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The Library in the Society of Control[i]

Abstract: The philosophic work of Gilles Deleuze is used to highlight how the public library has changed from an institution for disciplinary purposes to an organization where control is distributed over a network. There is no ideal traditional library to which librarians can return. Instead we must develop new tools to resist new forms of domination.

Résumé:

The work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze is well suited to highlight the changes that the public library has undergone since its inception. He describes the overall systemic change from a "disciplinary society" to a "society of control" which explicates how digitization and the reorganization of capital have changed social structures. For this reason, his work helps draw attention to the changes in the public library (from an institution for disciplinary purposes to an organization where control is distributed over a network). This theoretical model underscores the changing trends but more than that it challenges our idealistic notions about the democratic nature of the early public library by helping to uncover some of the early forms of control in the library. We come to recognize that the library is a part of a larger assemblage defined both by discipline, control and opposition struggles. Moreover, this historical model teaches us that there is no ideal traditional library to which we can return. Instead we must develop new tools to resist new forms of domination that arise in the information society of the 21st Century. "It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons" (Deleuze, 1995, 178).

We need to move beyond the strict dichotomy, common in some defences of "traditional" library values, between the library as a democratic and egalitarian

institution and the outside market forces. Moments of library history demonstrate that the role of the library is anything but clear cut. Despite librarians' attempt to champion freedom and democracy, the library has been and remains an institution with many disciplinary and control mechanisms. We need, therefore, to understand more fully the historical and contemporary role of the library as an institution. Librarians claim that their role is to empower individuals by providing access to information. Historically this has not always been the case. The first public libraries in the 1800's were purported to be institutions established to support the information needs of citizens in a democratic society. Yet evidence suggests that librarians hoped to play a "civilizing" role. Whether it involved civilizing the population by limiting access to literature that corrupted youth, such as fiction, or building desks to ensure maximum surveillance of library users, early public librarians clearly articulated their role as emissaries of good decorum and social discipline.

Contemporary librarians are convinced these are issues buried in the past. It is necessary to examine the changes in library practices in order to see the extent to which librarians have and continue to play a role in controlling or liberating creativity and movement. Deleuze has already provided us with a series of concepts that can be used to analyse the position of institutions in society by understanding the different types of mechanisms that are used for disciplining and controlling the population. The introduction of Deleuze's concepts of disciplinary society and the control society into LIS will help to unveil the multiple forces of discipline, control, liberation and resistance operating in the library. The introduction of these concepts permits us to see how the library can normalize behaviour through the creation of subjects for capital but also explain how there is room left over for creativity and transformation.

The Library of Discipline and Control

The disciplinary society commands obedience through a system of codes enforced by institutions: the family, the factory, the prison, the army, the school, the hospital, etc. These well defined institutions are marked by discipline and hierarchy. They bifurcate society into sets of binary relations: man/wife or parent/child in the family, teacher/student in the classroom, etc. Each institution has its own set of codes and form of discipline. The institutional organizations are experienced serially: "first of all the family, then school ("you're not at home, you know"), then the barracks ("you're not at school, you know"), then the factory…" (Deleuze, 1995, 175).

Disciple is not in fact a creation of the state, as it appears on the surface. Discipline arises from a whole series of practices that are dispersed throughout the social. Such practices as surveillance and the categorization of bodies and practices (such as distinguishing between the normal and the abnormal) come from a divergent set of organizations. The state overcodes these practices, meaning that it brings them together and applies them across large segments of society. The key to discipline is to produce codes or rules that define what constitutes normal behaviour in the institution. Individuals must be constituted according to this set of criteria and they must internalize these rules (i.e. make them a part of their identity). Hence, in disciplinary society, institutions are involved in the normalization of behaviour and the creation of subjects. The institutional processes are not only a means by which we organize society; "power acts not only by training or ordering elements of the social terrain but actually by producing them – producing desires, needs, individuals, identities, and so on" (Hardt, 1998, 29). These disciplinary practices create subject categories in order to trap any movement that would push towards a new form of social organization.

Changes come about with the arrival of what Deleuze terms the society of control in the mid twentieth Century. The arrival of the information society and the erosion of the nation state are recurrent themes in LIS and the social sciences more generally. Yet, in the society of control, Deleuze is not emphasising the disappearance of the state. Instead, we have seen a decline in the importance of mediation and more specifically an erosion of the institutions that facilitated it (Hardt, 1998, 36

The society of control is characterised by a dissolving of institutions. Disciplinary mechanisms continue to exist as do the institutions that support them. But increasingly there is a dismantling of the enclosures of institutions and identities that accompany them. There is increased mobility and anonymity. This society comes about because of the changes in technology, such as the growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), globalization and the disintegration of the importance of civil society as a mediator. For example, the strict divisions between work and leisure begin to be eroded, as do institutional boundaries. We have become increasingly accustomed to people working from home with the aid of ICTs. We have prisoners at home with control chips on their leg and patients cared for at home rather than in the hospital. And libraries are all too familiar with patrons who never step into the library but conduct all their research through library databases (access to which is actually controlled by the copyright owner or licensed distributor and not the library). Hence, control is not exercised through social institutions any longer but through network surveillance. Organization does not take place through the institution but through the network.

The modernization of the economy saw the move from an economy based in agriculture to an economy based on industry. In the control society, "informatization" of the economy describes the move from an economy based in industry to one where the

main factor of production is information (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 280). Constant deterritorialization explains the changing nature of production in an information economy. Production, literally, is no longer confined by territories; capital flows across state lines with ease; workers in Canada can easily collaborate on projects with workers in Europe. In the new control society, ICTs permit for the decentralization of production and geographical distance becomes less relevant. The assembly line gets replaced by the network, literally in the use of communication technologies but also as a model for production (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 295). In a control society organization does not take place within the confines of the institution but through the network. Thus the discussion moves from the institutions and the factory to society as a whole.

The utility of employing Deleuze's concepts of disciplinary society and societies of control is not done in order to demonstrate a radical break from the past. Rather, these concepts offer us the tools to understand the multiple forces of discipline, control, liberation and resistance operating in the library.

In the development of the early public library, the focus was upon the creation of the model citizen. The presumption that librarians disseminated information for the purposes of critical reflection and growth is easily challenged by the clear paternalistic desire of librarians to create subjects (citizens) according to a given set of values. To "make the coming man a good citizen in the community" is "undoubtedly [the librarian's] duty" (Kite, 1877, 278). Further, there were clear indications that a number of library supporters were in fact hopeful that the library would act as a form of social control and civilise any unruly portions of society in order to maintain the stability of the state and capital. This was clearly articulated by J. Larned:

> Free corn in old Rome bribed a mob and kept it passive. By free books and what goes with them in modern America we mean to erase the mob from existence. There lies the cardinal difference between a civilization which perished and a civilization that will endure (Larned, 1902, 16).

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Larned clearly articulated the need for the complete eradication of any rabble rousers. Similarly, Andrew Carnegie, the great library philanthropist and capitalist captain of industry, justified library expenditures on the basis that these provisions will ensure stability for Government (qtd. in Public library movement, 1897, 18). The library was also seen as an institution that could provide literature to ensure that the working class understood its position in society (Kite, 1877, 278).

In the 20th and 21st Century, the changing structure of the library and its increasingly digital nature has facilitated the encroachment of market forces and has meant that librarians are now more directly confronting capital. There is increased commodification of information and conglomeration of publishing and distribution companies. Furthermore, the digitization of information has meant a great deal less control over library resources than before (e.g. libraries access rather than own periodicals) and a shrinking of the public domain. It is information and communication technologies (ICTs) that have facilitated the increased outsourcing of libraries services, such as electronic reference services, collection development, cataloguing and even management of libraries to for-profit organizations. Also, ICTs have simplified the way in which libraries can partner with for-profit organizations such as those that provide students with homework help or tutorials.

Librarians are, in some instances, convinced the answer is to become information entrepreneurs, charge for services or outsource. In many other instances, librarians are much more directly engaged in protecting the information commons. They are actively involved in struggles against the expansion of intellectual property regimes and are forming consortia in order to have more power when bargaining over database licenses. They are using and developing open source software and attempting to facilitate the construction of electronic repositories for research that would facilitate the distribution

of articles without the need for publishers. We see, therefore, many instances in which capital is expanding aided by the development of ICTs but this has also meant that librarians are in a much more direct confrontation with capital and are organizing to struggle against it. "It's not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there's a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us" (Deleuze, 1995, 178).

Library Lines of Flight

Most, if not all librarians that are concerned with capitalist expansion into the library call for a return to traditional library values and the ideals upon which the early public library was founded. An alternative approach might be to seek not what is eternal but that which escapes. The power of the library may in fact be in its many failures, in all those moments in which we have broken out of the conformity and uniformity which is imposed by institutions. We are not interested in what is fixed and eternal in the library or what makes the library cohere; we are interested in what permits mutation and transformation. According to Deleuze, this would involve an analysis of the "lines of flight" which constitute the library. According to Deleuze, "society is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its lines of flight, it flees all over the place" (Negotiations, 1995, 171).

In order to understand lines of flight we must start from Deleuze's claim: "we are made up of lines" (Deleuze, 2002, 93). By "we" Deleuze means, not only individuals but also groups, nations, objects and parts that make up individuals. The world is made up of three types of lines: the segmented, the molecular and the lines of flight. The segmented lines are rigid and made up of segments such as the work place, the school or

the family. A segmented line is also made up of the binary divisions that so predominate in our lives, such as man/woman, child/parent, black/white.

There are also the molecular lines which are more supple and defined by micro-politics and becomings. The molecular lines are best understood in terms of all those things that escape the enclosures of the segments, cut across old divisions and structures. The molecular lines are to some degree still beholden to the rigid categories but they also escape them. Same sex marriage would be a prime contemporary example. It forces us to move away from heterosexual norms and breaks with gender stereotypes. Yet at the same time it holds onto the traditional conception of a good relationship as monogamous and life long.

There is also, according to Deleuze "a third kind of line, which is even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent" (Deleuze, 2002, 94). Lines of flight are a specific type of molecular line which includes all those movements and changes that are unforeseeable and undetermined.

Take the library as an example. It would be very easy to understand the library in terms of its segmentarity. The library is segmented; the space is divided according to where one reads, works, and drinks coffee. The use of the space is organized according to whether you are a child or an adult. Knowledge is segmented according to discipline, according to its authority, according to who has ownership. Yet, the institution should not be solely understood in terms of segmentarity. Deleuze and Guattari use the example of bureaucracy to demonstrate this point:

> It is not sufficient to define bureaucracy by a rigid segmentarity with compartmentalization of contiguous offices, an office manager in each segment, and the corresponding centralization at the end of the hall or on top of the tower. For at the same time there is a whole bureaucratic segmentation, a suppleness of and communication between offices, a

bureaucratic perversion, a permanent inventiveness or creativity practiced even against administrative regulations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 214).

Deleuze reminds us, therefore, that it is not sufficient to understand any phenomenon in terms of any particular given line. "[T]he three lines are immanent, caught up in one another" (Deleuze, 2002, 94). A profession, a family, a bureaucracy or a library can all be understood in terms of their rigid organization but there is always movement and connections that exist despite segmentarity. This is also certainly true of the library. It is easy to understand the rigid segments of a library but there are also molecular movements that cut across those boundaries.

The rigidity and segmentarity of the early public library and some of the molecular movements that escape it are highlighted in the tension between the capitalist imperatives of create passive workers in the library and workers' push for library resources. As noted above, the early public library had an alliance with capitalism not simply because of perceived economic imperatives but because it normalized behaviour in order to ensure stability for capitalist accumulation. Library management in the public library was quite reticent to offer any services to unionized patrons because of the fear of the movement toward unionization of library staff (Hubbard, 2002, 7). Historically unions found they had a real stake in the public library because of an understanding of their right to a quality education and the benefits of literacy. Yet these libraries that were:

> [d]esigned to ameliorate class friction during a period of high tension by making "good" reading materials democratically available, the style and values of the public libraries of the period often left members of the working classes cold. Nor did Andrew Carnegie's famous gifts for use in the construction of public libraries help matters much; many members of the working class saw his beneficence as part of an elitist and paternalistic scheme of social control and resisted using the new facilities (Clayton, 1993, 2440).

Members of the work force linked low wages, poor labour practices and philanthropic uses of profit (Ditzion, 1947, 162). Eugene V. Debs was extremely critical of accepting the philanthropic gifts "from the hands of Andrew Carnegie, red with the blood of their slain comrades" but also saw incredible hope and importance in the library system (cited in Ditzion, 1947, 163). The unions also envisioned the possibility of collaborating with librarians in order to enhance education and help them become "better trade unionists" (Sparanese, 2002, 25). Hence, the members of the labour movement saw the value in education, literacy and the free provision of books. Yet there was a molecular force operating which drove them to see its value outside of the creation of "good citizens" for a stable state or for capitalist operations which was a predominant discourse in librarianship.

Frequently, in political analysis we focus on the segments that exist in society and assume that they are the only lines that exist and that they are eternal and inevitable. Deleuze does not claim that the "real" human interests or truth is hidden by anything falsely produced by the rigid segmentarity. Rather, Deleuze claims that segmentarity is a very "real" phenomenon. The binaries produced along the segmented line are very real. There is a very real imperative to justify the library's existence in the information economy or suffer budget cuts. The problem is not that the segmented lines are not real; the problem is that focusing solely upon them obfuscates the existence of the movement of the molecular lines. There is always movement away and between the segments which guarantee that the segments will not remain intact.

According to Deleuze all change is due to lines of flight that determine the direction of an organization or the social world. Deleuze's project does not involve any attempt to find universals or eternal structures. Rather, he is interested in finding out how something new is produced and this according to Deleuze can be done through the

study of the lines (Deleuze, 2002, 94). "[A] society is defined by its line of flight" (its

capacity to transform) (Deleuze, 2002, 101). This is the norm by which society,

institutions and the state (often referred to as assemblages) operate: the norm of

deterritorialization. Or to put it another way, the only essential character of the

assemblage is its nature to transform. One could say the same of the state, institutions or

any assemblage (Patton, 2000, 106).

> Within any assemblage, what is normative is deterritorialization, that is ,
> the creation of 'lines of flight' (Deleuze) or 'resistance' (Foucault) that
> allow one to break free from a given norm, or to transform the norm
> (Smith, 2003, 308).

The library as an institution therefore will be best understood not by the norms that are

sustained over time and reproduced but by the forms of resistance.

The early public library can very well be understood in its function as a

disciplinary tool and the reproduction of norms and subjects of capital. Yet there are

always molecular movements that escape the rigid organization and imperatives. The

arrival of the networked society has meant that many of the old disciplinary regimes

have been slowly eroded and libraries are increasingly subsumed by capital. Librarians

have from the beginning of the public library movement used their purchasing power to

get discounts from publishers. Early attempts by the Booksellers Association to organize

and deny libraries discounts were a response to increasingly large discounts libraries

were able to obtain because of their buying power (*Library Journal*, 1897, 380).

Librarians are now required to confront the new reality that they do not own a large

portion of their collection and hence have less control. Yet ICTs have permitted

librarians to organize in large consortia in order to have greater bargaining power.

Though Katherine Maskell does not explicitly investigate the relationship between ICTs

and the growth of consortia, her seminal work on consortia in Canada clearly

demonstrates that many of the consortia's activities are related to technology or are made possible because of ICTs. Maskell notes: "One of the primary purposes of consortia [ ] is the leveraging of library budgets to purchase more resources (mainly digital resources) than could be purchased by any one member institution" (Maskell, 2008, 165). Further, consortia were seen not only as "buying clubs" but also means by which librarians could share staff expertise, collaborate on the development of technology, and develop new services such as interlibrary loan and virtual reference (Maskell, 2008, 173).

We noted above that ICTs have facilitated the expansion of intellectual property rights. Also it has become increasingly difficult for librarians and patrons to exercise their fair dealing rights. Yet the internet has also made it possible for the public to organize against the expansion of intellectual property regimes. Piracy on the internet, in fact, is the contemporary form of civil disobedience. Constant violation of all sorts of intellectual property law happens on a regular basis in our media saturated environment (see, for example Coombe, 1998, 1-5; Shearer, 2004, 85) Yet, it is difficult for many to imagine that copyright, a notoriously cumbersome set of legal rights that are difficult to decipher, would ever grab the attention of the public. However, considerable public interest was mobilized when amendments to Copyright legislation were added to the order papers for the Canadian Parliament on December 7, 2007.

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) weighed in on the issue back in December 2007, before the legislation was even tabled. A whole series of actions followed: the creation of blogs, websites, Facebook pages and a position statement on the CLA's website. Clearly anticipating legislation which would bring in anti-circumvention laws prohibiting the creation and use of tools which would permit individuals to circumvent technological prevention measures, Michael Geist had mounted a Facebook page "Fair Copyright for Canadians" where reform of copyright

and public interest issues could be discussed. Further, the group *Copyright for Canadians* established a website from which Canadians can obtain news and information on Copyright reform in Canada and easily send a letter electronically to their Member of Parliament expressing concerns about any proposed changes to Copyright legislation. Hence, we can see many instances in which capital is expanding aided by the development of ICTs. But this has also meant that librarians are in a much more direct confrontation with capital and are using networks to organizing to struggle against it.

The above few examples are used to demonstrate that there is constant flow underlying more rigid formations. In the disciplinary society for example, there were movements beyond the category of "good citizen" and attempts to resist capital. There have been changes in the lines of flight over time.   The hope for change and democratic engagement in the early public library was championed by librarians and seen to be within the purview of the institution itself. This rhetoric has not disappeared. Yet movement towards different forms of social organization are not happening in isolation in the library world anymore. Librarians are now making alliances with many other groups, people and movements as they confront capital more directly. The fact that library services are being privatized and increasingly information is commodified does not mean we need to resurrect the ossified remains of the early public library. Not only is it not desirable to return to the early public library because of the many disciplinary mechanisms that it employed, it is not a viable solution to contemporary problems. Resistance in the control society requires new network alliances. We must invent new concepts and new projects or use old tools in new ways because a new time calls for new weapons.

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