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Session: Hegemonic Information Structures

Critlib Unconference 2015 Session Attendees

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Hegemonic Information Structures

- authority control
- naming and power within controlled vocabulary

We don't have to be catalogers to be interested in this!

Introductions

- Interested in cataloging
- digital humanities and computer science through a critical lens
- spending time teaching what hegemony is to break it down
- want to talk about stories in hegemonic structures (as UX consultant) - what stories want to be told (or who wants to tell the story)
  - Cultural heritage
- Hegemonic is one of my favorite words. I like saying it.
  - Two reasons: get better as a cataloger by understanding public services; bias in cataloging (where I'm coming from informs how I describe something).
    - plus one (someone likes this)
- instruction librarian interested in academic publishing - who does it, who peer reviews, who decides that a publication is legitimate?
- non-librarian at a non-profit - some entity that funds cataloging.
  - information about hegemony
- community college librarian interested in what students are referring to, problematizing which sources are trustworthy
  - power of who grades
  - teaching them to use subject headings as a tool
  - inserting the idea - subject headings are politically and socially charged.
- cataloger - wants to make sure we talk about things other than cataloging (NACO training???)
  - unique text strings - mangering cooperative ... managing identities?!?!?
  - where do we get off thinking that we can do that?!?!?
- glad that there are catalogers here. - talking about bias
- library grad student tracing privilege
  - stories of underrepresented people
  - taking a cataloging class right now
  - intimidated by cataloging
- Jenna Friedman
  - amateur/outsider cataloger
  - whether or not authority control is anathema to critical librarianship
  - connections to intro to critical theory
  - unfamiliar with language? inaccessible
  - theory is important.
- Science librarian interested in these issues
  - invisible webs we get caught in as we try to navigate information
  - what do we mean when we say hegemonic structures

JOKE: Let's fix it!

- tear it down
- fix it
- burn it down?
  - MARC/LCSH - LETS BURN IT DOWN
    - Western thought
  - We can't all just be brains in jars
    - identity groups and class politics
    - you have to name it to make claims
      - tension is irresolvable
      - group like things with like

Efforts to reform and revise illuminate conflict.

POV as a cataloger - institution, race, class, gender, personal.

- Just strip it off. We are not unbiased
- Embrace the polyphony
Teaching freshmen

- opinion and authority
- people are not taught that opinions exists simultaneously
  - observe perspective and the multiplicity of rightness
  - think about bias
  - use the tool that is supported by that bias

Codeswitching!

- language at home, boss, friends.
- cataloging language - use the hegemonic language

Language is a negotiation

In our desire to be horizontal - we have bias, but we have a hell of a lot of expertise.
Are we going to embrace the term teacher - do we want to claim that we are an authority
Jenna is ready to claim that, as well as her biases. I am the person that should be cataloging this stuff.

Being critical "cuts off your own hands"

Experts - do we make room

Digital Humanities - Topic Modeling

- Throw text into an algorithm
  - I can't read that - as a cataloger.
  - Corporate, privatized - problem, nervous about that.
- Alt-cataloging
- Use the text as the discovery mechanism.
- Allow an abstract, a title, other fields to ID themselves!
  - caution: technology can't necessary reduce bias if bias is built into the algorithm
- TEI - encoding gender in ORLANDO
  - change of gender in the story
  - Excluding categories you find problematic.
- Mechanical Turk - outsource of algorithms
  - it's not magic

Name Authorities

- coding male female or other
- decision making - it was ignorance.
- we have the experiste, but it is limited
- cis-gendered people may not think about this.

Subject Headings

- Do librarians do not know when things got into LCSH?
  - Gender is not a LCSH.
    - not unto itself, according to Jenna Friedman
  - Gender identity is a subdivision
  - LCSH as a cultural artifact
    - what cultures surround.
- Should we care?
- Throwing it out is not the answer.
- Know the origins - how does it get made?
  - Catalogers submit proposals
  - Committee at the LOC
  - imagining them to be white and male.
- Experience
  - can't see African American by branch of the military
  - the order of things.
  - "we're not racist this has gone through committee review"
Cataloger talks about the different ways the heading refers to itself
  - Derek Bell?? essays
  - Weekly review of new proposals that went through the LOC
    - "We're definitely not racist 'cause we have a lot of committees"
  - LCSH -athon
    - trying to get fisting into the subject headings
    - feeling like a Pollyanna
  - I don't have the time to learn a new skillset or a new a vocabulary.
  - Public services and catalogers should talk more.
    - You have to tell people when things are broken
  - Favors for non-tech folks
    - telling people how to do their jobs.

Conversations within the library staff: a dialogue needs to happen
  - instruction
  - cataloging zines
  - Pre and post-coordinated headings

Stories (Cultural Heritage)

Academic Discourse as Hegemonic Structure / Information Literacy
  - Teaching them to work within this academic publishing context
  - You have to know about the topic to interpret a scholarly article
    - the requirement of two scholarly articles
  - Desperation of hoping something will stick with the students.
  - The buddy system of working with folks.
    - Peer review. Reviewer number 2 problem
      - removing the analytic framework
  - Faculty approval
  - Costume design class versus African Studies class. versus the Philosophy instruction (professor who thinks JSTOR is an 21st centry innovation)
  - When can we make stuff like this visible?

Politics of Citation
  - Did you cite the right people?
  - We learn different versions of who the right people are.
    - not an absolute standard
  - Students don't know the best people
  - Are we teaching how scholars REALLY find information
  - Really you should just be social
    - What is wrong about saying you should be social?
      - We do it
        - 50 minutes is the problem
        - I'm showing you how to do this, the language is wrong, it doesn't work for you, this is a mysterious language to create the systems, you have to learn this language, I will help you - and then the class is over.
      - Fuck one-shot sessions

New information literacy framework
  - "these are conversations that are happening - you can join them, and get the value from it"
    - you can join or not join these conversations - joining for strategic reasons
  - Mention who is not included and think about why they are not included
  - Anti-plagiarism
    - cited, not-cited
    - when does something gets stolen?

Feminist librarianship - what does it mean?
Joan Marshall
Violet wrote a Wikipedia article on someone _________ ?

Unity is not a conversation I hear about.
This is a perfect experiment - a public services person hearing what the catalogers have to say.

- tweet and blog about this - do info literacy librarians want to hear this?
- no new catalogers - more work for the one person.

Action points for productive resistance
Surface the conditions of our labor
Express when things are done
See the infrastructures - see the people behind it.
Mass produced - one cataloger isn't going to provide the solutions
We work within institutions