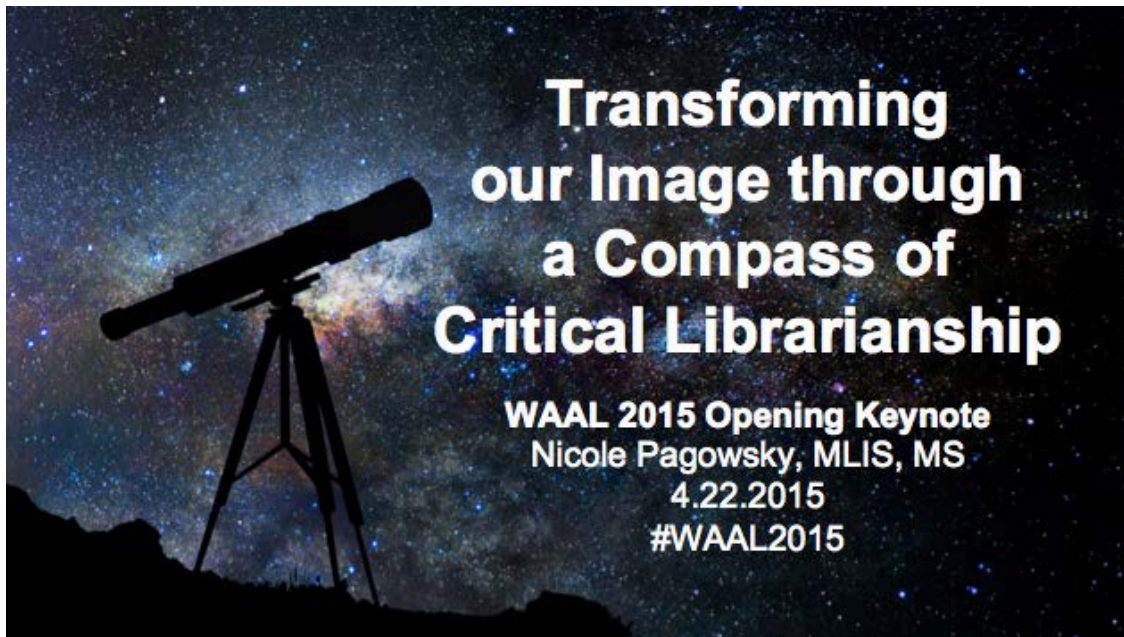


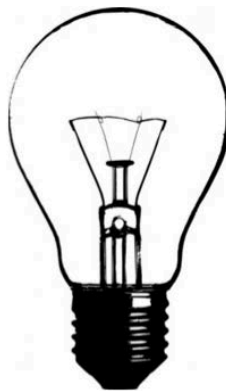
Keynote Transcript:
Transforming our image through a compass of critical librarianship
Nicole Pagowsky
Wisconsin Association of Academic Librarians, 2015 Conference
Opening keynote, April 22, 2015



Good morning, I am honored to speak with you today and would like to extend my appreciation to the conference committee for inviting me and for taking care of all the arrangements.

So, let's start today off with a joke:

**Q: How many
academic
librarians does it
take to change a
lightbulb?**



And that leads to what really want to talk about today, which is using critical librarianship as a compass to navigate our identity and image; but also how it can benefit our work and campus communities. But what *is* critical librarianship?



It examines existing power structures, inequality, and rhetoric in society, and how these things might get reinforced within institutions: or the library as an institution. It's a striving for equity, anti-racism, anti-sexism, and an awareness of our own roles in these structures. The "critical" part has a relationship with critical theory, though it's not an absolute of engaging in critical librarianship. The lisafrankfurtschool blog is a combination of Lisa Frank imagery and the Frankfurt School, which is a school of thought in social theory and philosophy. We have a play on the patriarchy here with the catriarchy, and if you say it quickly, it's "property is theft."

Ok, so with that grounding, then today, first, (1)we will investigate the image of the librarian in the public eye and its current state. Second, (2)we will examine faculty and student perceptions on campus. Next, (3)we will get more in-depth with what critical librarianship is. And last, onward: (4)what lies ahead and its application to our work.

1

Our Stereotypes: Image of the Librarian



Let's first look at where we stand with perceptions of librarians out in the wild through history. Much of the time our image to the public lacks a human component.

Librarians have been frustrated by these stereotypes for a long time, over 100 years. And the frustration over the frustration about stereotypes is probably not too far behind. We can call this "stereotype exhaustion" (it actually has a name). We wonder "how could these images still be in existence?" Unfortunately, their presence is very real and very prevalent with the public.

It's easy to say we're tired of hearing about the stereotypes, especially when we seem to keep having the same discussions about them over and over again. In response, we say we're not mean! we want to help! we really don't just read books all day! Although this angle of the perception can impede our work, especially when we think about something like library anxiety that our students might have, it's still a more superficial examination of the stereotype and doesn't fully get at why it truly is problematic.

In essence, the ability to shrug off our images and their repercussions is a form of... and I know this is a loaded term, but: privilege. Not having to worry about one's identity or how one is perceived is something reserved for the few, for those in dominant groups.

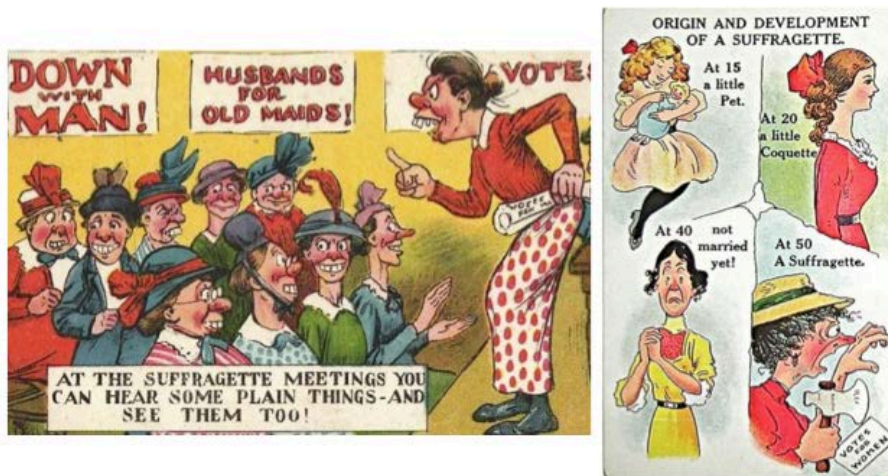
Those with more marginalized identities don't have this luxury. We should realize how these images affect all of us more deeply, and how they are tied to larger societal issues—especially for those within the more marginalized "us." And in reality, we all experience negative ramifications from these stereotypes, even those of us in more dominant groups.

With that, it's important to understand the underpinnings of our image *because* it's connected to larger issues. Dee Garrison, said the following through her significant research on these topics: "It is important that librarians assess the basic meaning of feminization and give precise attention to their early history, for the dominance of women is surely the prevailing factor in library education, the image of librarianship, and the professionalization of the field" (Garrison, 1972, p. 143).

A little history might then be in order for context on these underpinnings first, before we go on. 1852 was the year that the first woman librarian was hired in the U.S., and this was at Boston Public Library. By 1910, the field was 78% women. As you might know, this number has not changed much over time, as currently just over 80% of librarians in the U.S. are women. The stereotype shifted during this period of time, between 1852 when the first woman librarian was hired, and 1910 when 78% women dominated the field. In 1870, the image of the librarian was still focused on a man; he was dressed all in black, grim, ineffectual, and bookish. By 1905, the image shifted to that of a woman, a suffrage-era spinster with all the related baggage that would come with her.

1909 was the first time the word “stereotype” was documented by librarians discussing their image, and at this time it was their portrayal in fiction. And it was here that the stereotype obsession (and exhaustion) seemed to begin. Librarianship as having been dominated by women is a more marginalized profession and considered low-status, similar to other feminized professions like nursing, teaching, and social work. James Carmichael makes a very salient point that “Status and stereotype concerns are obsessive in all low-status, marginalized professions” (1995, p. 14).

As women began to dominate the field, since this was considered a suitable career choice at the time for a woman, the nature of the work began to shift toward what is considered “women’s work.” This is where the focus on service work, caregiving, and exuding “warmth” toward patrons came into play, and was an expectation of women librarians in particular. Men librarians had their own issues with a different flavor of the stereotype, but had not been expected to act in this capacity and instead were often fast-tracked to management positions with higher salaries. Women were positioned as cheap labor to help stabilize declining library budgets. And it’s not like women at the time were oblivious to this, they were very well aware.



Being viewed as a feminist, however, was deemed a worse fate, and so women librarians declined (for the most part) to advocate for themselves. And actually, portrayals of feminists during suffrage have a lot of similarities to portraits of women librarians at the time. The anti-suffrage and anti-feminist propaganda as shown here focused in on an “old maid” image similar to the librarian stereotype.

So hegemony--or, power structures--not only governed the librarian stereotype and how the public came to perceive this majority-women field, but it also served as a form of control over changing these images. Gary and Marie Radford have said “There is a clear relationship between the representation and treatment of women and the low status of the library profession” (1997, p. 262). So when we understand the power structures at play, as the Radfords point out, we should be thinking about “who” is speaking through the stereotype and to what end? Who benefits? And how can this image be challenged and changed?

And when looking at diversity, of course the stereotype isn’t the sole reason for librarianship’s struggle with becoming more diverse, but it doesn’t help. In essence, the stereotype shows who is “supposed” to be a librarian and what they are “supposed” to look and act like. This defines us to the public at large and can put limitations and expectations on us within the profession as well. This is something we need to be thinking about especially because it’s not an immediate realization in how our image truly affects us.

2

Campus Perceptions: Faculty & Students



Now that we’ve examined general public perceptions of librarians over time, let’s look more closely at how faculty and students perceive us. We’ll look at perceptions and expectations especially from faculty from the 1960s through today.



Now first, one argument that has been made in a number of instances for why we should just ignore the stereotypes is that we can simply do “good” work and then the stereotypes will go away. This is based on believing that, for academic librarians, our faculty and students will suddenly realize how much they value us and their perceptions will be completely changed. But when we say “good work,” good work according to whom? And what does “good” even mean? If, for example, “good” is defined by faculty who expect helpers, assistants, and minute takers, and then we do just that, then of course by those standards we have done good work. But where does that get us? So now let’s look at what actual faculty think.

Leigh and Sewny interviewed a number of faculty at Harvard in 1960, and they all coalesced around similar perceptions of librarians. One Harvard English faculty member said specifically that “A librarian too often resembles a headwaiter showing one to a table in a large restaurant and too little resembles an artist having profound and passionate views of life, death, and immortality.” This is important to keep this in mind as we continue; it ties into the idea of how “neutrality”--a foundation of our professional ethics--is projected in our image, an issue that we will tackle in just a bit.

In general, aside from being considered “helpful” at times, faculty perceptions of librarians have centered on negative imagery and cold traits. Gary Mason Church summarized Holbrook’s 1968 study of faculty perceptions, which included descriptions such as: orderly, meticulous, conforming, conservative, submissive, non-social attitudes and behavior, anxious, and lack of self-confidence (as cited in Church, 2002).

Jumping to 1981, we have research from Biggs (mentioning Douglass) and Blackburn that demonstrates a perceived conflict between faculty and librarians (in the eyes of faculty). And that faculty don’t see librarians as peers or intellectuals. The profession consisting of majority women, where faculty had been (and still are) majority men, is noted as a problem for being taken seriously, comparing it to a doctor and nurse relationship.

Librarians' perceived responsibilities, faculty status, and library school education has also been looked down upon by a number of faculty over time. Not all faculty, but a number. In 1994, Ivey found that 90% of the faculty surveyed did not believe librarians were their academic equals, and were instead professionals or semi-professionals.

We can see into the present through the 2013 Ithaka Survey that there is a mismatch in expectations. Essentially this chart is saying that faculty believe librarians are information providers, and not necessarily educators. Library directors believe it is the responsibility of the library to teach information literacy, whereas faculty believe they are the ones teaching information literacy, not so much librarians.

Faculty perceptions are important not just because they influence our work, but also because they influence how students perceive us. Of course pop culture and public perceptions outside of academia have an impact on how students interact with us, but Miller and Murillo, through the 2011 ERIAL Project, found that: "Professors play a critical role in brokering students' relationships with librarians." So if faculty have a view of librarians that implies we are only useful for library tours and not more in-depth library instruction, if we look at instruction as one example, this can impair the ability of the library to fully contribute to the teaching mission of the university and to provide the greatest benefit to students' learning.

The article, "Kiss a librarian," by a faculty member was published in *The Chronicle* in 2014, offering kisses to librarians for how helpful we are. Although it was attempting to be positive and highlight the work librarians do, it was also patronizing and didn't view us as academics, but instead helpers and assistants. The author apologized and amended her stance after feedback from librarians, Jenna Freedman being one. She said, "Within the academy, librarians generally feel second-class, even librarians with faculty status, even librarians with Ph.Ds. What I really want from faculty is advocacy and solidarity, more than kisses." Although perhaps faculty are more positive about librarians currently, there is still this lack of understanding about: what we really do, what we are able to do, and our standing as academics (though this does differ for us across the board by institution).

Part of the problem is that our work has changed over time, and librarianship is a field with constant change. And when there isn't an understanding about what we do because of this, or along with this, the limited view of librarians creates and reinforces expectations with both students and faculty.

Some of the work involved in transforming campus expectations of us involves re-examining how we are perceived and our goals. And as our work is changing, how can we approach our roles with a critical examination of ourselves, how we are perceived, and the work we do?

3

Critical Librarianship



Critical librarianship is an approach we can take to help us situate ourselves and better understand how our practices and processes operate within larger schemes of power. It of course is not a panacea for all the problems of the library world, but can be a beneficial way to approach ongoing issues related to how faculty and students perceive us, and how we engage in our work with them.

Highlighting this need, Chris Bourg said “Shared humanity, equity, and social justice... should be motivating the work of librarians now more than ever” (2014). And this is what critical librarianship can support if we use it as our compass.

Being critical in this way involves incorporating social justice as an action, but it is also an examination of theory. Paulo Freire, a critical theorist in education, called the use of theory into practice, “praxis.” And bell hooks, author and activist, explained theory as, “intervention, as a way to challenge the status quo,” she believes that practice embodies the action. So we need both. We need theory to question, examine, and challenge, and we need practice to put what we value into action.

To understand “critical,” a distinction has to be made between critical praxis and critical thinking. When distinguishing the two, Keesing-Styles explains that critical praxis works as collective action where individual effort is intimately linked to the social; the focus is on power structures. This is where critical librarianship would fall into. Critical thinking on the other hand, is aimed at the individual only, and tends to ignore power structures and the influence of hegemony (2003, p. 2). It’s possible to think of either being a component of the other, so critical thinking can be an aspect of critical praxis, and critical praxis can be an aspect of critical thinking, but they are not one in the same. And there is no one way to be critical, in fact, part of it is always questioning our own practices and theories of critical librarianship itself.

Being critical can typically include risk-taking... being fearless! As these opinions are not always popular or well-known. However, many of us came into this field to question and examine, and to help others do the same, so this isn’t really a new concept or a wholly new interest necessarily, but something that can feel like it falls just outside of what might be considered within our professional purview. To give an example of critical theory in action, we can look at critical race theory. And I’ll be

using race issues as my ongoing example for the rest of this talk particularly because of recent current events.

Critical race theory helps us unpack systems of power and normativity in society that keep racism in place. Privilege, representation, and language are just a few examples of what systemic racism functions through. And when we talk about systemic racism, we are talking about systems in place in society, not necessarily individual thoughts and actions; the latter does have an impact, but the focus here is on systems and structures. A great callout question is noted here: “who creates the acceptable norm?” We can relate it to thinking about how systems of oppression are perpetuated in our institutions (and perhaps the library as an institution) and what is the “acceptable norm” we’re measuring that against? It’s not necessarily because individuals are consciously trying to oppress others, but because it is written into the norms of society: something that we don’t see, that appears as universal and neutral.

In a way, gaining this understanding is like seeing “the matrix.” Critical theorists, such as Marx, have stated in various ways that being critical examines underpinnings of ideology. Bourdieu has said it is to search for emancipation from seeing the world in a certain way. And Habermas said it has an “emancipatory dimension” (Grenfell, 2010). It’s not necessarily about taking the blue or red pill and then suddenly all is realized, but this is an intentional process based on asking tough questions and entering into dialogue.

As part of the #critlib—or critical librarianship—Twitter chats that we do bi-monthly, a number of people with varying perspectives chat about a common topic. Topics that are not always looked at in certain ways within the larger field. And of course this isn’t the only space for these conversations, there are others that have been doing this research for some time, as well as new journals and other avenues being created currently. Here are some examples of tweets from a couple of my co-creators of the chats, Emily Drabinski says, “I also think #critlib (critical librarianship) helps us check auto responses to people in class or at the reference desk. It’s a habit of mind that encourages reflection, self interrogation.” And Annie Pho says, “To me, claiming ‘neutrality’ is like saying ‘I’m not racist.’ Critical pedagogy means YOU need to critical reflect on your own experience.” And this leads perfectly into where I’m going next.

We need to address the issue of “neutrality,” or the belief that libraries are by default neutral, apolitical. First, we should understand what this really means, and then look at how this functions in library work and the rhetoric of librarianship.

We can give a nod to The Enlightenment for spawning the notion of “neutrality,” for which it was believed that decisions were rendered fairly because they were approached as impartial, neutral, and disinterested. Neutrality was considered freedom from choice. The problem with this is that a neutral stance still reflects a point of view, primarily associated with the most dominant groups.

So the idea of achieving “freedom from choice” by taking a neutral stance would simply mean that one would yield to the dominant ways of being. Sampson points out that the problem really lies “...in the name of neutrality, one view comes to dominate all others but passes by unrecognized as such because it claims that neutrality is non-positioned and thus genuinely God-like and impartial” (1994, p. 148).

So this is a concern when we think about how libraries function as institutions. Bossaller, Adkins, and Thompson point out that “Equality is not possible when one culture is valued above another; the institutions then become tools of the dominant society” (2010, p. 30). When we have a dominant class creating, essentially, *reality*, all others then must live within those constraints. But these constraints become invisible over time, as they are viewed as self-evident, as normal reality, and as common sense.

When examining how this idea of neutrality functions in research, we can see Marion Namenwirth throwing some major shade to researchers claiming neutrality where she says “Scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious” (1986, as cited in Schroeder, 2014). Wow! But we need to be aware of this disconnect with neutrality as librarians—as librarians who collect, organize, and teach users to find research, as well as librarian academics who may be doing research ourselves.

We see what we want. As librarians, we should *want* to see the matrix of neutrality rhetoric, and cast it aside. And here is where being fearless really comes into play.



We can see however that this perspective is not a defining characteristic of our field. *Being fearless* is not how others tend to perceive us. Looking at this librarian protesting during Occupy Wall Street with the sign “You know things are messed up when librarians start marching,” what does this really mean? That things must be *really* bad to have librarians say anything at all? Think back here to that headwaiter quote, you might have already made a connection on your own. So, what is our responsibility even though librarianship has traditionally positioned itself as silent or neutral on many issues? What should we be seeing or doing that we’re not?



What does it mean to choose silence, or “neutrality” when an injustice is happening? And particularly so when the communities we serve are those facing these injustices? Choosing neutrality *is* in fact having a point of view, and our professional ethics dictate a point of view, it’s just depicted as being “neutral.” Ferguson and #BlackLivesMatter are examples of an issue on which we should consider what neutrality means. To illustrate this, the protesters on the left have a sign with the famous Desmond Tutu quote, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” And the other sign: “White silence is violence.” Another idea Howard Zinn uses to for this point is: “You can’t be neutral on a moving train.”

When I mentioned “the communities we serve” being affected by these events, just because our students are on campus doesn’t mean they are safe. There have been numerous articles and blog posts of late from faculty and students of color describing being profiled by campus police and treated unjustly, to put it mildly. Jay Dodd described his experience being profiled and interrogated by campus police and said in a March 2015 post to the Black Youth Project that “While knowledge is power, there is an insidious myth that education is the key in combating anti-Black violence.” So our stance, & our institution’s stance, on neutrality can directly affect our students, our faculty, and our campuses at large.

https://youtu.be/_JcVnDAk5IM?t=30s

To illustrate this idea, I’d like to show this short video of some students’ lived experience to provide more context to this point. Being a white lady, I’d like to let these communities really speak for themselves here. [Watch video]

So, we go back to asking what our responsibility is, and how do we examine the library itself as an institution that might perpetuate what is going on in society, as well as what are our own roles in thinking about “professional ethics?” And where might taking neutrality to task be construed as crossing a line and pushing a viewpoint? And is that always a bad thing? These waters can feel murky and will differ based on environment and situation.



The Donut: 3 Spheres

1. The donut hole
2. The donut
3. The air around the donut

Daniel Hallin on the journalist's world, 1986

To look at it one way, let's think about a donut. Journalists have a similar relationship with the idea of neutrality as librarians do. Hallin points out three spheres of the journalist's world through the donut.

First we have the donut hole, this is the sphere of consensus, of unquestionable values. Values such as "slavery is bad," "democracy is good," "all men are created equal." These are things we all seem to inherently know and agree on.

The donut itself is "the zone of legitimate controversy" where it is considered ok to probe undecided issues up for debate. These are issues that have been granted a bump out of the sphere of consensus by people in authority. So-called "objective" journalism thrives here, like debates on gun control, abortion, and other topics that "reasonable" people would debate. This is what we could also compare to neutral librarianship.

And then we have the air around the donut, which is the sphere of deviance. These are voices outside of the mainstream that are silenced and ignored, in which Hallin notes that the press plays gatekeeper to these points of view. He says the press "marks out and defends the limits of acceptable political conduct." This description is a bit simplistic now, about 30 years later when the media has gone through such a transformation and when issues can slide back and forth between closer to the donut hole and farther outside of the donut itself, as Hallin has later noted.

But the main thing to take away from this donut analogy is that: certain issues go unquestioned, some issues take on only a binary view of sides, and other, more marginalized perspectives can easily be shut out by what the press--and even we as librarians—consider our professional ethics through the lens of remaining "neutral."

Jay Rosen on PressThink makes the point that deciding what belongs in the public debate is in itself a political act. He says, "The press does not permit itself to think politically, but it does engage in political acts. Ergo, it is an unthinking actor, which is not good. When it is criticized for this it will reject the criticism out of hand, which is

also not good” (2009). A misconception that has stuck with librarianship for a long time, as we see here similarly with the press, is that our work is not political. This identity mismatch between who we think we are by what our professional ethics dictate, and what we do: what impact our work has on others, affects how others view us and how we understand ourselves.



Katy Perry
#LeftistShark
meme, Noam
Chomsky
quotes

So I hope this section has provided more context surrounding the idea of critical librarianship and how it can impact our image and our work. And now, onward...



We’ve looked at our stereotypes historically, and the impact of the feminization of librarianship. And common traits associated with our work have aligned: through how both the general public and our campuses perceive us, and what they expect of us. And we’ve talked about what using critical librarianship as a compass could mean in our work. Now, let’s look more closely at what we can think about in moving forward, and the application of critical librarianship to our work.

Looking at recent changes in higher education, I know many or even all of you are experiences these, and I am as well in Arizona. We have higher education taking on business models for funding, the adjunct crisis and massive budget cuts, and the

reframing of higher education to pop out workers—this idea of vocationalism. We can find change fast coming, and not necessarily for the better. Academic libraries are positioned in a precarious spot with an expectation to show our value and contribute to this change. With that, we also have our traditional areas where the professional ethics of neutrality have presided for a very long time.

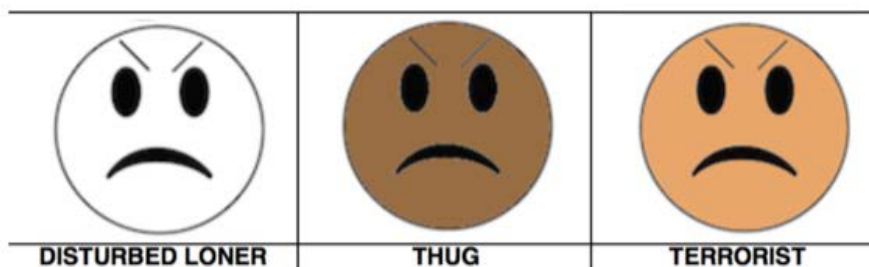


So let's drill this down to look at academic libraries specifically and how we can move onward in our work. Of course I can't capture *everything* here, but we can break it down to touch on a few things within technical services, public services, and our hiring processes.

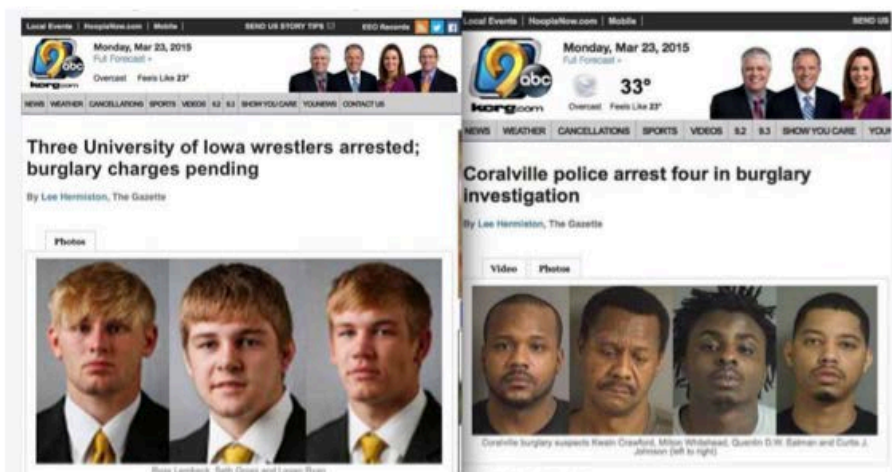
Technical services and collections: How we collect, how we *organize* what we collect, and how we *describe* what we collect is inherently political.

So, collecting for topics like gun control, for example, a topic marked "ok" to have some binary debate about, we have the pros and the cons, we have something like CQ Researcher laying out "all" the perspectives very neatly. But how do we get beyond this duality? And what about messier topics, and topics in which some perspectives are ignored? How do we seek these out and how do we deem them worthy of criteria that demand certain levels of "authority?" As the need for authority is inherent in our selection process and how we choose to organize and describe.

AMERICAN NEWS GUIDE TO VIOLENCE



Likewise, when our sources have bias that are hidden behind so-called objectivism or neutrality, it can skew our collections even further.



A very real and recent example of this lack of neutrality playing out is shown here in comparing two news articles. Two of the same crimes were committed around the same time, in the same location, and reported by the same paper. The white burglars are portrayed with their yearbook photos on the left. Now, this article was written after these men were arrested, so the paper could have chosen to use their mugshots, but instead sought out their yearbook photos. In contrast, the black burglars are portrayed with their mug shots, the paper chose to use these photos instead of seeking out these men's yearbook photos, or pictures with their families. There are many politically driven choices that are made, that don't seem political (perhaps until they are compared side-by-side), but just appear "normal" and "neutral." This highly skewed representation happens all the time. Of course in academic libraries, we are not only collecting mainstream media sources, but this view expands to a variety of perspectives, research, and publications. We can think back to that Namenwirth quote talking about researchers and how they might envision themselves as neutral just because they don't *think* they have a political agenda: this paper likely doesn't actively have a political agenda to represent people so differently in this way, as they did, but it still happened, and happens all the time beyond just this paper, because this type of thing is "normal." This skewed representation has become invisible and woven into the fabric of society.

Once we've collected materials, how we describe and organize them does matter beyond just findability and organization. As the work of Sandy Berman, Hope Olson, K.R. Roberto, and others over the years has pointed out, Library of Congress Subject Headings are biased even though we are trained to believe they are neutral. They can serve as insufficient access points and contribute to how language defines our perceptions of the world.

There are numerous examples of racist and other offensive terms being used as subject headings that Berman and others petitioned to have changed. Library of Congress has listened and changed a number of them—but there actually are still some questionable terms to this day documented by these catalogers. And of course this isn't just something we should be thinking about in Library of Congress-determined terms, but also in our more localized metadata and controlled vocabulary. The words we use and how we organize has an impact.

And it's not just the materials we collect, but also the tools we use. Safiya Noble, who is LIS faculty at UCLA has been doing a lot of research on how Google search portrays minority groups. This is her presenting at a conference and talking about what comes up when you search for "Why are black people so..." (the results are not pleasant). She presented some very intriguing data at ACRL 2015, demonstrating that, as she said, "Technology (like Google search) isn't simply a tool, but is made of human values." This isn't just within commercial search engines we should be wary of, but something we need to consider for our databases and other tools we provide as well.

This is a great segue then into public services, for reference and instruction, and how we talk about these issues with our users. Teaching the limitations of our collections, the bias of search tools, and what "authority" *really* means in evaluating a source is part of critical library instruction, a component of critical librarianship. (And I will be using the term "critical library instruction" interchangeably with "critical pedagogy.")

Some background on critical pedagogy is that it moves away from the idea of the banking model of education. Banking as in facts are deposited into the minds of students. And that what the instructor as authority figure said was always true and right and it should just be regurgitated without thought. Critical pedagogy is an ideal to question these power structures in society as well as in the classroom. If we think about how bibliographic instruction was framed as a series of linear steps and where to click (by the time of computers), it could be likened to a banking model of education. And this would have an impact on how students viewed librarians and their subsequent interactions with us. As we've shifted to information literacy instruction, it provoked moving more toward teaching larger ideas surrounding knowledge creation and engaging in scholarly communication.

The new ACRL Framework carries this shift through even further. Now, I'm not going to go into depth about the framework at this time since it will take us off on another tangent, but considering how the pedagogy connected to these new frames could help change our teaching (hopefully for the better) is something worth examining. Having a critical component to our instruction can give faculty and students a new perspective on how they perceive us and the work we do. Implementing this framework on campus could be one way to improve in that direction. The framework isn't necessarily perfect, and I'm not implying that I think everyone needs to use it. We all seem to have different opinions on its value, but thinking and talking about it—having these larger conversations we've been having--is an opportunity to re-evaluate our teaching and pedagogy.

Char Booth describes how re-examining our pedagogy in this way—critically-- functions by saying, “In the simplest terms, we are critical educators when we compel ourselves and others to think about power and privilege, and we are feminist educators when we dig beneath the status quo of our content and identify justice-focused approaches to engaging learners in a process of safe/radical-self and system examination” (2014). And with that, it is important for us to think about how we really can encourage thought about power and privilege: in ourselves, our colleagues, and our campuses. And this requires being fearless.

The third area to look at then is our hiring practices and internal processes. It seems to be well known within librarianship that we are greatly lacking in diversity. I mentioned before that one part of the problem is that our stereotypes and image is that of a white, middle-class, middle-aged woman, and this can send a very rigid (and potentially negative) message about what a librarian is supposed to look like, and supposed to act like. This can further marginalize those who do not fit into this image and description.

Our lack of diversity shows up here on this chart from School Library Journal, looking specifically at racial and ethnic diversity, with the U.S. population. This chart is showing that the overall population is 63% white, whereas 2012 MLS grads had been 84% white. We can see how heavily dominated librarianship is by white people, so much more so than the overall population.



And once diverse librarians are within the profession, there are still problems. Since I have been focusing on #BlackLivesMatter and race issues, I pulled out a couple related images from the LIS Microaggressions blog. We have “You don’t sound Black”

and “I got assigned all the ethnic studies programs.” For those not familiar with the term “microaggression,” it is a form of subtle racism, sexism, or bigotry that might not be intended to cause harm, but could have toxic effects on those at the receiving end. Although we can’t change all of society by our practices alone, we can certainly work to change the environment of libraries both for our colleagues and for the people we serve.

<https://youtu.be/8RfwnibEd3A>

To better situate and define the term, “microaggression,” I would like to show another short video. This term has been used a lot lately, and I feel it’s something important for all of us to really understand. [Watch video]

Something we should remember, and something I need to remind myself of, is that we need to stop framing diversity as a “problem” to be solved. A number of panelists speaking at the Academic Librarians of Color panel from ACRL 2015, have pointed this out, including the fact that framing the diversity discussion in this way puts the burden on librarians of color, or other, diverse groups, when diversity should be all of our responsibility. And this is one reason why we all should be thinking about the deeper repercussions of our image: even if we are tired of hearing about it, and even if we think it doesn’t affect us.



I hope we are all still thinking about that donut! This section of this talk then showed some targeted examples within our work of where we should be thinking outside of the donut. And not only outside but also questioning that whole thing.

Because changing our stereotypes is much more complicated than just upgrading our branding, we need to think more broadly about our philosophy & practices, and how they affect the work we do, and what image this projects to the public--our constituents.

And of course using this compass of critical librarianship is not just an effort to only improve the image of the librarian, but also to *benefit* our students and our campuses.

To wrap up, here is a quote from James Elmborg, where he said, “Librarians need to develop a critical consciousness about libraries, by learning to ‘problematize’ the library” (2006, p. 198). And I hope this is what we will be doing as we ring in this conference. We can be fearless through critical exploration and “problematizing” to reap benefits in our work and our perceptions on campus.



**Be
Fearless**

The goal is not perfection and the outcome is not meant to be pessimism. There is always work to be done when engaging critically, including questioning critical praxis itself. Thinking about progress and how we can make things better each day is key. I hope you will have an energized start to this conference and to your work going forward!

Thank you! Questions?

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Thanks so much! We can now open up the floor for questions!

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