

## Opening spaces for creative and critical inquiry

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### Preamble

A lot of thought has gone into how to write this book chapter - partly in terms of content, but primarily in relation to the awareness that, as three collaborating authors, we are all different in terms of how we approach what we do. We acknowledge that, whilst our aims and motivations in doing what we do connect and are similar, one of the greatest strengths (and, at least potentially, challenges) lies in the different perspectives and knowledges we bring to planning, developing and delivering workshops. This in itself is not a challenge, our co-operation developing organically and synergistically to take full advantage of what we each bring to the work we do. The challenge presents itself when considering how to share our practice(s) with others, in the form of a co-written book chapter! There is a tendency for co-written texts to be presented as a singular, unified voice. When discussing how to write this chapter, we realised this is not how we wanted to proceed. Instead, we recognised the need to write in a way that mirrors how we work together: disparate voices and perspectives that complement each other.

To some extent, we want our text to illustrate the overarching objective of decolonising - that of questioning the validity of a universally-relevant and approved theory or system, by recognising and truly valuing different voices. We are all too aware of the 'conventions' of academic writing but equally, if not more, aware that this is exactly the kind of thing we are challenging when we talk about the need to decolonise. Decolonisation is not only about diversifying library collections, reading lists and course curricula (although this is absolutely necessary), and it's also not only about highlighting how limited and limiting canons of knowledge are (again, this is much-needed). It's about recognising and decrying how the very fabric of our system of education, and of society as a whole, not only values one way above others but also presents this as *the way*, with other ways disregarded or ignored - excluded.

The way we approach our practices, and the workshops detailed below, are shaped by this belief in inclusivity and the need to engage with different knowledges. They come from a place of curiosity and interest, a belief in social justice as a key tenet of our roles, and in response to conversations with peers and students. Centred around a willingness to be open, to discuss and explore themes without a measurable outcome in mind, the focus is on challenging and asking questions of education, systems of power, and society as a whole. In this sense, all the workshops are inherently hopeful, advocating the need to expose the inherent bias and *curatedness* of systems of knowledge, and calling for a fully inclusive celebration of diverse ways of thinking, knowing, learning, doing, being, becoming, and living together.

It seems therefore not only appropriate but crucial that how we write about our work echoes this very focus on valuing difference. At the same time, we recognise the need to situate our writing within its specific and specified context. We had initially explored more

radical approaches to this text, but agreed to compromise in order for this account of our practices to potentially trigger more and wider discussions and actions.

### **In context**

In Higher Education there is currently a concerted drive towards decolonisation, a process which can only work by 'recognising and reorienting where power is drawn from' and adopting approaches which encourage 'exchanging rather than transferring knowledge' (Gus & Gurmider, in Felix, 2019). By viewing learning environments as spaces of exchange, the focus shifts from one of *transaction* to *interaction*, from a *product-driven approach* which provides answers, to a *process of active critical inquiry* which posits questions. These in turn leading to further critical explorations of structures and systems.

This can be achieved through the adoption of an experiential learning approach (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1994) - utilising pre-existing knowledges as a means of exploring instinctual connections with each participants' internalised logic, which can help develop learner confidence in their own ways of engaging with the world (or worlds). A key tenet here is that learning is active and independently navigated, triggered by the interests, personal views and perspectives of those present, and shaped on-the-go in response to the themes and directions arising from the shared critical explorations within the learning space. Through opening up these spaces to explore, and advocating for self-directed critical inquiry, opportunities are provided for participants to learn with, and within, their own learning.

A strong resonance can be seen here with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994) - an approach which proposes that 'learners can only truly learn to think critically if they are also able to challenge the problems within power and knowledge structures in their educational environment as well as the wider world' (Smith, 2013, 19). Within a critical pedagogy, learning environments provide space and support for participants to be/become active agents in their own (and others) learning (Freire, 1998). In this sense, teaching (and learning) is a political act (Giroux, 1997), one which challenges dominant systems of knowledge and calls for a critical inquiry into issues of social justice and fairness. This is emphasised by Freire when he stresses the importance of '*conscientizagao*': critical consciousness (Freire, 1970, 35). In his writings about the role of education in liberation from oppressions, there is a focus on equipping and empowering learners. He asserts the importance of what he terms *praxis*: 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' in education (Freire, 1970, 51). For Freire, critical reflection must be directly linked to a call to action in some form, as realization and reflection without action only make oppression more oppressive (ibid.).

Academic libraries, and librarians, are recognised as having a key role to play in the drive to decolonise. Questions must be raised about which resources and knowledges are included and, more importantly, which are *not included*. Reframing this through a critical pedagogy lens, we can say that particular perspectives and knowledges have been - at least to some extent - consciously *excluded*. This decision is often rationalised by the argument that they

are not part of the *legitimised knowledge* which is preserved and presented in the established canon.

The understanding of *neutrality* as positioned in opposition to the idea of *curated spaces* is an important theme within librarianship. Librarians know to critique this; they know the impact of homogenous spaces on library users because they are culpable in creating them. Libraries are born of colonial legacies; this is seen in the organisation and structure of their spaces. Drabinski (2019) wrote that in their quest for order librarians have overlaid their own technologies of power onto knowledge construction. In an attempt to introduce order to the world librarians have naturally impacted upon it, curating it and, consequently, changing it. As Adler (2017) suggests, the systems or order librarians wield could themselves be viewed as primary historical documents, which contribute to constructed notions of national history and identity. In libraries, one can unmake and remake meaning through the organisation of knowledge. Thereby in recognising the curated nature of these spaces, and their custodians as the gatekeepers, one also acknowledges the idea of legitimatised knowledge.

This is also present in the idea of open-access platforms, where in deciding what constitutes a good or authoritative source, notability of a subject, or neutrality itself, there is *consensus*. But that consensus is too often reached by a homogenous group of people- a predominantly white, male editorship- and qualified through a Western lens. This leaves little or no space for other types of knowledge, languages or thought, including indigenous knowledges- which cannot then fit into these supposedly neutral and open spaces (Gallert and Van der Velden, 2015).

In order to redress this imbalance then, academic libraries need to adopt a process of 'decanonisation' (Mambrol, 2016), encouraging active participation through a combination of a) adding new and hitherto under-represented voices and perspectives to their collections and b) adopting an activist stance towards becoming true 'advocates of diversity, equality and inclusion' (Poole, 2019), through creating opportunities and spaces for students to recognise and critically engage with the current colonised/canonised state of play and the injustices enacted by the systems in place. The focus here is not one of delegitimising canonised knowledge, but of advocating for the legitimisation of a whole range of knowledges. This call for an all-inclusive celebration of voices echoes Morrison's insistence for curriculum design to be 'marked by richness, diversity, discordant voices, fecundity, multiple rationalities, and theories... touched by humanity and practicality in a hundred thousand contexts' (Morrison, 2004, 487). The overarching aim here is to 'catch the untidy but authentic lived experiences of... every hue, draw on emergent disciplines outside education, and touch major issues in everyday life' (ibid) - as this will allow for multitudinous opportunities to exchange and engage with knowledges, and learn about ourselves and others in a variety of ways.

Given the potential (inevitable?) discordance of the voices we aim to engage with, there is a need for us all to adopt 'intellectual humility' (Paul, 1992) and recognise that the way we see the world is merely one of many ways - that what seems to be *the way* for us, in given contexts, is not and cannot be the way in all contexts and for all people. A link can be made here with Ron Barnett's assertion that, in order to **think**, **learn** and **be** in the radically

unknowable and indescribable supercomplexity (and superdiversity) of the world we live in, we need to develop Mode 3 knowledge: 'a knowing in and with uncertainty... a knowledge which is itself a complex of personal, tacit, experiential and propositional knowledges' (Barnett, 2004, 251).

Within the context of decolonising the academic library, not-knowing and openness-to-possibility are important tools in operating against oppressive systems of control. Akomolafe asserts we need to 'see activism as a politics of encountering the unsaid' so as not to be hindered, by the violence of existing systems, from experiencing the newness 'that lingers on the edges of awareness' (Akomolafe, 2017, 249). When we think about the impact of colonialism on libraries and publishing as systematic oppression and exclusion of knowledges and thought, we need to question both the modes in which information skills sessions operate *and* the content or collections they use or promote.

By encouraging an approach that embraces uncertainty, openness, serendipity and randomness, we allow for potentially infinitesimal spaces of inquiry to open, and for connections and insights to arise which are of intrinsic value to the learners in the space (by learners, we mean this in a Freirean sense, with no distinction made between teachers and students). This not only runs counter to more traditional colonial models of education, which view randomness and unpredictability as unproductive and unquantifiable, it also threatens the authority of said models - the simple reframing of *the way* as *a way* potentially leading to a repositioning of perception(s) as a result of not only new learning but also unlearning of previously unquestioned ways of thinking.

### **In practice**

We will now discuss what this can look like in practice, with reference to three workshops we have (co)designed and (co)facilitated at University of the Arts London (and (co)presented at conferences). While decolonisation was not necessarily the explicitly-stated focus of these workshops, some of the commonalities that highlight these as decolonising sessions are critical thinking around (library) systems of knowledge, and democratisation of information production through a praxis and an empowerment of the student voice(s). Representation of voices, perspectives and information is a key thread that runs through all three sessions.

By critically questioning the authority of dominant knowledges legitimised by library and information, and other, systems, and facilitating the consideration of knowledges which are effectively *illegitimised*, the sessions address lack of representation and ally themselves with under-represented, if not unheard, voices. The sessions critique ideas of libraries as neutral spaces and highlight the nature of curated collections and information systems. Drabinski outlined five principles of critical librarianship, the fifth acknowledging that 'critical librarianship knows that the world could be different' (Drabinski, 2019, 53). This principle underpins the design and delivery of the workshops discussed below, of our practices in general, and of the inherent hope which fuels the drive to decolonise.

In this sense, it may be more useful to think of the workshops we facilitate as forums, defined by Bruner as spaces and opportunities which advocate for the adoption of 'an *active* role as participants rather than as performing spectators who play out their canonical [and canonised] roles according to rule when the appropriate cues occur' (Bruner, 1986, 123).

What follows is a walk-through reflection on three different, yet intrinsically connected, workshops - each written in the voice and style that fits our respective approaches.

## **Creative Library Research (Adam Ramejkis)**

Creative Library Research (CLR) workshops aim to encourage critical engagement with libraries as systems of knowledge. When developing the sessions, we started with the following keywords/themes: *criticality*, *creativity*, *systems of knowledge*, *bias*, *neutrality* and *curatedness*. The idea was to open an exploratory space through engaging with diverse knowledges and making connections between seemingly disparate ways of thinking. This aimed at encouraging learners to recognise and value a wider range of perspectives and approaches to knowledge - beyond their own individual contexts and, crucially, beyond the *legitimised knowledge* of subject canon(s). To emphasise this, and highlight the curatedness and bias of all library collections, CLR workshops are held in non-UAL libraries - partly to encourage students to see and think beyond an Art/Design perspective, but also to explore the complementarity of differing systems of knowledge(s).

CLR developed from a workshop I ran for students from across UAL, centred on discussing and challenging definitions of *critical thinking*. To encourage a less-institutionalised engagement the sessions took place in a non-UAL library space (Conway Hall Humanist Library), chosen because of the stated mission of Conway Hall Ethical Society and its library (and collection) to be/remain 'a haven for the radicals, political and social reformers and freethinkers who dared to dream of a better world' ([conwayhall.org.uk](http://conwayhall.org.uk)). The hope was that participants would be inspired by the ethos of the space - feeling more comfortable engaging in critical and radical discussions, and freer in challenging the *legitimised* notions and definitions of thinking, knowledge and learning. In one of these workshops, a discussion ensued about how we could explore and connect with the 'millions of pages of knowledge and thinking' within the library collection - engage '*with* the library, not just *in* the library' (student feedback). Recognising this as an opportunity for potential collaboration with Library Services, I arranged a series of workshops with Academic Support Librarians across UAL (including Alex and Viv, and May Warren - former Academic Support Librarian at Central Saint Martins). This resulted in further discussions, culminating in the co-design of Creative Library Research workshops, which have been held in a range of non-UAL libraries. CLR - both the workshop and its approach - has been presented at library conferences (ARLIS 2018, ARLIS 2019, Decolonising the Curriculum - the library's role 2020), and has also informed course-based projects encouraging critical engagement with libraries and systems of knowledge (D'Clark, 2019; Ramejkis, 2019; Knight and Ramejkis, 2020).

CLR workshops start with a presentation and discussion of a selection of short texts around thinking and learning - these having been carefully chosen to match the context and focus (and, by extension, the bias) of the hosting library. For example, for a recent workshop in

the Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA) library, we included a short extract from Assata Shakur's biography (about the innate inequality of Western education), and one from Patricia Hill Collins (about the need to develop critical consciousness). After reading and sharing initial thoughts, we discussed the texts in relation to INIVA's focus on championing knowledges and practices from around the world as a way of challenging white-western-centric systems and approaches (iniva.org). The purpose of this discussion is to encourage an openness to what we understand by the term *critical thinking*, and an awareness of how this differs across contexts, through engaging with a deliberately diverse range of thinkers and text-types. Other examples used to date are: John Dewey, bell hooks, Umberto Eco, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Marcel Proust, Akala, Immanuel Kant, Peter Kropotkin and Charlene Tan. Through exploring a range of perspectives and discussing possible points of accord and disconnect between them, learners are encouraged to challenge not only canonised views but also to recognise their own individual ways of thinking as simply one of many possible perspectives. The aim here is to foster intellectual humility (Paul, 1992), as a pre-requisite to developing a 'willingness to endure [the] condition of mental unrest' (Dewey, 1997, 13) that uncertainty brings. The message here is to recognise uncertainty as an *open and creative* space for learning about ourselves, others and the world(s) we share.

After a brief introduction to the space, learners are given a short amount of time to explore the unfamiliar library collection, and to find a book (or books) they feel connects to their creative practice and/or current research focus. This is a deliberately vague prompt, with no specific criteria given, the aim being to open up new angles on the familiar, to highlight the benefits of widening perspectives through exploring and connecting with new knowledges. Being unfamiliar with the layout or contents of the library, there is an added sense of adventure to this search, with the potential for a more creative interpretation of their own areas of interest / research. Once all participants have found their connections, everyone returns to the group and these books are swapped (e.g. passed to the person on the right) so that everybody now has a new book. Learners are then challenged to find a connection between this new, randomly assigned book and their practice/research. In a similar but more pronounced way to the previous activity, this advocates an openness to serendipity, with learners encouraged to recognise the value of even the most tenuous/indirect links. The connections found/made, with the self-selected and other-selected books, are then shared with the group, followed by a discussion around recurring themes. Through asking for these connections to be articulated in words, the aim is to trigger a metacognitive focus as students need to critically engage with their own thinking to create links that are credible and make sense to them. Through doing this, learners can develop confidence in, and a feeling of comfort with, the spaces of uncertainty and confusion that come with living in a supercomplex and superdiverse world.

The session closes with a discussion on the *bias* and *curatedness* of libraries, as well as within systems of knowledge and society at large. This leads to shared reflections on the value of critiquing *canonised knowledge*, and opening ourselves to new and different ways of thinking, knowing, learning, doing, being, becoming, and living together. The hope is that learners take this approach into their further studies and creative endeavours, not only by questioning dominant systems of knowledge but reflecting on how this can lead to 'action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1970, 51).

## Wikipedia (Alexandra Duncan)

The Wikipedia workshops are both an acknowledgement of and a response to the multitude of ways the internet has failed. What was conceived as a tool for democracy has resulted in a space estranged from notions of knowledge equity, in which the norm is under-representation based on gender, race and geographic location. A hegemonic model in which knowledge has become another means by which to have power and control.

This project began with a conversation with a colleague, Cassy Sachar, about Wikipedia Art + Feminism edit-a-thons, a sense they were the sort of thing librarians ought to be doing. The statistics on the Art+Feminism organisation website (Art+Feminism, 2021) told us that representation was where certain open-access resources were failing.

We cannot avoid looking to open-access tools like Wikipedia, with the hope they redress wider issues with the democracy of information. It is one of the most significant websites in the world- the fifth most visited (Routley, 2019), and the largest and most popular general reference work on the internet (Wikipedia, 2021). 'Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge,' Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia tells us (Roblimo, 2004). A closer look at collective participation tells us that 80% of the global content of Wikipedia is written by white men from Europe and North America, a demographic that makes up just 20% of the world's population (Whose Knowledge, 2018).

So, in 2018 we began hosting UAL/ARLIS (Art Libraries Society) Wikipedia edit-a-thons. While this was initially in response to the under-representation of women on Wikipedia (in both the content and the make-up of the editorship), in acknowledging the need for a more intersectional approach they later became focused on women of colour. Using source material from the UAL libraries, in particular the collections at Chelsea College of Arts, attendees are given examples of rudimentary or non-existent articles on under-represented artists, and sources containing information they can easily populate the articles with. One invaluable example of such a work is *Recordings: A Select Bibliography of Contemporary African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian British Art*- published by the Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA) in collaboration with Chelsea College of Art and Design. The publication has an index that documents the African-Caribbean, Asian & African Art in Britain Archive, up until 1996.

The editing process is closely aligned with the information literacy learning outcomes in place at UAL. The necessity of edits being backed up by *appropriate* secondary sources forces any editor to not only find sources but read and evaluate them to understand the mechanics of both writing and referencing. This is not new- there are plenty of examples of Wikipedia being successfully embedded in HE curriculums for these exact reasons. However, from questioning edit-a-thon participants, it seemed the most valuable reason for participating was activism. The awareness that they have a valid voice- with as much right as anyone to participate in the scholarly conversation, and that in doing so they can change the world. As one participant put it: '...finding your own voice in the conversation is

empowering' (Duncan and Sachar, 2018). This is a concept at the heart of information literacy but being able to give it a tangible outcome is significant.

This recognition of the potential of Wikipedia being a tool with which to explore what representation means in society, and the impact of colonial legacies on the information landscape, led myself and Adam to facilitate our own Wikipedia workshop in December 2019. Presented as an activist event, its aim was to consider the politics and culture of Wikipedia, and the possibilities for activism it offered, posing the question "Does its open-source nature mean it is unreliable or does it conform to a different, more collaborative, system of checks and controls?" and, "Can it be used for research as well as a tool for change"?

We began with a discussion and mind map creation- asking participants to consider Wikipedia's positives and negatives. Participants acknowledged the lack of diversity, open editing as a double-edged sword, and critiqued the west acting as the knowledge gatekeeper. They already understood how and why open-source products sometimes fail and wanted to address this with practical activism. The rest of the workshop was spent doing live editing of Wikipedia articles, using *Recordings* as our key source material. As had become common at edit-a-thons, the takeaway was understanding there are not enough secondary sources on under-represented subjects, and the awareness that at the very least, Wikipedia is a useful tool to highlight this. Wikipedia, like Western publishing, prefers *traditional* methods of knowledge production and documentation- relying on published secondary sources to ratify knowledge. There is limited space for indigenous knowledge corroborated by, for example, oral histories and established systems of verbal peer-review, which ensures its content remains skewed towards Western sources, subjects and perspectives (Duncan, 2020, 156).

At UAL there is institutional interest in Wikipedia as a tool for decolonisation- in early 2020 I met with senior academic colleagues at London College of Communication (LCC) interested in exploring Wikipedia within education. Two Wikimedians also attended, and we shared our varied experiences of engaging with Wikipedia educationally. The possibility of the decolonial lens resulted in Lucy Panesar, LCC Progression and Attainment Project Manager, and the LCC Changemakers- students with a partnership role in developing pedagogy and the curriculum via a decolonial and liberating lens- taking on the running of the project. So far this has birthed a three-part edit-a-thon in summer 2020, on decolonisation, and has now led to the creation of the Decolonising Wikipedia Network- a network of LCC staff and students, run by Lucy and the Changemakers, in collaboration with Richard Neville from Wikimedia, with input from myself.

Wikipedia workshops offer a concrete way to fulfil institutional outcomes. Using dashboards to track the number of edits, and thus the possibility of making an immediate and positive change in the space of an hour, or a day, fits into the wider institutional framework. But the true and most interesting criticality is under the radar. This happens in the accompanying discussions on questioning legitimacy, what makes an authoritative source, or a notable subject? What is neutrality? Their worth is found in this combination of criticality and praxis.

They are reflexive- openly acknowledging we are not sure how or what is the *best way* to decolonise, and this idea of reflexivity feels very apt when examining Wikipedia as a product or tool. It is familiar to us as librarians, akin to our quest for *neutrality*; the compromise we



make in continuing to engage with structures of knowledge categorisation that are structures of oppression. It is making the best of it. This speaks to the inherent tension of libraries being colonial spaces we have created. In the workshops the process begins with understanding Wikipedia as an open access tool; inherently democratic. But we constantly re-assess it, to move to understanding it as part of the problem. Finally, we understand it as something in between- a mirror that reflects and displays publishing and society's shortcomings. And a way to make change.

## **Hack Your Library (Vivienne Eades-Miller)**

*Hack Your Library* is a workshop exploring the politics of library knowledge systems, labelling and publishing. The session facilitates critical reflection on these systems, their bias, curation and information not adequately represented. We provide students with tools to analyse the historic and inadequate nature of the subject classification and structures they navigate with library research.

After looking at zines as independent publications and discussing them in the context of library collections, we critically examine knowledge systems and discuss broader ideas of labelling and neutrality. An active session, we then ask students to make a generative critique using their own knowledge and perspective to imagine and recreate knowledge structures and labels in zine form.

My colleague Vanessa Govinden and I designed the session structure after reflections with colleagues around offensive or inadequate subject headings, classification categories and positionings. After co-facilitating *Creative Library Research* sessions with Adam and Alex, I wanted again to focus with students on exploring library knowledge structures, this time with a social justice lens. Influenced by student artworks reflecting on their experience as students of colour at UAL, we wanted to support critical engagement with the complexity of issues like naming, categorising, highlighting and othering, in libraries and broader contexts.

We begin sessions by asking questions about the value of zines to academic collections. Looking at a range of zines and then asking how they are different to the rest of the library collections and what they offer that other formats don't. Like Wikipedia, zines (which usually aren't classified) show up the inadequacies of commercial and academic knowledge production, but also colonial ideas of static classification. They help highlight inadequacy, bias and inaccuracies of categories and labels from limited singular perspectives. Zines provide a divergence in content, tone, language and authorship from mainstream collections. Personal and contemporary content contrasts starkly with academic sources and knowledge categories. Zines (and later the use of queer theory) provide a context which highlights ideals of universal, correct and static naming and organisation of knowledge as bizarre concepts.

The sessions then facilitate discussion of representation of knowledge (mis and lack of) in Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) using examples relating to aspects of identity including race, nationality, gender and religion.

As facilitators we choose examples of positioning, or decisions we are forced to make as librarians, that we find personally offensive, inadequate or exclusionary. We explain why, and how we think these could impact the library user navigating information. Using

examples which we feel a connection to, because talking about aspects of identity and representation in an information skills forum is relatively new to us and, having considered bell hooks' affirmation that it is our responsibility to share too. 'When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. [...] empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks' (hooks, 1994, 21). This also helps to create space for critical discussion and validate multiple opinions and perspectives, rather than projecting a static politics of correctness onto the session.

Ideas of neutrality, naming and positioning knowledge are then explored in the context of the politics of correction: using two queer library theory quotes to frame thinking about possible solutions for placement of specific books. This theory 'resists the idea that stable identities like lesbian or gay exist outside of time. Rather, these identities exist only temporarily in social and political contexts that both produce and require them' (Drabinski, 2013, 101). We ask students to question if 'there can be no "correct" categorical or linguistic structures, only those that discursively emerge and circulate in a particular context' (Drabinski, 2013, 102).

This provides a generative critical framework to discuss student opinions on complex issues. Students share differing opinions on issues such as foregrounding resources by less represented voices (with categories such as black female artists for instance), and othering (as while highlighting and making content accessible, without changes to other categories you are also reinforcing the white male as *default* or *norm*).

Rather than a dynamic of conflicting or opposing opinions, this has thus far produced questioning of and reflexion on opinion. Questioning the *correct* way to correct systems of knowledge allows students to consider different approaches, and the complexity (and possibilities) of decolonisation as an idea in this context. In some small way bringing an element of self-reflexivity to approaching decolonisation. The system doesn't offer enough choices to make a *correct choice* within it, the system needs reconceiving, but framing critically allows us to approach solutions thoughtfully with students.

*Hack Your Library* sessions encourage generative critique of the curatedness of libraries and classification categories through praxis (Freire, 1970, 32-65). This takes the form of students re-imagining and re-making subject categories, labels, and structures. At the end of a session students make zine pages around a subject of interest in DDC and create, or recreate, knowledge categories they feel important but ignored or framed incorrectly in the structure. As facilitators we endorse the importance of the students' personal and individual perspective in this activity. The experiential learning mode of the sessions utilises students' prior knowledge and their own logic and aims to build confidence in that. Using zines in the sessions helps validate personal experience and narrative in this context.

We hope this activity, channelling criticality into praxis, empowers students as to their own academic voice and perspective. Hopefully the sessions question classification in a way which also expands consideration of the ways students *can* immediately explore their own ideas in libraries, in order to work past limitations of inherently colonial and white classification structures.

*Hack Your Library* pitches knowledge and labels as contextual and fluid and has students

remaking categories from a multiplicity of perceptions, rather than singularly disconnecting static topics in a colonial logic. Supporting ideas of emergent knowledges, these sessions attempt to facilitate imagining of new spaces of knowledge and academic libraries.

### **In conclusion**

All of the workshops provide a space to question, to challenge the default. It is in this sense that they decolonise. These sessions grew in part out of an openness and eagerness to explore information skills and critical inquiry outside of dominant modes and structures. In terms of collections and resources explored, ideas of what librarians “teach” and how, and definitions of learning and criticality.

There is often a perceived need in the field of information skills (and in Higher Education) to revert to a model or a framework. This has the benefit of supporting staff but can also deny openness and creativity outside of the social and academic structures the library or institution operates within. It can be difficult for library staff to get time and support to explore information skills work outside of the expected lens and structures of transactional library skills. Explorative work or a focus on critical thinking or questioning may not be seen as immediately productive. Some of the sessions discussed in this chapter don’t generally fit with the modes of information skills, or academic support, we are often used to facilitating in academic libraries: not having easily measurable outcomes or delivering a clear product of mechanical skills, but seeking deeper, and perhaps immeasurable, learning (or unlearning.)

Deeper learning is less strategic, difficult to measure, and often impossible to measure in the short term. It is not necessarily directed at a single skill or outcome but relates more to ideas of lived experience and the connectivity of holistic learning. Facilitators running these sessions, and the institutions they work within, may need to look to different values and ‘surrender [the] need for immediate affirmation of successful teaching’ (hooks, 1994, 42).

Key to creating space for learning in these sessions is embracing multiplicities of knowing. There is an acknowledgement and practice within the sessions of different knowledges and systems of knowledge co-existing in a beneficial way. Wikipedia edit-a-thons and use of zines engage with the advantages of different sources. *Creative Library Research* aims to open-up responsive and self-generated possibilities of what critical thinking can mean. *Hack Your Library* emphasises the importance of self-publishing in the knowledge sphere and encourages students to reimagine systems of knowledge.

An important aspect of the sessions is their hopefulness, which supports imagining of new spaces in libraries and knowledge sectors. All the sessions have an active element of creation, making, or practicing in response to critiques of libraries, publishing and Higher Education. Encouraging and supporting students to add to multiplicities of knowing as a generative critique, hopefully achieving or working towards some form of praxis (Freire, 1970, 32-65). Channelling criticality into creative making tasks in the workshops, we hope, empowers the student voice(s) through action, whether in the academic sphere or more broadly.

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