Nicole Pagowsky and Kelly McElroy, eds. ***Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook***. 2 vols. Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries, 2016, xxi + 257 pp., xxi + 247pp., \$95.00.

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The editors of *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook* define critical pedagogy as “engaging in the theory and practice (or praxis) of inclusive and reflective teaching in order to broaden students’ understanding of power structures within the education system and in society . . . with the ultimate goal of action . . . to make the world a more socially just place” (xvii). Unlike earlier writings on Critical Library Pedagogy (CLP) such as *Critical Library Instruction* edited by Accardi, Drabinski, and Kumbier (2010), the *Handbook* focuses on “easy-to-implement instructional design” (xviii). It contains three different kinds of chapters: pedagogical essays; activities to encourage reflection, risk-taking, and community building; and lesson plans. Among the orientations informing the chapters are feminist, queer, antiracist, and reflexive pedagogy, inquiry-based learning, constructionism, social constructivism, and critical race theory. As a practical guide that encompasses a wide variety of instructional tools, topics, and contexts, the *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook* is a valuable resource for librarians seeking to implement CLP in their instruction.

Volume 1, *Essays and Workbook Activities*, contains nineteen essays in which library practitioners share their experiences in applying CLP. These essays cover the spectrum of teaching activities, from pre-teaching reflection through planning, implementation, assessment, and post-instructional reflection, reminding readers that instruction should be a cyclical process beginning and ending with critical reflection, which itself can be transformative of instructors and their praxis. The essays touch on information literacy in the neoliberal university, where it is taught as part of a “skills agenda” in which the librarians are “complicit” (Nicholson, 30). However, information-literacy instruction can function as a site of resistance to neoliberal calls for workplace/skills training for a market-based economy, where librarians can encourage students to interrogate information sources and processes and uncover and give voice to groups that have been omitted, ignored, or suppressed (146). Other themes treat aspects of librarians’ contexts in tension with CLP, the most troublesome of which relate to time: the constraints of the one-shot library session

and increasing librarian workload. Chapters discuss how to engage these constraints to provide time for reflection and dialogue necessary to engage in CLP and to make library instruction the site of dialogue and conscientization. For instance, Nicholson (30–31) argues that librarians need to “slow down” and develop alternatives to skills training, exploring “ways to go beyond teaching in the curriculum (in countable units [of time]) to reaching students beyond it and its time constraints in order to teach critical information literacy.”

For this reviewer, the most potent essays are those that empower librarians, as lower-status members of the university community, to critique and even subvert institutional oppression while engaging students in inclusive dialogue, enabling them to become critical users of information. Individual essays raise possibilities for incorporating consciousness-raising into library instruction. Hinchliffe’s essay on developing human-rights instruction by deploying social-justice examples pairs nicely with Garcia’s chapter operationalizing such instruction. Williams’s (113) treatment of archival and special collections materials as “sites for critical inquiry and reflection” and Maksin’s essay on fostering student engagement and critical reflection using print-based government documents are welcome additions that relocate instruction from the traditional library classroom and into dialogue with library resources that generally receive less attention than generic databases.

The pedagogical essays are followed by eleven shorter chapters describing activities intended to encourage reflection and dialogue to support praxis informed by CLP. Because the implementation of new pedagogies requires risk-taking, several of these activities involve the creation of supportive communities of learning or practice. Practical activities and checklists enable librarians to “discover a low-stakes entry into critical pedagogy, transform . . . instruction program[s] in small but meaningful ways, and create a more inclusive, critical inquiry-driven space for . . . students” (Watson and Ellenwood, 203). Witek (207) proposes activities to develop a “critical pedagogy disposition” that “approach[es] learning encounters as opportunities to understand and relate to participants as whole persons worthy of [one’s] time, attention, and vulnerability.” Schroeder (213–15) describes how integrating student resistance into instruction has led to authentic dialogue about information and research as well as fruitful reflections on teaching and learning. Goodman (224–25) suggests activities that identify how librarians’ racial identities affect their work relationships and service, encouraging reflection that leads to “cultural humility.”

Volume 2, *Lesson Plans*, operationalizes CLP in a variety of library contexts, from “small activities to multi-session projects”; the majority of the lesson plans “focus on the ubiquitous and often frustrating one-shot” (Pagowsky and McElroy, xix–xx). The

lesson plans can be used as written or adapted by instructors for their own contexts. Many “reflect material commonly requested by faculty, including introductions to databases, evaluating information sources, or the research cycle, [yet the] authors also demonstrate how to meet faculty demand while . . . negotiating a more critical approach” (Pagowsky and McElroy, xx). Authors cover instructional topics such as advertising/media literacy, visual literacy, numerical and data literacy, and search engines as market actors, using a range of tools, such as collaborative documents, podcasts, traditional primary sources like documents and less traditional artifacts like pop-culture zines, Zotero, Google, and social media. Truly innovative lessons feature social-justice topics. Schlesselman-Tarango and Suderman (60) deploy media relating to the murder of Trayvon Martin to encourage students to engage with the information cycle, and Goodman (131) fosters the “critical questioning” of health-sciences terms and their application to historically marginalized groups. Carbery and Leahy (156) juxtapose documents relating to nineteenth-century immigration with contemporary discussions of immigration to “rais[e] students’ consciousness of the ways in which voices of marginalized groups are cast aside or silenced in the rehearsing of history.” Other notable lesson plans engage subcultures using CLP. Gilgan (104) uses cultural artifacts and scholarly work concerning the Riot Grrrl movement to “create a space in which students can explore different types of expertise rather than simply valuing one over the other.” Ellenwood and Berger (202–3) place hip hop “in conversation with scholarly sources . . . [to] introduce concepts of authority and privilege in academia . . . at an accessible level . . . [and] to illustrate that students can be scholars in any area that interests them.” Those seeking to incorporate assessment into their instruction will appreciate Gammons’s (235–36) essay on critical library assessment, which affords “an appreciation for the individual journey of learners, resistance to the dichotomy of a right or wrong response, and opportunities for students to reflect critically on their library experiences.”

As Elmborg (xi, xiii) notes in his introduction, the *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook* “demonstrates the breadth of experimentation going on in libraries about how to do critical pedagogy” by authors “deeply invested in academic librarianship as their professional calling.” The *Handbook* offers practical advice; well-structured activities to encourage reflection, dialogue, and community-building; and a wide selection of lesson plans that can be directly implemented or adapted to local contexts. In such a complex undertaking as this work, one can expect oversights. For one, the *Handbook* lacks an introduction to Critical Pedagogy containing definitions of all relevant terminology to which authors might refer in their chapters. While the editors’ introduction defines (only) the terms *banking concept of education* and *conscientization* (xviii–xix), these and other Freirean concepts are discussed and defined in many of the chapters. It is certainly interesting to read individual authors’ understandings of

Critical Pedagogy; however, there is much repetitive discussion of Freirean concepts that limits space that could be better allocated to the practical deployment of CLP. Additionally, it is curious that in a work of this length and complexity, assembled by librarians, there is no index to either volume. Finally, the editors call attention to the lack of diversity in the *Handbook's* authorship, noting that, among other diversity issues, "all of our authors currently live in the United States and Canada" (xx). The authorship is even less geographically diverse than the editors claim; thirty per cent of authors in the first volume and forty-four per cent of authors in the second volume hail from the US Northeast, and only two authors reside in Canada. These shortcomings aside, the *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook* is a welcome addition to a field that is increasingly committed to inclusive social-justice instruction. In these days of limited funding and time, a work like the *Handbook* can function as a source of professional development, and like the best professional development it can help library practitioners become more enthusiastic and motivated to engage in professional praxis to improve, even transform, instruction using CLP.

REFERENCES

Accardi, Maria T., Emily Drabinski, and Alana Kumbier. 2000. *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods*. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press.