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Take the Bull by the Horns: Combatting Bullshit in Academic Libraries

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> **"Bullshit is something that doesn't really mean anything, but sounds totally legit; so we don't ask too many questions, go along with it, and carry on." - Jane Schmidt 2018 keynote at the Canadian Association of Professional and Academic Librarians**

Do you recognize this bullshit in your library?
- Job creep aka do more with less
- Diversity initiatives that don't talk about oppression and/or inclusion
- Myth of Library neutrality
- Leader and innovation fetishization
- Blame the individual not the systems
- Fear of Library irrelevance
- We talk the game but don't play it

Healthy Organizational Culture	Unhealthy Organizational Culture
1. Clear connection between an individual's efforts and the library's goals	1. Burn out
2. Recognition and positive reinforcement for work well done.	2. Lack of recognition for labor or invisible labor
3. A belief that the organization listens to workers.	3. Martyrdom
4. Feeling stretched and challenged.	4. Culture of fear and anxiety
5. Working around the clock is not seen as ideal or a requirement	5. Overwork
6. Leaving the desk, taking breaks, and just doing your job are celebrated	6. Exploitation
	7. Being "on" all the time without breaks
	8. Service mentality that is harmful to workers

Image: https://pixabay.com/es/vectors/toro-vaca-la-cabeza-ganado-1837489/

How can we overcome bullshit as individuals?
- Resist vocational awe (Ettarh, F. 2018).
- Tactics such as gossip, doubling, hacking, exaggerated compliance (Yousefi, 2017, p 98-102)
- Foster spaces for dissent, civic engagement, non-neutrality
- Reject the culture of "efficiency" to "disrupt the flow of the corporate university"
- Make our labor visible, including affective or emotional labor, recognize the maintainers
- Challenge problematic professional norms
- Engage in critical information literacy and social justice
- Expose mechanisms of knowledge creation

How can we overcome bullshit as organizations?
- Foster spaces for critique and dissent
- Listen, active listening training
- Facilitated discussions on how '-isms' and other systems of meaning and control impact organizational culture
- Review job descriptions and work plans to assign work fairly, reassess workloads
- Celebrate those who take breaks, vacations
- Set times and limits for front desk work
- Build true transparency so others know what people are doing
- Training on giving and receiving direct feedback to increase responsiveness and reduce trash-talk
- Create evaluation systems that work bottom up as well as top down

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