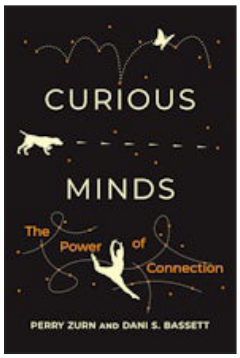
Curious Minds: The Power of Connection, Perry Zurn and Dani S. Bassett, The MIT Press, 2022. 293p. Softcover, $22.95. 9780262547147



It was upon reading the 1999 article, "The Invisible Substrate of Information Science" by renowned information science scholar, Dr. Marcia Bates, that something clicked in my understanding of the library field as a graduate student in my MSIS program. Bates described Information Science (as well as the disciplines of Education and Journalism) as a meta-discipline (1044). Compared to conventional disciplines, the meta-discipline cuts across the spectrum of various subjects, interested more in the processes than the content of each. Suddenly, I realized the reason all my peers and professors came from such varied academic and professional backgrounds. The common link was an interest in so many different fields. Specifically, we were curious about the invisible processes of information organization, retrieval, creation, and preservation that intersect with learning and human knowledge. While written in a manner inviting to any student, Perry Zurn and Dani S. Bassett's *Curious Minds* holds a particularly unique perspective from which librarians and information professionals can find kinship and inspiration.

What new is there to say about curiosity? Zurn and Bassett challenge common understandings of curiosity as a purely acquisitional drive to fill an information gap. Instead, they present a much more compelling theory of curiosity as a practice of connection or knowledge network building in architectures of "(un)knowers, (un)knowledges, and things (un)known" (47). The authors bring a wealth of collaborative research to support this work. Provost Associate Professor of Philosophy at American University, Dr. Perry Zurn is also the author of *Curiosity and Power: The Politics of Inquiry* and has academic publications in the areas of political theory, transgender studies, and network science. Dr. Dani S. Bassett is J. Peter Skirkanich Professor of Bioengineering at the University of Pennsylvania and a MacArthur Fellow whose research blends neural and systems engineering and intersects in psychology, visual arts, and more.

Accomplished, interdisciplinary scholars and twins, Zurn and Bassett themselves have curious minds. The book begins with an introduction that serves as an outline to ground the reader for the journey ahead and traces the authors' own backgrounds and experiences with learning while discovering limitations the external world imposed upon their freedom of thinking. The equity and policing of curiosity as manifested in exclusion, access, privilege, and oppression based on gender, sex, race, ethnicity, ability, and class is central to the inquiry Zurn and Bassett excavate in *Curious Minds.* Throughout the book there is continual emphasis on the *how* of curiosity rather than the *what*. Though the authors pay attention to definitions of curiosity, the bulk of their study consists of an examination of its shapes, dimensions, movement, and geometry through the lenses of philosophy, psychology, and network science. It would be easy for any authors to get lost in communicating these complex theories to a general audience, but Zurn and Bassett successfully distill and organize the information presented in their book. Admittedly recognizing that the narrative structure will not be straightforward, they lean into the meandering nature of curiosity, inviting readers to also indulge in curiosity *with* the book rather than *about* it.

Informed by their respective expertise in philosophy and neuroscience, the chapters alternate primary authorship between Zurn and Bassett resulting in a refreshing exercise of the left and right sides of the brain. Yet, they maintain a wholly unified voice, likely due, in part, to their connection as twins. Each chapter blends into the next as the authors pick up where the other leaves off. Showing their scholarly brush strokes, they form and revise questions and develop new theories over the course of the text.

Neuroscience science may pose a steep learning curve for many librarians, as well as the average person. Yet, Bassett's explanation of the field maintains a thoroughly humanist delivery. Providing multiple illustrations and playful metaphors, they provide a background on the origins of network science and current efforts to graph the architecture and movement of individual and collective knowledge. Writing, "the shape of knowledge is much like that of Swiss cheese … a flesh of knowns interwoven with pockets of unknowns," they build upon this visual metaphor to introduce the concept of a network model (116-117).

Zurn's chapters shift from the scientific and material perspective of curiosity to its cultural history and conceptualization within philosophy and the humanities. Discerning the shapes knowledge networks take as they move from node to edge, he identifies three curiosity styles derived from figures in Western intellectual history: the busybody, the hunter, and the dancer. We may ourselves be familiar with these curious minds, those rambling and indulgent, others intensely narrow and focused, and some ingenious and artful. Individuals are not bound to one style but rather shift between them. Readers will also enjoy the Curious Bestiary found in the book's appendix which expands upon the styles into which curiosity can morph; shapes that are not static.

The authors delve deeply into these various movements of curiosity through relational connections, knowledge network growth, kinesthetic shaping, and tour both the mind and material space. In the chapter, "Curiosity Takes a Walk," the authors contemplate the humanist traditions of walking as a form of thinking and the reverse, looking at four types of walks: the philosophical, the spiritual, the environment, and the political. In this examination of traveling thought they flesh out maps and geographies of the mind and delve into how they are encoded in the brain. How does curiosity impact the neurological functions of learning and memory?

It is in these final two chapters where libraries, educators and students can find especially relevant and valuable reflection. The atmosphere in academic institutions and libraries is charged with pressure to police thinking and learning. While public libraries encounter increasing challenges to censor and restrict access to books and resources, academic librarians are tasked with teaching information literacy. Zurn and Bassett describe the brain's capacity for flexibility and adaptation and how curiosity can result in conformational change. Could this process increase understanding of implicit bias and tolerance for ideas that conflict with deeply rooted belief systems? Could it expand the individual's capacity as well as communities to adapt these systems across diverse identities?

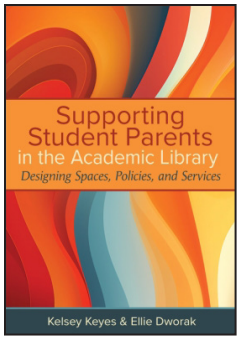
Curious Minds reimagines spaces of education and possibilities for change in neural, social, and knowledge networks. Giving credit to communities that have engaged in this kind of curious practice long before and outside of the academia, the authors turn to the case studies of neurodivergent author, Naoki Higashida, the Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights era, and Indigenous knowledge systems. They critique the academy's attachment to distinct knowledge structures and argue for a movement that allows for "flourishing ecosystems of knowledge" that focus on equity and liberation demonstrating a curiosity de-disciplined (213).

Curiosity engaged in what the authors describe as edgework, moves beyond filling information gaps by making relational connections—and breaking them. Librarians are aware of imperfect information architectures and engage in efforts to change and work around them. Instructing students how they too can make unexpected discoveries if they change a keyword or simply open themselves to new ideas can bring about the possibility for knowledge network growth. As librarians themselves operate within a meta-discipline, how is a praxis of curiosity passed along to students and educational institutions? Could the invisible information structures navigated regularly be made visible and find advocates for system change? Zurn and Bassett provide answers but generates further questions about the nature of curiosity. There is a lighthearted and rebellious spirit at the heart of *Curious Minds* that affirms the power of these small divergences in the mind to crack open streams of new connections and curious futures. — *Ginny Barnes, First Year Student Success Librarian, California State University, Fresno*

Reference

Bates, Marcia J. "The Invisible Substrate of Information Science." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, vol. 50, no. 12, 1999, pp. 1043–50.

Supporting Student Parents in the Academic Library: Designing Spaces, Policies, and Services, Kelsey Keyes and Ellie Dworak, Association of College and Research Libraries, 2024. 312p. Softcover, 82.00. 9798892555531



It is clear from the first pages of this book that authors Keyes and Dworak care deeply about students who are also parents, an increasing population found on college campuses. *Supporting Student Parents in the Academic Library* opens with the authors' own experiences observing student parents on their campuses and point out their relative invisibility, both in physical spaces, consideration in policies, and in the data collected at higher education institutions. They note "our point is to highlight the fact that a lack of data being collected about students' parenting status renders them less visible, and thus this group continues to be underserved" (xviii). While some chapters may digress into a discussion of higher education in more general terms rather than focusing on the library, ultimately the book is a detailed, timely, and thoughtful consideration of students who are parents, providing helpful tips on how academic libraries can support this often-ignored set of scholars.

The book is divided into four parts, thirteen chapters, with the authors describing their work as "part toolkit, part treatise, and part call to action" (xxi). Each chapter opens with several learning objectives which provide scope and overview to the subject matter. Chapters close with discussion questions to encourage further thinking on how information might be relevant to readers and their campus libraries. Part 1 provides a summary of the scant data that is currently collected about student parents enrolled in higher education as well as the challenges these students are likely to encounter. Through this examination the reader is given a bleak picture of higher education reporting regarding student parents and of the data that any researcher working with this population must piece together through various reporting agencies. The authors' data gathering resulted from a survey at Boise State University and offers a glimpse at how many students are parents, the challenges they face, and what support might help them graduate (xv). The answers to the questions of "why" were missing and still need consideration. Part 2 focuses on what the authors' study did not address and pushes