⁵ In claiming the feminine we can enact a different “symbolization, a different production of reference and meaning out of a particular embodied knowledge.”⁵⁶ In

⁵⁴ Anderson, “Interrogating.”

⁵⁵ Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women’s Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013): 243.

⁵⁶ Teresa de Lauretis, “The Essence of the Triangle, or Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the U.S, and Britain,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1989):27.

what I think is a complementary claim, Collins suggests that “using an Afrocentric feminist epistemology calls into question the content of what currently passes as truth and simultaneously challenges the process of arriving at that truth.”⁵⁷

I would like for our profession to harness these radical desires and ideas to form “new social spaces” and challenge the processes of arriving at truths in our profession. I’d like to answer Fox and Olson’s question with an affirmative, that we can take the “risk of essentialism” as de Lauretis puts it, as well as the risk of the continued “symbolic feminine” or feminization of our profession. As library workers we need not engage in acts of nurturing, but in the way that we structure our spaces, services, and programs we can draw on our capacity to empathize, and be sensitive to the affective qualities of our work. Regardless of our sexed and gendered bodies, and of our gender identities, we can reclaim our feminized labor as practicing feminism. A feminist care ethic may enable us to center the collaborative, communal, and politically engaged-ness of library work. And thus the “Core Values” most relevant and strategic to library work would include *Social Responsibility* and *The Public Good*. These become the reasons why we provide access—and accessibility—and provide services.

In the process of subverting our current “truths” we might also redefine service and access in our work. Gabrielle Dean has argued that over time, service in librarianship has not only accrued the subservient meaning of our feminized work but we’ve also allowed an elision of service and services, and of human and machine.⁵⁸ Likewise, access has become more about expediency, heavily weighted toward the readily available, than about the “equitably accessible” piece of the “Core Values.”

FROM CARE TO INTERDEPENDENCE

Those who have theorized and critiqued an ethic of care at the intersection of feminist, gender, and disability perspectives suggest the concept of interdependence. Interdependence could be a way to revalue our relationships and responsibilities both to our communities as well

⁵⁷ Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought,” 773.

⁵⁸ Dean, “The Shock of the Familiar,” 48-52.

as to and within our institutions.⁵⁹ The concept of interdependence allows us to recognize the limits of individualism, and the limits of single entities within institutions, while moving us “toward a politics in which we acknowledge our inevitable need for each other” in creating new possibilities through “collaborative resistance.”⁶⁰ Of her activism Alicia Garza, co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter, says, “we are building a world that values interdependence, values collaboration and cooperation, and also values the unique experiences of people.”⁶¹ This sense of interdependence in the service of creating new social spaces coalesces many of the theoretical positions of second wave feminists—Patricia Hill Collins, Teresa de Lauretis, Eva Kittay, Sandra Harding, etc.—in recognizing difference within common cause. In 1989 de Lauretis asked if a future for feminism existed without confronting the “essential difference of feminism as socio-historical formation.”⁶² I think we risk the future of libraries if we choose not to embrace an intersectional feminist practice, a feminist practice that takes a different path than the hegemony of liberal feminism but instead embraces the heterogeneity of feminist practices while working toward common causes.

Perhaps an interdependence perspective would allow library workers (including leaders) to do several things that relate to care—for ourselves, for our communities, and for our administrators: make visible our affective, ‘reproductive,’ and maintenance work; increase and strengthen collaborative work with our communities, patrons, and users in all areas of library work; and enable us to move away from return-on-investment talk toward valuing “our inevitable need for each other”⁶³ within the institution. A significant amount of library work and library operations remain invisible to those unfamiliar with the complex, interconnected work that maintains the library.

59 When I write of communities and institutions it is from the perspective of an academic librarian within the structure of a university.

60 Kathryn Abrams, “Performing Interdependence: Judith Butler and Sunaura Taylor in the Examined Life.” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 21, no. 2 (2011), 89.

61 Sara Grossman, Q & A with Alicia Garza, co-creator of #BlackLivesMatter, April 15, 2015, <http://conference.otheringandbelonging.org/blog/2015/4/25/qa-with-alicia-garza-co-creator-of-blacklivesmatter>

62 De Lauretis, “The Essence of the Triangle,” 33.

63 Abrams, “Performing Interdependence,” 89.

Management of electronic resources, development and maintenance of systems, and even cataloging are mostly invisible to students and faculty across the university, as well as to administrators who make budgetary decisions that impact library operations and personnel. This invisible labor, and those who perform it, need colleagues and leaders who champion and make visible the significance of their work. We can illuminate this maintenance work in instructional settings, in advocacy and marketing, and in budget and planning conversations. Likewise, certain kinds of library work are devalued both within the library and across the institution. In my experience, technical positions, those that require more interaction with integrated library systems and associated hardware and software, have higher wages, even if still underpaid. Public services (access services) staff members who engage in more traditional affective labor—services with smiles—are viewed as providing unskilled labor. Skillfully determining the needs of students, faculty, staff, and administrators; knowledgeably referring those in need to appropriate individuals and services; and assisting in the navigation of the library’s resources and services with expertise and abilities of an *empath* is valuable work, deserving equitable pay. Lisa Sloniowski, in her feminist analysis of academic librarian work and affective labor, draws attention to the division between techno-intellectual labor and emotional labor: “it may seem easy at first to distinguish between different librarian organizational silos, the reality is that our work deeply impacts and shapes one another. . . . Nonetheless, certain forms of digital immaterial labor are valorized as mind work over the emotion work of liaison librarians, and such valorizations have their roots in gendered divisions of labor.”⁶⁴ Similar divisions exist across roles and departments within an academic library. Yet academic libraries are capable of becoming small-scale exemplars of valuing interdependence, requiring the necessary marriage of affective and technical skills, social and maintenance abilities.

Deepening relationships between academic libraries and their varied communities holds the possibility of amplifying the value of interdependence, which in turn may be the means to resist neoliberal pressures to quantify return-on-investment for personnel, time, services, and other resources. Inviting student groups, faculty

⁶⁴ Lisa Sloniowski, “Affective Labor, Resistance, and the Academic Librarian,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 653.

groups, and local community groups to partner with the library to develop programs and curate exhibits would address gaps in our collections and resources, and less than inclusive library spaces. Such partnerships make explicit interdependencies. It may be a stretch to imagine the academic library as akin to marginalized or subjugated communities and cultures. Yet we may feel marginal when we hear the not uncommon refrain from our colleagues in other university departments, “but everything is online now.” For them the building, the physical collections, the maintenance of collections (digital, physical, and otherwise), the expertise and knowledge of librarians and library staff, are in need of repurposing and/or are redundant. Partnering with community groups who likewise feel marginalized, or socially devalued, creates a means to empower both those communities and the library. Such mutual care has the possibility of substantiating alternative value(s) and worldviews, and imagining, as Kittay suggested “possibilities for well-being of individuals and for justice within collectivities...in yet unimagined ways.”⁶⁵

What seems most urgent now is that we should practice a radical feminist ethics of care and practice from feminist standpoints in order to decenter dominant positionalities, bodies, systems, and perspectives in our work. In order to do this, we have to interrogate our positions and standpoints and question what we consider common sense or intuitive in our policies and processes. It would mean that libraries and library workers eschew the notion of neutrality⁶⁶ and work toward social justice goals that seek to dismantle patriarchal, white supremacist, Eurocentric, and hegemonic practices and systems that prevail in our profession.

65 Eva Feder Kittay, “A Feminist Public Ethic of Care Meets the New Communitarian Family Policy,” *Ethics* 111, no. 3 (2001): 523-547.

66 Take a look at the activism, scholarship, and public intellectual work of Safiya Noble, Chris Bourg, April Hathcock, Emily Drabinski, Maura Seale, @StorytimeUnderground, and many others for arguments against a position of neutrality in libraries.

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