

Women's Work and The Library: Ideological Shaping of a Feminized Profession

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Abstract

Overwhelmingly, librarians working at Canadian universities are considered academic staff, if not faculty. However, the role and fit of the academic librarian within the academic enterprise is overshadowed and frequently misunderstood. Librarians' expertise and contribution to the university's academic mission is often sidelined: the nature of the work too frequently viewed through an organizational rather than an academic lens and characterized as preoccupied with a structured set of regularized responsibilities. Drawing on the findings of my doctoral research, an institutional ethnography of librarians' work experiences as academic staff, I argue that our present-day valuations of work are historically rooted and ideologically determined and propose that two ideological codes—*women's work* and *the library*—permeate our speech, text, and talk to structure librarians' work in a particular way. Ultimately, I link the devaluation of librarians' work to the necessary gendered exploitation of labour that happens within a capitalist mode of production.

Introduction

A few years ago, I was serving on the Faculty Association Negotiating Committee at the university where I work. I am a librarian by profession and at one point in the negotiations the issue of vacation days management came up. Our then collective agreement required administrative oversight of vacation days with the requirement that all academic staff prepare a vacation plan. The university's proposal to download the management of vacation days to individual faculty members was a welcomed revision; librarians, however, were excluded from the proposal. The library, the rational went, was a service point and therefore librarians' vacation days must be managed and administratively approved. As the negotiations continued, I noticed that people had completely disappeared from the conversation; we were writing a vacation clause for the library.

In society the library and the librarian are conflated in a way that a doctor and a hospital never is. In the bargaining discussion, it was the library that had agency and assumed the intellectual labour of the librarian. Once the conversation was refocused on the actual work of academic librarians progress was made. However, the experience left me exasperated by the continuous and perceived need to manage and to task-orientate our labour. Overwhelmingly, librarians working at Canadian universities are considered academic staff, if not faculty (Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT], 2018; Jacobs, 2014). The necessity of robust library and archival collections as well as the need for critically mediated access to data and information is self-evident in the processes of knowledge creation, research, teaching, and

learning. However, the role and fit of the academic librarian within the academic enterprise is overshadowed and frequently misunderstood. Librarians' expertise and contribution to the academic mission of the institution is often sidelined: the nature of the work de-intellectualized, de-professionalized, and characterized as preoccupied with a structured set of utilitarian responsibilities. Too often librarians' labour is viewed through an organizational rather than an academic lens. These mischaracterizations and misunderstandings about librarians' work are not context bound and go beyond individuals and particular settings. What is it that shapes the discourse about our labour in this particular way? How is it that the academic librarian's lesser status is the ideal at Canadian universities?

These questions served as the impetus for my doctoral study: an institutional ethnography of librarians' work experiences as academic staff (Revitt, 2020). The study reveals how institutional processes and texts—policies, standards, reports, collective agreements—shape librarians' work experiences as academic staff such as they are. However, it is ideology as a method of reasoning, a way of making sense of our daily reality, that helps us understand why things are as they are. The focus of this article is the why: the ideologically infused speech, text, and talk that constructs academic librarians' lesser status as the institutional ideal. In my analysis of findings I identify two ideological codes—*women's work* and *the library*—that construct librarians' labour in a particular way. The concept of an ideological code is used here as an analogy to a genetic code to underscore the generalizing and replicating effect of ideologies (Smith, 1999). The power and effect of an ideological code is in the consensus vocabularies that people (unconsciously and often uncritically) take up along with the “beliefs on which they rest, which come to be widely accepted” (DeVault, 2008, p. 293). An ideological code can provide insight into how people's opinions and understandings are formed. Ultimately, I link the devaluation of librarians' work to the necessary gendered exploitation of labour that happens within a capitalist mode of production.

Institutional Ethnography as Method

Institutional ethnography is a theorized research approach developed by the Canadian social theorist and sociologist Dorothy Smith. Smith developed institutional ethnography as a critical response to established ways of knowing society and social relations. Sociological inquiry often begins with idealist assumptions that divorce concepts from the activities of people. Smith argued that concepts such as “cultural norms” or “delinquency” are floating *blobologies*: linguistic devices that are given agency and assumed to exist independent of people (Smith, 2005). The library has such agency. It is a construct from which people have disappeared. The issue for Smith is not that we talk about these concepts as if they have agency, but that we do not problematize how they come about.

Institutional ethnography is concerned with making visible how everyday life is socially organized, coordinated and ruled by institutions, broadly conceived as the activities of people located physically and temporally away from the subject's environment, so that things happen as they do. An institutional ethnography progresses through layers, in this case the progression was

from the academic librarian, to the library, to the university, and beyond, to reveal how power structures external to the local setting influence work experiences of librarians as academic staff.

I began the study by reaching out to the heads of academic libraries at universities across Canada, and eventually secured the participation of three institutions. The universities were located in different provinces, varied in size, and differed in the level of academic rights and responsibilities accorded to the librarians. The point of selecting multiple sites was not to compare or obtain a representative sample, but to determine if processes shaping local experiences could be traced to a macro generalizing discourse. In short, I wanted to see if librarians' experiences as academic staff can be hooked into institutional relations extending beyond the university and provincial boundaries.

Over the course of 14 months I visited the universities (referred here as Red, Blue, and Green universities) on seven separate occasions, and formally and informally spoke with over 50 librarians across Canada. Informal conversations are an integral, even necessary, component to examining how ideologically infused discourse benignly infiltrates our way of talking, reasoning, and interpreting. I also engaged in non-participant observation and examined over 1000 pages of texts including collective agreements, university and library policies, job descriptions, accreditation and quality assurance standards of professional and provincial bodies, as well as the documentation of various library associations.

Ideology and Ideological Codes

Ideology is typically defined as a system of ideas and beliefs. Within institutional ethnography ideology is conceived differently; it is a process, a way of knowing the world. It is ideology as epistemology, or what is known and how we know it, versus ideology as a belief system. The way Smith (2004) is using ideology—a way of knowing the world—is rooted in Marx for whom history and society were processes that exist only in people's activities. Our way of knowing the world is given and ideologically predetermined by the social relations and historical conditions into which we are born. This is problematic for understanding the social because ideology as a practice of knowing society obstructs and masks the actualities of people's everyday experiences. Smith (1990) explained that “[to] think ideologically is to think in a distinctive and describable way. Ideas and concepts as such are not ideological. They are ideological by virtue of being distinctive method of reasoning and interpreting society” (pp. 35-36). Because ideological processes give primacy to concepts and categories, it is possible to examine society.

The ideological processed ordering and conceptualizing librarians' work are evident in institutional discourses that are concretized in texts—policies, job descriptions, reports, standards, collective agreements—where librarians' work is often branded as in service of others and devoid of disciplinary expertise. For example, when talking about their day academic librarians talked about meeting and working one-on-one with students, teaching, and preparing to teach. However within institutional texts faculty are presented as teaching students while librarians are presented as instructing users. The distinction between students and users, teaching and instruction is not benign. As Fernández-Armesto (2006) points out: “You instruct soldiers.

You teach students” (para. 1). Teaching educates, liberates, provokes, and challenges. Instruction is regimented, prescriptive and devoid of imagination (Fernández-Armesto, 2006). Teaching require disciplinary expertise and engagement with pedagogical practices. Turning teaching into instruction renders what librarians do as mechanical, routine, and disciplinarily unhinged.

Here we are able to see how discourse, via text, shapes the work of academic librarians as less intellectually engaged—less academic—than that of faculty. Ideological codes operate within institutional discourse. They rise out of our material, social, and historical conditions infiltrating our way of sensemaking and knowing. People pick up ideological codes from writing, hearing, or watching and replicate it in their own talk or writing. They pass it along. Ideological codes are universalizing schemas that can reproduce across multiple and dispersed sites. The women’s work and the library ideological codes are not identified with a particular librarian or institution. They apply to any. An ideological code is a useful analytical tool that can provide insight into how people’s opinions and understandings are formed.

Women’s Work Ideological Code

Perhaps the most defining aspects of librarians’ work is that it is typecast as work done by women. Social consciousness constructs the librarian as female. This construction is empirically rooted. Recent surveys indicate that 72% and 74% of Canadian academic librarians identify as women (Revitt, Schrader, & Kaufman, 2016; Revitt, Magnus, Schrader, & Wright, 2019). However, it is the *women’s work* ideological code that infuses librarians’ work with particular characteristics: work as less skilled, de-intellectualized, and a natural fit for women because of women’s innate qualities and suitability.

Feminist scholarship has challenged the idea of inherent qualities based on sex, e.g. that women are intrinsically suited to childrearing, and revealed how even the family is a constructed social relation with an ulterior purpose within a capitalist mode of production. Mies (2014) argues that the family, along with the *housewifization* of women, are patriarchal and capitalist relations created so capital can be maximized. Similarly, in a graduate thesis, Holmes (2006) examined how myths around motherhood have been socially and historically constructed to suit those very same relations. Holmes points out that in pre-industrialized Europe childrearing was considered “an onerous task” best left to wet nurses and boarding schools. And while women were still the primary caregivers of either their own or other people’s children “this had nothing to do with ostensibly innate qualities which better suited them for raising children. After children, women were simply the most subordinate members of society, and as such, were relegated the denigrated position of child minder” (p. 38). Perhaps most interestingly, the children of aristocrats were raised primarily by men. Heirs needed to be well educated and morally intact, a job rightly delegated to the morally superior man.

Furthermore, scholars examining work skill and complexity stress that there is “no objective procedure for establishing standards of complexity across types of skill,” and our perceptions of work value, complexity, and skill were developed in relation to male dominated occupations (Steinberg, 1990, p. 452). In a seminal article, Steinberg (1990) maintains that the cultural

assumptions and gender ideology of the industrial era artificially separated men and women into public and private spheres. The artificial separation became institutionalized in salary structures and job evaluation systems that gave preference to male oriented jobs and male characteristics. Our present-day evaluation schemas are actually based on perception and assumptions of the typical incumbent rather than the actual job. How else, Steinberg asks, can managing a budget, as would be typical of management positions usually held by men, be regarded as more complex than working with welfare clients? These perceptions of skill and complexity promote wage discrimination and reflect “the systemic undervaluation of women’s work *because* that work has been and continues to be done by women” (p. 456).

The Value of Librarians’ Work

The alignment of higher salaries with masculine work, that is work that has traditionally been done by men, is particularly evident in the academic library. The examination of institutional texts revealed that the salary discrepancies between the University Librarian (UL) and the position of the Dean at Green, Blue, and Red universities as well as my own institution range between 0% and 13%. In some instances, the UL’s salary is higher. At Green University the UL’s salary is 4% and 30% higher than the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the Dean of the Faculty of Education respectively. Here we can see how the work of academic librarians working in an administrative capacity, using skills and doing the work traditionally associated with men and done by men, is considered of comparable value to the institution as that of their institutional counterparts. However, librarians working in non-administrative capacity, skill sets and work associated with women and traditionally done by women, are earning on average 26% less than their faculty counterparts (CAUT, 2017; 2018). Nevertheless, a differentiated salary scale for academic librarians is generally understood and accepted because the terminal degree for librarians is a master’s degree while the terminal degree for faculty is typically (although not always) a doctorate. But the further devaluation of librarians’ work through differentiated merit and career progression increments borders on stigmatizing. For example, at Green University the career progression and merit increments are 12% and 16% lower for librarians than for all other faculty including lecturers, artist-in-residence, academic administrators, teaching professors, and professors in the research stream so that even librarians’ efforts and accomplishments are institutionally valued as less than.

To contrast, librarians at Red University achieved salary parity with faculty peers in 1976; and to this day salary discrepancy at Red University is between individuals—not groups—and is based on rank. More recently, in the 2015 round of bargaining, librarians at Blue university experienced a significant bump in salary when librarians’ four ranks were collapsed into three to parallel the established rank structure for the professoriate. Conversely, at my own institution, the 2017-2019 collective agreement negotiations closed with librarians being bumped to a lower salary scale than the rest of the teaching faculty. These vignettes demonstrate the seemingly arbitrary, particularized, and contextually bound determinations of librarians’ wage. After all, each is the result of various negotiation processes at individual universities. However, an institutional ethnographic approach to inquiry necessitates a shift from the individual librarian to the examination of institutional processes. It is in this shift that ideological practices are noticed to construct librarians’ work value.

At Red University academic librarians have complete salary parity, identical academic rank structure, and full faculty status. Within the collective agreement a librarian position is treated identical to that of the professoriate. In fact, no separate clauses for academic librarians exist anywhere in the collective agreement. Academic librarians' full faculty status is unique to Red University and a curious anomaly for this study. In my investigation it becomes quickly apparent that most librarians at Red University, then and now, are men. When I asked a librarian who was a driving force for salary parity at Red University, "*Do you think it made a difference that you were a man versus a woman?*" The response was direct, "*Of course, of course. It was one of the arguments we used. These guys, our librarians, they're supporting families.*"

Gender roles and concepts such as that of the male provider are so engrained into the fabric of modern society that librarians at Red University may have not been successful in achieving salary parity without it. In the 19th century as the home and family unit "shifted from being a site of production to one of consumption" a new gender ideology emerged that recognized the home as a private and feminine sphere and work as a public and masculine sphere (Fehlbaum, 2016, para. 1). Few women worked outside the home; and if they did, it was on the assumption that they were not the main breadwinner. Men's wages were significantly higher because it was accepted and assumed that the man was the primary wage earner. We can see how our distinctive and discernable way of reasoning and interpreting society—that men need to work to support families sort of reasoning—ideologically predetermined the academic experience and status for librarians at Red University.

The Construction of the Librarian's Role

The work of librarians has long been considered a natural complement to a woman's role at home (Brand, 1983). It is perhaps unsurprising, that within social consciousness the librarian's role is confined to the library. An image search on the term "librarian" invariably yields a smiling woman with the ubiquitous stack of books. Cut off from the disciplinary grounding of library and information science, the librarians' work is deintellectualized, its scope and diversity rendered superfluous and not requiring particular expertise. Ideological practices prioritize the book and construct the organizing, purchasing, and recommending of books as *the* librarian role. It is the book as the container of knowledge and information, versus the ethical, social, and cultural dimensions of knowledge production, creation, organization, mobilization, and dissemination, that is discursively constructed as the librarian's preoccupation. Yet the practice of librarianship rests on a discipline that critically interrogates how knowledge is presented and organized and includes areas of specialization such as the philosophy of information; information systems and design; critical information studies; theories and practices of reading; multimedia literacies; publishing; digital preservation, curation, and access; information and society; and human information interaction to name a few.

The narrow lens within which the librarian's role is conceived is particularly evident in the texts of quality assurance standards and processes of accreditation bodies where the nebulous concept of library quality is typically equated with the quantity of books and journals. The *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* [the *Statement*] (2007) issued

by Canada's Council of Ministers of Education mandates that students and faculty have access to "appropriate information services and learning resources" as well as a "physical plan and facilities including laboratories, classrooms, library..." (p. 11). Predictably, provincial and territorial government standards likewise prioritize library resources with Alberta being the only jurisdiction to consider the role and expertise of library staff as relevant to quality assurance and accreditation processes. Within the context of the curriculum, the equivalent would be limiting quality assurance considerations to subject content while disregarding the need for qualified faculty.

Resource quantity as the marker of library quality is an organizational process that is administratively relevant: concerned with the quantifiable and the readily demonstrable. Grounding the inquiry from the standpoint of the academic librarian reveals that the preoccupation with library resources is out of step with librarians' experiential knowledge and 21st century collection development practices. Canadian university libraries, for example, expend almost five times as much on online subscription content than one-time purchases (CARL, 2018). The majority of library resources are electronic—not physical books. The acquisition, availability, stability, and effective discoverability of online collections is a complex ongoing project that requires expertise in information systems design and development, cataloguing and metadata standards, user information seeking practices, knowledge of electronic resource acquisition processes, policy development, budget management, licensing and contract negotiations, contract law, preservation, and copyright to name a few. While librarians' subject matter expertise is important and is typically a consideration in accreditation processes of professional bodies such as the Canadian Architectural Certification Board or the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, the specialized knowledge and breadth of skills necessary to developing, maintaining, and advancing the infrastructure and services that make it possible for students and faculty to "discover" the right information resource are not contemplated at all.

The preoccupation with the quantifiable plucks the librarian and library collections out of the professional relations and digital infrastructure necessary to information access and discovery. It is an artificial separation, rooted in categorical rather than relational conceptualization of librarians' roles. The naturalization of librarians' work invariably denotes the role as singular. It is always *the* librarian. Although the work of librarians is structurally and inherently collaborative, it is rarely depicted or conceptualized as such. The librarian simply, always, just *is*.

The Library Ideological Code

The library ideological code constructs the librarian as being synonymous with the library and it is perhaps most implicit within the profession itself where professional associations are overwhelmingly associations of *libraries* versus associations of *librarians* or *library and information science professionals*. The discourse within the profession is focused on the building: what can be found in the building, what happens in the building, what is accomplished in the building. The code's universalizing schema is implicit in almost any definition of a librarian which defines the role by the place of work. The following definitions of a librarian and a teacher in Wikipedia (n.d.a; n.d.b.) exemplify the point made: "A librarian is a person who

works professionally in a library, providing access to information and sometimes social or technical programming to users,” (para. 1) while a teacher is “a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence or virtue” (para. 1). In the case of the former, the building features prominently. In the case of the latter, it is the teacher’s role that is at the forefront. The fusing of the library and the librarian is discursive procedure that renders the work invisible.

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) is a key professional organization that provides leadership on behalf of Canada’s 29 largest university libraries. CARL’s statistics program, started in 1976, is a primary source of data about academic libraries’ staffing, salaries, services, collections, and overall expenditures. However, a closer examination of the text, specifically CARL’s instructions to member libraries that collect and annually submit statistics to the program, provides insight into the institutional shaping of librarians’ work. The section dedicated to library instruction reads as follows:

3.1 Number of library presentations to groups

Report the total actual number of *library instruction sessions* during the year. Count sessions presented as part of formal *bibliographic* instruction programs including class *presentations, orientation sessions* and *tours*. If the library *sponsors multi-session credit courses that meet several times over the course of a semester*, each session should be counted. Presentations both on and off the premises should be included when they are *sponsored* by the library. Do not include training for staff. (CARL, n.d., p. 2 [emphasis added])

The overriding objective to count and quantify is apparent and not surprising, the purpose of the survey after all is to gather data for the statistics program. However, a critical reading of the instructions reveals how the work of librarians is constructed: It is groups and not students, instruction and not teaching, sessions and not classes. The content of the instruction sessions is the library. The sponsor of the sessions is also the library. Thus, the library is simultaneous the subject and author/owner of the sessions. Bibliographic (a term that fell out of vogue in the 1990s) denotes resource focused. Presentations, orientations, and tours underscore the academically basic and optional nature of this work. The prerogative to quantify reduces for credit courses to the clumsily described “multi-sessions that meet several times” over a semester. Each session is to be counted individually. The fact that these are for credit courses is irrelevant, what matters is the number of sessions. The de-intellectualization of the work continues in the report where librarians’ teaching is “library presentations to groups,” students are “participants,” and the helping and working with students is “transactions.”

In CARL’s statistical program, the agent is the library. Here we can see how librarians’ work is constructed as library work and not academic work. The actuality of the work: the preparing, the teaching, the meeting, the supporting, and working with students to co-constitute, refine, and find meaning in a topic, to contextualize, evaluate, adapt, synthesize, and re-use information, all of which requires higher-order cognitive skills and deep learning (Webber & Johnston, 2000) is rendered invisible and statistically presented as an organizational achievement. The affective labour that is critical to helping students overcome anxiety, develop confidence, and find a

personal connection and thus interest in the topic (Kulthau, 2019); the necessarily complex form of communication (the student is typically asking about something they do not know) that underpins the librarian/student engagement; the inherently pedagogical and academic nature of this very librarian work—the teaching of information literacy and working with students—is de-intellectualized and de-professionalized, the work constructed as library work. Arguably, the women’s work ideological code is likewise implicit in this structuring. In my research, when describing their work, librarians’ talk focused on students: working with students, helping students, mentoring students. However, within the textually mediated discourses regarding academic librarians’ work, students are almost completely absent. Librarians’ work is not presented as working with students, an actuality that is accomplished daily countless of times across university campuses, but rather as a function of the library: the provision of consultative and reference services or the instruction of how to use library resources.

Regardless of where and when ideological codes start, once “born” their capacity to benignly infiltrate all manner of discourses is considerable. The library and women’s work ideological codes are taken up and reverberate through social processes of wage remuneration and role definition and become concretized in institutional textual discourses. The library and women’s work ideological codes frustrate a broader understanding, much less an appreciation, of the scope and breadth of responsibilities and areas of expertise that constitute the practice of librarianship in the 21st century. The codes further construct the librarian as singular, artificially plucked from the social and professional relations that actually make up the work. Situated within the library, the librarian is discrete, devoted, and innate to the role of *being* a librarian. The fetishization of the library—when we give power and agency to the building—contributes to a dichotomized, first impressions, ideological way of thinking that leads to an erroneous conceptualization of academic librarians’ work actualities. It is the appearance versus the essence of what is really happening (Colley, 2002).

The Academic Librarian and the Capitalist Mode of Production

The *women’s work* and *the library* ideological codes that infuse institutional and public discourses about academic librarians’ work, role, and place within the academy do not just appear. They are rooted in and rise out of our historical, dialectical, social, and material conditions. These conditions, according to Marx are shaped by the mode of production (Marx & Engels, 1970). Since Marx’s time and to the present, the predominant mode of production is capitalism. The most important law in Marx’s economics is that “*live* [emphasis in the original] human labor is the source of all value and hence the basis of profit and thus all capital accumulation” (Allman, 2010, p. 26). Marx considered labour-power a uniquely human characteristic that includes our mental and physical capacities to create, produce, and reproduce. He distinguished between two types of labour: productive and reproductive labour. The former produces surplus value, which is the source of profit, the latter does not. The former is integral to the circuitry of capitalist production, the latter is outside of it. Capitalism will always strive to increase productivity (Allman, 2010), and as such, it is always in need of labour-power in order

to generate capital, surplus value, and ultimately profit. An adequate supply of labour-power—people—is essential to capitalism’s survival and growth.

Marx’s exhaustive analysis of capitalist relations is primarily concerned with productive labour. Fortunati (1995) points out that without a rigorous consideration and analysis of reproductive labour, Marx’s critique of capitalism is an incomplete project. Feminist scholars such as Colley (2002), Federeci (2004), Fortunati (1995), and Mies (2014) argue that women’s bodies, labour, and reproductive capacities are economically meaningful and necessary to the accumulation of surplus value, capitalism’s endless goal.

The capitalist system has tried to obfuscate the dependence (and women’s potential power) by representing reproductive labour as non-work, a natural process, or a personal choice. The reason for the obscurity is that when reproduction is presented as natural it allows capitalism to exploit two workers with one wage, and “the entire cost of reproduction to be uploaded onto the labor force” (Fortunati, 1995, p. 9). For these reasons, capitalism privileges heterosexuality and the family along with ideologies that conceptualize women’s work as non-work because women “have a mission as wives and mothers” (Fortunati, 1995, p. 22). Only work within the process of production can appear as waged. Through this exploitation, capitalism is much more productive than pre-capitalist modes of production.

Even when the female worker sells her labour-power in the waged labour market, her labour-power is always subordinated because she is simultaneously “selling her labour-power as capacity for the production and reproduction of labour power—which latter must always be given precedence” (Fortunati, 1995, p. 67). Women are paid less because their labour-power is offered under different conditions from that of men. In a capitalist system, women’s reproductive labour power is more important. We can recognize the root of the women’s work ideological code in capitalist relations, and the particularizing discourse that constitutes academic librarians’ work as less than, as innate. Because librarianship is a predominantly female profession, academic librarians are automatically subjected to the prioritization of women’s reproductive capacities above all else.

It is not only that within capitalism women have a prioritized role as labour-power reproducers that affects remuneration for feminized professions, but also whether the particular labour produces surplus value. Labour-power can be exchanged for a wage and in this sense, it is a commodity. Marx called labour-power a “special commodity,” arguably the most important commodity because it is the only commodity that produces value and upon which all other commodities depend (Allman, 2010). Despite its eminence, labour power, like any commodity, has a use value and an exchange value. The exchange value is the basis of the wage. The use value refers to usefulness, to utility. What is essential for capitalism is not the type of labour performed but that it takes place within the labour capital relation and that it produces surplus value.

The work of university professors, who have always been hired on the basis of their area of expertise (their content) versus their ability to teach it, takes place within the labour capital

relation because students pay to acquire the content that professors have. This is in contrast to the academic librarian who is hired on the basis of professional practice rather than disciplinary expertise (the content). A professor's labour power, their commodity, has a use value (utility) and an exchange value (the basis for the wage). Within a capitalist mode of production, what matters is that the content is acquired by the student so the student can exchange their labour-power on the waged market. It does not matter how the content is acquired. The focus is the labour capital relation (in this case the relation between content and the job market). Value in the professor's labour is in the content—and hence why research, especially commodified research, is more highly prized than teaching.

The librarian's labour power, her commodity, also has a use value and an exchange value. But the value in the librarian's labour *appears* as having a use value only in the utility of the work and not the content. In fact, the librarian is not recognized as having any content. The women's work and the library ideological codes confine the librarian's role to within the library, de-intellectualize the work, and give organizational primacy and agency to the building. In actuality, of course, librarians have disciplinary expertise as any other academic and thus content. The librarian's labour power (and institutional status) is further compromised because the work *appears* to take place outside of the labour capital relation. The women's work ideological code plants the librarian in the library, while library ideological code cements her identity with it. The library is a cost centre. As utility work, librarians' labour is auxiliary to the productive (real) labour that takes place within the university. The codes' infused text/talk discourses artificially separate librarians' labour from the teaching, learning, research, and scholarly relations that constitute productive labour. The dichotomization and stratification of academic labour leads to false conceptualizations about academic librarians' work.

Within a capitalist mode of production, people are valued for their labour power potential, the actual individual disappears (Fortunati, 1995). What is prioritized is aggregate outcomes—university rankings, citation scores, and graduates' potential as a labour-power commodity. A capitalism mode of production necessitates competition for resources, the library is competing for funding within the university, and the university is competing for funding within the public sector. Librarians' work is constructed in such a manner as to demonstrate library use—the organization's utility with which the librarian is cemented. The librarian's labour-power has use value and an exchange value; however, organizationally it is only the utility that is relevant because the quantifiable utility of librarians' professional practice is critical to the valorization of the library. Affective and intellectual labour is futile to demonstrating library use. Library valorization and the demonstration of library use are important to the realization of funding.

Conclusion

Institutional ethnography is an empowering and emancipatory approach which helps to explain how librarians' experiences as academic staff come about as they do. By revealing how those experiences are shaped by institutional processes and texts should raise academic librarians' consciousness, as well as that of relevant others, to institutional practices that subordinate. However, it is ideology, as a procedure of knowing and sensemaking, that helps us understand

why things are the way they are. Challenging processes and practices that undermine librarians' role as academics is important. When the academic librarian's *academic* potential is fully actualized, a critical praxis of librarianship can intensively examine, theorize, and advance information fluencies; the social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions of information environments; as well as the role of libraries; technology, and processes of knowledge creation, management, mobilization, and dissemination.

I have argued that two ideological codes—*women's work* and *the library*—infuse social consciousness with a particularizing schema that confine librarians' work to the library, deintellectualize, and render the labour invisible. Librarians' academic status, thus standing within the university as academic staff, is a constant tug of war between the actualities of the work and institutional discourses that structure and organize the work to serve organizational and capitalist priorities. I have also argued that assumptions of librarians' work and librarians' work experiences are ultimately tied to broader social capitalist relations. It is important to note that while I have identified two ideological codes that shape librarians' practices and experiences, these codes are not the only shapers. Using the ideological code as an analytic lens has allowed us to understand how and why frustratingly stereotypical notions about librarians and librarians' work continue to persist.

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