

Libraries, donations and freedom of expression: The case of Scientology

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Abstract

Whilst until the late 19th century most libraries were dependent on donations for their stock, since then donations have been insignificant for the majority of libraries in comparison with purchased acquisitions. There are organisations, however, which have considerable donations programmes and the Church of Scientology is a prominent example. Scientologists suggest that their donations of sets of the works of L Ron Hubbard are frequently ignored and discarded without due consideration. They adduce information regarding the response to donations made to libraries in Germany and France to support this suggestion. Furthermore, they cite the principle of freedom of expression as a rationale for the inclusion of Scientology material in library stock. The relevance of freedom of expression in the matter of donations is assessed in relation to established library principles relating to balanced and representative collections. The importance of clear policies on collection development, derived from a respect for freedom of expression, is stressed as a basis for reasoned explanations to donors of why their donations might be accepted or rejected.

Keywords

Acquisitions, collection development, donations, freedom of expression, policy

Introduction

This article will discuss donations to libraries (a matter of practical library management) in relation to freedom of expression (a matter of high principle effecting libraries as information institutions) with the intention of throwing light on both practice and principle in librarianship. It will use evidence relating to the Church of Scientology: an institution that puts great emphasis on its extensive library donation programmes and which suggests that some libraries, by rejecting or marginalising its donations, infringe its freedom of expression. The case is undoubtedly a controversial one. Scientology evokes sharply polarised opinions: devotion from its followers; and hostility from many who feel distaste for what they know of its beliefs and outrage at what is alleged of its treatment of members and former members. It is clearly impossible to set these opinions of Scientology entirely on one side, but we will endeavour to use the case study of Scientology as a means to reflect on an insufficiently discussed management matter (donations) and a notion (freedom of expression) that nowadays affects the whole practice of librarianship but whose implications are so far incompletely worked out.

At the centre of this article will be two dossiers collected by the Church of Scientology relating to their book donations to libraries in France and Germany. These contain descriptions of Scientology donation programmes in the two countries; accounts of follow-up investigations relating to the fate of the donations; material relating to official policy on Scientology (because such policy was cited in responses); and copies of posts between librarians on relevant discussion lists. These dossiers were presented to the first author of this article, who was then Chair of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)'s Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) Committee, by representatives of New Era Publishing (one of Scientology's publishing houses). The implication was that the dossiers were evidence that librarians were not giving proper consideration to including

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the donations in their collections, and that they rejected them without offering justification for so doing. The Scientologists felt that the mere fact the donations concerned Scientology led to their rejection. Since the dossiers were explicitly assembled by the Scientologists, their validity as evidence is a matter of central importance for any commentary that might be offered on such cases. For a publicly available account of exchanges between librarians and representatives of the publishing arms of Scientology that gives a flavour of the problem from a slightly different perspective the reader can consult Ortega (2012). Clearly dossiers collected by an organisation to further its own viewpoint are not evidence that would meet the stringent tests that ought to be applied to research data. The authors do not intend to claim anything more than that the dossiers seem to constitute a kind of *prima facie* case to be answered.

The authors have not sought to verify every statement or piece of evidence contained within the two dossiers. What they have done is to assess the inherent likelihood that the dossiers genuinely represent communications between librarians in France and Germany and Scientology representatives, and comments made by librarians in relation to such exchanges. This was easier in relation to the German dossier as the second author of this article is a German citizen and a member of the German library community, and has read and examined the documentation in the original language. It was also possible to contextualise the case via the research of Schleihagen (2004). The French dossier has proved harder to check in the same way as requests for information and comment to key French members of the library community have brought no response. In the authors' opinion, the documentation contained in both dossiers is basically reliable as some evidence, at least, of what took place. However, they are obliged to place greater reliance on the German dossier than that concerning France. The contents of the dossiers on which the present authors have worked can be made available to enquirers on application. What is important to note is that any conclusions drawn here on the basis of their evidence are, more than is normal with research conclusions, tentative. The dossiers suggest patterns of response to the donations; the authors develop an argument and draw (tentative) conclusions on the possibilities that emerge from a reading of the dossiers.

Background

Donations

If we look at the question of donations we find that it has an enduring significance for libraries, but that significance has varied according to time and place. The centrality of donations to the growth and shape of libraries was a key factor in the age of the manuscript book and the early centuries of print. The royal and imperial libraries that mutated into national libraries, the monastic, college and early public

libraries all depended on foundation gifts and a continuing inflow of legacies and donations. Whilst a few libraries in the 16th and 17th centuries might have purchased a substantial part of their collections, most could only control the content of the library by encouraging some donations and (possibly) discouraging others. The 18th century commercial circulating libraries and libraries of private societies of one kind or another represent the first wave of libraries in which a proprietor, committee or librarian could, because of the revenue streams available, set out to exercise a real command over the shape and content of the stock. The expectation that library collections should represent a coherent view of a subject or subjects was thus a comparatively new addition to the intellectual structure of librarianship when, in the 19th century, libraries of many kinds began to be founded in great numbers in the USA and north western Europe.

Melville Dewey and the pioneers of systematic librarianship acknowledged and respected the role of donations, but they envisaged the librarian exercising a conscious control over the process of collection building. So whilst a recent text such as Gordon (2005) only discusses donations in the context of actively soliciting them, this is not entirely typical of the literature. Holden (2010: 75) stresses that 'An acquisitions strategy developed for donations needs to be part of a wider content development program'. Hoffmann and Wood (2005) make it clear that in receiving donations libraries need to stress that this only means acceptable items, and Futas (1995) provides a set of sample policies from libraries that make it clear to potential donors that only selected items will be kept, while unwanted material will be sold or otherwise disposed of. Whilst very few journal articles offer specific advice, DeWitt (1988) is extremely helpful, as we will show later; Bybee (1999) deals with gift policies; Cassell (2005) provides a relevant perspective from the USA; and Chadwell (2010) concentrates on the disposal of unwanted donations.

In public libraries, with their broad non-scholarly user base, donations are a highly disputable issue. Cassell and Futas (1991: 98) are categorical that: 'The collection development policy must state that the library is free to decide whether all or part of a gift is to be kept or disposed of elsewhere'. This is especially true in the developing world where libraries have an almost impossibly large role in supporting education and public enlightenment, with pitifully few resources to realise this. It is important to dwell on this briefly because it shows up the problem aspect of donations in sharp relief. In the context of library poverty, donations from charities and self-serving donations from government aid agencies have often been accepted even though they might be irrelevant, worn-out trash or glossy propaganda. It has frequently been strongly argued that their effect on library collections has not been beneficial and a recent article by Thomas (2007) supports the notion that the question of donations has been insufficiently discussed in print and at professional forums.

Freedom of expression

The next question to ask is whether any of this changes if we factor in the matter of the human right to freedom of expression. The UN Declaration on Human Rights, which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, provides the key statement of that right. Article 19 of the Declaration says that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Although set out as a right to opinion and the expression of opinion, it contains within it the right to freedom of access to information, expressed as the rights to seek, receive and impart information. Article 19 might now be seen as a lynchpin of the ethical approach to librarianship, but the older literature virtually never refers to it. Yet something like the same principle was there. In the UK, Douglas Foskett's (1962) puckish suggestion that the creed of the librarian was 'No politics, no religion, no morals' was in fact a statement of the principle that librarians should accept the whole range of possible subjects and ideas without interposing a political, religious or moral viewpoint. Yet taken a little further the principle could be seen as an abdication of responsibility, which is what Robert Hauptman (1976) seems to have identified in his famous mad bomber experiment. When asked to respond to what was quite obviously a dangerous information request, librarians supplied what was asked for without question. There is arguably a strain of thinking in the library profession which is content to avoid responsibility. What is more, there is a danger that this might be confused with a commitment to freedom of access to information. However, a broader examination of what is being said and written on library ethics shows informed debate on a range of views worldwide. Sturges (2009a) surveyed the literature; the codes, manifestos and charters; some of the conferences; and the education and training programmes that have been offered. He concluded that: 'If, as can be claimed, a mature profession is an ethical profession, library and information work is revealing increasing levels of maturity' (p.250).

What this means is that articles on ethical topics abound in journals, edited volumes and sets of conference proceedings. Almost any topic within library and information science, broadly defined, has been subject to carefully nuanced ethical exploration to some extent or other. What is more, there is a great deal of relevant discussion, particularly of issues arising from electronic information resources and communication, in the literature of a broader information ethics. To survey this large and growing field is beyond our scope here, but Floridi (2008) illustrates the strength of the literature. On librarianship issues as such, the concerned professional can turn to a body of writings that includes

general treatments of the issues, and sets of case studies, including Lindsey and Prentice (1985), Hauptman again (1988, 2002), McMenemy et al. (2007), Buchanan and Henderson (2009). On acquisitions specifically Holden (2010) provides a worthwhile ethical perspective. For an international flavour we can turn to Vaagan (2002), which is a collection of essays dealing with different countries and primarily their codes of ethics for librarians. There are also journals specific to ethical topics: since 1992 *The Journal of Information Ethics* and others more recently. Towering over the relevant literature, however, is Michael Gorman's (2000) work on the values that inspire librarianship, with a discussion of intellectual freedom that stresses the need for the profession to protect the availability of ideas even when these ideas conflict with the individual professional's own convictions. Promoting the intellectual freedom focus of the profession on an ongoing basis is IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) core activity (Byrne, 2007 and Sturges, 2009b).

Article 19 is clearly a statement of the rights of the individual, but it would be illogical to deny those rights to bodies of people, including belief groups like the Scientologists. Indeed, IFLA's Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom (IFLA, 2002) makes the whole issue much clearer, when it says: 'Libraries and information services shall acquire, preserve, and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society. The selection and availability of library materials and services shall be governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views'. In asserting their collective right to freedom of expression, Scientologists follow the logic of the Glasgow Declaration so as to claim a kind of right to donate their publications to publicly accessible libraries. Indeed, the Glasgow Declaration is not an isolated statement: numerous interventions by IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) Committee have reinforced this approach. This is the reason why the Scientologists presented the dossiers to the Chair of FAIFE with the suggestion that they, and in particular their programme of donations to libraries, were not receiving the full benefits of freedom of expression in libraries. We will discuss the case study of Scientology in the light of the question that this presents: 'If we regard the library as a vehicle for freedom of expression, does that change the tendency of library policy on the reception of donations?'

Scientology

Scientology is a set of beliefs, based on ideas the pulp fiction author Lafayette Ron Hubbard, first described as dianetics (Hubbard, 1950). The Church of Scientology was founded in 1954. It offers its members a highly structured programme of what seems to be personal growth tutoring called auditing, which is accompanied by the study of

numerous texts and recorded speeches by the founder. Members pay what the Scientologists say is a contribution towards costs and which their critics call an exorbitant system of fees. Scientology (like Buddhism) seems to be a religion without a god, but it describes the writings and recorded speeches of Hubbard as its scriptures. Elements of a kind of science fiction explanation of humanity are blended with a commonsensical self-improvement philosophy and an element of mysticism (reincarnation of souls, referred to as thetans) resulting in a religious structure that is distinct from other faiths. To the outsider it shares much of the character of the so-called ‘cults’ and recent religions such as Christian Science, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Although official and private opponents have been known to characterise Scientology as a cult, this is a term we will avoid applying to it ourselves because of its insufficiently precise and highly pejorative implications.

Like a number of other such bodies, Scientology proselytises enthusiastically, but, possibly distinctively, it does so with enormously efficient use of modern technology. It has sophisticated websites and purposively uses the ‘authority’ of Internet content. Its European publishing house New Era Publications has an impressively modern production unit in Glostrup, Denmark, and the nearby distribution facility is equally well organised and effective. For the purposes of this article Scientology’s commitment to a kind of industrialisation of proselytisation is central to the question of donations. Scientology has the facilities to donate its glossy books and other materials in different languages, to different parts of the world, to individuals and groups, bookshops and libraries. Its representatives argued in face to face discussions with the authors held in Copenhagen on 2 February 2010 that it exercises the human right of freedom of expression in doing so and went on to add that, in consequence of the same right, library users should be able to access its books so as to form their own judgment of their content. In what follows we will examine the case in two countries, Germany and France, and attempt to draw some conclusions for the library and information professional community, which may or may not have resonance for the Church of Scientology itself.

The German case study

Since 2001 IFLA FAIFE has published a biennial World Report that seeks to provide a global picture of the status of intellectual freedom with regard to libraries and information services. The German entry in the very first issue says that:

In the nineties considerable uncertainty was generated in public libraries by a problem arising in a jurisdictional grey area: the treatment of unsolicited ideological literature, e.g. the publications of religious sects. The Church of Scientology

used particularly aggressive methods in its attempts to disseminate its literature in libraries. (IFLA/FAIFE, 2001)

In 1997 the Ministers of the Interior of the various Länder set out the case that the organisation harboured aspirations against the free and democratic political order of the State. Although no formal requirements were issued by their superior authorities, public libraries in general tended to decline adding Scientology publications to their stock, justifying this course of action on the basis of their entitlement to freedom of stock selection. Scientology has responded by campaigning against what they alleged was book censorship in public libraries. The dossier that the Church of Scientology collected concerning its attempts to donate books written by Lafayette Ron Hubbard to libraries throughout Germany forms the basis of this section. Some examples follow.

In February 2009 Scientologists allege that they visited the Munich Public Library and talked briefly to its Director about the inclusion of books by Hubbard in the library. They say that the Director argued that he was not allowed by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC) to have these titles in the library. When the Scientologists raised the topic of users’ right to free access to information the reply was that users could get these books from other libraries. In summer 2009 a Scientologist called the subject specialist for books on religion at the same library with a similar query. The enquirer said that the response was that the Director would not permit the acceptance of any books from Scientology. When the Scientologists checked the library catalogue they did find that there were six books by Hubbard, and over 40 other, largely hostile, publications about Scientology. A distinction was made between the secondary literature which was available for loan and the titles by Hubbard, which could only be read in the reading room. The tendency of the material in the dossier was to suggest that this was fairly typical of practice in other German public libraries.

As long ago as October 1999 all directors of the public libraries in Berlin received a letter from the Berlin Senate Administration for Science, Research and Culture calling them to reject donations from Scientology. If a library did feel that it should accept a donation, however, the administration requested that it should store the books in the stacks, so that they would not be accessible except to a direct enquiry. When Scientologists have visited libraries in Berlin in subsequent years to discuss the availability of books by Hubbard most librarians cited the ‘decision’ (or more correctly, guidance?) of the Berlin Senate as a reason not to accept any books given by Scientology. A similar situation seems to apply across Northern Germany. The Scientology dossier includes the calculation that almost 95% of libraries in the region refuse to accept books by Hubbard. When asked about their reasons for this, librarians either referred to orders from higher authority or argued

that books by Hubbard were accessible in other libraries. Probably the most significant factor for our purpose is that only one librarian, from the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Library in Hanover, when returning three donated books chose to refer to the library's collection development policy.

The general trend of the material in the dossier is borne out by the independent academic research of Schleihagen (2004). Interviews with 12 Public Library Directors from the Berlin region explored their values and attitudes towards the intellectual freedom principles promoted by IFLA FAIFE. Broadly the Directors endorsed the idea of their contribution to intellectual freedom as providing access to information, stressing the importance of this by using qualifiers like 'all' and 'unrestricted'. However, some of them also mentioned limitations. Possible harm of body and soul, and violence against the constitution or the youth protection laws, were mentioned in this context. All interviewees, bar one, concentrated on materials on Scientology when asked about the appropriateness of refusing donations from religious groups and sects. The Directors were evenly divided on including materials by Scientology. Most of them referred to the recommendation, which some even remembered as an instruction, from the Berlin Senate not to include Scientology writings in public libraries. However, one Director commented that it was a question for the Penal Code and pointed out that the Church of Scientology was not prohibited. Schleihagen (2004: 46) concluded that 'despite overall agreement with intellectual freedom principles not all Berlin library directors can agree with the appropriateness of some controversial material in public libraries which points, among others, to an unsolved conflict between personal convictions and professional responsibilities'. To clarify the position regarding intellectual freedom principles Schleihagen recommended, among other things, the development of written selection policies and a code of ethics as professional basis for librarians.

Such a code was adopted at the Leipzig Congress of Library and Information in March 2007 (Codes of Ethics for Librarians, 2007). Translated, this states that: 'We choose information resources exclusively according to objective criteria, their quality and their suitability to meet the needs of our clients regardless of personal preferences and influences of third parties'. Such a statement has the virtue of firmly setting out the guiding principle but arguably it still requires interpretation according to the cases to which it is applied. Thus, if we use the dossier to look for reasons why Scientology donations are rejected, we do find interesting indications. A particularly explicit statement from a librarian at the Hamburg Public Libraries (Bücherhallen Hamburg) pointed out that the Federal Government of Germany had stated that Scientology was not a religious group but a business enterprise that had a number of methods to lock 'customers' into a continuing relationship. The key decision here seems to have been taken in March 1995 when the Federal Labour Court ruled that Scientology was neither a religious

group nor a philosophical community (though in 2002 the court stepped back from the 1995 ruling to recognise that Scientology was pursuing religious purposes). This original ruling, which is still present in the consciousness of librarians, would place Scientology much more in the commercial sphere and libraries do have a longstanding professional tradition of not including what could be considered advertising material in their collections. Even given that, it would be debatable whether or not the Scientology publications could actually be considered as advertising, or might more appropriately be considered in some such category as self-help or popular philosophy. Based on the contents of the dossier, the reader might well conclude that both government and library professional policy seem in need of re-examination so as to develop a transparent response to Scientology.

The French case study

According to the French dossier New Era Publications contacted French libraries in 2007 with an offer of a specially prepared set of 18 books by Lafayette Ron Hubbard, but did not receive one positive response from 60 calls. In the following year it sent consignments of these books to a total of 235 school and public libraries, without the prior agreement of the libraries. Follow-up calls were then made to all of these libraries, resulting in 179 usable responses and 56 contacts that did not constitute a direct answer to their questions. Of the 179 libraries responding, only six accepted the consignment, and 173 destroyed or otherwise disposed of the books. This total breaks down into 135 that definitely destroyed or 'lost' the books, 14 that refused to say how they had disposed of the books, eight that put the books into storage, six that handed the books on to users or other institutions, four that asked how to return the books without incurring costs, four that claimed to have already returned the books and two that had definitely returned the books. To further test the response, the Scientologists sent members to request the latest edition of Hubbard's *Dianetics* (with little success), examined public library websites and established that the online catalogue Electre excluded titles by Hubbard on the grounds that they were self-published. Taken all together this represents a comprehensive rejection of Scientology material and information about it by the French library system. We find no reason to disbelieve this aspect of the information contained in the dossier, nor do we believe that French librarians would be likely to dispute its general trend.

The dossier then indicates that when Scientologists pursued this further, they found that the donations seem to have been rejected because, in the first place, the librarians considered Scientology to be a 'sect' or 'cult'. This would not be surprising, as a Parliamentary Enquiry of 1995 had identified 172 such cults (although without actually agreeing on an objective definition). Probably as a consequence,

the French courts of law have frequently been at odds with official rulings based on the 1995 list, but in 2002 the Mission de Vigilance et de Lutte contre les Dérives Sectaires (MIVILUDES) was set up to act in this area. What is MIVILUDES supposed to do? Its stated purpose is to observe, analyse, and prevent sectarian abuses that might threaten public order. It took up the concept of the 'risk' and danger that sects were alleged to present; set out to inform the public on this; and coordinate preventive action by the authorities. It investigated the psychological hold a sect might have on its followers, sought to assess the harm this might do, the aid that might be offered to victims and the identification of those responsible for possible prosecution. Protection of children was a high priority, and anxiety was expressed about the 'seductive discourse' used by sects, often using anonymous and disguised contacts via the Internet. This is perhaps the key to the argument. Seductive discourse is surely the mode adopted by any proselytising religion or belief group. For instance, in the UK members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, another 'cult' known for its proselytising, have built up window cleaning businesses without undue comment. This particular form of employment enables them to earn a useful living, whilst offering valid non-religious reasons for visiting people's homes, initiating relationships of trust with customers and developing a positive community profile. In such circumstances they are ideally placed to use seductive discourse. Surely persuasion, whether seductive or not, is arguably a legitimate tool of those who wish to spread a belief and from a non-religious perspective the methods used by all churches, sects and belief groups differ only in matters of detail.

Part of the problem may lie with the suggestion that Scientology donations are 'enforced'. This is a strange accusation and it may perhaps result from a subtle mis-translation from the French language. French librarians seem to find no difficulty in rejecting the donations and the objection to them is surely that they are unsolicited and unwanted, rather than 'enforced'. Some of the evidence collected by the Scientologists clearly reveals that donations were rejected on grounds of 'quality' and this is, in general terms, a reasonable argument for rejecting donated material. The dossier includes transcripts of discussion list material from BIBLIO-FR that touch on the question of quality in controversial fashion. In one message they are compared to the works of Hitler, Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the like, whilst another message calls them a waste of paper in an age of sustainable development. This may be the personal belief of those concerned, and it is echoed in Ortega (2012), but it does not represent a clear professional explanation and justification for rejection. French professionals do have guidance in such matters from the Code de déontologie du bibliothécaire, adopted by the Association des Bibliothécaires Français (ABF) in March 2003. This states quite clearly in Section 3 that:

Le bibliothécaire veille à ne pas céder aux groupes de pression politiques, religieux, idéologiques, syndicaux, sociaux qui essaieraient d'influer sur les politiques d'acquisitions par imposition forcée, interdiction ou intimidation, directement ou par le biais de sa tutelle.

In other words the librarian is responsible for selection and must not submit to external pressure of any kind in making decisions on acquisition.

Only a few librarians cited this in rejecting Scientology donations and hardly any made the point that the full set of donations would unbalance and distort their collections (if such was their reason for rejection). The Code provides strong grounds for the rejection of a donation when the considered professional opinion of a librarian suggests that rejection is appropriate. Any failure of French librarians to explain their decisions, either when a donation was offered or a donation was sent unsolicited, is perhaps best seen in the light of the findings of the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1995 or the work of MIVILUDES. Librarians may have rejected books in response to the widely expressed distaste for Scientology, reinforced by official hostility towards 'sects and cults'. If this was the case they should have said so, but doing that would also have unnecessarily neglected the arguments against passively accepting donated books provided by the 2003 Code. To develop an effective argument for the rejection of a book on grounds of quality or appropriateness takes a little time, but the Scientologists, like any other donor or potential donor, need a reasoned response of this kind.

Discussion

The centre of the problems experienced by the library profession, as evidenced by these two dossiers, is that librarianship has not paid sufficient attention to the ethics of donations. This could have happened for a number of reasons. One possibility is the fact that libraries originally began as collections of donations, which might have lingered in the psychology of the library profession over the centuries. Perhaps more likely is that donations, as opposed to purchases, have been for a century or so a comparatively insignificant proportion of library acquisitions. It may not have seemed that the issue merits much attention. The professional literature, or rather the lack of it, on the topic suggests that the matter of donations has been avoided, perhaps partially out of embarrassment at rejecting well-meant offers. DeWitt (1988) is unusual in discussing the rejection of gifts, suggesting that it may indeed be psychologically problematic to refuse which is at least part of the reason why libraries find themselves with unwanted holdings. He also sets this problem of refusing donations against a type of giving that is 'strategic', driven by self-aggrandisement and with a power-orientation. Maybe librarians perceive

the Scientology donations in this light, but the evidence of the dossiers is insufficiently precise to confirm it.

In the developing world this issue is placed starkly at the centre of practical librarianship. Donors have the power of their comparative wealth and recipients have the weakness of their poverty. The most common types of library in the developing world are those with almost nothing on the shelves, but there are also those which have shelves stuffed with unused irrelevancies. A closer examination of the latter reveals that donations dominate, whether they come from kind individuals clearing their own shelves of unwanted material, from governments wanting to promote their own importance or national philosophy, or from bodies with a message to convey, which naturally include belief groups and churches. Modern, positive librarianship cannot accept this sort of distortion of collections and this is the acceptable side of the refusal of Scientology donations, even if it is imperfectly articulated. Refusal is often good librarianship. Ways to refuse that are as tactful as possible are therefore needed. DeWitt (1988) suggests that librarians need to ask themselves why a gift is offered and factor the answer into their response. He advocates a 6-point plan on unwanted donations of which the first three are relevant:

1. Have a written collection policy and a gift policy in place, a copy of which may be given to donors.
2. Say no, but be sure that the decision is representative of institutional guidelines and accompanied by professional reasons.
3. Invest the authority to accept and decline collections in only one person.

As with so many issues in librarianship, the presence or absence of policy is central to good practice on the one hand or ineffective and confusing practice on the other.

A further level of the problem comes when donations are rejected for reasons not directly linked to the content of the donations themselves, such as disapproval of the donating body. No reasonable policy will suggest the rejection of donations on the basis of a distaste, whether well founded or not, for their beliefs or practices of the donor. Thus any library might include Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the collected works of Kim Il Sung and any number of other works that might be considered objectionable for one reason or another. Looked at in this way, the Scientologists might well question whether rejection of their donations could be a violation of their freedom of expression. The strength of this *prima facie* case then becomes the question. The point that needs to be taken into account here is that a properly comprehensive collection includes something both for and against any idea. Thus if there are two or three, or more, books critical of Scientology in a collection, it is arguably essential that the other side of the case is represented. This might be best achieved by a more or less similar number of positive statements, but it certainly does not constitute an

argument for accepting a block donation of 18 works by Lafayette Ron Hubbard.

Freedom of expression through library donations very definitely does not mean freedom to donate at will in the expectation that the donations will be accepted in the first place, and publicly displayed in the second. The problem in both the dossiers discussed above is that, whilst it might have been reasonable to refuse the donations, this was not made completely obvious. If the donations were refused on the basis of prejudice, even officially sanctioned prejudice, this was not good librarianship. If they were rejected for sound reasons of librarianship, based on the balance of collections, then this should have been firmly and clearly explained. Anything else might well have been against the spirit of freedom of expression. The dossiers reviewed above do suggest that librarians may have perhaps failed to separate opinions on a particular body (Scientology) from the practice of principled librarianship (derived, it is to be hoped, from an understanding of freedom of expression). This would essentially be a policy failure, and as such it can be put right.

Conclusions

The answer to the question as to whether freedom of expression affects library policy towards donations, particularly the donations of the Church of Scientology, is that it does not change the underlying principles. Indeed it could be seen as offering strong reinforcement to those principles. Libraries should have always treated donations on the principles of openness to ideas and the willingness to offer balanced collections to the public. However, the Scientology dossiers relating to the German and French donations suggest that in some cases they have not always acted in quite this way or that they have failed to make the principles on which they acted as clear as might have been. Two specific areas of conclusion emerge from this small study, which concern libraries and donations policy and libraries' respect for freedom of expression.

Donations are in principle welcomed by libraries, but some donations are more welcome than others and more welcome by some types of library than others. In practice the majority of donations are more of a problem than a benefit – they cost money to deal with and can be an embarrassment by expanding the collection rather than improving it. Collections that are not, and never can be, all-inclusive (most public library collections for instance) have to be as carefully selected and as balanced as possible. Donations can distort the balance of collections rather than enhancing the information potential of the library. A donation of 18 books from one organisation promoting its ideas clearly falls into this category. If Scientology wants its donations to be accepted, at the very least it needs to limit them to one or two books that can fit into a balanced collection that provides both positive and negative commentary on its beliefs

alongside similar treatment of the *Book of Mormon* or Mary Baker Eddy's writings on science and health. A donation should ideally be negotiated in advance and the offer of one book, or two or three, is much more likely to be acceptable than a whole set, however essential the donors believe them to be. Libraries and the associations that represent them have a duty to develop and promulgate the necessary policy to make this clear.

There is a real sense in which Scientology's freedom of expression might be infringed by libraries not accepting donations. Libraries should give books on Scientology serious consideration and not exclude them without transparent, policy-based justification. It is unequivocally a right to donate, though not a right to have donations accepted, and it is arguably a right to have a set of views represented in libraries. This right is not dependent on the views expressed or the organisation that generates them, and publishes and distributes them, being something of which librarians approve. Libraries must stock what they consider misguided or out-and-out wrong along with what they consider correct and acceptable. In that sense they are neutral, trusting their readers to draw what conclusions they can from the material available to them in the library. Again the implication of this is that libraries need to sort out their policy on donations and communicate that policy clearly to potential donors. A policy might be expected to say that unwanted donations will be disposed of by sale, destruction or other suitable method. When there is a clear policy and it can be shown that the library follows this policy, the appropriateness of donations is likely to improve and the scope for difficult exchanges with potential donors reduced. Although it might seem to busy librarians that working on policy and its documentation is a diversion from the important practical responsibilities of the profession, in fact, good policy saves time and increases effectiveness.

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