Annie Downey, *Critical Information Literacy: Foundations, Inspiration, and Ideas*. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2016, 204 pp., \$28 US.

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Annie Downey's book is, as its name states, a text on critical information literacy, including the history, current trajectory, and potential future of the field. As academic librarians continue to explore critical information literacy—an idea that Downey notes “is still being constructed” (41) around the questioning of information creation—this book offers a focal point in the discussion and advancement within academic library instruction. It is intended not as a definitive guide but rather as an outline of the discourse up to the current moment, including ideas for future pursuit and consideration.

As Director of Research Services at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, Annie Downey oversees reference and instruction, and library assessment, among other areas of LIS practice. This, along with a PhD in which she researched critical information literacy in higher education, means that she is both highly qualified and deeply invested in the material, and she brings to the text both the theoretical eye of the academic researcher and the practical focus of an instruction and liaison librarian. With these qualifications, she has taken on the development of a relatively new field, and this book presents her revised and extended doctoral thesis.

Annie Downey has done an excellent job compiling the current discussion. She notes the small but growing body of literature on the topic (33), with most of the discussion happening in conferences and other similar venues. The lack of published scholarly research, coupled with the general glut of information and the ongoing problems that people have in parsing its validity, denote a need for further study in critical information literacy instruction. Downey laments the difficulties faced by librarians in presenting information literacy instruction, with many academic instruction possibilities consisting of one-off lessons, and with librarians often beholden to the whims of the faculty member primarily responsible for the class.

The ultimate thesis of the book, then, is one of shifting the instructional goals of academic librarians from one of information literacy to one of critical information literacy. The majority of incoming college students have low information literacy and

are not prepared for college-level research. Critical information literacy instruction is then presented as a solution to the over-simplification of current information literacy instruction, argued with a particular focus on the emancipatory benefits that critical information literacy offers through student engagement and empowerment. The arguments are well presented and inspiring in intent, though they are somewhat complicated by an uncertainty about what, exactly, critical information literacy entails and how it is separated from the aforementioned conceptions of information literacy. The conclusion brings back the differentiation by noting that neither realm has a fully agreed-upon definition; at the end of the text, the author expresses the ambiguity about the division between the two and describes how that uncertainty is instantiated in practice. The closest to a distinction left in my mind was that information literacy is primarily practice-based understanding of information, while critical information literacy melds the world of practice with that of theory, or "praxis," into a questioning of information and the context from which it derives.

While intended and written primarily for academic librarianship—both practitioners and researchers—this text would also find a good audience outside the academic circle, especially as information literacy is becoming an ever more necessary skill. As a means of informing practice for those tasked with helping the public understand the current media landscape, critical information literacy presents another facet of instruction, and Downey's book can be used to offer a current and comprehensive synthesis of critical information literacy as an instructional model. Teachers, journalists, and media personalities would all benefit from the ideas espoused herein.

The text is not without issues. Along with the above-noted ambiguity, there is some difficulty in the presentation of critical information literacy as a means to student empowerment. Tackling and deconstructing the power structures of academia is taken as a given good, and while I do not disagree, it would have been nice to see a more developed discussion surrounding this. Education involves inherent power dynamics, and how those dynamics are managed or deconstructed is not fully developed. More detail would further Downey's goal of increasing the theoretical undertakings in librarianship.

Stylistically, Downey maintains heavy academic language throughout the text. Such style is necessary for the intentions Downey is espousing, though it may, at the same time, hold back the broader push for ideological adoption. There are moments of appeal to less academically structured writing, such as a quote from Dead Prez—a hip hop duo from New York—but these fall somewhat flat within the overall context. The majority of the text reads as the PhD thesis it was built from.

As a whole, Annie Downey's *Critical Information Literacy* offers a thorough discussion of current understandings of the field, with some practical approaches to its inclusion in academic library practice. As a text, it offers much to consider and proved inspiring to read. I found myself ready to adopt critical information literacy instruction—just as soon as I figure out exactly what that is.