



# Pairing information with poverty: traces of development discourse in LIS

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poverty

371

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this research is to investigate and critically assess the notions of “information poverty” in LIS by highlighting its connections with development discourse.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The article takes a discourse analysis approach, which starts from Michel Foucault’s understanding of discourse. “Information poverty” is posited as a statement and investigated in its relation to other statements. The focus is on discursive procedures that emerge from the repeated connections between statements. The article draws on the interpretative analysis of 35 English language articles published in scholarly and professional LIS journals between 1995 and 2005.

**Findings** – “Information poverty” and the “information poor” are established as being assigned specific positions in the discourse of LIS as the result of overlapping, sometimes conflicting discursive procedures. The concept emerges as a possibility in LIS by anchoring it in the dominant discourse of development. Traces of development discourse surface in LIS and contribute to the legitimisation of the concept of “information poverty” by lending it authority.

**Research limitations/implications** – The material selection is linguistically biased. Results and findings are fully applicable only in an English language context.

**Originality/value** – The article relates the professional discourse of LIS to the dominant discourse of development and thus highlights some of the assumptions upon which the concept of “information poverty” is built. Moreover, the article is intended to contribute to the further development of discourse analysis in LIS.

**Keywords** Developing countries, Libraries, Information science, Information exchange

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

In “information poverty” two terms, which both signify complex concepts bound up with agendas determining contemporary society, are united. Information has been advanced as the dominant resource to define contemporary society and has been drawn on to provide its name. Poverty is one of the most powerful concepts to have shaped international relations since the emergence of development economics in the

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This article is a further development of the conference paper “Conceptions of Information Poverty in LIS: An Analysis of Discourses” presented at the 14th BOBCATSSS Symposium in Tallinn, Estonia, January 30-February 1, 2006. The writing of the article was made possible through a doctoral award by the AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) to the first author. The authors thank Jenny Johannisson, Swedish School of Library and Information Science in Borås, and Christoph Bart, Austrian National Library, for reading and for their insightful comments and the anonymous reviewers for their positive response. Jutta Haider also thanks Olof Sundin, Department of Library and Information Science at Lund University, Sweden, for his supportive comments on an earlier version of this paper.



1940s and has since been instrumental in defining large parts of the world (Rahnema, 1992; Escobar, 1995). In a process described as discourse synthesis (Pawley, 2003), the pairing of information with poverty leads to the formation of a novel notion, in which both parts change their individual meanings. Yet, both terms also retain their various connotations and these have implications for meaning and significance of the resulting compound. While in the Library and Information Science (LIS) literature, i.e. scholarly and professional journals, mention of “information poverty” can be found at least since the 1970s, it appears more frequently in the recent literature. Here it is often mentioned together with equally contested concepts, such as “digital divide” and in particular visions of a technologically founded information society. Usually reference is made to the novelty of the “problem” and frequently the library’s “traditional”, “natural”, or “obvious” role in alleviating it is emphasised.

“Information poverty” can be understood as an exemplary key notion. In its topicality it provides a focal point for a number of issues relevant in contemporary society and significant for the field of LIS. This includes concepts of information and its commodification, definition and value of different types of information, aspects of communication, and the wider significance of the Internet. It furthermore extends to ideas about technological progress, images of an “information society”, the privileging of economical advancement, and also perceptions of the library’s present and future role in a changed information environment.

Starting from a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, this article examines the notion of “information poverty” as it emerged more recently in the professional and scholarly literature of LIS. In particular the focus is on “information poverty” as an umbrella term, which, by invoking generalised perceptions of the “developing world”, aligns “developing countries” and their people with various other groups that are also identified by their perceived deficiencies and are equally constructed on the basis of this lack. Among them are the working class, the elderly, women, the unemployed, and the handicapped, the homeless and ethnic minorities. However, this article neither addresses “information poverty” as a factual issue nor is its focus on definitions or on existing “information poverty” concepts. Rather, it centres on the language of “information poverty” in LIS and librarianship, i.e. on ways in which it is imagined, spoken about and ultimately on how the “information poor” are constructed as part of the institutional discourse, whereas particular attention is paid to the identification of traces of development discourse in LIS.

“Developing world”, “developed world” and related terms are here perceived of as a dominant “meta-geography” that is the product of discourse. This is “a set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economic, political science, or even natural history” (Lewis and Wigen, 1997, p. ix). As such they will be understood as relating to a particular historical and theoretical position. Essentially, they are elements and results of popular and political discourse that have come to denote certain, yet not always clearly circumscribed, situations and types of relations. They are not seen as factual entities that describe actual geo-political borders or countries. To highlight this fact they will be surrounded by single quotation marks throughout.

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**Discourse, discursive procedures, and pastoral power**

Michel Foucault's (1972a, 1972b, 1991) understanding of discourse provides a particularly suitable frame of reference as it considers the institutional contingencies of discourse and knowledge, and sees them as products of the effects of power. In short, discourse is understood as a socially constructed regime of knowledge and truth that forms the social reality about which it speaks. It is a productive practice, which obeys specific rules, is generative of knowledge and related to a particular field of use. It is seen as consisting of limited numbers of so-called statements or inter-related concepts. These statements exist in systems of dispersion and gain meaning from their shifting relations with one another.

In this article "information poverty" is visualised as such a statement within the discourse of LIS. It gains meaning and significance from entering into relations with other concepts. Through recurring associations discursive procedures or strategies emerge. The concept of the discursive procedure is here seen as closely related to what Michel Pêcheux (1982, p. 112) has conceptualised as a discursive process, to describe "the system of relationships of substitution, paraphrases, synonymies, etc., which operate between linguistic elements – "signifiers" – in a given discursive formation." These procedures contribute to the stabilisation of "information poverty" as a concept within institutional LIS discourse and lead to the construction of the "information poor", which are positioned as the legitimate target of professional practice. In the following some of these discursive procedures will be examined more closely. This is intended to assess critically the strategies leading to the construction of the concept and thus to challenge some of the underlying assumptions. The analysis is preceded by considering the crucial position poverty has been assigned in development discourse.

Furthermore, Foucault's understanding of power as a productive practice, which is relational and permeates all of society, enables consideration of power relations beyond the limitations inherent in a mere oppressor/oppressed scheme (Mills, 2003). In particular, Foucault's (2000) concept of pastoral power provides an interesting backdrop upon which to project the practices of aid agencies, development institutions, and also public libraries. Pastoral power is an individualising power technique, which since the 18th century has been central to the conduct of a variety of institutions. It is salvation oriented, whereas salvation can take on a number of different meanings. This can include for example health, but also monetary wealth, economic progress, access to a certain type of information, or whatever else is considered to be a desirable state in different settings, at different times and by different actors. The agents of pastoral power are certain institutions, including for example the state, the police, the family, or the hospital, but in particular also welfare institutions and benefactors more generally, this can extend to, for example, development agencies and also (public) libraries. In short, defining what constitutes a salvaged state means exercising power, while providing salvation or aid is an act of control and domination, which is never uninterested. However, since it depends to a large degree on the agreement of those subjected to it, it exceeds being merely an act of oppression. It can be argued that in many cases systems of professional knowledge or expertise, which for their legitimacy, status and role are dependent on the recognition of those that are subject to their disciplinary control (Sundin, 2006), are also manifestations of pastoral power.

In LIS research, discourse analysis was most prominently proposed and introduced by Bernd Frohmann (1992a, 1992b, 1994). Since then a number of studies have

approached the field's literature from a discourse analytical perspective (e.g. Day, 1998; Tuominen, 1997; Talja, 2001; Hedemark *et al.*, 2005). The present article has to be seen as situated within this context, insofar as it equally aims to contribute to a critical assessment of the field's institutional discourse and knowledge claims.

### **Material selection, presentation, and limitations**

This article draws on the interpretative analysis of texts, achieved through the repeated reading of 35 English-language articles, published between 1995 and late 2005 in professional as well as scholarly LIS journals and the subsequent close-reading of selected extracts. The articles were retrieved from "Library and Information Science Abstracts" (LISA) and from "Library Literature and Information Science Full Text" by searching for "information poverty" and for "information poor". The selection is linguistically biased and the findings are fully applicable only in an English language context. However, the articles included in the analysis were found to have been published on all continents, except South America. This impedes a precise geographical limitation. The presentation is centred around the detailed textual analysis of exemplary extracts, which, however, should not be seen as isolated or de-contextualised, but need to be considered in relation to their surroundings.

In order to set the analysed material apart from the literature used to support the analysis, example quotations and excerpts are distinguished from other references by assigning them with consecutive numbers in square brackets. Their bibliographic information is provided separately, prior to the references, at the end of the article.

### **Post-development: poverty and development discourse**

Since the early 1990s discourse analytical and related approaches have emerged that critically assess development by focusing on its language practices and positioning it as a discourse. These are usually subsumed under the name post-development. The most comprehensive and influential post-structuralist analysis of development as a discourse and its deconstruction has been undertaken by Arturo Escobar (1995). Drawing predominantly on a Foucauldian perspective, development itself is here positioned as a discursive event, which emerged from a specific historical situation in the 1940s and which by the 1970s "had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" (Escobar, 1995, p. 5). He outlines how notions of development and poverty co-emerged and how the concept of "global poverty" was drawn on to provide an organising principle for the construction of the "underdeveloped". This led to the emergence of a discourse based on ideas of development, which colonised reality in a way that for a long time virtually impeded a meaningful conceptualisation of the world in different terms. Consequently, the problem of "development" became naturalised and its solutions began to appear self-evident, while the necessary tools – posited as neutral and universal devices – developed into seemingly obvious, quasi-natural parts of the solution.

Since the appearance of the concept of "global poverty" in development economics in the late 1940s (Rahnema, 1992; Escobar, 1995) poverty has been construed as a determining characteristic of the "developing" or "underdeveloped world". In January 1949 USA President Harry Truman is said to have officially heralded the age of development by introducing the concept of "underdevelopment" (Esteva, 1992; Rist, 2002) in the opening lines of the now famous point four of his inauguration speech

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when he stated, “we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas”. He continued, “[m]ore than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas” (Truman, 1949, cited in Rist, 2002, p. 259). In the same year the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development sent out the very first professional development mission and Colombia became the first country to be targeted by strategies aimed at changing its “underdeveloped” state. In their programme poverty features in a central position as a characteristic of “underdevelopment” and it is accompanied by the notion of ignorance (Escobar, 1995, pp. 24-26). The combination of poverty and ignorance developed into a powerful pair for the description of “non-western”, per definition “underdeveloped” societies and over a decade later, in 1961, John F. Kennedy, addressed the US Congress by declaring: “Throughout Latin America millions of people are struggling to free themselves from the bonds of poverty and hunger and ignorance. To the North and the East they see the abundance which modern science can bring. They know the tools of progress are within their reach” (Kennedy, 1961, cited in Ullrich, 1992, p. 275). While Truman characterised over half the world’s population as primitive and poor and consequently as posing a threat to economic progress, Kennedy classified, in a sweeping rhetorical move, large parts of the Americas as ignorant, characterised chiefly by their lack of science. The way ignorance, lack of science and technology, and their relation to poverty are operationalised to contribute to an image of the “underdeveloped” as well as the rhetorical positions they occupy in these early documents are in many ways similar to those of today’s notion of “information poverty”. The role of ignorance in the discourses of poverty and pauperism that emerged in the 19th century was already highlighted by Giovanna Procacci (1991, p. 162), who takes ignorance to include “technical backwardness which hinders the organization of labour”. However, more importantly, she argues, the true challenge to political power, which makes the government of poverty so essential lies in an ignorance of duties.

Truman’s and Kennedy’s speeches illustrate how from the very beginning poverty was an inherent theme of development discourse. They also give an indication as to how its use contributed to the production of a powerful image, which has come to dominate popular perceptions. Mahid Rahnema (1992) shows how, from a variety of meanings in different cultures and at different times, “poor” has been curtailed to signify solely the opposite of rich, predominantly in a material sense. According to Rahnema (1992, p. 161), “[G]lobal poverty is an entirely new and modern construct” based on “the economization of life and the forceful integration of vernacular societies into the world economy”. For the first time in the late 1940s this new and indiscriminate form of poverty was employed to describe entire countries. It was and, despite modifications, to a large degree it still is an economic concept, almost exclusively based on the simple measurement of national income. Rahnema (1992) shows how, alongside the assumed universality of “global poverty”, universal solutions and neutral tools to achieve them evolved. These are rooted in a firm belief in the necessity and most importantly in the universal character of economic progress and material accumulation. This was advanced and accompanied by the

professionalisation and institutionalisation of the development project, exemplified in a proliferation of programmes aimed at alleviating “global poverty”. Thus, according to Rahnama (1992), poverty turned into a catchphrase, while the construct of “global poverty” has led to perpetuate and intensify existing relations of governance and domination. Furthermore, the various programmes designed to eradicate poverty were in fact often conducive to the deterioration of the material conditions of their target populations by contributing to the disintegration of societal structures.

In an analysis of a speech by the World Bank president, Thompson (2004) shows how - based on a North-American world-view riddled with “orientalisms” (Said, 2003) - “poverty in the world” is mobilised to construct a need for the organisation’s expert intervention in the area of information technology and to make it indisputable. The specific function of “information poverty” as a category within development discourse is highlighted by Merridy Wilson (2003) in the context of a study of international public ICT debates. Technological determinism as well as teleological models of development are established as forming the basis for the construction. Moreover, she emphasises how in these debates “information poverty” contributes to perpetuating the dominant opposition between the “developing” and the “developed”.

Some argue that more recently broader concerns of development have merged with globalisation, understood as the continued integration of cultures and markets, and a new form of the “fight against poverty” has become the main *raison d’être* for mainstream development institutions and apparatuses (e.g. Rist, 2002; Mestrum, 2002). The fact that the first of the United Nations’ eight “Millennium Development Goals” is aimed at tackling extreme poverty seems to substantiate this view. That this is taken to mean reducing the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day by half, confirms the perpetuation of the dominant economic perspective. The proliferation and high visibility of events like “Making Poverty History” or the fact that in the year 2000 the World Bank entitled its annual world development report “Attacking Poverty” (World Bank, 2000) equally seem to point in this direction. In early 2006, a search for the term “poverty” in the World Bank documents and reports database on their website ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)) yielded over 9200 results, the oldest dating from 1950. Yet, over 6500 of those were issued between 2000 and early 2006 alone. Read differently of course, as Francine Mestrum (2002, p. 69) points out, “it is the persistence of poverty that constitutes the irrefutable proof for the failure of developmentalist politics” (translation from French by the authors. Original: “/... / c’est la persistance de la pauvreté qui constitue la preuve irréfutable de l’échec des politiques développementalistes.”).

At the same time, development, its discourse and institutions and with them the dominant meta-geographies (Lewis and Wigen, 1997) dividing the world into “developed” and “developing/underdeveloped” parts, have remained deeply ingrained in the collective imagination and they have not ceased to form powerful and omni-present parts of political discourse and popular perception.

### **Discursive procedures: “information poverty” in LIS**

A number of conceptual ties contribute to the formation of the notion of “information poverty” in LIS. In the following the main focus is on those discursive procedures that emerged as particularly dominant and consequential in the context of the “developing world”. These are technological determinism paired with economic rhetoric, the

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topic of illiteracy and educational shortcomings usually in connection with the insistence of the professional status of librarianship. Furthermore, an emphasis on notions of censorship, free speech or human rights in general can be found, sometimes it is paired with an insistence on the need for more efficient bureaucracy and also with a view to improve the situation for markets and investments.

In the following extract from an article published in 2001 the “information poor” are constructed in a way that subsumes people on low wages and minorities, those lacking formal education and even inarticulate persons with entire countries:

Material poverty and information poverty go hand in hand. According to a 1994 World Bank publication more than one billion people in the world live on less than one dollar a day. [...] People with a poverty of income are likely to be information-poor as well. Information-poor people may be those with low incomes or they may belong to an ethnic minority perhaps without language fluency. They may have had poor education and may be inarticulate or lacking in confidence. They may live in a country with bad communications and few telephones [5, p. 56].

This fragment unites a number of issues that recur in one form or another throughout the LIS literature investigated here. To begin with, “information poverty” is seen a direct result of material poverty, whereas material poverty is taken to mean a lack of financial resources, here measured in the dominant currency of the USA dollar. To hedge this economic view a higher authority is called upon. This is achieved by referring to the World Bank’s statistics, which constitute supposedly accurate depictions of the world. In addition to financial constraints the “information poor” also suffer from educational shortcomings or from behavioural deficits, i.e. they are inarticulate and lack confidence. Particularly interesting in this extract is the idea of ethnic minorities. Their potential for being “information poor”, which is already determined by their minority status, can be further aggravated by a lack of language fluency, without a further specification of which language this applies to. Supposedly the language referred to is the majority language, and presumably it is English. This effectively rids ethnic minorities of their own languages, whose fluency does not qualify as language fluency. It also leads to a perspective on the value and worth of information that is determined by the majority population. Finally, “information poverty” is also depicted as the result of a technological deficiency, as manifest in few telephones, whereas this is applied indiscriminately to entire countries. The latter corresponds with the prevailing technological determinism that was established by Wilson (2003) for the notion of “information poverty” in the development discourse of public ICT debates, where furthermore the absence of ICT is often directly aligned with the absence of knowledge. Brendan Luyt (2004) argues that “[t]he discourse surrounding new forms of information technology, and the digital divide their absence creates, helps secure state legitimacy by once again revitalizing the notion of development as achievable within the parameters of the current global economic system”.

Often these debates are based on the assumption that growth of ICT, and in particular of the Internet, can be equated with an information increase, i.e. information is posited as a consequence of technology. A perception that also exists in LIS and that is most explicitly contained in an assertion like the following: “Digital technology has created an explosion of information world-wide” [25, p. 261]. This statement is interesting, as this sudden information growth is understood to be a world-wide phenomenon. Yet, the dominant discourses giving rise to a concept like “information

poverty” or also to a related concept like “knowledge gap” usually suggest that exactly the opposite is the case, that information originates in the “developed” parts of the world, on the “right side” of the “digital divide”.

This form of technological determinism can also be seen as rooted in a resource-view of information and in a transmission perspective, expressed in the “conduit metaphor” (Day, 2000), which imagines information as neutral matter or as facts, that are context independent and easily transmittable. It is frequently accompanied by the dominant, evolutionary view of development.

This becomes clear in the following extract, published in 2000:

Over 75 percent of the population live in rural areas and are largely engaged in subsistence farming. As a result, there is widespread rural poverty. This poverty is not only limited to material things, but also includes information poverty. [ . . ]

It is a well-known fact that information is at the heart of development. Consequently, the information and resource rich societies of the west have developed at an incredible rate in comparison to the poor countries of the south which are wallowing in abject poverty and debt [1, pp. 29-30].

This extract is taken from an article on Nigerian agricultural libraries. To begin with, it introduces the classic catching-up paradigm of development discourse, which has its roots in colonial economics (Pakdaman, 1994). The west functions as a model, which sets pace and goal, i.e. it develops and advances, while the south is left behind and has to catch-up. A ranking is introduced, in which the rich countries, i.e. the USA or Western Europe, naturally take the first place. Moreover, without further qualification information is posited as the motor for development. It is implied that this information is a privilege of the resource rich societies of the west, while the poor countries of the south are seen to lack this very information that is at the heart of development. This introduces a vicious circle, which can only be interrupted by getting information from the “developed countries” to those wallowing in abject poverty and debt. This very theme can be traced back to the inception of “underdevelopment” and it is a variation of the way Truman or Kennedy conceptualised the relationship between science and poverty. Moreover, the image of subsistence as an equivalent of poverty is inherent in the idea of economic development, which is based on and visible only in production for the market. Consequently, rural populations have been a prime target of development programmes since their inception, aiming mainly at changing their status from farming for self-sufficiency to producing for the market (Escobar, 1992, 1995). Escobar (1995) shows how this was made possible and accompanied by discursive processes that constructed the group of “small farmers” alongside images of hunger and malnourishment, thus turning them into a “persistent client category for development programs” (Escobar, 1995, p. 106). This direct association of rural life with poverty, characteristic of development discourse, can be found throughout the LIS literature investigated. It forms a tie which is capitalised on to contribute to the construction of the “information poor”:

The most extreme information gaps are between illiterate and neo-literate people in rural villages and rich urban populations [17, p. 29].

The “information poor” are put in opposition not only to the “developed countries”, but also to urban populations. These, quite contrary to the actual situation of people in

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many of the countries considered to belong to the “developing world”, are imagined as rich and literate. The construction of “information poverty” is frequently achieved by introducing illiteracy as a prime characteristic of rural people and furthermore by relating it to a lack of library services in rural areas or in “developing countries” in general. Thus the library itself and the services it can provide becomes the indicator of the level of “information poverty”.

This becomes evident in a statement like the following:

In over-simplified terms [...] information poverty is the result of a mixture of factors, for instance a lack of knowledge and skills in large numbers of areas of LIS [library and information services] practice [2, p. 299].

Here “information poverty” is seen as the consequence of inadequate librarianship and library services. The institution of the library and librarianship are at the root of “information poverty” and consequently they are also the location of the solution. Having pinpointed the source of the problem within librarianship also narrows the spectrum of possible actions and the solutions are already inherent in the formulation of the problem. The construction of needs based on the solutions or the form of aid an institution can provide is among the main criticisms the development industry is faced with (e.g. Luyt, 2004). In addition, various forms of educational shortcomings, often identified as characteristics of the “developing world”, e.g. high rates of illiteracy, are drawn on to construct the “information poor”. In particular, the library’s educational role comes to the fore and gives way to the formulation of a need for expert help by underlining the professional status of librarianship and the librarians’ expertise.

Consider this extract from an article on the “information-starving” in Southern Africa:

Librarians need to recognize their very important and special role in the social and educational upliftment of illiterate people in this region [Southern Africa]. They have to adopt a whole new approach to their profession. Revised training methods and tailor-made services are necessary to make information accessible to all. Rural librarianship needs to be given more emphasis in formal library training courses to equip librarians with the necessary skills [25, p. 264].

To begin with, the librarian’s position is singled out as literally being above the illiterate people to be educated and uplifted. By implicitly making assumptions about the nature of the lower position of those to be pulled-up, the librarian is unquestioningly put in an hierarchically higher position of knowing which position needs to be reached. Very much in accordance with what Foucault (2000) describes as pastoral power, the librarian by way of his/her professional knowledge is assigned a special role in the project of social change, or salvation, which here consists of making information available to all. The social upliftment, or rescue, of the illiterate is connected to information being available for all and the librarian is the agent of salvation. The information has to be made available by the librarian through education and in particular this means also the librarians’ education and training. This leads to an assertion of librarianship’s specialised status and expertise, while at the same time, it can be seen as a claim to further advance its professionalisation. Specifically, this is achieved by introducing and emphasising the particularity of a specific subfield, namely rural librarianship, for the previously identified problem or target audience.

A particularly interesting procedure contributing to notions of “information poverty”, usually advanced as specific for the “developing world”, is achieved by alluding to censorship, freedom of speech, or human rights violations in general, as well as also to international intellectual property regimes. In the following extract from 2004 this is intermingled with reference to mechanisms of control and bureaucratisation:

To be sure, information poverty is under attack. The new government of John Kufuor cancelled Ghana’s criminal libel laws in 2001, immediately expanding freedom of speech in a country with a long tradition of press restrictions. Government is also asserting the formal names of streets and numbers of housing in an exercise aimed at making Accra more understandable. An explosion of radio stations is bringing greater awareness of public events and urban activities, at least within Accra. One entrepreneur is making a computerized, geo-coded map of the entire country, sending out researchers to pinpoint the location of gas stations, banks and other locations that might want such information for competitive reasons. There are now three television stations, compared to only one as recently as ten years ago. One station broadcasts CNN (commercials included) every morning. Old episodes of Oprah Winfrey also are shown [35].

The attack on “information poverty” alludes to the attack on poverty that has been proclaimed by the World Bank in their so entitled world development report from 2000 (World Bank, 2000). This situates “information poverty” in the currently dominant development discourse of the mainstream development apparatus, which has in poverty its chief signifier and thus contributes to its stabilisation. Furthermore, the attack is only one amongst a whole range of possible military metaphors typically used to stylise poverty reduction practices or other social interventions by equipping them with moral and heroic connotations. Others include for example “fight against”, the “battle against”, or the “war on”. The connection of “information poverty” with the absence of a human right such as freedom of speech can be interpreted differently and it goes to show that the same discursive procedure can appear and be used in diverging ways. On the one hand it is, of course, a legitimate concern. On the other hand it can also be read as directly instrumental in the sense that by tying “information poverty” to freedom of speech, the attack on it becomes a moral imperative to the “western” reader and, one could argue cynically, also to funding agencies. This lends an ethical dimension to the practices aimed at helping the prior positioned “information poor”, and is a widespread procedure. Moreover, information in the above extract is seen to signify bureaucratisation, government control, and literally the control over the land and surveillance of the people with a view to improve the situation for investments. This form of control has a disciplinary effect. Its origins lie in the normalisation project of 18th and 19th century Europe, which gave rise to the science of political economy, and which found one expression in what Foucault called pastoral power. It has to be seen in connection with various forms of social and urban planning that have been at the very core of development since its inception (Escobar, 1992) and that in the name of modernisation and enlightenment have given rise to administrative projects aimed at controlling and civilizing the population by shaping behaviours as well as by controlling space. It also has to be seen in relation to, what Tariq Banuri (1990, p. 93) calls, “[t]he shift from personal to impersonal constraints, and from internal to external ones”. As a major feature of development understood as a project of modernisation this shift is manifest in “the establishment of powerful and impersonal structures of

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surveillance and control at the level of knowledge (technology), politics (organization), and architecture” (Banuri, 1990, p. 93). Furthermore, by inversion, the absence of USA American news programmes, talk shows, and commercials is seen as “information poverty”, thus connecting non-restricted, uncensored information to foreign – i.e. USA-controlled news media, entertainment, and effectively also to consumerism.

### Conclusion

The emergence of “information poverty” as a possibility and its representation as a societal as well as a personal deficiency in the discourse of LIS is related to the positions of poverty and of ignorance in development discourse. This connection also leads to it being predominantly negotiated in the same terms as other forms of material lacks, or as closely related. This is achieved, for instance, by alluding to rural poverty, which is an established image in development discourse. It has to be seen as rooted in the on-going commodification of information, which together with an economised resource-view of information as well as strong technological determinism dominates certain, popular “information society” images. This also becomes apparent in at times conflicting views opposing this development, and which frequently position the “fight against information poverty” as a moral imperative. The “information poor” are, furthermore, constructed as the consequence of institutional deficiencies, tying their existence and consequently also their rescue to the institution of the library and to librarianship. The so emerging groups of “information poor” become the obvious responsibility of the library, which as the agent of salvation, is affirmed in its institutional authority and expertise. Moreover, “information poverty” also emerged as yet another form of “lack” that afflicts what is known as the “developing world”. Its construction is to a large degree based on the dominant binary opposition dividing the world into “developed” and “developing” parts, while at the same time contributing to its continuation.

In conclusion, “information poverty” and the “information poor” were established as being assigned specific positions and roles in the professional and scholarly discourse of LIS through their connections and alliances with other statements. The concept has been shown to emerge as the result of overlapping, at times conflicting sets of so-called discursive procedures and processes. In particular, it was seen to emerge as a possibility in the field by anchoring it in the already existing discourse of development, which forms one of the most dominant ways of depicting the world and whose powerful images are already deeply ingrained in the collective imagination. Traces of development discourse re-surface in LIS and contribute to the legitimisation of the concept of “information poverty” by equipping it with an air of pre-established moral necessity as well as by lending it authority.

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