

Imagining service as relationship in the academic library.

Lydia Zvyagintseva, Digital Scholarship Librarian, University of Alberta.

If we agree with Bruno Latour and Rita Felski that critique is reaching its limit to generate profound change in the world, then what new synthetic intellectual approaches are needed for scholarship in the 21st century? Kathleen Fitzpatrick demonstrates one way forward in her upcoming book, *Generous Thinking*, which is the starting point for my reflection on the politics of conversation and engagement with communities beyond the campus. As such, this talk begins as an exploratory response to Fitzpatrick's question: "What new purposes for the university might we imagine if we understand our role in it to be not inculcating state citizens, nor training corporate citizens, but instead facilitating the development of a diverse, open, community?" In other words, what might the academic library look like if the goal of postsecondary education was a broader public service?

In order to explore these ideas, I use my own Canadian context as well as practice of working in the middle of multiple communities and subject areas: that of the digital humanities and digital scholarship. I use academic makerspaces and digital scholarship centres as sites to evaluate and synthesize the ideas of relationship to the academic community and the public more broadly. Further, I rely on Adam Gaudry's work on insurgent education and indigenous community-centered research to examine how academic makerspaces and digital scholarship centres uphold techno-managerial socioeconomic order of the contemporary academy, and where they open up space to imagine new ways of relating to the land and to each other. I also provide examples of strategies to move away from the "extraction methodology" of research that is founded on exchange toward a more relational approach. For example, what if the object of study was a response to the local challenges faced by prairie communities? What if the goal of the learning was the process of design, organization, and collaboration rather than the production of the information object? What implications on labour would exist should this type of work be conducted in the library? Taking generous thinking and "conversational disposition" as the foundation of critical thinking and the academy's ethical relationship to the wider world, I propose an impractical but imaginative model for facilitating research in the contemporary age.