The Library as Conversation: the Information Professional as Facilitator of Conversation

Section 0104, Wednesdays from 1-4pm (week of January 9, 2017 to week of February 13, 2017)

Instructor: Stephen Abram

David Lankes observes “It is not about cataloguing, or books, or buildings, or committees – it is about learning, knowledge, and social action.” It is commonplace to observe that our society is increasingly knowledge-based. If, as Lankes asserts, knowledge is created through conversation, and recorded in millions of artifacts like books and images, what are the roles of libraries and similar information organizations, and of information professionals, in facilitating and leading conversation in the future?

This course explores the systems and assumptions within which libraries, in particular, have functioned in carrying out their mission of knowledge creation, curation, and dissemination. It examines the potential for radical extension of these systems into ever more participatory models, within a framework of timeless values such as intellectual freedom. To achieve this potential, there are challenges to be addressed as well as opportunities to be developed. The course will take a practical perspective in integrating insights associated with policy, operations, technology, and ethics.