You Can’t Stay Neutral on a Moving Train

Making Critical Librarianship Tangible Through Library Programs and Exhibits

#critlibALA17
Introductions

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Territorial Acknowledgement
Critical Librarianship:

“Critlib is short for “critical librarianship,” a movement of library workers dedicated to bringing social justice principles into our work in libraries. We aim to engage in discussion about critical perspectives on library practice. Recognizing that we all work under regimes of white supremacy, capitalism, and a range of structural inequalities, how can our work as librarians intervene in and disrupt those systems?”

critlib.org
#critlib Perceptions
Why do we do this work?
The Civic Lab at Skokie Public Library

About Skokie:
- 65,000 population
- 40%+ foreign-born
- 90+ languages spoken
- Significant immigrant & refugee communities

About Skokie Public Library:
- 165 staff
- 2400 programs annually
- 2.1 million annual circulation
- 1 location (133,000 sq. ft.) + bookmobile
The Civic Lab: Ideation

The Civic Lab: Ideation

“Civic education in America may not be enumerated within the Bill of Rights, but it does not change the fact that it remains the ultimate, tried and true weapon in the fight for justice and equity.”

- Elizabeth Adetiba, Black Youth Project
The Civic Lab: Implementation

Topics:

- Black Lives Matter
- Climate Change
- Immigration
- Income Inequality
- LGBTQQQI
- Reproductive Justice
The Civic Lab: Implementation

Components:
- Microcollections
- Curated resources
- Voting
- Conversation prompts
The Civic Lab: Iteration

Civic Lab Pop-Ups:

- Flexible furniture & equipment
- Topics in the news & of interest to the community
- Facilitation is vital—so is a team of staff
The Civic Lab: Iteration

Civic Lab Pop-Ups:
- Scaffolded options to appeal to the widest audience
- Touchstones to draw interest
- Curated resources available in person & online
The Civic Lab: Iteration

Election Day
What Every American Should Know
Let's Talk About Standing Rock
Dear Elected Official
Blackness in America
Executive Orders and Immigrants
Who is Chin-Kee?

Actually, She Did That
The Role of the 21st Century Library
What is CRISPR?
Take a Stand Against Racism
Understanding the Supreme Court
The Responsibility to Protect
Free Speech vs. Hate Speech

https://skokielibrary.info/resources/civic-lab/
The Civic Lab: Impact

Conversations around topics in the news
Resources to peruse at leisure

Executive Orders and Immigrants

Here are key terms, core questions, and resources for understanding and considering the recent executive order affecting immigrants and refugees to the United States.

Key Definitions
- Executive Order – an order issued by a government’s executive on the basis of authority specifically granted to the executive branch, as by the U.S. Constitution or a congressional act
- Immigrant – a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence
- Refugee – an individual seeking refuge or asylum; especially an individual who has left his or her native country and is unwilling or unable to return to it because of persecution or fear of persecution (as because of race, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion)

Core Questions
1. How should the United States balance a desire to welcome immigrants and help refugees with a desire to maintain a safe country?
2. What should be the role of the immigrant vetting process in the United States if being a mix of cultures is central to our national identity?
3. Should religion or national origin be taken into consideration in the vetting process for potential immigrants and refugees?
The Civic Lab: Impact

“You need to have good information in order to make up your own mind.

If you have bad information, someone else is making up your mind for you.”

- Civic Lab participant
Miriam Neptune

- Successful activism relies on building relationships
- Students are great partners, when seen, supported, and heard
- The Library provides a space to break down hierarchies and help people relate to each other across boundaries
- The Library can and should uplift and celebrate individual and community research as a source of power
Black Unicorn partnership

w/ Bekezela Mguni, Activist in Residence

Spring 2016
Experimenting w/

- Community building
- Students as partners/curators
- Making space
ENTER:
A pop-up library celebrating the impact of *When and Where I Enter*, and *Meridians Journal*
Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole ... race enters with me.'

— Anna Julia Cooper, 1892
Creating intergenerational, interdisciplinary research communities

Reverence for the personal, in public
April DeSimone, Founder of Designing the WE Urban planning strategist, Entrepreneur

Video of April re: Redlining in the Bronx
APRIL DESIMONE
BRONX, NY
April DeSimone, Founder of Designing the WE Urban planning strategist, Entrepreneur

Video of April re: Redlining in the Bronx
RACE & CLASS SPACE + Design

Neilson Browsing Room
Smith College
February 16th, 2017 | 7pm

sophia.smith.edu/undesign
Packed house @SmithLibraries last night for race+class space&design w @mirdigital @hypervisible @aprildesimone @lobojost #UndesignTheRedline
Undesign the Redline
What is the racial history of your neighborhood? Did restrictive covenants influence who lives in your neighborhood?

They were used in Amherst as recently as 1959.

My grandparents were the 1st blacks to move in their suburban Richmond, VA neighborhood. Their neighbors blew up their mailbox 2 weeks later to try to make them leave. mid 1970s
RESEARCHFEST
UNDESIGN THE REDLINE
@ Neilson Library Knowledge Lab
MARCH 3, 2017

Inspiring stories from researchers who imagine a future beyond inequality.

10:00am Welcome & Refreshments
10:30am Rigged Cities: Healing from demolition, displacement, disinvestment - Community organizers Terri Baltimore (Hill House Association, Pittsburgh) and Denys Candy (Jandon Center for Community Engagement) tell the story of Find the Rivers: a decade long initiative to transform how residents saw their roles in re-making their neighborhood and Pittsburgh’s future.

2 pm Food Access and Us - Students from Gender, Land, and Food Movements (SWG 230) present on the efforts to undesign food deserts in Springfield and Holyoke.


4:30 pm Work it Out - Interactive community mapping workshop @ the Spatial Analysis Lab.

Presented by Neilson Library Knowledge Lab, The Jandon Center for Community Engagement, the Program for the Study of Women and Gender, Center for the Environment, Ecological Design, and Sustainability, and the Spatial Analysis Lab

For More Info: sophia.smith.edu/undesign
“I appreciated how the programming brought together community activists, designers, architects, historians, and other scholars, together in a conversation that is very relevant for our current moment.”
“To me, this is the library of the future -- libraries as a space for knowledge sharing and production ... that invite and welcome a range of communities into its spaces...”
Key Outcomes

- Social justice-oriented
- Inclusive
- Community-building
IDEATE LAWRENCE 2015: WATER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2015
10a.m.-7p.m.
Learning Studio @ Anschutz Library

A COLLABORATIVE ALL-DAY EVENT

Ideate Lawrence is a hands-on event for the public to learn and exchange ideas about water issues facing our community. No expertise required, all you need is your curiosity!

SPEECHES, DISCUSSIONS, LUNCH AND PRIZES

EVENT INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION AT LIB.KU.EDU/IDEATE-2015
Partners

- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Center for Civic & Social Responsibility
- City of Lawrence
- Lawrence Public Library
- Undergraduate Studies
- First Year Experience
- Information Technology
- University Career Center
- Natural History Museum
Small acts of resistance through community-centered programming
Partnerships & Collaboration
Now for examples:
REACT: an artistic platform for political expression

Powell Library East Rotunda
Week Nine
March 5-12

Opening Event: Tuesday March 6
11-2 PM

Curated by Alyssa Dorn, Doreen Etaat, Louie Greenwald
REACT: an artistic platform for political expression
Diversity and its Discontents

Exhibit that highlighted movements towards diversity and inclusion in sci-fi and video games

Tied to library’s distinct collections

Hoped to engage community in dialogue
American Concentration Camps Exhibit

Library Special Collections exhibit in response to “Muslim Internment Camps”

Discussed executive order 9066

Tried to draw attention to forgotten American history
Between the World and Me: Zine Workshop

Zine workshop to prompt discussion and reflection of UCLA’s Common Book Between the World and Me

Partnered with FYE Office for snacks and promotion
Emotional & Invisible Labor of #critlib

- Being punished for doing this work
- Bullied by coworkers
- Told the work isn’t as important
- Retaliatory/punitive behavior
Lessons Learned

- Balance buy-in with being subversive
- Take care of yourself
- Recognize the benefits of both passive and active programming
- Build equitable relationships with people who share your motivations
- Advocates and sponsors may not come from places that you would expect
- Document everything - keep track of the contributions made by yourself and others
Put Your Learning into Practice

1. What social justice topics are coming up in conversations in your service population?
2. What type of program might you be able to offer that addresses one of these topics?
3. What/who are some resources/allies/partners you might turn to for help addressing this topic?
4. What is an obstacle you might encounter in pursuing this program?
5. Who in your network can you count on for brainstorming, troubleshooting, and support as you pursue this program?
Questions?