

# JLSC

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## **Brief Reviews of Books and Products** librarypunk

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## BRIEF REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTS

*librarypunk* [Audio podcast]. <https://www.librarypunk.gay/>

The *librarypunk* podcast is “a leftist library worker podcast,” in which hosts Justin, Sadie, Jay, and Carry, all library employees based in the United States, present a critical perspective on a variety of library-related topics. The podcast premiered February 3, 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hosts identify themselves using their first names only, pronouns, and their roles in librarianship, and they comprise a mix of academic and public library employees. Each episode breaks down tough conversations in librarianship, with a candid, conversational tone and irreverent humor throughout. Justin makes liberal use of a creative soundboard. Some episodes feature guests who join the conversation to help shed light on the topic of the week. The variety of guests across the podcast include library workers with a range of experience and expertise, such as archivists, independent scholars, consultants, and more. Occasionally, there is an appearance by Arthur the cat.

There are episodes that would be of particular interest to *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* readers. In the second episode, the hosts talk about open access. Justin provides a brief history and a thorough critique of academic publishing, not shying away from problems with the peer review process. For instance, he mentions stories, which can be found easily online, regarding dishonest behavior of peer reviewers, including one who rejects what she reads because she regards it as competition. Because not all of the hosts are academic librarians, the conversation provides substantial education on publishing, tenure, and the rise of, and problems with, open access. Other topics include open-access mandates in the United States and beyond, predatory journals, the serials crisis, Plan S, and more.

In Episode 027, “Intellectual Fweedom (no steppy),” the hosts and Sam, a Canadian academic librarian, have an extended conversation on efforts to challenge *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* by Abigail Shrier in public libraries and the anti-transgender history of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). Sam, who was working on a political theory dissertation on intellectual freedom at the time of recording, discusses his research using the work of cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall and the right-wing populism of intellectual freedom, moral panics focusing on the transgender community, and the myth of library neutrality. Citations in the show notes include some well-written blog posts by Sam on these topics for those who want more information.



In Episode 058, “Seize the Means of Cataloguing,” Becky Yoose, founder and Library Data Consultant for Library Data Hat (LDH) Consulting Services, talks about the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) lawsuit against Clarivate regarding MetaDoor. Whereas Clarivate described Metadoor as an open platform for sharing catalog records in integrated library systems that employed indexing and artificial intelligence (AI) technology, OCLC saw the service as a threat to their WorldCat service and existing licenses with client institutions. The case was settled in court in November 2022, resulting in Clarivate ceasing product development altogether. Yoose further discusses the usefulness of OCLC, although not defending them, in terms of centralized versus decentralized catalog records, as well as outsourcing cataloguing, the historical devaluing of technical services in libraries, OCLC’s litigation history, and more.

Episode 070, “Metadata Anarchy,” brings up some interesting issues related to controlled vocabularies. The episode was prompted by a Twitter post about an author who kept relocating his book to the poetry section instead of the religion section because he felt his “words are poetry,” to which host Jay, a former metadata librarian, responded with a joke tweet about metadata anarchy and “demanding that our systems be only about vibes from now on” ([librarypunk, 2022](#)). Because of this tweet, Jay discusses his experience hosting an invited lecture on metadata anarchy, which he developed into a discussion for library school students. Framed by Pëtr Kropotkin’s “On Order,” Jay breaks down a conversation on metadata order versus disorder. The hosts discuss the question, “What is order versus disorder in terms of metadata?” What follows is a compelling conversation about how the students reacted and questions that they asked, such as what role metadata play in capitalism. This episode prompts many questions that should be further explored.

Other episodes include topics such as information literacy, comics, graphic novels, vocational awe, toxic productivity, the Article Finder Network, open education, the Leather Archives & Museum, and more. A semiregular segment on the podcast is “What’s Wrong at ALA?” where the hosts address controversial or questionable actions by the American Library Association (ALA) and voice concerns that they have revolving around those topics.

*librarypunk* can be accessed through a number of podcast players, such as PodBean, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeart Radio, and more. They are active on their Twitter account (@librarypunk). The audio quality among speakers varies, but if there are editing cuts, the listener cannot tell. The soundboard volume sounds louder than the hosts at times, but it is not a deterrent. There is no unnecessary background noise, and Justin makes good use of samples and music throughout the podcast. Most episodes are about an hour long and include show notes with citations, uniform resource locators (URLs), and other pertinent information relating to the weekly topic. Something that would help their accessibility would be to make transcripts available.

The *librarypunk* podcast strikes a good balance between education and entertainment. With a wide range of topics and guests, there is something for everyone in librarianship who is interested in delving into subject matter from leftist social, political, and economic perspectives. The hosts posit interesting questions, some of which, of course, lack conclusive responses. The podcast's punk nonconformist, anti-authoritarianist spirit fosters a nontraditional way of discussing librarianship. To be clear, "punk" does not imply that topics covered are not presented in a scholarly way. On the contrary, the hosts take time to educate listeners, and each other, on the topic of the week. Although the hosts claim it is not a professional podcast, the content presented can be used to help advance library practices and improve the field as a whole. Accepting that librarianship is not neutral, and that all systems are biased, has the potential to open wider conversations and actually induce change. It is highly recommended to subscribe to *librarypunk*.

## REFERENCES

*librarypunk*. (2022, October 21). Metadata anarchy (No. 070) [Audio podcast episode]. <https://www.librarypunk.gay/e/070-metadata-anarchy/>

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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