

# Adjusting & Advocating: Reflecting on Challenges and Opportunities for Doing Critical Pedagogy as a New Librarian

Notes from the roundtable discussion presented at the Critical Librarianship and Pedagogy Symposium on February 25, 2016. Notes were recorded anonymously, but reflect the contributions of all the session participants.

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## Ice Breaker

Participants were asked to list three words that describe how they have felt while doing critical library instruction as a new librarian or someone who is new to critical librarianship. Their responses:

*frustrated*  
*clueless*  
*unsure*  
*anxious*  
*joyful*  
*free*  
*curious*  
*confused*  
*overwhelmed*  
*disempowered/ powerless*  
*gaslighted*  
*ignored*  
*fluffy*  
*professional-ish*  
*messy*  
*insecure*  
*guarded*  
*outsider*  
*sneaky*  
*resistant*  
*encouraged but not supported*  
*excited*  
*confusion*  
*desperation*  
*nervous*  
*creative*  
*alone*  
*pushing*  
*excited*

*confused*  
*exhilarating*  
*at home*  
*rebellious*  
*cautious*  
*invigorated*  
*dangerous*  
*authentic*  
*inspired*  
*insecure*  
*unprepared*  
*challenged*

## Small group discussion

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions in small groups. Later, we came together to share the results of our discussions. Here

- What is a new librarian? Not age or time but teaching of ideas/ concepts
- Placing institutional or personal success is defined in white supremacist, capitalist culture
- What would your ideal support structure look like?

## Assets

- Freedom to adjust or tailor classes as we see fit
- If you're new, there's less stakes for changing what you're teaching
  - not embedded in some practices as much
- Ability to mentor each other within the profession

## Challenges

- Teaching in a one shot model, challenge of implementing long-term
- Not sure what "critical librarianship" is so it might feel forced. Is it really part of our job or job description? It's a nebulous term
  - Have to "sneak" it in/ indirectly
  - How does faculty's understanding of what we do shape this?
- Goal of the institution and the tension there
- Feeling overwhelmed/ not knowing where to start. Just learning how to do instruction in general, difficult to add this component/ layer
- Handed down lesson plans from people with more experience
- Where we're located in the institutional structure (tenure track, paraprofessional, etc.) and political/ social capital (or lack thereof)

- Tenets of professionalism and librarian in title and how that affects opportunities
  - Rules, hierarchy, what we expect for “expertise”

### Support Structure

- Collection of lesson plans, reflections of people that are doing critical pedagogy but hasn't had to go through the peer review process
- A “kiddy pool”- group of people with similar experiences of newness to talk about issues, find collaboration and not feeling like you're going off of the deep end. A community of practice.
- Online community if only for **feeling like you're not alone in this**. Asynchronous so you can still get support at all times.
- A space for projects that aren't just about “what did you solve” but asking larger questions.
- Possible questions for the discussion group:
  - A discussion about motivations/ why this should be the work of librarians
  - Ways to promote it and discuss it with faculty
- Space to come to terms with the messiness of “critical” (critical of what?) and immeasurability of the work
- Help with digesting small parts-- we helped this group of students, for example [library.csusb.edu/cillab/](http://library.csusb.edu/cillab/)