DISRUPTING TECH
WHILE BEING PRO-TECH

Elisa Rodrigues & Anders Lyon

ALA Midwinter 2020
Symposium on the Future of Libraries
#alamw20

Introductions and Title --Elisa

Thank you for attending our discussion as part of the Symposium on the Future of Libraries. This is Disrupting Tech While Being Pro-Tech.

Introductions --Both

This is us.
Elisa: I'm a Library Systems Assistant at the University of San Francisco. I previously worked in public consortia libraries for over ten years and recently received my MLIS from the University of Washington. I am a white passing, a first generation American, and a first generation degree holder.

Anders: I'm the user experience & web design librarian at the University of San Francisco. I've been in this position for a little over a year. Before that I worked as a library assistant in systems and access services departments in academic libraries. This is my first time at midwinter. And my first time moderating a discussion, so hold onto your seats.

Outline --Elisa

First, we're going to do an introduction to the topic, which will primarily cover social justice issues surrounding our responsibility as library employees and properly vetting and implementing technology to meet community needs and patron privacy. During this time, we'll offer some working definitions of concepts, as well as identify some of the opportunities and challenges library workers face when confronting issues of privacy.

For the remaining time we'll be moderating a discussion with all of you about how libraries might take a more measured approach to reviewing and integrating technology and address issues in everyday work. We're especially interested in how innovation can work in favor of community goals, library ethics, and social justice concerns. As the title suggests, we are "Disrupting Tech While Being Pro-Tech", so we are coming at this from a pro-technology perspective, but want to be critical and productive in our approach.

Before we dive in, we also want to talk about our intent and where we're coming from. We are both very

interested in this topic, but we're not experts. We want to share our experiences and ideas, but we also want to hear yours for a positive, productive discussion.

Libraries and privacy --Anders

Privacy is a very hot topic. It seems like every day there's a new news story about digital privacy concerns and violations. We know that our personal data is being collected and sold to third party companies. We know our internet browsing behavior is being tracked and ingested by algorithms for targeted ads. Digital security breaches are becoming more frequent. And, although there is a lot of convenience that comes with using technology, it has become very clear that a lot of the companies collecting our data do not have our best interests at heart.

LIBRARIES & PRIVACY

All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

- ALA Library Bill of Rights

http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill

Luckily there is a lot of push back against what has essentially become a "normalized" tech practice of collecting large quantities of personal data. This work is being done by advocacy groups and there's a sizable community within our profession that are committed to more equitable technology practices. This makes sense given our commitment to patron privacy protection. Privacy is indeed a core tenant of ALA's Library Bill of Rights: "All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information."

That commitment, however, is much easier stated than actually realized in our everyday work. There's a tension between meeting users' needs and providing them with the technological tools they expect, versus implementing ethical privacy policies and critically evaluating new tech for the library.

Library technology --Anders

This begs the question: "What types of library technology should we be critical of?" The short answer is "All of it!" Any piece of technology that collects and stores data about patrons should be taken to task.

Typical of most libraries, we at the University of San Francisco use an integrated library system to store all of our patron records, catalog records, and order records. Personal identifiable information about our users is stored there. We have subscriptions to numerous electronic resources and media platforms, many of which offer a "personalized" experience by creating a separate account with our vendors. We have software for room booking, web analytics, and authentication and access management – all of which either store personal information or track the behavior of users. This software is invaluable for our library services, but all of it contains sensitive data about our patrons. At USF, we have not implemented much emerging tech. But in other libraries, new technology like voice assistants are being explored as a way to help patrons with disabilities complete tasks on library websites and catalogs. On the near horizon, there is a potential for libraries to begin

exploring the use of facial recognition software. The idea is that this could replace library cards. Although helpful in many ways, the personal data collected by these technologies is a major privacy concern.

LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY

- Challenges
  - New technology develops rapidly, hard to keep up
  - Limited budgets and staff time
  - Communicating risk, ensuring informed consent
- Opportunities
  - Resources – best practices, publications
  - Networks of communication – listservs, forums, interest groups

Libraries champion patron privacy, but we exist within a society where technology is pervasive and privacy is devalued. Library workers face many challenges finding a balance in this space: technology develops rapidly and is hard to keep up with; budgets are tight and staff time is limited; effectively communicating risk to patrons and ensuring informed consent is very difficult. But at the same time, opportunities to confront these challenges grow in parallel: there are more and more resources becoming available to help libraries navigate these issues; best practices and project documentation are being shared; model license agreements are available; and more expertise and experience is being shared on forums, listservs, publications, etc. There's good momentum in the profession and it's crucial that we stay involved and continue to advocate for our patrons' privacy.

> ## SOCIAL JUSTICE
>
> ...is a commitment to recognizing, addressing, and correcting systemic power imbalances that privilege one group at the expense of another.
>
> Duff, W.M., Flinn, A., Suurtamm, K.E. et al. Arch Sci (2013) 13: 317. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9198-x

Social justice --Elisa

Anders and I are very fortunate to work at a Jesuit institution that both advocates for social justice and weaves it through curriculum, campus-wide. Our student body is 72% POC, so our choices have a direct impact on marginalized communities. For this presentation, we will use the definition of "social justice as a commitment to recognizing, addressing, and correcting systemic power imbalances that privilege one group at the expense of another".

Social justice fits very well within library principles. In many capacities, libraries offer entry points to information, entertainment, tools, and skill building that empowers patrons to recognize, address, and correct power imbalances. We evolve and engage exceedingly well on insufficient budgets. We give ourselves honorable names such as Keepers of Knowledge and the Great Equalizers and with those titles come responsibility.

LIBRARIES, PRIVACY, & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Image retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/insertcoin/2018/12/16/spider-man-into-the-spider-verse-is-not-just-a-must-see-its-a-must-see-in-theaters/#3ad43eb12f92

Libraries, privacy, and social justice --Elisa

We must remember that while data can be very persuasive to ensure library funding and outreach, we need to be critical on why we are collecting this data and how much we are collecting. The library has a responsibility to protect the privacy of patrons, not just because we want to be trusted institutions, but because we must have an awareness of how data affects the lives of our marginalized and underrepresented patrons.

These are a few examples of headlines over the past five years where data sets and data collection put marginalized and underrepresented groups at risk.

LIBRARIES, PRIVACY, & SOCIAL JUSTICE

POLITICS — The New York Times — SUB

Facebook Engages in Housing Discrimination With Its Ad Practices, U.S. Says

By Katie Benner, Glenn Thrush and Mike Isaac

March 28, 2019

Facebook certainly gets a lot of news for their risky data usage. In March of 2019, after years of complaints and a lawsuit from the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Facebook removed advertisers' abilities to use Facebook user data to advertise housing. Essentially, the platform was allowing advertisers to discriminate against users based on their gender, job, zip code, and age.

LIBRARIES, PRIVACY, & SOCIAL JUSTICE
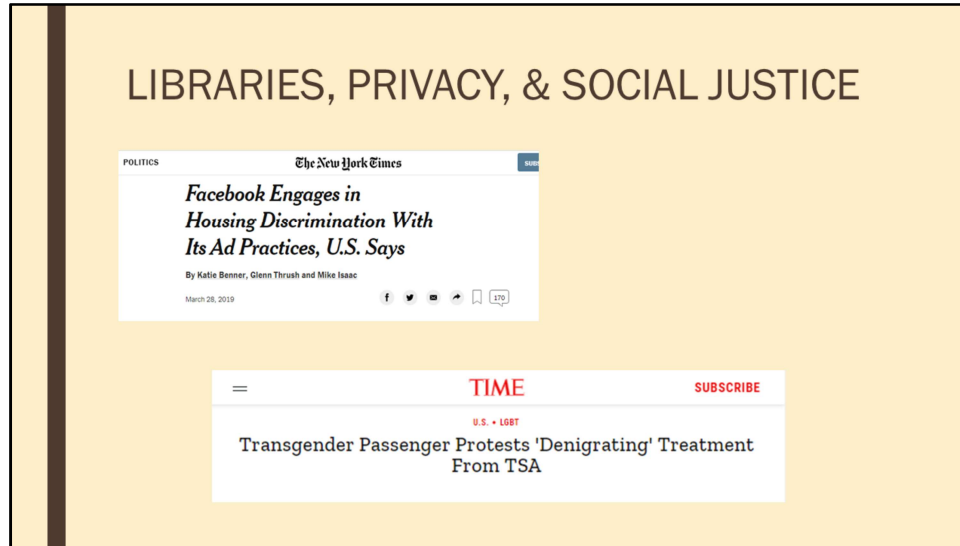
Government agencies, such as TSA and police departments, have also been quick to adopt data driven technology that has produced faulty determinations in regards to gender identification to gang affiliation, despite coming from industry giants like IBM, Microsoft, and Amazon.

LIBRARIES, PRIVACY, & SOCIAL JUSTICE
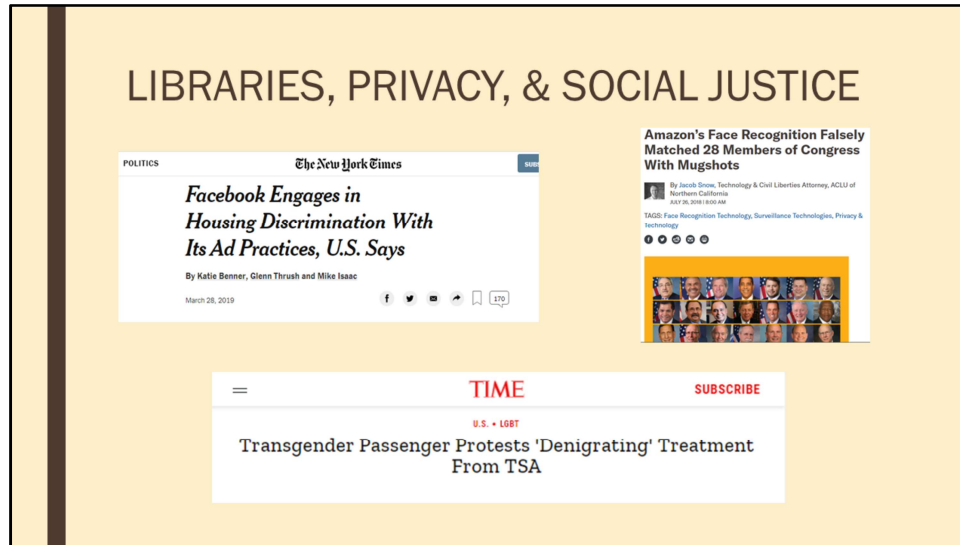
Compromising digital privacy rights puts all patrons at risk, but what makes this a social justice concern is that these risks adversely affect economically and socially disadvantaged groups. We know these risks are dangerous for everyone, but when a person is already on the margin, a single incident can devastate lives for generations.
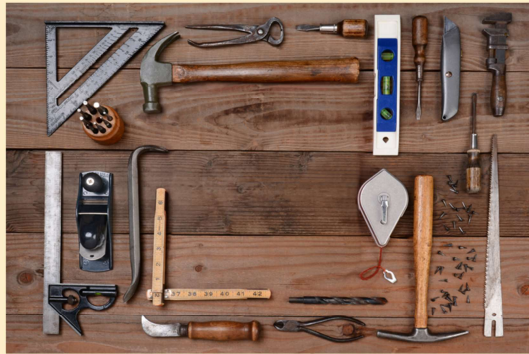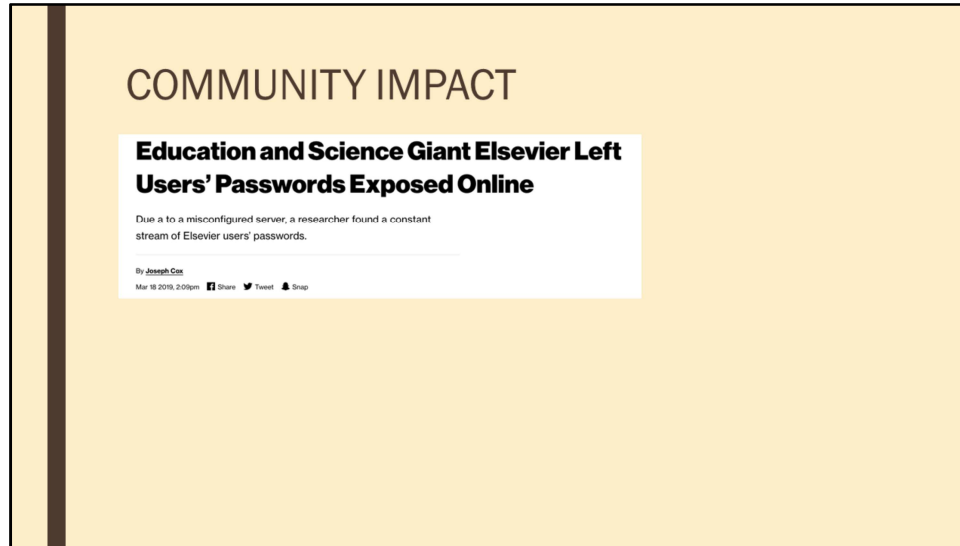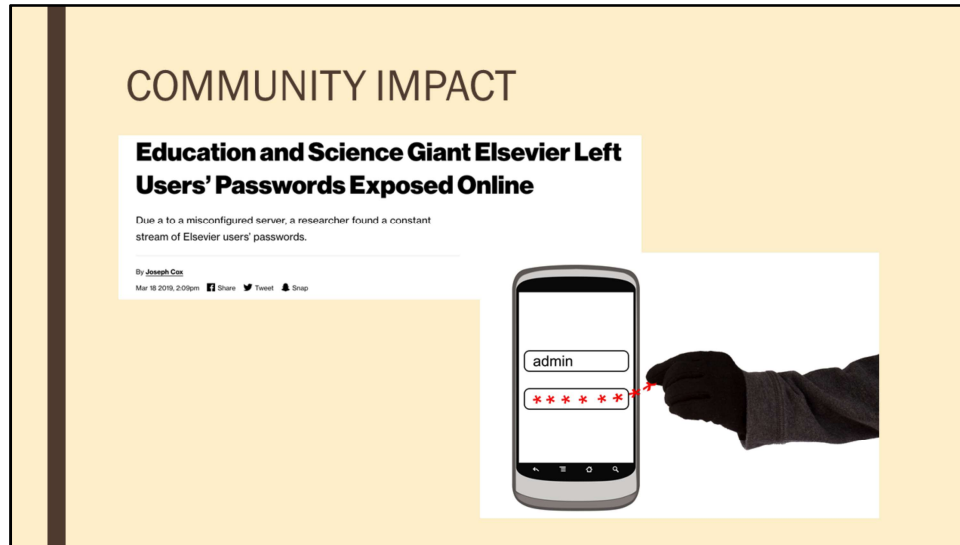
Community Impact

So how does this apply to libraries? Libraries are not any more immune to the luring potential of technology and data collection than any other industry. Technology is not bad, good, or even neutral. It is merely a tool and we want to make sure we are using the right tool for the job. Tech tells us, if we implement technology, we can show our administrators or our community leaders neutral, factual numbers to justify our existence. But does it? Data is definitely not neutral. Numbers can be manipulated from collection to presentation to show whatever we want it to. When we apply technology, let's be real with ourselves and others on what real value this service offer our communities.

Once we have agreed on the value of technology to our communities, we must vet access and support from our vendors. Our vendors might appear to have the resources to provide access and support over an in-house team, but are they secure? And are they reliable? Here are a few library vendor issues from the past year.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Education and Science Giant Elsevier Left Users' Passwords Exposed Online

Due a to a misconfigured server, a researcher found a constant stream of Elsevier users' passwords.

By Joseph Cox
Mar 18 2019, 2:09pm

Publishing giant Elsevier accidentally exposed the usernames and passwords of their subscribers because they were storing their data in plain text. Meaning, they stored that information exactly as you would write it in on a piece of paper.

Username Admin. Password Library. Which is not a secure password choice, but that doesn't excuse having it exposed in plain text.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Published on May 3, 2019

Kanopy: Not Just Like Netflix, and Not Free

Streaming service Kanopy emailed New York Public Library patrons directly, circumventing the library, to let patrons know that their library was not renewing this great "free service" and to contact NYPL to let them know they had made a mistake. There was no mention of how much Kanopy was charging the library or their business model that resulted in the move to not renew.
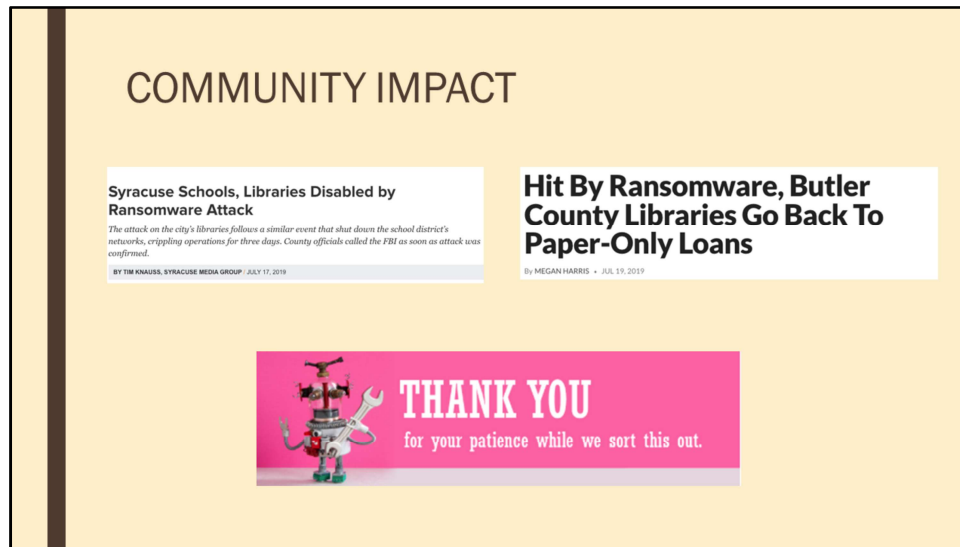
That is not to say in-house security is any better. There have been major ransomware attacks on libraries in the past year. Onondaga (ON-ahn-DAH-ga) County, N.Y. was disabled by an attack in July 2019. A week later, Butler County, Pennsylvania was compromised by the same virus. My own local library in Contra Costa County, California sent me a notice earlier this month about their attack, which I can say from a patron perspective, they handled fantastically well. No robust IT department can fix this. Remember in 2018, Google had a data breach. Major companies like Uber, Verizon, Apple, and Microsoft have all been hacked. That is just the world we live in, so it's better to just not collect it.

Again, technology is not bad, good, or neutral. When we apply technology, it merely amplifies and reinforces societal rules that are already in place, so the best we can do is be critical on why we implement, how we vet our vendors, and our response to impact on our most vulnerable communities.

HOW CAN LIBRARY WORKERS RESPOND?

■ LinkedIn Learning
   – Coordinating efforts to push back
■ National Forum on Web Privacy and Web Analytics
   – Action Handbook
   – Pathways to Action

How can libraries respond? --Anders

How are we as library workers responding to these issues?

One of the most significant ongoing issues is Lynda.com, an education platform offering video courses. Very popular with libraries. Lynda.com was acquired by LinkedIn and has rebranded to LinkedIn Learning. The platform announced that users would now be required to have a LinkedIn account to access and view the site's videos. This would be a major shift from how library patrons had traditionally accessed the content, so it quickly raised privacy concerns. Library workers spoke up, coordinated their efforts, and several advocacy groups spoke out against the new policy, including ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom. This push back has led LinkedIn to at least temporarily pausing their plans for the LinkedIn Learning platform.

Another example is the National Forum on Web Privacy and Web Analytics. Their work involves the collaboration of about 40 participants - librarians, developers, administrators, lawyers, etc. - and centers on

enhancing libraries' use of web analytics in support of web privacy and library ethics. They have created an Action Handbook that recommends how libraries can best configure their Google Analytics in respect to privacy. And they've compiled a list of non-Google Analytics alternatives. The handbook also outlines how libraries can communicate privacy policy to patrons. Another outcome is a "Pathways to Action" document, which identifies important areas, or "launch pads" for further work. One of the social justice-oriented pathways is about privacy within tribal communities and organizations. The concept of privacy differs across cultures and the implications this has on how libraries protect patron privacy is another very important consideration.

One of the things that we're doing at the University of San Francisco: we're in the middle of strategic planning. And a few of our tactics include assessing current technology and developing best practices for acquiring and implementing new technology. Protecting patron privacy will be a part of this work and having access to the resources created by other libraries and advocacy groups will be very helpful. In addition to these resources, USF's strategic planning process puts us at an advantage to confront these issues. The process places an emphasis on diverse perspectives and transparency. Library workers from all levels and experiences will be involved, which will allow us to address our tactics more creatively and more holistically.

DISCUSSION - COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- Acknowledge the power you bring into this space including personal, societal, and institutional power
- Step up/Step back
- Respect each other by staying engaged and not letting your mind "check out"
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Share freely, but don't universalize your experience
- Do not share others' stories without their permission
- For non-BIPOC, be willing to be vulnerable and sit with discomfort
- Be your own best advocate - step out if you need to do so

Andrews, N. & Kim, S. (2018). *Cultural Humility for Library Workers*. Presentation at JCLC.

This will begin the discussion part of our presentation. We intentionally invited Black, Indigenous, and people of color to this talk, because we know these are the communities greatly impacted by data collection. We also invited LIS students and library workers at all levels of employment to represent people not typically in the room when decisions about patron privacy and library technology implementation are made. With the hopefully diverse perspectives in the room, we would like to suggest these community agreements of recognizing your privilege and space in the discussion.

These guidelines are from our colleagues Nicky Andrews, who works with us at USF, and Sunny Kim at Seattle Public Library from their 2018 JCLC presentation on Cultural Humility.

Please acknowledge the power you bring into this space including personal, societal, and institutional power. If you are a person who typically speaks up, try stepping back. And if you often find yourself shying from discussion, try to step up. We want to hear your views.
Please respect each other by staying engaged and not letting your mind "check out" and try to listen to

understand and not to respond

Feel free to share freely, but don't universalize your experience and don't share others' stories without their permission.

For non-BIPOC people, we ask you to be willing to be vulnerable in this space and sit with your discomfort and lastly. Be your own best advocate. If anyone needs to, please feel free to step out if you need to do so

TAKE FIVE!

Reflect on what was discussed either by yourself or with the person next to you. Consider this question:

How might you balance patron need and patron privacy when reviewing and implementing library technology?

What types of emerging technology are you interested in seeing at your library? What strategies would you use to ensure patron privacy is protected?

What are some correlations you see between social justice and digital privacy?

RESOURCES

- ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom (Booth 1823 in the Exhibit Hall)
  https://chooseprivacyeveryday.org/
- Anna Lauren Hoffmann (Assistant Professor in Infomatics at the University of Washington iSchool) https://www.annaeveryday.com/ Particularly her medium article: Data Violence and How Bad Engineering Choices Can Damage Society
- Detroit Community Technology Project (Part of Allied Media Projects)
  https://www.alliedmedia.org/dctp
- LDH Consulting Services (Becky Yoose) https://ldhconsultingservices.com/
- Library Freedom Institute https://libraryfreedom.org/
- National Forum on Web Privacy and Web Analytics https://www.lib.montana.edu/privacy-forum/
- NISO Privacy Principles https://www.niso.org/publications/privacy-principles
- Rachel Thomas (Founding Director of the Center for Applied Data Ethics at the University of San Francisco) https://medium.com/@racheltho

We have about fifteen minutes left. We wanted to provide a few Resources, which we will be uploading to the conference page by the end of the weekend along with our slides and additional resources that came out of the discussion.