

# Library Catalog Notes for “Bad Books”: Ethics vs. Responsibilities

Philip A. Homan

Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, 921 South 8th Avenue,  
Stop 8089, Pocatello, ID 83209-8089, <homaphil@isu.edu>

Philip A. Homan is Instruction Librarian, history bibliographer, and Associate Professor at the Eli M. Oboler Library of Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho. Phil graduated with the MLS in 2002 from St. John’s University in New York City, where he studied cataloging with Sherry Vellucci, as well as indexing and thesaurus construction with Bella Hass Weinberg. He also holds an MA in Religious Studies from Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, and is ABD in Theology from Fordham University, The Bronx, New York. His academic interests include library catalog notes for “bad books,” as well as the history of the American West.



Homan, Philip A. **Library Catalog Notes for “Bad Books”: Ethics vs. Responsibilities.** *Knowledge Organization*. 39(5), 347-355. 46 references.

**ABSTRACT:** The conflict between librarians’ ethics and their responsibilities in the process of progressive collection management, which applies the principles of cost accounting to libraries, to call attention to the “bad books” in their collections that are compromised by age, error, abridgement, expurgation, plagiarism, copyright violation, libel, or fraud, is discussed. According to Charles Cutter, notes in catalog records should call attention to the best books but ignore the bad ones. Libraries that can afford to keep their “bad books,” however, which often have a valuable second life, must call attention to their intellectual contexts in notes in the catalog records. Michael Bellesiles’s *Arming America*, the most famous case of academic fraud at the turn of the twenty-first century, is used as a test case. Given the bias of content enhancement that automatically pulls content from the Web into library catalogs, catalog notes for “bad books” may be the only way for librarians to uphold their ethical principles regarding collection management while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to their users in calling attention to their “bad books.”

Received 16 July 2012; Accepted 16 July 2012

## 1.0 Introduction

In two recent issues of *Public Library Quarterly*, Jim Jatkevicius advocates what he calls “progressive collection management” (2003, 31). Librarians, he says, have at least three opportunities to reevaluate the books in their libraries’ collections: as the books age and decay, as library patrons challenge them, or as the librarians discover that they are compromised in some way (2003; 2005). Moreover, Jatkevicius continues, librarians can respond in one of two ways: they can either withdraw an old, challenged, or compromised book from their library’s collection, or they can “enrich the record” for the book in their library’s catalog (2003, 32). Otherwise, he concludes, librarians are little more than “eunuchs guarding the harem” (2003,

35). Indeed, by changing the names of their departments from Technical Services to Collection Management, catalog librarians are abandoning their mark-it-and-park-it mentality and acknowledging their ongoing responsibility for the books in their collections, the ethical principles of the profession regarding collection management found in the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights (1996) and its interpretation Labeling and Rating Systems (2009) notwithstanding.

Perhaps without realizing it, Jatkevicius has applied the principles of cost accounting in industry to libraries. Librarians have long known that the value of a book in a library is more than its price, for there is a cost in just getting a book on the shelf. Moreover, librarians are becoming increasingly aware that keeping

a book on the shelf costs money, too, and that there are the costs of overhead in keeping the library open, such as heat, light, and labor, that must be added to the value of a book. Jatkevicius, however, reminds librarians that the intellectual content of a book, as well as its physical carrier, can depreciate and that a book can therefore decrease in value as the ideas in it age, too, more or less according to its academic discipline. He also asserts that, depending on the nature of their decay, what he calls "bad books" can have a valuable second life that librarians can exploit in their libraries and in their library catalogs to keep users coming back to the library.

Jatkevicius's observation raises the question of what librarians can do about the "bad books" in their collections, even though they may not be legally liable for them (Curry 2005). Should they do anything? Are they dodging their professional responsibilities if they do not? Are they violating their professional ethics if they do? For libraries that can afford to keep them, library catalog notes for the "bad books" in their collections allow librarians to fulfill their responsibilities to their users in calling attention to the "bad books" in their collections without violating their ethical principles.

## 2.0 Types of "bad books"

What can librarians do about books in their collections that are compromised, for example, by age, error, abridgment, expurgation, plagiarism, copyright violation, libel, or fraud? Librarians discard outdated information without too much controversy, medical libraries routinely retract erroneous articles in medical journals, and library catalogs frequently call attention to abridged books by means of edition statements in their catalog records.

Librarians' responses to other types of "bad books" are more controversial, however. A book can be expurgated, or even Bowdlerized, such as the many nineteenth-century editions of Samuel Pepys's colorful seventeenth-century diary with the sexual and scatological parts removed for sensitive Victorian readers (Pepys 1970; Perrin 1992). It can also be plagiarized, such as Stephen Ambrose's *The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany*, which copied several passages from Thomas Childers's *Wings of Morning: The Story of the Last American Bomber Shot Down over Germany in World War II*, or Doris Kearns Goodwin's *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, which copied passages from Lynne McTaggart's *Kathleen Kennedy: Her Life and Times* (Hoffer 2004).

A book can also be illegal, as well as dishonest or unethical. It can violate copyright, as the United States Supreme Court decided *The Nation* magazine did when it published verbatim former President Gerald Ford's account of his pardon of his predecessor Richard Nixon from his memoir, *A Time to Heal*, published by Harper & Row (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., et al. v. Nation Enterprises et al., 471 U.S. 539 [(1985)]). It can also be libelous, such as J. Millard Burr's and Robert O. Collins's *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World*, published in 2006 by Cambridge University Press, which claimed that a Saudi banker had financed terrorism in the 1990s. The banker, who had already won libel suits against three other books, sued for libel in the United Kingdom, and the press agreed to destroy its remaining copies of the book and to ask libraries around the world to remove their copy from their shelves and either return it to the press or destroy it (Glenn 2007), which the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom advised libraries in the United States not to do (Albanese and Pinkowski 2007; Eberhart 2007).

Finally, a book can be fraudulent, which can be both unethical and illegal, if fraud is understood in its legal sense as a lie intended to rob people of their property or rights. Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*, published by Alfred A. Knopf in 2000, likely the most famous example of academic fraud at the turn of the twenty-first century, can be used as a test case. Should librarians "guard the harem" by simply ignoring the contexts of such bad books, withdraw the books from their collections, welcome the automatic pulling of content from the Web into their catalog records, or rather put notes into their records to inform their users of the contexts of the "bad books" in their libraries?

## 3.0 Cutter's Rules for a Dictionary Catalog and notes in library catalogs

If library catalogers choose to include notes in catalog records alerting readers to the contexts of "bad books," they can take inspiration from Charles A. Cutter's *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalog*, published in 1876. Not only the United States centennial, 1876 was also an important year for libraries, since the American Library Association was founded and the first edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification was published that year. According to the fourth edition of Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, one of the objects of a library catalog is "to assist in the

choice of a book ... as to its character" (1904, 12), and the means to that object are notes in catalog records. As Cutter's Rule 284 says, "Put into notes that information which is ... required to be given by the plan of the catalog" in order "to direct ... attention ... to the best books" (1904, 105). The main principles of such notes are not only that they should be brief and true, which is easy enough, but also that they "should characterize the best books only." Cutter asserts that "bad books should be left in obscurity" (1904, 105). Here Jatkevicius parts company with Cutter, since Jatkevicius believes that many "bad books" have that valuable second life.

If such notes for "bad books" in their library catalogs seem too controversial or difficult a task for most librarians, if it makes them ill at ease, nevertheless Cutters says in his preface to the fourth edition of *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, "The convenience of the public is always to be set before the ease of the cataloger" (1904, 6). In other words, getting library users the resources they need is the professional responsibility of librarians, which they must not dodge.

## 6.0 The case of Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America*

Librarians are fortunate to have an excellent test case for library catalog notes for "bad books": *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*, by American historian Michael A. Bellesiles, former Professor of History at Emory University, Atlanta, and founding Director of Emory's Center for the Study of Violence. *Arming America* has been at the center of a recent controversy concerning the meaning of the Second Amendment, gun control, and academic integrity. The controversy has been followed in detail by Homan (2003a; 2003b). It offers a rare opportunity to study the biography or life cycle of an academic book in which author, publishers, reviewers, award committees, the media, and librarians have all played roles.

*Arming America* began as an article published in 1996 in the Organization of American Historians' *Journal of American History* that won the organization's Binkley-Stephenson Award in 1997 for the best scholarly article published in the journal during the preceding calendar year (Bellesiles 1996). The book was published in September 2000 by Alfred A. Knopf and supports arguments against the National Rifle Association's interpretation of the Second Amendment—that the Second Amendment defends American's individual right "to keep and bear arms." On the basis of probate records, military censuses, and travel narratives, among other documents, the book claims

that few people in colonial America owned guns and that America's so-called "gun culture" began only with industrialization during the Civil War. Bellesiles argued that only about 15 percent of the county probate inventories from 1765 to 1790 in the northern New England and western Pennsylvania frontiers that he consulted counted guns.

### 5.1 *The letter to Charlton Heston and the National Rifle Association*

In March 2000, Michael Bellesiles signed a letter with almost 50 other scholars from the Legal Community against Violence to Charlton Heston, President of the National Rifle Association. The letter asserted that the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution in the Bill of Rights did not prohibit "broad and intensive regulation of firearms" and urged the NRA "to stop misleading Americans about the Second Amendment" (quoted in Homan 2003a). LCAV's advertisement in the *New York Times* announcing the letter called the NRA's "misrepresentation of the Second Amendment" "shameful." Many of the signers of the letter to the NRA were involved in the *Arming America* controversy.

### 5.2 *Favorable reviews of Arming America*

The dust jacket of *Arming America* bears the typical superlatives designed to sell books. Half of the contributors were cosigners with Bellesiles of the letter to the NRA. One contributor and cosigner called Bellesiles "the NRA's worst nightmare." Another opined that *Arming America*, an "astonishingly original and innovative book, chock-full of fascinating revelations," "ought to raise current controversies about gun control to a more fact-based and rational level" and is "certain to endure as a classic work of significant scholarship with inescapable policy implications" (Homan 2003a).

The book received favorable reviews in the popular press, including the two most important American book review magazines. The reviewer in the *New York Review of Books* said in a cover story that "Bellesiles will have done us all a service if his book reduces the credibility of the fanatics who endow the Founding Fathers with posthumous membership in what has become the cult of the gun" (Morgan 2000, 32). The one in the *New York Times Book Review*, a cosigner of the letter to the NRA, believed Bellesiles "to have dispersed the darkness that covered the gun's early history in America" (Wills 2000, 6).

*Arming America* was also praised in the academic press, including history journals and law reviews. According to the reviewer in the *Journal of American History*, Bellesiles "has attacked the central myth behind the National Rifle Association's interpretation of the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. He makes it clear from the opening ... that he intends to have an impact on public policy or at least discourse" (Lane 2001, 614). Likewise, in the *Texas Law Review*, the reviewer, a cosigner of the letter to the NRA, said that Bellesiles has "overturned a table on which rested everything we thought we knew about guns in early America" (Bogus 2001, 1641), and that *Arming America* has therefore "provoked a storm of criticism because it is relevant to a debate with contemporary policy implications, namely, the interpretation of the Second Amendment" (Bogus 2001, 1651). The book was reviewed favorably in the book-trade magazines, such as *Kirkus Reviews* and *Publishers Weekly*, and in library magazines, such as *Booklist*, *Choice*, and *Library Journal*, as well.

### 5.3 Awards to Michael Bellesiles

In 2001, *Arming America* received Columbia University's Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy, awarded to works "of enduring worth and impeccable scholarship that make a major contribution to our understanding of the American past." One of the three Bancroft committee members that awarded the prize was a cosigner with Bellesiles of the letter to the NRA. The National Endowment for the Humanities also awarded a \$30,000 grant to Chicago's Newberry Library to fund Bellesiles's research on his next book during his 2001-2002 sabbatical.

### 5.4 Early criticisms of *Arming America*

Of course, the National Rifle Association, as well as others opposed to gun control, had been watching Bellesiles since the publication of his *Journal of American History* article in 1996. Charlton Heston complained that Bellesiles "had too much time on his hands" (1999, 37). Many critics were disturbed by the book's implications for the Second Amendment. The introduction to *Arming America*, as well as his contributions, in both person and print, to studies of the Second Amendment, belied Bellesiles's denial that *Arming America* supported any political position. Bellesiles was the target of *ad hominem* comments on various Internet message boards and Web sites, and he received flaming e-mails, hate mail, hostile telephone

calls, and even a death threat. The Council of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, of both the College of William and Mary and Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia, which publishes the *William and Mary Quarterly*, protested Bellesiles's harassment and defended his academic freedom, and the defense was seconded by both the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians.

Although *Arming America* also received a few unfavorable reviews in the popular and scholarly press, the most persistent early criticisms came from Clayton Cramer, a software engineer, amateur historian, and gun activist; from James Lindgren, a law professor and member of the conservative Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies; and from Joyce Lee Malcolm, a professional historian. Malcolm's book about the origins of the Second Amendment, *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right*, published by Harvard University Press in 1994, argues that the 1689 English Bill of Rights that permitted individual ownership of firearms was adopted and broadened by the framers of the Constitution of the United States in the Second Amendment. Although her book was reviewed favorably on both sides of the Atlantic, it was unfavorably reviewed by Michael Bellesiles, and Malcolm and Bellesiles traded shots about the review.

These early unfavorable reviews of *Arming America* criticized, among other things, Bellesiles's methodology of counting guns by means of penciled ticks on yellow legal pads; his claim to have read county probate records on microfilm from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint Family History Library in Salt Lake City, which circulates only to local LDS family history centers, at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration's southeast regional facility in Atlanta; his claim to have visited archives that have no record of his visit; his citation of manuscript collections that do not exist, such as the San Francisco County probate files that were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire; and his claim to have received computer viruses by e-mail and that hackers had changed his Web site.

### 5.5 The William and Mary Quarterly special issue devoted to *Arming America*

The first criticisms of *Arming America* drew the attention of other scholars who had counted more guns in early American probate records than had Bellesiles. As proof that the early criticisms were not just ideo-

logical, political, or sour grapes, the January 2002 issue of *The William and Mary Quarterly* published articles by four academic historians about Bellesiles's research, as well as a response by Bellesiles (2002). One of the four, a cosigner with Bellesiles of the NRA letter, repeated his previous praise of *Arming America* (Rakove 2002). The three others, however, were critical of the book. The first said that Bellesiles's claim that probate inventories "scrupulously recorded every item in an estate" is "nonsense" (Main 2002, 211). The second accused Bellesiles of the "consistently biased reading of sources" and of the "careless uses of evidence and context" (Gruber 2002, 222). The third said that "every mistake he makes in his own calculations goes in the same direction, in support of his thesis" (Roth 2002, 240).

#### 5.6 *The examination of Arming America by Emory University*

These criticisms of *Arming America* by professional, academic historians in such an important venue as *The William and Mary Quarterly* forced Emory University to appoint a committee of Bellesiles's peers in February 2002 to examine the allegations of scholarly misconduct against him with regard to Emory's policies and the American Historical Association's standards concerning research. The three-person committee of historians from Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Chicago, one of them a cosigner of the NRA letter, concluded that Bellesiles was "guilty of unprofessional and misleading work" (Katz et al. 2002, 18) and that his "scholarly integrity is seriously in question" (Katz et al. 2002, 19).

#### 5.7 *The result of the Arming America controversy*

The denouement of the *Arming America* controversy has been compared by historian Peter Charles Hoffer, in *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud—American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (2004), to the gods' punishment of human hubris in a classical Greek tragedy. Bellesiles resigned his tenured position at Emory, stating that he could not continue teaching in a "hostile environment." The trustees of Columbia University revoked Bellesiles's 2001 Bancroft Prize and asked for the return of the prize's \$4,000 award. The National Endowment for the Humanities required Chicago's Newberry Library to remove its name from its \$30,000 grant to Bellesiles. Knopf stopped publication of the book and destroyed all copies re-

turned from bookstores, although it later found a new publisher in Soft Skull Press of Brooklyn, New York (Bellesiles 2003a). Bellesiles responded by writing *Weighed in an Even Balance*, a defense of his scholarship in *Arming America* (2003b).

Moreover, the controversy over *Arming America* has embarrassed many. One of the peer reviewers of Bellesiles's 1996 *Journal of American History* article, who recommended it for publication, told the *Chicago Tribune* that *Arming America* is "a case of genuine, bona fide academic fraud" (Grossman 2002, C1). PBS's *ExxonMobil Masterpiece Theatre* host Russell Baker even called Bellesiles "the Milli Vanilli of the academic community" (McCain 2002, A1).

Finally, the controversy has backfired by strengthening the "individual right" position on the Second Amendment, has earned Bellesiles a place with Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin in discussions of academic integrity, and has called into question the objectivity of scholars, publishers, reviewers, award committees, the media, and librarians, as well as the value of reviews and awards.

#### 5.8 *Effects of the Arming America controversy*

In spite of the resolution to the controversy surrounding the book, the legacy of *Arming America* will last for some time. A 2002 post on the *History News Network* described the domino effect of Bellesiles's influence (Williams 2002). In 1999, Bellesiles's *Journal of American History* article was anthologized as the introductory chapter in *Guns in America: A Reader* (Bellesiles 1999). In 2000, it was anthologized in answer to the question "Was the Second Amendment an outgrowth of America's gun culture?" in Bedford/St. Martin's *Whose Right to Bear Arms Did the Second Amendment Protect?* in the series *Historians at Work*, designed "to show students what historians do," edited by a cosigner with Bellesiles of the NRA letter (Bellesiles 2000b).

A number of encyclopedias, moreover, have uncritically cited Bellesiles's research as proof both of the scarcity of guns in colonial America and that America's gun culture began with industrialization during the Civil War. For example, *Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, Culture, and the Law*, published in 2002 by ABC-CLIO, lists both Bellesiles's *Journal of American History* article and *Arming America* in the bibliographies of numerous articles, including the one about gun culture. The encyclopedia also cites *Arming America* in the article about gun culture as the source for the claim that "re-

cent scholarship questions the efficacy of American militias, in particular their preparedness and the quality and quantity of their arsenals” and that “recent historians point out that most Americans, even on the frontier, did not own guns, nor were they familiar with their use and handling” (Hawley 2002a, 244). However, ABC-CLIO silently removed both the references and citations to Bellesiles’s *Journal of American History* article and *Arming America* from the second printing of the encyclopedia (Hawley 2002b).

Most seriously, however, *Arming America* has been cited in two legal decisions that ruled that the Second Amendment supported a collective, not an individual, right to own firearms. In *U.S. v. Emerson*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, New Orleans, cited Bellesiles’s research as supporting the collective right interpretation of the Second Amendment. San Francisco’s Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals also cited Bellesiles’s research in its decision *Silveira v. Lockyer*, which ruled that the Second Amendment established a collective, not an individual, right to “keep and bear arms,” but the citations were also silently deleted from the court’s decision before it was printed in *West’s Pacific Reporter*, which legal experts called unusual.

### 5.9 A failure of peer review

Scholars have acknowledged the responsibility of peer reviewers in the *Arming America* controversy. A Canadian professor has called the *Arming America* controversy a “monumental failure of peer review” (Mauser n.d.). He argued that reviewers’ easy acceptance of *Arming America* is more serious even than the book’s faults. A professor’s doing fraudulent work is less scandalous than his peers’ accepting it. Reviewers are “not as critical of arguments that support their prejudices” (Mauser n.d., 2). The real scandal, therefore, is “the willing gullibility of ideological reviewers and academic historians” (Mauser n.d., 1).

## 6.0 The ALA Library Bill of Rights and Statement on Labeling

The most serious objection to notes in catalog records for “bad books” comes from the American Library Association’s Labeling and Rating Systems (2009), an interpretation of its Library Bill of Rights (1996). According to the 1990 version, entitled “Statement on Labeling,” the version in effect during the *Arming America* controversy, the inclusion of “rating systems and/or review materials ... in bibliographic

records, library catalogs, or other finding aids” violates the ALA’s Library Bill of Rights (Hitchcock 2006). In 2005, however, the ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee revised its Statement on Labeling, renamed it “Labels and Rating Systems,” and deleted “and/or review materials” and “bibliographic records, library catalogs, or other finding aids” from the clause, in an apparent concession to library practice, as library catalogs of the new millennium were beginning to pull enhanced content, such as book reviews, into their catalog records. When it revised the statement again in 2009, the Intellectual Freedom Committee renamed the statement once again “Labeling and Rating Systems” and reinserted the phrase “on bibliographic records in library catalogs” to reassert that the inclusion of ratings—although not “review materials”—in catalog records violates the Library Bill of Rights (2009).

The question remained, however, whether the inclusion of enhanced content in library catalog records violates the profession’s ethical principles. It was still unclear whether Labeling and Rating Systems applied “to online catalogs that bundle bibliographic records with databases and other electronic informational resources, including book reviews, book covers, and other evaluative materials” (American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom 2010, 162). Therefore, the Intellectual Freedom Committee decided to prepare an FAQ, i.e., a list of frequently asked questions and the answers concerning specific applications of the statement Labeling and Rating Systems, for the ALA Web site. According to Questions and Answers on Labeling and Rating Systems, enhanced content in catalogs “should not be construed to preclude provision of resources and information useful to users ... as long as the criteria for inclusion is viewpoint-neutral” and that librarians “should seek the broadest spectrum of information and evaluative materials as possible” (2010).

## 7.0 The bias of library catalog content enhancement

Nevertheless, the enhanced content in library catalog records is frequently all but “viewpoint-neutral,” representing a “broad spectrum” of reviews. Library catalog content enhancement is frequently remarkably biased. Therefore, since library users want enhanced content for books in catalog records, à la Amazon.com, like book covers, summaries, and reviews, automatically pulled from publishers’ and booksellers’ sites on the World Wide Web, and beyond librarians’ control, librarians sometimes violate the Library

Bill of Rights and the statement Labeling and Rating Systems in meeting their users’ demands.

The catalog records for Bellesiles’s *Arming America* in many libraries, for example, fail the test of a “neutral viewpoint” and a “broad spectrum” of reviews, and the catalog of the Ames Public Library, in Ames, Iowa, in spite of the library’s best intentions, is a good example. The library received a request to withdraw its copy of *Arming America*, as reported by the director to the library’s Board of Trustees at its January 16, 2003, meeting. The request did not meet the criteria of the library’s collection development policy for withdrawal, however. The library therefore put a note in the catalog record, as well as in the book, indicating that the Bancroft Prize for *Arming America* had been rescinded (Homan 2003b).

The ability of the catalogs of sophisticated integrated library systems, such as SirsiDynix used by the Ames Public Library, to include in library catalog records hyperlinks to resources pulled automatically from the Web, however, makes the inclusion in library catalog records of book reviews, for example, easy, but takes it out of the library’s control. Ames Public Library’s catalog links users to *Arming America*’s table of contents, an excerpt of its introduction, and a summary of the book, but it also links to only two reviews, both of them favorable, one from the leading book-trade magazine designed to sell books, *Publishers Weekly*, the other from a major library magazine, *Library Journal*. The catalog also links to a short biography of Bellesiles, now outdated and inaccurate, as well as to the illustration of the dust jacket of the first, hardcover edition, with its superlative blurbs.

## 8.0 Conclusion

Michael Bellesiles’s *Arming America* is the subject of some spirited conversation between an academic library director and a collection development librarian in two very recent issues of the collection development journal *Against the Grain*. Appealing to cost accounting principles in libraries, as might be expected, the director argues that, if libraries discard outdated books “in the interests of saving precious shelf space” (McKinzie 2009b, 34), then “when a book has been proven to contain fabricated data and misrepresented research ... we should throw it out. Our commitment to ... the integrity of our collections ... demands nothing less” (McKinzie 2009a, 10).

The collection development librarian, however, argues that truth is not the primary criterion for acquisi-

tion in an academic library. “The primary criterion should be *usefulness*, and usefulness is determined by the library’s mission and the needs of its patrons. Bad books can be very useful indeed, and *Arming America* strikes me as an eminent example of such a book” (Anderson 2009, 34). *Arming America* is worth keeping, he says, “precisely because it has been an influential and important bad book, and because it is bad in particularly instructive ways” (Anderson 2009, 32), i.e., not as a history of gun ownership in America, but rather as an example of the tactics used by some in the modern American debate about gun culture, gun control, and the Second Amendment. Instead of discarding *Arming America*, he recommends pasting a rebuttal to the inside of the front cover of the book, thereby “using more speech to counter bad speech” (Anderson 2009, 32)—a “prejudicial label,” however, intended “as a means of predisposing people’s attitudes” toward the book, according to the American Library Association (2009). Neither the library director nor the collection development librarian thinks of putting a catalog note for *Arming America* in their library catalog.

Likewise, in a subsequent discussion among ten librarians on the collection development listserv about what libraries should do about such books as *Arming America*, triggered by the argument in *Against the Grain*, the most common analogy to the book in their libraries is outdated medical books, and the most common response to the book’s controversy is to withdraw it or, if libraries could afford to keep it, to “tape,” “tip,” or “glue” a “note,” “review,” or “disclaimer” to the inside of the front cover of the book—again, labeling, according to the ALA. Only one of the ten librarians suggests a catalog note for *Arming America*. “If we had the space to keep such a book, I suspect that we would put a note in one of the 500 fields of the MARC record” (Montgomery 2009, 60).

Although small libraries that cannot afford to keep their “bad books” may choose to discard them without violating the ethical principles of the profession, particularly since it is impossible for them to present “all points of view on current and historical issues” (Hitchcock 2005), library catalog notes for “bad books,” composed by librarians, not pulled automatically from the Web, are the most practical and least controversial solution to the problems posed by such books for libraries that can afford them. The purpose of library catalog notes for “bad books” is “not to restrict access to the books ... but to *inform* that access” (Hitchcock 2000, 363), allowing librarians to give up “guarding the harem” in favor of empowering a li-

brary's users to make their own, informed decisions about the library's "bad books." In fact, library catalog notes for "bad books" in twenty-first-century catalogs may be the only way for librarians to uphold the ethical principles of their profession regarding collection management while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to their users in calling attention to the "bad books" in their collections, and, at the same time, to help assert the relevance of library catalogs in the world of Web 2.0.

## References

- Albanese, Andrew, and Pinkowski, Jennifer. 2007. *Alms for Jihad* in libraries. *Library journal* 132n15: 15-16.
- American Library Association. 1996. Library bill of rights. Available <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.
- American Library Association. 2009. Labeling and rating systems: an interpretation of the library bill of rights. Available <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/labelingrating>.
- American Library Association. 2010. Questions and answers on labeling and rating systems. Available <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/qa-labeling>.
- American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom. 2010. History: labeling and rating systems. In *Intellectual freedom manual*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: American Library Association, pp. 157-63.
- Anderson, Rick. 2009. IMHBCO (in my humble but correct opinion)—academic libraries and the *Arming America* problem: a response to Steve McKinzie. *Against the grain* 21n6: 32, 34.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 1996. The origins of gun culture in the United States, 1760-1865. *Journal of American history* 83: 425-55.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 1999. The origins of gun culture in the United States, 1760-1865. In Dizard, Jan E., Merrill, Robert M., and Andrews, Stephen P. eds., *Guns in America: a reader*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 17-46.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 2000a. *Arming America: the origins of a national gun culture*. New York: Knopf.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 2000b. The origins of gun culture in the United States, 1760-1865. In Cornell, Saul ed., *Whose right to bear arms did the Second Amendment protect? Historians at work*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, pp. 145-79.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 2002. Exploring America's gun culture. *William and Mary quarterly* 59: 241-68.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 2003a. *Arming America: the origins of a national gun culture*. Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press.
- Bellesiles, Michael A. 2003b. *Weighed in an even balance*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Soft Skull Press.
- Bogus, Carl T. 2001. Shootout. *Texas law review* 79: 1641-55.
- Curry, Ann. 2005. Unreliable research: are librarians liable? *IFLA journal* 31: 28-34.
- Cutter, Charles A. 1904. *Rules for a dictionary catalog*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, D.C.: GPO.
- Eberhart, George M. 2007. Cambridge contacts U.S. libraries over *Alms for Jihad*. *American libraries* 38n9: 28.
- Glenn, David. 2007. Cambridge U. Press agrees to destroy book on terrorism in response to libel claim. *Chronicle of higher education*, August 10, p. 13.
- Grossman, Ron. 2002. Wormy apples from the groves of academe. *Chicago tribune*, January 23, p. C1.
- Gruber, Ira D. 2002. Of arms and men: *Arming America* and military history. *William and Mary quarterly* 59: 217-22.
- Hawley, E. Frederick. 2002a. Gun culture. In Gregg Lee Carter, ed., *Guns in American society: an encyclopedia of history, politics, culture, and the law*. 1<sup>st</sup> printing. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, pp. 243-48. Available: Google Books.
- Hawley, E. Frederick. 2002b. Gun culture. In Carter, Gregg Lee ed., *Guns in American society: an encyclopedia of history, politics, culture, and the law*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, pp. 243-48.
- Heston, Charlton. 1999. Rewriting firearms—and freedom—out of history. *Guns & ammo*, November, p. 37.
- Hitchcock, Leonard A. 2000. Enriching the record. *Journal of academic librarianship* 26: 359-63.
- Add reference: Hitchcock, Leonard A. 2005. An examination of article two of the Library Bill of Rights *Public library quarterly* 24n2: 1-18.
- Hitchcock, Leonard A. 2006. A critique of the new statement on labeling. *Journal of academic librarianship* 32: 296-302.
- Hoffer, Peter Charles. 2004. *Past imperfect: facts, fictions, fraud—American history from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Homan, Philip A. 2003a. A record enriched: the case for a library catalog note for Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America: the origins of a national gun cul-*



- ture—part 1. *Idaho librarian* 54n3. Available: <http://www.idaholibraries.org/newidaholibrarian/200302/RecordEnriched2.htm>.
- Homan, Philip A. 2003b. A record enriched: the case for a library catalog note for Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America: the origins of a national gun culture*—part 2. *Idaho librarian* 54n4. Available: <http://www.idaholibraries.org/newidaholibrarian/200305/RecordEnrichedII.htm>.
- Jatkevicius, James. 2004. When "good" books go "bad": opportunities for progressive collection management in public libraries. *Public library quarterly* 22n4: 31-40.
- Jatkevicius, James. 2005. Truth vs. authenticity: dealing with more "good" books going "bad" and seeking opportunities for catalog record enhancement. *Public library quarterly* 24n4: 35-43.
- Katz, Stanley N., Gray, Hanna H., and Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. 2002. Report of the investigative committee in the matter of professor Michael Bellesiles. Available: [www.emory.edu/news/Releases/Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.emory.edu/news/Releases/Final_Report.pdf).
- Lane, Roger. 2001. [Untitled review of *Arming America*.] *Journal of American history* 88: 614-15.
- Main, Gloria L. 2002. Many things forgotten: the use of probate records in *Arming America*. *William and Mary quarterly* 59: 211-16.
- Malcolm, Joyce Lee. 1994. *To keep and bear arms: the origins of an Anglo-American right*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Mauser, Gary A. N.d. An academic scandal: the importance of peer review. Available <http://www.sfu.ca/~mauser/papers/scandal/Bellesiles18-9.pdf>.
- McCain, Robert Stacy. 2002. Author under fire on accuracy of gun research. *Washington times*, January 1, p. A1.
- McKinzie, Steve. 2009a. Collection development and Bellesiles' *Arming of America*: the case for getting rid of a celebrated book. *Against the grain* 21n4: 10.
- McKinzie, Steve. 2009b. A response from Steve McKinzie. *Against the grain* 21n6: 34.
- Montgomery, Jack G. 2009. A case of discredited research. *Against the grain* 21n6: 59-61.
- Morgan, Edmund S. 2000. In love with guns. *The New York review of books* 47n16: 30-32.
- Pepys, Samuel. 1970. *The diary of Samuel Pepys*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Perrin, Noel. 1992. *Dr. Bowdler's legacy: a history of expurgated books in England and America*. Boston: David R. Godine.
- Rakove, Jack N. 2002. Words, deeds, and guns: *Arming America* and the Second Amendment. *William and Mary quarterly* 59: 205-10.
- Roth, Randolph. 2002. Guns, gun culture, and homicide: the relationship between firearms, the uses of firearms, and interpersonal violence. *William and Mary quarterly* 59: 223-40.
- Williams, Don. 2002. Could Bellesiles's problems undermine gun control? *History news network*. Available <http://hnn.us/articles/741.html>.
- Wills, Garry. 2000. Spiking the gun myth. *New York Times book review* September 10, pp. 5-6.