

Orienting Toward Social Justice: Trans, Anti-Racist, Anti-Colonial, Feminist, Queer, and Crip Approaches to Ethical Practices in the Digital Humanities

Evie Ruddy & Laura Horak

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Introduction

This essay was written on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Nation and on Treaty 4 lands — the territories of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. As white settlers, we acknowledge that we and our institution (Carleton University) have benefitted and continue to benefit from generations of theft of land and resources and we undertake to understand the obligations that this multi-generational transfer creates for us.

Universities, academic research, and laboratories have long contributed to colonial and imperial processes of stealing land and resources, making colonized and enslaved people into things, and maintaining the colonial cisheteropatriarchal order.¹ Trans research in particular has a long history of pathologizing trans lives and bodies, ignoring trans expertise and needs, and exhausting trans research participants.² As the PhD fellow and director, respectively, of the

¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “R-Words: Refusing Research,” in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, ed. D. Paris and M. T. Winn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014); Kimberly Christen, “Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online,” in *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, ed. Jentery Sayers (New York: Routledge, 2018); Maya Livio and Lori Emerson, “Towards Feminist Labs: Provocations for Collective Knowledge-Making,” in *Critical Makers Reader: (Un)Learning Technology*, ed. Loes Bogers and Letizia Chiappini (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2019), 286–97.

² Benjamin William Vincent, “Studying Trans: Recommendations for Ethical Recruitment and Collaboration with Transgender Participants in Academic Research,” *Psychology & Sexuality* 9, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 102–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1434558>; Florence Ashley, “Accounting for Research Fatigue in Research Ethics,” *Bioethics* 35, no. n/3 (November 17, 2020): 270–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/bioe.12829>; Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–18.

Transgender Media Lab, we aim to work within these oppressive structures differently, while acknowledging that we cannot escape them entirely.

The Transgender Media Lab (TML) was founded by Dr. Horak in 2020 to create an institutional home for students recruited to Carleton to research trans media-making and build the Transgender Media Portal (TMP), a collaborative online database of trans filmmakers and their works.³ The TMP's goals are to: promote the careers of today's trans filmmakers, call attention to older works so they can be programmed and preserved, jumpstart research on these films, and provide artists and others with access to an innovative tradition of work. While the lab's leadership team are all white and cis, the lab's student researchers have included seven white trans students (mostly nonbinary and transmasculine), four cis BIPOC students (two Black, one Indigenous, and one Latinx), and one AfroLatina trans woman student.⁴

In this paper, we ask two questions:

1. How can we run a lab that is fair, transparent, effective, fun, and in line with trans, anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, queer, and crip values?
2. What does meaningful and ethical collaboration with marginalized communities look like in the context of a federally funded university-based digital humanities project led by a white cis researcher?

³ Lab: <https://carleton.ca/transmedialab/>; Portal: <https://www.transgendermediaportal.org/> The TMP project began in 2017. The database is currently in a pilot phase and we plan to launch the public version in fall 2023.

⁴ The core members of the TML are the director (Horak), co-PI (Constance Crompton), an independent project manager (Kate Higginson), a lead software developer (Adam Milling, employed by Carleton), and a small, ever-changing group of paid undergraduate and graduate student researchers (including Ruddy, a TML PhD Fellow). The TML also has a larger group of "affiliated" scholars, a mix of faculty and students from across Canada and the US, who mentor the core students and attend community-building events like incubators. The lab is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Ontario Early Researcher Award.

For guidance on orienting our work toward social justice,⁵ we look to scholarship not only in digital humanities, but also art practice, design, human-computer interaction, science and technology studies, digital ethics, and archive studies. We find that we cannot separate trans, anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, queer, or crip approaches from one another. Firstly, this is because trans people are also Black and Indigenous, are also disabled and queer, so if we were to take a solely “trans” approach, it would ignore trans people’s lived realities and implicitly default to a white able-bodied trans experience. Secondly, we *all* live in a society built on land stolen from Indigenous people and on the labor of enslaved people, and that forces people into cisheteropatriarchal ableist norms—thus, all these approaches are necessary in order to understand and remake our world. Together, these approaches invite us to think carefully and act ethically in terms of power, labor, accountability, value, credit, privacy, and harm.

The solution is not to create a structureless group in which all members are declared equal. As feminist scholar Jo Freeman already noted in 1972, that move often works as a “smoke screen” masking underlying power dynamics.⁶ Rather, following the lead of the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR), a feminist, anti-colonial, marine science lab at Memorial University, we acknowledge that while “there is no ‘outside’ of power relations,” our attempts to orient our lab toward social justice “serve (at least) three functions: they are an ethic-in-practice that confirms our solidarity with one another in the lab; they make the politics that are always at work explicit and able to be addressed rather than implicit and unacknowledged; and they are a form of ‘prefigurative politics’ where we work to model the world we want, rather

⁵ Lynn Dombrowski, Ellie Harmon, and Sarah Fox, “Social Justice-Oriented Interaction Design: Outlining Key Design Strategies and Commitments,” in *Proceedings of the 2016 ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems*, DIS '16 (Brisbane, QLD, Australia: Association for Computing Machinery, 2016), 656–71, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2901790.2901861>.

⁶ Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 17 (1972): 151–64.

than merely critique the world as it is.”⁷ We are not offering “universal best practices” but rather strategies to align our lab’s practices with our values that could be translated and adapted to other contexts.⁸

Running a Lab

Tracing the history of the laboratory to the sixteenth century, feminist media scholars Maya Livio and Lori Emerson offer methodological provocations for challenging the colonial, racist, sexist, and ableist roots of the contemporary, interdisciplinary lab.⁹ More than liberal inclusion strategies, Livio and Emerson call for a restructuring of lab operations. Indeed, as Marisa Parham suggests, “You have to think profoundly differently about what it means to invite a person into a space—that the sentence ‘invite a person into a space’ already reveals a power dynamic about a thing that’s already gone wrong before you got there.”¹⁰ Failing to acknowledge and challenge these inherited power dynamics could mean inadvertently reproducing hierarchies and causing harm. Some typical and potentially harmful ways of operating labs include: a top-down power structure in which the principal investigator makes all of the decisions;¹¹ treating lab members equally, as opposed to equitably, which does not recognize people’s unique needs

⁷ CLEAR, “Clear Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols” (St. John’s, NL: Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research, Memorial University, 2021), 6, <https://civiclaboratory.nl/clear-lab-book/>. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha likewise calls for “prefigurative politics,” “a fancy term for the idea of imagining and building the world we want to see now.” Cody A. Jackson and Christina V. Cedillo build on this idea. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2019), 149; Cody A. Jackson and Christina V. Cedillo, “We Are Here to Crip That Shit: Embodying Accountability beyond the “ Word”,” *College Composition and Communication* 72, no. 1 (2020): 109–17.

⁸ Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang question whether there is “such a thing as a universal best practice” because responsible practices should be context-specific. Tuck and Yang, “R-Words,” 245 fn 1.

⁹ Livio and Emerson, “Towards Feminist Labs: Provocations for Collective Knowledge-Making.”

¹⁰ Marisa Parham, “Everything New Is” (What is a Feminist Lab? Symposium, University of Colorado Boulder, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTbtBWt__iU.

¹¹ CLEAR, *Laboratory Life: Author Order (Episode 1)*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrLOGokqL7w>.

stemming from their social, economic, and cultural locations;¹² presenting the lab as a neutral space that is welcoming to “everyone” – a term that is “deeply embedded in ableist, gendered, colonial, and racial assumptions about who counts as a someone;”¹³ and excluding community members from knowledge production.¹⁴

From the scholarship we have learned about more equitable and just approaches to running a lab. CLEAR is one example of a feminist lab that enacts their values in their everyday work. CLEAR lab members regularly engage in a lengthy, creative, and collaborative process to articulate the lab’s values and develop specific tactics for putting them into action.¹⁵ These values inform the work that lab members do, including “how to order supplies, how to hire new people, who to hire, how to treat animals... [and] how to deal with lab members who make mistakes and cause harm.” The latest version of CLEAR’s guiding values are: equity; humility and solidarity; supportive openness; and orientation toward process. An explanation of these values, as well as the rules, guidelines, and protocols that put them into action, are described in a living, publicly-accessible lab book.¹⁶ For example, CLEAR puts equity into practice by: collaboratively assigning author order in publications; engaging in consensus-based decision making; using round-robins in meetings so that everyone has an opportunity to speak; and providing yearly facilitation training to lab members so they learn how to advocate for quieter people’s ideas and how to “step back” when they are dominating a conversation. In another example, CLEAR demonstrates “supportive openness” through the lab’s number one rule: “If you’re heartbroken, sick or exhausted, go home. This job is not more important than your well

¹² CLEAR.

¹³ Livio and Emerson, “Towards Feminist Labs: Provocations for Collective Knowledge-Making,” 289.

¹⁴ Livio and Emerson, 291.

¹⁵ CLEAR, *Laboratory Life: How We Choose Our Values (Episode 2)*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYjfWZyAoh4>.

¹⁶ CLEAR, “Clear Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols.”

being.”¹⁷ Many digital humanities resources similarly recommend a project charter or other written agreement that describes the project’s goals, participant roles, how credit will be assigned, and instructions for particular tasks.¹⁸

While the TML has thus far been communicating lab values and processes in a largely informal, oral, top-down manner, this fall our team will undertake the values-defining process described by CLEAR and draft a lab handbook that describes these values and the everyday rules, guidelines, and protocols that align our actions with them. We will also start using round-robins in our meetings, look into training the group in facilitation, and adopt CLEAR’s number one rule about going home (or logging off) if you’re not well. Recently, we introduced a check-in at the start of each meeting, which creates space for each of us to share how we are doing, and where it is okay to share negative emotions and experiences if desired.

As Livio and Emerson note, conflict within feminist labs is not something to be avoided; it is welcomed and necessary. They advocate for establishing “a clear and transparent reporting structure” for when lab members breach protocols.¹⁹ Critical disability scholars Cody A. Jackson and Christina V. Cedillo write that “cripping our discipline requires a politics of risk...” They argue that non-disabled scholars must take such risks as holding people accountable “even when it’s not convenient or comfortable.”²⁰ The *CLEAR Lab Book* admits that “disputes and conflicts will arise whenever we are...working with others in a group” and includes a collectively-authored conflict resolution protocol for lab members.²¹ CLEAR advises its members to bring up any

¹⁷ CLEAR, 14.

¹⁸ Bethany Nowviskie, “Charter-Ing a Path,” Bethany Nowviskie, November 21, 2014, <http://nowviskie.org/2014/charter-ing-a-path/>; Stephanie Rodgers, “Creating a Project Charter,” PM4DH: Project Management for the Digital Humanities, June 3, 2016, <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/pm4dh/creating-a-project-charter/>.

¹⁹ Livio and Emerson, “Towards Feminist Labs: Provocations for Collective Knowledge-Making.” 295.

²⁰ Jackson and Cedillo, “We Are Here to Crip That Shit,” 111.

²¹ CLEAR, “Clear Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols” (St. John’s, NL: Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research, Memorial University, 2021), 8,

issues they have with a rule, process, or person when they are still small so that they can be addressed and to call each other *in*, rather than *out*. In generating our new lab book, the TML will likewise describe how we want our members to approach and resolve conflicts in generative and accountable ways.

CLEAR also reminds us that another part of “supportive openness” is “keeping humour, fun, and personality alive and part of the lab work.”²² Likewise, Wernimont refers to labs as “survival technologies” within academic institutions and she urges us to imagine labs not only as providing “freedom *from*,” but also providing “freedom *to*” – including the freedom to cultivate joy, excitement, and pleasure.²³ As a trans nonbinary fellow with the TML, Ruddy finds that community building within the lab has been significant as they navigate a cisheteropatriachal institution where they face misgendering and the exclusion of trans theory from their core courses. In this sense, the TML does serve as a “survival technology” within Carleton. The TML has also had a lot of fun over the past years, with lively public screenings, shared excitement at archival discoveries, and end-of-year parties with vegan doughnuts. The TML’s Trans Reading Group and the TML Incubator—a space for students to receive collegial feedback on scholarly work and nascent ideas—are supportive environments where trans students and faculty, as well as cis allies, engage in lively conversations with one another on trans-related topics and develop friendships. We will continue to support socializing and community building within the lab,

<https://civiclaboratory.nl/clear-lab-book/>. The Conflict Resolution Protocol is not included in the publicly-accessible version of the lab book.

²² CLEAR, “Clear Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols,” 11.

²³ Jacqueline Wernimont and Nikki Stevens, “From Lab to Cooperative: A Feminist Infrastructural Reimagining” (What is a Feminist Lab? Symposium, University of Colorado Boulder, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sffgoqq0idc>.

while being cognizant that even social events can perpetuate exclusion and unequal power dynamics.²⁴

Collaborating with marginalized communities

Recognizing that the TML is a federally-funded, university-based, digital humanities project led by a white cis researcher, it is key that we consider how we can meaningfully and ethically collaborate with marginalized communities as we create a database of trans-made films. We want to avoid replicating imperialist, colonial, and extractive research practices, some of which include: doing research *on* rather than *with* marginalized research subjects; “parachuting” into communities, claiming to know better than them, devaluing their expertise, and not investing in capacity building;²⁵ stealing the ideas of community members and reaping the rewards; asserting that you are the “first” to discover something that has been long known by locals;²⁶ demanding that marginalized people narrate their trauma on demand;²⁷ circulating primary source material online without considering how it might affect the people and communities that created it;²⁸ and expecting community members to do unpaid, volunteer labour or paying them in an untimely manner.²⁹

²⁴ Livio and Emerson, “Towards Feminist Labs: Provocations for Collective Knowledge-Making.”

²⁵ Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 99.

²⁶ Max Liboiron, “Firsting in Research,” *CLEAR* (blog), January 18, 2021, <https://civiclaboratory.nl/2021/01/18/firsting-in-research/>.

²⁷ CLEAR, *Laboratory Life: How We Run a Lab Meeting (Episode 3)*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emHbn9VMKBU>.

²⁸ Christen, “Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online”; T. L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, “Onlining Queer Acts: Digital Research Ethics and Caring for Risky Archives,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 121–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2018.1473985>.

²⁹ T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, “The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy,” *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 14, no. 3 (2014): 471–88; Danielle Cole et al., “Accounting and Accountability: Feminist Grant Administration and Coalitional Fair Finance,” in *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and Digital Humanities*, ed. Jacqueline Wernimont and Elizabeth Losh, Debates

One of the biggest lessons from the scholarship is that when your project is designed to benefit marginalized communities, members from these communities should be part of the project team from the get-go, and be afforded real decision-making power. People with lived experience are best situated to know what their community needs. Also, incorporating marginalized people means that they get trained in new skills and, as co-creators, some of the credit goes to them and not just to outside researchers. Lauren Klein and Catherine D’Ignazio argue that one of the principles of data feminism is to challenge power relations by developing more “robust participatory processes” in order to centre the experiences of those at the margins.³⁰ Similarly, the Design Justice Network’s principles state, “we center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process” and “work toward sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.”³¹ Sasha Costanza-Chock argues that there is no substitute for involving the most affected community in the design of a project (such as creating imaginary user personas, for example) and that it is essential to practice real accountability as opposed to simply extracting ideas from the community.³² For example, Moya Bailey created an advisory panel to help ensure her research on the Twitter hashtag #girlslikeus, created by Black trans activist Janet Mock, was ethical and useful to Black trans women.³³

in the Digital Humanities (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/projects/bodies-of-information>.

³⁰ Just Infrastructures, *Speaker Series: Lauren Klein & Catherin D’Ignazio, “Data Feminism,”* 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R0bKW2OrFY>.

³¹ Design Justice Network, “Design Justice Network Principles,” Design Justice Network, Summer 2018, <https://designjustice.org/read-the-principles>.

³² Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*. See also: Anneliese A. Singh, Kate Richmond, and Theodore R. Burnes, “Feminist Participatory Action Research with Transgender Communities: Fostering the Practice of Ethical and Empowering Research Designs,” *International Journal of Transgenderism* 14, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2013.818516>.

³³ Moya Bailey, “#transform(Ing)DH Writing and Research: An Autoethnography of Digital Humanities and Feminist Ethics,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (September 2, 2015).

Given that our project aims to benefit trans arts communities, it is a problem that our project's leadership team is all white and cis, and thus it is crucial that we build non-exploitative, mutually beneficial, collaborative relationships with trans communities, and hire more BIPOC trans people. Similar to Bailey and others, Dr. Horak recognized from the outset of the project the need to establish an advisory board of trans scholars and artists.³⁴ However, the board is mostly white, with one Black member and one Indigenous member, and has been operating quite informally—Horak sends emails when questions arise, and receives responses from only a few members. Thus, we have committed to: 1) reconstituting the board in Fall 2021 with majority BIPOC trans members; 2) giving the board more authority by formally defining its role, and requiring that it hold two one-hour online meetings per year; 3) paying board members a yearly honorarium for their time and expertise; and 4) establishing a meaningful relationship with an elder from the local Algonquin community.

In the past three years, the TML has hired six trans students in paid research positions. Most of the student researchers we have hired are trans, including trans media-makers, who are helping to shape the project, design the database, and connect it to the trans arts communities they are a part of. However, thus far, we have recruited only one BIPOC trans student. This is due, in part, to the systematic exclusion of BIPOC trans people from higher education institutions like Carleton. Although we have made specific efforts to get our job ads in front of trans BIPOC candidates by sending the ads to Black, Indigenous, and trans student groups, professional organizations, and historically-Black universities, we need to do more. We are now considering opening up some of our lab positions to non-students in order to include more BIPOC trans researchers from outside the academy. In this, we follow the lead of the Feminist

³⁴ Bailey, “#transform(Ing)DH Writing and Research”; Just Infrastructures, *Speaker Series*; Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*.

Crunk Collective whose members are feminists of color “in the academy and without,” including scholar-activists, community activists, and artists.³⁵ As a longer term strategy, we will build relationships with BIPOC trans community leaders and organizations, and ask them what kind of support they might find helpful from university-affiliated researchers. Further, we plan to lead trainings and edit-a-thons on the TMP at trans and queer film festivals, thus finding trans and BIPOC trans arts community members where they already are.³⁶

In order to ensure the TMP is responsive to diverse community needs and help prioritize our next steps, we ran usability test/community consultations with members of Ottawa trans arts communities in March 2020. All of the six testers were trans, half identified as BIPOC, and all were involved in art and/or activism.³⁷ Each tester explored our website, tried entering data into the database, and participated in a group conversation about the project’s plans and policies. The student researchers and PI summarized the testers’ recommendations in a 35-page publicly-accessible report.³⁸ Some things the users appreciated about the project were: the website’s focus on community engagement; the database’s flexible and intersectional approach to identity; and the focus on diverse voices on the website and Advisory Board. Some of their recommendations were to: make the process of contributing to the database less laborious; weave a “thread of gratitude” throughout the contributor experience; make the language on the website more

³⁵ “Mission Statement,” Crunk Feminist Collective, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/about/>; see also: Jacqueline Wernimont and Elizabeth Losh, “Problems with White Feminism: Intersectionality and Digital Humanities,” in *Doing Digital Humanities: Practice, Training, Research*, ed. Constance Crompton, Richard J. Lane, and Ray Siemens (London: Routledge, 2016), 43.

³⁶ The TMP also connects to trans communities by regularly partnering with trans and queer film festivals on trans film programs, presenting its research at trans-led conferences like Moving Trans History Forward, and organizing screenings of and presentations about trans-made films at artist-run collectives in Ottawa.

³⁷ This included two transmasculine, two transfeminine, and two nonbinary participants. Two identified as Black, one as a racialized refugee, and three as white. They ranged in age from 15 to 65.

³⁸ Kit Chokly et al., “Usability Test Report 2020,” 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/6c36-jn33>.

accessible; be transparent about the project’s limitations; and incorporate more BIPOC trans leadership at all levels of the project. We are now in the process of implementing these recommendations, and will track our progress with a yearly accountability report. We plan to conduct more usability tests in the future and will continue to prioritize recruiting BIPOC users.

Despite good intentions, social-justice informed digital projects do have the potential to cause harm to marginalized collaborators. For example, when T.L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault received funding to build a collaborative digital archive of trans- feminist and queer cabaret (Cabaret Commons), they realized that their initial idea was based on some incorrect assumptions about value, benefit, and risk.³⁹ Following their warnings, we are in the midst of figuring out how to make trans-made films more accessible without exposing trans people to harm and how to build a community of contributors that doesn’t replicate the exploitative relationship of much crowdsourcing and Web 2.0 economies. Psychologists Singh et al. have developed a checklist “to guide feminist researchers as they seek to work collaboratively, inclusively and respectfully with transgender participants.”⁴⁰ The first two tasks require researchers to examine their own positionality in relation to power and privilege, and articulate how their biases and beliefs impact their research, including naming potential shortcomings. Singh et al. further suggest that researchers “develop strategies for accountability emerging from these potential challenges.”⁴¹ This is an exercise that we will undertake individually and as a team.

³⁹ Cowan and Rault, “The Labour of Being Studied in a Free Love Economy”; Cowan and Rault, “Onlining Queer Acts.”

⁴⁰ Singh, Richmond, and Burnes, “Feminist Participatory Action Research with Transgender Communities,” 96.

⁴¹ Singh, Richmond, and Burnes, 98.

Further, university funding structures present barriers for scholars collaborating with marginalized communities. For example, Cole et al. discovered that as many as seventeen people could be involved in paying just one person. This lengthy bureaucratic process harmed their project's marginalized collaborators who relied on timely payments to cover basic living expenses, such as rent and food.⁴² For our usability tests and screenings, we worked with the university to overcome this barrier, and were thus able to pay testers and guest speakers in cash on the day of the events.⁴³

Conclusion

As Lynn Dombrowski, Ellie Harmon, and Sarah Fox write, orienting toward social justice is an “always ongoing process and practice” and “horizon to work toward,” rather than a “clearly defined utopia that offers itself up for idealized achievement.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, Jackson and Cedillo are frustrated with how institutions project accessibility and justice “into obscure horizons of futurity,” arguing instead that we must act now.⁴⁵ The first step is to start noticing all the ways that the status quo of universities, academic research, and labs support oppression, and how we are complicit within these structures—this itself is a never-ending process. The next steps are to decide what kind of world we want our work to build and what tactics we can adopt to put these values into practice. Invariably we will make mistakes, cause harm, and experience conflict. In some ways the next steps are the most important—how will we

⁴² Cole et al., “Accounting and Accountability: Feminist Grant Administration and Coalitional Fair Finance.”

⁴³ Appealing to Carleton's protocol for compensating Indigenous elders, project manager Kate Higginson convinced our research finance administrator to advance the funds to Horak and accept signed statements of receipt from the payees as sufficient proof of fund use.

⁴⁴ Dombrowski, Harmon, and Fox, “Social Justice-Oriented Interaction Design,” 665.

⁴⁵ Jackson and Cedillo, “We Are Here to Crip That Shit,” 111.

respond to finding out that we have caused harm? How will we be accountable to the people in our lab, the communities outside our lab that our work affects, and more broadly, to the people whose land we are on, and the people whose oppression benefits us and our institution? At the TML and TMP, we are learning from trans, anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, queer, and crip scholarship and putting into place regular check-ins about our values and how our activities can best support those values.

Appendix: Labs and Collectives that Inspire Us

- Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) <https://civiclaboratory.nl/>
(See, in particular, the Methodology section of the website)
- Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance <https://indigenoustatalab.org/>
- Crunk Feminist Collective <https://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/>
- Dark Laboratory <https://www.darklaboratory.com/>
- Design Justice Network <https://designjustice.org/>
- Data + Feminism Lab <https://dataplusfeminism.mit.edu/>
- Detroit Digital Justice Coalition <http://detroitdjc.org/principles/>
- Lesbian Herstory Archives <https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>
- LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory at University of Toronto
<http://lgbtqdigitalcollaboratory.org/>
- Sins Invalid <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/>
- Taller Electric Marronage <https://www.electricmarronage.com/>

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- . *Laboratory Life: Author Order (Episode 1)*, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrLOGokqL7w>.
- . *Laboratory Life: How We Choose Our Values (Episode 2)*, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYjfWZyAoh4>.
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