

Teaching Philosophy

Often we all enter the “class space” with preconceived notions. We enter with the hopes to gain and/or impart “knowledge” within a predetermined period of time. We enter the space not as tabula rasa, but as etched upon substrates, with varying, hopefully complimentary goals.

Teaching for me is about multi-directional knowledge transfer. That transfer requires remaining open and trusting.

I have been an information connoisseur since a child, memorizing the Dewey Decimal Classification System working alongside my Mother, a Library Clerk. I have fond memories of perusing the Encyclopedia Britannica, the precursor to my interest in databases. This provided a serendipitous foundation to my current occupation committed to indexing information, maximizing accessibility and monetizing electronic media.

I can now see that there was a reason to the many shifts in my career trajectory: from my initial job as a Show Researcher at Harpo, reading, cataloguing and inputting mail correspondence into a FoxPro database; to working in Circulation at Newsday which included everything from data analysis, the physical management of a home delivery distribution warehouse in suburban New York City, and the sales, marketing and distribution management of single copy sales territory in New York City; to a stint as the Publicity Manager at Voyager Publishing—the first company to put a book on floppy disk; working in Special Sales at McGraw-Hill where Amazon pitched us to buy direct and the “higher ups” all refused despite my youthful begging that internet book sales would be big; my time at Muze—the metadata company that powered Amazon’s initial foray into music retail and also provided some of their book metadata; working with the Managing Editor at Al-Ahram Publishing to improve production time to meet an international distribution schedule; consulting for companies some now defunct e.g. Urban Box Office others still thriving Black Enterprise and Sony/Columbia Records Group; finally as the inaugural Online Director for a suburban New York City Gannett media property.

In today’s world of transmedia storytelling, and convergence the tapestry of my experience makes sense, yet when I was involved in the process well not so much. As a Professor my goal is to facilitate a dialogue and serve as a catalyst, igniting new thoughts.

I encourage an exploration that starts with a foundational body of literature, opening up to a dialogue which leads to demonstration of techniques as it relates to individual career and educational goals. I work to foster a mature environment where student opinions are respected and “heard.” Where everyone fully feels a sense of “agency.”

Having been a product of John Dewey’s interactive teaching through experimental observation as a graduate of the University of Chicago Laboratory School I employ many of these same techniques. My goal is not to provide answers but to offer direction, with

the hopes of steering and guiding you to the development of your own “truths.” Researching, teaching, and consulting, I hope to play a role in the broader conversation shaping information dissemination.

Access for me goes beyond exposure to academic discussions and must be inclusive of industry. My first year in Graduate School I grew incensed as we discussed the Book Industry Study Group report, which concluded that African Americans were not readers. I knew a host of African Americans who were avid readers; after all it was the very thing that kept food on our table as my Mother had worked in predominantly African American communities as a Library Clerk. I set out to research and prove that this was not true. In my quest for truth what I discovered was an obligation to go beyond presenting my own personal truths. There was a forum for that, but the news media and academia was not that place. In setting out to present ‘my truth’ I was engaging in the very thing that I was fighting against. Fortunately, I ended at a very different place, deconstructing the information, allowing the audience to reconstruct their own truth. What I discovered was that the Book Industry Study Group panel included very few African Americans. This did not refute the argument but presented more accurate information. My initial anger turned to action, which led to my career shift from book publishing to electronic publishing. In lieu of refuting the study, my final research reviewed how digital distribution could impact African American book distribution, and ultimately my research interest in the digital distribution of information.

My current research uses qualitative and quantitative methods to continue to delve into the “actions” of people of African descent taking a contemporary lens to look at the Black Elite in Harlem and information dissemination.