IT'S NOT A COMPETITION!

QUESTIONING THE RHETORIC OF "SCHOLARLY VERSUS POPULAR" IN LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

Kevin Seeber / Foundational Experiences Librarian
Auraria Library / University of Colorado Denver
@kevinseeber / kevin.seeber@ucdenver.edu

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MY THESIS

First-year library instruction, especially "scholarly versus popular," tends to centralize the *LIBRARY* rather than the *STUDENT*.

That is a *PROBLEM*.

SO, WHAT IS SCHOLARLY VERSUS POPULAR?

QUITE OFTEN, IT'S GRID-BASED INSTRUCTION...

SCHOLARLY	POPULAR
Smart Authors	Mere Journalists
Cited References	No References
Peer Review	No Peer Review
No Advertisements	Advertisements
Formal Language	Informal Language
In Library Databases	On the Open Web

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

FIRST PROBLEM

The word *VERSUS* means *AGAINST*.

We are stating that these two formats are *OPPOSED* to one another.

SECOND PROBLEM

The grid wrongly implies that information is a *BINARY*.

We don't recognize what is *OUTSIDE* of the grid.

THIRD PROBLEM

We frame these comparisons to make *SCHOLARLY* sources look like *BETTER* sources.

By emphasizing scholarly sources, we *ALIENATE* our students.

WHAT DO WE SAY THAT ALIENATES THEM?

This thing you have been using throughout your life, which everyone uses all the time, which is easy to find and read, which is called POPULAR... yeah... that's the BAD one.

AND HOW DO WE FRAME POPULAR AS BAD?

We attach our *BIASES* to the attributes we compare.

We equate *CREDENTIALS* and *BIG WORDS* with *AUTHORITY*. (#snobmove)

RETHINK THESE COMPARISONS FOR A MOMENT...

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AUDIENCE QUESTION!

WHY DO WE DO THIS? WHERE DID "SCHOLARLY VERSUS POPULAR" COME FROM?

MY FIRST GUESS

This is the *BANKING MODEL* in action.

We see *STUDENTS* as *CUSTOMERS*, and other avenues of discovery as *COMPETITION* for the library's *BRAND*.

BECAUSE QUANTIFIABLE USE IS WHAT OFTEN DETERMINES OUR VALUE, THEN THESE POPULAR "RIVALS" CALL INTO QUESTION THE VALUE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS.

THIS LINES UP WITH KAPITZKE...

"A high proportion of activities undertaken in school libraries are based on the assumption that students lack something (that is, information), which only the teacher or librarian can provide."

Kapitzke, Cushla. (2003). "Information Literacy: A Positivist Epistemology and a Politics of *Out*formation." *Educational Theory, 53*(1): 37-53.

MY SECOND GUESS

Presenting evaluation of information as an absolute binary is a paternalistic paradigm designed to protect "*NEUTRAL*" librarians from acknowledging *CONTEXT* when speaking with students.

OUR PURPORTED NEUTRALITY, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY FAVORING SCHOLARLY INFORMATION OVER ALTERNATIVES, STANDS TO *OTHER* THOSE STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT HAD PAST EXPOSURE TO THIS TYPE OF DISCOURSE.

OUR NEUTRALITY THEN BECOMES AN INSTRUMENT OF EXCLUSION.

"[Librarians] would do well to concede that information and its outcome, knowledge, are not static, unquestionable, and authoritative entities; rather, they are products of culturally specific spaces and relations of power that directly or indirectly include and exclude those without access to their discursive forms and practices. The effect of this is what I call an *out*formation, in contrast to the *in*formation, or inclusion and empowerment, of those who understand how these forms work. Whereas information 'problem solving' emphasizes processes inside individuals' heads, a critical information literacy would analyze the social and political ideologies embedded within the economies of ideas and information." (Kapitzke, 2003, p. 49)

THAT LAST PART BEARS REPEATING:

"a critical information literacy would analyze the social and political ideologies embedded within the economies of ideas and information." (Kapitzke, 2003, p. 49)

So... what professional document could librarians use as a general guideline for engaging with these ideas during an instruction session?

OBLIGATORY FRAMEWORK REFERENCE:

AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED AND CONTEXTUAL.

IN SUMMATION

The competitive binary of "scholarly versus popular" removes discussions of *CONTEXT* and maintains the *LIBRARY*, with its collection of *SCHOLARLY* resources, as a *GATEKEEPER OF KNOWLEDGE*. This comes at the expense of our *STUDENTS*. It is a *BAD* model.

EVERYBODY STILL WITH ME? ANY QUESTIONS OR CRITICISMS?

HOW ABOUT SOME PRAXIS?!

It seems kind of silly, but... well... changing one word does away with a lot of these issues...

BEHOLD!

SCHOLARLY

AND

POPULAR

NO MORE COMPETITION NARRATIVE!
NO LONGER AN IMPLIED BINARY!

BETTER YET!

SCHOLARLY AND POPULAR AND...

Now the discussion can be about *SCHOLARLY*, *POPULAR*, and *ANYTHING ELSE* students might find relevant.

Providing room for other options allows students to introduce their own *LIVED EXPERIENCES* and *REFLECT* on how different types of information complement, rather than oppose, one another.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMPARE INFORMATION AND IDENTIFY DIFFERENCES!
BUT ALSO ENCOURAGE A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE PROCESSES BEHIND THOSE DIFFERENCES.

Librarians and students alike would do well to recognize that things can be different without being *SUPERIOR* or *INFERIOR*.

WHERE ELSE DO LIBRARIANS USE ANTAGONISTIC OR COMPETITIVE LANGUAGE?

"WE'RE MORE THAN GOOGLE!"
"BETTER THAN WIKIPEDIA!"

BUT KEVIN, ISN'T THIS RATHER SMALL?

Yes, it is. That's because putting theory into practice doesn't have to be monumental.

Making little changes can open up larger discussions.