Slavery Links Library: Collection development policy

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A collection development policy is ...

a way to strengthen the assurance that the Library will deliver rigorous materials that are evidence-based or contain practice wisdom relevant to modern slavery and processes of change.

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WHY IS A COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY NEEDED?

The subject of modern slavery is emerging from obscurity and the study of slavery is a developing field. Many disciplines have something to contribute: community development, economics, history, finance, human rights law and criminal law, psychology and more. However there is not yet a meta-view, a generally accepted understanding of how slavery happens today, and why.

Information that is available on related topics is not necessarily relevant to the issue of modern slavery generally or the *systems* of slavery that exist in the Asia Pacific. The reasons why this is so were canvassed in Australians and Modern Slavery[1]. An Order Form for the book can be found on line.

Let us take three examples where the sort of accounts that are readily available may not be useful for developing an understanding of modern slavery. These examples refer to slavery in the past; to information from the internet; and to information about trafficking (or such forms exploitation).

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Information about the past Atlantic slave trade is not relevant to the situation of modern slavery in the Asia Pacific

In the literature that has come out of the United States, there are two seminal works to be included in any slavery collection. These are: Orlando Patterson's study of slavery across time and cultures (Slavery and Social Death) and the works of David Brion Davis (especially Slavery and Human Progress).

About 90 books per year are submitted for the Douglass Prize at Yale University. These books are essentially on the subject of the Atlantic slave trade, slavery in the Americas and the emancipation of people descended from slaves who were captured in Africa and taken to the Americas.

Information about that past does not illumine our present. In seeking to understand the Asia Pacific, it is not necessarily useful to borrow from stories about slavery in the Atlantic 200 years ago. To understand modern slave-making systems, it is necessary to think the issue through afresh.

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1.   Roscoe Howell (2011) Australians and Modern Slavery (Slavery Links, Brighton)

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Information from the internet is not necessarily useful in understanding the situation of modern slavery in the Asia Pacific

The Internet does carry reports which refer to evidence-based work and practice wisdom in relation to slavery. Such reports are accountable in the sense of being well documented and transparent. They are to be found in on-line journals and research data bases as well as on the web sites of institutions that do research or fund projects to develop and test practice wisdom. Some of these are large organisations (the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations, the World Bank) and some are small (for example Sankalp or the Self Employed Women's Association, SEWA).

Regrettably the Internet is not always a source of reliable information. In preparing the book <u>Australians and Modern Slavery</u>, it was found that:

- On the internet, terms may be used without regard for legal definitions
- Sources, even some official ones, conflate human trafficking with slavery. Trafficking has different experiences, causes and solutions from slavery. (See the discussion of exploitation, below.)
- Reports can be found in relation to evidence-based work being done, especially in South Asia, but original documents are difficult to locate
- Some accounts of work done have not been documented. Such work is not transparent or accountable in a rigorous way

There is another sense in which the internet is not a reliable source of information about slave-making systems in the Asia Pacific.

'Information' can be defined as 'a difference that makes a difference'. On the internet, 'information' is being re-defined in terms of the ranking of web pages. Page rankings are based on factors including:

- immediacy (breaking news that sets a trend) and
- the number of 'hits' that a page receives (popularity).

Popularity and trend-catching refer to the wisdom of crowds. This aspect of the Internet is sometimes called 'crowd sourcing'. Crowd sourcing can indicate what is popular or generally accepted. Yet the wisdom of a crowd does not replace the evidence-based work that will be required to develop an understanding of how slavery happens today, and why it persists.

That leads to the third example, another sort of account that may not be useful for developing an understanding of modern slavery.

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Information about other phenomena is not necessarily useful in understanding the situation of modern slavery in the Asia Pacific

[Slavery is defined](#) in terms of ownership. One person in effect owns another person. The underlying condition of ownership can show up in different forms. Each form is just a symptom of a *system* wide problem that allows ownership of people, in effect, to occur.

There is much exploitation in the world. Slavery is different from exploitation because of the element of ownership. Ownership is what makes slavery a crime against humanity.

Ownership has a strict definition in law. Ownership is not the same as exploitation. Child labour is a form of exploitation. Forced labour is a form of exploitation. Human trafficking is a particular form of exploitation, where so much deception is used that no meaningful consent can be given.

On occasion, a person who is being exploited in these ways may become enslaved. In so doing, the person experiences a change of state, from free to unfree.

However the evidence seems to show that most modern slaves have been enslaved in a particular place, a farm, a factory, a quarry or a home close to where the person has lived. Such at-risk people can be harvested.

That is why it is necessary for the collection of a *slavery* library to illumine the forces that enable slave-making *systems* to persist; and to illumine the means to be used to bring change in the communities where slave-making happens.

So, what information will be useful?

Useful information will explain how whole groups or classes of people can be harvested by slave-making systems that have persisted for generations. Systems of child trading, debt bondage, forced marriage and peonage (serfdom) trap people who have been excluded from mainstream life. How can people - low castes, people with a disability, some tribes or races, some religious groups and women - be excluded in ways that put them at risk?

Useful information will also illumine the "engines" that drive slave-making:

- Poverty
- Powerlessness)
- Crime / corruption
- Conflict

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FRAMEWORK FOR SLAVERY POLICY: SUMMARY

In the Asia Pacific, there are persistent *systems* of slavery which can harvest whole groups or classes of people, who have been excluded by virtue of their caste, gender race, religion, disability or some such reason.

To be effective an anti-slavery policy needs to address the economic, social, legal and decision systems that have been compromised by the slave-making "engines" of poverty, powerlessness, crime /corruption and conflict. To be effective, an anti-slavery policy needs to be owned by the community that has been affected; needs to ensure that the community retains 'agency' in the making of change.

FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE
LIBRARY COLLECTION

In this situation it is desirable for development of the library collection to promote, enhance and facilitate the following interests and activities:

- Discern the problem. In particular identify *systems* of slave-making and the forces that have enabled these systems to persist for generations
- Design programs and services which could tackle slavery at a system level and which can also respond to people touched by slavery
- Test and review these demonstration projects to show how each part of the program could be up-scaled to a national level
- Demonstrate how to implement with real people in a real room doing real activities, to move beyond 'awareness' and enable people to get experience in what it would be like to change behaviour

FRAMEWORK FOR SUBJECT HEADINGS

The above framework for development of the library collection provides some principles to guide the selection of global subject headings.

For suggestions as to specific subject headings which relate to slavery in the Asia Pacific and processes for change, refer to the [Slavery Links Library: Thesaurus](), to be found on [www.library.slaverylinks.org]()

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WHAT IS THE SLAVERY LINKS LIBRARY?

Slavery Links is a community association with a six-year track record of research and action to minimise the harm arising from modern slavery.

The Slavery Links Library has a solid catalogue of evidence-based and historical works about slavery. The Library supports research activities and exhibitions as well as academic seminars, briefings about slavery, evidence-giving to parliamentary inquiries, and workshops with adult education groups, community groups, interest groups, secular and faith groups.

The Slavery Links Library also supports the development of education materials. The Library has supported the development of sixteen workshop topics. The Library supported the book Australians and Modern Slavery. The Library has supported the preparation of papers for judicial officers, human rights staff and family practitioners.

How does the Library operate?

The Slavery Links Library is funded by members, not by Government, philanthropic trusts or appeals for public money. We do accept donations.

What difference do we make?

The internet is not a reliable source of information about slavery.

The Slavery Links Library collects and disseminates information to support better business decisions, more informed consumers, more engaged members of Non Government Organisations. The Library supports increased community awareness and community action. Library information assists organisations to recognise their anti-slavery roles more fully.

We encourage you to join the Library, as:

• A member
• A student member
• A donor member

We invite your support, to:

• Provide professional advice
• Provide practical support
• Donate an early edition of a book about slavery
• Donate original research or historical papers about slavery
• Buy a copy of Australians and Modern Slavery for a school or public library

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