

Knowledge Ill-Inhabited

The Subjugation of Post-Stratfordian Scholarship in Academic Libraries

by Michael Dudley

[Discourses] work to define and to enable, and also to silence and to exclude by limiting and restricting authorities to some groups and not others, endorsing a certain common sense, but making other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impractical, inadequate or otherwise disqualified.

Jennifer Milliken¹

The library . . . seeks to institutionalize discursive formations through formal or idiosyncratic systems of cataloging and indexing. The arrangements of statements made possible by such systems provide those spaces in which new statements can be placed, located, and given meaning.

Gary Radford²

For all his centrality to Western culture in general and liberal arts education in particular, William Shakespeare the author is essentially a taboo subject in most universities. This is not to say that his works are not still pored over in English literature classrooms – although it appears there are fewer such required courses than there once were (according to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni). Rather, it is the poet-playwright himself who has been effectively cordoned off from scholarly investigation. While there are digitally-enhanced stylometric studies in the humanities to determine the authorship of certain Shakespearean works and passages within them, and claims made for various putative collaborators (Vickers 2011), these efforts are all premised on the traditional assumption that there is no question as to the identity of William Shakespeare the author, that he was a resident of Stratford-upon-Avon, and that he lived between 1564 and 1616.

The tide of dissent against this view – that “Shake-Speare” was a pseudonym and the traditional biography is little more than a myth that contributes nothing to our understanding of the works – has grown over the past 170 years largely because of the work of dedicated amateurs and is now reaching into the academy. For example, York University in Toronto, Ontario has offered a 4th-year course on the debate

over the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, while the world's first PhD recognizing Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford as Shakespeare was awarded in 2001 to Roger Stritmatter by the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In 2007 Brunel University in London initiated a (short-lived) MA program in Shakespeare Authorship Studies. In 2013, the Theatre departments of both York University and the University of Guelph co-hosted the Toronto Shakespeare Authorship Conference, entitled *Shakespeare and the Living Theatre*, focusing on the contemporary theatrical history of de Vere's authorship and production of the Shakespeare plays.

These rare and noteworthy exceptions aside however, critical discourse and scholarship about the identity of Shakespeare cannot be characterized as constituting an actual *debate* within the academy. The proposition that "Shake-Speare" was most likely a pseudonym used by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford is, almost without exception, barred from the curriculum. The alternative – conceding and coming to terms with centuries of scholarship representing uncounted thousands of books and articles being written about the wrong person – is unthinkable. All such evidence is rationalized and dismissed, its proponents ridiculed and demonized, while ensuring that adherents to the true faith are rewarded with advanced degrees, teaching positions and tenure (Chiljan, Stritmatter).

To support this sanctioned, orthodox scholarship, university libraries have collected tens of thousands of monographs and journals, the vast majority of which assume the Man from Stratford was actually the author of the plays and poems: A quick search in the WorldCat global library catalogue for the Library of Congress Subject Heading *Shakespeare, William - 1564-1616* yields 51,931 individual books, at least 1,347 of which are biographies.

Given the scale and significance of this publishing and collection-building and the controversies which have dogged the study of Shakespeare since the publication of Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded* in 1857, it would seem reasonable that these collections and their situation in the academic library

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should have been subject to some reflection, if not investigation. As far as may be determined, however, the scholarly library literature is silent on the subject (and bibliographic implications) of what Diana Price (2001) refers to as William Shakespeare's "unorthodox biography." Being ostensibly dedicated to foundational common knowledge, his biographies are apparently deemed unproblematic and their collection, classification and description prompt no concerns over controversy, bias, or the marginalization of opposing views.

This research suggests there is bias in academic library collections related to the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ) as well as in the ways they are organized, with a pronounced imbalance evident against anti-Stratfordian and Oxfordian scholarship. Holdings in Canadian university libraries were examined to determine the extent to which such titles published since 2000 are available in the country's universities, revealing three times as much recent traditional, Stratfordian literature as dissenting views. These findings will be discussed in terms of their likely causes – if they are evidence of deliberate bias on the part of library selectors, or are the result of structural deficiencies. More critically, we shall consider how these materials are made accessible in libraries and online library catalogues, and how they are described and classified, using schemes heavily criticized in the literature for their universalizing bias against all manner of marginalized bodies of knowledge (e.g., Berman 1971/1993, Olson 1998, 2002). In the field of library and information science, these processes are known broadly as *knowledge organization* or KO, for the purposes of *information retrieval* or IR.

The literature under examination is popularly referred to as *anti-Stratfordian* or, pejoratively, as *anti-Shakespearean* (e.g., Edmonson and Wells) in the mainstream media, or sometimes as *Oxfordian*. The preferred term in this paper for describing this literature will be *post-Stratfordian* to encompass both skeptical but non-partisan works debunking the traditional attribution to the Man from Stratford, as well as those setting out the case for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.³

Given the invisibility of Shakespeare's problematic biography in the library literature, we shall need to rely on critiques drawn from very different (yet equally contested) arenas such as terrorism studies in order to understand the place of post-Stratfordian studies in the academic library. At the same time, the fact that the publishing output from post-Stratfordian authors has been so robust offers us a timely sample from which useful comparisons may be made, and analysis undertaken.

The rationale for this approach is four-fold. Academic library collections are intended to support curricula, are often based on decisions made by faculty members themselves, and therefore correspond in large part to what is taught (Knightly 1975), so they should be indicative of the dominance of Stratfordian orthodoxy. Secondly, we should be able to gain an understanding of the structural nature of the bias

against certain literatures. Thirdly, we will be able to explore the extent to which the KO and IR tools of librarianship have contributed to the subjugation of post-Stratfordian knowledges and, hence, their absence in the classroom. Finally, and as a matter of pragmatism, the prospect of thousands of books potentially being rendered essentially obsolete by the official recognition of Oxford as Shakespeare has profound implications for both public and university libraries – implications of which the library profession is quite unaware.

This analysis relies in part on the modest but well-established and significant body of library literature going back to the late 1960s critiquing the profession's so-called neutrality and impartiality, and pointing out that these vaunted principles in fact disguise and facilitate a little-recognized tendency to neglect, misrepresent, or omit topics and constituencies falling outside the mainstream (e.g., Berman 1971/1993, Olson 1998, 2002). Hjørland (2008a, 2008b) implicates the positivist tradition that sees library knowledge organization schemes as passive, universalizing reflections of an external reality. Given this assumption, the library's power to constitute and reify knowledge through collection-building and schemes of indexing and classification is considerable, and, in the academic setting where collections are intended to support curricula and pedagogy, contributes significantly to determining what is taught and what domains are viewed as suitable avenues for research (Manoff).

This paper proposes that, more than being merely suppressed or neglected or, as some would have it, the victim of some sort of conspiracy (Rubie 87), post-Stratfordian discourse falls well within the parameters of what Michel Foucault called *subjugated knowledge*, or “historical contents that have been buried and disguised” by formal, mainstream scholarship (1980, 81), and which is now fuelling an *insurrection*. The purpose of this paper is not, therefore, to offer further explanations for the suppression of post-Stratfordian knowledge, but rather to situate its institutionalized subjugation within the structures of knowledge creation, dissemination, and representation.

I shall be arguing that post-Stratfordian knowledge is subjugated in the academy; that this subjugation is not only a matter of an exclusive academic culture but, as my empirical findings will show, implicates the processes and knowledge organization structures of the academic library as well.

Subjugated Scholarship: Lessons from Terrorism Studies

The question of the identity of William Shakespeare is not a fully-developed debate in the academy because it has not been allowed to become one. The questions, theories, research, and discourses of post-Stratfordian scholars are almost entirely and resolutely ignored, excluded and denied by the rest of academy, the members of which inevitably mock this work as the purview of amateurs. As Katherine Chiljan

has it, Shakespeare has been suppressed:

The Shakespeare professor – with few exceptions – is not interested in following the evidence about Shakespeare [and] apparently prefers fantasy and ridicule rather than investigation...He can get away with this...because he is considered the expert. It is his opinion and his work that is sought from book publishers, academic journals and the media. Thus the problem gets perpetuated (335).

This exclusion is, to some extent, consistent with the dominance of “normal science” paradigms as suggested by Thomas Kuhn (1962/2012), one manifest in other academic controversies, such as Alfred Wegener’s long-pilloried theory that the continents moved (Stewart). Yet, there appears to be more at work in the suppression of post-Stratfordian research than conventional explanations would warrant, such as the desire to maintain academic reputations, or to adhere to hallowed traditions. Indeed, the motivations may be more subtle and ideological. Psychoanalyst and Oxfordian Richard Waugaman (2012) describes a number of psychological dimensions to Stratfordianism, including projecting inadequacies onto opponents, as well as envy over the robustness of the biographical evidence for the skeptics’ leading candidate, Edward de Vere. In a previous publication, I also proposed that the unrecognized legacy of imperial and colonial ideologies surrounding the “National Poet” as a paragon of the “genius of The West” prevents the application of critical theory to Shakespearean biography, thus forestalling the dethroning of the traditional Bard (Dudley).

Whatever reasons motivate Shakespeare scholars individually or collectively to exclude skeptical voices, they clearly dominate mainstream scholarship and publishing, illustrating the intersections between power and the construction of knowledge. French philosopher Michel Foucault, in a series of lectures and interviews gathered in the book *Knowledge/Power*, explored these relationships, observing that certain bodies of knowledge can become subjugated by more powerful actors:

By ‘subjugated knowledges’ I mean two things. On the one hand, I am referring to historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functional coherence or formal systemization. . . . By ‘subjugated knowledges’ one should understand something else . . . namely a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to the task or insufficiently elaborated; naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges . . . a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force solely to the harshness with which it is opposed by

everything surrounding it – that criticism performs its work (1980, 81-2).

In employing the terms *naïve* and *below the required level of scientificity*, Foucault was not himself being pejorative, only situating the ways in which certain discourses are routinely disqualified by dominant ones, his examples being the voices of front-line health care practitioners and those with the lived experience of being institutionalized. While Foucault did not develop or elaborate this theory further himself, the notion of subjugated knowledge has been applied to repressed knowledge domains in a number of diverse professional disciplines, including those of oppressed peoples in social work (Hartman); preventative, social and feminist approaches to health in nursing (Gilbert); experiential learning in adult education (Brookfield); and local, grassroots knowledge of practitioners from the global South in the use of sports in international development (Nicholls et al.).

The disciplinary application of this lens with perhaps the most applicability to the Shakespeare Authorship Question was that undertaken by Richard Jackson, whose systematic analysis within his field of terrorism studies (2012) offers a near-ideal model for situating post-Stratfordian biography. According to Jackson, the field of terrorism studies is dominated by an elite body of experts, many affiliated with think tanks situated within the political power structure, whose narrowly-defined conception of their field – that only non-state actors commit terrorism, thus ignoring the actions of states, while aggressively resisting the search for structural, root causes of radicalism in poverty and repression – accords conveniently with the interests of those in power. The dissenting views of those with alternative, lived experiences of terrorism – peacemakers, journalists, victims of conflict, and former terrorists themselves – are actively shut out of mainstream discourse and are rarely called upon by the media “and thereby subjugated – for lacking in scholarly ‘objectivity’ or displaying the necessary standards of social science scholarship” (16). These alternative perspectives, while known to the experts, remain *unknowable* because of the exclusive manner in which discourses are constructed:

An important initial step towards understanding knowledge subjugation . . . is to consider how the field is constituted and functions as a discourse. That is, every discourse ‘allows certain things to be said and impedes or prevents other things from being said’ (Purvis and Hunt 1993, p. 485), in large part, because ‘discourses, by way of hegemonic closures, fix meanings in particular ways and, thus, exclude all other meaning potentials’ (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, p. 186). From this perspective, the subjugated knowledge described above represents the unsayable within the dominant . . . discourse; these subjugated knowledges represent those alternative meaning potentials which have been closed off by the closures inherent to the discourse. . . In other words, it is an internal functional necessity that a discourse and its authorized ‘experts’ will suppress and exclude knowledge and meaning which would

challenge the proper objects, boundaries and authorized speakers of the field (16).

Following the work of Reid (1993), Jackson describes this elite as an *invisible college* working within a “closed, circular and static system of information and investigation, which tends to accept dominant myths” as given, often without any empirical evidence (17). Particular energy is devoted to what he calls “taboo-enforcing practices” against certain research directions as a means of maintaining ontological enclosure (18-19), the ritual invocation of which becomes internalized, such that scholars practice not just self-governance, but self-subjugation. So committed are they to their shared belief system that, even in the face of its apparent inadequacy, they are able to maintain what Zulaika (2009) calls “a passion for ignorance” (19-20).

What particularly concerns Jackson is that when a discipline is dominated in this way, and its admissible research domains so strictly prescribed, the field itself is destabilized as certain knowledges are simultaneously known and unknown leading inevitably to ontological contradictions which are nonetheless tolerated, while “periodic eruptions of subjugated knowledge that destabilizes the discourse” are not, requiring “meanings [to be] re-sutured and the discourse re-stabilized” (20):

I employ the term ‘unknown’ to mean that certain knowledge claims rooted in theoretical or empirical research remain unacknowledged in the scholarship or texts of the field. Such work is neither mentioned nor systematically engaged with, and if it is mentioned, it is dismissed as inappropriate, naïve, or irrelevant. By contrast, what is ‘known’ is acknowledged, engaged with and referenced, and therefore, legitimized (25).

While an in-depth search for parallels in the respective discourses between Shakespeare studies and terrorism studies as articulated by Jackson is beyond the scope of this paper, a few observations are warranted. Using this model, we can see that mainstream Shakespeare scholarship is dominated by a particular epistemic community – an invisible college situated close to powerful institutions within the field, including the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Folger Shakespeare Library – whose mutual interests are maintained by the rigid imposition of ontological enclosures, fixed meanings, and stubborn mythologies which routinely fail to satisfy the demands of evidence. This epistemic community enforces taboos so effectively that its members self-subjugate by refusing to consider proscribed perspectives which would address otherwise inexplicable problems (e.g., the purpose and subjects of the Sonnets), while instead expressing a passion for ignorance – evident in the enthusiastic and seemingly inexhaustible embrace by Shakespeare’s would-be biographers of a *tabula rasa* Bard devoid of relevant life experience. Because these revered myths are incompatible with internal and external evidence, there are, inevitably, irreconcilable contradictions in the discourse, e.g., the most erudite literature in English – the

pinnacle of Western culture – bears no sign of an advanced education on the part of its supposed author.⁴ Constant efforts are therefore required to re-stabilize the discourse, a task growing increasingly difficult with the growing popularity of the “unknown knowns” of post-Stratfordianism, which are only mentioned to be dismissed as naïve.

Significantly for our purposes, Jackson echoes Katherine Chiljan in finding the major locus of this knowledge subjugation in the academy, in determining what is taught, in what contexts and with which texts, and in ensuring that only those within the approved epistemic community are invited to conferences and publish in the discipline’s key journals (17-18). As such, the production, availability, and pedagogical use of monographs and journal literature in the field becomes essential in setting and enforcing these ontological enclosures, thereby ensuring their reproduction in the next generation of scholars. Unstated but implied in Jackson’s analysis is the essential but underappreciated role of academic libraries in acquiring and organizing the literature required to support and facilitate sanctioned curricula and scholarship – and, in the process, institutionalizing this knowledge-subjugating function.

Libraries Subjugating Knowledge

As the venerable “backbone” or “heart” of the academy, the university library holds the fundamentally important role of supporting teaching and research through the collection of books, journals, and other scholarly outputs such as theses and dissertations, and in organizing them through classification and the assignment of subject headings to provide accurate, replicable, and intuitive access to them. In addition to being guided by a professional Code of Ethics (ALA 1939/2008), and principles of Diversity in Collection Development (ALA 1982/2014), academic libraries are also ostensibly committed to the American Library Association’s “Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries” (2000) which states that:

The development of library collections in support of an institution’s instruction and research programs should transcend the personal values of the selector. In the interests of research and learning, it is essential that collections contain materials representing a variety of perspectives on subjects that may be considered controversial (quoted in Jones 71).

As Barbara M. Jones points out, there is in the American context at least a little-appreciated difference between public and private universities, the latter of which may intentionally reject these principles and retain greater control over their libraries’ collections (69). Even so, library collection-building in general has been subject to some controversy and accusations of bias, omission, and neglect. There is a modest but vigorous and significant body of critical library literature that argues that, under the guise of neutrality and impartiality, (and owing in part to selectors’ own biases,

and other psychological factors [Quinn]), libraries have in fact failed to collect whole genres or categories of materials, (Berman 2001), or, by purchasing primarily from major publishers representing mainstream perspectives, passively neglect or marginalize certain topics and constituencies (Warner). Even if they are collected, materials deemed controversial or outside of the mainstream may be classified and described according to prescriptive and normative systems, often using prejudicial and pejorative language that “both reflect and create opinion” (Guimarães and Martinez-Avila, 22). These are biases in collections and cataloging, and, as will be shown below, have surely contributed to marginalizing the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

Library collections represent the cumulative product of a wide range of processes reaching from the author, through the publishing industry’s agents, houses, and marketers to reviewing journals to vendors to the selecting librarian, all of which are subject to external market forces, political decision making, and the vagaries of socio-psychological factors. For this reason – and owing to the quite varied range of controversial topics investigated – it has proven difficult to establish one particular, dominant factor in the creation of biased library collections. To cite a few examples, the literature suggests that some form of inside censorship (Berman 2001) may be a factor in the failure to collect adequately in such diverse areas as African studies (Warner), graphic novels and comic books (Toren), LGBT materials (Sweetland and Christensen), evangelical Christianity (Ingolfsland), small publisher political journals (Dilevko and Grewal), multi-ethnic materials (Sykes), and pro-life titles (Harmeyer). As this brief list suggests, areas of potential bias can cross the political spectrum; as well there is a great deal of debate in the literature concerning the methods employed to reach such conclusions, and what criteria should be used to identify “un-balanced” collections (Veh).

Market bias, for example, would occur in cases in which publishers are unwilling to take risks on new authors, or ideas. Or, if such works are published, they are not given wide distribution. As the past president of the American Library Association Nancy Kranich points out, in their quest for profitability in an increasingly challenging marketplace, major publishers tend to prefer authors and titles with proven audiences, while rejecting those with potentially critical cutting edge viewpoints on important issues, leaving authors little choice but to seek out small, independent alternative presses (Kranich). The difficulty for libraries is that such houses often fall outside the traditional distribution channels including major reviewing journals – the number of reviews and notices in trade journals being positively associated with library purchases (Sweetland and Christensen). Kranich argues that building truly balanced collections requires libraries to actively seek out these alternative publishers (Kranich 1999). Quinn (2012) however suggests that there may be significant psychological factors that lead to biases against unconventional publications. While acknowledging that “the ideal of the value-neutral collection is a myth” (282) he notes that:

Individuals not only exhibit a bias toward positive information but are also biased toward normative information. This is information that conforms to rules, standards, customs, practices, and expectations of one's social group... That minority behavior, deviant behavior, social taboos, and esoteric practices and ideologies strike the selector as strange or inappropriate may serve as an indicator of bias on the selector's part (287).

We should note that collection decisions are not entirely in the hands of selecting librarians, but may be driven by faculty members, or by students themselves through emerging patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), in which click-throughs in pre-packaged e-book collections trigger purchases. In the case of the former, Lee (1988) questions the extent to which the ideological biases of faculty members – who are bound by none of the ethical principles expected of librarians – will resist excluding books and journals contrary to their own disciplinary viewpoints. The PDA model, according to Sens and Fonseca (2013), is similarly subject to an inherent conflict of interest, and one not consistent with that of the librarian: that search results will be programmed to highlight backlist titles to boost commercial publishers' profits, de-emphasizing scholarly publishers in the process (363).

A tendency towards normativity can also result from the economics of collection development, particularly the use of pre-packaged approval plans. Libraries create these plans by establishing profiles of their universities' collection and curricular needs with a corporate vendor, as well as their preferred publishers, formats and price ranges, and then automatically receive only those titles corresponding with that profile. The economies of scale and deep discounts facilitated by approval plans are popular with libraries on limited budgets but inevitably favor major, well-known publishers at the expense of smaller, alternative presses, with the result that libraries are increasingly coming under fire for having homogenized collections representing only "a safe middle range of opinion...represent[ing] a consensus status quo" (Dilevko 680). Critics argue this corporate-friendly homogenization contradicts the library's core values: Jeff Lilburn (2003) asks how "can current library policies and practices be characterized as 'neutral' if our collections simply reproduce the privileges already enjoyed by established and powerful media conglomerates in every other area of our society?" (p. 30), while Sanford Berman states that libraries' "failure to select whole categories or genres of material" means that "[they] become willing accomplices in the homogenization and commodification of culture and thought" (Berman 2001, 7).

As Warner (2005) notes, the issue of bias in libraries presents a "complex picture" (184), a full explication of which is beyond the scope of the present paper. We should stress however that, whatever its causes, the overwhelming presence of the mainstream side of an academic debate – and the corresponding absence of any marginalized dissent – represents a significant positioning on the part of the institu-

tion as to the nature of legitimate and non-legitimate bodies of knowledge As MIT librarian Marlene Manoff observes,

[W]e need to acknowledge the kind of delegitimizing functions libraries perform in their exclusion of certain kinds of materials. . . . Academic libraries, as institutions of intellectual authority, confer symbolic status on those artifacts they choose to acquire and, implicitly at least, deny it to those they do not. Moreover, libraries, like universities, help to define what constitutes knowledge, i.e., what gets into libraries, and what are legitimate areas of study i.e., those that research libraries provide the materials to investigate. Especially in disciplines in the humanities, library research collections often limit possible areas of investigation (Manoff 4, 6).

Ironically (and perhaps understandably), this normative, delegitimizing function can also be bound up in a defensive liberal reaction against the spectre of America's culture wars over the purpose and future of the academy, as exemplified in the so-called *Academic Bill of Rights* (or ABOR) written and promoted by the right-wing David Horowitz Freedom Center and its offshoot, Students for Academic Freedom. While ostensibly espousing and defending pluralism and diversity, the Bill is seen by its many critics as an assault against both critical pedagogy and modern reason itself, being a veiled means to promote "intelligent design" and other conservative priorities in the classroom (Giroux 2006; Beitko et al. 2005). Among the many regrettable consequences of such a toxically volatile public sphere is that it encourages liberal institutions and observers to fallaciously conflate a number of unrelated but marginalized views and theories – some of which are, indeed, despicable. For example, David Prosser, director of Communications for the Stratford Festival in Ontario, has publicly compared the Authorship Question to Holocaust denial (McNeil). Even Barbara M. Jones, one of the American library professions' most outspoken leaders on the issue of intellectual freedom, subtly conflated these controversies with the Shakespeare Authorship Question in her 2009 book *Protecting Intellectual Freedom in Your Academic Library*, remarking,

The ABOR . . . assumes that all knowledge is uncertain, when in fact some discoveries have been accepted by broad consensus in the scholarly community – for example, that certain scholarship about Shakespeare is better researched and more fundamental than other scholarship (22).

Libraries depend on such scholarly consensus to impose universalized certainty over what constitutes knowledge in the form of classification and cataloguing: the disciplinary assignment and placement of books in three-dimensional space within the library, as well as the controlled vocabulary (subject headings) used to describe it in the library catalogue. The institution dominating this enterprise in academic and public libraries is The Library of Congress, in the form of its Classification system

(1897) and its Subject Headings (LCSH). The former is the Library of Congress's attempt to structure all human knowledge according to disciplines (regardless of what is published), while the latter is based on "literary warrant" (actual publishing) and which, while also dating to the late 1890s, has undergone periodic revisions since.

Widely adopted worldwide, these Library of Congress schemes have been utilized by scholars for nearly 120 years. However, beginning in the 1960s (and corresponding with the social and political upheavals of the era) they have been subject to considerable criticism for their overwhelmingly Euro- and Christian-centric nature, as well as for many examples of sexism, heterosexism, racism, and American exceptionalism, and for their use of pejorative language to describe, exclude or misrepresent marginalized knowledge domains (Berman 1971/1993, Olson 1998, 2002). As Hope Olson (1998) argues,

The result of these factors is classification, which might be seen as...concentric circles of degrees of representation quality...a few core concepts best represented, a middle ground adequately represented, and a large periphery of poorly represented marginal concepts with some concepts outside of the limits (236).

In accordance with libraries' long-standing value of neutrality, their classification and cataloguing schemes are created with a view to objectivity and avoiding bias. Yet, as A.C. Foskett, one of the Library of Congress' earliest critics pointed out, they instead "reflect both the prejudices of its time and those of its author" (117). Indeed, as the literature argues, it is this very pursuit of objectivity that results in systemic normative biases (Olson and Schlegl 2001). As Guimarães and Martinez-Avila observe, "the prescriptive intention of neutrality and universality in the pursuit of a 'better' retrieval process" is the problem, not bias per se, which will inevitably exist in any system (24). However, as Olson and Schlegl point out in their 1999 systematic analysis of the literature, marginalized topics will inevitably be treated within a universalizing system as either

- an exception to the presumed norm
- physically ghettoized from materials with which they should be associated
- depicted with an inappropriate structure that misrepresents the field
- assigned biased terminology, often with pejorative overtones
- omitted altogether.

These findings are significant and as we shall see, apply in all respects to the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

With the ability of online catalogues to discover keywords throughout a given record, there are arguments that perhaps formalized subject headings have outlived their usefulness, that they are no longer needed. On the contrary, critics contend that

subject headings are more important than ever, because the alternative presumes users will always know or guess the necessary terms (and combinations) on their own (Mann 53). Berman (2013) concurs, noting that without an intuitive subject heading, unless the desired term actually appears in the title, it may not be discoverable at all.

Given the potency of what Olson (2002) calls “the power to name” we should understand that library classification and subject headings have tremendous potential to contribute to marginalization in many fields of study. As Guimarães and Martinez-Avila note,

Library schemes both reflect and create opinion at the same time; they... shape reality. It is well known that a very effective way to eradicate a certain group or a people from History is by in no way naming it. An effective way to defame a thing and put an end to its aspirations is to change its meaning to the worst possible one or to place it in the wrong context. An effective way to ridicule and isolate someone is by pointing her/him out as abnormal (deviating from the norm) and to exile him/her away from the peaceful and anonymous norm (standard). And, most probably, all these biases were introduced with the unconscious or intentional purpose of reinforcing the power discourses and the status quo (22).

With a foundation in these structural biases in place, we now turn to an examination of the extent to which they may contribute in academic libraries to the marginalization of the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

Methods

To determine how well post-Stratfordian scholarship is being physically and conceptually represented in academic libraries I selected twelve titles published since 2000 that either question the traditional attribution of the plays and poems to William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon, or else argue for the candidacy of Edward de Vere, (classed as *post-Stratfordian*), and compared their presence in Canadian university libraries with another twelve works of standard Shakespeare biography, or those that seek to debunk the skeptics and thereby affirm the tradition (classed as *Stratfordian*).

This research was conducted using WorldCat, the global cooperative, networked catalogue operated by OCLC (Online Computer Library Centre, Inc.), and which allows users to locate items at public and academic libraries worldwide. These searches enabled comparisons to be made between holdings of the two broad categories, as well as between the university libraries themselves.

The analysis was based on publishing, not institutions; rather than investigating the holdings of all of Canada’s 98 university libraries to see which monographs they held, I was instead concerned with where these specific books on Shakespeare were

owned. Only university libraries were included in the survey; holdings in technical and religious colleges were excluded. All told, 59 university libraries were found to hold the selected titles in both categories.

The availability of these books was also considered in terms of their respective publishing venues (e.g., large, academic or independent publishers), and, related to this, their treatment by the major library collection development tools: these included YBP Library Services,⁵ the review magazines *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* and *Kirkus*. As a bookseller working directly with academic libraries, YBP provides bibliographic and ordering information, so is a primary source for selecting librarians. *Choice* was included in the study as its audience is also academic libraries, being a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL] (a division of the American Library Association [ALA]). *Kirkus*, a publishing industry mainstay since 1933, is a professional book reviewing service, meaning that publishers and, since 2005, self-published authors, must pay a fee to have their work reviewed. Finally – and for good measure – *Book Review Index* was consulted to see if the titles were listed, having been reviewed in these two sources but in other venues as well.

The Post-Stratfordian Titles

examined (in alphabetical order by author) were:

Shakespeare by Another Name (2005), Anderson, Mark

Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom (2010), Beauclerk, Charles

Shakespeare Suppressed (2011), Chiljan, Katherine

Dating Shakespeare's Plays (2010), Gilvary, Kevin

Shakespeare and His Authors (2010), Leahy, William (ed.)

Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward De Vere (2004),
Malim, Richard (ed.)

The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare" (2011), Malim, Richard

Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem (2000),
Price, Diana

The Shakespeare Guide To Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels (2011), Roe, Richard

Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial (2013), Shahan, John and
Alexander Waugh (eds.)

On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's the Tempest (2013) Stritmatter, Roger and Lynne Kositsky

The Monument (2005), Whittemore, Hank

The Stratfordian Titles

examined in alphabetical order by author were:

Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare (2006), Asquith, Clare

Shakespeare: The Biography (2006), Ackroyd, Peter

Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare (2009), Bate, Jonathan

Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy (2013), Edmondson, Paul and Stanley Wells (eds.)

The Truth About William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies (2012), Ellis, David

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare (2005), Greenblatt, Stephen

Nine Lives of William Shakespeare (2011), Holderness, Graham

The Quest for Shakespeare (2008), Pearce, Joseph

The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography (2012), Potter, Lois

1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare (2005), Shapiro, James

Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare? (2010), Shapiro, James

Shakespeare Unbound: Decoding a Hidden Life (2007), Weis, René

Finally, the Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings assigned to the post-Stratfordian books were analyzed to assess their adequacy in organizing, and therefore providing researcher access to, this scholarship.

It should be stressed that these titles were not selected based on pre-existing or external criteria, nor were they vetted by consulted experts as being the most reputable in the field. Neither were they chosen for the frequency of their citation in the scholarly literature, or for being the best-selling. All of these might have been valid approaches. Rather – and consistent with of the paper's institutional and professional contexts – I exercised the librarian's prerogative in selecting for representativeness

in terms of portraying the major themes in the debate over the identity of Shakespeare. This approach facilitated the inclusion of controversial perspectives within both bodies of literature, such as Shakespeare's perceived Catholic sympathies as interpreted by Stratfordians (e.g. *Shadowplay*, *The Quest for Shakespeare*), and the divisive Oxfordian debate over the theory that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the son of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth I (*Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*, *The Monument*). Readers may disagree with these choices, but in the context of librarianship the tenets of intellectual freedom would argue for the right of students to discover these books and reach their own conclusions about these controversies.

Because the purpose of the research was to determine the extent to which post-2000 post-Stratfordian literature is available in academic libraries, the presence of this literature in general was not assessed. As such, seminal works such as J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* and *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* by Charlton Ogburn are not included. These findings await other researchers.

Another direction for further research derives from perhaps the most significant limitation to this study: that no attempt was made to empirically identify the specific *mechanism* at work in each of the 59 libraries in producing the imbalances identified, such as collection development policies and processes, selectors' understanding of the SAQ, or psychological factors identified in the literature, such as a preference for normativity (Quinn). As well, given the far fewer number of degree-granting post-secondary institutions in Canada (98) as compared to, say, the United States (4,140), the ability to generalize about the findings to other national contexts should be viewed with caution. Finally, it should be noted that this paper represents a picture of academic library holdings in Canada as of May, 2014 and may not reflect these libraries' collections at the time of publication.

Findings

Using WorldCat and comparing holdings among Canadian Universities shows that these libraries are far from achieving balance in their collections. My analysis suggests that there is three times as much recent Stratfordian literature in Canadian university libraries as titles representing post-Stratfordian perspectives published during the same period (see below). A Stratfordian title is almost exactly three times more likely to be in a Canadian university library than a post-Stratfordian one; Canadian university libraries are twice as likely to hold a recent Stratfordian title than a post-Stratfordian title. Within the sample, there were some striking contrasts: The University of British Columbia Library and the Library at York University owned each of the selected Stratfordian titles, but no library in the country held all of the post-Stratfordian titles. Indeed, extrapolating from the sample institutions, it would appear that 56 university libraries in Canada hold not a single one of these books, representing a significant knowledge gap for interested researchers in the SAQ. Queen's Univer-

sity Library is a standout with eight post-Stratfordian works, while the University of Ottawa has seven and York, Simon Fraser University, the University of Alberta and McGill University each own six. (For more details, see <http://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/xmlui/handle/10680/845>).

Holdings of Post-Stratfordian Literature

- 100 copies of selected titles available
- Copies were found in 38 university libraries
- Each University holds an average of 2.63 Anti-Stratfordian titles
- Each title owned by an average of 8.3 libraries

Holdings of Stratfordian Literature

- 299 copies of selected titles available
- Copies were found in 55 University Libraries
- Each university library holds an average of 5.4 Stratfordian titles
- Each title is owned by an average of 24.9 libraries

This lack of balance is particularly noteworthy when we see that the Stratfordian *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (SBD) is held at 21 libraries, while the post-Stratfordian response of the same name with the additional question mark is at only two – including the copy I purchased. What can explain these collection disparities? One likely reason is the source of these books – their publishers.

Post-Stratfordian Titles - Publishers

Shakespeare by Another Name (2005), Gotham Books

Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom (2010), Grove Press

Shakespeare Suppressed (2011), Faire Editions

Dating Shakespeare's Plays (2010), Parapress

Shakespeare and His Authors (2010), Continuum

Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward De Vere (2004), Parapress

The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare" (2011), McFarland & Company

Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem (2000),
Greenwood Publishing Group

The Shakespeare Guide To Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels (2011),
Harper Perennial

Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial (2013), Llumina Press

On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's the Tempest (2013),
McFarland & Company

The Monument (2005), Meadow Geese Press

Independent and small presses dominate this list; some of these books are self-published. As the literature shows, smaller press publications are less likely to be reviewed, and hence less likely to be ordered (Sweetland and Christenson). This factor will also play significantly into the popularity of approval plans, with the result that this literature from small and self-publishers is less likely to be captured unless explicitly identified as a part of a given library's profile. By contrast, major, well-known publishers dominate the list of Stratfordian titles:

Stratfordian Titles - Publishers

Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare (2006),
PublicAffairs

Shakespeare: The Biography (2006), Vintage Books

Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare (2009), Random House

Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy (2013), Cambridge University Press

The Truth About William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies (2012), Edinburgh University

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare (2005), WW Norton

Nine Lives of William Shakespeare (2011), Continuum

The Quest for Shakespeare (2008), Ignatius Press,

The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography (2012), Wiley-Blackwell

1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare (2005), Faber

Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare? (2010), Simon & Schuster

Shakespeare Unbound : Decoding a Hidden Life (2007), Henry Holt

What difference would the source of publication make in a book's accessibility to library selectors? The YBP service was found to be very even-handed, listing all twelve of the Stratfordian titles, and all but one of the post-Stratfordian ones (the self-published *Shakespeare Suppressed*). The reviewing journal *Choice* covered five Stratfordian titles, but only three post-Stratfordian books, while the fee-based *Kirkus* reviewed half of the conventional titles, but only one from the post-Stratfordian list, the best-selling *Shakespeare by Another Name*, from Gotham Books/ Penguin). Finally, *Book Review Index* was found to be good at capturing both samples: eleven Stratfordian to eight post-Stratfordian publications. (See <http://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/xmlui/handle/10680/845>).

The effect of type and size of publisher, and the corresponding treatment of their books in collection tools may be illustrated in another useful comparison: the scrupulously researched but self-published *Shakespeare Suppressed* was listed in none of the tools investigated and is held in only one Canadian university library – ordered, in fact, by myself – while Stephen Greenblatt's openly imaginative *Will in the World*, published by the major publishing house WW Norton, was listed in all four collection tools and is held in 51 of the 59 libraries.

Beyond the influence of publisher size and the role of these tools (i.e., market bias) this study did not investigate additional probable mechanisms for the imbalances detected. The literature review however provides some likely factors. A preference for normative information on the part of selectors (Quinn), faculty antipathy to the topic (Lee), the sweeping insensitivity of approval plans to marginalized literature (Dilevko), and the corporatization of patron-driven e-book collections (Sens and Fonseca) may all have played significant roles.

What is more readily apparent is the biased organization to which this literature is subjected once it has been acquired and made accessible in library collections and catalogues. A quick glance at the treatment of this literature by the Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings reveals some fairly significant problems.

Library of Congress Classification: Shakespeare Authorship

Shakespeare, William. Authorship.

2937 - General.

Bacon -Shakespeare controversy.

2939 Pro-Shakespeare (including histories of the controversy and judicial estimate).

Baconian theory.

2941 , Collections: Periodicals, societies, etc.

Controversial literature.

2943 Early (to 1880).

Recent.

2944 English.

2945 Other.

2946 Pamphlets, and other minor.

2947 Other hypotheses, A-Z.

2948 Satire, humor, etc.

2949 Manuscripts. Writing. Signatures.

2950 Ireland forgeries. By author.

2951 Collier controversy.

The Library of Congress scheme dates from 1897, and the section on the SAQ appears not to have been updated since. The results are remarkably inadequate and pejorative. Obviously, treating the SAQ as if it was primarily a “Baconian controversy” is ridiculous, as is describing anything since 1880 as “recent:” Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford has been the leading candidate for almost 100 years. Interestingly, the term *controversial literature* is supposed to be used, according to the Library of Congress as “a form subdivision [under religion] for works that argue against or express opposition to those [religious] groups or works.” So the Library of Congress is essentially calling these works heretical in the strictest religious sense, particularly since its most recent edition states that the “controversial literature” heading should be:

restricted to use under individual religions, denominations, religious and monastic orders, and sacred works for works that argue against or express opposition to those groups or works. The subdivision is no longer to be used under general religious and philosophical topics” (“Controversial Literature” 1998).

As Sanford Berman (2013) notes of this subheading:

The result of this practice is two-fold: to segregate or ghettoize criticism of religious entities and holy books, and to make it appear – by extension – that pro-religious material is not “controversial” but rather normal, mainstream,

non-contentious and acceptable (117).

Apparently, Bardolatry is more than just a cultural phenomenon; it has been essentially institutionalized as a religion by the Library of Congress.

When considering a body of work in terms of its place in the classification scheme, there should be coherence between the two: the classification should characterize the literature both topically and functionally – that is, what it is about and what roles it plays in the discipline and discourse. In this case, the Library of Congress has failed to recognize Authorship literature for what it is: both biographical and critical, in that it seeks to connect the life of the true Author to his work. The scheme ghettoizes Authorship literature away from standard works of biography (which are placed at PR 2894), and instead situates them before PR 2935 – *Fiction based on Shakespeare's life* and notorious forgeries, as well as before PR 2961, *Criticism and interpretation*. In effect, the scheme erases the significance of more than a century and a half of scholarship.

Finally, the lack of a distinct subdivision for Oxford is a massive omission. Works about him are slotted under PR 2947 – *Other hypotheses*, again as if Bacon were the primary candidate and the only one meriting its own classification. With the 100th anniversary of Looney's book approaching, the Library of Congress needs to bring its approach to this literature out of the 19th Century.

Subject access to the post-Stratfordian literature is also highly problematic. The selected titles are without exception assigned the primary heading *Shakespeare, William – 1564-1616*, when, strictly speaking, the only titles which concern the Stratford malt merchant who lived between those years are *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, *Shakespeare Suppressed* and the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* and their purpose is to debunk the notion that he could have been an author. The remainder of these books are either focused on the characteristics of the playwright – whomever he might have been – (*Dating Shakespeare's Plays*, *Shakespeare and His Authors*, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*) or else are entirely dedicated to the proposition that Edward de Vere was Shakespeare (*Shakespeare By Another Name*, *The Monument*, *Great Oxford*). For all but the first three of these books the assignment of the *Shakespeare, William* subject heading aggressively misrepresents their contents. Richard Roe, for example, is quite explicit in his *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* in arguing that Shakespeare must have gone to Italy, so the poet-playwright could not have been the Stratford Man. To describe his book with the heading *Shakespeare, William – 1564-1616 – Knowledge – Italy* is to utterly confound the author's intentions. Similarly, Hank Whittemore's *The Monument* is an Oxfordian interpretation of the Sonnets; in no way does it suggest that William of Stratford wrote them. Again, *Shakespeare, William – 1564-1616 – Sonnets* is a complete misrepresentation.

There is another, more recently-developed layer of description available to libraries

employing the WorldCat catalogue, that of Faceted Application of Subject Terminology (or FAST) developed collaboratively between the Library of Congress and OCLC beginning in 1998. The purpose and strength of FAST is that it allows the creation of headings reflecting facets of topics, rather than being solely dependent on singular, higher-level headings. For our purposes, the simplification of *Shakespeare, William—1564-1616—Authorship—Oxford theory* in 2006 to *Oxford-Shakespeare controversy* is in some ways a positive advance that does legitimate Oxfordian scholarship with its own heading, and offers users a corrective to the *Bacon-Shakespeare controversy* embedded in the Classification scheme and a means to discover *Shakespeare by Another Name*, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*, and *The Monument*. Unfortunately, it also serves to separate Oxford alphabetically from the browsable hierarchy of other Shakespeare-related subject headings, and will only show up in OCLC's WorldCat version of a university's library catalogue, and not in the locally-hosted one.

On the other hand, no subject access at all is offered to Edward de Vere for the books *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* and *On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's the Tempest*, both of which are fundamentally concerned with evidence for the Oxfordian dating of the canon.

The greatest problem in accurately describing this literature is that all of it is assigned variations of the heading *Shakespeare, William—1564-1616*, a conceptual misnomer that assumes that the man with those birth and death dates is intended by the books' authors as the subject of their work, and that he was the author in question. In perpetuating the popular misconception, "who wrote Shakespeare's plays?" it misrepresents the literature to which it is supposed to provide access, both institutionalizing and fixing a fundamental mischaracterization of the Authorship question. Not only does it result in a frustratingly inaccurate research tool but provides powerful rhetorical support for the orthodox view, both reflecting and creating opinion while reinforcing the status quo (Guimarães and Martinez-Avila).

Turning to Olson and Schlegel's (1999) scheme for guidance, we can see that, as a consequence of its physical placement in university libraries and the conceptual access points with which it is made available in online catalogues, post-Stratfordian scholarship is grossly misrepresented. It is physically ghettoized, isolated away from mainstream biographical and literary criticism, being associated instead with forgeries and fiction. The effect is that Authorship literature is treated as an isolated phenomenon, rather than a legitimate body of scholarly work addressing a problem affecting the nature and interpretation of the entire canon. The literature is also subject to bibliographic omission, because subject access to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford is conspicuously absent from titles which concern his identification as Shakespeare. More significant still is the problem that his candidacy is subsumed under "Other hypotheses" within the Library of Congress Classification scheme, leaving the bulk of the available alphanumeric sequence to books about Francis Bacon. This

leads to Olson and Schlegl's other criteria, that of inappropriate structure: because the scheme hasn't been revised since 1897, it is archaically oriented to the centrality of the *Bacon-Shakespeare controversy* to the detriment of most other aspects and candidates, and therefore incapable of reflecting nearly a century of Oxfordian scholarship. These schemes suffer from biased terminology, including the use of *pro-* and *anti-* prefixes when referring to partisans of contested Shakespeares, and their consistent use of the Stratford Man's dates to confusingly identify the Man from Stratford as the subject of all of this literature, when (as we have seen) this is rarely the case. Finally – and most inappropriately – the application of the heading *controversial literature*, which according to the Library of Congress's own rules should be confined to religious texts only, pejoratively identifies certain works on the Authorship question as beyond the pale, to be readily dismissed.

(For a complete list of the Subject Headings assigned to the selected literature, see <http://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/xmlui/handle/10680/845>).

We can see through this analysis that the ability to discover and explore the discourse concerning the Shakespeare Authorship Question in any given university library is dependent on the theory and practices of an entirely unrelated field: that of library and information science.

Discussion: Rising from Beneath Discursive Formations

As this research suggests, the extensive and deep subjugation of post-Stratfordian knowledge in the academy may not be entirely explained through academic culture alone in the form of hiring and tenure practices and exclusive conference and journal invitations; it has powerful structural dimensions as well. Its formal systemization relies not only upon corporatized publishing and distribution models but also on the collection and curation practices of university libraries, all of which rest upon the foundational – but highly problematic – knowledge organization structures of the Library of Congress. Without this degree of institutionalization, the fixed meanings, ontological enclosures, and “circular, static systems of information and investigation” (Jackson, 17) that so profoundly deform the study of Shakespeare could not be so easily maintained and reproduced.

In particular, the structures used to classify and describe the Shakespeare Authorship Question are almost entirely inappropriate. To borrow the words of Guimarães and Martínez-Avila, these structures serve to “eradicate” the Authorship Question from history, “defame” it and “change its meaning [by placing] it in the wrong context” (22). The language we use to describe a mode of thought either validates or negates it; as information studies scholar Ramesh Srinivasan (2012) puts it, “the ability to find information endorses its right to exist” (9). Indeed, libraries and their classification and access regimes may be understood to be, as Michel Foucault (1972)

described in his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a “discursive formation.” In the words of Foucauldian library science theorist Gary Radford (2003),

discursive formations are real, just like the arrangement of books on a library shelf . . . Just by looking at the titles on the spines, you can see how the books cluster together. You can see which books belong together and which do not. You can identify those books which seem to form the heart of the discursive formation and those books which reside on the margins . . . Discursive formations are entities to be seen, touched, and experienced because the objects that make them up, such as books, are material objects. It follows, then, that because discursive formations are material, they have material effects (3).

Among the “material effects” of the discursive formations of the tools of library science is the creation and delimitation of further discursive formations. The very act of identifying what Hjørland (2001) critiqued as a universal, intersubjective “aboutness” of a given document can neglect and fail to represent other systems of meaning, other epistemological approaches to that subject. In the process, as Manoff argues, academic libraries can contribute to the delegitimization of knowledge, and determining what constitutes knowledge and suitable areas for investigation, especially in the humanities (1993).

We see these impacts in the treatment of post-Stratfordian literature. Viewing this scholarship through a Foucauldian lens (1972, 1980, 81-2) reveals its discursive formations to be profoundly subjugated – at least in part – through the discursive formations of library knowledge organization and information retrieval practices. As Foucault (1980 81-2) would have it, its “historical contents” have been “masked” for being “beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” by means of the “formal systemizations” employed by the Library of Congress, as well as the ingrained biases against marginalized topics inherent in the economics of publishing and distribution. Like Touchstone’s ignorant misappropriation of Ovid, decried by Jaques as “knowledge ill-inhabited, worse than Jove in a thatched house” (*As You Like It* [3.3]), the political economies of knowledge production and organization have relegated post-Stratfordian scholarship to the periphery of the academy, enclosing it in incongruous, inappropriate structures incommensurate with its contents and worth. Being thus both inadequately collected and misrepresented, this literature is constrained in its capacity to correct the ontological enclosures in Shakespeare studies which have, for so long, fixed Stratfordian meanings and excluded all others.

The result is an ossified canon of mainstream, mythical Shakespeare “biography” which both supports and depends upon what Jackson (2012) calls a “closed, circular and static system of information and investigation” reproduced through the disciplined self-subjugation of its practitioners and adherents; contrary theories are

“neither mentioned nor systematically engaged with” by scholars identifying with the mainstream, consensus view (17).

With their anemic, unbalanced Shakespeare Authorship collections organized and made accessible according to mostly outdated, biased and pejorative terminology and structures, academic libraries appear to be neglecting – and, most troublingly – actually preventing research and pedagogical development in one of the most important and exciting fields of study in the humanities.

Liberating Post-Stratfordian Knowledge in the Academic Library

The status of post-Stratfordian scholarship is consistent with Foucault’s description of subjugated knowledge not only for the ways in which it is treated by dominant discourses, but also in terms of what it represents: an “insurrection of knowledge . . . against the centralizing power-effects that are bound up with the institutionalization and workings of any scientific discourse organized in a society such as ours” (2003, 9). Post-Stratfordians from Delia Bacon and Mark Twain through to 21st Century authors such as Mark Anderson and Roger Stritmatter have been waging an insurrection against both institutionalized inertia and powerful discursive formations represented by orthodox Shakespeare studies.

To be fully realized, however, this insurrection will require yet another: against the influence of conventional library collection development practices and the scientific discourse of knowledge organization. The universalizing and supposedly neutral and unbiased practices of collecting, describing and arranging literature of a contested nature have for decades been decried for their inability to adequately represent the output, ideas, theories and aspirations of a wide range of constituents falling outside the mainstream, including feminists, people of non-white races, and those with non-conforming genders and sexualities (e.g., Berman 1971/1993, Olson 1998, 2002).

Changing the normative bias against post-Stratfordian scholarship where collection-building is concerned represents a cultural shift which will require ongoing educational efforts targeting the academy in general and the library profession in particular. One such strategy could involve a cooperative effort (adjusted according to respective financial capacities of course) among the disparate publishers of post-Stratfordian works highlighted here to create a joint, professionally designed catalogue of available relevant literature in print, which could then be emailed as a PDF to collection managers at university libraries worldwide. As well, they could combine resources to fund booths at library conferences featuring their titles and distributing the catalogue, and work with librarians to organize professional conference sessions on the SAQ as an issue concerning libraries.

There may also be promising approaches to reforming knowledge organization. The solution to addressing the bias of present KO systems that is proposed in the literature is – surprisingly – *more* bias: or, more accurately, *honest bias*. Librarians need to adopt a pragmatic rather than a positivist stance, one that treats different epistemologies on their own terms, rather than seeking to equally apply a single worldview to all of them. Information science scholar Birger Hjørland argues that, rather than deny bias, we need to admit that it is impossible to avoid – and, in fact, can contribute to more accurate content analysis than merely depending on consensus view of the matter (2008b). He defends this stance as pragmatic: that knowledge organization should be undertaken as a means to describe and evaluate various knowledge *claims* in such a way as to be meaningful for users, rather than employing positivist assumptions about monolithic *knowledge* per se, and KO schemes representing a single, external reality (2008a). The difference between these paradigms, he argues, is that the pragmatic view allows to flourish

the most important function of libraries and information systems [which] is to enable critical users to question established knowledge and investigate alternative views (2004, 500).

Adopting a pragmatic view on KO and the Shakespeare Authorship Question suggests that the Library of Congress Classification System for this subject domain will require an entirely new structure, and that new, reformed Subject Headings will need to be proposed. This is a practical step, and one to which the Library of Congress is officially open: it maintains a web-based “Subject Authority Proposal Form” through which new headings may be submitted. While the proposal of such headings is beyond the scope of this paper, even something as basic as a heading for *Shakespeare Authorship Question* (with standard subheadings such as – *History – Study and teaching* and – *Congresses*) would go a long way towards legitimating the field, and would bypass the problem inherent in associating this literature with a particular person possessing specific birth and death dates, and about whom the works in question are almost never actually concerned.

There is also a profoundly pragmatic reason for adopting new structures and authorities for post-Stratfordian literature: eventually, this task will be thrust upon libraries all over the world. As Ramon Jiminez (2009) points out, the formal recognition of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford as “Shake-Speare” will mean that

all the biographies of the Stratford man, and at least one of Oxford, will become comical literary curiosities. Every Stratfordian analysis of every play and poem will have to be rewritten, and dozens of speculations about sources, meanings, characters, and allusions will prove to be incorrect. The canon will be expanded, and its beginning and ending dates corrected to coincide more closely with the reign of Elizabeth (para. 59).

The implications for academic libraries are clear – but so, too, are the opportunities. A dedicated reassessment of the composition, description, and classification of entire collections devoted to Shakespeare would surely be costly, complex, and time-consuming, but would also constitute a signal contribution to addressing and repairing the damage wrought by a historic misdirection in scholarship. The alternative – perpetuating the status quo subjugation of post-Stratfordian knowledge through neglect and systematic ghettoization – will likely be viewed as untenable given the university library’s avowed traditions of neutrality, critical literacy, and intellectual freedom. How this revered institution – and its bibliographic foundation, the Library of Congress – choose to respond to the post-Stratfordian challenge may well help lay the foundation for a new generation of liberated Shakespeare scholarship.

Notes

1. Milliken, 229.
2. Radford, 264.
3. See: Warren, James A., *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*, 3rd edition. Somerville, MA: Forever Press, 2015.
4. In the documentary *Last Will. And Testament*, Stanley Wells – Life Trustee and former Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (and stalwart Stratfordian) states on camera “I see nothing in the plays to suggest that they were written by a man who couldn’t have had the sort of education that Shakespeare could have acquired in [the Stratford grammar school]. The plays are not that learned.” Quoted in Waugaman 2015, 86.
5. Formerly known as Yankee Book Peddler prior to its merger with Baker & Taylor Books in 1999.

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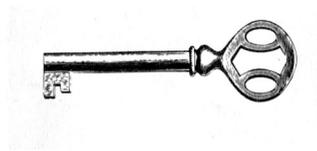
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