

Alternative Library Literature, 1998/1999 *A Biennial Anthology*

Edited by
Sanford Berman
and
James P. Danky



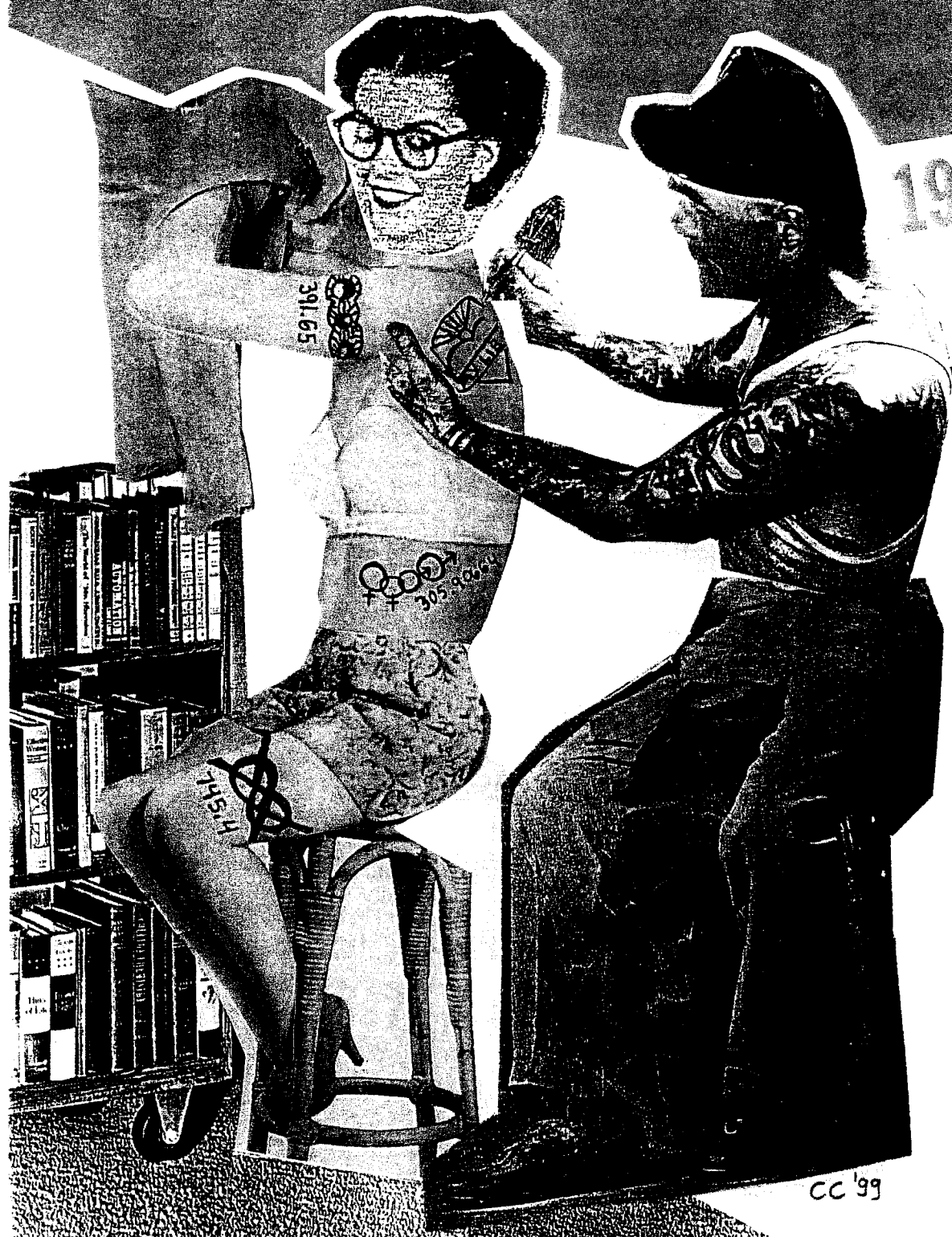
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ALTERNATIVE LIBRARY LITERATURE

1998-1999

**A
Biennial
Anthology**

Sanford Berman
and
James P. Danky,
Editors



CC '99

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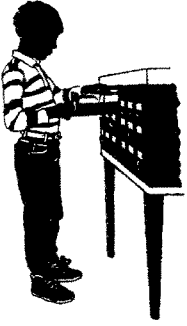
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Sandy Berman's Valedictory

I've been an ALA member since 1973, but with several interruptions, when I just couldn't stand it anymore. What brought me back each time was SRRT, of course, and colleagues like you: raucous, uncontrollable, outspoken, passionate folks who really want to make libraries—and the world—a little bit better, a little bit fairer, and a lot more fun. For everyone. People who could all be comfortably wearing this modest button with the simple inscription: "Joyfully Subversive."

In January 1997, I submitted five "professional concerns" when running for ALA Council. They remain my primary concerns, and perhaps yours, too:

- Enlarge "intellectual freedom" efforts to include opposition to economic censorship (like media monopolization and the chain superstore threat to independent booksellers and small presses); frank recognition, at least, of library self-censorship (e.g., the failure to select visual erotica, zines, labor materials, small press fiction and poetry, and graphic novels); and support for library staff to express their views on professional and policy matters without fear of reprisal.
- Stop and reverse the increasing commercialization of libraries and of ALA itself, which threatens the very soul of the profession: its commitment to genuine openness, diversity, and neutrality. (Among other things, this means ensuring that libraries are spaces or refuges free from hype and otherwise incessant sales pitches.)
- Expand and simplify access to library resources for poor, unemployed, and homeless people, in part by energetically implementing ALA's "Poor People's Policy." (Locally, this also involves abolishing fines when their major purpose is to generate revenue, not to get the books back, and avoiding fee-based services—like bestseller rental programs—that are predicated solely on ability to pay.)
- Foster greater democracy within both ALA and li-

brary workplaces, combatting such traditional management and mystery cult practices as hierarchy, paternalism, elitism, and secrecy; encouraging library unionization as a means of real empowerment, a way to create countervailing power; and unmasking the latest versions of Taylorism and TQM as frequently manipulative and wasteful frauds and fads. (In this context, that ubiquitous maxim, "Question Authority," might be modified to: "Question Managerial Prerogatives.")

- Maintain and dignify such activities as collection development and cataloging as "core functions" best performed in-house rather than outsourced.

I'd now add another item, related to the shibboleth about libraries being "bulwarks of democracy":

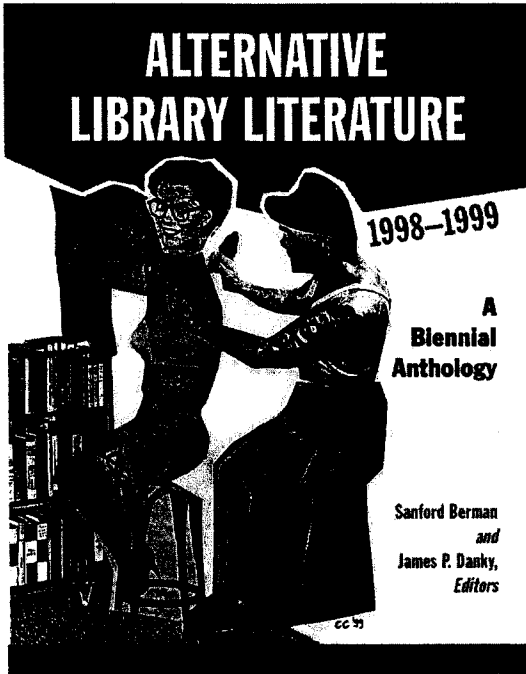
- Proactively foment and facilitate public policy debates on timely issues through programs, resource lists, and displays. (How many libraries have done this, for instance, regarding classism or poor-bashing, corporate welfare, economic democracy, and corporate power? These are not even LC-sanctioned subject headings!)

So what *should* libraries be?

- Equally accessible to everyone
- Dynamic sources of all kinds of information and ideas, available in a setting free of hucksterism
- Open places, where rules and policies emerge from unfettered, transparent discussion among users and staff

I honestly don't think that's too much to ask. Do you?

*Ralph & Kacoo's
New Orleans, Louisiana
June 27, 1999*



Alternative Library Literature, 1998/1999

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Sanford Berman *and* James P. Danky

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This highly acclaimed biennial (“the best of alternative library journalism”—*Library Journal*) provides a reminder of the roots of librarianship and a prod to a profession that has sometimes forgotten those principles. People/Work, Women, Censorship/Human Rights/Peace, Kids, Alternatives, Service/Advocacy/Empowerment,

Multiculturalism/Third World, and Cyberspace/Virtual Libraries are the topics covered, with writings from Earl Lee, Simone Murray, Scott Walter, Pat Mora and others.

Famed Minnesota cataloger Sanford Berman is also the author of *Prejudices and Antipathies* (1993, \$24.95, “Berman’s observations...resonate, stimulate”—*Library Journal*). James P. Danky is a periodicals librarian at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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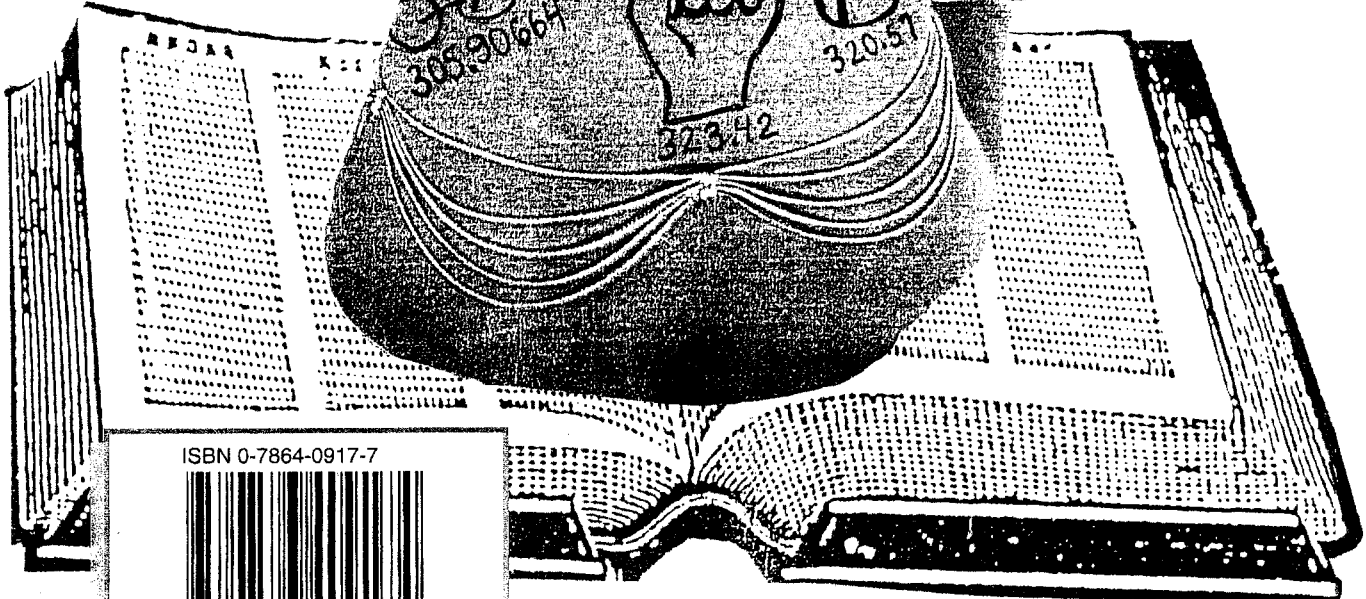
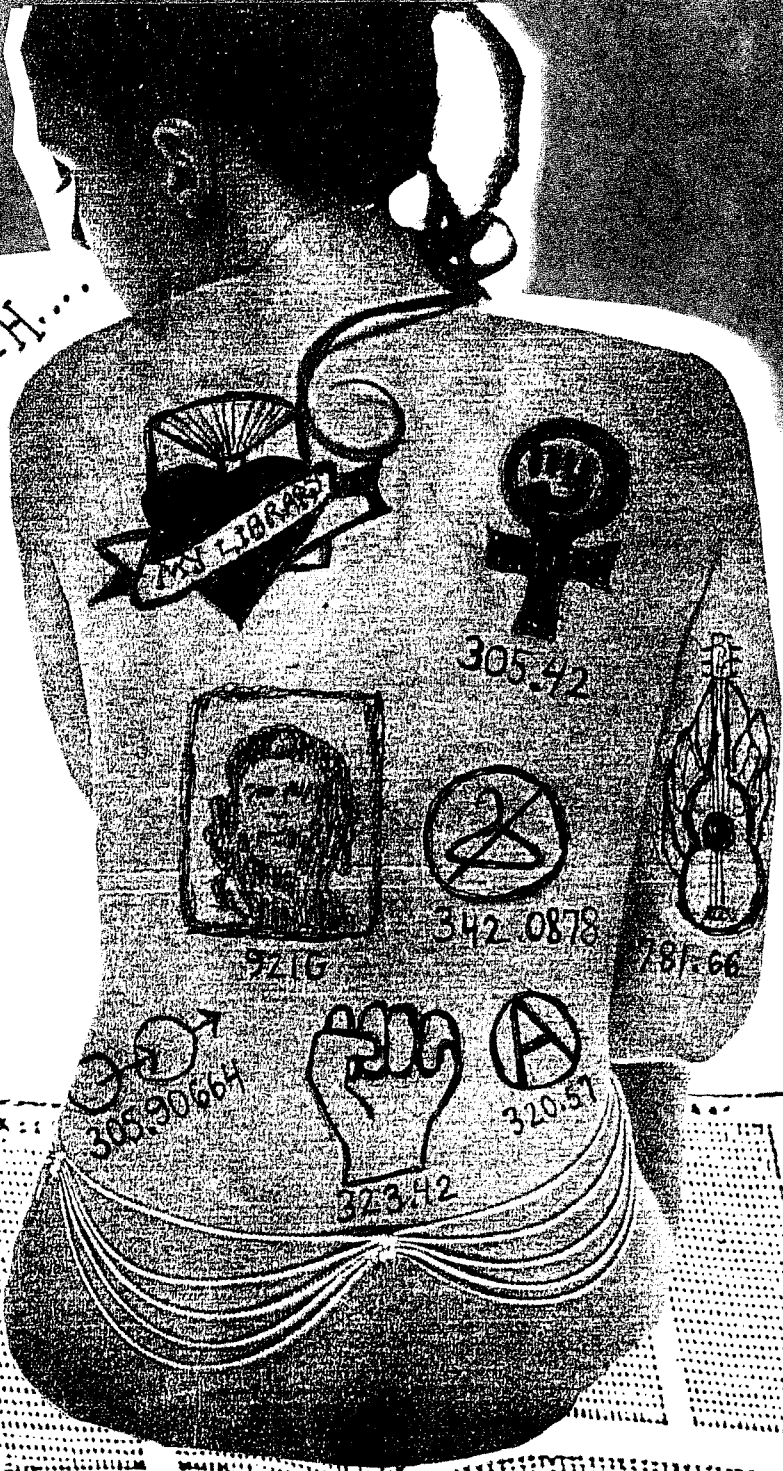
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