**Research Reflections in LIS Webinar**

Tuesday 4 July 2017

- This session is due to commence at 12 noon AEST.
- A reminder that the session will be recorded.
- All participants’ microphones will be muted on joining the session, if you wish to speak please remember to unmute your microphone.
- Questions or problems? Please use the chat feature to let us know.

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**Critical Librarianship**

From Practice to Praxis

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**Disclaimers**

- white
- American
- cis-gendered married heterosexual woman
- first language is English
- I’m also an immigrant and a New(ish) Kiwi in the profession since 1998
- I write stuff about libraries
- I am here today as me, not as Creative Commons ANZ.

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**Let’s talk pedagogy and webinars**

- Not awesome bits:
  - Teacher-centric
  - One-way
  - Not based on a genuine relationship
  - Don’t allow effective two-way communication
  - Uses tech and energy, based that damage the natural world.

- Awesome bits:
  - Geography irrelevant
  - Time (sort of) irrelevant
  - Cost effective
  - We get to feel like we live in the future

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**Neutrality isn’t a thing**


need. Neutrality does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is immersed in a largely taken-for-granted and unquestioned status quo, and that status quo is certainly not neutral. If “neutral” librarians are also immersed in that status quo (or dominant ideology or hegemony or discursive formation or whichever phrasing you wish to employ), can they really be neutral?

Lewis, Alison. Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian, p.24
What is critical librarianship? And who gets to set our epistemic boundaries?

Critical: You keep using that word...

CRITICAL THEORIES

- Critical race theory
- Critical education studies
- Critical pedagogy
- Critical whiteness studies
- Critical feminist studies
- Critical legal studies
- Critical technology studies
- Etc...

Critical Theory

A “critical” theory may be distinguished from a “traditional” theory according to a specific practical purpose: a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human “emancipation from slavery”, acts as a “liberating influence”, and works “to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers” of human beings (Horkheimer 1972, 246). Because such theories aim to explain and transform the circumstances that enslave human beings, many “critical theories” in the broader sense have been developed. They have emerged in connection with the many social movements that identify varied dimensions of the domination of human beings in modern societies.

Two Articles

This article examines the responses of eighty-five women surveyed on work satisfaction of African-American librarians employed in sixty academic libraries. Dependent variables include race, age, and years of experience. This article also provides information about the perceptions of the survey respondents regarding isolates in the workplace, racial discrimination in the workplace, diversity programs and how these factors affect their work satisfaction.

The issue of race has been evaded in the field of Library and Information Studies (LIS) in the United States through an unquestioned system of white normativity and liberal multicultural discourse. To counteract these paradigms, this paper draws from various scholarly writings about race and racial formation in order to center race as the primary axis of analysis in the reinterpretation of major theoretical issues in LIS. Beginning with an analysis of the historical construction of libraries as an institution complicit in the production and maintenance of white racial privilege and then turning toward present-day discourses surrounding diversity and multiculturalism, this paper discusses in length the epistemological forms of racism that exist in LIS.

While these efforts at diversification are certainly admirable and necessary interventions, a concentration on simply numbers or equitable representation appeals to a limited form of identity politics. Such initiatives fall easily in line with liberal multicultural orthodoxies of celebrating diversity and difference, and deflect attention from the collective and liberatory struggles toward social justice and anti-racism. In other words, representation alone cannot solve the problem of white privilege in LIS any more than self-congratulatory visions of inclusive multiculturalism can defeat historical legacies and institutional manifestations of racial discrimination. The process of examining the limitations of representational politics, and its complicity in the commodification of identities and the advancement of neoliberal ideologies of difference, allows us to see the need for a more progressive agenda in advocating for a multiracial LIS state. In re-evaluating their struggle against racial discrimination, librarians of color, then, must recognize the power relations involved in dominant society’s strategic institutional maneuvering which does little to challenge the structural racism that remains on a more covert level. Hence, the mere inclusion of tokenized bodies of color into LIS will not change the overall system foundationally and institutionally structured around race and racism.

Power and Domination

All critical theories seek to identify and challenge structures of power and domination.

What is theory?

Theory is less for understanding the world, a model.

Social theory refers to ideas, arguments, hypotheses, thought experiments and explanatory speculations about how and why human societies—or elements or structures of such societies—come to be formed, change, and develop over time or disappear. Usually supported in research institutions as a core component of the discipline of sociology, social theory most commonly encompasses the range of explanatory concepts, analytical tools, and theoretical devices which sociologists and social scientists draw in their efforts to interpret statistical or qualitative data about particular empirical social phenomena.


Is it this?

Critical librarianship is the application of various critical methodologies generally grounded in critical pedagogy to the study and practice of librarianship.

Or this?

”Critlib,” short for “critical librarianship,” is variously used to refer to a growing body of scholarship examining the intersections between librarianship, politics, race, and social justice. A shared concern is that librarianship and information science maintain and reproduce social inequalities. Critical librarianship seeks to introduce and develop the critical perspective that is needed to ensure that librarians work for social justice.

http://libraryjuicepress.com/critical-librarianship.php

Or maybe this?

Because at the end of the day, Critical Librarianship doesn’t have a thing to do with esoteric buzzwords or abstruse epistemological theories. Critical Librarianship, above all else, is about empathy.

http://betterlibraryleaders.com/2016/05/19/why-library-leaders-should-care-about-critical-librarianship/

But like, what do i do?

Critical Information Literacy

Critical Critiques of Technology
Critical Cataloging and metadata

Community Bibliography:
A Ridiculously Incomplete Bibliography of LIS Work from a Critical Perspective*

http://tinyurl.com/jn7na56
Go forth and edit!