

Potsdamer Informationswissenschaftliches Kolloquium

„Dokumentation ist für Kultur, was Maschinen für die
Industrie sind.“

“Documentation is to Culture what Machinery is to
Industry.” (Robert Pagès, 1948)

Michael Buckland
University of California, Berkeley

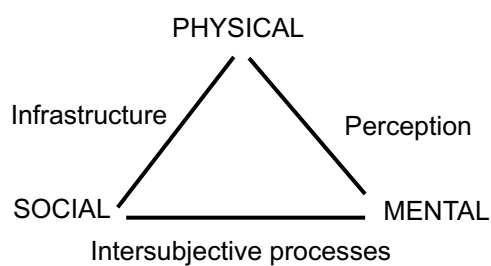
November 11, 2020

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Collquium

1

Original topic “Document theory” covered by Roswitha Skare.
Also ISKO encyclopedia article <https://www.isko.org/cyclo/document>.



So, comments relevant to the principal Colloquium themes: Documents;
library services; democracy; information competencies; i-schools

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Collquium

2

Libraries as Democratic Spaces.

How is a democratic library different?

More general question: How and why do libraries differ?

Traditionally four *types of library*: academic, public, school, special.

Clearly different but little discussion of *why*. They provide the same services but with different emphases.

A more refined analysis: four *types of library service* based on:

- How specifically are **topics** specified; and
- How specifically are **sources** specified.

High and low on each gives four combinations.

- A: Specific topic + no specific document: Any document about topic Y;
 B: Specific document + Specific topic: Topic Y in document X;
 C: Specific document + non-specific topic: Topic of document X?;
 D: Neither topic nor document specified: Almost any document and topic.

These require different styles of library service. Thus:

| | | Specific sources? | |
|------------------|------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Less | More |
| Specific topics? | More | Fact checking A | B Historical research |
| | Less | D Recreational reading | C Current awareness |

Discretion

Special libraries emphasize in A Fact checking and C Current awareness.

Academic libraries emphasize B Historical research, minimal discretion.

Public libraries emphasize D Recreational reading. Also School libraries.

Scope for political discretion greatest with public and school libraries.

Decision-making diffuse in decentralized, labor intensive organizations.

California County Library System c. 1900-1917 -- 1

California half the size of Germany. Very rural. Few cities. Few libraries. Rural local government (County = *Bezirke*) not authorized to provide library services. Very large State Library only a collection; not open to the public.

James Gillis came to California as small child from Iowa: 2,000 km by ox wagon across plains, deserts and mountains. Railroad manager. Then state bureaucrat. In 1898, Gillis visited the State Library. Empty! No readers, no staff. A vision of what was possible! Became State Librarian. Transformation.



- Legislative reference service.
- California history department.
- First library service for the blind.
- Sociology department to study readers
- First union catalog in USA, based on *Deutscher Gesamtkatalog*, 1902-
- "Extension": Systematic encouragement of other libraries.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Collquium

5

California County Library System 1900-1917 -- 2.



New legislation to authorize counties to provide public library services. One early branch located in a small secondary school. The director, Harriet Eddy promoted use: Took books to farmers.

Eddy becomes charismatic library organizer. Persuading each county to start a free public library.

- Library service must be free. Paid from taxes.
- Director of each library must be qualified.
- County libraries and state library are a network.

State Library became a "ministry for library services" providing advice, technical assistance and infrastructure. Would find or buy any needed book.

Triumph of efficiency and scientific management.

Complemented school system: "People's university"!

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Collquium

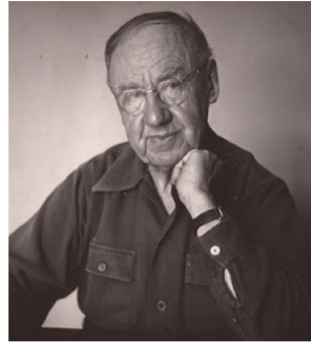
6

California County Library System – 3

Public libraries, efficiency, and democracy.

Sydney Mitchell, first director of the Berkeley library school, gave presidential address to the California Library Association on “The public library in defense of democracy” soon after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Libraries need democracy.

“Librarians should be all for democracy, as under no other system of government now in effect can the public library, as we understand it, persist. In the totalitarian state the librarian becomes merely an agency for propaganda, for the dissemination of such information as the authorities care to pass on.”



He denounced intolerance of ideas, of religion, of other groups, and lack of critical thinking.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

7

Wilhelm Munthe, Oslo, on Public Libraries in the USA

Norwegian librarian, wrote *American librarianship from a European Angle: An attempt at an evaluation of policies and activities*. (1939).

Skeptical of public libraries: Mostly light fiction for women. But pp 53-55:

“A factor in human progress. Thus the library is presented to us as a sanctuary of free inquiry and objective search for truth. . . . Every healthy democracy must find itself in a continual process of gradual reform, as the result of a peaceful readjustment of values in people’s minds. . . . It is a great blessing when this work can go on quietly and without creating bitterness and strife. . . . Its significance is raised to a higher plane where it joins forces and purposes with the scholarly library in a common task. The business of the latter is to help scholars in their work of constantly extending the bounds of knowledge, and the public library’s business is to help the people at large take possession of these new-won territories.”

Is this about efficiency or about democracy or both?

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

8

Libraries as Cultural Foreign Policy

"In our country's first year of war, we have seen the growing power of books as weapons. . . . This is proper, for a war of ideas can no more be won without books than a naval war can be won without ships." (Franklin D. Roosevelt).

First World War: US concern at German influence in Latin America led to a various US propaganda activities. "It was in in this recognition of Public Opinion as a major force that the Great War differed most essentially from all previous conflicts . . .

German *Kultur* raised issues that had to be fought out in the hearts and minds of people as well as on the actual firing lines." G. Creel, 1920. A reading room in Mexico City with Mexico and US newspapers and books, lecture and film programs, and classes was an unexpectedly success. Others in other cities.

Second World War: Repeated with more focus of information for elites. Office of War Information: Excellent small public libraries. Program expanded during the Cold War. e.g. Amerika Häuser. Part of broader cultural foreign policy. All leading powers: British Council; Goethe-Institut (operates 159 centers); Alliance Française; etc.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

9

Japan, Meiji Restoration 1868 -- 1945

Very high literacy. Well-developed publishing, book imports, ownership.

University libraries resembled German university libraries: Inefficient institute libraries controlled by autocratic professors.

Otherwise, like California before James Gillis. National library only a collection, lack of library infrastructure. Lack of standards. Minimal professional preparation.

Public libraries little developed. Why?

Conformist homogeneous society; authoritarian culture; little social mobility; educational system dominated by examinations, very strong central government, very weak local government; militaristic regime.

Resembles lack of public library development in France for cultural and institutional reasons: Jean Hassenforder, *Développement compare des bibliothèques publiques en France, en Grande Bretagne, et aus Etats-Unis* . . . (1967).

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

10

Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952

Japanese government continued, but directed by allied commander.
One country with two culturally different governments.

Allies impose democratic constitution. Parliament ("Diet") source of power – not the Emperor. Suddenly, Diet needs legislative library and library infrastructure.

National Diet Library created includes national library collection; many government libraries; standardization; national bibliography; national union catalog; ...

Very effective. Big success. The government wanted it.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

11

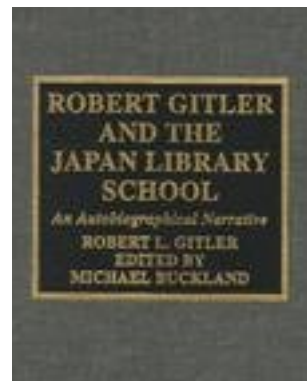
Need for better professional education for librarians.

US Army paid the American Library Association to start a college-level library school. I recorded founding director's reminiscences.



Robert Gitler and the Japan Library School: An Autobiographical Narrative. Ed. by M. Buckland. Scarecrow Pr., 1999.

I remained curious and continued to study the Japanese library context.



Nov 11, 2020

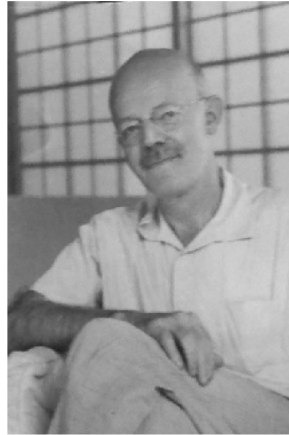
Potsdam Colloquium

12

Philip Keeney's Californian Plan for Japan

Library officer in occupation proposes more or less exact copy of California County Library system in Japan in 1946.

"Thus no matter where one lives, he has access to all the library service within Japan making the service EQUAL; all library material is used as far as possible making the service ECONOMICAL; every possibility of filling a request is resorted making the service COMPLETE; and every unit of service—the already established public library, the school library, the prefectural and national libraries—is woven into one system making it completely UNIFIED."



Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

13

What Result?

1. Head of Occupation security was Charles Willoughby (geb. Adolf Karl Tscheppe-Weidenbach) a fascist, an admirer of Mussolini and Franco, obsessed with fighting Communism. Keeney dismissed and deported as suspected communist subversive.

2. The Ministry of Education is not sympathetic. After 20+ revisions the public library law of 1950 was very weak. "Substance had been sacrificed for shadow." Little progress since then.

Note contrast between the new National Diet Library that the Japanese government wanted and public library development which it did not.

The librarians were well-informed. Not their decision.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

14



Title: "Documentation is to Culture what Machinery is to Industry." from Robert Pagès.

Anarchist activist, later director of a major social psychology research laboratory. From 1946, student of Suzanne Briet in the documentation course now named Institut National des Techniques de Documentation, Paris.

Thesis, semiotic perspective on documentation: "Transformations documentaires et milieu culturel (Essai de documentologie).
Review of documentation 15, fasc. 3: (1948): 53-64.

Pagès: Documents as Infrastructure

Ideas are developed and transmitted through signs and symbols.

Documents are a very important kind of symbol.

Combinations are very powerful (e.g. of words in language; of machinery; of related documents).

Available machinery = infrastructure.

"Documentation is to culture what machinery is to industry."

The Failure of the Enlightenment Project (*Die Aufklärung*)

The rational individual + reason + direct experience of evidence.

New media have made that impossible already by 1948.

- Evidence is now indirect experience, "second-hand information."
- Experience is realistic but vicarious (films, TV); commercialized; a commodity.
- Increasingly group experience not individual; emphasis on collective cohesion.
- Mass production, mass media, total war, totalitarian regimes, networks, teams, groups.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

17

Power of documents

Great Recession of 2008 caused by false documents.

Poverty in Third World would be reduced by reliable property documents:
Hernando de Soto.

2016: US Presidential election influenced by false social media manipulation.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

18

Strategy for any Fachbereich Informationswissenschaften

“Black lives matter” and other social concerns.

Pious statements and vocal protests have limited impact.

If there is a concern with crime, corruption, inequality, inefficiency, . . .

There are two basic requirements for reform:

1.Documentation: Recorded and preserved;

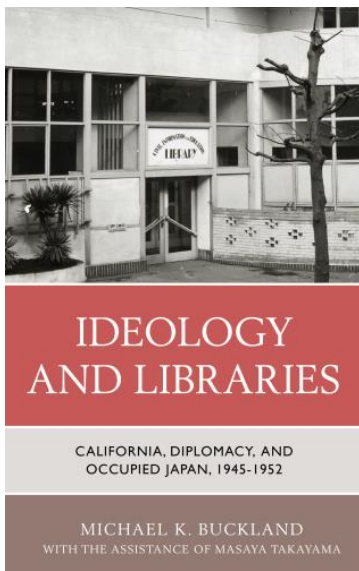
2.Possibility of analysis: “Forensics.”

These are the two basic principles. The rest is details.

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

19



More in:

*Ideology and Libraries:
California, Diplomacy, and Occupied Japan,
1945–1952*

Michael K. Buckland, with Masaya Takayama.
Rowman & Littlefield.

Publication later this month.

Thank-you!

buckland@berkeley.edu

Nov 11, 2020

Potsdam Colloquium

20