

8B—CRITICAL LIBRARY PRACTICE AND HIGHER EDUCATION: LOCATING SPACES OF AGENCY AND RESISTANCE

Programming and Displays

Sofia Leung (MIT Libraries)

Collection Development

Vani Natarajan (Barnard College)

Reference

Eamon Tewell (Long Island University Brooklyn)

Academic libraries are plausibly environments where socially-conscious practices might easily be explored. Yet librarians engaged in these efforts often struggle to bring a critical perspective to bear upon their work within the confines of larger institutional cultures. Our liminal status can sometimes work to our advantage by allowing us to “fly under the radar,” while other times it leaves us stuck in the margins, lacking the agency necessary to create lasting change.

This panel will speak to the challenges and opportunities encountered by librarians who engage in critical practices within higher education, offering reflections on our agency across three sites: collection development, reference services, and event programming and displays. After having heard the panelists’ approaches to locating critical spaces, a facilitated Q&A will encourage attendees to voice their concerns and hopes for socially-conscious library work within environments that are sometimes agreeable to these aims, sometimes hostile, but never neutral.