

3A— ON NEUTRALITY / QUESTIONING NEUTRALITY #1

The Enchanted Academic Library: A Critique of the Neutral, Secular Library

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As academic librarians assess the influence of the social and political environment on our profession, attention should be paid to the presumption that our social sphere is secular and neutral. In this paper, I demonstrate the ways in which academic librarianship, its values and goals, regularly presume that we are functioning within a secular framework. I focus on the principle of neutrality and demonstrate how this particular principle imposes secularism on librarians. Neutrality is a secular ideal and the principle reinforces the idea that religion should remain private. Those who champion the principle of neutrality work from the assumption that there is a space we can occupy without God, spirituality, or enchantment. That position is at odds with many religious viewpoints and it is, therefore, not neutral. Critical librarianship has challenged library neutrality. We can extend the critique of neutrality to include a critique of secularism in order to protect religious pluralism and challenge discriminatory legislation and policies.