

Thursday, January 31, 2019

Visualizing the Future Organization Team  
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**RE: Visualizing the Future Fellowship**

Dear Dr. Justin Joque & the Visualizing the Future Organization Team,

As librarians, how can we create spaces where learners take risks with digital scholarship methods? What would it look like for us to encourage learners to bring their identities and experiences to their work with data, especially in the context of investigating the issues they care about most deeply? What does a distinctly *feminist* approach to data visualization look like?

It's in this spirit of inquiry, and the desire to explore these questions in community, that I submit my application to the Visualizing the Future fellowship. I have found myself exploring these questions again and again since beginning as the Social Sciences and Geospatial Data Librarian here at Cornell University in May 2018. As I grow more familiar with the instructional landscape in academic libraries, I have learned the immense value in identifying communities of praxis that can learn, experiment, and grow together. Contributing as a fellow in the Visualizing the Future cohort would be an absolutely fantastic opportunity to advance inquiry into critical, engaged data visualization. I am excited to share more about the research I would contribute as a fellow and how I hope to advance data visualization engagement in libraries as a whole.

As a fellow, I would propose as my central project developing and piloting a week-long Data Storytelling for Social Change design jam-style event for undergraduate students. The event will encourage undergraduate students across disciplines to work on small teams to craft persuasive, compelling visualizations about issues they care about, whether through their studies or their experiences on campus. In particular, I hope to encourage participants to follow the lines of inquiry expressed in D'Ignazio and Klein's *data visualization feminism* framework, such as: rethinking binaries, examining power, focusing on embodiment & affect, and making labor visible (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2015). Building off this framework, I will encourage students to engage the concepts of *storytelling* and *narrative* in data visualization praxis: narratives of exploring and critiquing data; narratives of persuasion; narratives that surface not only process but labor; and so on.

Participants will attend an immersive sequence of workshops for the first several days of the design jam to learn key data visualization skills, with an eye to constructing critical & investigative data narratives, such as: finding and exploring datasets; effective data visualization design techniques; and using Python and Jupyter Notebooks for data storytelling. We will award the winning teams with a prize stipend, and showcase student work online and in our new Digital CoLab community space. The event will use summative assessment along the way to ensure effective instruction & adjust as needed to meet learner needs.

This type of visible, experimental, and socially engaged event would be a wonderful way to build awareness about our Digital Scholarship CoLab at Cornell, which is at a moment of transition and transformation as we move locations and expand our offerings. It will provide one model and target audience (design jam, undergraduate students) that will complement our diverse engagement plans for the upcoming semesters, such as our upcoming digital scholarship training opportunities in the context of rural humanities. My hope is that the Data Storytelling for Social Change design jam will help us better understand the needs of students who may have been excluded or underserved in other data skills learning environments, and may benefit from the opportunity to build portfolio-ready projects in a receptive, attentive community. Finally, the design jam would provide a context to work with local community members and organizations via identifying datasets that speak to local issues and showcasing the results of the design jam in public-facing spaces.

I am eager to explore impact both within and beyond my institution – and this is what makes me so specifically excited about the Fellows program! I would love the opportunity to contribute to a diverse community of praxis that shares similar goals in helping learners engage critically and impactfully with data visualization. As I plan the event, I will continue reflecting on feminist data visualization and narrative data visualization on a theoretical level; in particular, I am curious at the role narrative may play in moving from feminist data critique to praxis (e.g., Hill, Kennedy, and Gerrard, 2016). Ultimately, I plan to compose these reflections into an article for publication; along with our closing Symposium, this will provide an important avenue for widening impact and sparking discussion within the broader library community.

In sum, I would love the opportunity to be part of the Visualizing the Future cohort. Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Warmly,

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#### **Works Cited:**

D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2016). Feminist data visualization. In *Workshop on Visualization for the Digital Humanities (VIS4DH)*, Baltimore. IEEE.

Hill, R. L., Kennedy, H., & Gerrard, Y. (2016). Visualizing junk: Big data visualizations and the need for feminist data studies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 40(4), 331-350.