

*THREATS TO OUR INTELLECTUAL  
HISTORY:  
THE IMPACT ON ALCOHOL AND  
DRUG STUDIES*

**Paper presented by  
Andrea Mitchell, SALIS  
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# A Singular Event

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- Our paper emanated from the case of one librarian being abruptly fired from one library in the U.S.
- This singular event – multiplied in numerous countries among many people – may be seen in the context as a creeping consumerism of the governing logic in the academy based on a market logic than on intellectual criteria

# Four General Topics of our Paper:

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1. Older women and the process of deskilling
2. Privatization and the academic world
3. The changing face of accessibility to information for the scientific community
4. Societal-level and intellectual consequences emanating from the loss of our history

# Older Women and the Process of Deskilling

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- In U.S. and other countries:
  - Disproportionate numbers of older people, especially women, are prematurely dismissed from the workplace -- *librarians are among this group*
  - Legal challenges against “intentional, willful, wanton or malicious” age discrimination are now limited in the U.S. with respect to compensation or punitive damages

# Consequences for the Institution

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***Loss of return on human capital***

***Loss of skills, experience, institutional memory, narrowed recruitment pool***

- Deskillng labor contributes to these trends as does the rise of human resource management
- Constant restructuring is not accidental
  - It functions to increase the power of the new executives struggling to the top

# Concern for Feminists

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- Modern-day feminists are increasingly aware that equality in the workplace is being subverted
- This is a complex mix boiling down, not simply to age and gender, but **equality** and **power**

# Who Benefits from the New Ideologies and Practices?

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Those who lose would wish to see a world-view based on concepts of democracy, justice, sustainability and equity – ideas which are derided as “old-fashioned” as such hopes may be in this latest of “Dark Ages”



# Privatization and the Academic World

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- **Not accountable:**  
Increasing privatization of the academy has resulted in monitoring of own practices without federal oversight
- Dependence on business partnerships with commercial enterprise
- **Importation of corporate practices:**  
Produces high salaries for top executives & low ones for juniors
- Individual workers left exposed and unprotected

# Changes of Accessibility to Information for the Scientific Community

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- World Wide Web makes libraries and librarians appear to be redundant
- Specialist libraries are closing, their acquisitions dispersed or relegated to storage
- Assumption is that all information is readily available and accessible

*So why spend public money on maintaining these collections?*

# What's Wrong Here?

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- Pubmed dominates the alcohol and drug field
- Tacit assumptions:
  - All relevant knowledge is fundamentally biomedical
  - Other knowledge – social, psychological, ecological, etc. – is well known, adequately documented and accessible

# What's Wrong Here?

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- Rare documents, books, unpublished reports unavailable on Pubmed
- Social scientists are developing an amnesia to scholarship of the past
- Biomedical science is reflecting “the model” of scholarship
- Articles are for payment excluding use by those not affiliated with wealthy universities

# Consequences Emanating from the Loss of Our History

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- Libraries and their specialist librarians preserve the past and engage in history making
- They combat orthodoxy and ideology, preventing subversive elements that seek to rewrite history
- They provide an essential feature for a democratic society – available data and personal evaluation of multiple interpretations, NOT just “received wisdoms” & propaganda
- The study of alcohol and drugs is susceptible to forces that seek to rewrite history (because these are social problems)

# What To Do?

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- The dismissal of one librarian in one specialist library revealed to us deeper problems
- A realization that the intellectual history of our field was at stake
- This paper is a small beginning on the long uphill task of fighting these corrosive developments
- The world of scholarship is obligated to protect our history and the caretakers of it