

The Handling of Holocaust Denial Literature in a Special Library

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Introduction

It is a pleasure to share this podium with such an illustrious panel. We have had an introduction to what constitutes Holocaust Denial literature. As librarians, we must now come to grips with the question, what do we do with it. As the only librarian on the panel, I shall address this issue on the basis of my personal experience in our library.

Since its inception in 1977, the Wiesenthal Center Library has had to cope with Holocaust Denial, Antisemitism, and other similar genres of literature. On my first day of work, I was handed two cartons of books and told to make a library. As I perused the fifty books given to me, I suddenly realized that it was not going to be a simple task. There was *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* by Lucy Dawidowicz (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), and a number of other basic Holocaust texts; however, there was also a copy of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur Butz (Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1976).

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of crackpot pseudo-scholars drawn primarily, but not exclusively, from the libertarian right wing. Most of its organizational activity and publishing is sponsored by the Liberty Lobby, which is (among other things) perhaps the best organized and financed anti-Semitic organization in the United States. It is Butz and his gang that are controversial—not the foolish and malicious views they propound, which have *no* constituency among serious historical scholars.

Libraries must not shrink from reflecting this fact in their classifications of such material.

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From that day on, we daily wrestle with the questions: How do we handle it? What do we do with it? What are our obligations to the public?

The focus of my remarks is on the literature which revises and denies the Holocaust; however, PLO propaganda materials, "Zionism is Racism," and Antisemitism are only a few of the additional subject areas which would need similar decisions, and we have applied some of the same parameters discussed below to our holdings on these topics.

Also, *denial* of the Holocaust is not the only Holocaust material treated this way. It may surprise you to learn that there is Holocaust pornography—anti-Nazi and extensively illustrated. We handle these materials in a similar way. Perhaps you will find other areas where these ideas can be applied.

My remarks shall be as specific and as practical as possible. Throughout every decision, there is a primary concern for the public we serve.

Assumptions

In order to best understand the topic given to us, we must consider what is probably the most important word in the title of today's session. The title reads: "Controversial materials in a Jewish library." It is the adjective "Jewish," in this case, which sets important guidelines for us. It is the word "Jewish" which entitles us to a bias—a bias which constitutes a commitment to the institution we represent.

In the Wiesenthal Center, we accept as a premise that the Holocaust did take place. As do the courts, we firmly believe that the Holocaust is an historical fact. This does not mean, however, that we would attempt to prevent the deniers of the Holocaust from publishing their materials. That certainly is not our intent. On the other hand, we do not have to buy their materials. We do not have to buy anything that contradicts the mandate of our institutions, and we certainly have no obligation to publicize it.

Legitimization

In this regard, I was dismayed to see that the Jewish Public Library of Montreal published a Holocaust bibliography (1979) which included *The Drama of European Jews* by Paul Rassinier (1975), listed under the history and background of the Holocaust (Item #16). I find it difficult to understand why one would list Rassinier's book together with those of Lucy Dawidowicz, Martin Gilbert, Yisrael Gutman, and other recognized Holocaust historians.

If we are producing a bibliography, or a section of a bibliography, dedicated to Holocaust Revisionism, there is obviously room for the Rassinier book; however, we must not legitimize such books and materials by including them in a Holocaust bibliography that does not distinguish fact from fiction.

Giving all sides of an issue is also not a consideration here. We have absolutely no obligation to give a platform to Holocaust Revisionism. The Holocaust is an accepted historical fact, and we need not concern ourselves with citing the sources of the Holocaust deniers.

Already heard here today is a plea to librarians from the academic community to classify these materials and to provide subject cataloging for them which honestly identifies them for what they are. In public institutions, as well, there have been recent efforts to distinguish between authentic Holocaust historiography and Holocaust Revisionism and denial; e.g., The Library of Congress has now drawn that distinction with the designation of the subject heading *HOLocaust, Jewish, 1939-1945—ERRORS, INVENTIONS, ETC.* (This is discussed further below.)

Acquisition of the Materials

It is essential when dealing with controversial matters to know the other side's views. Knowing the enemy and/or the opposing view is crucial to one's understanding of the subject. In fact, it frequently strengthens

your conviction in the justness of your own cause. Given this premise, should Holocaust denial and revisionist materials be purchased and/or accepted for your library? How do we provide the information needed by the research public? This question is particularly crucial since we live in an age of diminishing philanthropy, and none of us has been granted an unlimited library budget.

There has to be a repository for these materials from which they are available for research, but not every library needs to specialize in everything. We have institutions which, by their mandate, are committed to the monitoring of specific organizations, their activities, and their publications. The Library/Archives of the Wiesenthal Center has decided that this will be one of its areas of specialization.

The Wiesenthal Center regularly monitors the activities of a number of organizations of the radical right, as well as of those that deny the Holocaust or its magnitude. This is done by subscription to a number of the basic publications of these organizations and by listening to their telephone recorded propaganda, e.g., David McCalden's recorded message, which is changed weekly (213-640-2006).

The Wiesenthal Library/Archives not only monitors and collects; in addition, its library and research staffs are available to provide reference assistance, guidance, and inter-library loan services to other libraries. To whatever extent we are able, we are willing to provide the kind of service which will obviate the need for every library to collect most of Holocaust denial literature. The saved dollars can easily find other projects for investment.

Cataloging and Classification

What are my suggestions to you for handling these materials? How do we catalog them? Many libraries happen on to these materials. It may be important to retain a sampling of Holocaust denial literature for educational purposes, even though you will not develop a research collection in the field. In any case, there must be decisions on classification, subject headings, circulation, and control.

All of my suggestions in this area have been tried, experimented with, and revised in our library. Our criteria have been complete *cataloging*; *retrievability*; *some control*; and *availability* for researchers.

In our procedure, every book is carefully cataloged using the Library of Congress Classification scheme¹ and Library of Congress Subject Headings. Holocaust denial

literature is assigned the new Library of Congress subject heading, HOLOCAUST, JEWISH, 1939-1945—ERRORS, INVENTIONS, ETC.² (We are much happier with this heading than we were with the previous LC heading which legitimized Holocaust denial with the heading HOLOCAUST, JEWISH, 1939-1945—HISTORIOGRAPHY.)

Our second step in this process is classification into our Special Collections. All of Special Collections are housed in our closed stack area, but are, nonetheless, retrievable through the central card catalog in the library. A patron may retrieve something from Special Collections for research by submitting a call slip to a library staff member who will then obtain it. These policies accomplish several important goals:

1. They assure the availability of the material for researchers.
2. They clearly identify the materials for what they are, without misleading the public or giving credibility to that which contradicts historical fact.
3. They exert a certain level of control, i.e.:
 - a. The materials are less likely to disappear.
 - b. The staff can use its discretion in distribution.

You must be thinking: "This is censorship." I don't really think so. Everyday with every patron, you, the librarian make such decisions when you assist them. Would you give Raoul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961; Rev. ed. NY: Holmes & Meier, 1986) or Lucy Dawidowicz' *The War Against the Jews, 1939-1945* (Rev. ed. NY: Free Press, 1986) to a ten-year-old child who might have read *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1967)? On the other hand, would you give Milton Meltzer's book, *Never to Forget* (NY: Harper & Row, 1976) to a graduate student?

Our library's patrons cover the entire spectrum from school-age children to college faculty and researchers. We are happy with our decision to keep these aspects of our collection in their proper perspective. This, however, does not mean that you will not wrestle with yourself each time you make a decision.

Recently a thirteen-year-old girl came in and said she was writing a paper on Holocaust Revisionism. We gave her the phone number noted above so that she could listen to the recorded message. Beyond that, however, we gave her only secondary source material. I did not feel that I was censoring her reading because I chose not to acquaint

her with the sophisticated primary source materials in Special Collections.

Young people have to be given materials that they are ready for and capable of handling. This is a tremendous responsibility which is carried by the librarian. The decisions are not easy, but we must measure up to the responsibility.

To illustrate the naïveté of young people, and to emphasize the inherent danger in material of this type, allow me to share with you an experience I had with a group of senior high-school girls. (Primary in the mandate of the Simon Wiesenthal Center is education. We periodically bring school groups into the library to explore the resources of a particular topic.) I decided to expose this group of girls—all Jewish, and of above average intelligence—to the *Journal of Historical Review*, the slick, academic, intellectual journal, published by the Institute for Historical Review.

There were about ten girls, juniors and seniors. I distributed copies of the *Journal of Historical Review*, which none of them had ever seen and asked them to pretend that they were in my position and had to make a decision as to whether or not the library should subscribe to this journal. Each group of two girls was assigned a different issue; they had as full a spectrum as was possible. I gave the girls a variety of guidelines, suggesting that they look at the editorial board and at the physical format of the magazine, and that they read the beginnings and the endings of a few articles. After giving them about fifteen minutes to jot down a few notes on their reactions to the magazine, we then discussed their feelings. Throughout our discussion, not one single girl detected the denial of the Holocaust, revision or distortion of Holocaust history, or antisemitism.

Finally, one girl said that there's an article on *The Diary of Anne Frank*, indicating the journal's importance as Holocaust literature. Taking the issue in question, I showed them where the article appeared. They had seen the title at the top of the page which read "*The Diary of Anne Frank*." There were two lines between the title and the first paragraph. The second of the two lines contained the name of the author, which was probably not familiar to them; however, in tiny print between the title and the author's name, was a subtitle which they had missed. The subtitle read: "A Hoax." Not one of the girls picked up the subtitle or its significance.

I have conducted similar workshops with other groups of students and adults. If this is the result with college-bound Jewish students, you can surmise what happens with

groups of students who do not have the kind of educational background that these girls have. Experiences like this convince me that we made the right decision to segregate these materials.

Circulation

Special Collections at the Wiesenthal Center are non-circulating; however, we will, under special circumstances, circulate in person and through inter-library loan. To facilitate this type of decision-making, we restrict access to our Special Collections and Rare Books to those daytime hours when the professional staff is available.

Photocopying is an aid in this area as well, and we do permit photocopying of these materials. There is a sign at the copy machine regarding copyright law and infringement. In addition we have a form, that is signed by the patron, indicating that the library assumes no responsibility for copyright clearance. This form is particularly important when pictures are involved. Such a signed document protects the library and its parent institution from problems of copyright infringement.

Staff Awareness

How can library staff intelligently answer the questions of patrons on Holocaust denial? We all have an obligation to familiarize ourselves with the subject—its philosophy, major proponents or personalities, key publications, journals, and newspapers. Even though a library does not have all these materials, the staff must still assist the public. Moreover, not having to catalog Holocaust revisionist books does not excuse one from the obligation to be aware of appropriate classification and subject headings.

To summarize: as librarians, you do not have to know all of the answers; you must be able to intelligently assist your patrons in finding the answers. With this kind of personal assistance, with an understanding of the material, with an attempt to catalog and process materials so that they are retrievable and used but not abused, we can prevent intellectual freedom from becoming intellectual license.

Notes

¹Until now, the class number assigned has been D810.J4, the general number for the Holocaust, except for works that deal with a specific aspect of the Holocaust. We are currently negotiating with the Library of Congress to establish a special class number for Holocaust denial literature.

²Both primary and secondary sources—i.e., Holocaust denial literature and works about it—are assigned this subject heading. We hope that the

Library of Congress will eventually differentiate these two categories in its subject cataloging.

Appendix

Holocaust Revisionism: A Selected Bibliography of English-Language Publications

Anonymous. *The Myth of the Six Million*. Intro. by E.L. Anderson. Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1978.

App, Austin J. "Hitler-Himmler Order on Jews Uncovered." *The Liberty Bell* (Reedy, WV). January, 1978.

———. *The Six Million Swindle*. Takoma Park, MD: Bonniface Press, 1973.

Bennett, John, comp. *The Holocaust Debate*. Melbourne, Australia: Institute for Historical Review, 1980.

Brown, S.E.D. "The Myth of the Six Million." *South African Observer* (Pretoria, South Africa). June, 1978.

Butz, Arthur R. *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1978.

Christopherson, Thies. *Auschwitz*. Schwarzenborn, West Germany: Deutsche Bürgerinitiative e.v., 1979. (1974 ed. *The Auschwitz Lie*.)

Degrelle, Leon. *Epic: The Story of the Waffen-SS*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1983.

———. *Letter to the Pope on His Visit to Auschwitz*. Brighton, England: Historical Review Press, 1979.

———. *Campaign in Russia: The Waffen SS on the Eastern Front*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1985.

Faurisson, Robert. *Faurisson on the Holocaust*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, n.d.

———. "The Gas Chambers: Truth or Lie?" *Journal of Historical Review*. vol. 2, no. 4 (Winter 1981), 319–373.

———. *Is the Diary of Anne Frank Genuine?* Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1985.

———. *The Problem of the Gas Chambers or the Rumor of Auschwitz*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Revisionist Press, 1979.

Felderer, Ditleb. *Anne Frank's Diary: A Hoax*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1979.

———. *Auschwitz Exit*. Taby, Sweden: Bible Researcher, 1980.

Friedrich, Christof. *Nazi Horrors: Fact, Fiction, and Propaganda*. Toronto: Samisdat Publishers, n.d.

"The Great Holocaust Debate." Reprint: *The Spotlight* (supplement). (Washington, D.C.). December 24, 1979.

Grimstad, William. *Antizion: The Jewish and Zionist Question Through the Ages*. Brooklyn, NY: Revisionist Press, 1982.

———. *The Six Million Reconsidered*. Torrance, CA: Noontide Press, 1979.

Harwood, Richard. *Nuremberg and Other War Crimes Trials*. England: Historical Review Press, n.d. (Available: NS Publications, Milwaukee, WI)

———. *Six Million Lost and Found*. Brighton, England: Historical Review Press, 1979.

Hoffman, Michael A. *Blaspheming Against the Holy People's Holy Hoax*. Costa Mesa, CA: Noontide Press, n.d.

———. *The Great Holocaust Trial*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1985.

Irving, David. *Hitler's War*. NY: Viking Press, 1977.

The Journal of Historical Review. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1980– (quarterly).

Malz, Heinrich. *The Big Swindle of the Six Million*. NY, 1954.

Martin, James J. *The Man who Invented "Genocide": The Public Career and Consequences of Raphael Lemkin*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1984.

Morris, Warren B. *The Revisionist Historians and German War Guilt*. Brooklyn, NY: Revisionist Press, 1980.

"Nazi Gas Chambers? The New Doubts." *Smith's Journal* (Los Angeles, CA). Fall 1980.

Rassinier, Paul. *Debunking the Genocide Myth*. Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1978.

———. *The Drama of the European Jews*. Silver Spring, MD: Steppingstones Publications, 1975.

———. *The Real Eichmann Trial or the Incorrigible Victors*. Silver Spring, MD: Steppingstones Publications, 1979.

Roth, Heinz. *Why are We Being Lied To?* Witten, West Germany: Refo-Druck Verlag, 1975.

Sanning, Walter N. *The Dissolution of Eastern European Jewry*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1983.

Smith, Bradley. *Confessions of a Holocaust Revisionist, Part I*. Costa Mesa, CA: Noontide Press, n.d.

Staeglich, Wilhelm. *The Auschwitz Myth*. Costa Mesa, CA: Noontide Press, n.d.

Stimely, Keith, ed. *1981 Revisionist Bibliography*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1981.

Vary, Colin. *The Victims*. South Africa, 1979.

Walendy, Udo. *Forged War Crimes Malign the German Nation*. Vlotho, West Germany: Verlag für Volkstum und Zeitgeschichtsforschung, 1979.

———. *The Methods of Re-Education*. Vlotho, West Germany: Verlag für Volkstum und Zeitgeschichtsforschung, 1979.

Weber, Charles E. *The Holocaust: 120 Questions and Answers*. Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1983.

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