Critical Information Literacy Applications

for

ALL LIBRARIES

Edited by **JULIE N. HORNICK** and **LAUREN KEHOE**

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Part IV. Critical Information Literacy Lesson Plans

Supplementary materials are available at alaeditions.org/webextras.

Introduction

JULIE N. HORNICK and LAUREN KEHOE

In 1970, Paulo Freire published his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which articulates the need for marginalized and oppressed people to have an awareness of the systems of oppression that keep them from being able to view their lives critically.[1] Through deliberate effort, as people begin to see that they do not have to accept their oppression, that they have the power to both affect and effect change in their world, they develop this critical consciousness.

Unsurprisingly, it is not in the interests of those who benefit from oppressive systems to encourage this development. As Freire notes, traditional systems of education born out of that oppression do nothing to encourage critical awareness because "the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that [oppression], the more easily they can be dominated."[2] To combat the inherent domination of traditional systems of education, Freire's work advocates for a problem-posing style of education in which learners are presented with problems of interest to them (and to the world around them), encouraged to challenge and question what is given, and thereby empowered to change their reality.[3]

Critical information literacy (CIL) reflects Freire's conception of problem-posing education and applies it to the examination of the production and consumption of information and the power structures that underlie those activities.[4] CIL asks us to interrogate underlying algorithmic biases and address the underrepresentation of marginalized voices. It further encourages us to question who creates information and who controls its dissemination, and to question the assumption of information neutrality. In sum, CIL provides a framework for moving beyond a traditional, skills-based information literacy approach, and toward a more socially conscious and critically engaged practice. Through its emphasis on questioning power structures, addressing algorithmic biases, and advocating for the inclusion

of marginalized voices, CIL serves as a vital tool for fostering equity and social justice in information literacy instruction.

Libraries and librarians have long been at the forefront of this important work, and it was in this spirit that we began work on this book, which was initially inspired by the Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT) President's Program session at the 2022 American Library Association Annual Conference, a session that showcased how librarians in public and school libraries had integrated CIL into their instructional practices. Our goal in editing this volume has been to build on that session by adding the work of more voices across all library types—public, school, and academic—with the aim of providing practical approaches that all librarians can adopt and adapt for their particular library setting. By providing practical approaches for integrating CIL into instruction and praxis, this collection seeks to offer librarians the tools to better engage with the complexities of today's information landscape and empower their library community to do the same.

Purpose and Scope of the Collection

With this volume, the unique aspect of the text that we kept coming back to was the focus on a cross section of library types: public, school, and academic libraries. We wanted to emphasize the importance of covering these diverse library perspectives and settings, but also to provide a volume that allowed for cross conversation among library types, all of which are engaging with concepts of CIL. While each type of library may have its own scope and community, CIL affects all types. With this volume, we invite librarians to engage with the topic of CIL and to learn from what is happening across the profession, making connections and adapting programs that can be applied to their own context. We hope to leave the reader with a set of practical tools, grounded in CIL theory and frameworks, to adopt and adapt for their own setting.

Overview of the Text

We open the volume with a grounding in the academic discourse happening in the realm of CIL in order to give the text a base in foundational theory. This first part, "Theoretical Frameworks of Critical Information Literacy," includes chapters that examine the history of critical race theory in academic library instruction, CIL and feminist critique, and the intersection of queer pedagogy and CIL.

From this first section, we move into programmatic offerings and professional development programs happening across various library types to give readers a place to learn from their colleagues and to be inspired to create similar programs within their own library. The seven chapters in part II, "Critical Information Literacy Programming," include descriptions of longer sustained programs developed by public, school, and academic libraries that provide an in-depth look at programs designed to begin the process of critical-consciousness raising. Among the chapters in this section are a primer for librarians wondering how and where to begin addressing CIL (chapter 4), one on algorithmic literacy (chapter 8), and a description of how two academic librarians integrated CIL instruction into a local Canadian radical humanities program designed to reach groups historically excluded from postsecondary education (chapter 6).

For those hoping to introduce CIL concepts to their peers and coworkers, part III concentrates on professional development programs. In these six chapters you will find described, among others, a workshop for bringing algorithmic awareness to educators (chapter 14), a program on CIL skills instruction developed by public librarians in New York for those who serve the everyday needs of information consumers (chapter 11), and a program, in zine form, designed to guide practitioners through a zine-making exercise for practicing reflection that embodies CIL (chapter 12). Two K–12 educators describe their efforts to create a space in their school conducive to introducing CIL practices into their school culture (chapter 15), and academic librarians describe how they created book clubs for local educators (chapter 16). Another chapter focuses on how librarians can develop reflective practices that will allow them to address CIL in the age of social media (chapter 13).

Finally, we end the volume with a corpus of eight lesson plans and outlines for those who are ready to begin incorporating CIL practices into their instructional work. Each of the plans suggests ways they can be adapted for library types different from the one they were originally designed for.

Call for Engagement and Action

We thank you, reader, for finding our book and for being interested in critical information literacy for your library. Whether you read the volume from front to back or just browse the lesson plans, we hope you choose to continue the conversation and engage with CIL theory and applications in your own praxis.

Please use the materials in the digital supplement available at **alaeditions.org/webextras** to further engage with contributor content and consider creating your own programs and lesson plans around CIL.

NOTES

1. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th anniv. ed. (Continuum, 2012).
2. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 74.
3. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81.
4. See Eamon Tewell, "A Decade of Critical Information Literacy: A Review of the Literature," *Communications in Information Literacy* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 24–43; Eamon C. Tewell, "The Practice and Promise of Critical Information Literacy: Academic Librarians' Involvement in Critical Library Instruction," *College & Research Libraries* 79, no. 1 (January 2018): 10–34, https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.79.1.10; James Elmborg, "Critical Information Literacy: Definitions and Challenges," in *Transforming Information Literacy Programs: Intersecting Frontiers of Self, Library Culture, and Campus Community*, ed. Carroll W. Wilkinson and Courtney Bruch, ACRL Publications in Librarianship 64 (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2012), available at https://iro.uiowa.edu/esploro/outputs/bookChapter/Critical-Information-Literacy-Definitions-and-Challenges/9983557574202771.

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