Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility in Library and Information Science: A Reconciliation

Abstract:

This article presents a reconciliation of intellectual freedom and social responsibility in library and information science (LIS). The conflict between traditional intellectual freedom and social advocacy, integral to understanding a range of issues in LIS ethics, juxtaposes a laissez-faire freedom with social intervention. This study, by contrast, engages with conceptions of freedom within philosophical and LIS literatures, presenting a descriptive conceptualisation of both values through the common rubric of freedom. This method, influenced by the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, echoes Solove's (2002) conceptualisation of privacy and provides a conceptual clarity lacking in existing LIS literature. This clarity, it is argued, suggests a path of reconciliation for both values. The argument unfolds in three stages. First, the prominent conception of intellectual freedom within LIS represents an "anti-censorship" conception. This conception, restricted to passive physical accessibility, conflicts with literature promoting social responsibility. Second, an analysis of freedom within philosophical literature picks out three conceptions: negative, positive and republican. These conceptions, it is argued, translate to LIS literature and represent a full spectrum of viewpoints within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate. Five conceptions in LIS are identified: "negative conservative", "negative progressive", "content neutral", "republican" and "freedom as moral action". The conflict within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate, therefore, represents conflict between *conceptions of freedom.* Third, this insight paves the way for a reconciliation that tempers and ameliorates the tension between both values. Dimova-Cookson's (2003) "producer-recipient" model suggests how a negative intellectual freedom and a positive social responsibility may sit together in a symbiotic relationship. This understanding, illustrated by practical case studies, provides a fresh perspective on the complex interaction of both values within the LIS profession.

Introduction

Intellectual freedom is a core value within Library and Information Science (LIS). Debate over its meaning, complexity, and interaction with other values, however, sees it juxtaposed with social responsibility, a theme often discussed within LIS literature (Burgess, 2016; Dresang, 2006; Shockey, 2016; Childs, 2017). This study, by contrast, changes the shape of the current debate by suggesting a reconciliation for both values through the dialectic of freedom. This reading, facilitated by a descriptive conceptual analysis, integrates intuitions that favour intellectual freedom or social responsibility into a framework that *acknowledges* and *ameliorates* the tension between them. This symbiotic connection between a traditional "negative" intellectual freedom and "positive" social responsibility offers a fresh understanding of both values and a new perspective on the ethical dilemmas they interact with.

First, it is argued that conflict between intellectual freedom and social responsibility within LIS rests on a narrow "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom. Second, drawing on Solove's (2002) conceptualisation of privacy, conceptions of freedom within philosophical and LIS literature are compared using descriptive conceptual analysis. Starting with Berlin's (1958) positive and negative freedom, three conceptions in the philosophical literature successfully translate to LIS literature, breaking down into five conceptions that capture the spectrum of viewpoints within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate. Conflict between intellectual freedom and social responsibility in LIS, therefore, reduces to different *interpretations of freedom*. Finally, it is argued that this new understanding, exposed by the descriptive method, brings a new means of ameliorating the conflict between both values. Dimova-Cookson's (2003) "producer-recipient" model and Gould's (2013) "social conditions" show how intellectual freedom and social responsibility may co-exist in a symbiotic relationship. This symbiosis tempers the conflict between both values and deepens understanding of ethical dilemmas in which they interact, reducing tension between both values and appreciating them as complementary, rather than contradictory, values within the LIS profession. By doing this, the current study aims to move the shape of discourse within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate away from dogmatic difference towards an evaluation of the trade-off between different facets of freedom in specific situations.

Intellectual Freedom: A Core Value in LIS

Before examining conceptions of freedom, however, this section underlies intellectual freedom's place within the LIS profession and the documentation of national library associations. This is most prominent within the American Library Association (ALA) where, rather than presenting a honed concept, it runs thematically through core documents. Its clearest definition is found in its *Support for Intellectual Freedom,* depicting an ability "to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment" and to "[promote] access to information and [guide] the defense against censorship" (ALA, 2018). Likewise, the *Intellectual Freedom Manual* describes a value whereby individuals "have the right to hold any belief" and society "makes [a] commitment to…unrestricted access to information" (ALA, 2010, p.xvii cited in Ratcliffe, 2020, p.13). The *Library Bill of Rights* (1939) represents several facets of intellectual freedom ranging from protection of resources from "partisan…disapproval" and "censorship" to the protection of users from discrimination based on "age, background, or views", the use of "meeting rooms" and the right to "privacy and confidentiality" (ALA, 1939). Its code of ethics, by contrast, affirms a commitment to "uphold the principles of intellectual freedom" and the *Freedom to Read Statement* focuses on access and user rights, promoting "the widest diversity of views and expressions" and guarding against the coercion of users' reading behaviour (ALA, 1953). This intellectual freedom – "essential to…democracy" (Cohen and Minow, 2006, p.94) – strengthens the "freedom of its citizens to choose widely from conflicting opinions" (ALA, 1953). For the ALA therefore, freedom embodies free access, opposition to censorship, and the protection of library users from discrimination, coercion, and invasion of privacy.

This codification is affirmed by various European library associations. For the UK's Library and Information Association, it constitutes "the right to access and share information, to intellectual activity and creativity [and] expression and debate" (CILIP, 2018). France's Association des Bibliothécaires Français promotes a "freedom of reading" uninfluenced by LIS professionals' personal views (ABF, 2003). The Netherlands Association of Librarians, respects "free and equal access to information" (Netherlands Association of Librarians, 1993) and, for Spain's Association for Documentation and Information (2013), intellectual freedom defends "expression, information and knowledge". Beyond national boundaries, article nineteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promotes "the right to

freedom of opinion and expression" (UN, 1948 cited in Nye, 2017, p.1). This right is affirmed by the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (Byrne, 2000, p. 58). The UN's article nineteen is acknowledged by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (1999) whose *Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom* describes a "core responsibility" opposing censorship and promoting "freedom of thought" (IFLA, 1999).

The reverence for intellectual freedom within ethical codes gives it a legitimate claim to be LIS's most prominent value. Its broad scope, however, ensures its elusiveness within LIS. This is picked up by Ratcliffe (2020) who notes a shift in meaning from an eighteenth century "freedom to think" to a twentieth century "freedom to express views" (p.19) and encapsulated in circular definitions within the literature. The ALA, for example, provides a definition which includes the ability to "speak freely" (ALA, 2018). Other codes and frameworks, by contrast, assert a right to freedom with respect to thought or expression. These definitions, however, do not engage with freedom itself - a contested concept within philosophical literature. This study, by contrast, maps conceptions, bringing a fresh perspective to intellectual freedom's interaction with social responsibility.

Intellectual Freedom in LIS: The Fight Against Censorship

Having established intellectual freedom as a core value in LIS, this section explores the predominant "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom within LIS literature, forming a backdrop that frames conflict within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate.

The predominant conception of intellectual freedom in LIS literature extends the concept found within ethical codes. It has two features. First, intellectual freedom is viewed narrowly as a "freedom from *external constraint*" (Rubel and Zhang, 2015, p.430). It opposes censorial barriers that thwart access, characterised by Rubel and Zhang as, "restrictions…that are imposed by others and limit a person's ability to act" (p.430). Freedom is impaired when barriers, *erected by others*, prevent access, or prohibit free expression. Crucially, its scope is narrow and tightly defined; barriers originate outside of the agent and do not extend to inner psychological makeup or motivation.

4

Second, this negative conception is melded to a neutral passivity. This notion – subtler and often implied within the literature – sees the LIS professional sit back and promote unfettered access, rather than critically challenge trends within publishing or knowledge creation. Put another way, this conception concerns itself with *overt* rather than *covert* barriers; that is, with policies and mechanisms which directly prevent access to information, rather than internal barriers that hinder self-realisation, or other systemic issues, such as those related to class, race, or gender, that interact with knowledge creation. The overriding hallmark of the "anti-censorship" conception, therefore, is a focus on direct barriers to access.

This conception is commonplace within the literature. For Darling (1979) libraries have become "a…channel of unfettered access to all forms of expression" where intellectual freedom is realised through the accessibility of "differing opinions" (p.315). Knox (2014) argues the "librarian should provide information giving all points of view" (p.14) and Busha (1972) describes an "antithesis of censorship" which reflects a user's "rights to read, to watch, or to listen to what he wants" (p.284). Here we see both facets of the "anti-censorship" conception – a freedom from censorial barriers facilitated by the LIS professional's unfettered provision. In a similar vein, Oltmann (2019) depicts an intellectual freedom which provides "a broad array of ideas and perspectives…with as few restrictions as possible" (p.3). Likewise, Rosenbaum (1996) argues that internet filtering impairs freedom; "libraries…should not deny or limit access to information available via electronic resources" and Childs (2017) notes that "intellectual freedom is compromised" by "policies resulting in online censorship" (p.62). In a school context, Adams (2011) argues intellectual freedom is curtailed by "excessive filtering" blocking "constitutionally protected online content" (p.32), and for Schliesman (2008) "access to ideas" are curtailed by censorship (p.221). This is crystallised by Doyle (2001), who argues that intellectual freedom constitutes "a case against all forms of censorship" (p.44).

Rather than report fully on anti-censorship literature, however, the present argument sketches the "anti-censorship" conception to show how it is *understood.* It represents a narrowly construed freedom thwarted by censorial barriers, melded to a neutral passivity synonymous with *physical accessibility*. Crucially, the present argument delineates the "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom *as a concept* rather than exploring its

normative justification, which could derive from a range of normative traditions, epitomised by Woodward's assertion that "one can give both consequentialist and deontological arguments for intellectual freedom" (Woodward, 1990, cited in Doyle, 2001, p.55). For consequentialism, morality consists in promoting values or maximizing states of affairs (Petit, 1997, p.231). This form of justification for intellectual freedom can be traced to John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty,* where a marketplace characterised by "open…exchange lead[s] to the…adoption of best ideas which prevail over falsehoods" (Oltmann, 2016, p.159). Here, intellectual freedom becomes a societal good, promoted for the consequences it accrues. Crucially, this justification need not require a consequentialist calculation on a "case by case" basis but could, instead, embody a form of rule-consequentialism where intellectual freedom becomes a de facto right (Doyle, 2001, p.69). Deontological constraints, by contrast, place ethical limits on our behaviour irrespective of consequences, making a stronger rights-based claim "that people are *entitled* to freely express their thoughts" (Ward, 1990, p.86). This is epitomised, for example, by Oltmann's assertion that intellectual freedom represents an "essential…means of assuring self-fulfilment" (2016, p.164).

Rather than examine the normative justification in favour of the "anti-censorship" conception, however, the present argument engages with the *meaning of intellectual freedom itself*. It provides the *conceptual clarity* from which a normative evaluation of intellectual freedom and its interaction with social responsibility could, perhaps, be made. It should be noted, however, that the "anti-censorship" conception, characterised as a narrow freedom thwarted by external censorial barriers and melded to a neutral passivity, *is consistent* with a range of normative traditions and may be discussed independently of its normative underpinning.

Intellectual Freedom vs Social Responsibility

Having introduced the predominant "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom, this section charts its conflict with social responsibility, highlighting the development of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate through three strands of conflict.

From the mid-twentieth century, the "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom, ingrained within the ALA's *Library Bill of Rights* and reflected in LIS literature, began to be challenged, notably in the United States by the Progressive Librarian's Council and the

formation of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) (Dresang, 2006, p.177). The SRRT rejected neutral passivity, advocating an interventionist approach that engaged with social and political issues. This conflict was crystallised in Berninghausen's *Social Responsibility vs the Library Bill of Rights* which argued that "social and political issues" were an "erosion" that weakened "access [and] expression" (1972, p.3676). In other words, the "anti-censorship" conception – "the paradigm of intellectual freedom within…American librarianship" (Shockey, 2016) – connotes a commitment to professional neutrality incompatible with social responsibility (p.103).

The conflict between the neutral librarian and "social responsibility" continues to the present day. The #critlib movement, for example, stands in stark contrast to the narrow scope of the "anti-censorship" conception, describing itself as a disrupter of a dominant "white supremacy", "capitalism" and a "structural inequality" (Critlib, 2022), or as a movement that prioritises "human rights above other professional concerns" (Samek, 2007 cited in Beilin 2012, p.195). Seen this way, "Critical Librarianship" – often synonymous with "social justice-orientated activism" (Ferretti, 2020, p.137) – prioritises wider societal issues over restrictive "library-centric" boundaries. This clash of perspectives, integral to understanding a range of issues within LIS ethics, is well rehearsed within LIS literature. Instead of recapitulating the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate, however, the current project sketches this conflict as a precursor to reconciling both values.

Criticism of the "anti-censorship" conception is threefold and focuses on the LIS professional's role as a passive facilitator. First, the LIS professional ignores the bias that frames the paradigm in which they work. For Seale and Mirza (2019) the neutral librarian embraces a neo-liberal agenda linked to a "marketplace of ideas" where "black people's humanity" and other minority rights are overlooked (p.44), or tacitly prioritises a market "dominated by the powerful and well-to-do" (Heckart, 1991, p.497, cited in Seale and Mirza, 2019, p.46). By promoting an intellectual freedom that is restrictive, the LIS professional cannot "grapple with power and oppression beyond 'suppression' and 'censorship'" (Seale and Mirza, 2019, p.45). This theme runs through criticism of the "anti-censorship" conception. The LIS professional – a "vessel to pass information" (Williams, 2017) – supports a status quo dominated by "white…society" (Stoffle and Tarin, 1994, p.47); (for a more

detailed presentation of this criticism see Macdonald and Birdi, 2020; Bales and Engles, 2012; Birdsell, 1982 and Blanke, 1989).

Second, the "anti-censorship" conception overlooks inequality within publishing and paradoxically perpetuates censorship. Here, an interventionist conception emerges. Childs (2017) notes librarians who protected intellectual freedom by opposing Harper Collins who, due to wider societal pressures, initially withheld Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men* (p.60). This is echoed by Iverson's (2008) observation that "mainstream publishing houses" unwittingly perpetuate "systemic racism" (p.16) – a finding backed up by empirical research (see McDonald, 2008; Atton, 1994; Dilevko and Grewal, 1997). This criticism targets the passive librarian who overplays the LIS professional's neutral role at the expense of wider societal inequalities.

The third criticism argues that the LIS professional's role has an irreducible social dimension. Here, libraries have a duty to promote "social and emotional inclusivity" as part of a "larger mission" (Pagowsky, 2015). Closely related to the "tacit value" criticism, this argument focuses on *values* rather than the incoherence of the "anti-censorship" conception. It branches into two strands. First, libraries should endorse specific values; Martin (2020) notes that libraries are "defenders of human and social rights" (p.131) and Morales et al. (2014) promote "diversity and social justice in librarianship" (p.439). Second, this interventionism also embodies communitarianism, epitomised by Gibson et al. (2017) who advocate a community-based approach that "acknowledges…social, cultural, financial, and political power…to confront limitations to freedom of speech" (pp.1-2) and Alfino and Pierce (2001), who argue libraries should help communities "self-legislate" and "lead…inquiry" (p.482). In this guise, the "anti-censorship" conception is challenged *emotively*.

Again, the purpose here is not to provide an exhaustive account of the literature that charts the conflict between an "anti-censorship" conception and social advocacy, but to characterise the arguments that frame conflict between them: first, LIS's role in addressing dominant "tacit values", second, its influence on structures that underlie knowledge creation, and third, the prioritisation of progressive values. Having framed this debate, however, the present argument turns to a path of reconciliation within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate.

Descriptive Conceptual Analysis

This reconciliation is approached through descriptive conceptual analysis. Echoing Solove's (2002) conceptualisation of privacy, this approach explores the *grammar* of freedom. This grammar, previously explored by the current author in the context of LIS neutrality (see Macdonald, 2022), provides fresh means of mapping intellectual freedom's place within the LIS profession.

Descriptive conceptualisation contrasts with a traditional method that searches for concepts' "necessary and sufficient element" (Solove, 2002, p. 1090). These conditions represent a blueprint where uses of the concept are "cleaned up to match the conceptual category" (p.1096). Seen this way, the traditional method searches for an "essence" or "core common denominator" calibrated through logical consistency (p.1096). This is epitomised by Scriven, who describes a method that constructs "paradigmatic examples" determining a rule for a concept's application (Scriven, 1988, cited in Smith, 2008, p.33).

A descriptive analysis, by contrast, does not establish "conceptual truths" but charts the *relationship* between concepts in a cartographic process that interprets language as a "spatial and temporal phenomenon" (PI 108). This approach, heavily influenced by the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, rejects the "systematic uniformity in the logic of our language" (Macdonald, 2022, p.582). Instead of searching for an underlying essence, Wittgenstein draws attention to the "network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" that ensues when concepts are applied (Wittgenstein, 1953, PI 66). For Wittgenstein, therefore, conceptions *resemble* each other as family members who share a likeness do. He illustrates using the concept of "game". Whilst "winning or losing" seems to capture an essential facet of the concept, it does not apply to a child whose individual "game" - bouncing a ball – simply passes time. The relationship between instantiations, therefore, constitutes a looser "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein, 1953, PI 66). In this spirit, the present study presents a descriptive conceptualisation of freedom, charting the relationship between conceptions within philosophical and LIS literatures. Rather than deducing an overriding "theory of freedom" or following a strict methodology, it maps the *connection* between competing conceptions, representing a shift in attitude from theoretical construction to appreciation of the complex landscape that instantiates a concept's use.

The benefit of the descriptive approach lies in the *conceptual clarity* it provides which, rather than any deeper philosophical belief, motivates its use. This pragmatism is encapsulated by Solove (2002) who notes that description is conducive to multifaceted, contested concepts (p.1099). Consequently, freedom's complex character – a concept with contested meaning – lends itself to descriptive conceptualisation. The synergy between contested concepts and description was noted by the present author in a study that explored LIS neutrality (Macdonald, 2022), where the descriptive approach produced an informative representation of a fragmented "LIS neutrality" debate. This method of conceptualisation has a noted precedent throughout the wider literature. Seli et al. (2018) propose a family resemblance conceptualisation of "mind wandering" based on its ability to map heterogeneity, encouraging a "more nuanced and precise understanding of [its] many varieties" (p.1) and Ab Kadir's (2007) conceptualisation of "critical thinking" argues that "family resemblance" provides a means of "mediation in conceptual conflict" (p.6). In this spirit, the present argument describes differences between conceptions of freedom in the philosophical literature and transposes them to LIS, providing a fresh perspective on the interaction of viewpoints within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate. The descriptive method provides a more *accurate depiction* of freedom's heterogeneity which, in turn, mediates a more reconciliatory tone for discussions about its interaction with social responsibility. (For further discussion of Wittgensteinian conceptualisation, see Barrenechea, R. and Castillo, 2019; Irzik and Nola, 2011; Willcox, 2017; Nyström, 2005).

Conceptions of Freedom

This descriptive process begins by focusing on the philosophical literature which, highly developed in comparison with LIS literature, sheds a light on the debates implicit, but often hidden, within LIS literature. It lays the foundation for a reconciliation between the "anti-censorship" conception of intellectual freedom and social responsibility by describing the *diversity and scope* of freedom as a concept. The structure is threefold. First, Berlin's (1969) distinction between positive and negative liberty is introduced. Second, the conceptual structure of negative and positive liberty is described in detail; rather than depicting two honed concepts, positive and negative freedom characterise clusters of closely connected

conceptions. Third, the republican conception of freedom straddles the "negative-positive" dichotomy. Understanding the variation between competing conceptions sheds a light on the differences within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate which boil down to differences between *conceptions of freedom*.

Berlin's (1958) *Two Concepts of Liberty* forms a cornerstone in the modern understanding of freedom (treated synonymously as liberty for the present argument). Berlin presents two broad conceptions of liberty that express "irreconcilable" attitudes (p.156). The first, negative liberty, represents a freedom to act "unimpeded by interference" (p.156); it concerns "the area within which the subject…should be left to do…what he is able" (Berlin, 2017, p.369). This conception of freedom – which echoes Hobbes, Mill and Hayek – conceives freedom as *opportunity* rather than *ability*; an agent's freedom to do X does not depend on X's attainability, but its prevention by external impediment. For this conception, therefore, a semi-literate person may be *free* to write a novel yet lack the *ability* to do it; "freedom is the opportunity to act, not action itself" (Berlin, 1969, p.xlii, cited in Bowring, 2015, p.157). For the negative conception, therefore, freedom is thwarted by *external* barriers that prevent goal realisation, or a "freedom from being governed by others" (Bowring, 2015, p.157).

Its counterpart, positive liberty, focuses on "moral or rational action" (Dimova-Cookson, 2003, p.76). This substantive account shifts the onus from external barriers to the way desires are *formed or governed* (Berlin, 2017, p.369). In doing so, freedom is entwined with our motivational make-up. For this account – favoured in different forms by Kant, Rousseau and Green – freedom has a "content [and] character" that make it "a determinate activity" (Bowring, 2015, p.157). Seen this way, freedom represents the attainment of a rational or moral ideal.

In *Two Concepts of Liberty,* however, Berlin favours negative liberty. Positive liberty's focus on a moral or rational self-realization neglects pluralism and choice. For Berlin, the positive conception grinds against a pluralistic understanding of the good (Berlin, 2017, p.384). His argument in favour of the negative conception is twofold. First, if freedom consists in "obedience" to a rational or moral law, our 'real selves' "cannot help choosing it" (Berlin, 2017, p.375). Counterintuitively, therefore, agents are freer when they discard *their* desires for a prescribed ideal (Christman, 1991, p.352). For Berlin, this "monstrous" conclusion is

11

incompatible with pluralism. By equating freedom with self-realization, the positive conception requires agents to abandon their desires as if they are "something [they are] not" (Berlin, 2017, p.374). Second, Berlin extends his reductio ad absurdum. If agents become freer by giving up desires, this is consistent with the coercion of agents "on behalf of their real selves" (Berlin, 2017, p.374). By equating freedom with a prescribed self-realization, freedom becomes a tool of oppression, legitimising (or at least consistent with) bullying, coercion and tyranny (Berlin, 2017, p. 374)

Despite his influence in shaping modern discussions of liberty, Berlin's argument is easily countered by a "content neutral" conception of freedom, consistent with pluralism, that focuses on the *quality* of rational deliberation (Christman, 1991), or a progressive conception that facilitates autonomy (Dimova-Cookson, 2013). Before reviewing these responses, however, positive and negative liberty are reviewed in more detail.

Negative Liberty

Rather than depicting a tightly honed concept, negative liberty represents a cluster of ideas that conceive freedom as an absence of barriers. Its classic articulation stems from Hobbes; man is free when "not hindered to do what he has will to do" (Hobbes, 1968, p.262 cited in Van Mill, 1995, p.445). Rather than linking freedom to rationality, freedom is concerned with physical barriers and is thwarted by "impeding…what is willed" (Van Mill, 1995, p.445). Similarly, for J. S. Mill, freedom constitutes "pursuing our own good in our own way" (Mill, 1946, p.11). Hobbes' and Mill's liberty, therefore, embrace pluralism, favouring a conception that allows agents to pursue personal goals (whatever they may be). Most modern defenders of negative liberty, however, would argue that freedom also constitutes opportunity to pursue what an agent *does not want to do*. This distinction is important; a freedom that *only* demands desire satisfaction is consistent with Berlin's dystopian picture of a population conditioned to follow a prescribed conception of the good. On this modified account, the negative theorist sidesteps this difficulty; freedom represents the opportunity to pursue courses of action free from external impediment (see Steiner, 1974; Day, 1970).

For Hayek, the sphere in which freedom operates is even more restrictive; it constitutes "a relation of men to other men" (2017, p.81). In short, freedom is only limited by actions that are coerced. A rock climber is free even when consigned to take an unavoidable risk

dictated by their path. To argue otherwise confuses freedom and power; liberty neither satisfies wishes nor provides attractive choices but represents the "absence of external impediment" by *other humans* (p.86). As Hayek states, "to be free may mean freedom to starve…or to run mortal risks" (p.87). This strict criterion is echoed by Steiner (1974), who argues that "the unfree individual…is *prevented* by another" (p.33). An agent is free to do X provided the "components of doing A" are not possessed by another agent (p.48). Crucially, freedom is only thwarted by direct action. Here, Steiner discounts the notion that indirect actions, such as threats, influence freedom. To do this, he unpicks the logical structure of offers and threats. Intuitively, threats appear to diminish freedom; the threat of violence, for example, may deter an agent from following a course of action. An offer, such as a new job, by contrast, appears to leave our freedom unscathed. When unpacked, however, Steiner argues that threats and offers are logically identical; our calculation "consists in effecting a positive remainder when the degree of desirability attached to the non-compliance consequence is subtracted from that of the compliance consequence" (1974, p.40). In other words, both are evaluated via the same procedure: a weighing of the costs and benefits of action (or inaction). By doing this, Steiner blunts the intuitive pull of threats as freedom limiters. Having done this, he argues that only actions made *impossible by others* limit freedom. Mere threats, by contrast, leave liberty unscathed; "intervention does not count as prevention" (p.43).

Day (1970) also endorses a freedom from coercion, targeting "real will" accounts of positive liberty whereby an autocrat, the kind envisaged by Berlin, "frees" his subjects by acting on their behalf (p.185). To dispel the idea that an autocrat knows the will of his subjects, he distinguishes two senses of the word "want". Want (desire) is only known first-hand; it is analytic and built into the definition of being "adult" and "sane" (p.188). Want (need), by contrast, reports what an agent *thinks* would be good for another (p.183). He argues that only agents know their wants (desires); whilst an autocrat may know his subjects want (need), they cannot bridge the step from want (need) to want (desire) (p.189). Given this, Day argues that all arguments for a "real will" account of freedom are either false (because an agent is the sole authority of their own desires) or, if taken as want (need), commit the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* by failing to prove their conclusion (that an agent's wants (desires) can be known by another). Day's argument seeks to challenge positive accounts

13

where a prescribed ideal is imposed by a higher authority. Put in context, therefore, Hayek, Steiner and Day delineate two facets of negative liberty; first, freedom from coercion to *pursue* outcomes, and second, a distinction between freedom and desire *realisation* which, unobserved, conflates freedom with *power or ability*.

In contrast, Nelson (2005) makes a conceptual argument in favour of negative liberty. Instead of rejecting the *content* of the positive account, freedom can be *reduced* to the "negative idiom" (p.66). The positive liberty of Kant, Green, and Bosquet turns "to the language of constraint" (Nelson, 2005 p.66). In contrast to Hayek and Steiner, however, Nelson cedes that constraints may be *internal*. For Green and Bosquet, freedom is liberation from constraining "wants and impulses" (Dimova-Cookson, 2003, p.18 cited in Nelson, 2005, p.61). Likewise, Kant's conception of freedom – a higher "law of reason" free from the "world of sense" – can also be framed through the language of constraint (Kant 2002, p.69 cited in Nelson, 2005, p.66). Here, Nelson draws attention to Kant's assertion that freedom is "something left over" when constraints are removed (Kant, 2002, p.79 cited in Nelson 2005, p.66). By doing this, Nelson argues positive liberty reduces to its negative counterpart.

Nelson's focus on internal psychological barriers – far removed from physical coercion – demonstrates the negative conception's malleability. Rather than depicting a tightly defined concept, negative liberty is a cluster of ideas representing freedom as *absence.* For the most part, however, barriers are external and determined by well-defined criteria – "an absence of external impediment" (Hayek, 2017, p.86) or direct "prevention by another" (Steiner, 1974, p.33). Second, its liassez-faire character – a freedom from interference – supports pluralism through action in accordance with desire (Hobbes and Mill) or freedom to pursue actions (both desired and undesired) (Steiner, Day and Hayek).

Positive Liberty: Historical Roots

For positive liberty, freedom is more than absence; it constitutes moral and rational self-realization. Its historical roots trace to Plato's *Republic* where, contra Hobbes and Mill, Plato denounces "freedom as the right to live as one likes" (Hansen, 2010, p.24). Instead, freedom constitutes "the dominance of the rational part of the soul" over the "appetitive…soul" and avoiding slavery in the service of desire (p.24). This rationality is echoed by Kant who, contra Nelson, represents an archetypal positive theorist. For Kant, freedom constitutes a

convergence between rationality and morality where freedom is aligned with "conformity to duty" (Kant, 1997, p.11 cited in Dimova-Cookson, 2013, p.77). It ensues "when we give up the activities to which we are inclined" (p.73) and, instead, access *a priori* rules that transcend "sense data" (Kaufman, 1997, p.40). For both Plato and Kant, therefore, liberty represents rationality.

For Rousseau, by contrast, desires play a part in liberty; freedom constitutes the judicious pursuit of passions guided by rationality. Whilst Rousseau's freedom constitutes "self-realisation", it embodies a choice "grounded in a mixture of reasons and impulse" (Kaufman, 1997, p.43). Central to Rousseau's conception is the ability to make *balanced choices*. It is this freedom of choice, Bertram argues, that forms his "argument against despotic government" (2020) and answer to the tyranny objection. Instead of leading to Berlin's tyranny, Rousseau's positive liberty – a "sharing of…political power" (Dimova-Cookson, 2013, p.82) – *also provides freedom*. By doing this, Rousseau blends "the conditions for freedom with the…exercise of freedom" (p.82), realised through *active political participation*.

Positive Liberty and Pluralism: Responding to Tyranny

Positive liberty branches out into two further lines of thought. The first advocates a "content neutral" liberty. Taylor moves away from a homogenous rational ideal, arguing that freedom constitutes a personalised self-realisation where agents "can't be the final authority on… [their freedom]" (Taylor, 1979, p.147). Second, however, he argues that his conception does not lead to "totalitarian manipulation" (p.147). Whilst gaining from those who "surpass us in wisdom", self-realization *differs for everyone* (p.147). Taylor escapes the criticism from tyranny by embracing a pluralistic conception of the good. He departs from negative liberty, accepting that self-realization may be thwarted by "internal, motivational obstacles" (p.160); "a man who is driven by spite…is not really made…free if one lifts the external obstacles to his venting" (p.160). Seen this way, freedom is an *individualised* self-realization frustrated by psychological barriers.

"Content neutral" liberty is developed by Christman who shifts emphasis to the *development* of freedom. Freedom constitutes "self-mastery" dictated by an "internalist rationality requirement" (Christman, 1991, p.344), where agents "acting on the basis of

inconsistent beliefs…are not acting freely" (p.350). By doing this, Christman's liberty - a "subjectivist, internalist notion" (p.359) – also bypasses the tyranny objection; rather than adhere to a universal external value, freedom represents autonomy measured by consistent internal beliefs. A freedom of mere absence, he argues, neglects the *development* of this autonomy which requires "just institutions" as well as "educational, social, and personal resources" (2005, p.87). Both Taylor and Christman, therefore, avoid oppressive totalitarianism. Instead, positive liberty becomes an *enabling freedom*.

Positive Liberty as Social Responsibility

A second response to the tyranny objection equates freedom with moral action. Here, freedom embodies a *collective morality*. T. H. Green distinguishes between "juristic" and "true" freedom; the former constitutes action "according to preference" whilst the latter involves "doing what we ought to do" (Dimova-Cookson, 2013, p.77). Complete freedom is only realised through "true" freedom; "short of developing our full rational and moral potential, we live in a state of frustration and unrest" (2013, p.78). By recognising freedom's social dimension, Green blends demand for individual liberty with social justice. In *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, his positive freedom represents "contributions to a common good" (Green, 2017, p.23). For Green, a well-ordered society provides resources and property, its preservation, therefore, represents a freedom that serves the collective interest (p.23). Seen this way, Green echoes Rousseau; positive liberty combines the exercise of freedom with conditions that *sustain it*.

This theme is encapsulated by Dimova-Cookson, who argues that positive liberty's alignment with social justice represents a "fairer justification of the way the concept has evolved" (2013, p.79), and is a sharp departure from negative liberty à la Berlin – "everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice" (Berlin, 2017, p.37). For Green, by contrast, this response is inadequate. Observing how freedom of contract favours the stronger party in Victorian Britain, he argues that freedom's social value should be preserved "in a way that makes social justice part and parcel of the exercise" (Dimova-Cookson, 2013, p.81). Like Rousseau, Green answers the tyranny argument by equating freedom with a collective preservation of the conditions that allow it to flourish.

In summary, positive freedom represents a cluster of ideas that switch the emphasis away from a negative absence to moral or rational self-realization. Two themes have been developed. First, a content-neutral conception of freedom supports pluralism, demanding adherence to a rational standard, such as consistent beliefs (Christman), or recognition of internal barriers (Taylor). Second, positive freedom can also be equated with moral responsibility. Here, the emphasis switches *from the individual to the collective.* Freedom is part of an eco-system maintained by socially responsible action, encapsulated by Rousseau and Green who combine the exercise of freedom with its preservation.

Beyond Negative and Positive: Republican Liberty

A final conception – republican freedom – straddles the positive–negative divide, representing protection from "the arbitrary…power" (MacGilvray, 2013, p.116). Freedom constitutes self-governance or, put another way, the absence of arbitrary control. MacGilvry characterises this control as the inability to "display one's true character" (p.116). By equating freedom with the absence of arbitrary power, the republican conception escapes the "positive–negative" dichotomy. Its focus is on *societal self-governance,* rather than moral or rational self-realisation, eluding Berlin's positive dialectic. Likewise, a negative non-interference fails to capture republican "non-domination". This distinction is explored by Petit (2016): whilst non-interference "makes the absence of interference sufficient for freedom" (p.224), non-domination "requires the absence of a capacity…to interfere arbitrarily" (p.224). For the republican conception, therefore, freedom constitutes self-governance where the law *applies to all equally* (p.226). For Petit, this focus on non-domination is consistent with state redistribution. Whilst a republican conception puts "the state under scrutiny" (p.238), it can be harnessed to redistribute resources consistent with democracy (p.241). For republican freedom, therefore, the emphasis switches to the preservation of democracy where all are stakeholders in society.

Summary of Conceptions

To summarise, the present argument has described three broad conceptions of liberty: negative, positive, and republican. Rather than provide an exhaustive analysis, it serves to illustrate *freedom's heterogeneity*. The negative conception – a freedom of absence – is characterised by two features. First, barriers to freedom are overt and restricted to well-

defined criteria, such as physical prevention. Second, the negative conception embraces pluralism: freedom represents action in accordance with desire, or the ability to pursue courses of action (desired and undesired). The positive conception, by contrast, conceives freedom as a form of moral or rational self-realisation. The "content neutral" conception commits to pluralism tempered by an internal autonomy, or recognition of internal barriers. Second, positive liberty may also be equated with social responsibility, epitomised by Green's collective social freedom. Finally, the republican conception eludes a "positive–negative" analysis, equating freedom with a collective self-governance.

Having explored freedom within the wider philosophical literature through descriptive conceptual analysis that charts the relationship between conceptions, the present argument turns to intellectual freedom and its interaction with social responsibility in LIS. The conflict between both values, it is argued, can be understood as conflict between *different interpretations of freedom.* Consequently, the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate can be reinterpreted through the rubric of freedom. This reinterpretation, not a theoretical construct but an observation arising from description, germinates an insight that points towards a reconciliation for both values within the LIS profession.

Intellectual Freedom in LIS: Intellectual Freedom vs Social Responsibility

The present section lays out this interpretation. It is argued that all three broad conceptions examined in the philosophical literature – positive, negative, and republican – share significant structural similarities to positions within the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate, bringing a conceptual clarity lacking in existing LIS literature. Five distinct conceptions – two negative, two positive and one republican – are identified. To reiterate, the presentation does not provide a "theory of intellectual freedom" but *proposes a presentation* where LIS and philosophical literatures conceptually align. In other words, the presentation is not intended to represent the *only presentation* of freedom in LIS, nor is it intended to construe a tidy representation of individual writers' positions within it (whose views often fluctuate between conceptions). Instead, the descriptive conceptualisation brings a *conceptual clarity* which points towards a framework that provides a possible reconciliation for both values. For clarity, table one shows five conceptions of freedom in LIS and the philosophical conception they match with.

Negative Freedom	Positive Freedom	Republican Freedom
"Negative Conservative" Conception Synonymous with the traditional "anti-censorship" conception. Represents physical accessibility facilitated by the laissez-faire LIS professional.	"Content Neutral" Conception Moves from physical access to psychological development, recognising internal barriers and the development of autonomy through user education.	"Republican" Conception Promotes democracy, providing resources that facilitate an informed citizenry.
"Negative Progressive" Conception Represents physical accessibility facilitated by LIS professionals who intervene to represent marginalised viewpoints.	"Freedom as Moral Action" Conception Transforms freedom into a *normative concept,* promoting social responsibility.	

Table One: Conceptions of Freedom in LIS

Negative Liberty in LIS: The Laissez-faire LIS Professional

The "negative conservative" conception forms a basis for understanding the traditional "anti-censorship" conception within LIS. Both share a commitment to pluralism epitomised, in LIS literature, by the laissez-faire librarian who sits back and provides unfettered physical access and, in the philosophical literature, a physical freedom to pursue courses of action. Here the term "laissez-faire" is used in its widest possible sense, connoting the librarian's non-interference rather than any specific reference to free market-economics. For proponents of the "negative conservative" conception in LIS, intellectual freedom is the "antithesis of censorship", hallmarked by access "without restraint" (Busha, 1971, p.284), where censorship and filtering represent external barriers to access (Rubel and Zhang, 2015, p.430). This commitment to pluralism and physical access is affirmed by the ALA's support of "information from all points of view" (ALA, 2007). Likewise, Childs argues that intellectual freedom is compromised by the United States' Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Implementing the act – which mandates internet filtering – damages the library's role as an "equalizer in society" (Childs, 2017, pp.61-62). Drawing on Bushman, she argues a denial of this freedom represents an "affront…to the individual's humanity" (p.62). This commitment is summarised by Doyle (2001) who, citing Asheim, characterises an "unbiased collection" which provides "unrestricted access" (p.50).

Negative liberty within the philosophical literature underpins this "negative conservative" attitude. A commitment to unrestricted access reflects a Hobbesian pursuit of "the will…desire, or inclination" (Hobbes, 1968, p.268 cited in van Mill, 1995, p.445). Similarly, focus on *physical accessibility*, rather than hidden barriers, chimes with Hayek and Steiner's "external impediment" (Hayek, 2017, p.86) or direct "prevention by another" (Steiner, 1974, p.33). Berlin's negative liberty – a freedom thwarted by interference – is also aligned with the "negative conservative" conception, representing choice without physical obstruction.

Negative Liberty in LIS: A Progressive Conception

Within LIS literature, however, there is also a "negative progressive" conception of intellectual freedom which, like its conservative counterpart, is equated with negative liberty. For this conception, a prevailing neo-liberal ethos overlooks systemic inequality within publishing and represents the second criticism of the "anti-censorship" conception in the preceding argument. This is delineated by Oltmann (2016) who compares the laissez-faire librarian – the "neutral facilitator" – with Heckart's characterisation of librarians who "intervene" when markets exclude "unorthodox, and controversial ideas" (Heckart, 1991, p.497 cited in Oltmann, 2016, p.162). For Buschman and Rosenzweig (1999), an "unquestioned corporate culture" hinders intellectual freedom within LIS (p.37). Rather than promote access driven by market forces, the "negative progressive" conception argues that intellectual freedom is a "social force" (Oltmann, 2016, p.162). This is epitomised by Sellen, who argues libraries should provide "unbiased service" to the gay community (1973, p.27), and Darling's (1979) assertion that freedom is damaged by marginalisation of "specialized periodicals" (p.318). Instead, a commercial agenda is pursued by publishers, "absorbed by…corporations", who focus on "profits at a high level" (p.320). Likewise, Ratcliffe (2020) argues for "inclusion of all opinions: not simply the mainstream" (2020, p.12); this is echoed by Byrne (1999), whose commitment to "plurality" and "diversity" reflects access to "the widest variety of materials" (p.115). The progressive conception, therefore, focuses on *collection breadth*.

Like its conservative counterpart, the "negative progressive" conception shares a striking similarity with conceptions of negative liberty within philosophical literature. First, there is a commitment to pluralism in the vein of Hobbes and Mill and, second, a focus on physical

accessibility, epitomised by Hayek and Steiner. The difference between the conservative and progressive conceptions centres on the *LIS professional's role in facilitating access*. For the "negative conservative" conception, the laissez-faire LIS professional is a neutral facilitator whilst, for the "negative progressive" conception, they should intervene, often against market forces, ensuring all are represented. Although the "negative progressive" conception engages with structures that interact with publishing and knowledge creation, it only pertains to *physical accessibility*. Despite its progressive character, therefore, it can be seen as a form of negative liberty.

Positive Liberty in LIS: The Development of Autonomy

Moving beyond negative liberty, the positive conception of freedom also runs throughout LIS literature. Here, there is a shift away from *collection development* to the development of *library users*. In a rare example, Rubel and Zhang (2015) draw comparison with the philosophical literature to develop a "content neutral" positive intellectual freedom as a "function of the quality of…agency" (Rubel, 2014b, p.184). First, by engaging the connection between intellectual freedom and privacy, they argue that intellectual freedom is more than *physical accessibility*. They note that "freedom of enquiry" is suppressed when "users *fear* privacy…is compromised" (ALA, 2015, p.178 cited in Rubel and Zhang, 2015, p.430). Consequently, freedom may be thwarted by, to use Taylor's words, "internal, motivational obstacles" (1979, p.160). Here, emphasis switches from a negative *physical accessibility* to a conception which acknowledge*s psychological barriers*. Having argued that intellectual freedom is more than "an absence of constraint" (Rubel, 2014, p.390), and by making a link to privacy, Rubel, drawing on Christman, advances a conception of freedom where autonomy is *developed* with the aid of "educational, social, and personal resources" (Christman, 2005, p.87). In a library setting, this is realised by a breadth of viewpoints that allow users to determine "value in their lives" and "reflect on reasonable alternatives" (Rubel, 2014b, pp.201-203). To allow this autonomy to flourish, he argues, libraries should inform users about the "privacy implications of…electronic resources" and provide alternative "attractive options" (p.205), fostering a "sense of reading independent of observation" (p.196). This idea of intellectual freedom as positive autonomy can also be seen within wider LIS literature. Hartman-Caverly (2018) acknowledges the link between privacy and intellectual freedom, arguing that privacy is a "fundamental…condition" for its

preservation (p.58). Likewise, Anderson (2018) argues in favour of an individualised freedom where LIS professionals promote "the…right to develop…knowledge" and foster "skills to decipher…information" (p.7). Seen this way, a positive "content neutral" freedom switches emphasis from *physical access* to *psychological development*. This involves recognition that internal barriers, such as fear of privacy violation, and second, that freedom is a capacity *developed* through information literacy instruction. In this guise, a positive "content neutral" intellectual freedom becomes a form of *empowerment*.

Republican Liberty in LIS

The republican conception also translates to LIS. Here, the focus switches from the "negative–positive" dichotomy to arbitrary power. Drawing on freedom's interaction with privacy, the ALA argue that monitoring leads to "patterns we leave behind [being] brought back to implicate us, by whatever authority…[is] focused on our…acts" (ALA cited in Rubel and Zhang, 2015, p.433). Whilst the positive conception draws a link between the *psychological effects* of loss of privacy, the republican conception focuses on the *power gained* – a loss of freedom for the user – by accessing personal information.

Switching emphasis away from privacy, the republican conception reflects the library as a promoter of democracy. This is emphasised by Scott who argues "the library is a democratic equalizer [helping] people improve...their lives" (Scott, 2011, cited in Oltmann 2016, p.293). In a similar vein, Cohen and Minow (2006) draw on the ALA's *Freedom to Read Policy Statement,* arguing that freedom to read is "essential to our democracy" – suppression, represents a "denial" that citizens "accept the good and reject the bad" (p.94). This commitment is crystallised by the ALA's *Library Bill of Rights* where free expression is a "foundation for self-government" (ALA, 1996 cited in Buschman, 2009) and the UK's Library and Information Association, which argues that "democratic society is built upon access to information" (CILIP, 2018). For the republican conception, therefore, the library is part of an eco-system that promotes democracy and self-government; it keeps arbitrary power in check by empowering an informed citizenry.

Positive Liberty in LIS: Social Responsibility as Moral Action

In addition to the "content neutral" conception, a substantive account of positive liberty, equating freedom to moral action, also translates to LIS literature, forming a conceptual bridge between intellectual freedom and social responsibility. This traditional chasm is epitomised by Knox (2020) who juxtaposes a "liberal" intellectual freedom with a "progressive" social justice whereby the former represents anti-censorship, and the latter focuses on the welfare of "individual members of certain groups" (p.3). This difference between a traditional "negative conservative" conception and social responsibility, it is argued, hinges on different interpretations of freedom within the philosophical literature. In other words, freedom as moral action provides a plausible grounding for social responsibility within LIS. In the philosophical literature, for example, Kant's freedom – a "conformity to duty" – constitutes moral action through obedience to a universal law that ensues when "we give up the activities to which we are inclined" (Dimova-Cookson, 2013 p.77). From a different standpoint, Green's conception of positive liberty – a contribution "to the common good"– also constitutes moral action, offering a conception that "resolve[s] moral problems" through the prioritisation of social justice (Dimova-Cookson, 2013, pp.78-82). For both Kant and Green, therefore, freedom is transformed into a *normative concept.*

This reading provides a plausible justification for those who advocate social responsibility in LIS. This large literature argues that libraries should endorse progressive values that defend "human and social rights" (Martin, 2020, p.131) and "diversity and social justice" (Morales, 2014, p.439). Racelis (2018) argues libraries should help the "poor and disenfranchised" as part of a social justice agenda (p.1) and, for Wahler et al. (2020), who draw a direct comparison between libraries and social work, the social dimension of LIS should be reflected by "joint library science and social work courses", connecting LIS professionals with "the psychosocial needs of their patrons" (p.41). This viewpoint is epitomised by two criticisms of the "anti-censorship" conception (and its synonymous "negative-conservative conception) within in the preceding argument. The "tacit value" criticism argues that LIS ignores societal bias that overlooks "black people's humanity" and other minority rights (Seale and Mirza, 2019, p.44) and second, the LIS professional's role has an irreducible social dimension promoting "social and emotional inclusivity" as part of a "larger mission" (Pagowsky and Wallace, 2015). Seen this way, therefore, conflict between the "negative

conservative" conception and social responsibility can be reduced to differences between conceptions of freedom within the philosophical literature. The equal treatment of all users, including a commitment to "black people's humanity" could, for example, derive from a Kantian duty to treat all users as ends in themselves. Likewise, Green's "common good" forms a clear basis for "social and emotional inclusivity" and progressive values. To clarify, the present argument does not attempt to summarise the totality of viewpoints that argue for social responsibility in LIS but describes their *normative character.* By doing this*,* a clear parallel emerges between social responsibility and positive freedom as moral action.

Summary of Conceptions

To take stock, the present argument proposes a descriptive conceptualisation of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate in LIS through the rubric of freedom within the philosophical literature. Rather than represent a precise methodology, the descriptive approach maps conceptions of freedom from the bottom up, charting the connections between conceptions and bringing a conceptual clarity lacking in existing LIS literature. Three broad conceptions of freedom – negative, positive, and republican – translate to five conceptions of intellectual freedom in LIS. The "negative conservative" conception represents *physical accessibility* facilitated by the laissez-faire librarian. For the "negative progressive" conception, by contrast, LIS professionals intervene when markets exclude "unorthodox, and controversial ideas" (Heckart, 1991, p.497 cited in Oltmann, 2016, p.162). Both conceptions, derived from negative liberty, disagree on the *LIS professional's role in facilitating physical access.*

For the positive "content neutral" conception, emphasis moves from *physical access* to *psychological development*. It recognises internal barriers created by privacy violation and the development of autonomy through user education and empowerment. For the republican conception, by contrast, the library is a promoter of democracy, providing resources that facilitate an informed citizenry and, finally, a positive "freedom as moral action" – derived in different forms from Kant, Green and Rousseau – transforms freedom into a *normative concept,* drawing a parallel with those who advocate a politically active, socially responsive LIS profession.

24

Thus far, therefore, it has been argued that the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate can be conceptualised through the rubric of freedom. Seen this way, the "negative conservative" conception, a form of negative liberty, is juxtaposed with positive moral action. Crucially, however, descriptive conceptualisation also points towards a path of reconciliation for both values which ameliorates and tempers the tension between them. This symbiosis – a path presented within the philosophical literature – depicts intellectual freedom and social responsibility as distinct, yet interdependent, values that sit side by side as core values within the LIS profession.

Positive and Negative Liberty: A Path of Reconciliation

This reconciliation explores the *interaction* between negative and positive freedom. An examination of this interaction – a mutually supportive symbiosis – eases the tension between intellectual freedom (as traditionally conceived) and social responsibility in LIS.

For Dimova-Cookson (2003), a "producer–recipient" model combines "positive and negative freedoms into a single concept" (p.508). Drawing on Green's juristic freedom – a negative action "according to preference" – and true freedom, a positive "doing what we ought" (Dimova-Cookson, 2013, p.77), she argues, contra Green, that *both have intrinsic value*. To do this, she characterises the distinction between juristic and true freedom through moral and ordinary action. Moral action – a state "of self-mastery" – pertains when agents ignore their desires and pursue "an object qua good for others" (2003, p.513). Ordinary action, by contrast, constitutes the pursuit of our "own good" (p.513). Green's true freedom, the suspension of our own good for the promotion of another's good, is analogous to moral action. Ordinary action, in turn, corresponds to a juristic pursuit of self-interest. Crucially, Dimova-Cookson claims that there is "dialectical relation between the moral good and the ordinary good" where "one's moral good translates as another's ordinary good" (p.516). An analogy of caregiving illustrates this: if X cares for Y, X's moral good (the act of providing care) translates to Y's ordinary good (being a recipient of care) (p.516). This shows that the same act, the provision of care, is both a moral and ordinary good depending on the *agent's place* within the relationship. By observing how the moral and ordinary good may be instantiated by the same act, Dimova-Cookson argues that both have intrinsic value; true freedom facilitates the juristic freedom of another (p.517).

This symbiotic relationship forms a reconciliatory gateway. At a societal level, the advancement of the "common good" constitutes, for example, "free education…medical care and free counselling" which, in turn, facilitates an increase in juristic freedom seen as the ability to "do as I like" (p.522). Whilst this interpretation of negative liberty grinds against a freedom that is a mere absence of barriers, epitomised by a laissez-faire liberal state, it does embody Berlin's ideal of "freedom of choice" (Dimova-Cookson, 2003, p.527). Seen this way, therefore, positive freedom – construed as moral action – "strengthens…negative freedom" as pursuit of ordinary action (p.529).

In a similar vein, Gould (2013) develops this symbiosis, drawing a connection between a negative liberty representing choice and the "social conditions" that allow it to flourish (p.108). Seen this way, positive and negative liberty co-exist in a supplementary framework where social conditions, realised by progressive policy, *facilitate* the negative self-interest of those who benefit. By exploring this path, the present argument does not dissipate the tension between negative and positive liberty nor deny the conceptual difference inherent within the descriptive approach. Hayek and Steiner's freedom, for example – curtailed only by direct "[prevention] by another" (Steiner, 1974, p.33) – precludes recognition of wider social or moral freedom. This need not, however, be problematic for the present argument which aims only to *temper and ameliorate*. It does this by drawing attention to a core component of the negative conception – *the exercise of free choice* – that feeds off positive moral action or, put differently, the relationship between moral action and pursuing "our own good in our own way" (Mill, 1946, p.11).

Intellectual Freedom Vs Social Responsibility in LIS: A Symbiosis?

This reconciliation provides the LIS professional with a new means of understanding the conflict between a traditional intellectual freedom and social responsibility. Two case studies embed the preceding discussion into practical professional practice, examining the interaction between negative liberty, "content neutral" liberty, and social responsibility.

First, suppose a LIS professional runs a series of information literacy workshops for users with basic IT skills. Each workshop introduces users to a range of online resources, databases, and library services. "User A" struggles with technology but overcomes their anxiety to attend. Their confidence increases, and when shown a classical music database,

they develop a pre-existing passion in a new medium. They also access sheet music, rekindling their piano playing. Stimulated by these new resources, user A joins a local music ensemble which, in turn, boosts their mental health and self-esteem.

In this example, the LIS professional embodies a positive "content neutral" conception of freedom by developing user autonomy through "educational…resources" (Christman, 2001, p.87) and fostering "skills to decipher…information" (Anderson, 2018, p.7). Here, freedom is a capacity developed through information literacy instruction, becoming a form of empowerment. For user A, by contrast, this positive liberty *translates* to a form of negative liberty. Their passion for classical music embodies a Hobbesian pursuit of "desire, or inclination" (Hobbes, 1968, p.268 cited in van Mill, 1995, p.445).

This symbiosis also translates to interaction between negative liberty and social responsibility. To illustrate, say "Library A" runs an awareness campaign highlighting discrimination against a minority group, showcasing displays, curating reading lists, and hosting an informational talk. A local politician attends and, as a result, raises the issue at a national level, leading to a government review. The library's stance constitutes a positive liberty construed as moral action, defending "human and social rights" (Martin, 2020, p.131) and "diversity and social justice" (Morales, 2014, p.439). Crucially, however, this *also facilitates the negative liberty of the minority group*. The library acts as a *moral producer* for the *recipient group* whose ordinary action – the right to pursue their own good – is protected. This illustrates facets of both conceptions working in tandem within a mutually supporting framework.

To emphasise, the present argument still acknowledges distinct conceptions. For example, the traditional "negative conservative" conception's restrictive focus on physical barriers, epitomised by a laissez-faire attitude represents a conceptual divide with positive accounts that transcend physical accessibility. In addition, symbiosis between positive liberty and free choice may break down in individual cases. Suppose a LIS professional endorses a political party before a national election, prioritising literature supporting its policies over alternative views. This could be construed as positive social advocacy. By making this case, however, the library *diminishes* the negative liberty of users by restricting access to alternative perspectives, whilst *increasing* negative liberty for beneficiaries of their political stance. This creates an unbalanced trade-off for user liberty. Seen this way, freedom becomes a

27

relational concept. In this example, the library's relationship with itself – the realisation of moral action – constitutes positive freedom. For library users, however, it *decreases* negative freedom whilst, arguably, *increasing* the negative freedom of those who benefit from its stance. By recognising this, however, the present argument contends that negative liberty, construed as freedom of choice, may in certain circumstances, sit alongside both a "content neutral" and socially responsible positive conceptions in a mutually supporting symbiosis. This recognition *ameliorates and tempers* the tension between both values and challenges their exclusivity. Far from representing polarised positions, therefore, negative liberty and social responsibility pick out morally salient features of ethical situations that can be weighed *on a case-by-case basis*. These features, which may align or diverge, should now be evaluated in an inclusive normative framework that appreciates both sides of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate.

Conclusion: A Taxonomy of Freedom

The present argument has presented a descriptive conceptualisation of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate through the rubric of freedom. First, three broad conceptions – negative, positive, and republican – were outlined within philosophical literature and translated to LIS literature through five distinct conceptions: "negative conservative", "negative progressive", "content neutral", "freedom as moral action" and "republican". The contrast between the "negative conservative" and "freedom as moral action", it is argued, represents conflict between proponents at either end of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate. By interpreting this debate through the rubric of freedom and by examining the interaction between negative and positive liberty, both values may co-exist in a mutually beneficial symbiosis. Dimova Cookson's (2003) "producer-recipient" model and Gould's (2013) "social conditions" show how positive liberty, construed as moral action, may lay the foundation to pursue "our own good in our own way" (Mill, 1946, p.11). Although this symbiosis may break down in individual situations, it provides a new means of respecting intuitions on either side of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" divide and challenges a dichotomy that juxtaposes a traditional intellectual freedom with progressive social responsibility.

Moving forward, the granularity of the preceding discussion should be reflected in codes and frameworks that inform professional practice which currently overlook freedom's heterogeneity in LIS. By understanding this dynamism, LIS professionals should be better placed to navigate the ways intellectual freedom manifests itself in individual situations. Rather than represent a broad ideological dispute, therefore, ethical deliberation should examine *the trade-off between conceptions*. A threefold "taxonomy of freedom" could facilitate this transition. First, a *freedom of access and expression* represents negative freedom, encompassing the negative conservative and progressive conceptions. It features situations that engage with the traditional concept, incorporating censorship and freedom of expression. Second, a *freedom of self-development and preservation of the conditions that allow it to flourish* switches emphasis to reader development and privacy, fostering a positive "content free" autonomy. The conditions that permit this flourishing, however, also extend the library's prerogative to moral issues. Broadly construed, these issues need not be library-centric and could, perhaps, incorporate issues such as the climate crisis, interpreted as a collective threat to humanity. Finally, a *freedom to participate* represents the republican conception. For this facet, the library is a promoter of democracy, empowering an informed citizenry and respecting legal obligations that follow from a democratic, well-ordered society.

Whilst only briefly sketched here, a taxonomy of freedom could act as an overarching framework for understanding intellectual freedom within LIS. Having mapped the ways in which freedom is understood, however, the challenge for the LIS professional switches from conceptual understanding to normative application. In other words, the navigation of dilemmas where *facets of freedom are in conflict*. In this pursuit, a deliberative virtue-based framework, previously suggested by the current author, that "focuses on the quality of *rational deliberation*" would, whilst beyond the scope of this paper, form a promising avenue of exploration (Macdonald, 2022, p.592). More broadly, however, the present argument moves discussion of the "intellectual freedom vs social responsibility" debate away from dogmatic difference to a contextual awareness of freedom's multifaceted, and at times contradictory, character within the LIS profession.

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33

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