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Luyt, Brendan

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Internet Access in Libraries: A Comparison of Press Coverage between Canada and Singapore

Dr. Brendan Luyt, Assistant Professor, Division of Information Studies, School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Abstract

This article compares the newspaper coverage of Internet access in public libraries across two countries, Canada and Singapore. The aim is to discover some of the main concerns and themes that the press identifies with libraries, noting the differences between the two countries in this regard, and then to provisionally link these differences to certain structural characteristics of their respective societies and states. To achieve these aims I compare press coverage produced in terms of dates of publication, discourse producers, and discourse content. Implications of the findings for libraries and librarians are discussed.

Introduction

The rapid spread of Internet technologies has had a profound impact on the operation of libraries around the world. Although claims that libraries were outdated relics of the Industrial era are now seen as exaggerated, the Internet has been a force libraries have had to come to terms with. In so doing, the changes wrought by librarians have also affected how society views their institutions. Given the importance of public perception and the increasing need of libraries to justify their existence in light of numerous demands made by other groups and institutions in modern society, examination of these views is warranted. In this article I focus on one highly influential agent of public opinion, the press, and its coverage of the Internet in public libraries.

If my institutional focus is the press, my geographical focus is twofold: Canada and Singapore. Such a comparative approach is valuable given the increasing ease with which people and ideas connect around the world. It is also valuable in and of itself for the insights that the differences and similarities two separate systems of library provision can provide when examined comparatively. This is especially the case for Singapore, a nation-state that stands as an exemplar of successful economic development and which has devoted considerable resources for the past decade and half to improving its library services. Canada, although suffering economic setbacks in the 1980s and early 1990s is now among the top ranking countries in the United Nation's human development index (UNDP 2005) and so is also a valuable case to examine. In an age that favours international benchmarking for "best practice" both countries are worthy of consideration, and even more so, of comparison.

My overall aim is to discover some of the main concerns and themes that the press identifies with libraries, noting the differences between the two countries in this regard, and then to

provisionally link these differences to certain structural characteristics of their respective societies and states. To achieve these aims I will compare press coverage produced in the two countries in terms of dates of publication, discourse producers, and discourse content.

The Internet in Canadian and Singaporean Public Libraries: A Short History

The Singapore government has been interested in electronic information technology since at least the 1980s. In the early part of that decade it implemented the Civil Service Computerization Programme to enhance the productivity of government services and procedures. In 1985, as a response to an economic downturn, the use of information technology was extended to the business world as a means of increasing productivity, as well as controlling costs. By the early 1990s, a third phase of IT use began, heralded by the report, IT2000: Vision of an Intelligent Island (Teo and Lim 1998). This phase further extended IT use to the entire population of the island through such projects as e-government and e-commerce services, as well as the use of information technology in schools and libraries. The Internet, arriving in Singapore in 1992, was made part of this package. Initially available only to academics and industry it was first offered to home users in 1994. In 1997, the government announced an ambitious project that would put in place the infrastructure to connect every home, office, and school in the country to a broadband network called Singapore ONE (One Net for Everyone). By 1999 98% of homes, all schools, and forty-two library and community centres were hooked up. The number of people using the Internet also took off in the second half of the 1990s so that by 2000 Internet penetration stood at 57.3% of the population (Ang and Lee 2001). In 2003, a fourth stage of IT development was initiated through the publication of Infocom 21 which aimed to update and expand of the goals outlined by IT2000. This in turn was superseded by Connected Singapore, a plan that aimed to "fine tune Infocom 21" by developing "new sources of growth, including new areas involving creative inputs, like design and the arts" (IDA Singapore, 7).

In this environment of fostered information technology use, the library system was not left behind. In 1992, at roughly the same time as it unveiled its IT2000 Report, the government appointed a panel of experts, the Library 2000 Review Committee, to plan for the future of Singapore's libraries. In 1994 the panel outlined six strategic thrusts that it wanted to see the library system follow. Among these was the creation of "a network of borderless libraries" (Library 2000 1994, 8). With this mandate, the newly created National Library Board began an ambitious programme of networking libraries, subscribing to digital resources, and digitizing parts of its own collection. It also embarked on IT training as well as training for information literacy. Taken as a whole, the plan has paid off. Half of all Singaporeans are now library members with "five times the population visiting the library every year" (Chia 2001, 345).

The government of Canada has also been interested in applying information technology to its own operations and that of Canadian society as a whole. Internet technology has a long history in Canada with attempts at building a national network starting not long after ARPANET was established in the United States. Connection to ARPANET itself was made unofficially through

Usenet in 1979 and officially in 1983 (Cheesman et al. 2001). As the popularity of networked computing rose dramatically in the 1980s and early 1990s, the government responded by establishing IHAC, the Information Highway Advisory Council, to draw up recommendations for future policy. IHAC was formed primarily from representatives from industry with token representation from other groups (Birdsall 1999). During its life it published two reports: Connection, Community, Content: the Challenge of the Information Highway (1995) and Preparing Canada for a Digital World (1997). The government took these reports seriously and developed a number of initiatives based on them. These included the Community Access Program which was to assist in the provision of public Internet access points for those unable to afford home connections, especially in small rural communities, and SchoolNet, a partnership between the government, schools, and private industry that successfully connected all of Canada's schools and public libraries by 2000. Industry was not left behind either. The CANARIE (Canadian Network for the Advancement of Research, Industry and Education) consortium was established to provide resources for applications development (d'Haenens and Proulx 2000).

Although not given as high a profile as in Singapore, Canadian public libraries did receive attention. In its final report IHAC wrote that:

Publicly funded libraries represent an essential community information resource, with staff experienced in imparting the skills needed to access information in print or electronic form. Public access sites located in libraries constitute a key instrument in bringing digital literacy to the large numbers of Canadians who do not own a computer and lack Internet access. However, there are obstacles. Most notably, libraries at present face static or declining budgets, even though use of their facilities is increasing (IHAC 1996, 53).

The Committee recommended that the federal government not only provide all public libraries the funds needed to enable sustainable public access to the Internet, but also make sure that basic IT skills training be made available as well (Ibid., 53).

The federal government's response to the IHAC reports made it possible for public libraries to participate in the CAP program and a number did do so (Howse 1999). Industry Canada also established the Computers for Schools and Libraries program which was intended to link these institutions with private firms for the purpose of donating used computer equipment. At the same time, funding was provided to LibraryNet, an online forum for librarians and interested others to share best practices and provide resources on sources of government and private sector funding for Internet technologies (Canada 2003).

Method of Investigation

In order to carry out the investigation I first had to level the playing field. Singapore is a city-state. It has one library board and only two major papers. Canada on the other hand is the second largest country in the world with at least ten major dailies and numerous library jurisdictions. I

decided therefore to reduce the Canadian focus to Toronto, a city in many ways comparable to Singapore (both serve diverse urban populations of over 4 million people). The Toronto public library system is also the largest in Canada making it most suitable for comparison to the nation-wide National Library Board of Singapore.

The major English language daily papers were examined for each city. In the case of Toronto these were the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail. These two papers have the highest circulation figures in the country and are considered national leaders in the industry. For Singapore, the major papers are the Straits Times and the Singapore Business Times. Table 1 presents the circulation figures for these papers. Using online databases, all available articles dealing with the subject of the Internet in libraries were collected. This yielded 56 Canadian and 44 Singaporean relevant articles. These articles were analyzed for three kinds of data: date of publication, discourse content, and discourse producers (that is, the people cited in the article).

Table 1: Circulation Figures of Major Papers

	Monday to Friday	Sunday
Straits Times	380,197	388,796
Business Times	27,515	NA
Globe and Mail	314,940	395,516
Toronto Star	432,388	434,359

Sources: Singapore Press Holdings. Available at: <http://www.sph.com.sg>. Canadian Newspaper Association. Available at: <http://www.cna-acj.ca>.

Dates of Publication

Table 2 charts the rise and fall of the coverage of the Internet in libraries for both Singapore and Toronto. In the case of Toronto, the earliest coverage dates back to an article in 1992. The succeeding years did not herald much change with just five articles appearing by the end of 1996. Then, in 1997, the coverage soared to twelve articles. The following years, while not at the same level, are still much larger than the totals for the pre-1997 period. This is not surprising given the intense excitement surrounding all things Internet; an excitement spurred on by the rapid advances in Internet technologies and the speculative fever surrounding the "dot com" industry in the later half of the decade. But attention to the Internet in libraries remained at reasonably high levels even after the end of the bubble. The years between 2000 to 2003 saw a total of twenty-six articles published. Only in 2004 and 2005, well after the collapse, do we see a marked decline in the number of articles, perhaps reflecting the current ubiquity of the Internet

in mainstream Canadian society.

Table 2: Dates of Publication

Year	Singapore	Toronto
1992	0	1
1993	1	0
1994	3	1
1995	2	2
1996	4	1
1997	4	11
1998	7	3
1999	6	7
2000	5	7
2001	3	6
2002	2	6
2003	2	7
2004	4	1
2005	1	3

The amount of coverage of library Internet services in Singapore assumes the aspect of a much more gradual buildup and decline than the Canadian case. The Internet in libraries is first mentioned in 1993. Growth gradually brings the numbers to a high point of seven articles in 1998. Not surprisingly, these years also were the time when the Library 2000 report was being implemented by the government. And, as in Canada, these were years of intense Internet speculation. Growth continues at a heightened level till 2001. Thereafter, the drop is gradual and made even more so by the fact that two of the articles published in 2004 are actually letters to the editor.

Discourse Producers

By discourse producers I mean those individuals who are quoted in the press. Tables 3 and 4 lay out the data. There are a number of interesting differences between the two countries. First, are the far larger number of front-line library staff quoted in the Toronto press. In the Singapore

case, only two instances could be found where "ordinary" librarians were quoted, whereas for Toronto there were ten. The Singapore press seems to rely on, or is granted access to, only deputy directors and above (it should be noted that both library jurisdictions require staff to seek permission before talking to the press). Another interesting difference is found in the coverage of politicians. The voices of politicians are to be found in both the Singapore and Canadian press, but Singapore leads in the total number of instances. Twelve Singaporean stories quoted politicians; only nine stories did the same in Canada. As we shall see, this likely reflects the importance attached to library Internet services by the Singaporean state. Finally, it is interesting to note that although six stories quoted Canadian Library Association representatives, none of the Singaporean stories did the same for the Library Association of Singapore. The significance of this will be discussed in more depth later in the article.

Table 3: Discourse Producers in the Toronto Press

Librarians	40
Chief Librarians or Directors	30
Front-line Librarians	10
Private Firms	14
Municipal Politicians	8
Individual Citizens	8
Canadian Library Association Representatives	6
University/College Faculty	5
Library Boards or Foundations Representatives	5
Union Representatives	3
Municipal Civil Servants	2
Gates Library Foundation Representatives	2
Others	7

Table 4: Discourse Producers in the Singaporean Press

NLB Staff	35
CEO	9
Directors and Managers	22

Front-line Staff	4
Individual Citizens	19
Politicians	12
Private Firms	8
National Computer Board	5
University Faculty	3
Civil Servants	2
Others	5

Discourse Content

The content of the press coverage was examined and a number of themes identified. Four of the most common are presented here. They are: the digital divide, library and librarian values, pornography and intellectual freedom, and innovation.

Digital Divide

In both the Canadian and Singaporean press mention is made of the digital divide, that is, the gap between those with access to the Internet and those without. However, in Singapore's case the total number of referencing articles (7% or 15.9% of the total) is considerably less than in the Toronto papers (17% or 30.3% of the total). Is this because the digital divide is not a problem in wealthy Singapore? Studies of the digital divide are nearly unanimous in noting that a key predictor of Internet access at an individual or family level is economic wealth (NTIA 1999; Norris 2001; Servon 2002). If we look at GDP/capita for both Singapore and Canada we find the two countries roughly equal. In 2004, the statistic for Singapore stood at \$23,636 while the number for Canada was \$24,712 (constant 2000 US\$). In Canada, there has been extensive documentation of a digital divide despite such high levels of prosperity (Sciadas 2002; Rideout 1997; Reddick 2002) suggesting that Singapore likely also has a gap in access equity. Furthermore, a comparison of Gini index values (a measure of economic inequality), suggests that Singapore's income distribution is much more concentrated which would tend to amplify disparities in access. Statistics are available for 1998 for both countries. In Singapore the index stood at 42 whereas in Canada it was 33 (the higher the number, the more unequal the distribution of wealth). This is a very cursory examination of a complicated issue, but it does suggest that the lack of a digital divide is not the best explanation for the sparse coverage of the issue in the Singapore press. Perhaps a better explanation lies in the different attitudes of the Canadian and Singaporean society and state towards communication policy. In the case of Canada, there is a strong public policy norm that sees access to communication services as a right of all Canadians. Concern over access to communication was born in Canada out of the need of the state to create a collective identity in a vast and sparsely populated land. One of the founding acts of the new nation was to create a national railway to connect the east and west

coasts of the country. Similarly, the development of the telephone spurred the creation of public policy mechanisms that helped raise access levels to among the highest in the world. Radio, television and satellite communications have also been the target of government concern not to leave pockets of the country behind as these technologies emerged from the laboratory and into wider society. Despite two decades of neo-liberal economic and social policy that have called into doubt the necessity and effectiveness of government intervention in communication, it remains a policy concern even today. The coverage of the digital divide on the pages of the Canadian newspapers is a sign that this norm is still part of the cultural fabric of the nation. Given its small size, Singapore has not had to face this particular challenge with the result that neither state nor society has had to think about the access of citizens to communication infrastructure as a priority issue.

There is another feature of the digital divide coverage that needs to be explained; namely that in Canada, the removal of the digital divide is frequently tied to the charitable intentions of wealthy individuals or companies whereas in Singapore it is the library as an organization, in partnership with the wider government of which it is a component, that is seen as resolving the problem. The press coverage gives the impression that there appears to be no role for philanthropy in providing Internet services in Singapore's libraries. However, in Canada many articles focus on the donations of Bill Gates, as well as the Canadian telecommunications company Clearnet Communications. Furthermore, these contributions to the library system are described in terms that suggest that the active force in the relationship are the philanthropists rather than the library: "We could have put the cell sites on office buildings, then we could pay the owner or landlord for rental. But what we have chosen to do instead is to make the arrangement to place these cell sites on libraries to help support community infrastructure" (Surtees 1997). In this and other articles the voice of librarians is reduced to either grateful recipient or made invisible because not recorded. The contrast between Singapore and Canada in this regard is great and can likely be explained by the perceived need of the Singaporean state to exercise a greater degree of control over civil society than in Canada. As Garry Rodan, a noted authority on the politics of Singapore, writes: "The PAP's [the ruling political party in Singapore since 1959] particular brand of authoritarianism is characterized by legal limits to independent social and political activities on the one hand, and extensive mechanisms of political co-option to channel contention through state-controlled institutions on the other" (Rodan 2003). The aim is both to prevent alternative sources of authority from developing as well as to cement in the minds of Singaporeans the image of a benevolent state. Given these aims it is not surprising, especially when consideration is made of the importance the state currently places on information technology as an engine of economic growth, that public provision of Internet access is to be channeled through the institutions of the state, rather than philanthropic or other non-state organizations. For the library as an institution, this level of state support makes philanthropy a secondary consideration, one that is not really necessary to fulfill its goals for Internet service.

Library and Librarian Values

In the pages of the Canadian newspapers the values that libraries and/or librarians are perceived to embody in connection with Internet service are numerous: lifelong learning, free access to

information, literacy, intellectual freedom, privacy, and service to under-served groups. They are also seen as binding society together, providing a public space and protecting children. These values are viewed as rooted in the past functions of libraries and attitude of librarians, as well as being applicable in the age of the Internet. For example, one journalist writes that "now seniors and new Canadians are being taught to use e-mail to communicate with their families in far-off places and to search the Internet for training and job opportunities ... all those things are consistent with the principles established at the founding of Toronto's first public library in 1884" (Friesen, 2004).

In the Singaporean press, the values ascribed to libraries and librarians are of a more general nature. They are associated with a willingness to reach out to the population, making it convenient for them to use whatever the library offers: "The next time a frenzied publicity campaign implores you to read a book, watch a movie, listen to a song and interact with a CD-ROM, do not panic. You can do it all under one roof at the National Library, where locating that elusive title just became as easy as the click of a mouse" (Dawson, 1999). These values are also limited in that they exist without any historical foundation. In fact, the library of the past is usually described negatively as a "dank" or "dark" place with long queues standing in the way of people and their reading. As one author put the recent changes to the library system: "Gone are the libraries of yesteryear, with their bare furnishings and sterile grey shelves" (Siow, 1999). The past appears more as something to be broken with rather than used as basis upon which to build new technological services that continue to reflect traditional library values or ideals. A partial explanation for the limited and ahistorical perception of library values in the press lies in the relative youth of Singapore's public library service and library profession. Although Singapore dates its first library back to 1823 and has a continuous record of library facilities since the 1830s, these libraries were subscription based and therefore available to only a small percentage of Singapore's inhabitants (Seet, 1983). It was only in the 1950s that a completely free public library came to Singapore, while the Malayan Library Group, the precursor of the Library Association of Singapore was founded in 1955 (Anuar and Krzys, p. 44). In the case of Canada, the library as an free public institution dates back to the later half of the nineteenth century and the Canadian Library Association to 1946. Even before that time, Canadian librarians were active in the much older American Library Association (founded in 1876).

Although the present perception of library/librarian values in the Singapore press is limited, the future may see recognition in the press and society of values reflecting the experience of Singaporean librarians. On the other hand this development may be blocked by the nature of state-society relations discussed previously. The state in Singapore has never been keen on empowering professional groups as these might serve as a potential base of opposition. Even occupations as professionally secure as lawyers have been the target of government ire when they transgress set boundaries. In 1986, for example, the Law Society of Singapore criticized the government over amendments to the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act. For their pains, the Society leadership was replaced and two years later a new organization, controlled directly by the government, took over its functions (Tremewan 1994). If powerful professionals such as the law community have been stymied in a quest for a more independent existence, one should not expect too much from librarians who have some trouble, at least in the English-speaking world,

getting others to even look on the discipline as a profession! Librarians and libraries in Singapore are therefore much more closely tied to the state than in Canada and so as professionals likely identify more clearly with the civil service of which they are a part than with a separate professional identity. An examination of the code of ethics produced by the Library Association of Singapore provides evidence for this view. The code is divided into seven parts, specifying the ideal relationship between librarians and various other groups (for example, library users, suppliers, and other staff members). The first of these groups, and presumably the most important, is the "governing authority", which is declared to be "ultimately ... responsible for the operation of the library" so that "The librarian must give complete loyalty and fidelity to the policies set by the governing authority" (Library Association). If the ideals of this code continue to be accepted by the majority of librarians (there is an attempt now being made to devise a new code), such a prescription would provide little latitude for the development of professional autonomy and the deepening of values that necessarily accompany that autonomy.

Pornography, Intellectual Freedom, and Children

In Singapore Internet pornography and the related issue of censorship is not an issue in the press as pornography of all forms is tightly limited by the state. The Canadian case is much different. In fact, pornography, and whether libraries have a duty to censor it or not, occupies a large portion of the newspaper coverage. Most of the coverage that expresses an opinion takes a negative stance to censorship and the filtering software which accomplishes it. As one author puts it: "Advocates of the use of blocking software by libraries often seem to forget we call them 'public libraries for a reason. They are a branch of the public sector. Of government. I do not want my government letting unknown individuals living who knows where tell me what I can and cannot read" (Campbell, 1998). There are a number of themes that are closely tied in the press to the issue of viewing pornographic Internet materials in the library. The notion of intellectual freedom is one. In fact, the only time intellectual freedom appears as an issue in the Canadian press is in connection with pornography. In a few cases it is the right to view pornography that is defended through an appeal to intellectual freedom: "Libraries should provide for the free exchange of ideas - not just ideas you or I find palatable, not just ideas suitable for 5-year olds. And librarians should not be forced to censor patrons' reading, let alone eject them for looking at disturbing images" (Librarians not expected to censor, 2005). But in most cases what is defended is the right to view educational materials that deal with subjects such as homosexuality that might be construed as pornography by an over-zealous censor or machine algorithm. In recent years the press has covered incidents where librarians have been subjected to verbal threats or abuse by patrons asked to stop viewing pornographic websites. Part of this coverage included the grievance filed by Ottawa librarians through their union. Here the right to intellectual freedom collides with the right to a safe and harassment-free working environment. In this contest the press coverage still favours intellectual freedom. One substantial article on the topic concluded that the issue could be resolved through better relations between management and workers (Conlogue, 2003), while another claimed that "the allegations of generalized harassment go too far" (Censorship has no place, 2003). Interestingly, the portrayal of librarians as champions of intellectual freedom is in some cases contradicted by this coverage of these "beleaguered librarians" (Conlogue, 2003). In 2000 the Toronto Public Library decided to filter computer terminals in children's libraries around the city. The Toronto Star's article on the

move quoted library workers as saying that "the plan doesn't go far enough" (Surette 2000). A more tempered view, but one that clearly provides support to those wishing to restrict Internet was found in another article where the author, a Toronto librarian, wrote: "I used to be a strong supporter of open access to the Internet. I now think that is too simplistic a solution and that some kind of controls over what children can access in the library are necessary" (Johnson, 1999).

Viewing pornography on the Internet in Canadian libraries generates attention because of the tension it creates between two important elements of political and social life: the individual and the community. Canada is essentially a liberal democracy which means that ultimately, the legitimacy of the government is thought to rest on the support of the people as a collective group. Yet liberal democracy, at least in the Anglo-American tradition, has also historically placed a great deal of value on the rights of the individual. Ideally the liberty of the individual acts as a counter-balance to what otherwise would be in fact a tyranny of the majority; it "helps me to draw around myself a circle within which they may not trespass, and prevents me at the same time from interfering with their freedom in just the same way" (Skinner in Axtmann 1996, 17). However, problems arise when the rights of society and the individual collide and this is exactly the case with the issue of pornography. On the one hand most people in Canada find much pornography distasteful at best. Yet few would seek to completely ban its sale or make its possession illegal for private individuals. However, the boundary lines are not so clear when it comes to the public viewing of pornography in institutions such as the library. Here, the right of society not to be subjected to pornography comes into play, but to secure this right, how far does one go to impose on individuals, especially adult individuals? The answer is made especially tricky because, as we have seen, the library has for some time been keenly associated with intellectual freedom and rights of expression. These rights are viewed as fundamental to the practice of liberal democracy. Only by allowing free debate can the people competently make the decisions needed to govern themselves (Holden 1993, 25). Thus, the balance between society and individual rights is a question that has no clear answer and so makes the issue of Internet pornography in Canadian libraries the focus of incessant debate.

Innovation

The Internet and information technology in general is viewed both in the Singaporean and Canadian press as examples of library innovation. In the Singapore case, chronological as well as geographical comparisons are used to emphasize the innovativeness of the library system. Chronologically, the current bright and wonderful new world of Internet-equipped libraries is almost inevitably juxtaposed to a "dark and dreary" past when libraries were "stagnant institutions with a collection of battered books" (Ong, 2004). In these articles the Internet is seen as the salvation of the library, enabling it not only to gain in status and prestige as a place where new technology is prominently featured, but also in the library's more fundamental reason for being, to reach out to people and encourage them to read books. In the case of children, libraries have become "educational amusement parks" through "videos, CD-ROMS, Internet access and story-telling sessions in cheery surroundings guaranteed to make your child devour books" (Siow, 1999). Similarly, the response given to an interviewer's question about how the former chief

executive of the National Library Board "made reading fashionable" was through an acceptance of the Internet: "Ride it. Not fight it" he is quoted as saying (Riding the Internet Beast). But the Singaporean press not only compares past and present. It also provides cross-country comparisons that illustrate how innovative the Singapore system is: "While the much larger New York Public Library is still pondering the intricacies of putting its patrons on-line, the National Library of Singapore is already reveling in the positive response to its own free public Internet service" (Bhalla, 1995). Of course, given Singapore's dimensions, the only relevant geographical comparisons are international, but it is also not surprising when one considers the importance placed by the Singapore state on catching up and surpassing the developed world. In her discussion of the effects of the state on the work of Singaporean sociology, Lian Kwee Fee, notes that the independent Singaporean leadership in its early years was forced to make a momentous choice in how to construct the country's national identity in the wake of its divorce from Malaya in the mid-1960s. It could "return to its past and revive a long and proud cultural tradition" or it could try to move Singapore into the future by calling "for a forward-looking, collective orientation committed to economic achievement and problem-solving" (Lian, p. 41). It was the second of these approaches that the government chose. Singaporeans came to look towards the future, rather than the past, and outside the immediate region, rather than within. Following the lead of their government they strove to, as Diane Mauzy and R.S Milne relate: "attain the status of a First World 'oasis' in a Third World region" (Mauzy and Milne, 2002, 3-4). And so the necessity of aiming to be first: in educational attainment, the provision of healthcare and housing, in business achievements, even in at what appear at first glance to be unlikely areas of concern such new kinds of tourist attractions (the first zoo in the world to open at night is located in Singapore).

Turning to Canada we also find evidence of a link between the notion of library innovation and Internet access. Here though, geographical comparisons are limited to the domestic scene. Brampton (a community located close to Toronto) public library, for example, compares their state-of-the-art online catalogue to Burnaby, British Columbia, noting that "our system is a little ahead. I don't think theirs lets people actually reserve books using their home computers" (Cunliffe, 1987). Unlike the Singapore case comparisons between a dismal past and a bright future are not a prominent feature of the coverage. Highlighted instead are the revolutionary implications of the new technology. Referring to online access to scholarly journals, one article claims that the technology is "fundamentally changing the way students and faculty access information" (Barrette, 2005). Another notes that "today, libraries are on a verge of a technological revolution that will transform them" (Philp 1998). The changes that Internet access brings to Canadian libraries does not result in a deepening polarization between a bad past library system and a good present one. As one author put it: "Ontario has one of the finest library systems in the world and its being made even better through the newest computer technology" (Millar, 1998). The perception is that technology enhances already good library service.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to uncover some of the main themes that the press in Canada (Toronto) and Singapore associates with the Internet in libraries, and relate these to the structure

of their respective states and societies. Most of the coverage falls, not surprisingly from the mid-1990s onwards with the amount in decline since the turn of the century. This is likely a result of the current ubiquity of the Internet in both societies. There are also clear differences in who gets to speak in these articles with the press in Singapore relying on high-level personages much more than its Canadian counterpart.

The bulk of this article has focused on content, where four main themes were discussed: the digital divide, library and librarian values, pornography, and innovation. Differences were found in the handling of each of these themes. The digital divide was generally given a great deal of attention in the Canadian press, likely due to the importance of communication issues to a country that sprawls across a continent and has a population of only around 30 million. There was also much more attention paid to the relationship between library Internet access and pornography in the Canadian press which may be traced back to the tensions of liberal democracy. In terms of the other two themes, the coverage was more even, but still different. The Canadian press associated librarians and libraries with a host of values and gave these values a historical base. This was not the case for the Singaporean press and likely reflects the young age of the country's library profession. In terms of innovation, whereas the Singaporean press clearly demarcated a boundary between supposedly "unpleasant" libraries of the past and the bright, modern libraries of the Internet era, this was not so for the Canadian papers. These papers tended to view the introduction of the Internet as a continuation of a "good thing"; being more of a quantitative rather than qualitative change.

There are a number of implications of this study for the management of libraries. The first is that librarians need to be aware of the potent role of the press in selectively highlighting certain elements of library service over others. The issue of pornography in Canada is one such example. Only in connection with pornography is the key librarian value of intellectual freedom raised in the press. It is not an issue at all in Singapore. On the other hand, the Internet in Singaporean libraries is very much associated with better physical facilities, rather than just being a communication or information-seeking tool. Secondly, that behind the press lies the broader structural forces of state and society. The significant coverage of the digital divide in Canada is likely a product of historical concern over communication in a large, sparsely populated country. In Singapore, the lack of a highly articulated sense of library values in the press is likely a product of that country's developmental State and its relations with society. And finally, flowing from the first two implications is a further one: that in order to work effectively with the press, account needs to be taken of the particular nuances surrounding the state-society forces that comprise an integral part of the library environment.

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