

Editorial Introduction

Critical Library and Information Studies: Educational Opportunities

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Dear Readers,

It is my privilege, as guest editor, to introduce this special issue of JCIE on the theme entitled *Critical Library and Information Studies: Educational Opportunities*. The 2019 call for papers (CFP) for this 2020 special issue invited critical scholarship that interrogates conventional education and explores new possibilities for lessons, learnings, cases and studies on radical librarianship and related pedagogical opportunities. For the purposes of that CFP, radical librarianship was described as socially engaged forms of library and information education, research and practice that aim to address deeply rooted structures in society. Submitted works were expected to reflect the radical potential that librarianship holds in the related setting and its possibilities for library and information studies. Submissions supportive of developing knowledge and understanding of grassroots initiatives involving Canadian-based and/or international cultural brokers were preferred. A sample of topics offered that could suit this terrain included:

- Relationships between librarianship, grassroots organizing (anti-gentrification; migrant justice; prison abolition; anti-police brutality; land defence) and social movements in Canada (Occupy; G20 and World Summit protests; Idle No More)
- Library activism in geographic contexts outside major English-speaking cities (Quebec; rural, reserve and isolated settings)
- Critical theory in library, archival, and information practice and education
- Decolonization of library, archive, and information institutions
- Perspectives of Indigenous and racialized librarians, archivists, and information workers
- Considerations of gender identity in the library, archival, and information setting
- Homelessness and poverty, as they are approached by librarianship
- Information inequality, information poverty and our incarcerated populations
- Perspectives on disabilities, accessibility, usability and universal design
- Diversity, equity, respect and expressive freedom
- Information literacy
- Artificial intelligence, education and social responsibility
- Networked learning, critical pedagogy and philosophy of technology

As a result of the CFP, the intake of submissions, and the peer review process, I am delighted to present a diverse set of seven stimulating offerings informed by research and practice that encourage critical thinking and just action.

The first paper contributed by Carolin Huang is entitled “On the Importance of Theory in LIAS: A Review of Literature on Radical Librarianship in Canada”. Huang offers a pioneering

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overview of the status of radical librarianship in Canada presenting both a collection and an analysis of relevant resources, a call for more theoretical works in library, information and archival studies, and encouragement of further inquiry in librarianship and the need to nurture voices of dissent. This paper is an accessible and informative foundation for the readership of this special issue.

The second paper contributed by Eva Revitt is entitled “*Women’s Work and The Library: Ideological Shaping of a Feminized Profession*”. It brings our attention to a feminized workforce cohort in the academy. Drawing on the findings of an original institutional ethnography of librarians’ work experiences as academic staff, Revitt makes the case for how contemporary valuations of work are historically rooted and ideologically determined and positions the devaluation of librarians’ work in the context of gendered exploitation of labour in a capitalist production mode. Importantly, this work offers a skilled lesson on the ‘how to’ of institutional ethnography research and scholarship.

The third paper also reflects on the academy, with a focus on technology. This work contributed by Sam Popowich is entitled “*Proxying the Data Body: Artificial Intelligence, Federated Identity, and Machinic Subjection*”. Popowich addresses the academic library shift from self-management of user-authentication of licensed resources themselves, to cloud-based implementations of “federated identity” technologies and covers related issues regarding privacy, surveillance, machinic subjection, and algorithmic governance. Popowich argues the emergent nature of the “data body” creates ambiguity between the hyper-control of contemporary technologies as well as the possibility of combating them.

The fourth paper contributed by Reece Steinberg is entitled “*Case Studies, Cuts, and Critical Information Literacy*”. Responding to the challenging contemporary post-secondary context, Steinberg sets the stage for the necessary offering of practical examples of critical library instruction using case studies, explores the relationship between case studies and critical information literacy, and argues for case studies as a radical, relevant tool in post-secondary library teaching.

The fifth paper contributed by Güler Demir is entitled “*Democratic and Educational Background of Information Poverty: The Case of Turkey*”. Demir examines information poverty in Turkey, focusing on its democratic and educational aspects in examining domestic and international literature and other public and official sources. The study concludes Turkey suffers from information poverty because of it failing to fulfill minimal democratic and educational conditions and recommends the first step in the amelioration of information poverty is awareness-raising by targeting all governmental and societal segments, and asserting librarians and other intellectual workers have a significant role to play in the process.

Underscoring attention to education and conditions of life, the sixth paper contributed by Matthew Conner and Leah Plocharczyk is entitled “*Social Justice and Converging Theories: Library Service for Those with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD)*”. The co-authors caution that efforts to advance diversity in library services have not yet engaged people

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with IDD. The study offers a review of trends and a case study and affirms a viable way forward combining traditional library programming and training with immersions in social justice learnings that may benefit this population and thus all.

The seventh and final paper contributed by Tami Oliphant, Danielle Allard and Angela Lieu is entitled “Addressing Patron-Perpetrated Sexual Harassment in Libraries: Four Propositions for Intersectional Feminist Anti-violence Education in LIS”. The nature of this work loops us back to issues systemic in society highly reflected in feminized contexts like librarianship. The three authors identify and offer four propositions for library and information studies education that renders patron-perpetrated sexual harassment visible and an important topic to take up within our classrooms. They call for a tailored educational model rooted in intersectional feminist anti-violence pedagogy, the use of critical and anti-violence theory, the connection of theory to practice, and being informed by the inclusion of students and those working in libraries.

This carefully curated collection of urgent papers illuminates the value of critical library and information studies and offers important opportunities for how to ameliorate systemic problems in society in Canada and elsewhere. The papers are not forgiving. They demand not just our attention but also our action. What is written is informed by the real opportunity to bring the field of library and information studies to and across learning tables in libraries, archives and museums; in schools, colleges and universities; in the cultural network; in the public sphere; in information centres; in governments; and so on.

Appreciation is extended to everyone who responded to our CFP, the rigorous reviewers, the ten authors for sharing their words, and the wonderful working team at JCIE. Special thanks are owed to: JCIE Editor Lynette Shultz for encouraging a special issue from the field of library and information studies; library and information studies students, including Carolin Huang, for provoking the theme for the special issue; and, JCIE Editor Maren Elfert and editorial assistant Carrie Karsgaard for the heavy-lifting performed to realize the intended aim in polished and published form.

Reading is freeing. *Toni Samek, Guest Editor.*