

Two Sides of the Coin

Sharing Perspectives on Work and Identity between a Graduate Student and an Academic Library Manager

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Introduction

In this joint chapter, we—Lingyu, a former academic library scholarly communications graduate student specialist, and April, an academic library scholarly communications manager—reflect on our two years working together and the unique opportunities for learning, collaborating, and mentoring that have arisen. Following a conversational style, we discuss key points in our collaboration and relationship, including how we each came to enter the library and information science (LIS) profession, what noteworthy projects highlighted our work together, how we brought our identities into our work, and finally where we see our work going in the future as situated within broader professional and social landscapes. In reflecting on our work, we adopt the critical lenses of identity and

communication, given that we both belong to identity groups that are largely underrepresented in the library and information profession. We highlight the ways in which mentorship and collaborative work have helped us explore the interrelated boundaries of professional and personal identities. We hope that this chapter serves as a case study for strong relationship building and support between managers and graduate student workers, which can be used to better prepare the next generation of diverse library and information professionals.

We wrote this chapter during a time of change and uncertainty, when the COVID-19 pandemic is posing serious questions for academic communities: scholars, students, and library workers are forced to adopt new modes of collaboration and communication; local communities and digital counterparts have come to support people in their work and everyday life; xenophobic and racist policies are dividing communities and putting certain groups under further marginalization and risk, while countering social movements are striving for the better and reshaping the world we live in.

In writing this chapter, we situate ourselves in the current climate when reflecting on and contextualizing our past work. By doing this, we hope to bring to the fore unifying ideas and practices for change (i.e., praxes) that can serve to build more inclusion in our work, both during this pandemic and in the future.¹ One thing we both have taken away from our relationship is a recognition of the need to engage praxis from the outside world to benefit the “insides” of higher education and academic libraries. This conversation—written asynchronously, in a back-and-forth style during a time of social distancing and large-scale quarantining—represents our reflections on how we can use our work and identities to bridge gaps in our professional and personal lives. From these reflections, we end by offering recommendations for how others can work to make this kind of inclusive change making a reality.

Our Conversation

Forging Paths in LIS

APRIL

Congratulations on finishing your master’s program and embarking on your doctoral studies! It has been such a joy to work with you, Lingyu, and I am excited to be able to collaborate on this book chapter and other scholarly projects to come. There is a sense of accomplishment that can come from reflecting on our separate paths and the ways those paths have come together in our working relationship.

In fact, one of the things we have in common from the start is that neither of us took a direct path to this work. Having started my professional life as a corporate lawyer, I made the transition to librarianship after realizing corporate law did not

quite offer me the career satisfaction I was seeking. It was a fairly meandering path that led me to scholarly communications librarianship.² I have spent the last decade in the LIS profession working in a public library system, at a community college learning center, and in an academic law library before coming to my current area of scholarly communications librarianship for a multidisciplinary academic research library at New York University (NYU).

It is so fulfilling to be able to reflect on this trajectory, but also to witness someone else's, like yours! What about you? What kind of meandering path led you to the LIS field?

LINGYU

Thank you April! I've been so lucky to have worked with you over the past two years. Without your mentorship, I would not have known the world of libraries. Looking back at the time when I just started my master's program at NYU, or further back when I was an undergraduate, I definitely did not imagine finding my place in the libraries.

The beginning of my path was actually quite (stereo-)typical of international Chinese students in the United States: I was studying electrical engineering and computer science, looking to work in the then fast-growing tech industry. However, soon I realized that I wanted my work to be culturally and socially meaningful for more people, not just profitable for the industry. I turned to more humanistic fields and tried user interface design, graphic design, film production, and so on and settled with film and media studies for a while, with focus on visual culture and ethnography (which I later realized is actually a form of archive).

In terms of library jobs, I started as a part-time front desk assistant in the media resources center in my last few semesters in college and enjoyed the occasional film and documentary archival projects that we did there. When I started my work as a graduate student assistant at NYU, and as we began to take on more complex and impactful projects, the library job turned out to be intriguing and rewarding on its own. Eventually, I decided that LIS is the place to combine my engineering skills with humanistic thoughts and social awareness, under the common goal of making valuable intellectual works accessible.

While I am still figuring out where my work will go in this relatively new field, what would you like to share about your work? What are some thoughts or inspirations from your background that have shaped your approach to LIS and scholarly communications? What parts of your work do you find enjoyable and relatable?

APRIL

LIS work is incredibly interdisciplinary and that interdisciplinarity can often be rooted in very practical methodologies found across different fields. Excitingly,

the work I do now in scholarly communications librarianship draws directly on the skills, experiences, and expertise I have cultivated throughout my academic and professional trajectory. The path may have been meandering, but the stops along the way have been meaningful! From legal practice, I learned how to analyze complex issues and provide guidance to colleagues and researchers while empowering them to make informed decisions about their own work. From public library work, I gained an appreciation for information equity and the importance of providing access to knowledge to all people and communities. In the course of my community college and academic law library work, I honed my teaching skills and learned to cultivate a reciprocal relationship between a learner and an educator. Now, as I work with my campus community on issues of rights, access, and ownership of scholarly materials, I bring all that experience to bear in meeting, and learning from, the needs of the people with whom I work.

Truly, there are many things that I enjoy about this work, but one at the top of the list is the variety of projects we get to encounter, working in the scholarly communications field. I know we got a chance to work on a lot of different things during our time together. What were some of your favorites, some of the projects that really stand out?

LINGYU

We have had a lot of different projects indeed! Now that you mentioned information equity and access, I think those are also agendas that I really care about and enjoy working on. For me, the most memorable project we have done in this direction is the research on open access policy, which is now part of the library's larger goals. I think the concept of open access touches back on the promise of scholarship and academia: to produce ideas that improve basic human conditions. Besides that, I have come to understand that opening up access not only changes the economy of scholarly publishing, but also opens up academia for broader conversations, like what we are doing right now, so that we can produce new forms of knowledge that reflect the values and experiences of more people.

On another note, to me, open access seems to be a very common and somewhat mythical ideal about digital technology that has brought about heightened connectivity and interactivity. Myth or not, what we are seeing today is a rising mindset of conversing, communicating, and exchanging ideas as broadly as possible. This may sound a bit like the 2000s Internet Utopia, but I believe it is crucial to keep the optimism and work for the better even in a divisive and confusing time. I look forward to the future of scholarship, when more people can read scholarly works and share their reflections, joining the scholarly conversation. Even though digital tools are still presenting us with lots of problems to solve, I still believe in the positive possibilities brought by open, civil, and well-informed conversations.

Personal Identities in Scholarly Communities

APRIL

It is so true what you say about the power of scholarly communications residing in open conversation. As you point out, that is the very basis for the conversational format we chose for this book chapter. In fact, one of academic librarianship's basic tenets for information literacy is "Scholarship as Conversation."³ We teach students to recognize scholarship as an interplay among scholars, both within and across disciplines. Moreover, as with any conversation, identity plays a major role in the creation and sharing of ideas. Scholarship, like librarianship, is not neutral,⁴ and the context of identity affects all aspects of what we know and how we value that knowledge.

For me specifically, personal identity is very important to my work. As the second-wave feminists have been known to say—and as my fellow queer Black woman library worker, poet, and activist Audre Lorde has acknowledged (most notably during a talk critiquing a 1979 humanities conference at NYU)—“The personal is political!”⁵ I think the personal is also professional. Librarianship, particularly academic librarianship, is very White, colonial, able-bodied, middle-class, cisgender, and straight; and the work can be very isolating for those of us who do not fit into those dominant identities.⁶ As a queer, cisgender Black American woman of Native descent (Mvskoke Seminole, Cherokee, Gullah/Geechee), I often find a disconnect between the ways I engage with knowledge in my personal life, through my cultural identities, and the ways in which knowledge is created and valued in my professional academic spaces. It is very much a situation of what W. E. B. Du Bois calls the “double consciousness,” a concept that especially resonates for many scholars from Indigenous and People of the Global Majority (People of Color) backgrounds.⁷ I come from cultural identities where oral, community-based knowledge is valued and shared but work in an environment where written, single-author-based authority is elevated. It can be frustrating to try to dismantle the White supremacy, patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, and cis- and heteronormativity of the profession and to incorporate my broader concepts of scholarship into the often rigid confines of academic work. What about you? Have you felt the effects of your identities as you navigated the professional and educational space of the academic library?

LINGYU

The personal is political and professional, indeed! Thinking explicitly about identity is not just about affirming one's background, it's also about reflecting on the broader implications and unexamined premises of one's work. For me, the most influential identity is the identity as a Chinese international student, and this identity has a lot of complexities. Being a Han ethnic Chinese comes

with many privileges (including international mobility itself), since Han ethnicity is the dominant majority in Mainland China. However, reflections about these more under-the-surface identity differences do not always make sense for my Chinese peers. Adding onto this is the simplified Asian racial identity (and in fact, most naive skin-based identities) in the United States. In terms of the academic communities, these identities are putting students and scholars from drastically different social and cultural backgrounds under the same umbrella term.

This issue is also reflected in language. In an early project that we worked on, we researched the incorporation of different languages into scholarly publication. Back then I did not fully realize the importance of that incorporation, but now in retrospect, I see that language is part of the basis for nuanced cultural identities, and incorporating more languages into circulation can help scholars and students manifest their identities in their own terms. More often than not, terms devised in American English to represent other cultures are poor estimations and misfits, and these mistranslations can be even bigger problems for local researchers who are not bilingual as their international peers are.

A bit more on transnationality and cross-cultural communication: I think NYU, or generally, higher education in the United States, is quite distinctly transnational and cross-cultural, which is an advantage and a privilege. A lot of our projects speak to highly diverse communities within our NYC campus, across NYU's global campuses, and from many other institutions in different places. Some of these communities are scholarly ones, while others may not be scholarly in the strict sense. These crossings of borders also make this conversation between us two possible in the first place. What do you think these perspectives across borders could bring back to local conversations? Beyond the scholarly content that libraries deliver, what can our work bring to students, scholars, and just ordinary people who do not have the privilege of cross-border mobility, or for other reasons have been living in largely homogeneous communities?

APRIL

This border crossing and bridge building is such a vital potentiality of scholarly communications. Just as we in academic libraries teach our communities that scholarship is a conversation, we also encourage students to view this scholarly conversation happening even beyond the ivory towers of academia. We aim to recognize the expertise of thinkers and knowledge creators wherever they may be, whether academic or not, because “Authority Is Constructed and Contextual.”⁸ When we allow the concept of scholarship to broaden through open conversation, we are better able to hear and welcome new ideas. Thus, we make space for people—researchers, students, instructors, community members,

and the like—to bring their personal identities and expertise into knowledge creation and to stimulate equitable exchanges across differences.

A great example of the possibilities in building broader, more inclusive conversations within scholarly communications is our work with the *Femifesto*. *Femifesto: A Feminist Framework for Radical Knowledge Collaboration* is a project, centered on multilingual, global, equitable knowledge creation and dissemination, that we have been working on with our colleagues Sandra Enimil, Ivonne Lujano, Charlotte Roh, Gimena del Rio Riande, and Sharon Farb.⁹ Started as our accepted proposal for the 2019 Triangle Scholarly Communication Institute,¹⁰ the *Femifesto* has grown into a framework and community committed to elevating and celebrating different ways of producing and sharing cultural knowledge. It is rooted in feminist principles, such as an ethic of care, and seeks to build more globally inclusive and equitable scholarly communications.

Gendered and Hegemonic Spaces in the LIS

LINGYU

Talking about sexism and gender identity, I hope we can discuss the *Femifesto* project in some more depth, because this project has been a big thing for me, and I will continue to work on it even after I move to my new program. Often, when people talk about informational platforms, I find that their discourses of technical neutrality and mathematical rationality have a somewhat masculine undertone that aims at some fixed, idealized technological perfection, while *Femifesto* raises different questions for us to think about. As I'm still processing everything about *Femifesto* and feminism, could you say a bit more about these principles? What roles do gender identities and feminist perspectives play (or could they play) in scholarly communication?

APRIL

It is so great that we have the opportunity to talk more about *Femifesto* because I love the work we are doing there and the fact we are able to continue working on it together. One of the crucial foundations of that project—and of feminism, in general, to me—is our explicit focus on *intersectionality*. Intersectionality, a term first coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, was meant as a means of taking feminism beyond the White, middle-class cisgender women's perspective and introducing a lens of race, class, and other markets of identity and oppression.¹¹ It has since, importantly, grown to go beyond feminism as a concern for cisgender woman and femme gender identity to encompass the struggle for all forms of oppressed gender identity, with interlocking lenses of race, class, queerness, disability, and other forms of being.¹²

So this intersectional approach that we apply to the Femifesto is absolutely crucial and provides a powerful framework for what we do in scholarly communications. Just as our intersectional Femifesto is about making space for voices, ideas, concepts, and knowledge that arise out of a variety of interconnected marginalized identities, so too should scholarly communications be focused on opening up to and centering a variety of voices and ways of knowing. The capitalist, White, Western, colonialist, ableist, patriarchal, cis- and heteronormative way of creating and sharing knowledge should no longer dominate the scholarly narrative.¹³ As you and I experience in our own identities, there are so many more ways of knowing we can and should hear from, and in the academic library world, we have a responsibility to help bring those narratives to the fore. The way we approach gender identity is one important area where we can do that.

LINGYU

I see. The concept of intersectionality is indeed a powerful way to bring diverse experiences and identities into the picture. I can see it paving the way for establishing more complex Chinese identities that I mentioned before, and it can also help with, say, being an Asian person, living with a certain variant of Sinophonic culture, AND identifying as queer.

On the more practical level, it seems to me that librarianship itself is not as masculine as the knowledge structure it represents is. Telling from my personal experience, people taking care of libraries (at least in China) are usually female. I tend to perceive that the basic, everyday jobs in libraries are more about taking care of rather than producing intellectual products. These jobs often require carefulness, attention to detail, and affective labor, which are considered not productive or merely reproductive, and therefore feminine. I also see this division as part of the division between public space (exclusively for men) and domestic space (to which women are confined). How do you find library work and scholarly communications in relation to these gendered discourses?

APRIL

Oh, absolutely, library work in North America, as in China, is very feminized. In general, about 80 percent of professional library workers in North America identify as women, though the gender differential evens significantly in large academic research libraries.¹⁴ Nonetheless, it is important to note that as you progress up the administrative ladder, the gender differential shifts considerably, with more men serving in library leadership roles.¹⁵ Thus, librarianship in the United States and Canada is a largely feminized profession, in which more women conduct the lower-level and lower-paying care work while more men tend to lead organizations and conduct the higher-paying and higher-valued strategic and generative work of the profession. Of course, it is vital to recognize

that much of these analyses about the gendered nature of library work anywhere in the world tends to fall under binary cisgender-normative lines, essentially erasing the experiences of nonbinary, transgender, and genderqueer professionals. Nonetheless, even as we take into account the experiences of colleagues who identify with all forms of gender marginalization, without fail, the gendered nature of library work translates into expectations of normativity and performativity that can be very harmful.

This gendered stratification within librarianship is particularly acute in fields like scholarly communications, digital scholarship, and digital humanities, where the distinctions between reproductive and productive work combine are deepened by the use of technology.¹⁶ In many ways, it all harkens back to the days of classic Western notions of knowledge creation, where the solitary cisgender heterosexual White man genius scribbles in isolation, producing wisdom, which he will then pass to his dotting wife to organize, type, disseminate, and archive for time immemorial. Library and information work may have evolved in many respects, but when it comes to gender expectations, it has not changed as much as it could or should.

LINGYU

That is so true. That image of a solitary genius is just so all over the place! Even today, in many team-based research projects that actually require collaboration, seldom do you see credits given to collaborators or contributors who are lower in rank. The resulting image—and many times the expectation—of researchers is still the way it was in the classic Enlightenment times.

For another aspect of gender identities, I think we are now moving toward a mindset that things don't have to be well defined or rigidly categorized. Instead, gender identities can be something that is fluid, blurry, and even self-contradictory at times (that's also why I don't like to label myself with gender or sexual orientation). The same idea also applies to other kinds of identities, especially when it comes to cultures. While the whole social system of statistics uses clear categories to count, evaluate, and rationalize everything, and while sometimes these categories can seem like the only ways we can build our life, the real world has far more exceptions and uncertainties—which is why social systems of all kinds keep running into abnormalities and needing fixes.¹⁷

Building Empowered Mentoring Relationships

APRIL

Yes, yes, yes! Fluidity is key. That is exactly what I was talking about when I spoke earlier about navigating the “double consciousness” of academic library work as a person from underrepresented identities.¹⁸ We can and should find ways to

incorporate this fluidity into our work and make room to bring our whole selves into our scholarship. When we are able to see more aspects of our own identities in the fluidity of our work, we can more readily make space for others, especially those who may not feel welcome in academic spaces to begin with.

Ultimately, what it all comes down to are conversations and relationships, just as we are demonstrating now in this chapter. One of the aspects of our relationship that I have found to be most important is mentorship, and not just me mentoring you! I find professional and personal mentorship to be so important, especially as a person navigates their identities in academic spaces.¹⁹ It has been a pleasure for me to mentor you as you explore more about LIS work in general, and scholarly communications work specifically. It has also been a pleasure to be mentored by you as you have taught me so much about the ways in which scholarly communications and academia can be improved for people newly entering the field, particularly those coming from different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. For example, you mention the work we did on language and scholarly communications; your take on that work—as someone for whom English is not your first language but who nonetheless has to work in a largely monolingual English scholarly environment—added so much to my understanding of the importance of language inclusivity. In fact, we even ended up incorporating language inclusivity as a principle of the Femifesto, based in part on your perspectives.

I know what my experiences of navigating identity in my work have been like, but it is always important to learn about and from the experiences of others, and you have offered me some very powerful insights. How do you feel about mentorship as it relates to our work and identities?

LINGYU

Mentorship is definitely beneficial for both sides of the relationship! I also find that when I give advice to younger students interested in library studies and careers, I'm constantly realizing things that I did not previously notice in my own work.

I find that mentorship is about having meaningful, open exchanges of ideas in and around the work environment. It is not just teaching facts, but figuring out. When we navigate the profession, the workplace, and our own identities through this mutual process, we are not just getting facts about a definitive reality, but we are shaping the reality at the same time. A lot of conversations between us are not about how things are, but how things can be—from the format of our projects to the understandings of each other's community, from the way we can use the office space to the way we position our work in the field of LIS. Also, beyond workplace mentorship, I think the conversational, processual fashion of working is actually transforming the knowledge structure and work culture of LIS (and academia, generally) as well. It really goes above and beyond.

APRIL

I agree with you completely. It is no mistake that this emphasis on conversation and relationship serves as such a controlling theme of this piece. As conversations deepen through engagement with openness and identity, LIS, and academia more broadly, is becoming more inclusive in important and exciting ways. That is why I am so thrilled to have folks like you joining the profession and helping to navigate these issues. Your personal scholarship on archival memory and social justice movements, for instance, is an area of study, and an area of conversation, that is much needed in our profession, and I can't wait to see where you go with it.

Looking Forward

APRIL

Speaking of next steps, as you get ready to embark on this next phase of your academic and LIS career, how do you see yourself working to break down these barriers within scholarship and the academy? How are you hoping to continue to engage in this work as you progress in your career?

LINGYU

That is a grand question, and I will spend the good part of the upcoming years looking for a substantial answer. The broader answer is that I'll be looking for a way to better archive and represent social movements, and where I am now is looking at archives of street arts and social media arts. I want to know that beyond the material-centric approaches that we use in archives right now, and beyond the attention business of social media platforms, what kind of knowledge structures we can build these archives on. In other words, how can we create archives to reflect the crucial and diverse experiences, perspectives, values, and identities? I think this is how I situate my future work right now, and this is how I want our discussion in this whole chapter to fold into my own research.

Also, I want to take this chance to address the extraordinary time that we are going through—in the midst of (on the brighter side) the Black Lives Matter movement and (on the darker side) the COVID-19 pandemic. People are now bringing so many agendas that are long overdue to the front. The COVID-19 pandemic has really put caregivers in central positions, and ideas of care and communication have become prominent. On the other hand, the series of protests and movements ignited by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many other Black people have woken a lot of people who were unaware of other communities or of their own privileges. Academia will have to adapt to these changes, if not lead them.

This may sound a bit opportunistic, but I think the coming years will really give us a good chance to address and fix what has long been problematic in universities and libraries. Digital tools are now essential for teaching, open access is even more urgent and meaningful, intersectional feminist discourses are gaining more momentum, and the concept of education itself is also under reexamination. Data policies, socio-spatial data collection, health data, public health research, social movement archiving, social media archiving, new modes of community engagement... I believe these are all projects we can expect to work on.

Just for speculation, what do you think our new normal (in terms of our work, of course) would be like after this period of big changes? What larger changes in academia can we expect? What new mindset will we be working with? How will we work with our identities and communities in the new normal?

APRIL

You know, I don't think it is opportunistic at all: in fact, I agree that now is a pivotal moment for reflection on what it means to engage in academic library work. It is important now as we find ourselves in the midst of major societal change, as well as for the future as we settle into a new normal. As you note, we now have a unique opportunity to examine critically the failings of the LIS profession and academia, to reckon honestly with the ways in which our processes and practices have helped to perpetuate inequity and injustice. Everything we have been discussing here about relationships, identity, and conversation is key to this examination. It all reminds me of the work you and I have done on developing a soon-to-come open access policy for NYU and our work on setting up a task force to review privacy practices in the library. Both of those projects arose out of a recognized need to build more equity and justice in our academic and library spaces. We can hope to build a more equitable and inclusive space for our profession only if we engage in these kinds of conversations openly, where folks—particularly those who have been marginalized—are welcome to bring their many and varied identities to the table. With that in mind, one last note I'd like to make about our conversation: it is important to point out that the majority of the people we cited in this piece are people who identify as Indigenous or People of the Global Majority (People of Color), and we did this intentionally in recognition of the political nature of citation.²⁰ Our citation choices are just one example of how we all can engage in building more equity into our academic spaces.

In terms of using this moment to look forward, you're right that digital tools can play a key role in this moment of critical examination, but I also think it will take more than a few community-organizing Zoom calls or crowd-sourced anti-racism reading lists. This moment requires an iterative process

of self-reflection and systemic community action. We must examine ourselves and the role we play in the profession and in this moment, while also bringing those reflections to our professional communities to make meaningful collective change. That kind of process is very difficult and requires a lot of vulnerability, but it is absolutely worth doing. The future of our profession depends on it. Speaking of the future of the profession, as we close our conversation here, what advice would you give an entering or prospective LIS graduate student worker?

LINGYU

Thank you so much for the remarks, April! I totally agree that working with the local is just as important as, if not more important than, the digitized projects. This is a time when we are more connected to both the digital realm and our local fellow people. Now that I come to think of it, maybe the only thing that is missing now is the illusion that one can live in a digital world of pure concepts and shape one's own world without ever getting troubled by the reality.

For my fellow graduate student workers, my big takeaway from the past years is that we—all of us who have come across this text at some point—are first and foremost humans, and then students, scholars, library workers, and so on. Therefore, whenever we want to pursue something like a project, a career, an expertise, or a form of knowledge, we want to remind ourselves that what we do will eventually go to people just like us (in terms of humanity) but also different from us (in terms of identity). For me, I have gained a lot from asking who I am and what I care about as a person, as well as who they are and what they care about—“they” being whoever are on the other side of my work. As April and I have been discussing throughout this whole chapter, the personal is political and the personal is professional, or actually, both the political and the professional eventually boil down to the personal. Both realms are eventually about everyone in relation to everyone else, before all the physical and conceptual boundaries can set us apart.

APRIL

So well said, Lingyu. What a great way to end a great conversation. I look forward to all we are able to build for our profession in the future!

Conclusion

It is our sincere hope that this chapter has served as an example of the kind of reflection, empowerment, and praxis that is possible in a relationship between an academic library manager and a graduate student worker. With a focus on our work in scholarly communications, and bearing in mind our belonging to identities underrepresented in LIS, we reflected on the ways our professional work

is contextualized through personal identity and has potential to enact change in the world around us. In particular, this conversation reflects a few important lessons that have guided the way in which we build and maintain our relationship of openness across our personal and professional lives.

First, we approach our relationship as graduate student worker and academic library manager by explicitly acknowledging and challenging the existing external power structures inherent in our relationship. While we realize that our work together has come from our respective roles as worker and manager, student and professional, we both acknowledge and question those roles to center more equity and mutuality in our interactions. April has been and continues to be just as interested in learning from Lingyu, as Lingyu is in learning from April. We recognize that while our professional and educational positions may attempt to dictate a hierarchy between us—and at times in our work, that hierarchy is unavoidable—we still maintain the openness of our relationship through a recognition of what each of us equally has to bring to and receive from the table.

Second, as we explicitly acknowledge existing power dynamics, we seek to build trust in each other in increments as a solid foundation to our relationship. Over the years, we have built trust in each other's work practices and work ethics, starting with small opportunities to demonstrate trust: in working together, Lingyu has learned to trust April to work thoughtfully to come up with new projects, while April has learned in the course of those projects to trust Lingyu to work thoughtfully on assigned tasks. We know that we will not hold back our critiques and praises for each other's work, and we know that regardless of our respective takes on a project, we respect each other as people. These opportunities for trust can even be entirely mundane, such as relying on each other to read and reply to email, but noting these small elements and taking small steps to affirm them can help a lot with building a relationship. From these small building blocks of trust, we have built our relationship, always with an explicit acknowledgement of our power dynamics.

Finally, we make a point of bringing our work into our broader communities, building on those incremental moments of trust. We find it immensely helpful to work together in larger communities—in our case, one example is the Femifesto group. In the group we are equal members, so we can share ideas with fewer hierarchical concerns. In addition, since we both work to bring diverse new projects to the library profession, we find a lot of support and inspiration from a group where people share similar motivations. Even after Lingyu's employment at NYU Libraries ended, the Femifesto community has always helped us stay in touch and build a lasting and supportive relationship.

While every manager-student relationship is as unique as the individuals involved, we nonetheless offer our own relationship as a case study, through the lens of open conversation, to demonstrate the possibilities these relationships

have for building a more inclusive LIS profession. By openly acknowledging power dynamics, building trust in increments, and bringing work into broader community relationships, we have crafted a strong relationship that goes beyond the roles of manager and student. We are colleagues who look forward to many more years of mutual learning, growth, and collaboration.

Notes

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