



Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy: Marking the Limits of Neoliberalism

By John Buschman

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Library marketing and advertising in schools are now very widespread practices. Since libraries and schools have been strongly linked to economic performance, adopting marketing and advertising techniques into them is often seen as a natural extension of that linkage. But should that be the case? John Buschman argues that as we shape and guide our educative institutions, we should carefully consider the consequences.

In *Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy: Marking the Limits of Neoliberalism*, Dr. Buschman details the connections between our educative institutions and democracy, and the resources within democratic theory reflecting on the tensions between marketing, advertising, consumption, and democracy. Drawing on wide scholarship to explore some of the history of democratic theory and its intertwinements with capitalism, the author helps the reader think about how democracies can deal with the challenges of this current historical phase. The complex arguments of de Tocqueville, Dewey, Marx, and many others help clarify how the market has pierced classrooms and libraries with advertising and marketing—and why this is of concern in the interests of democracy.

In this volume, Buschman provides a history of marketing and advertising and their entanglements with democracy, education, and libraries. He then engages Democratic Theory and the framework it provides to critique neoliberalism's influences. A final chapter traces the trajectory of neoliberalism and educative institutions on our democracy. Throughout, the book makes clear that issues concerning public educative institutions in a democracy are political. A provocative and engaging book, *Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy* should be required reading for anyone interested in the challenges facing libraries today.

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Editorial Review

Review

In today's classrooms corporate advertisement is abundant; in today's libraries marketing campaigns are conducted to attract new customers. How is it that these markers of neoliberalism are present in our educational institutions, asks Buschman (Dean of University Libraries, Seton Hall Univ.; *Dismantling the Public Sphere*), and should this even be a cause for concern? He addresses these questions by offering a theoretical critique of neoliberalism's growing role in America's schools and libraries. By thoroughly examining the ideas of various strains of democratic theory the author makes the case that the inclusion of marketing and advertising in our educational institutions is counterproductive to the central purposes of those institutions and to democracy. VERDICT This meticulously researched book provides a theoretical foundation for future investigations of the issues surrounding neoliberalism in our educational institutions....The work raises important questions of interest to all educators. Academics in the fields of library science, education, political science, and marketing will find this to be valuable reading. (*Library Journal*)

Extensively researched....The issues discussed provide a philosophical foundation for understanding current trends toward 'library as place' and privatization. (*American Libraries*)

Libraries and other U.S. educational institutions can reject neo-liberalism, but first we need to understand the evolution of this soul-limiting strategy of self interest that pervades U.S. institutions in the 21st century. John Buschman explicates the advance of neo-liberalism in *Libraries, Classrooms, and the Interests of Democracy* and provides thoughtful philosophical insight with contemporary examples such as the effects of the *Citizens United* decision. Buschman extends the deliberations of critical educational theory, communitarianism, and Jürgen Habermas among others to the enterprise of librarianship. He demonstrates that libraries are one of the important cultural sites that provide for the capacities of sound judgment in a democracy. The model of the Occupy Wall Street library provides a respite from institutional weariness and gives promise to a break with the neo-liberal ideas. As in his *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, Buschman provokes librarians to understand the political and social context of our practice. (Kathleen de la Peña McCook)

The author is an erudite scholar who helps the reader to think about how democracies can deal with the challenges of this current historical phase. Dr. Buschman understands that neoliberalism is hegemonic, and he draws on wide scholarship to explore some of the history of democratic theory and its intertwinements with capitalism. We meet Tocqueville, John Dewey, Marx, Michael Sandel, Habermas, and many others who have wrestled with these issues in historical and contemporary terms. These complex arguments are brought to bear with clarity on an explanation of how the market has pierced classrooms and libraries with advertising and marketing—and why this is of concern in the interests of democracy. Paraphrasing Michael Parenti about the wants of the wealthy and powerful, when asking what neoliberalism seeks to shape, the answer is: most everything. (Richard A. Brosio, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee)

About the Author

John Buschman is Dean of University Libraries at Seton Hall University. He was previously Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources and Services at Georgetown University. Buschman is currently on the editorial boards of *Library Quarterly* and the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*. He is the author of *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Libraries in the Age of the New Public Philosophy*

(2003); editor of *Critical Approaches to Information Technology in Librarianship: Foundations and Applications* (1993); co-editor of *Library as Place: History, Community and Culture* (2006), *Information Technology in Librarianship: New Critical Approaches* (2008), *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines* (2010), and many articles.

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