

CARL Core Competencies

Through a Neoliberal Lens

Definition: Neoliberalism in LIS

- David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005] most commonly quoted for definition, in LIS literature:

“Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices [promulgated by the state] that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005:2).”

- LIS literature tends to make appeals to: professional (LIS) values; morality, and; democracy [Buschman reference?]

Definition: Shaping our understanding

- Mirowski's work important for 3 reasons: multitudinous nature of neoliberalism; as a "thought collective"; 13 tenets
- William Davies's *Limits of Neoliberalism* [LA: Sage, 2014] explains how meaning of competition has changed (neolib rhetoric vs our reality)
- Charles Masquelier's 2013 "Critical theory and contemporary social movements: conceptualizing resistance in the neoliberal age" [*European Journal of Social Theory*, 16(4), 395-412] offers up a typology of critiques of neoliberalism

CARL Core Competencies

- Author mostly relied on content analysis to identify neoliberalism.
- Developed by admin level librarians. Scholarship? 6 “competency statements consulted” and 4 “other works cited.” CARL defines the academic research library market for largest libraries in Canada.
- “the construction of knowledge and skills are key resources for regulating identity” Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, 630.->CARL recommends use as :
 - checklists of desirable competencies for “Library Directors and human resource professional” when hiring and when identifying training and development
 - to recruit new talent
 - to reassess the role of the librarian within the academy
 - to market the profession (CARL thus mandating a philosophy + identity)
 - as a “guide” for librarians to manage their careers, set meaningful professional development goals and to align those goals with the mission of their organization, i.d. strengths/gaps in their personal competencies in order to round out portfolios; but also uses language “All CARL librarians should...”

How Shapes Identity

- No reference to contested areas of academic librarianship such as librarian neutrality, issues of social justice, race, differing philosophies of librarianship (e.g. democratic vs neoliberal), critical theory, etc.
- No room within the statement for establishing your own professional identity or extending your expertise beyond the statement (is your world)
- No team-specific recommendations (work with “diverse groups”), assumes success derives from individuals only
- No competencies/auditing that applies upline, no administrative responsibility for library success/failure (embodied in commodified staff)
- Positivist (valid knowledge is objective, empirical, static with focus on predetermined, measurable outcomes), instrumental approach common to neoliberalism (no intrinsic value, is what x enables, the outcomes)

How Shapes Identity

- Librarians no longer the human actors responsible for developments in the library field but masked/sublimated by processes about us
- “bundle of skills” approach with librarian as self-managed product
- Introduces checklist for auditing
- Perception by some users that we must be equally good at everything on the statement
- Focus impact on the individual librarians, not the library as a community, (thus developed with little or no ‘line librarian’ input)
- Reported prescriptive use of statement in survey
- HOW is all this deprofessionalising us?

Survey: Some Textual Responses

- Statement is nebulous
- Unrealistic
- Prefer to focus on ethics or other competency statements
- Interested in more critical sources
- Presence of Collective Agreements
- Unrealistic to expect every librarian to meet the expectations in the statement
- A laundry list
- Are used in theory but refer to other statements for practical applications
- Doesn't apply to work outside library needs
- Librarians meet competencies specific to their jobs, plus other comments about selective use
- Not directly relevant

Q:

- What is happening in your libraries?
- What is most important to you as a professional?
- Can you interpret it using a neoliberal lens/approach? What does it then look like?

Neoliberal Outcomes in Libraries/Academia

- “austerity agenda” anyone?
- Audit culture (managerialism) and expanding administrative levels
- Focus on “products” and commodified self
- Quantity over quality since latter can’t easily be measured
- Competition between colleagues, faculty members, departments for sparse resources
- Flexibility aka work longer hours, constant shifting responsibilities, acting “professionally” and responding positively to demands, mentally precarious/uncertain
- Short term goals, reduced/disappearance of long-term planning
- Lack of transparency

Potential Librarian Responses

- The supposed “neutrality” of librarians, lack of defense of ourselves, and that we don’t view ourselves as labour, castrates responses to political implementation of neoliberalism within our universities and libraries
- As self-managed individuals we are audited and our work counted with an emphasis on relevance, accountability. (Where are the corresponding competency statements/requirements for administrative staff?)
- Neolib reflects one approach to librarianship: neoliberal (vs democratic vs social democratic vs ...)

End

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Survey of Core Competencies for 21st century CARL Librarians : Admin Details

- Canadian librarians working in university setting, CARL and non-CARL
- Population: postulated 1206.41 librarians (2014); but CARL-only data states 1380 CARL librarians (2013)
 - Regardless, unable to generalize to larger, Canadian university-based librarian population for lack of data
- 23 questions, 8 linked/dependent questions (visually, a “tree”)
- Fluid Surveys and SPSS software
- Reviewed critiques of neoliberalism, LIS research that explicitly mentions neoliberalism, the CARL Core Competencies, some LIS competencies

Survey of Core Competencies for 21st century CARL Librarians : Hypotheses + Response

1. CARL Core Competencies are not being used by academic librarians in university settings = false
2. But if used, any difference in use among the different types of positions? = unreliable for lack of data
3. Worth investigating further the hypothesis that these competencies represent the responsibility/authority of administrative level librarians, not 'line librarians' = yes, but how?

Survey of Core Competencies for 21st century CARL Librarians: Results

- Not generalizable for lack of data
- No relationship b/t CARL membership and whether read (P=0.131)
- Admin intervention: 45.95% not encouraged, 16.32% encouraged to use
 - Unreliable data re: whether formative vs prescriptive use but respondents answered yes to both, incl. recommended prescriptively
- Choice: 35.21% chose to use them, 64.79% chose not to
- Use of any competency statement: 38.57% responded yes but otherwise unreliable for lack of data, so FYI,
 - Top 2 mentioned: ALA Core Competences of Librarianship; IL Competency Standards for Higher Education
 - Top uses: to set professional development goals; identify gaps in professional development

Mirowski (2009, 2013), expounding on his history of neoliberalism as economic rationality, describes **13 tenets**, or configuration of doctrines, of neoliberalism “arrived at by roughly the 1980s (2009, 434).” These tenets in conjunction with his neoliberal thought collective approach offer a useful, overarching framework on which to pin or hang other articles:

- “...contrary to classical liberal doctrine, ...conditions for its existence must be *constructed* (sic), and will not come about ‘naturally’...(53)”;
- Neoliberals are “extremely vague about the structure and character of the market (55)” (what it is) and are “preoccupied with what it does,” except there is consensus “for the purposes of public understanding and sloganeering (2009, 435)” [see point 3 below];
- The “neoliberal market society must be treated as ‘natural’ and inexorable state of mankind (55),” claiming scientific evolution as its process obviating a socially constructed market (2009, 437);
- Intent is to “redefine[s] the shape and functions of the state, *not to destroy it* (sic) (56)”;
- Masking the coercive nature of the neoliberal version of the state with legitimacy, since rational actors would otherwise reject it;
- Revise what it means to be a human person (58-59) from humanism with accompanying human rights to neoliberal human capital with emphasis on managing of/investment in self in the labour market (the supposed freedom of the individual based on ability to sell themselves in the labour market as a commodity) “the individual is no longer a privileged ontological platform (59).” “entrepreneurialism of the self (61)”
- There are no more classes since individuals are both employer and worker; and corporations are people(59-60); property is not sacrosanct but now subject to political objectives; and there are no “theories of ‘interests’ (60);
- Definition of freedom “recoded and heavily edited (60)” [as Davies 2014 shows] in various ways separate from the old versions of individualism. The markets seems to determine your freedoms by the choices offered you, neglecting to inform you of how those choices/options are formed within the market framework and disallow non-market options. Economic freedom is dominant and excludes other definitions. “Conveniently, ‘freedom’ does not extend to principled rejection of the neoliberal insurgency (61)”;
- Capital has a “natural right to flow freely across national boundaries [and] ...labour enjoys no similar right (62)” vs old capital controls. Arose a need for tools for “economic and political discipline of nation states (62)” thus new roles for IMF, World Bank, WTO, [and free-trade agreements such as the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership)];
- **Inequality** “as a necessary functional characteristic of their ideal market system (63)” and is “one of its strongest motor forces for progress (63)” though there is a “...lack of correlation between reward and effort (63)”;
- “Corporations can do no wrong, or at least they are not to be blamed if they do (64).” Re-engineered the corporation;
- Any problem has a market solution as the market contains all relevant information (2009, 435) and “the market always surpass[es] the state’s ability to process information (2009, 435)”;
- “unchecked expansion of the penal sector (66)”;
- Neoliberal “political/economic theories...as a moral code (66)” continues as an ongoing project.

Posted flip chart page for reference

1. Foundational Knowledge
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Leadership and Management
4. Collections Development
5. Information Literacy
6. Research & Contributions to the Profession
7. Information Technology Skills

Posted flip chart page: Are CARL Core Competencies Neoliberal?

- Authority is constructed and contextual.
- Information has value.
- Information creation as a process.
- Research as inquiry.
- Searching as strategic exploration.
- Scholarship as a conversation.

If all these threshold concepts hold true what happens when apply them to the CARL statement?