

Promoting and Resisting Student “Success”: Critical Information Literacy Instruction in the Neoliberal Academic Library

Ian Beilin, Columbia University

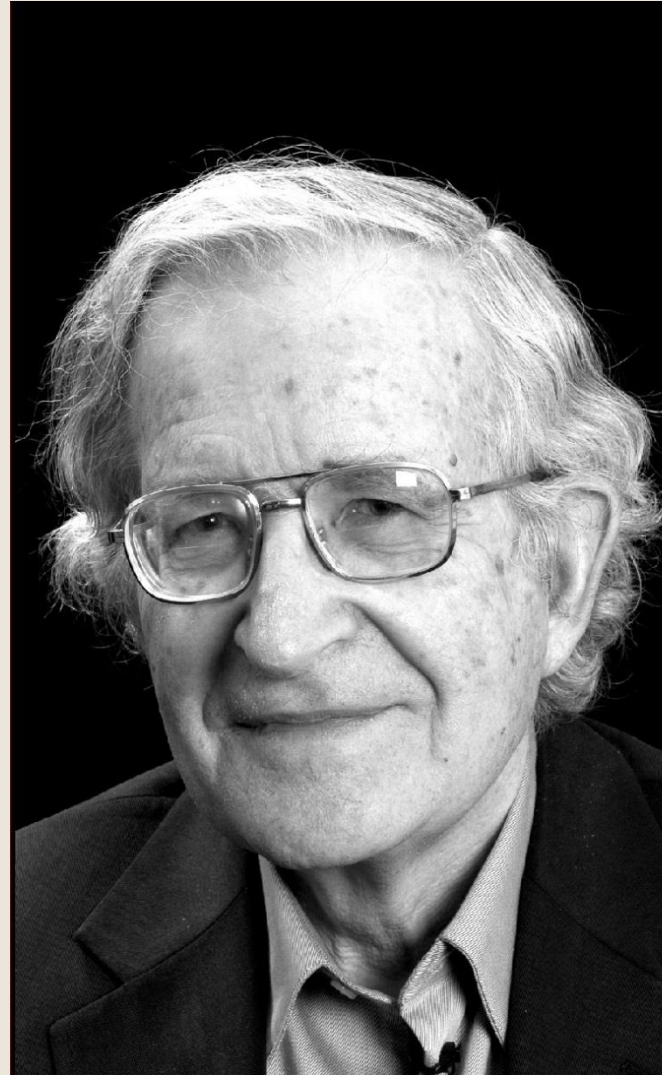
First stop: "Neoliberalism"



Problems with Neoliberalism?



“...for neoliberals, humans are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*. This was not so for classical economists, where we were market creatures in the economy, but not in civic, familial, political, religious, or ethical life.” **Wendy Brown**



"Neoliberalism is the immediate and foremost enemy of genuine participatory democracy, not just in the United States but across the planet, and will be for the foreseeable future."

Noam Chomsky

Neoliberalism in LIS

“Neoliberalism creates a discursive framework in which the value of information is determined by its ability to be monetized.” (Cope 2015)

“...LIS must address how neoliberal conceptions of the market have shaped the ways in which information and knowledge are viewed.” (Cope 2015)

Yes, Here's Your Neoliberal Library!



Neoliberalism in Information Literacy Instruction

Following the leader?

ACRL Standards (2000)

ACRL Framework (2015)

Critical Pedagogy and IL Instruction

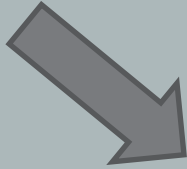
“...education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction.” (Freire 72)

Success

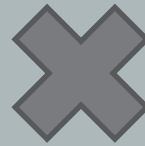
Academic success



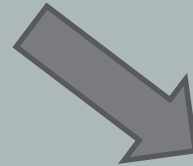
Critique



Professional success



Critique



Critique



Personal success

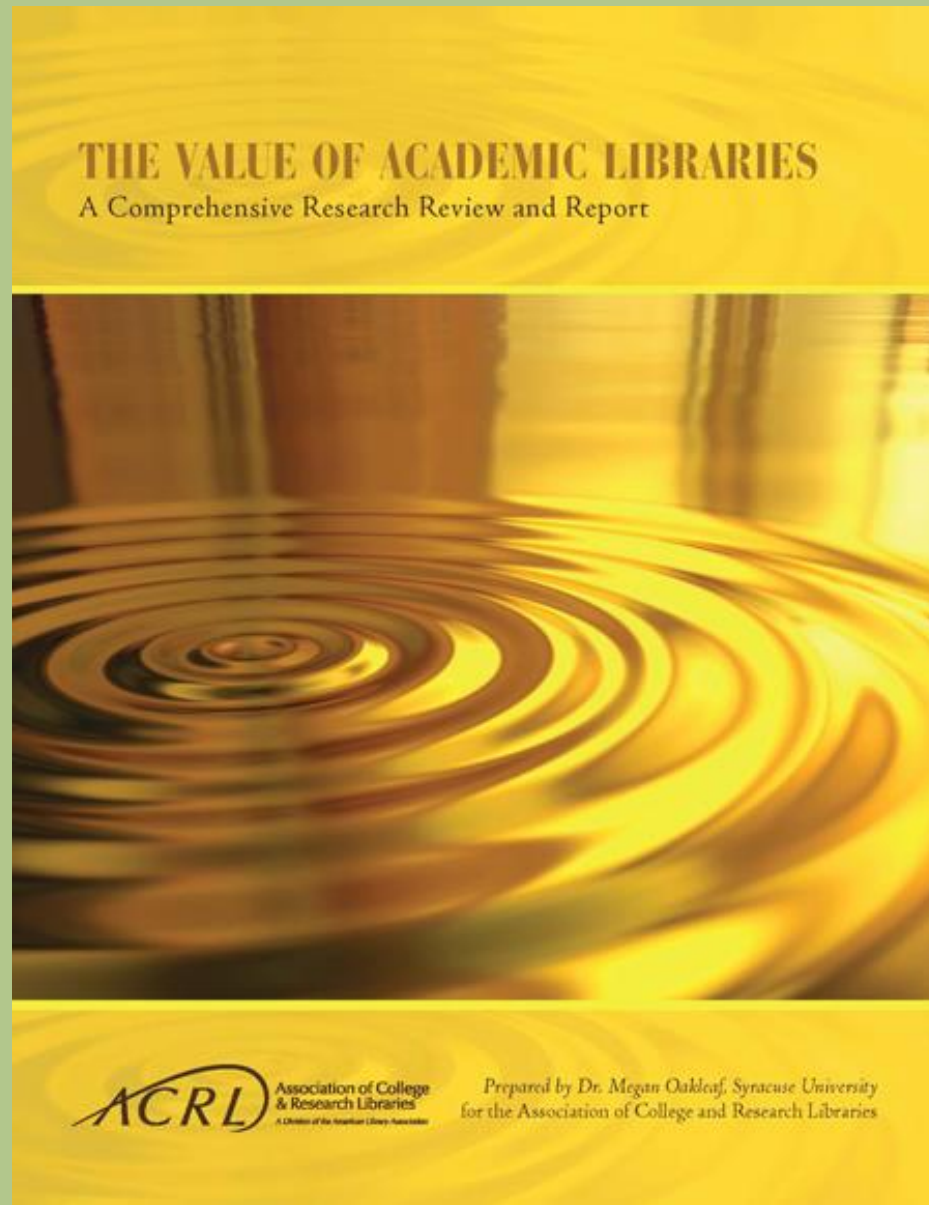
Student Success and the Academic Contract

Student  apply, pay tuition, attend

College/University  graduate w/degree

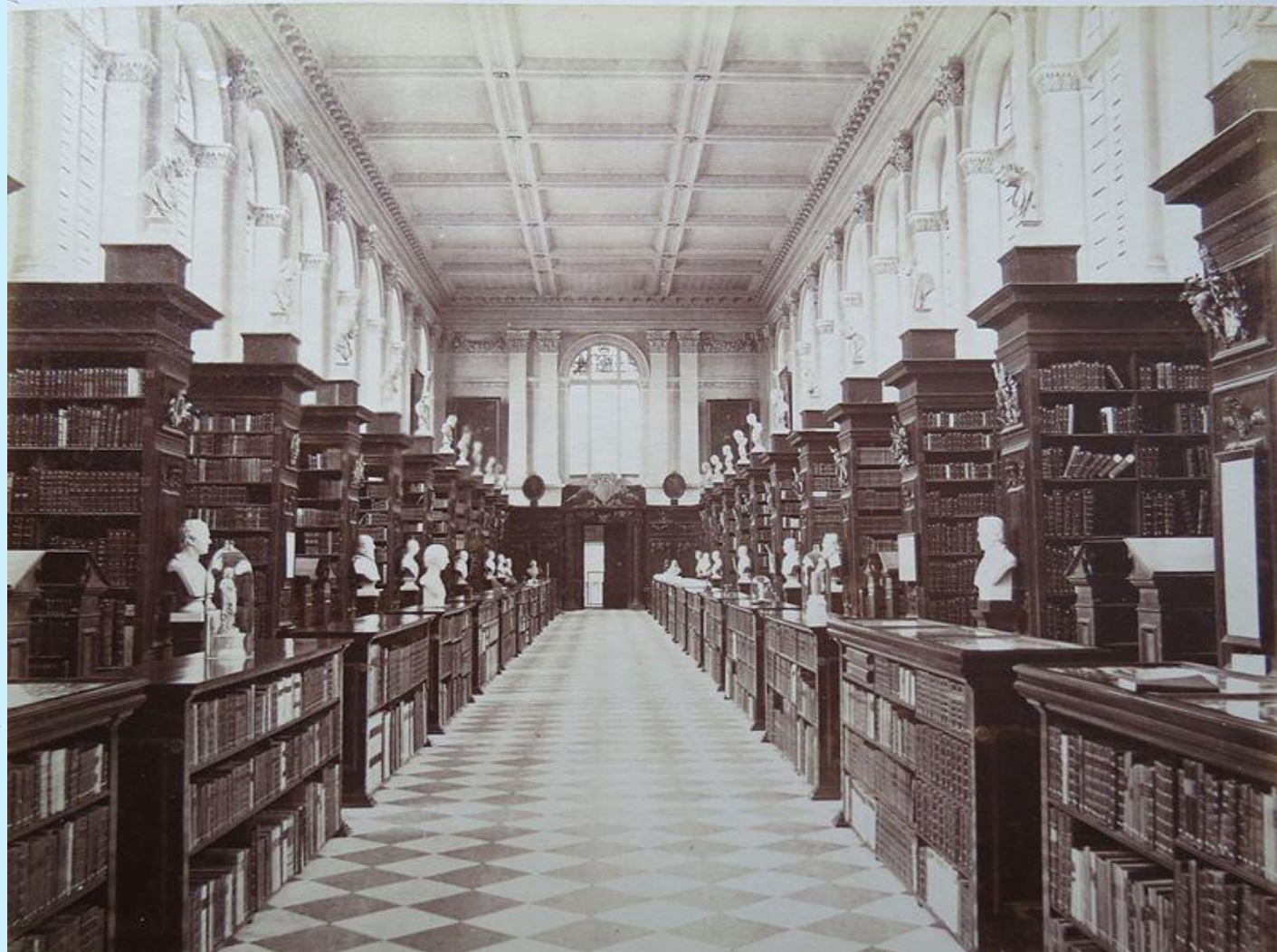
(Professional Qualifications  Job)

Libraries' Role in the Contract



Isn't this what academic libraries
always did?

sort of



Wren Library (1695)
Cambridge University

The Purpose(s) of Higher Education

Training for professions

Education for elites

Providing skilled labor for industry

1960s and beyond (and before!)



Post 1970s: Neoliberalism

The beginning of austerity in higher education



Protesting student fee increases,
University of London,
1975

Today: evisceration of public education through defunding AND philanthropy

“Our students are afraid of rich people,” Ms. Dubinsky said over lunch recently. “And then they meet with them and sit down with them and say, ‘O.K. they’re fine.’ ”

- Rich donor on giving money to LaGuardia Community College (NYT, 11/14/14)

Academic Libraries Today



Information Literacy and Student Success



Teaching success: two levels

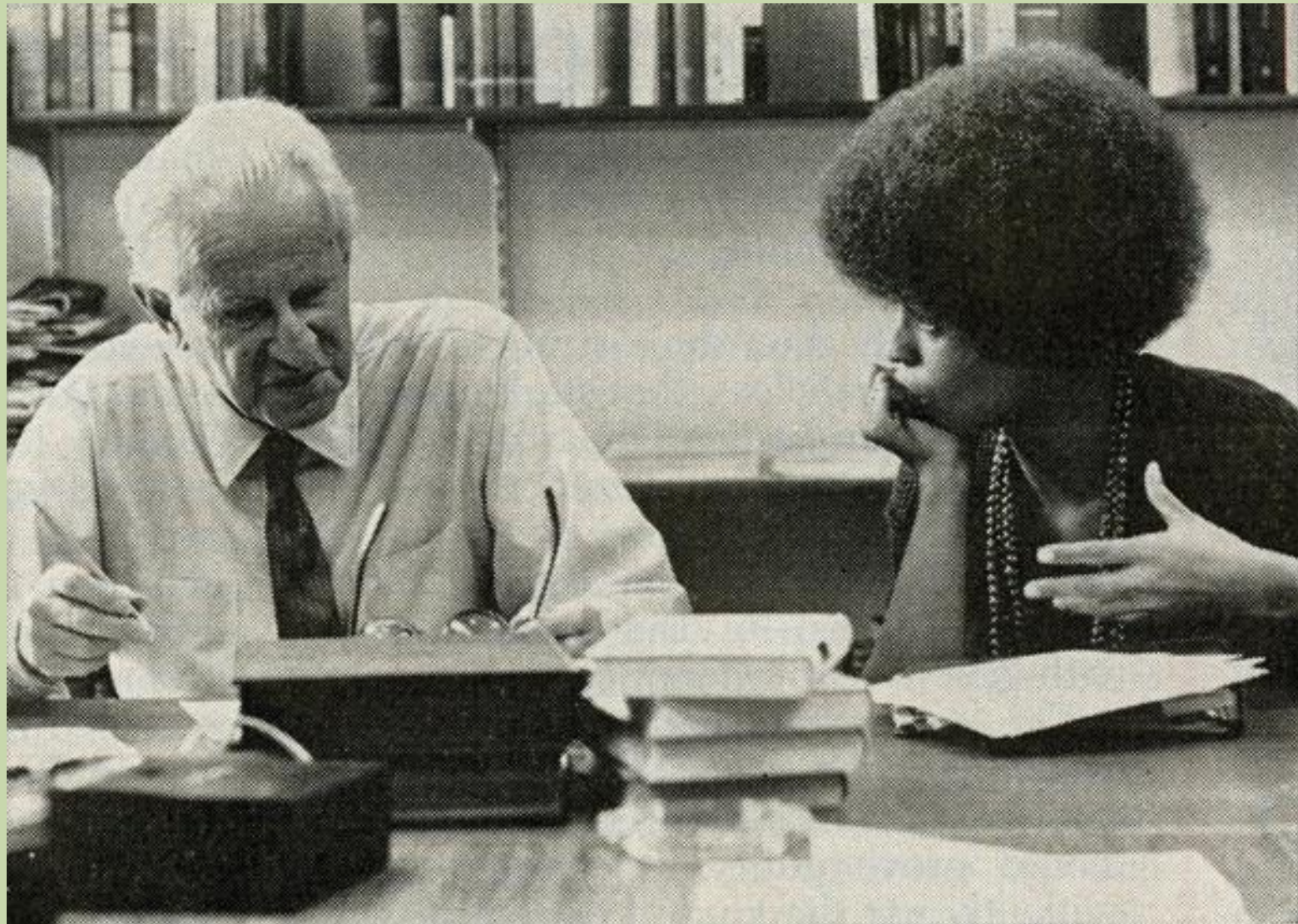
Success according to the contract +

success in enabling/activating/realizing
critique

Students already feel the tension

“...This reminds me of something from philosophy. The more funding means you will get pay more. isn't that what most college students have in mind? but in philosophy, they teach you to do what you are most capable of.”

Conventional Academic Success and Revolution: A Long Tradition



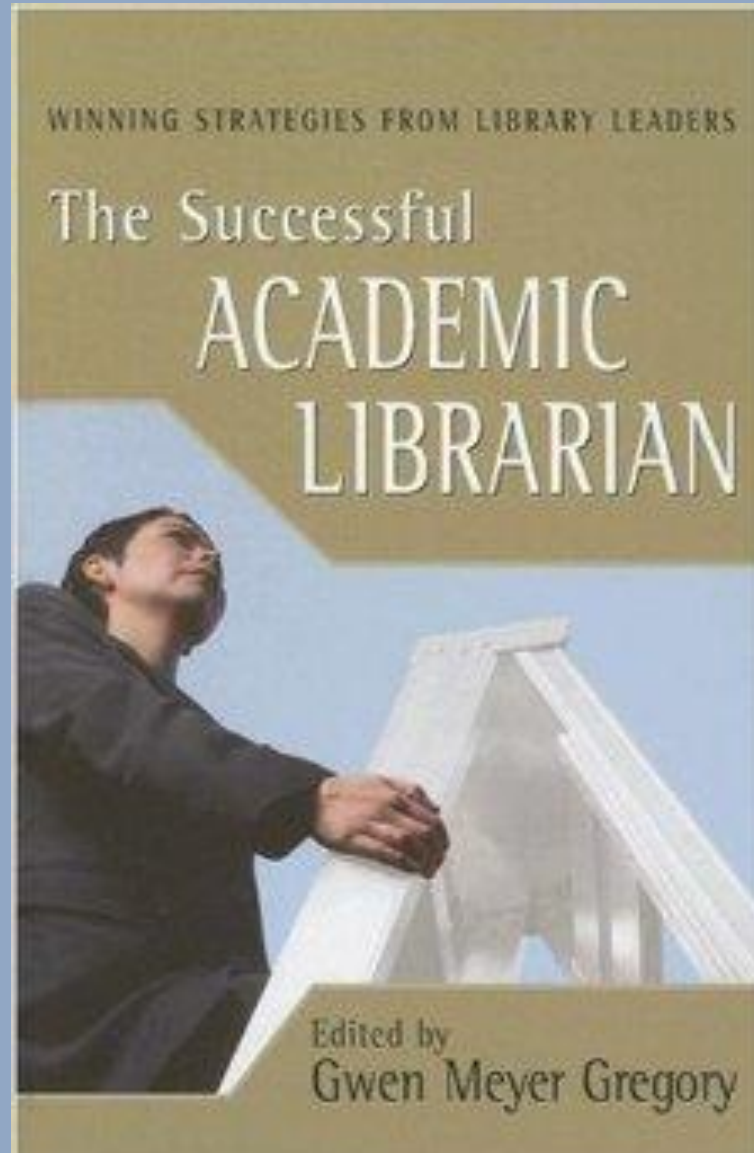
Angela Davis with
Herbert Marcuse

Teaching for revolution?

What are the limits of what's possible?

- **context**
- **time**
- **problem of privilege**

**Always keep alternative meanings of
success in view**



Praxis

Pay heed to your particular context

Not only the 'information needs' of students, but their position, culturally, socially, economically, politically – to their peers, their institution, to you, and to their fields of study/disciplines/careers