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15. Librarianship and Culture: Social Change in Postcolonial Jamaica

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Introduction

“Meaning is always a social production, a human practice; and because different meanings can be ascribed to the same thing, meaning is always the site and the result of struggle” (Storey 2003, xi). Similarly, the meaning of development is a site of struggle. Development is given meaning based on the lens through which it is seen. Therefore, development from the viewpoint of the ruled may differ from that of the ruler. Consequently, development in this paper is articulated as a positive social change for a particular proponent, and therefore encompasses the sum of activities involved in any one of the following sets of social change:

1. Diffusion of cultural values from the West; change from colonization to neocolonization or globalization; change from traditional society to modern society; from popular culture as folk culture, to popular culture as global culture.

2. Indigenization; change from colonization to nationalism; from popular culture as imposed culture, to popular culture as folk culture.

Development is therefore an alteration in the sociocultural and economic order and/or changes in sociocultural and economic behaviors that are treated as positive factors from the perspective of a particular proponent. In this context, as above, what is deemed development is very much a matter of perspective. This distinction will determine how librarianship contributes to development; how, in the process, it articulates questions of cultural and socioeconomic power; how it binds or unbinds us from the social order; and how it reproduces or displaces the social conditions necessary for the economic relations of imperialism.

There is a third way in which this paper defines development. While the first two definitions are informed by modernization theory and dependency theory respectively, this third definition is one that is informed by neo-Gramscian hegemony theory. Accordingly, development is viewed as a combination of the perspectives of the ruler and the ruled; a combination of modernization and dependency perspectives. It is therefore a combination of the two definitions of
development aforementioned. In this respect, this paper also defines development as:

3. A terrain of exchange between the perspectives of the ruler and the ruled; a compromise equilibrium between the perspectives of the ruler and the ruled, marked by resistance and incorporation; negotiation between the ruler and the ruled; from popular culture as folk culture, and as imposed on popular culture as an arena of hegemony.

This makes development not only a struggle but a profoundly political concept. Whichever dimension of the definition is adopted, development is a goal of the ruler and the ruled; the rich and the poor. Accordingly, many countries pursue this through the adaptation of various socioeconomic strategies. It follows that only the activities that are perceived as contributing to this goal will be highly regarded, and others will not. The risk, however, is that if there are preconceptions regarding the set of factors that so contribute, others equally important may be missed. Librarianship is one of the set of activities in which such preconceptions operate adversely to its value as a contributor. It is therefore important to establish the nexus between librarianship and these articulations of development. With the objective of determining the extent to which librarianship can be regarded as an activity that contributes to social change, this paper therefore explores the scope of library work, by applying dependency, modernization, and neo-Gramscian theories to the interpretation of postcolonial librarians’ activities.

This paper begins with a review of the literature, which situates this research within the development debates, and highlights the gap in the literature as well as the problem. It then sets out the methodological framework for this investigation. Drawing on the theories described above, the activities of postcolonial Jamaican librarians are interpreted with the objective of highlighting librarianship in development. The paper then concludes with recommendations for further lines of inquiry.

The Literature

Theories of development emerged as a result of the decolonization of Third World countries (Haque 1999, 72; Leys 1996, 5; Lewellen 1995, 54). Jamaica, an excolonial state of Britain, received self-government in 1944 and was granted independence in 1962 (Clarke 2006, 29; Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 368, 375, 408). Since 1944, modernisation theory and dependency theory have largely informed development models and policies in Jamaica. This is evident in the implemented economic policies of industrialization, import substitution, populist socialism and structural adjustment (Clarke 2006, 22–23; King 2001, 1–2; Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 379–80; Blomstrom and Hettne 1984, 99–114). The current economic policies in Jamaica indicate a combination of both, rather than a strong focus on a particular paradigm. See Table 1.
Table 1. Summary of Modernization, Dependency and Neo-Gramscian Hegemony Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modernization</th>
<th>Dependency</th>
<th>Neo-Gramscian Hegemony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development will come about through a diffusion of western traits (Lewellen 1995, 50)</td>
<td>Development in the underdeveloped countries can occur only independently of most of these relations of diffusion (Frank 1969, 4)</td>
<td>Terrain of exchange between the ruler and the ruled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Satellites experience their greatest economic development and especially their most classically capitalist industrial development if and when their ties to the metropolis are weakest.” (Frank 1969, 9–11)</td>
<td>Negotiations between dominant and subordinate cultures</td>
<td>Arena of hegemony (Storey 1998, 13–14; Storey 2003, 48–49)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“How this is to be achieved varies from writer to writer, but is generally accepted that a combination of self-reliance and socialism is a substantial part of the answer” (Harrison 1988, p. 99)</td>
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| Popular Culture as Structure: Culture imposed by capitalist culture industries, culture provided for profit and ideological manipulation (Storey 2003, 51) | Popular Culture as Agency: Culture emerging from below, an authentic folk culture or sub-culture (Storey 2003, 51) | Popular Culture as Compromise Equilibrium: A contradictory mix of forces from both below and above, both commercial and authentic, both resistance and incorporation (Storey 2003, 51) |

Alongside the economic dimension of Jamaican development, there was a cultural dimension which dates back to the riots of 1938, which precipitated a movement for decolonization (Clarke 2006, 227–30; Nettleford 1978, xvii), and a “need to forge a national identity…instead of relying on the imitative provincialism of white colonial culture” (Clarke 2006, 225). These movements bear out the tenets of dependency theory as espoused by Frank (1969, 4), who posits that development can only occur independent of the diffusion of values, institutions, and capital from the West. As such, in Jamaica the goal was to develop indigenous identity, as was evident in the focus on the development of plastic arts, poetry, novels, pantomime, dance, plays, language, and music (Clarke 2006, 225; Nettleford 1978, 13).
Although the cultural dimension of development largely shows the influence of dependency theory, it also reflects the modernisation theory of achievement as espoused by McClelland. He asserts that development can be accelerated through increasing other-directedness through recognition, so that traditional norms must give way to new ones (McClelland 1967, 394). In this regard, there were Jamaicans who believed that the traditional African norms, as embodied in cultural activities, must give way to new norms, such as European and American ones. In fact, according to Nettleford (1978, 21) “there are still significant groups of Jamaicans from the privileged classes who naturally place the achievements of any external civilization over and above the achievement of Jamaica and the Caribbean.” For example, “European classical music is still regarded as necessary to life and is reserved for the ‘better-type person’ ” (Nettleford 1978, 25). In another example, “little Caribbean girls are still encouraged by their mothers to hanker after the image of a European ballerina” (Nettleford 1978, 29). Additionally, Standard English of the metropolitan brand is culturally mandatory if one is to get on in society (Nettleford 1978, 13). This brings to the fore the bipolarity of Jamaican society, as expressed in the concepts of “two Jamaicas” (Sherlock and Bennett 1998, 386, 389), and Carolyn Cooper’s terms, “downtown” and “uptown” (Clarke 2006, 226).

Additionally, the foregoing authors provide a depth of information on various artists, musicians, dancers, dramatists, athletes, and politicians. They also illuminate the role such professionals played in social change, both before decolonization and in the postcolonial period. Interestingly, only Nettleford (1978) refers to a librarian—Frank Cundall—who served during the period leading up to decolonization.

The mention of only one librarian in these recognized works raises questions as to the place of librarians in the movements towards decolonized and postcolonial development. More specifically: Were there other librarians in the movement towards the first period? Were there any librarians in the second? What was the range of activities they performed and how, if at all, did or do these still feature in the discourse on Jamaican development? How, if at all, have their activities reflected the two dominant development theories embraced by Jamaica over the years?

Methodology

A qualitative, narrative, autobiographical approach was used to facilitate the telling and recording of three postcolonial librarians’ stories of their work lives. Given the gaps in the development literature, it became clear that the sample of subjects selected should consist of living colonial Jamaican librarians who took over from their British counterparts, and served within the first local library directorate from the decolonization period into the postcolonial. Accordingly, a purposive sampling strategy, specifically criterion sampling, was used to select three postcolonial librarians.
In-depth interviews were conducted to collect their stories which spanned from the end of the colonial period to the early postcolonial. Personal documents—photographs of miscellanea; photographs from a monograph; a journal and an informant’s personal scrapbook; autobiographical notes; and/or curricula vitae written by each of the informants—complemented the stories these postcolonial librarians told. In writing about stories, Said (1994, xii) contends that they become “the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.” Through this approach, the postcolonial librarians in this study were empowered to assert both their own identity and the history of librarianship in Jamaica’s development. In this way, they gave other postcolonial librarians a voice and a place within the development discourse.

A blend of the editing organizing style (Dozor and Addison 1992), the template organizing style (Crabtree and Miller 1999, 163–77), and the immersion/crystallization style (Borkan 1999, 179–94), informed the presentation and analysis processes in this research. The data was then presented in response to question one, on the scope of librarianship (see Section: “Summary of Findings”) and to question two, on the place of librarianship in development (see Section: “Analysis of Findings”). Figure 1 below gives a visual representation of the data presentation and analysis process.

As per Figure 1, I began with a typological analysis of the data. Based on my review of the literature on postcolonial librarians, and its revelations on the types of activities they performed, I developed an “A Priori Code Listing” to categorize the data from the transcripts and the photos.

“These categories then bec[a]me buckets or baskets into which segments of text [we]re placed” (Patton 1990, 159), as well as those in which photos were placed. I added descriptive and theoretical memos to segments of the transcripts, the CVs, and/or autobiographical notes to each photo. I applied Glaser and Strauss’s “constant comparison” (1967, 106), and incorporated Strauss’s (1987) “in-vivo coding” to the transcripts and photos. This involved selecting librarians’ words or phrases from the transcripts and photos, that I felt stood out as potentially significant to aid in understanding the range of the librarians’ activities. These words and phrases were used as themes, similar to codes or categories. The in-vivo codes that emerged from the transcripts were then used to further code not only the transcripts but the photographs as well. As new codes emerged, I did further constant comparison. I went beyond the descriptive data, “attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order” (Marshall and Rossman 2006, 62). I interpreted the librarians’ activities through the lens of modernisation, dependency and neo-Gramscian theories.
Figure 1. Visual Overview of the Procedure for Analysing and Presenting the Narratives
Summary of Findings

The narratives revealed that the early postcolonial librarians in Jamaica performed a range of noncustodial activities, namely: outreach and community development, administration, teaching and/or training, professional activities, nonlibrary related activities, collection development, advocacy, library design and/or setup, research and publication, cataloguing and classification, reference activities, circulation, and technology. This paper focuses on three of these activities.

Collection Development

The narratives revealed that the activity of collection development comprised the provision of a more secular collection that provided books on various subjects in the English language, from Britain and from the United States. It also followed the pattern of previous British librarians to acquire books from England, and placed emphasis on building a West Indian collection, notwithstanding the limitations of Jamaican publishing and the small number of West Indian writers in general.

Cataloguing and Classification

The librarians’ activities of cataloguing and classification involved the importation and use of the American cataloguing systems: Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal Classification. The interview narratives indicate that this adaptation enabled better access to information by the public, in particular children. Although the librarians did not develop any local cataloguing schemes, they did select local indexing terms that would facilitate access to local information. As per the narratives, for example, materials on new developments in agriculture were indexed, which provided enhanced access.

Technology

Part of this activity was to facilitate the teaching of technology skills. It also included partnering with international organizations such as the Organization of American States and the International Development Research Centre to obtain computers.

Analysis of Findings

Collection Development

From a modernization theory perspective, development depends on “traditional,” “primitive” values being displaced by modern ones (Webster 1990, 49). According to modernisation theorist, Nash, it also depends on “the diffusion of cultural elements from the developed to the underdeveloped countries” (Frank 1969, 48). This suggests that social change can be achieved through contact with other societies, also known as the process of diffusion. Using
this perspective to interpret the collection development activities of the librarians under study, places them in the role of facilitating social change, through articulating popular culture as imposed culture. The stories gleaned from the interviews revealed that the librarians provided books from Britain and the United States. In this regard, they largely followed the pattern of their British librarian predecessors by acquiring books from England. This may have been continued for convenience, given that the ties were already established.

In spite of this, the narratives also revealed that the librarians placed an emphasis on providing West Indian materials. This was in keeping with the information on collection development given by a Jamaican librarian. In responding to questions on collection development, the librarian noted: “In the beginning I would say it was colonial in attitude, but it became more West Indianised later” (Green 1989, 33). This is also consistent with the literature on postcolonial Burmese librarians, who built their collections with foreign texts but also with Burmese materials (Khurshid 1970, 334–35). It also accords with the writing of Harrison (1984, 233) on postcolonial librarians in Bermuda. According to Shelley-Robinson (2005, 15): “Whether living in their own countries or as immigrants elsewhere, Caribbean people have always faced identity issues due largely to the peculiarities of their past.” Given this, librarians’ initiatives to acquire West Indian texts could be interpreted as their endeavors to encourage the establishment of a West Indian identity. From a dependency angle, this could be viewed as an attempt to weaken colonial ties. Further, using Benedict Anderson’s (1991) concept of “imagined communities,” these librarians could be seen as cocreators of the “imagined community” of West Indian nationality.

However, it is important to point out that, although the librarians ensured the presence of West Indian books, there is no guarantee that these texts presented a true picture of West Indians. Questions can be raised regarding how West Indians were represented in these texts and from whose perspectives. The narratives already informed us that Jamaican publishing was yet to be developed and that, consequently, they imported most of their books from Britain and the United States. Therefore, although the librarians provided West Indian texts with the possible intention of creating knowledge of the West Indies, and by extension West Indian identity, it is possible that the content of these texts may have conflicted with that goal. This is a point highlighted in Altbach and Gail’s Textbooks in the Third World: Policy, Content and Context (1988). This work shows how the content of texts is sometimes in conflict with the “lived culture,” and how some foster the continuation of colonial culture. As such, the content might have been inconsistent with a dependency perspective.

From a neo-Gramscian viewpoint, librarians’ collection development activity can be interpreted as a contradictory mix of competing value positions and interests of both the ruler and the ruled, in an example of Gramsci’s hegemony. The procurement of West Indian books perhaps had the effect of
enlightenment and possibly an embrace of West Indian identity and culture. However, given that the West Indian authors and book industry were limited at the time, and that books were mainly purchased from the European and American industry, this suggests that the politics of West Indian culture were and continue to be expressed in a form that is ultimately of financial benefit to the dominant culture. Further, the profits from this could be used to advance more West Indian books written in Europe or America and by their citizens, not necessarily reflecting the lived culture of West Indian people. Therefore, librarians’ collection development activities could be paradoxically interpreted as having reproduced and legitimized the very forces of capitalism they sought to thwart.

By virtue of these collection development activities, the librarians automatically provided books in the English language. From a dependency perspective, providing materials in the colonial language could be interpreted as encouraging imposed culture. Further, this type of conclusion is strengthened by the fact that these postcolonial librarians did not mention whether or not they provided books in the vernacular of the Jamaican people in order to reach the local population illiterate in English. However, this practice may open itself to an attack that would challenge its bias, as it suggests that people who are not literate in English would also not be literate in the vernacular. Additionally, this reveals that the librarians seemed to have largely provided a modern, text-based service in an oral culture, although a spoken word service would have been of value to those unable to read and write. This is largely consistent with the reviewed literature on African postcolonial librarians, who also failed to build their collections using audiovisual formats, although drama, song, and dance are important to their public, as well (Matare 1998, 30). The narratives indicate that the absence of an oral West Indian collection may have been due to the fact that West Indian publishing was still in its infancy, rather than to any deliberate attempt on the librarians’ part to exclude them. In fact, the spoken narratives brought out that one of the reasons for the limited West Indian materials was the limited number of its writers. Added to this, although there were Chinese, Indian, and Jewish immigrants living in Jamaica, the spoken narratives do not mention the acquisition of materials in other languages. This is perhaps evidence of some degree of insularity, and is somewhat similar to the practice of postcolonial African librarians. Although there were several indigenous languages, the African postcolonial librarians built their collections largely in the language of the colonizer.

From a neo-Gramscian perspective, this could be interpreted as an arena of hegemony. According to Storey (1998, 125), one example of British hegemony in the Caribbean was the imposition of a certain version of British culture, part of which was the institution of English as the official language. He notes that “the dominant element of the language is English, but the language itself is not simply English,” and adds, “the new language is the result of
negotiation between dominant and subordinate cultures; a language marked by both resistance and incorporation...language that is the result of a hegemonic struggle between two language cultures” (Storey 1998, 125). Because of the varied origins of the people, it may have been easier to focus on negotiating and building a central unifying national culture through the English language at this particular stage of development. If not negotiation between the two cultures, what would have been the alternative after colonization? Would they have reverted to precolonial culture? Would that culture still have existed? Would they have adopted the postcolonial culture?

Fiske (1989, 31) points out, “in capitalist societies there is no so-called authentic folk culture against which to measure the ‘inauthenticity’ of mass culture, so bemoaning the loss of the authentic is a fruitless exercise in romantic nostalgia.” This highlights the relevance of Fanon’s (1965) assertions that only through liberation can a true national culture emerge. He provides an acceptable response to these questions in his statement that, “the struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes...cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people’s culture...this humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and others” (Fanon 1965, 197–98). Likewise, given the varied origins of the people, if librarians were creating a unifying culture by promoting English, they could be viewed as defining a new humanism for “Jamaicans,” both native-born and immigrant.

Additionally, the narratives inform us that librarians provided a collection that represented various subject areas. Writing about the politics of information and knowledge, Duranni contended that “development does not take place in a vacuum...in order to develop, people and societies need relevant information and knowledge in a number of fields such as science, history, geography and technology” (2007, 49). If her premise is accepted, then providing texts that represent the various subject areas, rather than the earlier colonial practice of providing largely religious materials, could be interpreted as facilitating a more secular development, thereby challenging the imperial order. The provision of a more secular collection depicts librarians and librarianship as dynamic. This indicates that, even at the level of collection development specialists, librarians are much more. They are multidisciplinary workers who can be viewed as facilitators of anticolonial development.

**Cataloguing and Classification**

From a modernization theory standpoint, librarians’ aforementioned importation and use of the American classification and cataloguing systems, Library of Congress (LC) and Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), can be seen as facilitating the modern processes of organization and access. In this regard librarians have used the “modular forms” of organizing information for access to ensure standardization with American information organization
systems. Rockwood, commenting on the international impact of such practices notes, “the DDC Scheme has done a great deal for libraries in organizing knowledge. It has made it possible for libraries to arrange even the largest collection in a logical way. This...has greatly facilitated the use of the collections and the accessibility of materials” (1968, 335). The interview narratives confirmed this for they revealed that use of the system enabled better access to information by library users, in particular children. Therefore, from a modernization theory viewpoint, cataloguing and classification activity modeled after Western forms, could be inferred to have facilitated development.

However, from a dependency theory perspective, doubts could be cast on the kind of development being facilitated and also about development for whom. Adopting and using American cataloguing and classification systems could be interpreted as cultural imperialism, as librarians have not bothered to develop postcolonial or West Indian classification schemes which are relevant to the information needs and behavior of Jamaicans. This is cause for concern within a West Indian and postcolonial information context as, from a dependency reading, facilitating values and norms from the metropole and not from local experience is key to the perpetuation of underdevelopment (Carnoy 1974, 35). To borrow some questions from Chatterjee’s (1993, 5) work, if nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain “modular” forms already available to them through Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized.

This raises questions on the extent to which librarians’ activities can be viewed as thwarting the creation of an “imagined community” of West Indian nationality if, through their cataloguing activities, they can be viewed as facilitating Western “modular forms” as opposed to local, West Indian forms of information organization and access. This reveals how the very routine act of deciding how to organize information for access is infused with cultural politics and, as such, is capable of continuing Western hegemony in a new form, or neocolonization. According to Frank, development cannot be achieved “by importing sterile stereotypes from the metropolis which do not correspond to their satellite economic reality and do not respond to their liberating political needs” (1969, 16). Therefore, although the use of the LC system enhanced access to children’s literature, questions arise on the degree of access and its resulting content. From a dependency theory angle, this raises questions on the extent to which librarians facilitated anticolonial development through the activity of cataloguing. The type of development they facilitated through this activity could be characterized as a largely dependent, colonized one,
thereby tacitly intimating that, in this way, the librarians may have facilitated underdevelopment.

Taking a contrary view, it can be argued that, although they did not develop any local cataloguing schemes, they did make use of local indexing terms that would facilitate access to local information. As per the narratives, this was done with the indexing of materials on new developments in agriculture, for example, which provided enhanced access. From a dependency outlook, they can be seen as having provided ready access to development information, and this could be viewed as a small but noticeable contribution to a more nationalistic economic development.

From a neo-Gramscian view, cataloguing could be interpreted as facilitating compromise equilibrium. Although local information is collected, it is largely organized using methods from the dominant culture. Therefore, although librarians have placed an emphasis on collecting West Indian information for dissemination, it is organized and accessed through Western modular headings and forms. In this regard, the organization and accessibility of information are articulated to protect the social order and to maintain the interests of capitalism. Therefore, the seemingly ordinary activity of cataloguing and classification is much more than it seems. It is a negotiation between dominant and subordinate cultures with implications for the type of development and society created.

Technology-Related Activities

McClelland, a modernization theorist, notes that we “should seek to break orientation toward tradition and increase other-directedness...increase achievement and to provide for a better allocation of existing achievement resources” in order to accelerate development. He states that one can increase other-directedness through “recogniz[ing] that traditional norms must give way to new ones” (McClelland 1967, 393–94). From a modernization theory standpoint, “modern values being diffused through education and technology transfer” facilitate development (Leys 1996, 10). Within this context, if McClelland’s reasoning is correct, librarians’ initiatives to replace technological incompetence with competence through the teaching of technology and the provision of technological resources, could be interpreted as facilitating modern development, thus assisting in the transition from traditional, underdeveloped Jamaica to modern, developed Jamaica.

Further, if Duranni’s argument that “an Information Society may be contrasted with societies in which the economic underpinning is primarily industrial or agricultural” (2007, 53), and that the tools of the Information Society are computers and telecommunications, then librarians’ technological activities as outlined here can be interpreted as facilitating the move from an agricultural society to an Information Society. Additionally, if it is accepted that librarians facilitate this transition, and that the “Information Society can
be used to describe a society in which the creation, distribution, and manipulation of information has become the most significant economic and cultural activity” (Duranni 2007, 53), then it can be surmised that there is a nexus between librarians and economic and cultural development.

Applying Schumpeter’s (1951) view of capitalism as the antithesis to imperialism, such transitional technology related activities can be interpreted positively. To Schumpeterians, “where education contributes to the formation of a capitalist ‘modern’ society it is contributing to the destruction of imperial relations and the elimination of future threats of imperial domination of one people by another” (Carnoy 1974, 32–37). Thus, librarians’ technological activities could be interpreted as facilitating a capitalist modern society and, by extension, the destruction of imperial relations.

On the other hand, through a dependency reading, technological activities such as partnering with international concerns such as the Organization of American States and the International Development Research Centre to obtain computers, could be criticized for what Frank would term as “not actively removing the causes of underdevelopment but instead waiting for the diffusion of development aid from the metropolis” (1969, 48). Frank argues that the diffusion of capital and technology creates obstacles to development. For example, he notes that the diffusion of technology creates a technology gap (1969, 51, 55). Carnoy also argues that “cultural dependency, which includes dependence on technology…severely limits the possibility of new forms of institutional development emerging” (1974, 55). Furthermore, he posits that modern society is capitalist, and that capitalism evolves into monopoly anti-imperialism (Carnoy 1974, 32). Lenin also argues that capitalism is imperialism (1939, 89). Within this context, librarians who facilitate the development of an Information Society could be also interpreted as promoting capitalism and thus imperialism. From a neo-Gramscian view, librarians could be seen as reproducing workers who are capable of participating in capitalism, by stabilizing the technology gap. In this way, those workers maintain social inequalities and articulate the economic interests of capitalism by assisting the dominant powers to enhance the production of profits from the sale of these technological products.

If the context of the above arguments is accepted, it is worrying because librarians’ activities could be viewed as maintaining and encouraging imperialist development under the guise of the concept of a “modern society.” It would also add support to Carnoy’s observation that “in theory, Europeans would not have to be directly present to perpetuate the social structures and social relations…if capitalist production relations exist” (1974, 59). Librarians are therefore more than technicians, as their technology-related activities are infused with the power to thwart or enhance capitalist and imperialist development. In this regard, there is a nexus between librarians and development, and librarians do have a place in the development discourse.
Conclusion

The narratives of the postcolonial librarians reveal that they were and are more than custodians. They are cataloguers, classifiers, collection development specialists, and technicians, and these activities can be interpreted as much more than their literal labels suggest. They reveal the ways that the library culture industry is infused with power relations. The library culture industry is therefore a negotiated mix of practices from above and below; the ruler and the ruled; folk culture and imposed culture; resistance and incorporation. As such, librarianship can either enhance or thwart particular types of development and, by extension, power. One can observe in the written narratives, that the librarians engaged in activities that drew on foreign ideas and values, that they tried to develop an “imagined community” of Jamaican and West Indian nationality, and attempted to reinvent popular culture as folk culture. This shows that the library can be an arena of negotiation, compromise equilibrium, and hegemony. It also highlights Said’s (1993, xx) term “the interdependence of cultural terrains.” Although librarians sought to promote West Indian culture and popular culture as folk culture, they borrowed from and negotiated with the British and the American. In this regard, they also promoted popular culture as an imposed culture and as an arena of hegemony. Librarians are therefore in the nexus of various categories of development and, indeed, have a significant place in social change.

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