

## THE RESEARCH LIBRARY AS COLONIAL POWER: CONTROL, RESISTANCE, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC IDEOLOGY

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The research library must necessarily be understood as an instrument of power and as such is inherently implicated in the broader colonial project that has defined the modern world for the past five centuries. Like other memory institutions (archives and museums), the library serves an instrumental function anchored in a fundamentally conservative state ideological apparatus whose telos is control: the language of the bibliographic imaginary — i.e., collections and their control — can best be understood as part of the Western project of expansion, enclosure, exploitation, and eradication. It must be acknowledged that the violence implicated within the library is all the more insidious and seemingly ineradicable given how successfully the library profession has ignored the fact that an institution (foremost in the English-speaking world) is founded upon pillage (viz, the birth of the English research library in the looting of the monasteries during the Reformation) as well as the violent assertion of property rights (both real and intellectual). In order to decolonize the library (and other memory institutions), the profession must resist its role in this ideological apparatus and re-evaluate, reassert, and reconstruct what libraries collect, what property rights are assigned to them, and how they are controlled.