
Teaching and un-teaching authority:

Evaluating sources in the critical library classroom

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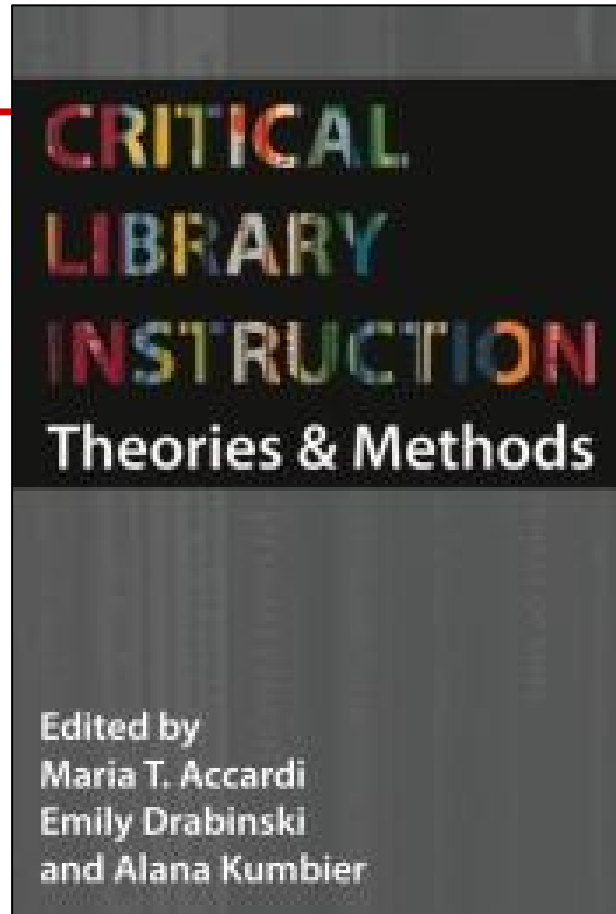
Overview

- Our inspirations
 - Our project
 - What worked and what didn't
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Setting



Background



CRITICAL
LIBRARY
INSTRUCTION
Theories & Methods

Edited by
Maria T. Accardi
Emily Drabinski
and Alana Kumbier

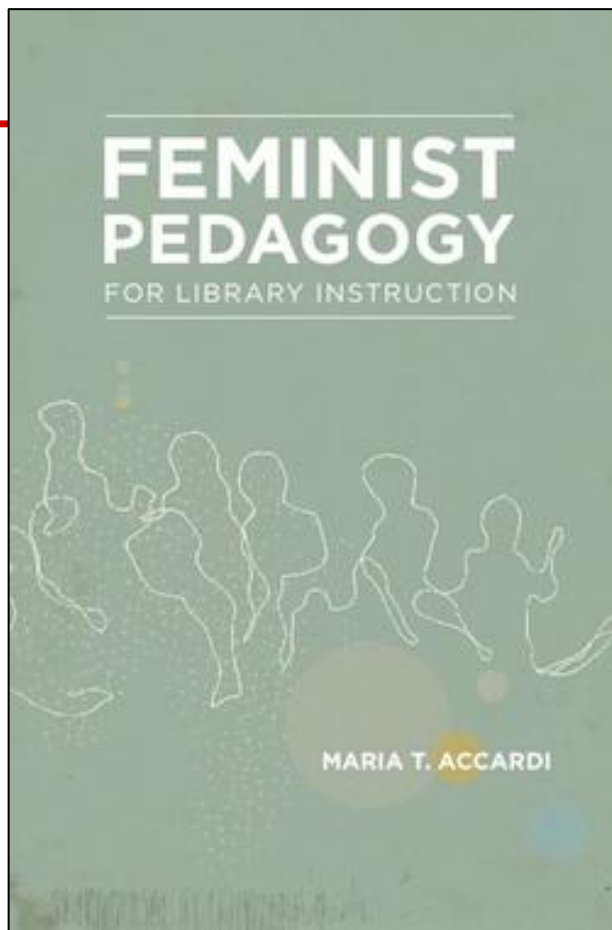
Background

CRITICAL
LIBRARY

“Ours is a profession that often splits working and thinking in two—theorizing goes on in LIS doctoral programs while front-line librarians concern themselves with ‘best practices’ at the service desk...Would ideas that didn’t always lead directly to outcomes find a home in our profession?”

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Background



Background



FEMINIST
PEDAGOGY
FOR LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

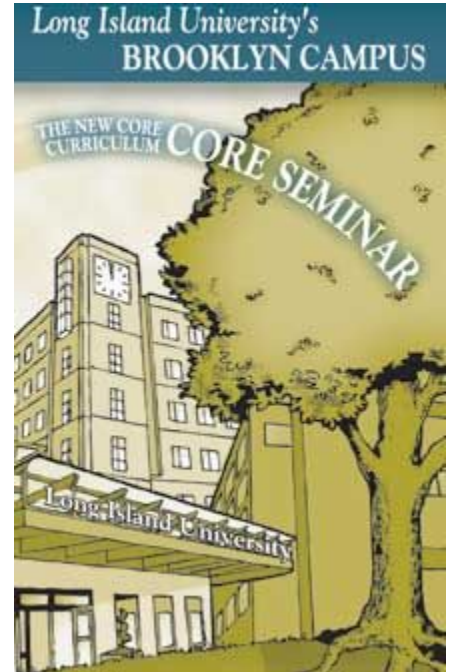
The “classroom as a collaborative, democratic, transformative site; consciousness raising about sexism and oppression; and the value of personal testimony and lived experience as valid ways of knowing.”



MARIA T. ACCARDI

Context

- Undergraduate students in Core Seminar classes
 - Required interdisciplinary course
 - Primarily first and second years
- Classes visit library twice



Session #1

- Divide students into groups of 2-4 people
 - Assign each group an information source (chosen to reflect everyday reality)
 - Wikipedia
 - Google
 - Library catalog
 - Library database
-

Session #1

- Group answers questions about source
 - Identify author(s)
 - Pros and cons of using source
 - Viability as a reference
 - Group presents findings to classmates
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Session #1: Activity Questions

- Please write down the author(s) and title of your source.
 - Who wrote or contributed to this source? How can you tell?
 - How might this particular source be useful to you? What are its disadvantages?
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Session #1: Sample Student Answer

Source: Wikipedia article on cyberbullying

“Anyone could have contributed.”

“It helps people gain knowledge, but there’s no way of verifying the info because there’s no author.”

“It pertains to my topic but it’s not reliable since anyone could have contributed.”

Interim

Students complete online survey between first and second session

What is one thing you remember from the first library session?*

What questions about library research do you have that you would like answered in the next library session?*

Is there anything from the first session that you found confusing?*

“I remember...”

“How to cite my work properly”

“Google search is too broad”

“To put keywords into the databases”

“My question is...”

“What websites are acceptable to use on my paper?”

“What sources are valid sources? Where can I find more valid sources?”

“How can I effectively use the library to obtain all that information?”

Session #2

- Address student questions and interests
 - Students find and cite an article
 - Students explain if article is trustworthy
 - Students reflect on publishing qualifications
 - Included vs. excluded voices
-

Session #2: Activity Questions

- Find one article relevant to your paper topic. Please email the article to yourself and to me.
 - Using APA or MLA style, write down the citation for the article you found.
 - Do you think this is a trustworthy source? Why or why not?
 - Who can publish on this specific topic? Whose voice might be included or excluded?
-

Session #2: Sample Student Answer

Topic: Human trafficking in the United States

“The people who post on it have a certain education...it has citations and references.”

“Teachers and highly educated people [can publish on this topic]. Professor voices may be included and student voices excluded. Only people with a PhD or similar can publish.”

Why We Taught The Way We Did

- Fostering an anti-hierarchical classroom:
 - Student contributions and experiences sought for group topics, search strategies, selecting sources
 - Students present to the class and showcase their knowledge
 - Students learn that they can also be teachers
-

Why We Taught The Way We Did

- Moving away from teacher-dominated discourses:
 - Work done in small groups for most of 1st session
 - Student questions set the stage for 2nd class
 - Opportunities for personal reflection:
 - Time set aside in second session for considering authorship
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What Worked

- Students were more engaged when asked to be the experts on a resource
 - Asking the hard questions resulted in uncertainty, and also reflection
 - Balance between group work and individual activities
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What Didn't

- Responses to survey between classes seemed to be “what the librarian wants to hear”
 - Some instructors didn't want to deviate from standard library session
 - Additional reflective questions posed at end of session yielded little discussion
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Questions to Consider

- How is authority used by the instructor?
 - How is the authority of students ignored or undermined?
 - What steps can we as library instructors take to promote student authority and empowerment?
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