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### Critical Information Literacy: An Annotated Bibliography

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## Critical Information Literacy: An Annotated Bibliography (Fall 2022)

Beatty, J. (2014). Locating information literacy within institutional oppression. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-information-literacy-within-institutional-oppression/>

While many library professionals have lauded the ACRL information literacy framework that was released in 2016, Beatty argues that the framework “reinforces existing structures of power, particularly in its use of metaphors such as “information marketplace” that promote neoliberal values. Continued use of similar metaphors “naturalize the current model of production, organization, and distribution of scholarly information that we take for granted in our libraries today.” The author asserts that by change is still possible through our “insisting on the possibility of a true commons of information, and by denying the supposed inevitability of neoliberal values and neoliberal librarianship.”

Blackburn, F. (2015). The intersection between cultural competence and whiteness in libraries. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/culturalcompetence/>

Blackburn, who self-identifies as a white librarian in Australia, argues that “cultural competence embedded in professional approaches, library operations and the library environment can be the means of addressing whiteness, if the understandings of power and privilege outlined in intersectionality are incorporated.” Using her own professional experience and cultural growth as a framework, Blackburn voices the need for a programmatic and institutional embrace of robust cultural competence so that individual information professionals working towards change no longer face the “lack of support and insulation.”

Elmborg, J. (2006). Critical information literacy: Implications for instructional practice. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 32(2), 192-199. <https://www.sciencedirect.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/science/article/pii/S0099133305001898>

In this foundational work on critical information literacy, Elmborg argues that “librarians and library educators can better engage the educational climate by defining academic librarianship through the scholarship of teaching and learning.” Elmborg’s criticism of the ACRL information literacy standards anticipate by nearly a decade the IL framework, including the proposal that libraries should help students develop an “academic fluency” that enables participating in a discourse that requires “the ability to read, interpret, and produce information valued in academia.” For Elmborg, libraries can no longer be “value-neutral” cultural spaces but must instead take part in the “daily struggle of translation between the organized conceptions of knowledge and the efforts of all students to engage that knowledge.”

Etta, F. (2018). Vocational awe and librarianship: The lies we tell ourselves. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>

In this paper, the author describes and explores the impacts of what they term “vocational awe,” or “the set of ideas, values, and assumptions that librarians have about themselves and the professional that results in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique.” Not only can vocation awe lead to burnout, under-compensation, job creep, and the reinforcement of privilege, but it also “sets up an expectation that any failure of libraries is largely the fault of individuals failing to live up to the ideas of the profession, rather than understanding that the library as an institution is fundamentally flawed.”

Irving, C. J. (2020). Critical information literacy, adult learning, and community perspectives. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 11(1), 65-76. <https://rela.ep.liu.se/article/view/3865>

As critical information literacy work has traditionally taken place in higher educational settings, Irving explores in this article the value and limitations of using existing CIL methods and approaches in community-based programs involved adult learning. Community-based programs must strive to avoid “reproducing the neoliberal dynamics” and instead should “explore new ways to document and theorize voices that are currently missing.” Two library-led initiatives that achieve this goal, according to Irving, involve making information more accessible and the reconceptualizing the “structure and practices of libraries that integrate Indigenous people’s knowledges and interests.”

jesus, n. d. (2014). Locating the library in institutional oppression. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/>

After establishing that “the proposition that libraries (and librarians) be politically neutral is a self-defeating one,” jesús situates libraries within the broader enlightenment project that is founded upon and perpetuates “the three logics of white supremacy”: slavery, indigenous genocide, and Orientalism. “The clear solution” to this problem, writes the author, “is decolonization,” one which disrupts the empire’s mechanism for creating ‘knowledge,’” allowing libraries to “become focal points for the free exchange and access of ideas.” The article offers few concrete steps, however, that information professionals could take to perform this important and critical work.

Marsh, F. (2022). Unsettling information literacy: Exploring critical approaches with academic researchers for decolonising the university. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 16(1), 4-29. <https://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/JIL/article/view/PRA-V16-I1-1>

This article argues for critical information literacy’s potential to help liberate, or decolonize, the curriculum at institutions of higher education in the UK, particularly with CIL’s “deeper scrutiny of power structures and socio-political dynamics of information and student learning.” Ways that libraries could assist with this decolonization include embracing the value of non-traditional and non-textual information; reconsidering how to value and evaluate sources, authority, and legitimacy; exposing libraries’ own role in

colonizing the curriculum; and pursuing pedagogies of relationality and transitionality. The author asserts that information literacy “must also remain unsettled in the way that we might understand it to be a remedy; it should not become another form of settler-harm reduction for academia.”

Stommel, J., Friend, C., & Morris, S. M. (2020). *Critical Digital Pedagogy: A Collection*. Hybrid Pedagogy Incorporated. <https://pressbooks.pub/cdpcollection/>

This open-access volume offers a selection of articles originally over a decade in the “collaboratively peer-reviewed” journal *Hybrid Pedagogy*, whose editors define “critical digital pedagogy” as an “activism as much as it is a field, practice as much as it is theory, derived from experience and then reflection upon that experience.” The collection is divided into five sections: Politicizing Critical Digital Pedagogy, Practicing Critical Digital Pedagogy, Contingency and Academic Labor, Pedagogical Alterity, and The Scholarly and the Digital, with representative chapters that include “A Guide for Resisting Edtech: The Case against Turnitin,” “Librarian as Outsider,” and “Love in the Time of Peer Review.” “Ultimately,” write the editors, critical digital pedagogy “is about human relationships, the complexity of humans working together with other humans.”

Tewell, E. (2015). A decade of critical information literacy: A review of the literature. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 9(1), 24-43. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2015.9.1.174>

After Tewell first situates critical information literacy—defined here as the consideration of the “ways that librarians may encourage students to engage with and act upon the power structures underpinning information’s production and dissemination”—within its conceptual and historical context of critical pedagogy and information literacy, the article offers a clear review of scholarship and advocacy related to critical information literacy. Tewell’s review, whose aim is partly to “draw attention to the many thought-provoking works within the body of literature,” elucidates the dense thicket of CIL’s aims, theoretical approaches, and non-linear evolution and its relation to ACRL’s then-operational Information Literacy Competency Standards.

Tewell, E. C. (2018). The practice and promise of critical information literacy: Academic librarians' involvement in critical library instruction. *College & Research Libraries*, 79(1), 10. <https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/16616>

After establishing “information literacy’s failure to address the social and political dimensions of information and education,” the article explores the possibilities and practices of academic libraries to incorporate critical information literacy to help students understand “how libraries participate in systems of oppression.” After conducting questionnaires and interviews with librarians, Tewell then shares in detail some of the benefits, challenges, and practices that librarians have experienced when bringing critical information literacy into their instruction, including “through the application of methods that aim to destabilize established hierarchies in the classroom and foster meaningful

discussion and dialogue between students, the integration of topics that interrogate systems of oppression both within academe and out, or a combination of both.”