

ABSTRACT

Controlling Outside Influences:

Undesirable Publications in Jamaica 1967-1972

An Investigation into the main features of a specific State Information Policy: A Content Analysis

Tanya Marie Manassi

This research is a content analytic study of the Schedule of Prohibited Publications for the years spanning 1967-1972 compiled from the gazetted Prohibited Publications (Amendment) Orders of the period. The listing was content analyzed to identify trends in publication characteristics. Powers of information control allowed the State are examined through a document analysis of The Undesirable Publications (Prohibition of Importation) Act, (1940). An evaluation of the political processes contextualizing the formulation and interpretation of information policy is crucial to the library positioning itself as a significant part of the Jamaican information infrastructure.

The investigation conclusively establishes The Undesirable Publications... Act as a piece of legislation allowing the Minister of Justice censorial authority in the regulation of publications produced outside of and seeking entry into the country. The basis for classifying a publication as being "contrary to the public interest" and therefore prohibited is "the opinion" of the Minister. The vulnerability of the concept of "freedom of expression" to potential abuse is exposed. Over ninety (90) entries comprised the Schedule. Many of these publications were deselected in 1972 and the current listing of prohibited publications is representative of the themes Magical Arts and Guerrilla Warfare.

Internationally, 1967-72 is noted for militancy, supported by political and racial ideologies. While the findings of the study are specific to the Jamaican context, the influence of international affairs is evidenced by the prohibited publications of the period. The majority reflect the themes of Communism and Black Power. While the Schedule identifies only paper based formats, advances in information communication technologies (ICTs) have expanded the regulatory sphere of the law to include electronic formats accessible through wireless technology. These developments necessitate an assessment of the efficacy of existing law in regulating outside influences in the public interest in today's more open information climate.

Key words: Tanya Marie Manassi; Information Policy; Undesirable Publications Law; Information Control; Censorship; Selection; Banned Books; Undesirable Publications; Librarians; Library and Information Professionals.