

*Libraries and the Intersection of Power and Knowledge:
An Analytical Study of the Social Control Function from Michel
Foucault's Perspective*

المكتبات وتقاطع السلطة والمعرفة

دراسة تحليلية لوظيفة الضبط الاجتماعي من منظور ميشال فوكو

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Abstract:

Libraries are typically viewed as neutral spaces that facilitate free access to knowledge for all, but this perception overlooks the latent authoritative role they play in society. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory of the intersection of power and knowledge, the article demonstrates how libraries function as mediators of empowerment and tools for social control. Through their classification systems, collection development policies, and access controls, libraries shape what is considered legitimate knowledge while marginalizing or excluding other forms of knowledge. The article explores how libraries contribute to shaping behavior, directing thought, and reproducing dominant knowledge systems. It concludes that, despite their status as cultural institutions, libraries play central roles in regulating the social domain within power structures, and proposes strategies for rethinking library practices to enhance epistemic justice, promote the right to access information, and resist invisible forms of institutional control.

Keywords: Libraries, Power and Knowledge, Social Control, Michel Foucault, Analytical Study.

المخلص:

يُنظر إلى المكتبات عادةً على أنّها فضاءات محايدة تسهل الوصول المجاني إلى المعرفة للجميع، لكن هذا التصوّر يتجاهل الدور السلطوي الكامن الذي تؤديه في المجتمع. فبالاستناد إلى نظرية "ميشال فوكو" حول تقاطع السلطة والمعرفة، يُظهر المقال كيف تعمل المكتبات كوسائط للتمكين وأدوات للضبط الاجتماعي. من خلال أنظمة التصنيف التي تعتمدها، وسياسات تطوير المجموعات، وضوابط الوصول إلى المعلومات، تُسهّم المكتبات في تشكيل ما يُعتبر معرفة مشروعة، بينما تهمّش أو تستبعد أشكالاً أخرى من المعرفة. ويستعرض المقال كيف تساهم المكتبات في تشكيل السلوك، توجيه الفكر، وإعادة إنتاج الأنظمة المعرفية المهيمنة. ويخلص إلى أنّه، رغم مكانتها كمؤسسات ثقافية، تلعب المكتبات أدواراً مركزية في تنظيم المجال الاجتماعي ضمن هياكل السلطة، ويقترح استراتيجيات لإعادة التفكير في ممارسات المكتبات لتعزيز العدالة المعرفية، وتعزيز الحق في الوصول إلى المعلومات، ومقاومة أشكال الضبط المؤسسي غير المرئية. الكلمات المفتاحية: المكتبات، السلطة والمعرفة، الضبط الاجتماعي، ميشال فوكو، دراسة تحليلية.

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1- Introduction

Libraries are typically regarded as prestigious cultural institutions that are an integral part of the social structure in various societies. They have long been perceived as neutral spaces that aim to enable individuals to access knowledge freely, without bias or discrimination, thus promoting values of democracy and epistemic justice. Libraries are often portrayed as open spaces for the community, where everyone can access the information they need, reflecting their crucial role in enhancing culture, education, and the transfer of knowledge between generations. Libraries are commonly credited with facilitating the freedom of thought and offering diverse sources that contribute to enhancing individuals' educational and cognitive abilities. In this context, it is believed that libraries provide knowledge in an unbiased manner and represent a space that is not subject to the influence of power.

However, this traditional view of libraries as neutral institutions contributing to the dissemination of knowledge for all overlooks many complex and authoritative dimensions that might influence their role in society. Despite the prevailing perception of libraries as cultural centers aimed at spreading and developing knowledge, Michel Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge suggest that institutions involved in the production of knowledge, including libraries, cannot be free from political and social influences that define what is "legitimate" and "authorized" knowledge, and what is "illegitimate" or "marginalized." Thus, libraries become not only places for storing and distributing knowledge but also tools used by social and political powers to reproduce dominant knowledge systems.

Through Foucault's theory of the intersection of power and knowledge, we can understand that libraries are not neutral spaces as often assumed, but are part of the social system that contributes to the shaping of knowledge and the direction of its access. Within this framework, libraries represent a part of the "machines of power" that regulate and distribute information, whether through the classification systems in place or through collection development policies that help define the kind of information made available to the public. Additionally, libraries' policies in controlling access to information contribute to determining what is considered "legitimate" knowledge, thus leading to the marginalization or concealment of other forms of knowledge that may not align with the prevailing knowledge standards.

The central issue raised by this article revolves around important questions regarding the "neutrality" that is often attributed to libraries in contemporary society. If libraries are indeed, as perceived, neutral spaces respecting the freedom to access knowledge, then:

- What factors determine the type of knowledge made available to the public?
- Do libraries contribute to shaping individuals' behavior, or is there a hidden authoritative role played by the library system in reproducing dominant intellectual and political patterns?

- How do these patterns intersect with Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge, which link knowledge systems with political and social power structures?

- Can libraries be considered tools for social and intellectual empowerment, or do they ultimately contribute to reinforcing intellectual hegemony and social control?

In this context, this article will analyze the role of libraries from Michel Foucault's perspective, aiming to understand how libraries play a role in reproducing dominant knowledge systems. It will explore how libraries, through their classification systems, collection development policies, and access control mechanisms, are not merely places for storing and distributing knowledge, but intervene in the formation of "legitimate" knowledge and the determination of what is illegitimate or rejected. The article will also reveal how libraries contribute to shaping individuals' behavior and directing their thinking, thus reproducing knowledge systems that serve prevailing social structures. Finally, the article will consider how we can rethink the role of libraries in society in alignment with epistemic justice, the right to open access to information, and resistance to invisible forms of institutional control.

2- Michel Foucault's Theory of Power and Knowledge:

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is considered one of the most influential French philosophers who deeply impacted contemporary thought, especially in the fields of social philosophy, sociology, and cultural history. Foucault developed a set of concepts aimed at studying the relationship between knowledge and power, where he believed that knowledge is not merely a collection of objective facts or information that is discovered, but a social product shaped within cultural and historical contexts determined by the dominance of power. According to Foucault, power and knowledge intersect in a complex manner, and one cannot be understood without the other. Knowledge is produced within social and political contexts, and it is a tool used to shape social and political reality and to guide individuals. (GUÉDON, 1977)

At the heart of Foucault's theory is the concept of the intersection of power and knowledge, where he sees knowledge as not produced in a vacuum, but as closely tied to power. Knowledge is not neutral or just objective information; it is the product of power relations that organize societies and define what is "legitimate" and "acceptable" knowledge. In this context, power is part of all knowledge systems present in society, such as educational systems, libraries, and media, which determine what can be known and how it is disseminated. Institutions that produce knowledge are not limited to political or economic power, but also include cultural institutions that define what is considered truth and what is not. (Foucault, 2008)

One of the key concepts in Foucault's theory is discourse, where he argues that discourse is not just words or language, but a set of ideas and practices that determine how the world is organized

and understood. Discourse is produced and reproduced through society's institutions, including libraries, which are seen as a means of producing and distributing knowledge. Through discourse, power determines what knowledge is "acceptable" and what is "rejected." In libraries, for example, the type of information that is made accessible is determined by classification policies and collection systems, reflecting the dominant knowledge system in society. According to Foucault, libraries are not just places for storing and distributing knowledge, but are tools of power that reproduce the prevailing discourse and guide individuals' behavior in line with dominant knowledge and political standards. (GUÉDON, 1977)

Self-governance is another fundamental concept in Foucault's theory, referring to how power intersects with individuals in organizing their behavior based on the knowledge standards imposed by institutions. According to Foucault, individuals do not just submit to direct power through laws or commands, but become responsible for organizing their own lives based on the prevailing knowledge standards. In this context, libraries contribute to shaping ****self-governance**** by determining what individuals are allowed to access and how they use knowledge. In other words, libraries help individuals organize their intellectual behavior according to the knowledge systems imposed by the institutions. (Charles C. Lemert, 2019)

Discipline, in Foucault's theory, refers to how society organizes individual behavior through continuous surveillance and social control. In his work "Discipline and Punish", Foucault explains how institutions exercise detailed surveillance over individuals through disciplinary systems, whether in schools, prisons, or libraries. In libraries, discipline is manifested in the way information is classified and who is allowed to access it, contributing to shaping and directing individuals' behavior in accordance with dominant knowledge systems. These knowledge systems, enforced by institutions such as libraries, contribute to reproducing the cultural and social hegemony that determines what individuals should know and how to access that knowledge. (Foucault, 1995)

3- The Invisible Hand of Knowledge: How Classification Systems Shape Society?

Library classification systems, often viewed as neutral tools for organizing knowledge, carry a much deeper, hidden significance. Through Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge, we can see that these systems do much more than organize; they shape how knowledge is perceived, regulated, and disseminated in society. Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, discourse, and normalization provides a framework to understand how classification systems in libraries are embedded with social and political functions. Rather than merely facilitating access to knowledge, classification systems organize power by determining what knowledge is legitimate, who has access

to it, and which knowledge is excluded. Below, we examine the latent roles of classification systems in libraries through Foucault's lens. (Katie Warburton, 2024)

3.1- Power/Knowledge: The Role of Classification in Shaping What Is "Legitimate" Knowledge:

Foucault argued that power is not only exercised through force but is also embedded in knowledge itself. Knowledge production is always tied to power relations. In the context of library classification systems, knowledge is not neutral but is shaped by the power dynamics that determine which knowledge is included and which is excluded. Classification systems, through their organization of knowledge into hierarchical categories, define what is considered legitimate knowledge in a society, giving authority to certain fields of study while relegating others to the margins. (Fox, 2019)

In classification systems like Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress, Western knowledge systems, such as European philosophy and modern science, often occupy more prominent positions, while knowledge rooted in Indigenous cultures or non-Western epistemologies is placed in less accessible sections. For instance:

- In the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system:
European philosophy is classified under 190-199 (Western philosophy), while Indigenous knowledge systems might be relegated to 398 (folklore and mythology) or 970-979 (which focuses on the geography and history of the Americas and Oceania, often presenting Indigenous cultures as a subset of historical or anthropological studies).
- In the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) system:
Western philosophy is classified under B (Philosophy), with subcategories such as B 1-5800 for Western philosophy. Meanwhile, Indigenous epistemologies might be classified under GN (Anthropology), such as GN 301 for Indigenous cultures, or placed under E (History of the Americas), often categorizing Indigenous knowledge as part of a broader historical or ethnographic narrative rather than as an independent intellectual tradition.

This reflects the dominance of Western thought, where systems prioritize Western philosophical and scientific perspectives while placing non-Western and Indigenous knowledge systems in more peripheral, less visible, or generalized categories. This hierarchy mirrors the power structures that have shaped global knowledge systems, reinforcing the authority of Western institutions in controlling and organizing knowledge. (Warburton, Katie, Charles, Yang, & Lea, 2023).

3.2- Discourse and Normalization: How Classification Reinforces Social Norms:

Foucault's theory of discourse examines how knowledge is not simply discovered, but produced within specific contexts that reflect and maintain social power structures (Charles C. Lemert, 2019). Classification systems in libraries help construct and reinforce dominant discourses by organizing knowledge in ways that align with prevailing ideologies. By normalizing certain categories and topics, these systems influence public understanding and contribute to the normalization of social norms. (Warburton, Katie, Charles, Yang, & Lea, 2023).

Consider the classification of Islamic studies in libraries. In some classification systems, Islamic philosophy, theology, and history may be categorized under specialized sections like 297 in Dewey Decimal (Islam) or BP in the Library of Congress Classification system. While these topics are placed under a distinct category, other related fields like comparative religion or criticism of religious beliefs might be relegated to less visible or secondary sections. This organization can reflect the dominance of Western religious thought and secularism, marginalizing Islamic thought as a "distinct" or "other" category rather than integrating it into broader intellectual discourse. This reflects Foucault's idea of normalization, where Western perspectives are treated as the mainstream and Islamic thought is often treated as peripheral, reinforcing the idea of religious hierarchies within knowledge systems. (Haroon Idrees, 2009)

3.3- Social Control: Excluding and Marginalizing Knowledge:

According to Foucault, power works not only through inclusion but also through exclusion by defining what is not legitimate or acceptable knowledge. Classification systems in libraries play a key role in this process by determining what knowledge is visible and what is hidden or excluded. By excluding certain types of knowledge, these systems help maintain the dominant power structures of society. (OLSON, 1998)

Many libraries use classification systems that marginalize knowledge related to critical theory, radical political movements, or historical critiques of colonialism. For instance, in the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system, critical theory or radical political movements may be placed under 320 (Political Science), but subcategories like 320.01 (Political theory) or 320.9 (History of political movements) often receive less prominence compared to mainstream political ideologies. Similarly, materials addressing historical critiques of colonialism might be classified under 972 (History of South America), 973 (History of North America), or 305.8 (Colonization) and may be placed in less visible sections, often presenting the colonizers' perspectives rather than the critiques. This reflects the dominance of mainstream political ideologies, marginalizing dissenting or alternative viewpoints, and reinforcing the power of those ideologies by determining what is worth knowing and what is not.

In this way, libraries act as instruments of social control, shaping public understanding by controlling access to knowledge. (OLSON, 1998)

3.4- Surveillance and Self-Regulation: Creating Intellectual Norms:

Foucault's concept of disciplinary power emphasizes how control is often exercised through surveillance and self-regulation. Classification systems subtly encourage individuals to regulate their own intellectual behaviors by providing a structured framework for knowledge. These systems guide users in how to engage with information, reinforcing intellectual boundaries and shaping how people think about knowledge and its rightful boundaries. (Amelia N. Gibson, 2017)

In libraries, classification systems encourage users to conform to certain intellectual categories. For example, a patron searching for books on psychology will find works grouped under 150 (Psychology) in the Dewey Decimal Classification system. Within this section, subcategories like 150.1 (Behavioral psychology) or 150.19 (Neuroscience) are prominently featured, reinforcing a scientific approach to understanding the mind. Meanwhile, alternative views such as holistic psychology or spiritual psychology may be categorized under 158 (Applied psychology) or 130 (Parapsychology) and placed in less visible sections, implicitly reinforcing the intellectual dominance of the scientific model of knowledge. (Katie Warburton, 2024)

3.5- Shaping Access to Information:

Foucault's theory underscores that knowledge production is inextricably linked to power relations and that access to knowledge is inherently controlled. Classification systems determine how information is structured and accessed in libraries, which ultimately influences who has the right to engage with certain types of knowledge. By controlling access to information, classification systems also control the intellectual development of individuals and groups. (Ronald Deibert, 2010)

Academic libraries often prioritize the classification of advanced scholarly journals and specialized databases in a way that makes them accessible only to students or faculty members. For example, in the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system, academic journals related to advanced subjects might be classified under 500 (Natural Sciences), 600 (Applied Sciences), or 700 (Arts and Recreation), with subcategories such as 500.5 (Advanced physics) or 610.72 (Specialized medical practices). These resources are typically restricted to certain areas of the library that are only accessible to students or faculty members, creating an elitist divide. Only credentialed individuals are allowed to engage with high-level academic discourse, reinforcing social stratification based on access to knowledge. (OLSON, 1998).

3.6- Reproducing Cultural Hegemony: Knowledge as a Tool for Cultural Dominance:

Foucault's ideas about power/knowledge highlight the way in which institutions such as libraries contribute to the reproduction of cultural hegemony. By categorizing knowledge in ways that reflect the values and ideologies of the dominant culture, libraries help perpetuate those ideologies and reinforce societal norms. Libraries are not simply neutral spaces for knowledge dissemination but are active participants in shaping the cultural order. (Stoddart, 2007)

In some libraries, the history of France's occupation of Algeria may be framed through a Eurocentric lens, with materials that portray colonization as a civilizing mission or as a force for progress. For example, in the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system, books discussing French colonial rule in Algeria may be classified under 944.05 (History of France) or 963.05 (History of North Africa), which might focus on the development and modernization introduced by French rule. In contrast, works that critically examine the negative impacts of French colonization, such as violence, economic exploitation, and cultural suppression, may be placed in more peripheral sections, such as 305.896 (Colonialism and postcolonial studies) or 956.2 (Algeria's history post-independence). These critical perspectives might even be excluded or marginalized, reinforcing a cultural narrative that justifies the actions of the colonizers and downplays the suffering of the colonized population.

4- Collection Development Policies and Their Latent Role in Controlling Knowledge:

Collection development policies in libraries play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of knowledge by selecting what materials are included, how they are organized, and which are excluded. While the primary goal of collection development is to ensure that libraries meet the informational needs of their users, these policies also carry a latent function of controlling knowledge. Through strategic decisions about acquisitions, libraries influence which perspectives are represented, which ideas are prioritized, and whose voices are amplified. These decisions can perpetuate certain cultural narratives, social norms, and power structures, thus shaping both individual and societal access to information. Below are some examples of how collection development policies subtly control and shape knowledge: (Morrissey, 2008)

4.1- Selection Criteria and Budget Allocation:

Collection development policies often establish specific criteria for selecting materials, which directly influence the kind of knowledge that is prioritized and made available to library users. These policies often include guidelines on factors such as academic importance, user demand, cost, and

cultural relevance. This process inherently shapes which fields of knowledge are promoted and which are neglected. (Highby, 2004)

A university library may have a collection development policy that prioritizes the acquisition of materials related to STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) due to institutional priorities or financial support. As a result, the library might allocate a significant portion of its budget to technical journals, engineering textbooks, and scientific research databases, while neglecting subjects such as art history or social studies. This type of policy contributes to the hierarchy of knowledge, reinforcing the dominance of STEM disciplines over humanities or social sciences. This prioritization not only influences the intellectual environment of the library but also shapes the academic and professional paths available to students, often favoring those in STEM fields over those in the humanities or social sciences. As a result, students in non-STEM disciplines may have limited access to resources, which can hinder the diversity of thought and intellectual development within the academic community. (Doyle, 2002)

4.2- Exclusion of Specific Topics or Authors:

Collection development policies may exclude certain authors, topics, or perspectives based on political, ideological, or cultural considerations. This exclusion can restrict access to critical or controversial knowledge, influencing public discourse and shaping what is considered acceptable or legitimate knowledge. (Highby, 2004)

A library in a region with limited awareness of racial issues might have a collection development policy that excludes books or materials on topics such as systemic racism, critical race theory, or racial justice movements because these subjects are seen as controversial or uncomfortable for the community. As a result, the library may offer little or no access to these perspectives, limiting public engagement with alternative viewpoints on race and reinforcing dominant societal perspectives that downplay or ignore racial inequalities. (Highby, 2004)

4.3- Focus on Mainstream or Popular Materials:

Collection development policies can sometimes favor popular materials over scholarly or niche publications to meet the perceived demand of a general audience. This focus can result in the promotion of mainstream ideas and popular culture while overlooking more specialized or critical works. (Mcmenemy, 2008)

For example a public library might prioritize acquiring bestsellers or popular fiction in order to cater to a large audience, based on the idea that these materials attract more visitors. In contrast, specialized resources in areas like postcolonial literature, avant-garde art, or radical political movements may be excluded from the collection. This decision shapes the library's intellectual

environment, focusing more on entertainment and conventional ideas, while leaving alternative intellectual explorations marginalized. (Doyle, 2002)

4.4- Subscription-Based or Restricted Access Policies:

Many libraries, especially academic libraries, may establish collection development policies that favor paid subscriptions to scholarly journals or high-cost databases. While these resources are essential for academic research, this policy limits access to high-quality knowledge for individuals without institutional access, reinforcing intellectual elitism. (Quinn, 2012)

A university library may prioritize purchasing access to premium academic databases such as JSTOR, Elsevier, or SpringerLink, but may offer limited access to the general public. This decision effectively restricts access to critical academic research to students and faculty, while excluding non-academic individuals or those from lower-income backgrounds, perpetuating social stratification based on access to knowledge. (Morrisey, 2008)

4.5- Censorship or Self-Censorship in Acquisitions:

Collection development policies may reflect a library's response to censorship pressures or the fear of offending certain groups. Libraries may intentionally avoid acquiring materials that could be considered controversial or inflammatory, thus limiting the scope of available knowledge and restricting free access to diverse ideas. (Tudor, Moore, & Byrne, 2023)

A public library in a religiously conservative community may develop a collection development policy that excludes books discussing atheism, secularism, or non-traditional family structures due to concerns about offending the local community. This policy restricts access to knowledge that may challenge dominant cultural or religious views, and by avoiding the acquisition of certain works, the library enforces conformity with local values, thereby restricting the diversity of thought. (Mcmenemy, 2008)

4.6- Community-Focused Collection Development:

Many libraries base their collection policies on community needs and local interests. By focusing on the needs of specific user groups, these policies influence the kinds of knowledge that are promoted or de-emphasized. This can lead to either the broadening or narrowing of knowledge access depending on how community priorities are interpreted. (Doyle, 2002)

For example a public library in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood may prioritize materials that cater to the language needs and cultural backgrounds of the local community. For instance, they might acquire books in Spanish or Arabic, or focus on resources that help immigrants integrate into the new society. While this can be seen as a way of meeting community needs, it could also exclude other global perspectives or academic works that are not perceived as immediately useful to the community. (Morrisey, 2008)

5- The Hidden Power of Libraries: Controlling Knowledge through Access Policies:

Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge emphasizes that power is not just something that is imposed from the top down, but is instead embedded in the everyday practices and institutions that structure society, including libraries. Libraries, through their access control policies, shape knowledge by regulating what information is available to different groups of people and how that information is accessed. Foucault's view on power highlights how knowledge is not neutral; it is shaped by social structures, cultural norms, and institutional power. By analyzing access control to information through this lens, we can see how libraries inadvertently reinforce existing power relations while limiting access to alternative viewpoints and knowledge systems. (Tracey & Ninkov, 2025)

5.1- Restricted Access Based on Institutional Affiliation:

One of the most common forms of access control is the restriction of resources based on institutional affiliation. This type of policy, often seen in academic libraries, reflects how institutions exert power over knowledge by determining who is allowed to access certain materials. These access controls ensure that specialized knowledge and academic resources are reserved for a select group of individuals, typically those affiliated with the institution. (De Masha Garibyan, 2014)

For example a university library may grant access to specialized journals like JSTOR or ScienceDirect only to students or faculty members. This decision reflects Foucault's idea that institutions—through powerful mechanisms such as institutional affiliation—can control access to knowledge and determine who has the right to participate in high-level academic discourse. By restricting access, the library reinforces the hierarchy of knowledge where only the institutionally privileged are allowed to access advanced or specialized materials. This system not only limits access but also aligns with the power structures that define what is legitimate knowledge.

5.2- Geographical Restrictions on Digital Content:

Foucault's concept of biopower, or the regulation of populations, can be applied to digital content restrictions that are based on geographical location. Libraries, especially those with digital resources, may impose geographical limitations that restrict access to content based on where a person is located or their institutional affiliation, thus shaping the flow of knowledge across borders. (Elkins, 2015)

For example a library might grant access to academic resources such as historical archives or government documents only to users within specific countries or regions. In this case, national borders become a site of power and control, determining who has access to global knowledge and

who does not. This can result in the marginalization of knowledge from outside dominant political or economic regions, reinforcing the idea that knowledge is controlled by powerful nation-states or institutions. (De Masha Garibyan, 2014)

5.3- Age-Based Access Controls:

Age-based access controls in libraries reflect the societal power structures that regulate individuals' exposure to sensitive or controversial knowledge. This form of control over access often stems from moral or legal considerations, where libraries act as mediators of social norms, restricting access to information based on societal expectations of what is appropriate for certain age groups. (Miller, 1981)

For instance, a school library may impose restrictions on books related to sexuality, mental health issues, or substance use, making these materials unavailable to younger students until they reach a certain age or grade level. While these measures are intended to protect younger users from content deemed inappropriate for their age, they also prevent adolescents or young adults from accessing vital information that could assist them in dealing with real-life challenges. In this scenario, libraries function as gatekeepers of knowledge, influencing the intellectual and emotional development of young people according to prevailing societal values and norms. (Helberger, 2005)

5.4- Content Filters and Censorship:

Access control policies sometimes include content filtering, where libraries block or restrict access to websites or materials that contain offensive or inappropriate content. This practice, while meant to protect users from harmful material, also serves as a form of censorship that limits the diversity of knowledge available. (Doyle, 2002)

In this way a public library may implement content filtering software to block access to websites or resources that discuss topics such as drug use, mental health issues, or radical political movements. While intended to protect users from potentially harmful content, this filtering can inadvertently prevent access to educational materials related to mental health awareness, addiction recovery, or activist movements that challenge the dominant political and social norms. By enforcing such restrictions, the library limits access to critical knowledge that could foster more inclusive and diverse perspectives, thus reinforcing mainstream ideologies and silencing dissenting viewpoints. (Amelia N. Gibson, 2017)

5.5- Economic and Subscription Barriers:

Economic considerations are a key aspect of Foucault's theory of power, where access to resources is often determined by one's economic status or institutional backing. In libraries, subscription-based models often create a barrier to knowledge, where access to valuable resources is only available to those who can afford it, whether through institutional membership or financial

resources. (Helberger, 2005)

For example a public library may be unable to afford subscriptions to high-cost databases like ScienceDirect or IEEE Xplore, which means that only affluent institutions or universities with substantial budgets can access the latest scientific research or cutting-edge technology content. This creates a power imbalance where only those within wealthier institutions have access to high-value knowledge, while public library patrons are excluded from important resources. This limits access to knowledge based on financial resources, perpetuating disparities in information access across social and economic classes. (Ronald Deibert, 2010)

5.6- Control Over Digital Access:

Foucault's theory of surveillance and power dynamics can be applied to digital libraries and resources, where access is increasingly controlled through authentication mechanisms. By limiting access to digital resources to specific user groups (such as students, faculty, or subscribers), libraries are exercising power over the distribution of information, ensuring that only a select group can access certain types of knowledge. In this way, libraries regulate who is allowed to engage with intellectual resources, reflecting Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. This control not only determines what knowledge is available but also defines who has the right to engage with it, reinforcing existing power structures within the institution. (De Masha Garibyan, 2014)

5.7- Physical Access Restrictions:

Foucault's concept of disciplinary power - where behavior is governed through systematic surveillance and regulation - can also be applied to physical restrictions in libraries. Libraries may impose physical access controls to limit how and when users can access certain materials, especially rare or sensitive resources. This is reflected in the way libraries manage the use of materials that require careful handling or specific permissions. (Amelia N. Gibson, 2017)

For instance, a special collection library may impose strict regulations on the handling of rare manuscripts or historical documents, requiring special permissions for access. These restrictions limit who can engage with particular types of historical knowledge, reinforcing the hierarchy of knowledge where only a select few (e.g., scholars or researchers) can engage with certain intellectual resources, ensuring that these resources are controlled by those in positions of power. Foucault's concept of disciplinary power - where behavior is governed through systematic surveillance and regulation - can also be applied to physical restrictions in libraries. Libraries may impose physical access controls to limit how and when users can access certain materials, especially rare or sensitive resources. This is reflected in the way libraries manage the use of materials that require careful handling or specific permissions. (Ronald Deibert, 2010).

6- Results:

- Foucault's power/knowledge lens reveals that library classification systems shape and control knowledge, reinforcing social norms. Recognizing this role can help create more inclusive systems that promote epistemic justice and challenge dominant ideologies.
- Collection development policies in libraries shape knowledge by selecting and excluding materials, influencing intellectual and cultural environments. These policies determine which ideas are accessible and whose voices are heard. By recognizing these roles, libraries can promote intellectual diversity and inclusive access to ensure a broader representation of ideas.
- Access control policies in libraries, through Foucault's power/knowledge lens, regulate knowledge by controlling access, filtering content, and imposing barriers, reinforcing social and intellectual hierarchies. Libraries shape what knowledge is available and who can access it, reflecting broader power dynamics.

7- Discussion:

The results of this study, when examined through Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, highlight the critical role libraries play in shaping knowledge and reinforcing societal structures. The latent functions of library systems - specifically classification, collection development, and access control -reveal how libraries serve as instruments of disciplinary power, which govern what knowledge is available and who has access to it.

Firstly, library classification systems are not neutral tools for organizing information; they function as mechanisms for controlling the dissemination of knowledge. By categorizing and prioritizing certain types of knowledge, libraries contribute to reinforcing dominant social norms and intellectual hierarchies. These systems, when viewed through Foucault's lens, can be seen as actively shaping public understanding by determining what knowledge is considered valid, legitimate, or important, while marginalizing other forms of knowledge. Recognizing the power embedded in these systems is essential for libraries to create more inclusive and equitable structures that not only challenge dominant ideologies but also promote epistemic justice by ensuring all knowledge forms are represented.

Similarly, collection development policies play a significant role in shaping the intellectual and cultural environment of libraries. By selecting which materials to acquire and which to exclude, these policies determine what ideas are accessible to the public and whose voices are prioritized. This has a profound impact on societal knowledge, as libraries are seen as authoritative sources of information. Therefore, understanding how collection development works within the framework of power/knowledge allows libraries to become more intentional in promoting diversity and inclusivity,

ensuring that marginalized perspectives are not excluded and that all voices are represented in the knowledge landscape.

Lastly, access control policies further underscore how libraries regulate knowledge. By restricting or limiting access based on factors such as institutional affiliation, economic status, or geographical location, libraries play a role in reinforcing intellectual elitism and social stratification. These access barriers, while often justified on practical or protective grounds, serve to consolidate power by determining who is allowed to engage with certain types of knowledge. The broader societal and institutional power structures, then, are reflected and perpetuated through these policies. By examining these policies through Foucault's lens, libraries can better understand their role in social control and work towards creating systems that offer equal access to knowledge for all individuals, irrespective of their social status or institutional affiliations.

8- Conclusion:

Libraries are active participants in shaping and regulating knowledge. Through classification systems, collection development policies, and access controls, libraries influence intellectual discourse, cultural values, and social structures. These systems not only determine what knowledge is available but also who has access to it, often reinforcing dominant ideologies and social hierarchies. Recognizing these latent roles allows libraries to critically reassess their practices and ensure they promote epistemic justice, making knowledge more inclusive and accessible. Libraries have the potential to challenge dominant narratives and contribute to a more equitable, democratic society by fostering intellectual freedom and diversity. By realigning their practices, libraries can create a knowledge landscape that reflects a broader range of perspectives, driving social change and ensuring fair access to information for all.

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