# Critical Library Pedagogy in Practice

Edited by

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## 1. Developing and Delivering Resistance Researching. Alice Harvey and Laura Elliott.

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## Introduction

This chapter will explore the ongoing experience of new professionals in the role of Subject Librarians, developing and delivering library workshops for students in 'Resistance Researching' at Goldsmiths, University of London. These workshops drew on ideas from critical librarianship, with a focus on examining social justice principles in library work, and were designed to contribute to the 'Liberate our Library' and decolonising the curriculum campaigns (see ch. 11 for further discussion of this campaign at Goldsmiths).

The chapter starts with a literature review to highlight writing we have found particularly useful in developing our thinking and ideas. Our aim here is to give any readers new to this area of library work a bibliography to use to develop their own knowledge and practice. The rest of the chapter looks in more detail at the workshops we created. Here, it is our intention to detail our workshops for others to use. However, we are not showcasing a series of perfect workshops, rather work in progress. We seek to be open about the challenges we have come across, and to offer up our insights to others interested in adopting this approach in their library teaching work. We hope it will inspire others to develop their own versions of 'Resistance Researching' that work for their institution.

## Literature Review

The process of reading was an integral part of the planning and preparation process for our workshops. As nobody within our own institution had attempted this kind of loose-structured, dialogic workshop before, or focused on delivering workshops with an explicit social justice angle, we sought support from other library case studies in the UK LIS community. It may be useful to other practitioners to explore some of the same literature and draw on our reflections/connections, so we have included a brief critical overview here.

## Decolonising the Curriculum

The 'Resistance Researching' workshops were designed to promote the values encompassed within the Goldsmiths 'Liberate Our Library' campaign and the movement to diversify the curriculum across Higher Education (HE) institutions in the UK more broadly. 'Decolonising the University' by Bhambra et al. (Bhambra, Gebrial, & Nişancıoğlu, 2018) provides an essential overview of the work taking place across the sector, and blogs such as those by Meera Sabaratnam at SOAS (Sabaratnam, 2017) provide more current critical perspective. More recently, nationwide work focused on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) attainment gap, for example the #closingthegap report (Universities UK & NUS, 2019), has drawn out case studies of work taking place at individual institutions. This has been useful in identifying areas of overlap across the country.

There is a distinct institutional focus on the role of academic staff in decolonising the curriculum, however there is a great deal less literature that explicitly deals with the role of the library and library workers within this. At the beginning of this project work, it was useful to connect with Ian Clark (University of East London), who wrote 'Tackling Whiteness in the Academy', which specifically focused on library work and the risks of superficial, tokenistic gestures such as 'diversifying collections', and the importance of collaboration and of feeling discomfort (Clark, 2018). It was crucial to read Clark alongside Sista Resista, who argue against the co-option of decolonising rhetoric within commoditised learning environments, and highlight the importance of self-accountability for workers engaged in agitation (Resista, 2018). Both articles highlight the necessary move to decentre the self when creating inclusive platforms, which was a guiding principle throughout our work.

It was through informal networking such as this that the LIS-DECOLONISE Jiscmail list[1] was established, which now provides a

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[1] JiscMail is the UK's national academic mailing list service, mailing lists are themed around taught subjects, research areas, special interest groups and collaborative project activities. Further information can be found at https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk

crucial forum for continuing conversation and sharing best practice. Interest in decolonising the curriculum is rapidly evolving within the UK LIS community, fuelled especially through personal interactions or work-in-progress presentations at conferences. Academic references specific to this work in UK LIS are sparse as yet and the literature is bolstered more by individual case studies, for example work on reading lists at Kent (Field, 2019) or emancipating the collections at Glasgow School of Art (Glasgow School of Art, 2019).

Across these forums there appears to be an overall trend to focus on diversifying reading lists or liaising with academic departments directly to influence collection development. The focus on evaluation and provision of resources in a Higher Education (HE) academic library context is perhaps inevitable, as this commonly forms the basis of work in general. It may also reflect the (lack of) agency library workers in the neoliberal university have—held hostage within an "audit culture" (Bates & Quinn, 2017), and struggling in the face of diminished budgets to engage in more long-term, student-centred project-work.

### Diversity, Neutrality, and Critical Librarianship

At the beginning of this project, we searched for literature specific to the library's role in teaching critical information literacy within the context of decolonising the curriculum. Engagement in critical librarianship has been particularly active in the art library community in the UK. Art Libraries Journal dedicated a special issue to 'critical art librarianship', which has become an invaluable resource for exploring the influence and infiltration of critical librarianship within the UK LIS landscape. It documents key presentations from the symposium, 'Towards a Critical (Art) Librarianship' (University of the Arts London, 2018), as well as the ARLIS Conference (ARLIS UK & Ireland, 2018), and includes perspectives on professional identity, knowledge organisation, workshops, and critical reflection.

Jess Crilly's emphasis on 'a reflexive lens' (borrowed from Nicholson and Seale's definition of critical librarianship) is especially interesting in addressing how critical librarianship has "the potential to influence any area of our day to day library practices" that take place within the institutional context (Crilly, 2019, p.83). Crilly provides an overview of activities at the University of the Arts London that proactively address issues of representation and bias—for example through interventions in

collections, teaching, and student engagement—highlighting the value of critical librarianship to library staff and its impact on institutional culture.

Crilly outlines a practice that is not only reflexive, but necessarily holistic and evolving, popularised beyond the confines of individual workshops. This mentality was equally important to us as we sought to develop our own practice. The value of sharing honest accounts in this way has contributed to our own openness around activities at Goldsmiths.

However, there does seem to be a gap in the UK LIS literature landscape specific to the library's role in teaching critical information literacy around decolonising the curriculum. This led us towards US literature on critical librarianship. Here we found the US to be far more established in the area of information literacy instruction specific to tackling issues of social justice.

For an overview of the history and parameters of critical librarianship within the US, Library Juice Press provides an excellent range of titles (Accardi, Drabinski, & Kumbier, 2010; Downey, 2016; Gregory & Higgins, 2013; Nicholson & Seale, 2018). Our personal interest in critical librarianship intersected with the movement to decolonise the curriculum in its resistance to the concept of neutrality in libraries. Jennifer A. Ferretti provides an excellent overview of 'false neutrality' in libraries (Ferretti, 2019), and examples of ways to advocate for the integration of social justice issues within library work, which was a useful guide for the work we began.

### Information Literacy Instruction

Ultimately the 'Resistance Researching' workshops were conceived of as an attempt to connect critical information literacy with social justice pedagogy. From the outset we aimed to foster a democratic classroom environment, and sought examples of practical techniques for facilitating this kind of learning environment. Books on critical information literacy, such as by Annie Downey (Downey, 2016), were a useful starting-point, and provided advice on finding small ways to work critical content into student workshops. For example, introducing critical source evaluation as part of a broader discussion around information cycles and research flows, crucially addressing the question of *what/who is missing*?

More personalised accounts of teaching practice were invaluable to us in preparing for our workshops, including for example Maria Accardi, who

emphasises feminist strategies for library instruction (Accardi, 2013). These include narrative, intuition, and experiential knowledge—in practice this means valuing personal narratives and fostering a collaborative learning environment. This reading gave us the confidence to facilitate dialogic exercises such as group discussion and activities, supported by prepared reading materials, which were useful as prompts to scaffold learning within informal conversation.

We found the work by Lua Gregory and Shana Higgins (Gregory & Higgins, 2017) particularly useful in plotting the trajectory of individual workshops. We used their work on mapping across values from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education as the basis for rearticulating our core aims to reflect an explicitly critical librarianship slant, and restructured our workshop plans accordingly. We were mindful of how our aims related to shared outcomes of "awareness, consciousness-raising and independence of thought" (p.48). Most significantly, in the process of formulating critical learning objectives for students, we became more self-aware of how they could be extracted and embedded into more general teaching sessions.

Gina Schlesselman-Tarango's 'Cyberfeminst approach to information literacy' (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2014), which advocated for the cyborg librarian, who will 'challenge the master narratives' (p.30), interact with "digital technology to create social change," and subvert oppressive binaries (p.31) was particularly valuable to our thinking. Approaching the library worker as active interface or facilitator who guides students in "untangling and navigating information" (p.37), to identify missing and dominant voices, critique information paradigms and participate in digital cultures, was exactly what we were looking for. Schlesselman-Tarango highlighted to us the importance of working holistically across print and electronic resources, and encouraged us to extend the scope of our workshops beyond classification to include inclusive citation practices and information dissemination.

## Cataloguing and Classification

From the outset, 'Resistance Researching' was intended to be a consciousness-raising workshop that aimed to highlight bias and marginalisation built into library classification systems such as Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress Subject Headings—both of which we

use at Goldsmiths. We hoped this awareness would demystify the library as a site of fixed and objective meaning. This would enable participants to think critically about the way their research practice fits within (and could work against) socio-historical frameworks of representation, as realised in the physical shelving layout of the library and the online catalogue.

There is a great deal of literature on the topic of deconstructing classification concentrated in the US around the work and activism of Sandford Berman, Hope A. Olson, Emily Drabinski, and more recently, Melissa Adler. All of these librarian-teacher-writers interrogate classification along the lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality from an inclusive perspective that takes into account the intersectionality of lived-experience (for example Olson, 2001). More specifically, they concentrate on the dangerous perpetuation of negative stereotypes within information systems and the historic relationship between such systemic oppression and persecution by the state. For example, Berman's tireless campaign to incorporate more representative terminology for marginalised people within Library of Congress Subject Headings (Berman & Gross, 2017), Adler's focus on structural racism within Dewey Decimal (Adler, 2017a), and Drabinski and Adler's attention to vitally queering the catalogue (Adler, 2017b; Drabinski, 2013).

We introduced quotes from texts by these authors as discussion points within the workshops and in particular used the model of dynamic order at the Sitterwerk Art Library (Roth, Schütz, & Price, 2015) to design the book-sorting activity we use in the workshops.

Whilst the literature was sufficiently informative and inspirational for us as library workers, it did not touch on how to introduce these topics in a more accessible format for enhancing critical awareness in students. We would have welcomed more guidance on how to broach these topics in a short, practical session, as well as examples of localised or student-led interventions in classification schema. Hopefully, the overview that follows will provide one example of how to do this.

## Context

Decolonising the curriculum campaigns have grown in the last few years from various student-led movements, such as University College London's (UCL) 'Why is my curriculum white campaign' (2014) and 'Rhodes Must Fall' (2015) in Cape Town and Oxford. One of the key aims of such campaigns is to draw attention to the prominence of straight, white men in

curricula and challenge historic racial oppression within Higher Education (HE) institutions, specific to the selective narrative and Eurocentrism of academia.

The National Union of Students (NUS) #Liberatemydegree campaign that was subsequently launched, focused on the BAME attainment gap and issues of marginalisation within education, which impact disproportionately on women, working class, disabled, LGBTQI, Black students, and those with caring responsibilities (Bouattia & Vieru, 2017). At Goldsmiths in 2016-17, 40% of students were BAME, yet there was a 19% attainment gap between White and Black students (Woodford-Lewis, L. 2018).

Goldsmiths Students Union (SU) adopted the NUS title for their own "Diversifying the Curriculum" campaign to make the student experience more inclusive. The SU were directly involved in rewriting the Learning, Teaching, Assessment Strategy 2017-21, focusing on the need for staff to "embrace liberation, representation, and inclusion at every stage of the learning process," which was encompassed within the strategic priority to "Liberate Our Degrees" ('Liberate My Degree', 2018).

Intersecting with this call to action, the Critical Librarianship movement uses critical pedagogy to encourage us as library workers to be proactive in addressing issues of social justice, including a consideration of equitable access and opportunity, amplifying marginalised voices, empowerment and an ethics of care. It focuses on 'problematizing' the library, challenging the idea that it's a neutral space, in order to better equip ourselves and our students with the critical tools necessary to interrogate power structures and norms (see Olson 2001, Drabinski 2019, Adler 2017a, and Adler 2017b for more on these ideas).

As a means of foregrounding our commitment to social justice within Goldsmiths library in particular, as allies, the working group to *Liberate Our Library* was formed. The mission statement is to "work to diversify our collections, to de-centre Whiteness, to challenge non-inclusive structures in knowledge management and their impact on library collections, users, and services" ('Liberate our Library', 2018). The 'Resistance Researching' workshops were designed as a means of contributing to this ethos.

**The Workshops**

'Resistance Researching' is a series of workshops run by the Subject Librarians as part of the Academic Skills Centre (ASC) programme at Goldsmiths; they began during the 2018-19 academic year. The 'Resistance Researching' workshops were established around three broad themes: information gathering, citation practices, and dissemination. The idea was that these themes could be developed in different ways to reflect the personal knowledge and interest of the staff involved. The workshops are open to students from any department and at any level of study across Goldsmiths, from undergraduate to PhD.

One of the first questions students ask when they walk into sessions is what is "resistance researching?" The workshops are designed to help students think more critically about how and why we find and use information, specifically addressing issues of social justice such as representation of race, gender, sexuality, disability, and class. The title of the workshops is intended to emphasise the practice of going *against the grain* of traditional research practices. In so doing, we can constructively challenge the inbuilt biases of information systems and processes in libraries. Such systems and processes include cataloguing, classification, citation, and dissemination. By engaging critically with these systems and processes, students can also contribute to going against the grain of traditional research practices.

The ASC sessions are a useful space for the librarian-teachers to try out new ideas and get student feedback. However, they can also be challenging to run as attendance is unpredictable. As a result, the taught content cannot be tailored to particular subject areas or academic cohorts, as it would be in embedded departmental teaching sessions. They therefore rely on the session coordinator to be comfortable with the material and think on their feet!

The next section of this chapter will outline the content and feedback from the workshops, and reflect on some of the strengths, as well as pitfalls we faced along the way.

### Critical Information Gathering

The workshop on Critical Information Gathering is structured around a dynamic book sorting activity. Prior to teaching the workshop, we chose a loose theme that would encompass books distributed across the physical

library space and that could be relevant to a range of departments, for example on gender, borders, and environment. We selected themes that could dovetail in with Sara Ewing's weekly Academic Skills Centre seminars 'Decolonizing Research Methods' (this is a series of ten workshops exploring the relationships between Western academic research and colonial practices, open to all Goldsmiths students) to try and appeal to an existing audience. We then gathered a selection of books from the library shelves and covered up the class marks on the spines of the books.

In the workshops, student participants are provided with a pile of 10-15 books and asked to find connections and synergies between books and their topics. We encourage students to evaluate the books on their own terms, free of any preconceptions of the library layout. They can use post-it notes to add words or comments to the books, relevant to any associations they make. This helps to introduce the idea of keywords. We also suggest they can sort the books physically to indicate their interconnections, and many participants build structures such as piles or bridges to show their own library system.

This activity is really playful and great for fostering discussion. The sense of playfulness moves students away from feeling that there is a right or wrong way to do something, and we noticed that it frees them up to be more adventurous in their approach to the task. Concealing the class marks on the spines encourages the students to rely on their own expertise, to form an independent evaluation of the materials based on their own knowledge and research interests. The focus is on *prompting* participants to reflect on the process of categorisation itself, to identify biases and unexpected intersections that they might otherwise miss in their usual approach to finding material on the shelves.

As students work, we pose questions such as:

- What are your categories?

- How easy is it to separate the materials?

- How do you decide (rational, emotional?)

- Do the categories interact?

- What considerations arise out of the materials?

- Have you considered the descriptive language you are using, and how does it compare to that used by the library?

After students create their own connections and identify keywords, we ask them to uncover the spine labels. We have available to them an OCLC Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) 23 Summaries handout (https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/dewey/ddc23-summaries.pdf), which includes some historical background to DDC (we informally check for prior knowledge) and a breakdown of the main classes. The participants particularly enjoy this reveal, working out where their connections 'officially' match up to in the main classes of DDC. Discussing in their pairs or small group we encourage students to think about how their approach differs from Dewey. They are often surprised at how books they've collected together are dispersed around the physical library space. Or conversely, how books they see as very different are sat next to each other on the shelf. This creates a great opportunity to discuss how the books are classified in our library, and how this can privilege some information over others. We also use this to highlight how DDC classification prioritises some aspects of knowledge over others.

The process of working out what the books are actually classified under in relation to their own analysis, helps to show the human decision-making behind the fixed numbers and provides an opportunity to discuss DDC with our critical librarian hats on. We introduce some quotes by Emily Drabinski and Charles Cutter as discussion points to draw out the students' thoughts and experiences of searching for information. These quotes also provide an opportunity for us to highlight bias and marginalisation inherent within library classification systems, presenting the idea that the library is not a neutral space as is sometimes assumed.

Finally, we ask students to use the keywords they identified to search the library catalogue and see what they find. We again pose questions such as:

- What are the implications of grouping your books in this way? Definition/separation, togetherness/exclusion, belonging/othering, etc.

- Can you find these books in the library catalogue using the keywords you identified?

- Do your keywords take you to any unexpected reference?

On a very practical level, this gives a useful opportunity to encourage students to explore features of the library catalogue they are not familiar with, and for us to offer advice on how to refine their searches effectively to seek out relevant information. This illustrates how we could engage

participants in both the technical nuts and bolts of searching for information whilst also exploring critical themes of social justice.

To demonstrate that developing resistance research practices is a learning experience for all of us, we ask students to share their personal reflections and tips at the end of the session on a worksheet. This also presents a further opportunity to gauge what students have taken from the session, and discuss it further as a group in the class.

*Impact*
*"It's things I never thought about, that are actually very important for refining tools for study." (Student feedback from 'Resistance Researching' information gathering session)*

Feedback gathered from the workshops, using the reflective worksheets and a more traditional survey, indicated that students were not used to applying much in the way of critical thinking in their approach to searching.

The 'Resistance Researching' tips we gathered from the students at the end reflected on the discussions the class had in the workshops. For example, after one session one student's 'Resistance Researching' tip was "Understand the limitations in book sorting". This kind of 'tip' comes out of discussion we encourage in the session around the idea of the 'neutrality' of the library. Students begin, often for the first time, to think about who organises the books they use and what that organiser prioritises in that book.

Another tip was "Ask questions about why things don't exist that you are looking for." This picks up on another theme we try to draw out through the book sorting exercise around asking questions about how you can capture intersectionality in the physical library space. It also reflects discussion we again encourage around the vocabulary and language that are being used by the students. Several tips picked up on this, offering the advice to "Learn to clearly define keywords", and "Know/find the keywords of what you are searching for."

What all the feedback—tips and more formal feedback forms—shows is that through these sessions, students are developing a greater awareness of the systems that operate in the library to organise information (DDC, Library of Congress etc). They gain an awareness of the fallacy of the neutrality of these organisational processes. And they gain techniques to help them perform critical information gathering through a more thoughtful approach to search skills such as keywords.

## Inclusive citation

This second workshop was initially inspired by a blog post by Maha Bali, *Inclusive Citation: How Diverse Are Your References?* (Bali, 2018). We were aware that the general emphasis around teaching referencing tended to focus on it as a tool to avoid plagiarism. This contrasted with the argument for the potential of citation as a "feminist and anti-racist technology of resistance that demonstrates engagement with those authors and voices we want to carry forward" (Mott & Cockayne, 2017, p954). The concept of inclusive citation is rooted in a longer tradition of symbolic citation, where references are used to maintain intellectual traditions and provide peer recognition. Resisting this became the focal point for the workshop.

The workshop focuses on encouraging students to think more critically about who they are citing in their research. Our aim is to give them a space to think critically about how and why citation practices can stifle some voices and amplify others, and for them to consider this in relation to their own research work. As Sara Ahmed argues, "the reproduction of a discipline can be the reproduction of these techniques of selection, ways of making certain bodies and themes core to the discipline, and others not even part" (Ahmed, 2013). We hope that teaching referencing through a social justice lens might help move students from often being nervous about referencing, to seeing it as a powerful tool that they can use to amplify voices that are important to them.

The workshop uses a variety of activities to engage students in questioning assumptions around citation practice. The idea, taken from Bali (Bali, 2018), was to encourage students to first consider their own reading habits, and to see what they know about the authors they are using. We start with an exercise we call '*Who's in the frame?*' Here we ask everyone (students and facilitators) to list three authors they have recently read. Ideally, this is from their research, but to help participants feel comfortable we make sure to say any reading can be used. Once someone used the bedtime stories they read their children, which actually worked really well to get people discussing and thinking about their reading. To record this information we have used both a paper-based worksheet and the map function in Padlet (an online virtual bulletin board, where students and teachers can collaborate, reflect, share links and pictures, in a secure location). The mapping is particularly visually effective for delivery in a lecture theatre setting.

We talk about what we know about these authors, which is often not very much. This leads to the next step, to research the researchers. We ask students if they can find out some basic facts about the authors. For example, do they know the researchers' gender, academic level, and where they are based in the world? We discuss why we are doing this, offering up that the potential of citation as a tool for resistance depends on making an informed and conscious decision about who you choose to cite. We also discuss that to do this, we must sometimes think beyond the content of the work and instead consider a reference as a powerful signaller of who is allowed to be heard.

The second part of the workshop focuses on some practical tools. We created an exercise on citation trails, which asks students to compare linked articles through our library catalogue, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. During this exercise, we ask the students questions such as:

- How are these results ordered?

- How can you manipulate the results and change how they are ordered?

We also explore the idea of 'snowballing'—the process of following citation trails from resources that you have already found, and which are most interesting to you, to create an interconnected 'snowball' of research. The aim here is to show how different voices can be privileged, and how the tools available can influence and affect searching. We discuss how citation trails can be used as a positive tool for discovering voices that might otherwise be marginalised in scholarly conversations. We also touch on how practices such as self-citation (the practice of citing your own work, particularly to boost your citation metrics) and citation cartels (groups of authors that cite each other disproportionately more than they do other groups of authors that work on the same subject) demonstrate privilege and marginalisation of different groups.

We briefly show students the *GBAT Gender Balance Assessment Tool* (https://jlsumner.shinyapps.io/syllabustool/) for bibliographies, which opens up the opportunity to talk about the assumptions we can make based purely on names. Within a longer workshop, you could incorporate this tool more centrally. For example, by asking students to bring along recent reference lists or a bibliography of their own and then using this tool to analyze them. This is something we hope to explore further as the sessions develop.

In this session, the dialogical approach has really had an impact. For instance, in one session, while we were doing the 'In the Frame' exercise, a female student questioned the need to think about the gender of researchers, questioning if this was really still an issue. This opened up the opportunity to discuss why citation practices (such as self-citation) tend to disadvantage women and how we all need to cite more women.

Another example came through a discussion with a postgraduate history student who attended the session. Their dissertation was on the philosopher Friedrich Hegel, and they were struggling to see how they could use this approach in their work about a white, German, 18th Century philosopher. This allowed us to discuss, as a group, possible ways to bring in diverse voices to this research. As in other workshops, we finish these workshops by asking students to reflect and share their own 'Resistance Researching' tips. This postgraduate student's tip captured their solution: "To try and look at the subject matter from a different lingual perspective. This allowed me to locate sources in my language and think about my particular culture and tradition." Anticipating questions and being prepared to facilitate ad-hoc discussion has been a key aspect of our approach and a rewarding part of these sessions.

*Impact*
*"Practical, informative, relevant. It was interesting." (Student feedback from 'Resistance Researching' – Inclusive Citation session)*

As mentioned, we gather our own feedback from these sessions in the forms of the 'Resistance Researching' tips, as well as in more standard feedback forms. The feedback gathered shows that students appreciate the practical tools used alongside the theoretical discussions. When asked 'As a result of this session, what new ideas or strategies will you use?', responses mentioned the GBAT tool alongside techniques we discussed such as snowballing. Students commented on how they were "developing different inclusive citations to include a wider spectrum of writing" and "thinking about an inclusive list of sources."

## Theoretical Considerations

*"Conservative, traditional educational practices …concern themselves only with the presence of the professor; any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged." (hooks, 1994, p. 8).*

We have sought to develop an approach to our information literacy teaching that will foster a democratic classroom environment. But in practical terms, what does this actually mean?

One of the first steps we have taken is to move our teaching practice away from standing at the front and talking *at* students. For example, we try to sit with the students and, where practical, we take part in the exercise and activities alongside the students. This fosters the idea that we are learning alongside and from the students, a key concept in creating a democratic classroom environment.

The workshops have focused on *offering suggestions* about changes students might make to their own research practice to find a wider, more diverse range of ideas and voices for their research. The emphasis on offering suggestions has been to create a space where we are not telling students what to do, recognising we all have different knowledge that we can contribute.

Encouraging many opportunities for discussion has also been central to our approach. The dialogic approach is a tool for decentring our Whiteness. It speaks to our attempt to address the idea that "a classroom environment should meaningfully engage with a plethora of voices, representative of not only the white-gaze" (Akel, 2019, p. 20).

These are small steps, but we believe that you have to start somewhere. Through making even small changes to our practice we will develop a more engaged pedagogical practice better suited to supporting the information literacy needs of our diverse student body at Goldsmiths.

## Practical Considerations

It is important to acknowledge that these sessions are new and evolving. As such, we thought it might be useful to share some of the practical issues we have encountered, as well as considerations to bear in mind when designing future 'Resistance Researching' sessions.

### Timing

We played around with timing, trying out both 90-minute and then short 40-minute sessions. This is an aspect we'll continue to reflect on. A 90-minute session is enough time to go into detail and really discuss and explore the themes and issues of the workshop. However, as an additional,

voluntary session, this is quite a big time commitment for students. In the latest version of the workshops, we tried a more focused 40 minutes, however the reality was that all the sessions ran over time. Each session had a lot of information in it and a lot of excellent, relevant discussion, owing to the teaching, approach and level of student engagement, which we did not want to curtail. Feedback collected so far is all indicative of students desiring longer sessions (e.g. "More time", "more discussion", "it was too short" and "extending the duration"). For the third approach, we are planning a more open-ended 'taster' session, to run in the new event space on the library's ground floor near the entrance, that students can drop in and out of at their convenience.

## Attendance

It is our experience at Goldsmiths that attendance for a non-compulsory session is often patchy, particularly for the more esoteric library sessions. An introduction to a particular piece of software is generally well-attended, as its application and usefulness to the student is much more obvious and concrete. Sessions such as 'Resistance Researching' are a harder sell. Seasonal timing also has an impact on student attendance, for instance summer term sees many of our students very focused on dissertation writing, and they don't necessarily see the need for, or have capacity to engage in, these types of sessions.

Attendance also links to engagement. We had expected these sessions to appeal to students already engaged with the campaigns around 'Liberate'. Anecdotally, we found that most students attending were not familiar with either Goldsmiths 'Liberate' campaign, or more generally with the decolonising the curriculum movements in the UK. However, once they learn more about these campaigns they are generally very engaged in the ideas. Thus, including time to provide information on and discuss 'Liberate our Library' has become an important part of all these workshops.

Students are also, understandably, very focused on passing their degrees. They have invested a lot of time, energy, and money in their learning. Many are also concerned about being penalized for not using the 'right' sources, going to the 'right' academics, etc. Indeed the recent report *Insider-Outside* (Akel, 2019), which examined the experiences of Goldsmiths students who identify as BAME found that "40% believed that they must conform to their lecturer's academic opinions in order to secure good grades" (Akel, 2019, p. 6). This indicates that our students don't—yet—

feel empowered to recognise and use their own scholarly voices to contribute to and grow these debates. We need to continue to consider and suggest ways they can use their own voices, whilst addressing their very real concerns about the consequences of not using the 'right' voices provided by their recommended reading.

Goldsmiths Library is working with academics to look at this in more detail. Senior members of the library team have contacted all academic departments in Goldsmiths to try to find out how they are addressing the 'liberate the curriculum' agenda. There is a lot of good work going on, but it is often happening in silos, and this is our first attempt to survey what is happening university-wide. Many academic departments already have, or are setting up, 'liberate' working groups and Subject Librarians are part of these groups. The cross departmental nature of the library and the subject team's work means we are well placed to informally share and spread good practice from around Goldsmiths. The next steps are to work on how this can be more strategically and formally captured and shared, but the library seems in a strong position to support as well as develop this work. For us, the next challenge is to demonstrate to our academics that the critical librarian pedagogy we are using in our workshops can empower their students and make a valuable contribution to liberating the curriculum.

## Space

The space the sessions take place in is another aspect of the workshop we've experimented with. We have used both seminar rooms and computing labs, and will try out a new iteration using a new, open-plan, library events space. The seminar rooms were good for concentrated discussion, but relied on students bringing along their own device to try out some of the more practical aspects. This could present an accessibility issue for some students. Using computer labs addressed this issue, but the space is obstructive for group discussion, and it is harder not to end up standing at the front behind the lectern as you demonstrate something to the group. We are hoping that the events space might be a good bridge between the two types of spaces: we can use the big screen to demonstrate online tools; the space is flexible enough to facilitate discussion; and the space allows for more practical activities. It has the added benefit of public visibility, and so we are hoping the activities will attract students just passing by.

## Next Steps

It is important that this work continues to develop and grow. In this section we identify some key areas for next steps. Hopefully, these will be useful for anyone inspired to use these approaches in their own work.

### Embedding

If confined to discrete 'Resistance Researching' workshops, the critical skills we teach will have limited reach and impact. Many of the activities we have developed and used in these workshops can be adapted for other contexts. We have encouraged colleagues in the Subject Librarian team to use aspects of the workshops in their own sessions, as many of the activities can be taken as standalone exercises and slotted into more standard information literacy teaching.

It has also been important to engage with other members of the library team to create sessions that reflect a range of approaches and experiences. It is great to see colleagues beginning to engage with the parameters and ethos of the 'Resistance Researching' concept. They bring new ideas and fresh approaches that keep these workshops evolving and—we hope— relevant. One concern voiced by other library workers has been that they do not feel informed or expert enough about the issues around critical librarianship to teach in this way. To anyone reading this who shares similar concerns, be assured we are not experts either—we have had to educate ourselves and continue to do so. The more you read and engage with this material, the easier you will find it to adopt a critical librarian pedagogical approach. We are excited to see how it will develop over the next few years.

### Empowering

Our anecdotal findings were that all students were worried about going away from approved, or what they consider 'safe', sources. The *Insider-Outsider Report* (Akel, 2019) further confirmed that is something BAME students are particularly concerned about. In seeking to create information literacy teaching that speaks to issues around social justice, this is an important area that needs addressing. It is not something we, as librarians, can necessarily change, but it is something we can address in our teaching.

One way to empower students to be braver in their choices is to develop teaching that shows how to sit the more mainstream theorist alongside the lesser-known ones they are discovering, which their lecturers might not be familiar with. A session run by a colleague in the Academic Skills Centre here at Goldsmiths introduced a useful teaching tip: the metaphor of the table and dinner party for writing literature reviews. This idea of planning who to invite to the table, thinking about which scholars you'd invite and how much or how little you engage with their scholarly conversations, can help students to see they can acknowledge key theorists, while also bringing in their own choices that reflect different perspectives or types of knowledge.

The other way we can support this is to give students the tools to critically evaluate sources. This is important as it gives students confidence in their research, especially if they want to use sources published outside the typical, traditional scholarly sources. It also gives them the tools to critically think about and assess the more mainstream resources they might be presented with. At Goldsmiths we have been using RADAR (Mandalios, 2013) and IF I APPY (https://guides.libraries.psu.edu/WC/HPA210). IF I APPY, with its approach to reviewing credibility through both a personal and a source lens, seems particularly useful for developing a critical library pedagogical approach.

## Conclusion

*"Students should be encouraged and taught how to form their own line of inquiry to become independent academic thinkers" (Akel, 2019, p. 20)*

Since engaging with this work, the Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action student occupation of Deptford Town Hall, reached a total of 137 days in July—a clear demand from our own students to address structural institutional racism and better meet the day-to-day needs of students of colour. In their own words: "we resist the ironclad coloniality of Goldsmiths College…that subjugates its BAME students, staff, and workers alike" (Frazer-Carroll, 2019). The list of demands and the college's response can all be found online and mark a turning point in confronting these issues collectively.

Further to this, the *Insider-Outsider Report* (Akel, 2019) was published as we were in the middle of writing this chapter. The report looks at the experiences of BAME students at College and Goldsmiths Students'

Union, and makes for sobering reading. It foregrounds the way our BAME students "are compelled to battle everyday racisms not just in social spaces and the corridors of our institution, but in the very lecture theatres in which they are being taught", and calls on us "to reflect and to be prepared to learn and work differently" (Akel, 2019, p. 5). Reading the report has reinforced our belief that foregrounding social justice within our work is more necessary than ever.

Teaching librarians have a role to play in providing a space away from/outside of the student's usual department and academic connections that could be central in empowering them to try out new ideas. At Goldsmiths the ASC workshops are not credit-bearing and so do not inform students' academic marks. However, they do provide an important opportunity for students to develop as independent academic thinkers in an alternative, supported environment.

Finally, we have personally found the workshops to be very inspiring. The students we have seen have really engaged with the ideas and activities and taken a lot away from the sessions. We have enjoyed being able to engage with and discuss some concerns and preconceptions around our work in the library, and to discuss critical librarianship. Our students have been generous in sharing their thoughts and knowledge, too, and we are continuing to respond to and learn from them.

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