AT THE LIBRARY, IT'S A BALANCING ACT AS OUR EXPERTS NAVIGATE THE HARD QUESTIONS
We’ve been hearing a lot about “fake news.” But as Pilate famously asked, “What is truth?” At the university, we like to seek truth, and we think that in some scientific pursuits we can determine it through theorem-proving or experimental evidence.

But the truth is, with so many things we care about — politics, economics, health care practices, educational methods — there is uncertainty about what is, in fact, true.

Libraries are confronted with this issue daily: What is true knowledge? Should we be impartial in our judgments about sources of information, letting patrons determine for themselves what is (more or less) true? When we make decisions that shape our collections and services, can we do so without imposing our own beliefs and politics?

At the heart of these issues is the fundamental question: Can — and should — the Library be neutral?

Opinions on this topic diverge and vary. But regardless of where you land on this thorny, perennial conundrum — and the other “hard questions” sprinkled across these pages — there is something we can agree upon: At the Library, we’re dedicated to being thoughtful and effective stewards of information, cultivating minds that will rise to the challenges of our world.

And that’s the truth.
SHOULD THE LIBRARY BE NEUTRAL?

Librarians and researchers reflect on the role of impartiality in the services we provide and the information we share

STORY BY TOR HAUGAN

Does fake news have any place in the Library?
What about pseudoscience, like the sort that has animated a small but vocal throng of flat-earthers?
What obligation does the Library have to present opposing and polarizing views, even when someone could find them abhorrent?
At the heart of these questions is the issue of neutrality — a complicated conundrum that affects everything from what librarians collect to how they serve patrons.
We asked a group of librarians, plus a couple of Library users — a professor and a recent graduate — the same question: Should the Library be neutral?
The responses offer a glimpse into librarians’ important role as curators, collectors, and providers of knowledge. Answers touch on such themes as the importance of rejecting hate and bigotry, representing voices of marginalized communities, and including a range of perspectives — even ones people might find objectionable.
But the responses, too, raise a multitude of questions of their own: What does it mean to be neutral? Who gets to define it? And how does neutrality — or a lack thereof — affect the Library’s ability to carry out its mission to help scholars find, evaluate, use, and create knowledge?
As might be expected, a unified answer does not emerge. Taken together, the answers reflect the range of perspectives that, subtly and not-so-subtly, help shape the Library into the indispensable, inclusive wealth of knowledge it is — not only for Berkeley, but for scholars across the (ahem, demonstrably round) world. ►
Opinions on the Library’s neutrality run the gamut, touching on themes from rejecting hate to representing diverse points of view.

The Library cannot be neutral in our policies and procedures when it comes to services for our patrons or our staff. We must reject bigotry, hate, and their byproducts, discrimination, in all its forms. This is difficult work, and we are not alone in doing this. However, when it comes to building and growing the collection, we need to do so broadly, which includes adding some reprehensible materials. This is also difficult work, but if libraries do not collect and maintain this information, how can future generations build a better, more enlightened society without studying and learning from the mistakes of our collective intolerant, bigoted, and at times barbaric past?

JESSE SILVA, scholarly resources strategy librarian

Yes — libraries (at least academic libraries, which I am most familiar with) should collect a range of viewpoints on various topics. But does this mean that all positions and viewpoints are somehow equal and deserving of merit? I think not. ... We are entitled to our own opinions but not entitled to our own facts. Yes — the Holocaust did happen, HIV causes AIDS, human-caused climate change is significant. Library materials that state otherwise may be useful to read in order to assist in refuting pseudoscience, and are thus worthy of being in our collection. But no, they should not be reflected “equally” in our collection, neither in quantity nor prominence.

MICHAEL SHOLINBECK, public health librarian

There are potentially multiple answers to a single but complex question. I chose to answer it as follows. Should libraries be neutral is a complicated question, and any answer to it is context-specific and driven by the ideological stance that might be prevalent in a particular society. Also, the same problem can be answered using another equally valid question — whose neutrality? Who is the arbitrator of what is neutral or not? Traditionally, American libraries and librarians have been at the forefront of the fight for the preservation of intellectual freedom. ... For me, the neutrality lies in the fact that as librarians in an academic setting, we value and fight for rights of our patrons to privacy and their freedom of unhindered access to unclassified or legally declassified information.

LILADHAR PENDSE, librarian for Latin American and Eastern European collections

As a librarian in the Social Sciences Division, one of my responsibilities is to select books, journals, and other materials in support of research in the Graduate School of Education. Among the many goals of the Graduate School of Education is to explore the role of schooling in sustaining a democratic society in the face of social inequality and economic restructuring. This mission is decidedly not neutral. Indeed, the core mission of UC Berkeley — to address the world's most pertinent challenges — is not neutral. And, as librarians supporting the research and teaching of the university, we should not be neutral either.

MARGARET PHILLIPS, librarian for gender and women's studies, education, and psychology

I think an academic research library has to be neutral to be successful in its mission of being a repository of knowledge and information that it makes accessible to its patrons. In any discourse or controversy there are at least two sides and, most often, the standpoint of one cannot be fully understood on its own without reference to the other. If libraries were to take sides they would end up building ideologically truncated collections that would negatively impact scholarly research by eliminating important voices and points of view.

ADNAN MALIK, curator and cataloger for the South Asia collection
In my 46 years at Berkeley, I benefited from the Library, enjoying the effective mix of electronic and physical publications. I loved that I could find everything I wanted and discover new treasures. I work on agricultural biotechnology, which is controversial, and I was able to obtain even obscure publications that provide multiple perspectives. When the university has to make budgetary choices, it’s crucial to be unbiased and seek and aim to satisfy the opposing point of view. Pursuing diversity also means understanding and seriously considering points of view that we may not agree with.

DAVID ZILBERMAN, professor, Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics

LILLIAN CASTILLO-SPEED, head librarian, Ethnic Studies Library, and Chicano studies librarian

MOHAMED HAMED, Middle East and Near East studies librarian

GISÈLE TANASSE, film and media services librarian, Media Resources Center

Without question, a library should treat its authors, sources, and patrons equitably — which is not necessarily to say with neutrality. Should a library be nondiscriminatory? Of course. But should it be neutral? The shelves of a library should be exactly as neutral as the voices of the community it represents — or, put another way, not in the least. ... It is the admirable work of the Library to diligently make space for even the quietest voice in the room, to consider every side. Far from non-participation, a library’s non-neutrality is its best hedge against prejudice. With the capacity to facilitate any conversation, to present any angle, to build a platform for anyone with something to say, the worst position a library could take is no position at all.

JULIA BURKE ’18
Charlene Conrad Liebau Library Prize winner, 2018, English and history double major
Library conservators weigh pros and cons of repairing priceless relics

STORY BY VIRGIE HOBAN

Days after the Notre-Dame cathedral saw its roof and spire fall into flames, questions about the monument’s reconstruction echoed around the world.

Should the roof’s frame, built in the 13th century from 1,300 oak trees, be re-created with the same materials, in the same style? Or should wood be swapped for steel, the less flammable, more abundant alternative?

In short: How do we honor history while fixing it for the future?

In the UC Berkeley Library’s Preservation Department, conservators work through that puzzle for every item crossing their desks. The solution lies with more questions. Each repair begins with an investigation into an object’s story, both past and yet to come.

The tricky part — the heart of the work — is balancing the two.

The core mission of the preservation team is to make sure the Library’s collections are stable enough to be used. But that standard varies greatly depending on just how much use the item is expected to endure. Those unknowns are guided by curators, whose insights help steer each restoration.

If the text of a volume is available online, for instance, then the physical copy may be less essential to readers, and its repair need not be as robust as others.

“If it’s something that is used a lot, we might want to do a stronger repair that may involve being slightly more invasive, in the interest of making it usable,” explains Hannah Tashjian, who leads the Library’s preservation team.

Senior conservator Martha Little points to a 1749 novel, The History and Adventures of an Atom, whose cover has been torn from its body. A sturdy repair would involve cutting a portion of the leather to slide new material underneath. But the leather is so thin, Little says, the process would ruin it.

The text can be read online and is not requested often. So instead, a strip of handmade Japanese paper, very strong and thin, will be pasted to the inside, forming a hinge between the cover and the first page.

“To learn more about how the Library preserves and digitizes materials to expand users’ access, contact the Library Development Office at 510-642-9377 or give@library.berkeley.edu.

Conservators can use a Japanese paper hinge to secure a partially detached leather spine.
The goal isn’t to beautify the pieces. Even smudges on a page can reveal what section of a book has been read the most, Little says. “It’s not just the text that’s important to look at — it’s the ownership, the binding, the printing ... who was reading it and why,” says David Faulds, curator of rare books and literary manuscripts at The Bancroft Library.

Old objects often contain several layers of history, represented by their patchwork of repairs across time. Those restorations may or may not be worth preserving.

Sitting on the conservators’ desk now is an 1813 tome in Hebrew from The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, whose cover hangs on by a thread. Many of the Library’s older Jewish works are in poor condition, Faulds notes, having been lugged around the world for centuries throughout the Jewish diaspora.

“There are so many home repairs,” Little says. “We wouldn’t want to remove any of them.”

**For a well-worn first edition**

of the King James Bible, printed in 1611, one question is just how far to take the repair. The spine is bare skeleton in parts. The linen threads binding the pages are intact, though. It’s usable, Tashjian says, inspecting the work — especially if rested on a cradle. Rebinding seems unnecessary for now.

But it’s a popular treasure at Bancroft, Faulds says, and its stability in perpetuity is unclear.

“Do you want to wait for the failure, or do you be preemptive and deal with it right away?” he muses aloud.

Another item, a photo book titled “Discharged Prisoners from Folsom & San Quentin (1911-1917)” is even more fragile, with pages as brown and brittle as dried leaves. Just turning a page could be disastrous.“(Patrons) pull out these materials in the reading room, and when they put it away you can see bits of crumbs of it on the table,” Faulds says.

One option is to place each leaf in a sleeve made of archival polyester and bind those together anew. That does change the character, Tashjian says. But it’s the only way people can use it. “This is our history,” Tashjian says. “And if we destroy it, and we don’t take care of it, then we can’t learn for the future.”

The ultimate solution, Faulds says, will be digitization, to ensure access to the collections will not impose further harm. Some items, however, will need to be altered slightly to withstand the digitization process itself — another trade-off in the mix.
CASTLE IN THE CLOUD

UC Berkeley Library balances access, security as purveyor and protector of research data

STORY BY VIRGIE HOBAN

The Library’s mission is to share information — to sow the seeds of knowledge as widely and meaningfully as possible. It’s a core value of librarianship, notes the American Library Association.

Right up there with another one: privacy.

By day, librarians fight to make research open and accessible, helping scholars share their evidence in the name of scientific truth. But bookending that work is the promise to secure and protect that information, ensuring contracts of confidentiality are intact.

Now, as more and more research at Berkeley draws on sensitive data, navigating between the two has become more important than ever.

“We create data not only for ourselves, but for people downstream and in the future,” says Jon Stiles, data services lead at Berkeley’s D-Lab. “That’s been the library’s role for centuries and centuries. And we just need to realize that in an increasingly electronic world, that presents risks.”

In some ways, you can think of research data as a baby, Stiles says. You want to put it in environments where it can grow and be successful. But you also have to defend it from harm’s way.

“The philosophy is, if data can be open, it needs to be,” says Amy Neeser, consulting and outreach lead for Research IT. “But some of it is highly sensitive, and in that case,
it’s our responsibility to be good stewards in that way, too.”

At UC Berkeley, that’s the work of a village, involving many units on campus. One such partnership is Research Data Management, led by the Library and the campus’s Research IT unit. Consultants from that group show researchers how to safely store and transfer data, and how to safeguard their devices against a breach.

The first step is to figure out how sensitive the data is — from accounting records to the whereabouts of endangered species. One common type of highly sensitive information is human genomics data, Neeser points out. At Berkeley, researchers look at DNA to track everything from the migratory patterns of our ancestors to the crucial links between a specific gene and disease.

To meet the campus’s growing security needs, the Library and its partners are now spearheading an initiative called Secure Research Data and Compute. The initiative focuses on creating safe computing environments, including encrypted data storage and secure virtual computers; building communities invested in data security; and expanding services; and enacting clearer policies for data use.

Meanwhile, the Library has also launched a new initiative to train all librarians at UC Berkeley to have basic levels of data literacy — including data security. For Stiles, it’s about getting everyone on the same page, so “everyone understands where to go and what to do at each step.”

**There are many reasons data**

might need to be protected. It may contain personal information about people. Or it might be commercial data, such as financial records, owned by companies and purchased by the Library on researchers’ behalf. The first category is protected to maintain confidentiality — the latter, to serve a company’s business model.

Vendors of commercial data often line their product with restrictive contracts. The Library’s job, then, is twofold: to try to peel back those limits, where possible, and to help researchers do their work within those binds.

“Librarians got into this business because we wanted to share information,” says business librarian Hilary Schiraldi. “It doesn’t feel good to say no.”

One goal is to convince vendors to let researchers “scrape” information from across entire databases. If researchers could scan, or text-mine, thousands of newspapers for certain phrases, for instance, they could do key historical work without diving too deep into the content.

“It allows us a bird’s-eye view of large swaths of information,” says Stacy Reardon, literatures and digital humanities librarian. Negotiating for text-mining rights is important, she says, as databases typically do not allow data to be downloaded at scale.

Another challenge is figuring out how to crack research data open just enough so that fellow researchers can verify their peers’ work — a crucial part of the scientific process. You want your study to be replicable, Stiles says, but if someone can’t access your data, it “throws some grit in … that mechanism.”

It’s complicated, and many on campus are working out solutions to tread that line. One option is to publish as much about a dataset as possible and provide reviewers with the code used to run it. It’s a way to be open — but not too much.

“It’s about trying to preserve as much privacy and confidentiality as possible while still providing as full and meaningful research access as we can,” Stiles says.
In “Run Like a Girl,” Lindsey Chung looks at the 2018 ruling of the International Association of Athletics Federations, or IAAF, to require female athletes with high levels of testosterone to take hormonal treatments. The IAAF stated there is “scientific consensus” that high levels of testosterone significantly enhance performance. But that’s not quite what the study says, Chung writes. The paper discusses the case of Caster Semenya, an Olympic champion from South Africa. Chung argues the rule discriminates against athletes from the Global South, holding women’s bodies to a “narrow definition of femininity” more prevalent in the West.

Yes, irony is a liberating force in Søren Kierkegaard’s The Seducer’s Diary. But how useful is that liberty to the story’s female character, Cordelia? In the paper “The Invalidation of the Female Ironist in Kierkegaard’s The Seducer’s Diary,” Katherine Zhao explores the social conditions of women living through the Danish Golden Age, and how wealth and gender disparities keep a female ironist from reaching the same heights as a male. Throughout her research and writing, Zhao took many turns, shifting her thesis and consulting the Library for new sources. “Embracing the Library’s collections was like meeting an old friend,” Zhao says.

While researching her thesis, Emma Bianco pored over more than 350 sources — and used about a fourth of them. “This did not show my failure, but the importance of retaining flexibility,” she says. Her project, “Politics, America, and Sex: What Could Go Wrong?” investigates how right-wing ideologies influenced K-12 education in Orange County in the 1960s. Using newspaper archives and educational policy materials, Bianco found that right-wing groups had attempted to ban “anti-American” textbooks encouraging students to criticize their country. While that effort was unsuccessful, the right was able to nearly abolish sex education, citing its threat to students’ moral principles.

Claire Danna stumbled on the topic for her thesis, “And as to my own Sex,” through happenstance. She was flipping through old English books when something caught her eye: the words “Printed by” followed by — for the first time — a woman’s name. “Just like that, I had a topic,” she says. She devoured books on printing in Main Stacks, studied works by early female printers in The Bancroft Library, and tracked down works from 16th-century female printers in Dublin. She found stylistic patterns across the works, which, for Danna, point to an “early feminist vocabulary” that female stationers deployed to fight the sexism of the industry.

James Kennerly began with the ultimate challenge: conduct ethnographic research involving no human interaction. Instead, Kennerly made the Library his field site. His paper explores the concept of othering through language and art — focusing on how the ruling Han Chinese depicted the Yi minority of Liangshan as second-class citizens lacking Confucian ideals. For the project, titled “I Gave my Dreams to Liangshan,” Kennerly dove into the C. V. Starr East Asian Library’s collections, reviewing 16th-century Chinese woodcuts, propaganda comic books, and more. “The project taught me how to build a personal connection to the archive,” Kennerly says.

In December 1948, the United Nations adopted a convention banning all acts of genocide, defined as “acts committed with intent to destroy ... a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” The United States did not join the convention until the Senate ratified it 40 years later. Why the wait? “Opponents of ratification viewed the Convention as ... a threat to legalized white supremacy,” writes Harriet Steele in her thesis, “That Means Filibuster,” based on reports, law articles, archival materials, and more. Southern congressmen needed to be assured that lynching black people did not count as genocide, Steele writes. As a crime against an individual, it did not.

### Honorable Mentions

**Erinn Wong**

Lower Division

“Digital Blackface: How 21st Century Internet Language Reinforces Racism”

**Amelia Mineiro**

Upper Division

“La conciencia evangelizadora del Movimiento Santuario en el caso del East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (1971-1985)”

**Benjamin Papadopoulos**

Upper Division

“Morphological Gender Innovations in Spanish of Genderqueer Speakers”
This year, David Lei ’74 was recognized with the campus’s Peter E. Haas Public Service Award, given annually to an alum who has “made significant voluntary contributions to the betterment of society.”

For Lei, who immigrated to San Francisco’s Chinatown in 1956, that has meant helping his community tell its stories. As a longtime member of the Friends of The Bancroft Library, Lei works with local groups to bring their records to the Library — ensuring they will help shape the story of the West.

Chinese immigrants have contributed much more than building railroads, after all, Lei says. They helped lay the foundation for immigrant rights in the United States, including the right to a public education and equal protection under the law, regardless of citizenship. Those contributions need to be recorded, he says.

“All of these are concepts that the Chinese brought about — even what makes you an American,” Lei said in a video presented at commencement, in May, where he spoke to the graduating class.

In his remarks, Lei encouraged students to stay idealistic and to always be in service to others.

To learn more about Bancroft & the West, a program created to help tell the story of the West from a broad range of perspectives and sources, contact the Library Development Office at 510-642-9377 or give@library.berkeley.edu.

‘Thank you, Berkeley, for providing me with great places to study.’

Ziwei Guo ’19, an engineering student, donated to the Library during Big Give, the campuswide day of giving held in March. Supporters gave $138,950 to the UC Berkeley Library during the event. Thank you!
WITH FRESH FACES, PORTRAIT EXHIBIT AT BANCROFT BRINGS THE WEST INTO FOCUS

Decking the walls were faces — some familiar, others less so. One by one, they helped tell the story of the West.

This spring, The Bancroft Library opened its doors to the second installment of Facing West: Camera Portraits from the Bancroft Collection. Facing West 2 highlighted some of the people and communities that make the West, the West. (Think Black Panther Party co-founder Huey Newton, writer Alice B. Toklas, and Beat icon Lawrence Ferlinghetti, among others.)

“(The West) is such a vibrant, rebellious, and fascinating place,” said Jack von Euw, pictorial curator at Bancroft, who put together the exhibit with curatorial assistant Christine Hult-Lewis. “We wanted to include portraits that capture the spirit of the West.”

For the second part of the show, which ran through July 12, the curators swapped out more than 80 photos — about half of the pieces in the exhibit — adding a batch of fresh faces and ensuring those who visited the first part of the show would have plenty of new images to explore.

New additions included one-of-a-kind daguerreotypes and a carte-de-visite album featuring the very first graduating class from UC Berkeley, in 1873. Hult-Lewis counted two photos among her favorites in Facing West 2: Edward Curtis’ sensitive portrait of a California Pomo girl from the 1920s and a vibrant 21st-century photograph of a Yurok elder and his family by Ira Nowinski.

“The portraits in the exhibit showed us the faces of leaders and followers, performers and audiences, people working hard, having fun, spending family time, getting married, and mourning their dead,” said Elaine Tennant, director of Bancroft. “In them we read the history of Hubert Howe Bancroft’s collecting region — from the Rockies to the Pacific Islands, from Alaska to Panama — and of our ourselves looking forward.”

To learn more about the Library’s exhibits and educational programs, contact the Library Development Office at 510-642-9377 or give@library.berkeley.edu.