

About the Author

This library was created to advocate for technological freedom, equal access and transformative social justice. [The creator](#) is a designer, developer and information scientist who was shaped by [open-source technologies](#).

- Positionality
- Intersectionality

Story

- My name is Josh. I am queer, trans, non-binary and intersex. I am polyamorous with two long-term live-in partners for the last 10 years. I am neurodivergent and autistic. I have dealt with disability and chronic illness since I was a child, requiring multiple surgeries and life-long treatment plans that have made it difficult to feel integrated into my community. I exist on the fringe of what is commonly accepted within society and I can see it from a unique perspective. I have longed to create a family and community for those who have felt shunned by theirs. I am also a masculine-presenting White person, specifically working in technology spaces for a decade. I am not judged solely on my physical being. Within our colonial and capitalist systems, there is a structural authority assigned to me and I must always be conscious of positionality. Even when I chose not to wield it, I am taking a stance. I have the option to hide who I am, as required, for my own safety. It is important to embrace the dichotomy and balance of “queerness” and “conformity” – privilege and oppression. This discomfort can lead to growth and learning, building trust between people and communities. Radical empathy requires seeing yourself from the perspective of others and doing the work to understand not only your positionality and intersectionality, but theirs. While I cannot and should not try to intuit your lived experience, there are always ways to communicate. I am a first generation student returning to school after dropping out as a teenager. I prefer

hands-on learning methods and my innate curiosity has always led me towards digging deeper.

I joined the MLIS program because I wanted to help people in the ways I knew how. I have struggled in academic spaces but taught myself how to thrive. Now, I can help those who struggle in the ways I have. I am working on becoming a better advocate because it is not enough to know about injustices and inequalities. We must do the work to transform knowledge

into praxis and this can mean changing the world or changing a single mind.

My father was a telecom engineer for a mobile phone company in the early 90s, granting immense privilege through constant access to information and technology. As a teenager, I got

into designing and creating websites on a recycled computer with an open-source operating

system. Community and culture have always informed my approach to technology having started out volunteering websites for local restaurants, organizations and artists. By exploring

my own inner artist, I have learned to appreciate the depth of expression that can exist within

simplicity. I write sci-fi and fantasy short stories and novellas. For work, I am currently a researcher and technical writer. As a self-taught learner, I have insights on approaching informal education within technology spaces. As I branched into interface design and user experience, I began to see the value of assessment and evaluation.

I have embraced my role as an educator to build communities of practice and provide opportunities for meaning-making. While I don't think I will ever be someone who can stand in

front of a crowd and effortlessly orate, I can be a different kind of educator. I believe in the

creative and social power created through workshops and participatory sessions. I am a facilitator who can meet a person at their understanding and bridge the gap.

Throughout my undergrad, I built relationships with local museums and libraries to develop

open-source technologies for everyone. As part of a local community, we created educator-facilitated lesson plans that could be shared with elementary school children trapped

at home during the pandemic. This was a truly world-changing experience that taught me the

power of technology in the hands of the people, as well as the struggles of digital access. Public institutions have the opportunity to create a new relationship with technology; one that they have a voice in. Technology should be created locally by the communities that need them

and shared globally for the potential betterment of everyone. Part of this mission is also teaching people how to involve themselves. Open technologies allow us to build around mutual

needs by focusing on community and consensus instead of power. We create better things when we work together - and we gain a deeper understanding of the potential ramifications.

Closed doors do nothing to broaden perspectives and radical change requires doing things

Motivation

- There are a myriad of guides out there for creating your own server – even for people new to computers. These days, the process is relatively simple and automated. I have never found one viewed through a critical perspective and I feel this knowledge is imperative to information freedom. We must highlight how we have created and maintained the system (often at the expense of communities), while also offering ways to reflect on how we can involve ourselves (and others) in systems that have been transparently crafted to be exclusionary. While the technical aspects become easier, the human questions become larger as they are pushed uphill: what are the social, ethical, moral, and security considerations that will affect the identity, privacy and livelihood of both people and communities? Technology is a convoluted and confusing mesh of topics. “Diversity in technology” is our current framework for seeing ourselves represented in the technologies we use – and it should encompass the diverse ways we can be included in technology. From my experience, this is what’s most overwhelming for people looking to learn technology: where do I even begin? By providing the basic concepts alongside more in-depth resources, participants can spark curiosity to explore the web of technology. Even if you don’t want to code, your voice matters when you are given the power to express yourself. “Talking back” is of critical importance if we ever hope to critically examine and address our relationship with technology. While far from perfect, open technologies focus on community and help people see how they might be involved in the systems churning around them. Technology has been a largely white cis hetero space and has predominantly worked to accelerate colonial white supremacy. This has happened through the erasure of the stories behind our advancements. The first “computers” were women – who programmed our

first

digital computers – and it took until 2005 for their names to be recognized. Erasing these histories has only perpetuated the idea that not everyone belongs in technology. While we can say that we need to “increase diversity in technology”, we have not worked to create a welcoming space where people can see themselves in technology. We can help people embrace that their voice is important and can make a difference.

Teaching Objectives

- Never a failure, always a lesson.
- Education as the practice of freedom
- One possible alternative to the banking model is the [problem-based learning](#) model (similar to what Freire called [problem-posing education](#)), in which students are encouraged to think and actively solve problems presented to them by the teacher.[\[5\]\[6\]](#)
- Identity
- Prescott, M., Ewing, R., and O’Dea, M. (2018). “Where Are We Now? Gender, Technology, and Libraries.” *Library Technology Conference*, https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/libtech_conf/2018/sessions/32/ [download the .pptx file]
- Yoose, B. (2015). “Your code does not exist in a vacuum.” Code4Lib Annual Conference, <https://code4lib.org/files/c4l15yoose.pdf>.
- Harihareswara, S. (2015, April 15). User experience is a social justice issue. Code4Lib Journal. <https://journal.code4lib.org/articles/10482>
- To me, the best case scenario is not that everyone instantly understands the technical concepts being taught to them, but instead that they learn to grapple with how the applications of these technical concepts have begun to affect their personal lives. While computers are part of our everyday lives, we don’t think about them and – even more nefariously – we are taught by tech companies not to think about them. I consider the lesson a success when someone can articulate their questions about what these technologies mean for their privacy, or why computer science history has been paved over in favor of our current narrative. As a corollary, failure means completing the entire process without critical reflection.

Philosophy

- Stommel, J. (2017, October 26). Why I Don't Grade. *Jesse Stommel*.
<https://www.jessestommel.com/why-i-dont-grade/>
- Magnus, E., Faber, M., & Belanger, J. (2019). [A Consideration of Power Structures \(and the Tensions They Create\) in Library Assessment Activities](#). *Library Assessment Conference Proceedings*, 600–606.
- Winner, L. (2004). "Technologies as forms of life." In Kaplan, D M. (Ed.) *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*. Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 103-113. [Winner - Technologies as forms of life.pdf](#)
- They are different faces of the same coin – wonder and criticality – each placed in careful balance through reflection. Community is an important aspect of education; while we can learn by ourselves, we gain knowledge and ultimately grow through our connections within the community of practice. Qualitative growth is more important than quantitative assessment. What we learn may be important, but it is just as critical to understand how we learn and why. True growth requires both criticality and vulnerability with reflection as our tool for understanding the strides we've made and the journey we still have left to go. Just as we can never know the ways a book will affect its reader, we cannot objectively quantify how our lessons will affect the trajectory of their day, quarter or life. As an educator, our job is – as bell hooks described – to “teach in a manner that empowers students” to be “actively committed to a process of self-actualization.” While the “sage on the stage” has a place within instruction, I prefer to work within participatory community spaces. We all learn from each other and build a collective understanding through our relationships with each other. I may not be able to find the right analogy in the moment – to find the spark of connection across differences in life experiences – but within a community of practice, it is not my job alone. By valuing the voice of a community, we can explore the nuance surrounding what it means to be humans with differing needs.
- Freire's intended audience is radicals—people who see the world as changing and fluid—and he admits that his argument will most likely be missing necessary elements to construct pedagogies in given material realities.^[1]: 37-39 Basing his method of finding freedom on the poor and middle class's experience with education, Freire states that his ideas are rooted in reality—not purely theoretical.^[1]: 37

- We learn facts out of context of application in school. How will this history, science, math show up in our lives, in the work of growing community and home?
- We learn as children to swallow our tears and any other inconvenient emotions, and as adults that translates into working through red flags, value differences, pain, and exhaustion.
- We learn that tests and deadlines are the reasons to take action. This puts those with good short-term memories and a positive response to pressure in leadership positions, leading to urgency-based thinking, regardless of the circumstance.
- We learn that the natural world is to be manicured, controlled, or pillaged to support our consumerist lives. Even the natural lives of our bodies get medicated, pathologized, shaved or improved upon with cosmetic adjustments.
- To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks 1994: 13)
- In the book, Freire calls traditional pedagogy the "[banking model of education](#)" because it treats the student as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, like a [piggy bank](#). He argues that pedagogy should instead treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.^[1]
- https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banking_model_of_education
- Freire argued that this model reinforces a lack of [critical thinking](#) and knowledge ownership in students, which in turn reinforces [oppression](#), in contrast to Freire's understanding of [knowledge](#) as the result of a human, creative process.^[1]
- Freire describes this form of education as "fundamentally *narrative* (in) character"^{[3]: 57} with the teacher as the subject (that is, the active participant) and the students as passive objects.

“ Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" [concept of education](#), in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.^{[3]: 58}

- In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. ... The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence.^{[3]: 58}
- Banking education follows the *transmission model* of education. This model views education as a specific body of knowledge that is transmitted from the teacher to the student. It emphasizes teacher-centric learning where students are passive absorbers of information and that the purpose of learning is memorization of facts.^[4]

- any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged. That insistence cannot be simply stated. It has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices. To begin, the professor must genuinely value everyone's presence.
- Progressive, holistic education, "engaged pedagogy" is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively involved committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. (hooks 1994: 15)
- Freire's idea of dialogue. He first explains the importance of words, and that they must reflect both action and reflection. Dialogue is an understanding between different people, and it is an act of love, humility, and faith. It provides others with the complete independence to experience the world and name it how they see it. Freire explains that educators shape how students see the world and history. They must use language with the point of view of the students in mind. They must allow "thematic investigation": the discovery of different relevant problems ([limited situations](#)) and ideas for different periods.^[1]
- "teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own wellbeing if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students."
- *"The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions... What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. **The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change and fight it - at no matter what risk.** This is the only hope that society has. This is the only way societies change."*

— James Baldwin, "[A Talk to Teachers](#)," 1963

- No level of individual self-actualization alone can sustain the marginalized and oppressed. We must be linked to collective struggle, to communities of resistance that move us outward, into the world.
- It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have. —James Baldwin
- It is easy for the oppressed to fight their oppressors, only to become the opposites of what they currently are. In other words, this just makes them the oppressors and starts the cycle all over again. To be fully human again, they must identify the oppressors. They must identify them and work together to seek liberation. The next step in liberation is to understand what the goal of the oppressors is. ^[1]: 58
- The professors present at the first meeting were disturbed by our overt political standpoints. Again and again, it was necessary to remind everyone that no education is politically neutral. Emphasizing that a white male professor in an English department who teaches only work by "great white men" is making a political decision, [they] had to work consistently against and through the overwhelming will on the part of folks to deny the politics of racism, sexism, and so forth that inform how we teach.
- During this time, he noticed that his students had an unconscious [fear of freedom](#), or rather: a fear of changing the way the world is. ^[1]: 35 Freire then outlines the likely criticisms he believes his book will face. ^[1]: 37
- ***Escape from Freedom*** is a book by psychoanalyst [Erich Fromm](#), first published under that title in the United States by [Farrar & Rinehart](#)^[1] in 1941 and a year later as ***The Fear of Freedom*** in the UK by [Routledge & Kegan Paul](#). It was translated into German and first published in 1952 under the title ***Die Angst vor der Freiheit*** (The Fear of Freedom). In the book, Fromm explores humanity's shifting relationship with freedom, how individual freedom can cause fear, anxiety and

[alienation](#), and how many people seek relief by relinquishing freedom. He describes how [authoritarianism](#) can be a mechanism of escape for such people, with special emphasis on the [psychosocial](#) conditions that enabled the rise of [Nazism](#).

- A **community of practice (CoP)** is a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly".^[1] The concept was first proposed by [cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave](#) and educational theorist [Etienne Wenger](#) in their 1991 book *Situated Learning*.^[2] Wenger significantly expanded on this concept in his 1998 book *Communities of Practice*.^[3] A CoP can form around members' shared interests or goals. Through being part of a CoP, the members learn from each other and develop their identities.^[2]
- For [Etienne Wenger](#), [learning](#) in a CoP is central to [identity](#) because learning is conceptualized as social participation - the individual actively participates in the practices of social communities, thus developing their role and identity within the community.^[7] In this context, a community of practice is a group of individuals with shared interests or goals who develop both their individual and shared identities through community participation.
- A [project team](#) is driven by deliverables with shared goals, milestones and results. A community of practice is often organically created, with as many objectives as members of that community.

Revision #12

Created 6 June 2025 21:26:13 by metaphorraccoon

Updated 24 August 2025 04:54:29 by metaphorraccoon